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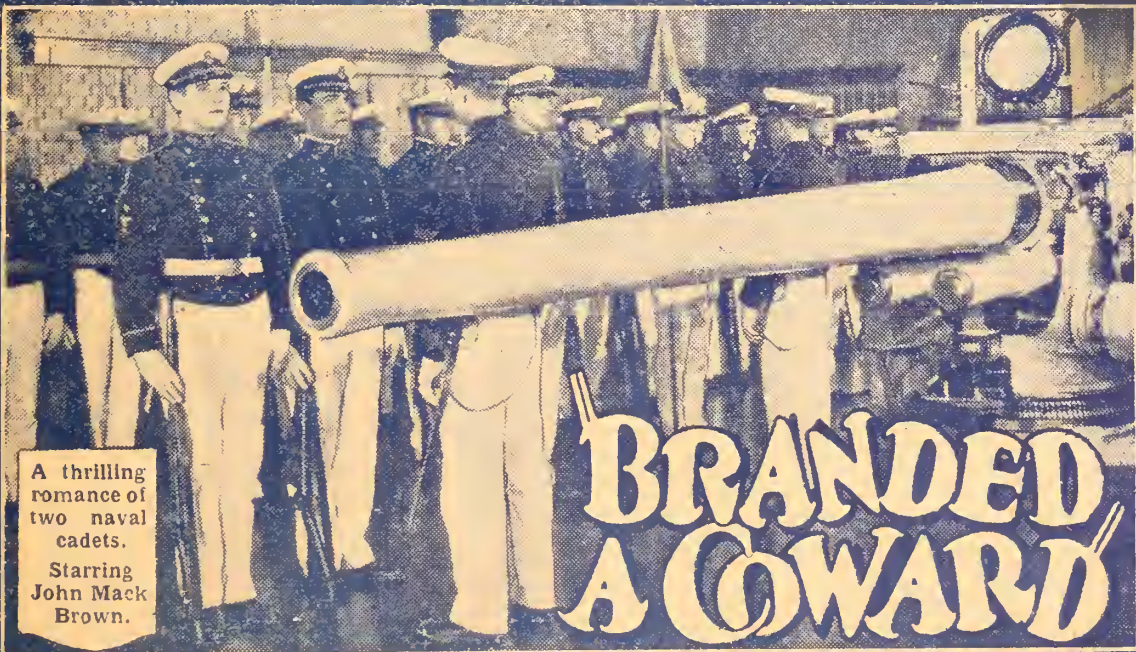
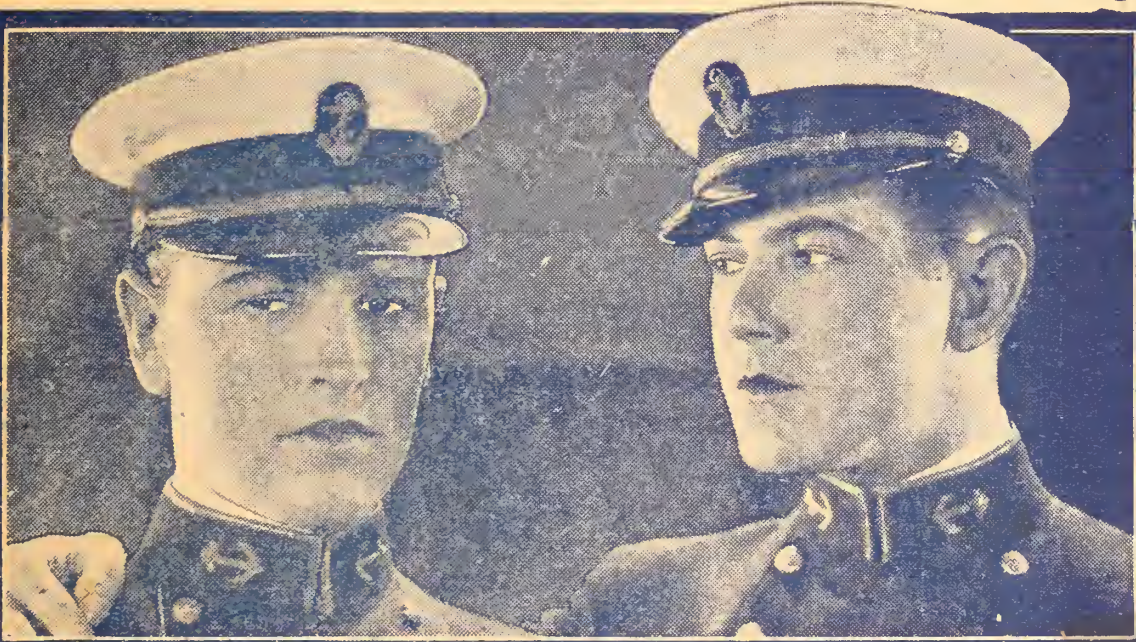
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"THE ENEMY" and "HORSE-SHY." COMPLETE FILM STORIES
IN THIS ISSUE.

BOY'S CINEMA

2^d Every Tuesday

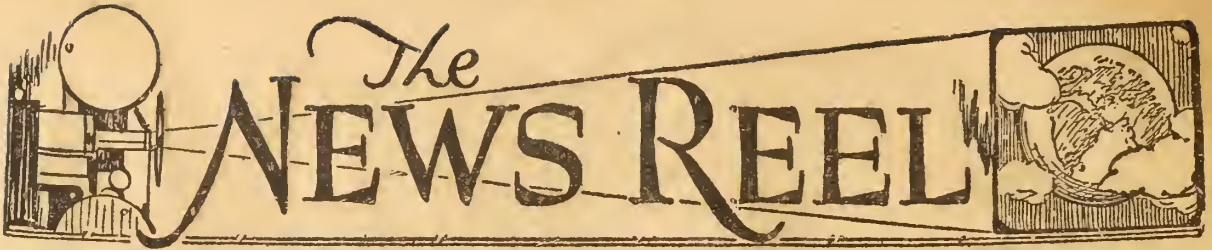
No. 531. February 15th, 1930. Weekly



A thrilling
romance of
two naval
cadets.
Starring
John Mack
Brown.

BRANDED A COWARD

GLOSSY PHOTO CARD OF **William Boyd**, FREE WITH THIS ISSUE.



The NEWS REEL

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 186, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Stutterers and Stammerers Needed.

Clear-speaking voices are apparently not all that the talking films want. Recently the First National Studios sent out a call for people who could lisp, stammer or stutter. Among those who lisped of the candidates applying was a twelve-year-old Negro girl for a part in "The Forward Pass," a football picture which shows how the American game is played. Stuttering men and stammering women were also among the applicants.

Risky Work.

In "Love Never Dies," Colleen Moore's new picture, there is a scene showing an air battle between German and English acroplanes. There were altogether sixteen machines performing all kinds of stunts, as diving, looping, and tail-spinning, and occasionally one of the planes would fall in flames to the earth. The really risky part of this scene lay in the fact that often several of the machines were so close together that had it not been for the skilful

manœuvring of their pilots there might have been a serious accident.

"Branded a Coward."

Bill Dunn, John Mack Brown; Herbert Luff, Hugh Allan; Betty Allen, Jeanette Loff; "Bulge," Maurice Ryan; "Skeeter," William Bakewell; Lieutenant Dunn, Robert Bosworth.

"The Enemy."

Pauli Arndt, Lillian Gish; Carl Behrend, Ralph Forbes; Bruce Gordon, Ralph Emerson; Professor Arndt, Frank Currier; Ugust Behrend, George Fawcett; Fritz Winkelmann, John S. Peters; Jan, Karl Dane.

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND FILM STORIES.



"The ACE of Scotland Yard"

Blake again—in a most sensational and thrilling serial story of mystery, plot and counterplot. The adventures of a clever detective against the master-minds of the underworld. It is the first "talkie" serial ever made. Don't miss the opening episode next week! Starring Crauford Kent and Florence Allen.

"THE PHANTOM CITY."

The deserted city of the plains and how an intrepid cowboy was sent there on a dangerous mission. His hairbreadth escapes and amazing riding turned the tables against a gang of crooks. Starring Ken Maynard.

"DARK SKIES."

An all-talking drama of the exploits of an intrepid rum-runner versus the Revenue Patrols. Starring Wallace McDonald and Shirley Mason.

"TEMBI."

A splendid picture-supplement of wild animals, filmed at great personal risk by the well-known explorer, Cherry Kearton.

In the Long Ago.

Few picturegoers know that as long ago as 1917 the Edison company endeavoured to make talking films. Jack Muthall made his vocal debut in one of them. Ordinary gramophone records were used in synchronisation with these pictures, but they were not a success, for there were then no loud speakers, and the other mechanical devices so necessary nowadays were also unknown. Since then inventors have made big strides.

A Golden Goose.

All of us have heard of the goose that laid golden eggs. But a golden goose is a bird one would not hope to see even in a zoo. There is a golden goose, however, which will be seen in "No, No, Nanette," and the name of this strange bird is Tessie. It may be as well to explain that Nature is not responsible for Tessie's fine colouring. That was the work of studio experts, for apparently a goose of an ordinary colour was not good enough for the story.

So Tessie was well sprayed with a golden hue, but after the scene in which she appears had been filmed the director felt a bit uneasy. He thought the paint might badly affect the health of the bird, and so a property boy, armed with a hatchet, was deputed to find the goose and kill it. Meanwhile, Tessie, remembering she had another important duty to perform, laid an egg. It was not golden, of course, but the discovery of it saved Tessie's life and she was permitted to retain her golden plumage.

Barthelmess Learns Chinese.

Richard Barthelmess is learning to speak Chinese. This, we are assured, is no Press Agent's yarn, but the simple truth. His new picture is called "Son of the Gods," in which he will portray a Chinese youth, and in order that he may ably play his part, he is being tutored in one of the most difficult languages of the East. We offer him our sympathy, and wish him good luck.

(Continued on page 28.)

He accepted the blame for another's offence and nearly ruined his career. An appealing romance of two naval cadets and a charming girl. Starring Johnny Mack Brown.



BRANDED A COWARD

Annapolis.

WHEN Bill arrived at the small junction at Odenton to wait for the local train into Annapolis, he was beginning to get uncomfortable.

Three long years seemed to stretch before him like a century. During those years, almost completely cut off from his family for the best part of the time, he would have to work like fury.

He took comfort from the fact that his father was in the Navy. Because of this he would probably have a better time than most. Old man Dunn was only a junior officer himself—even though he was nearly fifty—for he had worked his way up from the lower deck of the service, and only in exceptional cases did rankers soar to the dizzy heights of commander.

Bill reckoned he had a better chance than his old man. He was starting in the senior service as a cadet, which meant that after only three years he would get what his father struggled twenty-eight years to achieve—a commission. After that the sky was the limit. The important rank of Admiral of the Fleet, the highest immediately under First Sea Lord, was within the reach of every cadet who started at the naval academy at Annapolis.

In spite of the fact that Bill felt a little lost, as though all his old associations had suddenly fallen away from him, his ambitions compared with the next fellow's very favourably. Already he could imagine himself wearing the uniform of supreme command, watching his battleships sweep past in salute on his annual inspection of the fleet, and listening to the forard six-pounders booming across the waves in acknowledgment of his authority. Already he could visualise the eight o'clock salvos from naval dockyards, which would announce to the stations that he had arrived for his periodical visits,

and see the bunting being run up to the masthead of every vessel in harbour as the echoes of the gunfire rumbled away into the distance.

He smiled thoughtfully as he stood on the small wayside station, and life felt better. After all, he argued to himself, all these things were possible in time. It was just a matter of working hard and waiting patiently enough. The Admiralty could not help recognising his worth sooner or later, and then the coveted position would be won.

The fact that he had not yet even begun his training at the naval academy did not disturb him in the least. Hang it all, everyone had to start sometime, and he was starting now. But he was starting with a difference. To him, nothing was impossible. He would leave the other cadets far behind. His abilities would dazzle his superiors.

Bill's imagination had just brought him to the point where he was conducting a battle and wiping a fleet twice the size of his own completely off the surface of the seas, when he felt a touch on his arm.

"Got a match?" inquired a voice.

He turned to see a fellow about his own age standing before him, cigarette in hand.

"Sure," he replied, and brought out a lighter. He watched in silence while the other lit up, and then spoke again. "Is this the right platform for Annapolis?"

"It is," was the reply. "Are you bound for the naval academy?"

"Yes."

"So am I. We might as well go along together."

Bill liked the idea, and said so. So they exchanged names, and found that the stranger was Herbert Luff.

"It's a great life we're going to," Bill went on when they had introduced

themselves. "I reckon you and I ought to be pals. What do you say?"

Herbert inspected him much as he would inspect a new suit that he was buying. He was not exactly a gracious individual, and made no attempt to be.

"Well, I suppose it's all right," he said casually. "I've certainly got to pal up with somebody, and you'll do as well as anybody else. At least, until I have time to look round."

Bill looked at him wrathfully. There was something about this chap he did not like. He seemed so superior—so cocksure that he was the only person in the world that mattered.

Bill was about to make some caustic remark, when he thought better of it. No use making enemies right at the start, he reflected. After all, this offensive way of speaking might only be an unfortunate habit, and he might not really mean to be like that.

"You and I will get on mighty well together," Bill replied, making a strenuous effort to be friendly. "I reckon I can be useful to you, too. You see, my father's in the Navy, and he knows the ropes. It's going to help a terrific lot."

"Is that so?" Herbert surveyed him once more with that sweeping stare, but this time his glance was more interested. "Well, what with your influence and my brains, we ought to be in a position to run this place very shortly. People at the top get a bit irksome unless you get some hold on them, you know."

"Er—yes." Bill was not quite sure what to say. It was obvious that Herbert was entirely unaware of the conditions of life in the Navy. He thought it best to change the subject. "I shall do well here," he went on. "I'm going to put my back into it. I want to be Admiral of the Fleet one of these days."

days, and if we're friends I'll see that you are made my chief of staff."

Herbert made a deprecatory gesture. On his face there was very nearly a sneer.

"You flatter yourself," he said ironically. "Only one man can be Admiral of the Fleet, and that's going to be me. It's brains they want—not fathers in the Navy."

Bill turned away, trying to hide his annoyance. A whistle shrieked in the distance.

"I think that is our train," he said quietly.

In the Cannon's Mouth.

"CADET WILLIAM DUNN," snapped the officer of the day.

"Sir?" replied Bill promptly.

"You are allotted to cabin number 46, ground floor. Have you any friend you would like to share the cabin with?"

"Yes, sir," Bill indicated Herbert. He did not know anyone else. "Cadet Herbert Luff, sir."

"Very well. Take him along to draw kit, and report in uniform at divisions ten o'clock to-morrow morning for inspection. By that time you will be expected to have settled down."

The officer turned away to someone else, leaving Bill to carry out his orders.

Bill beckoned to Herbert, and together they went along to the quartermaster's stores. Half an hour later, equipped with a large quantity of implements of training, they made their way to the room allotted to them.

"Darn silly way to carry on," muttered Herbert as they dumped their gear on the floor. "Why in the name of thunder did that idiot with the two gold rings round his cuffs call this place a cabin when it is nothing more than an ordinary room?"

"They always do that in naval shore establishments," Bill explained. "You see, they treat it as a ship. If you want to go out for the afternoon, you have to apply for shore leave; the skipper has his cabins on the quarter-deck—that's that house on the other side of the grounds—and the place where we eat and so on is the gun-room. It has to be like that, so as to get us used to conditions on board ship."

"Darned ridiculous," Herbert commented, overlooking the fact that the Navy had been trained at Annapolis long before he arrived, and that it had always done quite well under this system. "Well, I suppose we'd better get settled in."

"I suppose so," Bill replied, and heaved his kit on to one of the beds. "I'll have this bunk."

He had chosen it quite haphazard, and without any idea of getting hold of the most comfortable one. But Herbert was not satisfied with the arrangement. He felt the springing of the remaining bed, and then tried Bill's. The result was that he removed Bill's kit, depositing it on the floor, and placed his own on Bill's bed.

"What's the big idea?" Bill demanded quickly. "I said I was having that one."

"Quite possibly," was the calm reply. "But as your future superior I feel that I am entitled to some choice in the matter."

Bill's blood began to boil. Herbert was becoming intolerable. He was behaving as though he ran the place, and Bill did not intend to stand for it. He deliberately removed the other's kit, and starting picking up his own.

Herbert countered by dropping back on to the floor each article Bill put on the bed.

February 15th, 1920.

Bill stuck it for as long as he could, and then straightened up suddenly.

"Look here, Luff," he said quietly. "I put my stuff on this bunk first, and I'm jolly well going to have it. I don't particularly care which one I have, but I'm darned if I'm going to stand for bullying tactics."

"No?" Herbert went up to him and thrust his face temptingly close. "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Have the bunk I want," Bill replied, his jaw setting with sudden obstinacy.

Herbert calmly picked up Bill's kit bag and hurled it into a corner. Then he turned his back as though he had ended the argument beyond further question.

Bill strode up to him and swung him round.

"Pick up that bag," he ordered, and in his tone there was more than a hint of danger.

"Rats," was the immediate reply.

"Pick up that bag," Bill repeated. "I'll chuck you clean out of the cabin if you don't."

"Get on with it. Don't forget that you'll want three others to help you."

Bill clenched his fists, and made a sudden movement. It was arrested by a sharp voice from the doorway. The officer of the watch was looking at them with stern disapproval.

"This is a bad start," he said. He turned to Bill. "What is your name?"

"William Dunn, sir," Bill replied smartly.

"And yours?" The officer addressed Herbert.

"Herbert Luff," he replied shortly. "This egg—"

The officer held up his hand.

"I do not want any discussion upon whose fault it was," he said. "All that matters is that I find you two quarrelling almost immediately you arrive. One of you will have to go to another cabin. Who wants to move?"

"I'll go," said Bill. "You're right, sir. He and I will never hit it off properly."

That was the beginning of the enmity between Bill and Herbert. It had been brought about by nothing more than an absurd difference of opinion concerning a bunk, but from its intensity it might have been caused by some deadly insult.

The commander, who in spite of the iron discipline he enforced, had the welfare and progress of each individual cadet at heart, saw the trend of the quarrel, and gave orders that Bill and Herbert were to be thrown together as much as possible. The result was that they found themselves side by side at divisions, on parade, and even at the mess table.

A month went by. During it, the cadets were slowly trained in the use of arms, each day bringing them nearer to the great event of the first stage of their new lives—a sham battle.

Suddenly the looked-for day arrived. At divisions one morning the commander inspected the cadets and then stood before them with a map in his hand.

"We are going to carry out practice manoeuvres," he announced. "Cadets in the starboard establishment will carry out an attack in mass upon Crownsville, the port establishment defending. The two forces will be under the commands of Lieutenant-Commander Ridgley and Lieutenant Betterton respectively. Master-at-Arms."

"Sir?"

"Issue rifles, and have ammunition for the twelve-pounder landing guns loaded into limbers. The two con-

tingents will move off at twelve, and the attack will commence at three in the afternoon."

"Very good, sir."

At three o'clock to the minute the battle opened with a crackle of rifle fire and a roar from the field gun battery. Bill and Herbert, lying side by side in the tall grass beyond the landing beach, loosed off half a magazine-full of blanks at the defending party's entrenchments four hundred yards away.

"Good stuff, this," Bill observed, smuggling his chest close to the butt of his rifle. "I wish Jimmy-the-One would arrange something of the kind every day." He laughed as the tang of burnt powder drifted across his nostrils. "I say, Luff—"

Herbert clicked home the bolt of his weapon, and looked at Bill coldly.

"My name is Mr. Luff," he said. "Your father might be in the navy, but that is no reason why you should not address me properly. Furthermore, I do not think the commander would like to be called 'Jimmy-the-One.'"

Bill flushed awkwardly. Herbert was deliberately trying to be offensive, and Bill's pride was hurt, because he had tried to make friendly advances, and so end the feud.

"Oh, rats, Luff," he replied. "Commanders are called that in every branch of the service. I heard the officer of the day using it last week." He loosed off a round absently, and reloaded. "Look here, old man, can't we be pals? We—"

"Advance to gun-point," roared the lieutenant in charge of their section, and they scrambled to their feet.

In fan order, they swooped over fifty yards of open ground, and dropped once more side by side, next to one of the guns of the field battery. Bill made a further attempt at establishing friendship.

"We can't go on like this," he said quickly. "Hang it all, we are making ourselves the laughing stock of the academy."

"You mean you are," retorted Herbert boorishly. "I do not wish to have anything to do with you. Go away and shut up."

Bill laid his rifle down. It was a deliberate movement, and it was ominous.

"Look here, Luff, I'm not going to stand for you treating me like dirt any longer," he said quietly. "You have been nothing but a pig since we first arrived, and you haven't the manners of an ape. If you can't be civil, I'm going to start trouble."

Herbert stared at him as if not understanding such accusations. He was so eaten up with his own importance that he regarded Bill's remarks as a grave injustice.

"Why, you rotten cur," he bellowed. "Who are you to say I haven't the manners of an ape? For two pins, I'd —"

But Bill had had enough. Hardly hearing the lieutenant shout "Fire, number one," and the subsequent report of the first gun of the field battery, he leapt to his feet.

"Get up," he roared. "I'll teach you to call me a rotten cur. Get up, and take what's coming to you."

Herbert needed no invitation. He threw down his rifle and jumped for Bill's head, his fist swinging heavily. Bill dodged, and they closed, swaying backwards and forwards as if they were fighting for their lives.

Someone yelled at them as they began

to totter towards number four gun of the field battery. They began to fall, and at the same moment the breechworker of the gun thought the section lieutenant had given him orders to fire. He jerked at the lanyard, and a broad pencil of flame leapt from the muzzle of the weapon.

"Battery, cease fire," the section lieutenant shouted, and rushed forward through the lifting smoke.

"I'll teach you to call me a rotten cur," Bill was yelling again, aiming a deft blow at Herbert's jaw. Herbert stopped it as the lieutenant's hand fell on Bill's shoulder. He crouched low, whimpering with fear at the nearness of the field gun above them.

"Stop that fighting, you two," the lieutenant ordered. "Get up and return to your posts."

"Oh, heavens," whimpered Herbert. "It nearly got us. I saw the flash, it almost hit me, I'd have been blown to pieces."

"Come on, man," breathed Bill, forgetting his share of the quarrel with abrupt suddenness. "Don't show them you're a coward."

Herbert scrambled to his feet as if he had been stung. The word "coward" had roused him from his terror.

"I'm not a coward. I'm not—I'm not."

The section lieutenant laid his hands on their shoulders.

"Listen, you two," he said in a kindly tone, "don't you think this row has gone far enough? You nearly got killed just now, and I'm quite certain that whatever started it isn't worth a death. What about shaking hands and calling the whole thing off?"

Bill looked at Herbert, and Herbert looked at Bill. For several seconds each hesitated. Then Bill's hand shot out.

"I'm crying quits, Herbert," he said.

"So am I," Herbert replied. "Now I come to think of it, I suppose I've been a bit of an ass. Let's forget all about it."

"Sure thing we will," Bill said as their hands clasped. "But it's not you that's the ass. It's me."

"Nothing of the sort," Herbert replied. "I was entirely to blame."

"I tell you—"

The section lieutenant stepped between them. On his face was a grin.

"Don't start it all over again," he said.

"You'll be having a row over who started the other one in a minute, and we shall all be as we were before."

They both laughed. The quarrel was over.

Rammed.

THE following month's manoeuvres were of a more responsible nature. The cadets had to put a chaser barrier across the mouth of the Chesapeake River, some fifteen miles wide, and sent out five submarines that had been kept specially from the West Atlantic Fleet.

Bill and Herbert found themselves de-

tailed to Submarine-chaser SC7, where they had to put into practice what they had learnt concerning four-inch semi-automatics—guns that could pump out high-explosive projectiles weighing sixty pounds each at the rate of thirty-seven rounds a minute. It was the most deadly weapon up to ranges of seven thousand yards that the Navy possessed.

The SC7 had not been out for more than an hour before the shout came, "Periscope on the port quarter, sir!" from the look-out. The lieutenant on the bridge promptly settled down behind the range-finder.

"Four thousand five hundred yards!" he shouted into the gun telegraphs. "Deflection one five right."

There was a clatter of feet as the ammunition hoists brought a supply of blank charges to the level of the deck, and the gun crews tensed themselves for the one order they wanted.

"Add two hundred!" came over the telegraphs. "One six right!" There was silence while the range was being corrected. "Port number one—fire!"

The immediate response was a spurt of cordite flame as the gun roared. Almost before the sound had died down the breech closed over another round.

"Steady at four thousand seven hundred, one six right!" the lieutenant went on. He looked down at the gleaming guns beneath him, and saw that all was in order. "Independent!"

There was a shattering roar as four guns broke into life simultaneously, their crews throwing themselves with zest into seeing how much ammunition they could get rid of before the order came to stop. The gunlayers, telepads over their ears, strained for the next word of command.

The light craft began to rock under the force of the firing, while aeroplanes

hovered overhead watching the progress of the battle in order that their observers could judge whether the attackers or the defenders were winning.

Suddenly the submarine at which they had been firing disappeared beneath the surface.

"Check!" shouted the lieutenant, and it was repeated by the gunlayers.

The breechworkers drew out the safety handles, and the guns relapsed into silence. Almost at once the buzzer in the wireless cabin could be heard working.

A few tense seconds passed, and the operator handed to the lieutenant a slip.

"Not that time," the slip ran. "He dived and eluded you."

"Shucks," said Bill, when the message was made known to the crews. "I reckon we had him easily with our last five rounds. What do you say, Herbert?"

Herbert, who had been in charge of the sights, shifted one of his telepads.

"Sure we had him," he replied enthusiastically. "If we had been using real ammunition instead of blanks, we'd have smashed in his conning-tower like an eggshell. I reckon that umpire in the 'plane doesn't know what he's talking about."

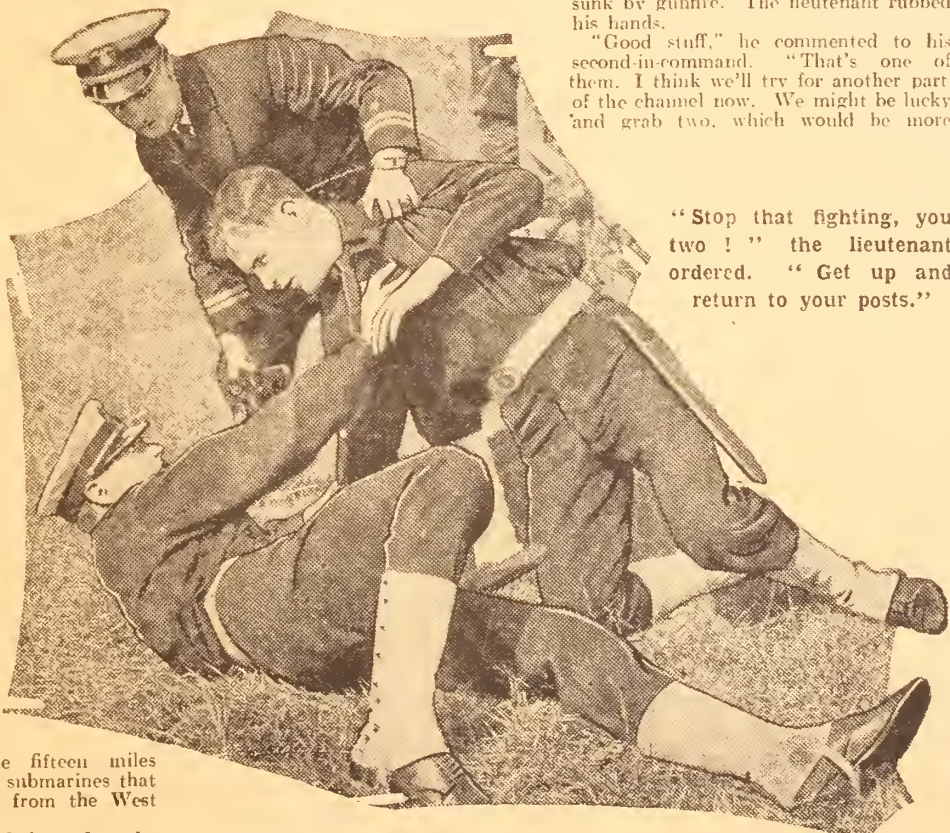
"Change stations!" came the order.

Bill and Herbert at once left their posts and made their way to the bridge. During the course of the day they had to take a spell at every task on the vessel, and this time they had been assigned to navigation. Herbert took the wheel while Bill pored over the charts with a pair of dividers.

The guns began to roar once again as the submarine broke surface, and fell into silence at a message from the aeroplane that the craft had been adjudged sunk by gunfire. The lieutenant rubbed his hands.

"Good stuff," he commented to his second-in-command. "That's one of them. I think we'll try for another part of the channel now. We might be lucky and grab two, which would be more

"Stop that fighting, you two!" the lieutenant ordered. "Get up and return to your posts."



than the others can do." He turned to Bill. "Set a course for Hooper Strait. We'll investigate the shallows off Bloodworth Island. One of them is sure to try to get through close to the shore."

"Yes, sir," replied Bill, and promptly set to work with dividers and parallel rulers. Presently he turned to Herbert. "North seventy-three degrees east!" he said in his best professional voice.

"North seventy-three degrees east!" repeated Herbert concisely, and began to ease off the chaser to its new direction. Suddenly, as if he had been struck with an idea, he looked over at the chart. "Hi, isn't that wrong, Bill?" he asked in ordinary tones. "I reckon we're not more than ten miles away from Cedar Point, and we've been going south forty-five east. The course should be very nearly due east, shouldn't it?"

Bill consulted the chart again and shook his head.

"No. According to the last D.R. position, what I said was right."

"Independent!" roared the lieutenant, spotting another periscope on the horizon.

"You're wrong!" snapped Herbert, and left the wheel to see for himself.

The SC7 careered on, the eyes that were supposed to keep it safely on its course looking elsewhere. Its engines throbbed steadily, its guns roared almost without cessation, and faintly above it all came the buzzing from the wireless cabin next to the bridge.

"Check!" the lieutenant shouted as the submarine dived.

The guns became silent, and almost simultaneously with the stopping of the noise came a horror-struck shout from beneath the bows of the vessel.

"What was that?" whispered the lieutenant, suddenly turning pale.

"Heavens, I believe we've—" He leapt to the engine-room telegraph. "Stop port and starboard!"

There was a gentle thud, and the shouting ceased. Then came the crisp order from forward: "Sea boat's crew!" The falls began to run out through the davit-blocks as a small cutter slipped downwards and rested itself on the surface of the water.

"We've rammed a small dinghy, sir," said the bosun, running up from the deck. "It's a pleasure craft with a man and a girl in it."

"Anyone hurt?"

"No, sir. Both saved. Their craft is sunk, though."

The lieutenant wheeled round on Herbert wrathfully. In his eye was an angry gleam.

"What were you doing at the time of the collision, Cadet Luff?" he asked.

"Looking at the charts, sir," replied Herbert.

"That was deliberate disobedience of orders!" the lieutenant snapped. "You know quite well that you are not allowed to take your eyes off the sea ahead while at the wheel. You might have killed everyone on this chaser if it had been a rock we'd hit. Report yourself under arrest when you get back, and remain in your quarters until defaulters' parade to-morrow."

"Very well, sir," Herbert said, and looked away as the lieutenant went to make his apologies to the victims of his carelessness.

The Commencement Ball.

BILL, this is perfectly rotten!" Herbert said when they met in cabin number forty-six a day

later. He looked from his friend to two others standing by—Skeeter and Bulge, so called because the one was thin and the other fat. "Can't you fellows think up something?"

Bill shook his head. "No," he replied. "Absolutely nothing. You can't break open arrest."

"But, hang it all, man, to-night there's the Commencement Ball, and Betty's coming down specially for it." Herbert looked out of the window miserably. "She's—we're as good as engaged, and—" He broke off awkwardly. "Well, you can see how it is," he finished.

Bill nodded, but it was quite beyond his powers to help. Herbert had been remanded for three days on a charge of wilfully deserting his post during manoeuvres, thereby causing damage to private property, and the skipper was waiting to hear how much the damage would cost before dealing with the case further.

To make matters worse, the period of remand cut across the Commencement Ball, the greatest function of the season, when the cadets were allowed to invite their friends and relatives to an all-night dance. The dance seldom lasted all night, for it is not easy to keep awake when you are used to turning in promptly at ten o'clock every night, but rules were relaxed sufficiently to make the occasion really enjoyable.

"Well, there's only one thing for it," Herbert said after a pause. "I'll have to get you three fellows to look after her for me. You can explain what's happened, and tell her that if she likes to wait until the day after to-morrow I'll be able to see her. Will you do that for me?"

"Is she good-looking?" Skeeter asked quickly.

"Here's her photograph," Herbert replied, pulling one out of his jacket pocket.

Skeeter inspected it in silence, and then handed it back. His expression was sheepish.

"Leave it all to me, old man," he said. "I'll stick to her like glue all evening."

"Fine!" said Herbert. He turned to Bill. "Perhaps you'll take over her mother for me. She's not a had old girl, even if she does talk a lot."

"But—" Bill began.

"Thanks so much. I knew you would."

Bill mumbled something and went away. He could not exactly call himself a success where ladies were concerned, and he was not too cheerful about having to act as escort to one that was probably close on fifty.

Anyway, he would do what he could. After all, it was darned hard luck that Herbert should be confined to his quarters, and the least a pal could do was to put things right with his future mother-in-law.

Bill changed into his dress uniform immediately after morning watch and took the early train to a neighbouring town to have some films developed. He just managed to catch the four o'clock train back again, which would bring him into Annapolis an hour before the festivities were due to commence.

He walked down the aisle of the pull man and saw one vacant seat some paces away. Next to it was a girl.

Bill drew in his breath sharply. Her head was almost in profile as she looked out of the window at the passing scenery, and her sheer beauty almost knocked him dizzy. He stood staring at her in astonishment, hardly believ-

ing that such a glorious creature could be human.

Then he pulled himself up sharply and recollected that he was standing in the middle of a crowded car looking a perfect ass. Summoning his courage, he went to the vacant seat and sat down by her side.

The next ten minutes he spent in thinking out all kinds of devices for attracting her attention and opening up conversation. Each scheme seemed a good one until he came to try to put it into effect. Then his courage failed him completely.

He was just evolving the details of his eleventh idea when she suddenly turned.

"This is the right train for Annapolis, isn't it?" she asked. "I heard somebody behind me say that it stopped at a place called Eastport."

"Yes—er—yes!"

He cursed his tongue for having suddenly developed a tendency to cleave to the roof of his mouth.

She turned her deep blue eyes on him as if he were a new kind of lunatic.

"You don't seem very sure," she said gently.

"I am. Believe me, I am." He spoke quickly now, anxious to set her mind at rest. "You see, Eastport is the next station beyond Annapolis, and it is the terminus. I am at Annapolis myself, so I know."

"Thank you."

She turned away, interested in the scenery again. Bill tugged at his collar as if it were choking him, and ventured another remark.

"It's a nice place. Annapolis, I mean. Ever been there before?"

"Yes," the girl replied, not turning her head. "I arrived there this morning."

Bill suddenly had an idea.

"I say, you're not going to the Commencement Ball at the Naval Academy, are you?" he asked hesitatingly. "I mean, I'm at the academy myself, and if you will be there I'd like to book you for a dance." He paused, expecting a reply. When none came he blundered on: "It's frightful cheek, I know, but I—well, I thought perhaps—"

She turned round so quickly that he almost fell off his seat.

"What?" she asked.

"Eh?"

He blinked at her surprisedly.

"What did you think?"

Bill summoned the last of his will-power and prepared for immediate extermination.

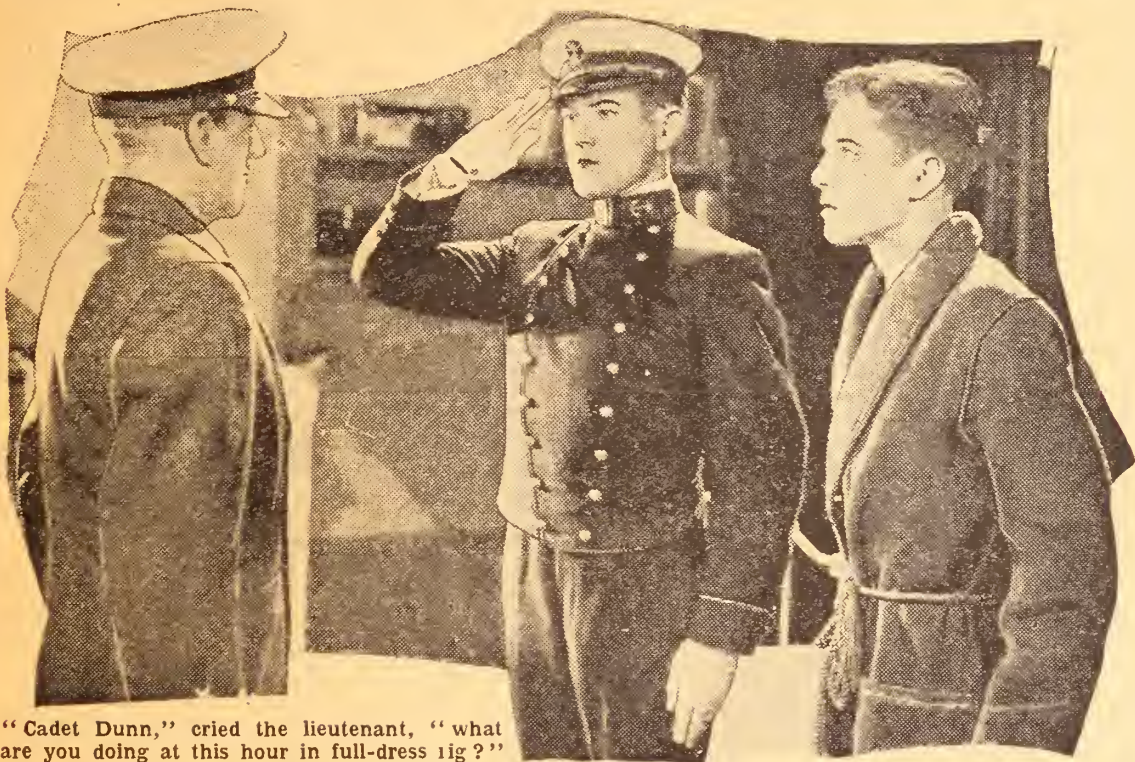
"I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind my asking you, seeing that I shall be introduced to you at the ball, anyway," he explained. "You see, when all the other fellows spot you, I'm likely to get crowded out. That's why I want to fix something now."

She smiled, and her eyes danced provocatively.

"I haven't said I'm going yet," she said. "But I am, of course." She looked at him and hastily averted her head. "Why did you say you would be crowded out?" she continued softly.

"Because—because—" Bill gulped convulsively. "Well, because you're so wonderful. That's why." He became defiant now that the bridge was crossed. "The brutes will simply swarm all over you. Anybody would. If I thought you'd agree, I'd ask you for every dance on the programme."

She turned away to the window once again, and for some time neither of them said anything more. It was not until the brakes were grinding on the



"Cadet Dunn," cried the lieutenant, "what are you doing at this hour in full-dress rig?"

wheels and the guard was coming down the car calling "Annapolis next!" that she spoke.

And all she said was:

"I'll give you two dances, and you shall take me into supper."

Bill wandered back to the academy in a dream. He seemed to be walking, and yet was not conscious of the fact. Once only did he wake up, and that was to hear the bad language of a taxi-driver who had narrowly missed him as he stepped off the kerb without looking.

He got it this time. It was a ease of love at first sight—so complete and overwhelming that as he walked he made plans for redoubling his energies towards becoming Admiral of the Fleet, and worked out a convincing proposal of marriage that he intended to use that same evening.

On the stroke of seven he stood by the door waiting for her to come in. His dress kit was faultless, and his gloves—an essential part of his uniform—were spotlessly white.

He saw her in the crowd and started forward to meet her. Then he observed with considerable disappointment that she was with none other than Skeeter. He drew back quickly.

"Hallo, Bill," Skeeter greeted, spotting him. "Waiting for Mrs. Allen?"

"No!" Bill snapped between his teeth. "Come over here. I've got something to say to you."

Skeeter bowed elaborately to his partner.

"Will you excuse me a moment, Miss Allen?" he said. "My friend wants me!"

"Who is she?" Bill demanded, when they were out of earshot. "Come on. Out with it!"

Skeeter looked at him with an ironical expression and then grinned. He made a warning gesture.

"Stand off," he advised. "She is not for you, Don Juan. Her name is Betty Allen, and she is as good as

engaged to Herbert. He told us so himself, and he ought to know."

Bill held his hand to his head dazedly. "She's Betty Allen," he mumbled. "But I met her on the train this afternoon. She's promised me two dances, and she's going to let me take her in to supper."

"Maybe," Skeeter retorted. "But she's still Betty Allen all the same. And let me tell you this, my lad. She has been entrusted to my fatherly care, and I want no funny business. Keep off!"

"You'd better be getting back to her," said Bill, suddenly very quiet. "She won't like standing about too long."

They sauntered to the doorway of the ball-room once more, and to Skeeter's intense annoyance she had already gone.

"Some other blighter's got her!" he growled. His eyes swept the crowd of couples. "Yes, there she is. It's that confounded Bulge. You wait until I get hold of him. I'll pound his fat carcass to ribbons!"

But Bill was not listening. He had quietly slipped out into the open air.

The Quarrel.

IT was a long time before he ventured back into the ball-room again. The discovery that the girl he had met on the train was Betty Allen had hit him harder than he first realised.

He had never before been in love, and somehow he had thought that she was the sister of one of the cadets. In fact, he had taken it for granted. As a matter of course, he had allowed himself to weave all kinds of dreams about her, seeing in her a girl worth working for and fighting for.

And then Skeeter, in all innocence, had dropped his bombshell. She was as good as engaged to Herbert, which meant that she was in love with him, and only waiting for a formal announcement that they were to be married.

It almost knocked Bill over. His intense, sincere nature would never allow

him to treat such things lightly, and he saw at once that all the plans that were half-formed in his brain were futile. She belonged to Herbert, and that was the end of the matter.

As he walked into the crowded room again Bulge immediately sought him out.

"I say, Bill. Betty's been asking for you," he said. "She says that you booked two dances with her, and she is wondering which ones you want." He prodded Bill in the chest. "You miserable brute, you deserve to have them cancelled. She's flatly refused to make up her engagement card more than one dance ahead in case you showed up. Jolly decent of her, I reckon. If it had been me I'd have cut you right out."

"You mean it, Bulge?" Bill said incredulously. "She's been keeping those dances for me all this time?"

"She has," Bulge replied. "Get to it, my lad."

Bill got to it.

He found her in an alcove by one of the windows, fanning herself and looking a little flushed.

"Hallo, Miss Allen!" he said, by way of opening a conversation. "I must apologise for running off earlier in the evening, but I had to—to go out somewhere."

She smiled at him, and motioned him to sit by her side.

"What a shame!" she said. "The two boys who have been dancing with me up to now have been telling me all about you. You're Herbert's friend. What a coincidence that we should have met in the train this afternoon!"

"Have you seen him?" Bill asked, not quite sure of his position.

"Who? Herbert?" She shook her head. "No, but I expect I shall later on. He sent a message to say that he had been detailed for duty at the last moment and was unable to get away."

Bill nodded thoughtfully. It was what he wanted to hear. So long as he knew what yarn Herbert had told, there was no fear of him saying anything which would upset it.

"What about those two dances?" he said. "I don't really deserve them, of course, but I'd like them all the same." "You shall have them," she replied. "Let us stop here for a little while, though. I feel so hot."

They chatted idly for a while, and were later joined by an elderly woman. "This is mother," Betty explained. "She knows you you are, too. Mother, this is Mr. Dunn, Herbert's friend."

"Mr. Dunn?" Mrs. Allen's hand went out in warm welcome. "I'm so glad to meet you. Herbert has mentioned you in his letters to Betty quite often, and I knew you must be very nice. Betty, dear, we must have him over to tea to-morrow afternoon. I expect Herbert will still be on duty, but he won't mind. They're such good friends."

Bill intervened tactfully. The last thing he wanted was to prolong his friendship with the Allens.

"I really don't think I ought to," he said awkwardly. "You see, I have such a lot to do, and—"

Betty looked at him with pleading eyes.

"Please," she begged.

Bill had no more to say. He just nodded, his hands clenched to keep himself from taking hold of her then and there and telling her what he felt.

At four the following afternoon he presented himself at their hotel. Mrs. Allen kept him to herself for the first three hours, talking incessantly about her troubles and her family until Bill could have cheerfully murdered her. Suddenly, as if she had exhausted all her gossip, she stopped.

"Well, I mustn't keep you any longer," she finished, as if she had been talking to him for only a few minutes. "I must run along to have my hair done. But don't go yet. Talk to Betty for a little while. Take her out into the garden—it will be nice in the twilight."

Bill couldn't get out of it. Dumbly he offered Betty his arm and led her through the windows that opened on to the lawn.

When they were out of sight from the hotel she led him down a short pathway to a seat. They sat down, he edging awkwardly away from her.

She turned so that she could see his face.

"Tell me, Mr. Dunn, is Herbert really on duty, or has something happened which won't allow him to leave the grounds of the academy?"

"He's on duty," Bill said loyally.

"But surely no duties last more than four hours at a time, do they?" she persisted, and Bill realised that she had been making inquiries.

"Well, no," he admitted, his brain trying to evolve some excuse. "But, you see, this—is this a very special kind. It's—it's rather important in its way. He'd come if he could."

She nodded as if she understood. All the time her eyes were fixed on his.

"Of course, I know he wouldn't stop away if he could help it," she went on. "But, you see, I know him so well. He's always getting into trouble of some sort, and I thought perhaps that might be the explanation now. He's a bit of a coward, too." She sighed. "I wish he would be more careful. I wish he were like you sometimes."

Bill's head span round dizzily. Her last sentence had been spoken so softly, and it had come so suddenly, that he had been taken off his guard.

"Why like me?" he asked unsteadily. "Why not like somebody else?"

"Because you are—" She paused, her head lowered. Something in the night air seemed to be casting a spell over them, taking them away from the February 15th, 1930.

world around them and leaving them in an eternity of their own. Neither seemed to be aware of the danger ahead.

She looked up again and faced him. Bill thought he saw in her the same mental processes that he had experienced on the train.

"Because you are not like the others," she said. "When you first met me you didn't try to make yourself objectionable. In fact, I've had an idea that you tried to avoid me last evening. You did, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

Bill hardly knew the question had been asked. He was not even listening for it.

"Because I loved you from the moment I first met you," he replied without stopping to think what he was saying. He moved nearer, and held out his hands. "Betty, I'm sorry if I've made myself seem a rotter to you, but I just couldn't help it. I don't think I've ever met anyone quite like you before, and you sort of bowled me over." He looked away. "Of course, you'll never want to see me any more. I've made love to you when you are already in love with Herbert. I think I'll go."

He attempted to rise, but she laid her hand on his—gently, but with quiet restraint.

"I was in love with Herbert once, but not now," she whispered. "I came down here to tell him. That's why I asked you all those questions about his duty just now. I thought perhaps he knew that I would tell him everything was ended and was avoiding me."

"And you—you—"

Bill did not need to ask the question. One look, and he knew that she cared for him in return. Quickly he took her in his arms and crushed her close. His lips were pressed on hers.

A voice cut through the silence.

"So that's your game, is it, Bill Dunn?"

It was Herbert!

They sprang apart, and Betty turned away while Bill faced his friend.

"I thought something of the sort was going on," Herbert pursued angrily. "Bulge told me that you had come over here, and I guessed it was to see Betty." His eyes gleamed with cold fury. "When you first came here I told you you were a rotten cur. Well, I'm telling you it again."

"Herbert!" It was Betty who spoke. She spun round furiously. "How dare you speak to Bill like that! Apologise at once."

"Apologise, be hanged!" He clenched his fists, and brought one of them across Bill's face suddenly. There was nothing serious in the blow, except that it hurt Bill's pride. He tensed his muscles to spring.

Betty's hand fell on his arm.

"Leave it to me, Bill," she said quietly. "I can deal with him. Go back now, and come in the morning."

Bill relaxed. He knew what Herbert was going to hear, and did not want to make things worse for him.

"All right," he said. "I'll hang around for a little while until you go in, and then I'll clear off."

He hurried away, and as he walked rapidly towards the veranda where he could wait and watch without overhearing, their angry voices followed him.

A Blow in the Dark.

BULGE and Skeeter stood in the corridor outside their cabins, and on their faces were expressions of anxiety.

"What did he do it for?" Skeeter asked. "If he's not back by stand-to, he'll be for the high jump. I reckon they'll withdraw his training warrant and send him back home. It's no joke breaking arrest."

"Ho's always like that," Bulge replied. "He wouldn't be Herbert Luff if he wasn't in trouble. The bother is, he's got such a rotten temper, and a rotten mind goes with it. When he asked me where Bill was, and I told him he had gone across to tea with Betty and her mother, he walked up and down like a caged lion. He did that for two hours solid, remember. Then he suddenly started to get into his outdoor rig. I was jolly thankful when he had gone, I can tell you. I had a lot of prep. to do for old Hallam, and a fellow can't concentrate on curved trig when anybody's stumping all over the room and making an infernal row."

"Let's go to your cabin and wait," Skeeter suggested.

"Right. Come on!"

They went inside and made themselves comfortable. For a while neither of them spoke.

"I suppose this will mean more trouble between them both," Skeeter began suddenly. "The old grudge is sure to come up."

Bulge shrugged his shoulders.

"A lot I care. Anyway, Bill is a decent fellow, and it would be a good thing if a topping girl like Betty chucked Herbert ever. He's not her sort."

Skeeter glanced at his watch.

"Ten minutes to rounds," he said. "There'll be trouble if he don't hurry. By the way, I wonder if Bill's in yet. I'll go and look." He went across the corridor, and when he returned his face bore a troubled look. "No, by gosh. He's not. I hope they haven't had a fight and messed each other up."

Meanwhile out in the grounds all was still, except for the guard who patrolled to see that everything was in order.

Suddenly he stopped as he saw a figure climbing the wall over the western gate. Quickly he leaned his bicycle against a tree and began to hurry in the direction of the intruder.

It was Herbert. He had stayed quarrelling with Betty and her mother until long after the closing time of the gates, and he was doing his best to get in unobserved.

He dropped from the top of the wall to the ground, and began to move towards the buildings, keeping well under cover of some shrubbery. Suddenly he paused and looked round as Bill, following him closely, scrambled to the top of the wall behind him.

While he was still watching, the guard reached him.

"Now, then, young man, you're out after time," the guard said. "Turn round and let me see who you are."

Herbert almost froze where he stood. He was under open arrest, and this would mean expulsion. Then suddenly he realised that the guard did not know his name, and in the darkness would never recognise him from the back.

Swiftly, his whole safety depending on a desperate move, he swung round and crashed his fist into the guard's face. The old man staggered back and fell. Before he could get to his feet, Herbert was gone.

The guard mounted his bicycle and rode back to the office. He reached it just before the officer of the watch set out on his rounds, and hurriedly related what had happened.

(Continued on page 26.)

A gripping story of two chums, parted through the Great War, and how, after many horrors, they were united in Peace. Starring Ralph Forbes and Ralph Emerson.

"The ENEMY"



The War Menace.

BRUCE GORDON stood, his eyes glittering with excitement, watching the big crowd which milled about the bulletin board posted outside the café. Men were jostling one another, students from the university to which Bruce belonged, were climbing on each other's backs to read the latest news.

Heavy black lettering read:

**"SERBIA REJECTS OUR
ULTIMATUM; and
DECLARATION OF WAR
IMMINENT!"**

Shouts sounded on the air, and suddenly the struggling crowd quietened as, through the uproar, there came the steady tramp of marching feet.

A company of soldiers were passing the café gardens, and Bruce leaped on to a barrel to watch them go. Beyond the moving men showed the grey, ancient stone walls of the University of Vienna, at which he was a student. They were breaking up, to-day, and Bruce was duo soon to journey home to England for the holidays.

Those old walls had seen knights in mail and armor riding to wars, now they looked on warriors of a later day. The afternoon sunshine caught the steely glitter of bayonets, and shone on the smooth barrels of rifles. The men wore full fighting equipment, overcoats rolled above their packs, pouches heavy with ammunition.

They marched steadily, hobnails clumping the cobbled surface of the road, with crowds blocking the footways, cheering them towards the train which would rush them south to the frontier. Ahead, a band blared martial music, and the sound of it set the blood leaping in Bruce's veins.

"It'll be war, Bruce!" A voice called below him, and a moment later, Carl Behrend leaped to the barrel-top and stood watching at his side.

Bruce and Carl were friends. They were the same size, broad-shouldered and clear-eyed. They were always together, closer than brothers in their friendship.

"Shall you have to go, if it is?" Bruce asked, as the last of the glittering, grim bayonets passed.

"Yes, of course!" Carl laughed, his eyes alight. "I'm an Austrian, and we're all soldiers. If we really declare war, I'll be called up. I'll have to fight—and that'll be better than studying at the university!"

"War, eh?" Bruce drove one fist into the palm of the other at the thought of it. "Gosh, I shall envy you! If England went to war, I'd have to volunteer before I'd be accepted as a soldier."

"And you'd volunteer, wouldn't you?" Carl asked.

"You bet!" Bruce exclaimed. "I say, if you have to go, couldn't I soldier with you?" They dropped off the barrel, and stood looking at one another. "I mean, we've been friends so long." Bruce went on. "We might as well fight together, if there's to be any fighting."

"That would be fine!" Carl reached for his hand, and they gripped. "But we'll wait until I'm called up first and—"

He broke off. The students in the café gardens had returned from the street, and now they were grouping about the grey-haired figure of old Professor Arndt, the most popular in the university—and father of someone whom Bruce regarded as the prettiest girl in all Vienna.

The professor mounted a box. Always before the class completely broke up, he made a little speech, wishing the fellows a good time during the holidays and thanking them for their expressions of goodwill.

Bruce and Carl joined the crowd, pushing to the front, and heard the old professor saying:

"Boys, we are living in exciting days, and they say that war will be on us in a matter of hours! Well, war is a very dreadful thing, and I trust that its horrors will not touch any of you or—"

That was about all that Bruce and Carl heard, because both

saw the professor's daughter, Pauli, sitting on another box near her father. She was very beautiful, with her hair caught in ringlets, wearing a frock that was all filmy—the kind of frock that only a captivating Viennese girl could wear.

She smiled at the boys, and Bruce held her eyes. He saw her lift one finger and motion gently, while her lips formed the words:

"The tree—now!"

Bruce's heart jumped. He had been in love with Pauli for a long time—and he knew what she meant. "She was saying that she would slip away to a tree at the back of the grounds, and meet him there."

He glanced at Carl. His friend was smiling as he looked at Pauli, and Bruce took his chance to ease back through the crowd. He had a glimpse of Pauli running in the direction of the tree. It was a big, spreading oak, with a circular seat round its base, and he came up to the seated girl on tip-toe.

He heard the distant band blaring as it escorted the company of soldiers to the war, and the cheering of the crowds that lined the streets. War and excitement was in the air, but it was not this which made his blood race now.

He saw Pauli's hand resting on the edge of the seat, and she jumped a little as his fingers closed over it. She did not look up at him, but he saw the smile which curved her shapely lips.

"Pauli!" he whispered. She turned her head quickly then. Her eyes widened and her smile died. "Oh—h—you?" she breathed. "I meant—"

"Pauli, I saw you beckon to me!" Bruce exclaimed. "You're wonderful! I—Pauli, I love you! I've—"

He checked as she drew her hand away. "But—but I didn't mean you, Bruce!" she said. "I wanted—Carl! Didn't you know, we've loved one another ever since we were kiddies? I didn't

think you—that you—” She stared at him. “Oh, I like you awfully, I don’t want to hurt you, but there’ll never be anyone for me, except Carl!”

Bruce’s smile died. He looked at her, then grinned a little. It hurt him to do that. He alone knew how often he had dreamed of this moment, when he would tell Pauli how deep was his regard, and he had never even guessed that Carl meant anything to her.

“That’s—all right,” he said jerkily. “So Carl’s the lucky fellow, eh?”

“He was standing next to you when I beckoned,” she said.

“And I thought you wanted me?” Bruce laughed. “I’ll find him and send him to you.”

“We’ve arranged a betrothal party,” she said breathlessly. “He wants you to be his best man when we’re married and—”

“I’ll be honoured!” Bruce exclaimed. “Look, I’ll find him and send him to you now. Forget what I just said, Pauli. Carl’s my best friend—and I’m glad it’s him!”

She caught his hand and pressed it a moment, then he turned and hurried back towards the café gardens.

“I was a silly ass to imagine that she’d ever think anything of me,” he told himself. “Anyway, it’s—Carl!” He called suddenly as he saw his chum coming towards him. “Pauli’s by the tree,” Bruce said. “And congratulations, old man! I never even guessed there was anything between you two!”

“Well, we were keeping it a secret,” Carl said. “We’ll be having a party in a few days, and we were going to announce it then.”

Bruce gripped his hand warmly, then pushed him on towards the tree where Pauli waited, and it was as Carl went that Bruce heard a sudden cheer from around the bulletin board. He ran forward, and he was in time to see a notice pasted up there:

“AUSTRIA DECLARES WAR ON SERBIA.”

Bruce did not know it, but in that moment he was watching the start of the greatest war in all the history of the world, a war which was to set France and Russia and Germany, Italy, Rumania, and America in arms, while England, too, was to fling her steely might into the great conflict which started in those summer days of 1914.

The First Blood.

A ROOM was decorated at Pauli’s home, and the table was laden with good things. Pauli was there in a pretty frock, and the old professor was wearing his best suit.

It was the afternoon of the party when Pauli and Carl were to become officially engaged. Carl’s father came—a big, bearded man who was as cunning as any in Vienna in matters of business.

There was Fritz Winkelmann, too, due to be called up with Carl some time soon, now that Austrian gunners were hammering in Serbian territory, shattering the roofs and ploughing up the streets of old Belgrade, the capital of the enemy country.

Through the open window came the hum of the excited city, the roll of drums and the stamp of marching feet as more and more soldiers poured southwards to meet the enemy.

Germany had come into it and had declared war on Russia, allying herself with Carl’s country. England had already declared war on Germany, who was at hostilities with France; but, as yet, England and Austria were not at enemy.

February 15th, 1930.

On the wall hung a photograph which Bruce had long ago given to Pauli. Two or three days before Carl had draped a little Union Jack around the frame, and the flag formed a splash of colour.

The door slammed open and Bruce entered, bringing presents for the two. “The street’s packed outside!” he called. “Some of the Guards have just gone off; they’re bound for Russia, to fight there! The people are wild with excitement.”

“I’m expecting to be called up any day now!” Winkelmann exclaimed. He was a thick-set fellow with pale blue eyes and a stiff back of a student who had already put in his peace-time military service. “My uniform’s all ready!”

“So is mine. I was brushing it this morning!” Carl said, as he shook hands with Bruce. “And are you coming into our army, or are you going over to fight for England against Germany?”

“I don’t know yet,” Bruce told him. “I suppose I shall have to go home.”

“We are Germany’s allies,” Winkelmann said. “What will happen if England declares war against us?”

“Oh, rot! That’ll never happen!” Bruce told him.

“If it did, we’d be enemies!” Carl exclaimed, and he wrung Bruce’s hand again as he laughed. “Enemies! Ha, ha, ha!”

Bruce threw back his head and laughed, too.

“That’d be a good joke!” he half yelled, as he clapped his friend on the back. “Well, it’d take more than a war to make us bad friends, Carl!”

“Don’t let’s talk about war!” Pauli broke in. “It makes me feel all cold! Sit down everybody, and let’s have a good time!”

In a little while the party was going forward. Pauli’s new engagement-ring flashed as the sunshine caught the glimmer of the diamonds set in it. Bruce took her hand and looked at it, but he wasn’t jealous of Carl’s good fortune.

He himself loved Pauli just as much as ever, but he was a sportsman and a good loser. Presently he lifted his glass and stood up.

“I can’t make a speech,” he said, “but I just want to wish Pauli and Carl all the happiness there is in the world. Carl’s always been my friend. Once when we were skating in the Stadt Park and the ice broke I’d have been drowned if he hadn’t hauled me out—”

“And who got me clear of the university fire?” Carl broke in. “Eh? Who climbed up the rainwater pipe and found me unconscious from the smoke and got me out, and was three weeks in hospital because of his burns?”

“That was Bruce!” Pauli cut in. “You two have saved one another’s lives!”

“That doesn’t matter, anyway!” Bruce said. “Well, the best of luck to both of you!”

He raised his glass just as there came a furious burst of cheering in a nearby square. They heard people shouting as they ran along the street below. Somewhere a band struck up the National Anthem, and it sounded as though ten thousand fervent voices raised with the song.

“More excitement,” Bruce said, as he sat down. “I suppose it’s much the same at home, if we’re getting ready to fight Germany.”

“I heard that your British troops had already been in action,” Winkelmann said across the table. “And a man told

me this morning that war will be declared between our two countries—not that it’ll make any difference to us here!”

“We’ll never be enemies!” Carl laughed at Bruce. “It—”

He checked as the telephone bell strummed suddenly. Winkelmann was nearest, and he rose to answer it. They heard him saying:

“Hallo! No, this is Winkelmann. Yes; d’you want to speak to him? I can give— What?”

They saw his expression change suddenly as he listened to the words that came over the wire; then he hung up the receiver and turned to face them.

“The news has just come through,” he said. “That’s what all the cheering outside is about. *England has declared war on us!*”

“What!”

Bruce jerked from his seat. Every eye in the room was on him now, and he suddenly realised something which had never occurred to him before. He was the only Englishman in the house—all the rest were Austrians.

“I knew it would come!” Winkelmann said, and Carl’s father spoke.

“England has always been jealous of our commerce,” he said. “She’d play any dirty trick to make herself more powerful!”

“You’re wrong there!” Bruce leaned across the table. “We’ve been forced into this. Germany invaded Belgium, and we had to defend that little country. If you people are Germany’s allies, then we—”

“England didn’t have to interfere!” Carl leaned across Pauli as he spoke to Bruce. “England’s out to get more power!”

“We’ve got all the power we want; we’re only defending the weak and helpless!” Bruce spun to him, and they glared at one another across the girl. “You’re siding with Germany; she’s jealous of us and our trade; that’s at the bottom of the war!”

“And now you’re declaring war suddenly on us for no reason at all!” Carl ripped. “You—”

“Don’t—don’t!” Pauli pressed them away from one another as she rose to her feet. “What’s it got to do with us, anyhow? We’re all friends here!”

“We may be. But there’s an enemy flag in this house!”

Winkelmann lifted a quivering finger and pointed to the Union Jack which draped Bruce’s photograph. Carl thrust his chair back as he saw it, then strode towards the wall. Instantly Bruce barred his path.

“What are you going to do?”

“Tear that down!” Carl answered, and his eyes were glaring.

“That’s my country’s flag, and you’ll leave it alone!”

“It’s an enemy flag, and it’s coming down!” Carl rasped, and he leaped for it as he spoke.

He snatched it from the frame, gripping the fabric in his hands and starting to tear it to shreds. For a moment Bruce stared at him.

An Austrian was tearing the Union Jack before his eyes! The flag for which his forefathers had fought, the flag on which the sun never set, the flag which stood for freedom. His country’s flag!

He jumped at Carl, snatching it from him, for Carl’s fist to swing madly and land high on Bruce’s cheek. Bruce’s own right swung, and an instant later Carl was staggering backwards, to crash against the table.

“I won’t stand that!” he half snarled. “No cursed Englishman can hit me!”

His clutching fingers wrapped about the haft of a knife, and it shone in a steely arc as he raised it and rushed again.

Pauli half screamed, while Bruce leaped to meet his opponent, vainly trying to block the slashing blade. Something that felt like the sear of red-hot iron jagged across his wrist, and he reeled away, then stood close against the wall, still gripping the flag, while blood from the wound in his wrist soaked down to its folds.

Carl had stopped dead, with the now-stained knife still half raised.

He and all the others were staring as though petrified at the blood trickling down Bruce's fingers and dripping to the floor.

All the colour had gone from Bruce's face now. He looked at his wound—and at the first blood shed after the declaration of war!

He straightened up, and stared around the room.

One Englishman, with his own flag soaking his spilled blood, facing a group of Austrians—a group of enemies!

His voice came, shaking:

"And five minutes ago we were all friends!"

The World at War.

PAULI bound up Bruce's wound, while the others stood around, silent. Outside the excited crowd was singing, cheering, and roaring their defiance to England.

The hard, cruel spirit of war itself seemed to have entered the room, where the decorations on the walls, the feast on the table, and Pauli's pretty dress were in strong, ruthless contrast to the little pool of blood on the carpet and the bandage about Bruce's wrist.

The knife lay where Carl had now dropped it, its bright steel tarnished.

"You can get out of this house as soon as you like!" Carl said, when Pauli stepped away.

"No, no! There's no need for that!" Pauli gasped.

"What has come over you two?" the old professor's voice broke in. "Until that telephone message came, you were friends—like brothers. Now one of you has tried to kill the other—all because of a little bit of tinted cloth over a photograph."

"It's my country's flag, sir!" Bruce told him.

"And it's the flag of my country's enemy!" Carl cut in.

"And so you two—friends—must spill blood!" said the professor. "You young fools, what does—"

He broke off. Out in the street below came a deep, growling sound, made up of cheers and curses and maledictions. It was a wild, deep-throated roar which surged closer and closer, and took Pauli to the window. She looked out.

"There's a crowd downstairs, following

some soldiers. They've got prisoners! They're coming here!" Pauli cried. "They've stopped outside, and two are coming in! They're after you, Bruce!"

Bruce leaped from the window and snatched up a chair.

"Then I'll fight before they take me!" he shouted. "If I'm your enemy, Carl, start in now! Come on—all of you! I'll show you how an Englishman can scrap!"

"Don't be a fool!" Carl gasped. "We'll get you away. You can escape and get back to your own country. I'll do that much for you because you were my friend. Out through the back window and down on to the shed roof—you can jump it!"

"Yes, Bruce—go!" Pauli swung to him. "Don't let them make you a prisoner—and don't fight! Oh, you're mad, all of you! Get away—they're coming up the stairs!"

Carl wrenched open the door of the other room. Winkelmann ran through it and slammed open the window through which Bruce could escape.

The young Englishman hesitated for a moment, then dropped the chair and started forward. Old Professor Arndt gripped his hand as he passed.

"Heaven keep you, my boy!" he said, and a moment later Bruce was checking where Carl stood by the door.

Bruce offered his hand. Carl drew himself up, his back stiff.

"I can't shake hands with—an enemy," he said.

"Then I'll come back, after the war," Bruce said.

"We'll all be the same again then!" Pauli called after him. "Good-bye, Bruce—good-bye!"

Bruce waved to her and plunged across the room, while the tramp of the mounting soldiers sounded loud on the stairs outside. As he climbed

through the window Winkelmann snarled:

"If I meet you on the battlefield, I'll give you no quarter!"

"And I shan't ask it!" Bruce laughed at him. "Good luck to you! And Carl—good luck, old man!"

"Good-bye—enemy!" came Carl's voice, and with that Bruce jumped from the window to the shed roof ten feet below. He landed safely, then scrambled off it to the little yard beyond.

There was a door in the surrounding wall, and he snatched it open, to plunge into an alley. He turned away from the crowd in the street and hurried. In a little while he was mingling with the mob in the broad boulevard of the Franzensring.

There was nothing in his dress to mark him as an Englishman, and he spoke the language well. Wild-eyed crowds were parading. He saw moving groups of soldiers surrounded by great cheering masses of people, and still more crowds were about the huge bulletin boards which now told of successes of Austrian armies on Serbian soil.

Bruce dared not go back to his rooms. Everything there he must abandon. But he had money with him, and he decided to travel south, cross the Italian border somehow, and then make his way to England.

He saw more soldiers rounding up Englishmen in the city, and when he cautiously approached a railway station he found troops on duty there, examining the papers of all who passed through the barrier.

Bruce saw that he would be unable to get aboard a train in Vienna, so he started, then and there, to tramp southward. In an hour he was clear of the city, and in a small shop he bought



Bruce leaped to meet his opponent, vainly trying to block the slashing blade.

February 15th, 1930.

bread and sausage and a raincoat, as well as a hat.

Lorries passed him, loaded with troops. Giant guns ground their way towards the frontier, and some gunners gave him a lift on a limber which followed one titanic howitzer.

They were full of how Austria and Germany would smash England between them. They themselves were bound for the raging battles in Serbia, and were full of triumph at the victories the Austrians had already gained.

They told Bruce, too, of how some Englishmen rounded up in Vienna that afternoon had been mobbed by the crowds, dragged to the Danube Canal and slung in, so that most of them were drowned. None of them suspected that they were even then talking to one of the hated British!

When the gunners camped at darkness, Bruce walked on all through the night until dawn, when he hid up in a wood and slept. He skirted the towns to which he came, travelling only by night. Everywhere people were searching for Englishmen, Frenchmen, Serbians or Russians, with all of whom Austria and Germany were at war. Such as the people found were lucky if the military ever took them over; more likely were they to be stoned until they died, or to suffer the fate of the unfortunate bunch of Britishers in Vienna—of whom, Bruce knew, he might well have been one.

He was fourteen days before he reached the Italian frontier—to find it a mass of trenches, where men stood on guard, and where barbed wire had been slung in great festoons, because the Austrians feared that Italy might come into the war, allying herself with Britain. She did later on.

Bruce lay a whole day, hidden in bushes, watching the movements of a group of Austrian sentries before him. At night, he crept forward at a point between two sentries, passed them, squirmed through the thicket of barbed wire, and an hour later he was in Italian territory, telling his story to an Italian officer who immediately gave him food, then sent him south on his journey to England.

It was on the day that Bruce reached safety that Pauli and Carl were married in Vienna. Carl had no best man; Bruce had gone—an enemy—and Winkelmann had been called up.

As Pauli and Carl came arm-in-arm from the church a regiment passed, on its way to force home Austria's invasion of Russia in the north. The troops went swinging by, rifles gleaming, boots spurning the cobbles.

But the cheers were not so hearty now. Weeping women moved in sombre groups beside their men. Casualty lists had come through; many and many a brave Viennese had fallen in the fighting. Many and many a man who now marched past would not come back.

Pauli and Carl clung to one another as they looked at the grim, grey-clad figures of the passing soldiers.

"Carl, shall you have to go?" Pauli breathed as she looked up at him.

"Not yet. They won't call me up for a long while!" Carl said. "The war won't last long enough for them to want me."

But that night, late, a soldier thumped on the door of the little flat they had taken. His fist crashed on the panels, and when Carl opened it, the man jerked to attention and saluted.

"Mobilisation order for Lieutenant Carl Behrend, sir!" the man said. "It orders you to report at dawn at headquarters February 15th, 1930.

quarters to-morrow, with full equipment, ready to move off at midnight!"

Carl took the order and closed the door.

It was a long, blue-tinted envelope, and it would tear him away from the girl he loved. He looked at the clock. It marked the hour of ten-thirty.

In seven hours he must go to the war.

In the Firing Line.

CARL'S division was attached to the German Army, to fight with them against the British. In return, a German division was sent in exchange to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Austrians against their common enemies. This was just a gesture to show how both Germany and Austria were together in the war.

While Carl, commanding a company, marched from Vienna, Bruce was racing from Italy across France and back to England, eager to get into uniform.

On his way, he had seen British wounded from the Battle of Mons. He had seen all Austria and France inflamed by war, and he realised how titanic the conflict would be. As he rode across France, he saw refugees coming in from the battle front, he heard the distant thundering of guns—a sound that was with him until he crossed the Channel.

Bruce arrived in London on the night that news came through that British troops and their French allies had driven the Germans back across the Marne, scoring a great victory.

He heard the cheering and saw the crowds. He saw two battalions of Guards marching to Waterloo to entrain for France, with bands playing and thousands lining the streets—just as they had done in Vienna.

The taxicab that took him home was held up suddenly by a titanic mass of people which abruptly swarmed, struggling and shouting, across the road, chasing some fugitive who rushed away like a wild animal.

"That's a German baker!" an excited man yelled to Bruce when he asked what was the trouble. "If they catch him they'll lynch him!" And the crowd surged on.

"That's the way they were chasing Englishmen in Vienna," Bruce thought, and he could not help feeling sympathy with the pursued man.

It was odd to think of both nations doing exactly the same thing. It was still more odd to think of his friend Carl in uniform fighting against England and her allies—but a month later Bruce himself was in uniform, a lieutenant, training for the front.

The training was long and hard, and it was a year before his battalion was sent to France, and rather more than another year before Fate decreed that Bruce's battalion should enter the line in a sector just south of Arras.

It was near Christmas. Snow clung to the thistle patches of barbed wire that marred the shell-torn stretch of No-Man's-Land. When Bruce had seen his company into position and had posted his sentries, he mounted the fire-step and looked towards the enemy lines.

He was leaner, harder and altogether tougher now. A heavy Army revolver was holstered at his belt, and his uniform was mudstained and torn. For two years the ground in front of him had been fought over, and at any moment the zone was liable to flare up into another fierce battle.

He saw the British wire ahead, a tangle of barbed strands wrapped about leaning stakes. Beyond this was the

ploughed-up earth, patched with snow, then the enemy wire, from the other side of which Very lights shot up occasionally, shedding a green-white glow which came down in ghastly fashion as it illuminated the scene around.

Still further off, Bruce could see the bluish flicker of German guns against the sky. Shells droned overhead. Now and again a rifle cracked, or the silence would be shattered by the quick, vicious stammer of a machine-gun.

Boots thudded and grated on the frost-bitten floor of the trench, and a voice called loudly:

"The colonel wants to see you, sir, in headquarters' dug-out!"

"Very good!" Bruce dropped from the fire-step and made his way along the trench. In little funk-holes men crouched over small coke-filled braziers or slept in niches hacked from the walls. The glow of bayoneted rifles, the dull, rounded shapes of steel helmets and the slender, compact masses of masked machine-guns.

Bruce picked his way down a communication trench to the support line and found the dug-out he sought. Orderlies jerked to attention when he entered it and passed through to the battalion headquarters beyond.

The colonel was sitting at a rough table, papers and two trench maps before him, while the adjutant leaned over his shoulder.

"Ah, Lieutenant Gordon, I've a job for you!" the colonel said, as Bruce saluted. "I want you to make a raid to-night."

"A raid, sir?" repeated Bruce, and his heart kicked a little in his chest.

"I want you to take half a dozen bombers, go over, bring back a couple of prisoners for identification—and start within the hour!"

"Yes, sir," answered Bruce, and the colonel eyed him levelly from under his shaggy grey brows.

"The unit which held these trenches before us," the colonel explained, "took a prisoner who said that his regiment was to be relieved by battalions from some crack Austrian division. We've heard about some Austrian troops being in this part of the front, and I want, if possible, to find out just who they are. As you were in Vienna before the war you'll know something about them, and you'll be able to question the prisoners when you bring them in. If you can't get live prisoners over, get their papers and identification badges. Is that all clear?"

"Quite clear, sir," said Bruce steadily. "I take six bombers over with me and make the raid immediately."

"That's right. Best o' luck!" called the colonel, and acknowledged Bruce's salute mechanically.

Bruce returned to the fire trench, and now he viewed No-Man's-Land with different eyes. It was going to be a hard job to get himself and six men across that snow-scattered waste without being seen by the enemy.

And if he were seen it would be bullets from the rifles of Austrians which would come at him. The people in whose university he had studied, and amongst whom he had had so many friends. Standing there, he wondered what had happened to Carl, and how Pauli was getting on.

For all he knew, Carl might now be lying in a soldier's grave.

He went down the trench, asking for volunteers for the raid. He collected his half-dozen men swiftly enough, and they grouped with him in a short sap

which ran out from the trench towards their own wire.

"Look here," Bruce told them. "This is going to be risky. We shan't get any artillery support at all, although machine-guns and rifles from the trench here will cover us as we come back.

"We'll crawl over, and be careful that you don't get on to the snow, because it'll show you up to their sentries. When we are through their wire we'll creep close to their parapet, and I'll give the word to rush.

"You two, and you two"—he indicated four men—"go to each side of the enemy fire-bay and chuck bombs over the traverse to prevent any of them getting at us. You other two grab a prisoner each—more if you can manage it. I'll stay on top of the parapet ready to lend a hand if anything goes wrong and to direct operations generally. Now, does everybody know what he's got to do?"

The men nodded. Because they were volunteers they were about the most courageous in Bruce's company. Each man carried a dozen bombs, in addition to trench knob-kerries and revolvers.

"Right-oh, then we may as well start!" Bruce grunted, and led the way out of the sap.

No Man's Land.

BRUCE crawled forward, his men close at his heels. The frost-rimmed wire reared before him, traced against the gun-lit sky. He reached it and went through by a narrow lane which had been specially cut to allow British patrols and listening parties to go out.

At the far side was a stretch of earth, all shell-ripped and shapeless. Broken rifles, steel helmets, torn gasmasks—all kinds of battle litter cluttered it. Amongst this were stretched the scattered figures of men who had died in the fighting; it was too dangerous to try and bring them in.

The ground was hard and icy cold. Here and there patches of grass showed grey where the frost had settled. In and out of shell-holes Bruce led the way. Now and again a shell would burst on the trenches ahead or well back on the enemy support area, breaking with a sudden spurt of lurid flame, then dying in an eruption of flying earth.

Bruce remembered, as he crawled, that it was near to Christmas. He remembered his last Christmas with Carl and Pauli in Vienna—and now he was going out to kill or make prisoner men who might even know his own haunts in Austria's capital.

A Very light quivered up into the sky, limning everything with its stark glare and shining on a coal-scuttle helmet silhouetted against the enemy barbed-wire entanglements ahead!

"Listening-post in front—go steady!" Bruce passed the word back, then whispered: "Two men come up level with me, ready to rush!"

Two of his group came at either side of him, and they went on. Now they travelled forward more and more slowly. Bruce knew that he had to knock out the enemy patrol ahead before he could get through to the trench beyond.

Nearer he crawled. Then the foot of a man behind him slipped where ice had formed in the bottom of a shallow shell-hole, making a scraping sound.

From where he had seen the helmet Bruce heard a guttural exclamation, and three helmets lifted from the ground. He glimpsed the shrouded faces of a trio, their rifles levelling.

"Rush!" Bruce gasped, and leaped with the words.

A rifle spanged almost in his face. He saw one of the three leap to his feet and start to run back. Then the two bombers were on the men, their knob-kerries smashing purposefully, dropping them.

Bruce raised his revolver, sighted on the third of the group and fired it the moment that the man would have shot. The fellow jerked, his knees bent, then he slammed down to the shell-hole in which he had been sheltering, while a Very light curved up into the air, as the men in the trench behind stared to see what had caused the shots.

"Down!" Bruce called the order.

The bombers with him flattened on the ground about the hole and the three still forms now stretched inside it. From the enemy trench a rifle spanged,

then two machine-guns stammered wickedly as the gunners traversed No-Man's-Land.

The bullets clipped through the wire, showering caked snow. They plugged the frozen ground or skimmed off it and ricocheted away on the air. More Very lights went up. British weapons started in reply to the Germans. Rifle-grenades screeched on the air and plugged down.

Trench-mortar batteries thudded, hurling massive shells. A field-gun battery got into action, and for half an hour steel screeched across No-Man's-Land in a solid hail, while Bruce and the others clung to the ground and waited for the midnight battle to die down.

The firing ceased off at last, and Bruce made an examination of the three dead men. A glance showed him that they were Austrians, not Germans.

"It's all right, we shan't have to raid the trench," he said. "Get all the papers off them, as well as their shoulder straps. Keep your heads now, and work quietly!"

Five minutes later they were crawling back, pursued by occasional bullets. Within half an hour Bruce was down in the headquarters' dug-out, making his report.

"Very good work!" the colonel commented. "No casualties, eh, except to the three Austrians? Where are the papers?"

"Here, sir."

Bruce set the little bundle down on the table and the colonel looked through them, then picked up a pay-book which



He sat there, his whole body trembling, his eyes vacant and his lips quivering. "Shell-shock!" Mr. Behrend gasped.

Bruce himself had taken from one of the men.

"Look at this, Gordon! What unit did these men belong to?"

Bruce took the little book and examined the writing on the first page.

"Fourteenth Infantry Regiment—Second Vienna Division!" he gasped. "That's Carl's regiment!"

Carl sat in the front line trench, with his coat-collar turned up close about his ears, beating his hands to try and keep them warm. Near him sat Jan, who had come with him from Vienna, and who now acted as his servant.

Jan was a big fellow, above six feet in height, and strong as a lion, but now pinched with cold.

"A pretty fine Christmas this, sir," he growled.

"It's Christmas Eve to night." And Carl smiled a little. "Thank goodness the line's quiet. The English don't want to fight any more than we do just now, from the looks of it."

"It's been all quiet since they mopped up that listening party in front of us three or four nights back," Jan replied. He added suddenly: "Haven't got any—any grub to spare, have you, sir?"

"Not so much as a biscuit," Carl answered. "There's plenty of cigarettes. I'm sick of smoking."

"Cigarettes won't fill a hungry man," Jan answered. "They say the English have got plenty of grub. Why can't we make a raid and get some? I'll volunteer for it!"

"If it wasn't Christmas Eve I'd lead a raid myself," Carl told him. "But that would mean killing—and we can't kill on a day like this."

"I could kill some of those English if I thought I'd get food for doing it!" Jan snarled. "I'm sick of short rations."

"So am I," Carl said slowly. "The English are well fed. They always have been, but—" He stood up and looked over the top of the trench towards the British lines.

Hardly a gun was firing anywhere. No lights showed. There was nothing to see except barbed wire, frost and patches of snow, and the faint glow of trench braziers in the British lines.

But Carl could catch the voices of the English ringing on the frosty air, an occasional shout, and then the lilt of some chorus as the Tommies sang a lively tune:

*"Take me back to dear old Blighty,
Put me on the train for London
Town!*

*Take me over there, drop me any-
where,
Birmingham, Leeds or Manchester—
I don't care!*

*Oh, I should like to see my best
girl—"*

It didn't sound to Carl as though the English were particularly anxious to do any fighting on this Christmas Eve. They seemed to be having a pretty good time, while he and the others went hungry in their freezing trenches.

"They've got food—we've got plenty of cigarettes," he murmured. "I wonder if—" An idea came to him, and he stood thinking it over, listening to the distant sounds.

Presently he picked up a length of board from the trench, then snatched at a piece of chalk which a man had used to scrawl the name of a dug-out. Carl knew English; Bruce had taught him. On the board he wrote: "Have you any food to spare?"

"Give me a bayonet, somebody!" he called, and snatched the weapon as a man held it up, then drove the tip into

the edge of the board and mounted the fire-step again.

He held the board high above the trench parapet, switched on his flashlight, and directed the beam so that it lit up the lettering.

Instantly there came the crack of a watchful sentry's rifle, and a bullet whanged through the board. More bullets followed, but Carl still held the board high.

The fusillade stopped. He sensed that the British were now reading what he had written. He held the board up half a minute longer, and then lowered it.

He stared across No Man's Land, and presently he sighted the white beam of a torch on their side, shining on a length of wood on which someone had written: "Yes, if you've got cigarettes!"

"See that?" Carl gasped to the men around him. "They say they'll give us food for cigarettes. Give me a couple of packets, somebody, and I'll go over!"

"Let me go, sir—they're a treacherous lot!" Jan growled, but Carl caught the cigarettes a man held out to him, and a moment later he was over the parapet.

Boldly he stood upright and looked ahead. No bullets came at him, and he saw an Englishman rise from the opposite trench.

Slowly Carl went through the barbed wire out into the waste of No Man's Land to meet the figure which was coming towards him. Five yards from it he stopped.

"You have food?" he asked in English.

"Yes," came the answer from the other figure, its face concealed by the darkness. The man held out a package, and Carl stepped nearer. "You have an officer—Carl Behrend," the voice went on. "Is he with you?"

"I'm—It's Bruce!" Carl gasped. "Carl!" Bruce jumped at him. "I chanced coming out because I could speak your language. How are you? How's Pauli?"

"I don't know. I've not seen her. Things are terrible at home—no food—no money!" Carl gasped. "It's—" He broke off as he saw more British coming from their trench. He turned, and then saw that Jan was leading his own men out, bringing more cigarettes.

"They're fraternising—it's all right," Bruce exclaimed. "We shan't shoot if you don't. You haven't been wounded, Carl?"

"No, I'm fit enough—but I'm fed up with the war," Carl answered. "I didn't know you were in front of us!"

"I knew your unit was here," Bruce said. "I raided one of your listening posts the other night."

"That was you, then!" Carl gasped. He peered into Bruce's face and went on: "It's the same old Bruce! It's good to see you again!"

"And to see you!" Bruce caught his hand and wrung it. "And you don't know if Pauli's all right?"

"No, I got an hour's leave in Vienna, but I couldn't trace her," Carl answered. "I found my father, but that was all. He's doing all right—fit and well."

They talked in the middle of No Man's Land, these two old friends who wore the uniforms of their warring countries, while all around them British Tommies, imbued with the spirit of Christmastide, swapped food for cigarettes and souvenirs.

And then there came a scurrying rush on the air with the fierce whine of a

shell. It burst in the heart of the waste ground, scattering its droning fragments, felling men and filling the air with smoke.

Another shell came, and another. Some artillery observer had seen movements in No Man's Land, and he was calling on his batteries to fire. More gunners joined in; British and German and the Austrian guns attached to Carl's division.

The uninformed figures broke and scattered, running back to their trenches. Carl parted from Bruce and scurried back the way he had come, Jan at his side.

It was as they ran that there came a mad blast of sound on the air, and a shell burst near them. Carl saw its red heart, saw torn earth flying, heard the colossal crash of it—and then felt as though he were hit a million times at once.

He fell backwards, his sight misted and his head spinning, his whole body numbed from the shock of awful wounds. Through the glare of other shells bursting near he saw Jan; the big man was staggering and reeling blindly, pawing the air until another shell-burst hid him from sight.

Lights flashed across Carl's eyes. He tried to get up, but he could not move. Blackness swamped across his brain, and he felt that he was dying. He tried to call out, but no sound would come.

He forced away the mistiness that cloaked his vision, but it swirled back again, and through it all he thought he heard Bruce calling his name.

A moment after the face of his old friend seemed to float before his eyes.

Carl tried to smile, then sank to oblivion.

Shell-Shock.

IN a little garret, with windows broken and bare furnishings, Pauli sat, sewing alone. There was no fire in the grate; it was a month after Christmas, and she tried to tell herself that warm spring was near, and that she did not feel cold.

The door opened, and her father came in. Professor Arndt was gaunt and thin, and he had sold his overcoat to buy an egg, which he carried wrapped in a paper packing. He carried it more gently and more carefully than he would have done a king's crown.

"An egg, Pauli!" he called. "Now we'll have a feast, my girl! It's nearly a month since I had such luck!"

"Then you eat it, father," said Pauli. "I'm—I'm not hungry."

"We'll share it," the professor said, and Pauli hurried to the stove, gathering up the sticks she had placed there in readiness to cook whatever food her father might bring home.

The professor had lost his job at the university. He did not believe in war. He thought it was all mad foolishness, and he said so. Others did not agree with him; they'd hooted him out of the place.

He had sold all his books and his little treasures. He had moved from his house to this attic. Pauli had tried to get work, but she wasn't strong enough to be a washerwoman; she had been trained to do nothing in particular, and there were many like her in Vienna these days.

No letters had come from Carl. The authorities would not let the soldiers at the front write home now, because Germany and Austria were losing the war, and they did not want the troops to know what hardships the folk at home were suffering.

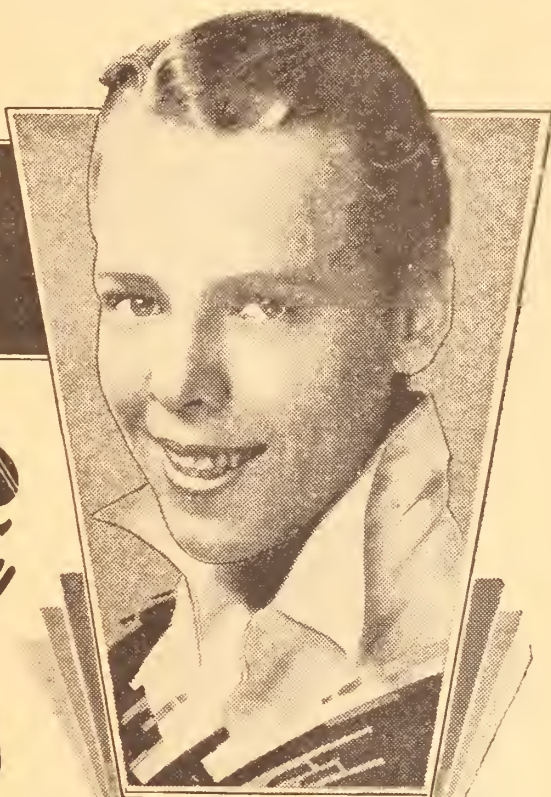
For that egg the professor had sold

(Continued on page 27.)

For the sake of a girl he went riding, though he was scared stiff of horses. An amazing comedy with an unexpected climax.

Arthur LAKE

in "Horse H shy"



In Love With a Picture.

ARTHUR BRYANT gazed cautiously round the big shop before drawing a newspaper cutting from his pocket. The cutting he spread out on the glass top of the counter.

"Ah, my divinity!"

He sighed and gazed down at the picture of a girl in Red Cross uniform. A costume that Miss Marian Day had worn at a big fancy-dress ball. The outline also stated that the charming Society girl was the daughter of a wealthy financier.

The rough paper is never very complimentary to the best of features, but there was no doubt that this girl was pretty, because the paper could not conceal her good looks. Her hair was dark and shingled, but Arthur had fallen for the twinkle in the big eyes and the dimples in the cheeks.

If only he could meet her and she should fall in love with him!

Now Arthur was nineteen and that age where youth is susceptible to what some term "Calf Love." He was an assistant in the big jewellery store owned by Biggs and Higgins, but he had prospects because Biggs was his uncle.

Arthur was a likeable but a provoking youth. He had arrived at the awkward age of life. At college he was neither a success nor a failure. An average brain had always kept him somewhere near the middle of his form, but his mind had a way of wandering off on to other subjects to the detriment of his learning. In the middle of mathematics he would suddenly want to be playing baseball, and in the middle of baseball he would want to go swimming.

His small-town parents had sent him to Mr. Biggs to be trained to work for

a living. At moments he was a brilliant salesman and at other times his uncle nearly tore out his hair with despair. A dreamer, who had moments of great brilliance.

Yet everyone liked him because he had a happy smile, curly black hair, a slim and well-knit body, and a certain amount of charin and personality.

Arthur was quite unaware that the revolving door had revolved and that a lady in furs had walked to the counter that he was supposed to be looking after. She had coughed and had tapped the glass top, but Arthur was away in another world. The lady frowned angrily and placed a gloved hand on his wrist.

Absent-mindedly, he stroked the glove and murmured, "Dearest!"

"How dare you!"

The falsetto voice shattered his dreams.

"I—er—beg your pardon!" spluttered Arthur, blushing like a schoolboy. "I was reading about a big jewel robbery."

"I take that paper and I saw nothing about a jewel robbery on that page!" snapped the lady. "Will you please show me some ear-rings."

Why Arthur should first produce gentlemen's dress studs, and when rebuked bring out engagement-rings is beyond understanding. The lady's exasperation brought Mr. Biggs on the scene, and that gentleman was able to pour oil on troubled waters.

"Yes, madame. No, madame. A perfect pearl, madame." And so forth, and the lady eventually left, having spent far more than she intended. The result was that Mr. Biggs, though he frowned severely, was not half so displeased as he looked.

"One day you'll go into a trance, Arthur, and never wake up," he rebuked. "Now I have a most important

commission for you to undertake." He produced a small packet. "This necklace has been specially ordered over the telephone by a lady who wants the necklace to be a surprise for her daughter—the girl is eighteen to-morrow. She wants the necklace taken to her house immediately. You will take the necklace, and for the love of Mike don't lose it or yourself. The address is on the package, and you had better start at once. You have eight hours before dusk." Here Mr. Biggs chuckled. "Only eight miles to go, so you might be able to make it."

"Yes, uncle."

"Be off with you, my boy." The uncle patted him on the back. "And if you don't deliver that to-day, never darken my doors again. So if you're goofy about some gal, forget it."

"I wish I could, uncle," moaned his nephew. "I shall always carry her picture with me."

"You'll get a fat head if you don't look lively!" grunted his uncle. "And don't make any mistakes."

Trouble With a Hat.

ARTHUR BRYANT set out for the railway depot. He entered a full 'bus and went off into a trance thinking of the girl of his dreams.

The 'bus stopped, and nearly all the people got out, so that there were plenty of seats. Arthur still went on standing, until a titter and a remark from a small girl brought him back to earth.

"Has he been a naughty boy, mummy? Perhaps that's why he's standing."

Arthur frowned heavily and took a seat. Within three minutes he was dreaming again, and didn't wake up till the conductor tapped him on the shoulder.

"This is the end of the run, bo," he

chuckled. "Unless you wanta go all the way back again. What's up? Your gal giving yer the chuck?"

"I have no girl," haughtily retorted Arthur, and stalked forth, realising that he had gone four streets too far. He was too dignified to return in the same 'bus, and so had to wait. Still, there were plenty of trains.

Another 'bus at last, and it would be crowded.

Somehow, he wedged his way inside and started trouble by treading on a fat lady's corns.

"Look where you're going!" complained the lady shrilly. "Ain't yer got eyes in yer head?"

"Yes, mum."

"Then why not use 'em."

This caused a general laugh, and the fat lady shook all her four chins.

In that crowd it was impossible to do much dreaming, but one could walk on people's feet and nudge neighbours in the ribs, especially as the driver was a run-and-brake merchant. In other words, the driver tore along whenever he saw a clear space, and directly a block appeared on went all the brakes. Those standing swayed backwards and forwards like a storm at sea.

Arthur butted the man next him so violently that the latter's straw hat fell on the floor.

"So sorry!" murmured Arthur, and in stooping to pick it up off came his own.

The hats were restored at last, but the man who had been butted had evidently had a row with his wife or got out of the wrong side of bed that morning, because he kept on glaring at poor Arthur.

Then Arthur got a seat at last, and looked out carefully for the depot. At last the depot and Arthur struggled to his feet.

"No, you must not give up your seat. I insist," a pretty girl said severely to him.

"But I—" began Arthur, when the bus jerked forward and he sat down heavily again.

Arthur made another attempt to get up at the next stop.

"I am quite capable of standing!" The girl was angry. "A girl is the equal of a man any day, and what a man can do we can do! Please keep your seat—I insist!"

"You can insist as much as you like"—Arthur was really angry—"but I'm getting out here."

And the girl gave him a look that would have frozen the North Pole as hard as granite.

Arthur felt better after that—he had scored that time. He marched off to the depot, and, of course, there was a queue waiting for their tickets. The youngster went into another trance as he slowly filed forward. He reached the sill, still in a dream.

What was all that banging about? He looked vaguely around to see a sea of angry faces.

"Brought yer camp stool with yer?" snarled a labourer.

"You kids oughta go to bed earlier!" said another.

"Where's his nurse?" was the worst out of all.

Feverishly Arthur bought a ticket, rammed it into the band of his straw hat, and was so anxious to get away that he ran right into a man—he of the other straw hat.

"Ugh!" grunted the little man, and staggered back. Both straw hats went flying.

"Sorry! Sorry!"

"You confounded young chump!"

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shouted the other excitedly. "Why don't you have your eyes tested?"

Arthur was so confused that he didn't realise he had picked up the wrong hat, whilst the little man was so annoyed that he didn't realise Arthur's hat was nearly over his eyes.

Hence a gust of wind played a fine old game. The hat on Arthur's head was like a pimple and easily whisked off, whilst the wind got under the larger hat and lifted it off the small dome like a new form of kite.

Worse was to follow, because when Arthur chased after his hat that seemed bewitched it did not stop till it came to rest under the front logs of a respectable cart-horse, who was feeling in a hungry mood that day. To the boy's horror, the big teeth closed on the brim and proceeded to get busy on the straw.

No sign of the man in charge, and every time Arthur held out an uncertain hand the horse showed its teeth.

"Here—hi—steady!" cried the lad. "Chuck it, old chap!"

But the horse calmly went on munching till all one side was gone.

"Hallo, son, what's the trouble?" growled a voice, and the carter appeared. "Oh, ho, so old Ned's having a meal!"

The horse gave up the hat quite meekly.

"He's eaten my ticket!" shouted Arthur. "And I don't believe there's another train for an hour." He was feeling feverishly in his pockets to see how much money he possessed when another person arrived on the scene.

"Gimme my hat!" was the infuriated cry. "You knock off my hat and then have the impertinence to take the wrong one!" He grabbed the offending headgear and shoved it on his head without noticing the damage. His anger was so great that probably he was blinded.

"Fool! Dolt! Idiot!" he screeched, and flung Arthur's hat on the ground. "I've a good mind to stamp on it!"

"Here, you be off!" growled the carter, and the man departed muttering dire threats.

With a glad cry Arthur pounced on his hat, and there in the ribbon was the ticket.

"Thanks, old sport!" he cried. "You've saved my life. Can't stop to inquire after the wife and kids, 'cos I gotta catch that train. Cheerio! Drop me a postcard any day."

"Loco!" muttered the carter, pushing his greasy cap on one side and scratching his thick hair, whilst he stared after the running Arthur. "I wouldn't wonder what them two ain't escaped from somewhere. Corks, he'll break his blinking neck!"

The train was on the move and was gathering speed. A guard and about four porters yelled "Stand away!" but Arthur charged after the last car. A final spurt and his outflung hand gripped the rail, and with a mighty heave he dragged himself on to the step. He nearly fell off when his hat tried to do a disappearing act. The carter's heart went to his mouth as Arthur released his hands to jam on his straw hat, before desperately clinging again to the rail. Then the boy ran up the steps and gaily waved.

"Clean off his onion," muttered the carter, then looked all round. "Perhaps he was a film star—don't see no camera. No, he must be loco, as I thought first."

Trouble in a Train.

HAVING caught the train by the skin of his teeth, Arthur sought a seat, but found that the coaches were all very full. The carriage was a saloon with double seats and a gangway

between. A fat lady had a seat to herself, but she was so monstrous that after vainly endeavouring to place some portion of his anatomy upon the cushion he gave it up and went elsewhere.

In the very end coach Arthur saw two spare seats—on opposite sides of the corridor, but level. On one of the double seats sat a man, and on the other a girl. Being of a nervous disposition, Arthur chose to sit next to the man.

Arthur settled himself down, but dreams were not possible. How can a chap dream when there is a peculiar odour in the air? He glanced at his companion, then became aware that the girl had a handkerchief to her nose. Another look at his companion noticed a movement of the jaws. The latter becoming aware of Arthur's gaze turned his head, and the boy nearly swooned.

"Ze garlic spearmint—verra good," said the Italian, with a broad smile. "I inventa cet myself—you takka zee piece."

"No, thanks I don't," gasped Arthur. "Phew, gimme air!"

Whereupon Arthur leaned forward and pressed a knob which was supposed to open the window about two inches. Unfortunately he pressed the bottom knob instead of the top, and the window opened quite a foot.

A torrent of air swept into the car. Can you imagine a liner with a gaping hole in her side and the seas sweeping in? Well, that was very like what happened when Arthur opened that window. People reading newspapers either had them snatched out of their hands or else were buried in their folds. Papers, handbags, hats, and other debris reposing on the tables were whisked off like straw. Glasses and cups were spilled, and among the shrieks and screams of the women could be heard a few comments by the males.

"Shut that blankety, blank window!" "Chuck him out of the car!" "My hat's ruined!" "Where's my ice-cream cornet?"—this last raised the passengers to boiling pitch. They stood up as best they could and all shouted and hooted and screamed at Arthur, who got thoroughly panicky and pressed another button, whereupon by some freak the window opened a further foot.

"Cursa de vind!" shouted the Italian. "You bigga de fool!" He managed to find the right knob, and the window shut with a clang.

Arthur sank limply in his seat and tried to imagine that all the rude things that were being said were not about him at all. He tried to dream again, and became aware that there was something in his eye—grit that must have got in when the window was open. He became aware that the person on the seat next to him was cycling him with amusement. What a surprise Arthur got when he found she was the girl of his dreams—and he could have sat next to her! Instead of which he was next to an evil-smelling Italian.

As Arthur stared at her, hardly crediting his senses, the grain of dust got busy on the nerve cells and his left eyelid flickered once, and as the girl's own eyes opened wide with indignation, so did Arthur wink again and again. He knew he was winking and couldn't stop it.

Marian Day gave him a look that would have killed, and busied herself with a book, but it was not so easy to read. Her curiosity was aroused, and he was such a nice-looking lad; she ventured a quick peep. Arthur, the picture of misery, was dabbing at his left eye. He removed the handkerchief, and noticing that peep decided upon a bold move.

He pointed to his eye, shook his head, winked twice, and then rubbed it vigorously. Marian understood at once that something was in his eye. She forgave him with the faintest twitch of the lips, and then returned to her book.

How can one dream when one's dream is sitting within a few feet of you. Marian was even prettier than her picture, but Arthur quite realised that her chin was a very determined chin. How could he frame some excuse to talk to her. He blushed uncomfortably some minutes later when he heard a whispered: "Rubberneck" from some kind person behind, denoting that his ardent gaze at the girl had not been overlooked.

The girl must have heard, because she flashed a startled look at Arthur, who had rubbed his eye so much that it was quite blood-shot—the effect was heightened by a stream of tears that he couldn't check.

"You've got something in your eye," stated the girl, who was as kind as she was pretty. "Could I get it out for you?"

"Could she?" Why Arthur very nearly leaped from his seat to her side. Did the lady miss the boy's enthusiasm—not she! At once Marian got busy with a small handkerchief, and Arthur was quite sorry that she removed the cinder so efficiently and so swiftly.

"There, that's out!" she cried triumphantly, and expected him to return to his seat.

Arthur glanced at the Italian, who saved the day by producing a very dirty handkerchief, and inside some even worse sandwiches.

The boy looked at the girl, and she looked at the sandwiches—both their nostrils quivered—and Arthur, with love in his heart for the Italian, stayed where he was.

So far so good, but in these days you can't touch a strange young woman on the shoulder and start a conversation by saying: "Where are you going, my pretty maiden?" Or words to that effect. Probably she would clout you one round the ear or hand you over to the guard with a hint that probably a bootlegger had had some influence on your present condition.

Marian would have had no objection to becoming friendly with Arthur, but she had been brought up by very strict parents, who had taught her that it was not for the lady to make advances; besides, hadn't she done him a good turn already. And Arthur, fearing a rebuke, kept a still tongue, and thus wasted a golden opportunity.

But the opportunity was soon to arrive. The nigger attendant came along the car to see if anyone required refreshments; he evidently had waited on the girl before, because he grinned broadly and produced a bottle of ginger-beer.

"I'll open it," said the girl, and went back to her book till the end of the chapter. Having turned down the page, she picked up the bottle and the opener, and wondered why Arthur had not had the common sense to offer to

open the bottle. Arthur also wondered why he had been such a chump; he just sat and stared at her like one hypnotised.

Marian made one effort, but the patent top would not lever off, she made a second effort, and again had no luck.

"Could I do it for you?"

"Thank you so much!" murmured the girl, and gave the bottle and lever to Arthur.

His first effort brought no result, and, grimly determined, Arthur stood up, but still the bottle wouldn't open. In his efforts he did not realise that the bottle of ginger pop was being shaken violently, also it was a very hot day. What, therefore, might be the result when that lid-top suddenly came off?

A sudden release of gassy substance at express speed. Squirt a syphon into someone's face, and you have a good idea. Unfortunately the bottle was pointed towards Marian when the lid came off, and the girl got a shower bath.

"O-o-o-oh!" A gasp and a shudder. "Oh, you careless wretch!"

Arthur made things worse by trying to put his finger over the escaping spray, with the result that the people behind had a shower bath, and, when he altered his finger, then the spray got those in front in the back of the neck.

The light of friendship in the girl's eye had gone, because she was wearing a particularly smart two-piece dress and coat, which was, to her mind, ruined. It wasn't, but girls are strange creatures. She would arrive home for her birthday, looking stained and bedraggled, and the chick outfit would be wasted. Therefore, the dress and coat were ruined.

Arthur produced a large handkerchief

and dabbed at her rather helplessly, whereupon the girl pushed him away.

"You're the clumsiest idiot I've ever met!" she snapped unkindly. "You'll only make matters worse."

"I don't think it's done any harm," began Arthur.

"You ought to be put in a place where you can't do any harm," growled a damp passenger.

Annoyed that all his good work with the girl of his dreams had been shattered, Arthur turned upon the accuser. "A bath won't do you any harm!" he growled. "You look as if you need one."

Of course that insult meant a small scene. The man wanted to get abusive, and had to be held back by several others. All this while, Marian was repairing ravages to her complexion with a powder-puff.

The man broke free and aimed a wild blow at Arthur, who drew back his head and then jerked back his arm in order to return the blow. His elbow caught the powder-box, and there was further catastrophe. A large shower of powder went all over Marian, so that it looked as if it had been snowing.

The passengers' wrath turned to laughter, and, except for Arthur and Marian, everyone doubled up with mirth. Marian jumped to her feet, said "Oh!" in a sort of strangled whisper, and then turned her back haughtily on the culprit.

The train slowing saved the situation, because Marian realised this was her home depot. She swept by Arthur like a small iceberg, without the least sign of being aware that such a person as Arthur Bryant ever existed.

Arthur stared after her dumbly, until he realised from the black porter's

"How dare you follow me!" Marian cried indignantly.



shout that this was his destination as well. He grabbed his hat, glared at the other passengers, and hurried down the corridor. He had better get his mission done and get back to business—this would go down as the worst day of his life.

He alighted from the train and saw a porter.

"Do you know this address?" And he showed the parcel.

"Sure I do that!" grinned the fellow. "We all know 'em. Most generous they be and kindly disposed with their tips." He pointed to a straight road and a solitary figure. "See that young lady? You follow her."

Even at that distance, Arthur recognised the girl.

"Why follow her?" gasped he, like a fish out of water.

"That be Miss Marian Day!" laughed the fellow. "That parcel be for her mother. It be Miss Marian's birthday to-morrow." Here he winked. "That'll be a present, I suppose."

Determinedly Arthur stepped out after the girl, and there was renewed hope in his heart. Maybe there would be a chance of pacifying her ladyship.

The Lull Before the Storm.

AS the girl walked she brushed the powder from her clothes. Now she was annoyed for another reason. The car was not here to meet her, but as she had stated that she would come by a later train, what could she expect? Still, a walk might cool her fevered brow.

Something made her look back, and then her plucked eyebrows went up in an arch of indignation. That impertinent pup of a boy had had the audacity to follow her. With eyes flashing fire she waited till he drew near.

"How dare you follow me?" she cried indignantly. "If you don't go home I shall call the police."

And before Arthur could say a word she had marched away with her head very much in the air.

"Here, I say!" called Arthur, and began to hurry after her.

Marian turned, stamped her foot, and went on all the faster. Her anger increased when she looked back a few minutes later to find him following her. "Check!" she cried, and began to run.

"Confound it!" growled Arthur, and had to run as well.

After a quarter of a mile the girl paused for breath, and looked back, imagining that Arthur would be a speck on the horizon. Her horrified gaze saw a running figure that shambled to a walk even as she watched. Could he be a bad young man—one of those that held you up and stole your money? No, for all his faults she didn't think he could be as bad as all that.

Horror upon horror—he was waving to her. A gesture to stop. Then he must be a bad lad.

Marian began to run again, and sighed with relief as she saw the iron gates of her country house ahead. She glanced back at the entrance of the drive and shook her fist derisively. He wouldn't dare follow her any farther.

The sound of running footsteps made her whip round, and there he was at the gates.

"Hi!" he shouted; but Marian, in sudden panic, had taken to her heels.

Up the steps she rushed to the front door. He was following her, and she rang the bell furiously.

Watson, the butler, appeared.

"There's a man following me, drive him away!" she gasped, and darted into doors, but waited by the staircase to

see what would happen. Somehow she didn't want Watson to get rough.

"What do you want?" growled the butler. "Why you following Miss Marian?"

"I've got a parcel for Mrs. Day," stated Arthur between puffs. "I inquired the way, and they said follow Miss Marian. I'm from Biggs & Higgins, jewellers."

"Oh, I see," murmured Watson. "Wait here, please."

Mrs. Day had appeared, and mother and daughter had flown to each other's arms.

"So glad you've come earlier. You do look flushed," said the mother, a trifle anxiously.

"I've been running." Marian glanced at the glass door, where she could see two figures. "I'll go and change my clothes."

"Do, darling," murmured the mother.

At the top of the stairs Marian looked down. The boy was actually in the hall and shaking hands with her mother. This looked like a mystery. She would change quickly and find out what it all meant.

Meanwhile, Arthur was explaining that he came from Biggs & Higgins, and had a very important parcel.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Day. "The pearls for Marian." Then she smiled at the boy. "What is your name?"

"Arthur Bryant, madame," said the boy.

"You don't by any means come from Pullervale, Ohio?" she asked, and at once Arthur's face lit up.

"Sure, that's my home town," he cried. "My pop sent me to Mr. Biggs to learn a trade, and it seems years since I've been away."

"Arthur, I'm delighted to meet you," was the surprising remark of Mrs. Day as she held out her hand. "Your mother and I were old school friends, and knowing I was in Chicago, she wrote asking if I could invite you round."

Here Mrs. Day hesitated.

"I have to confess I mislaid the letter, but directly I saw you I guessed at once who you were. You're the image of your mother. How very curious!"

Arthur just stood there tongue-tied, and then kindly Mrs. Day went on talking.

"You've come at a right time. It's Marian's birthday to-morrow, and you shall stay the night and come to the party. I'll ring up your uncle and put that right." Here she smiled. "We do a lot of business with him, so he won't mind. And don't say a word that you work for Biggs & Higgins, because I want those pearls to be a surprise for Marian. You will be just an old friend. Ah, here she comes! Marian!"

It was a surprise for Marian when her mother introduced the boy as an old friend of the family. Arthur looked so apologetic that all her anger vanished, and she held out her hand. Arthur clasped it in a firm grasp.

"I'm going riding this afternoon," she cried gaily. "We've got a spare horse, and you can be my escort."

"You're a quick worker, Marian," laughed her mother. "So the young folk know you're back already? All the same crowd, I suppose?"

"All those that are coming to the party," laughed Marian. "We're going to ride and think out rags—awful fun."

"I—er—can't go riding like this," nervously murmured Arthur. "Perhaps I could follow on foot?"

"Not unless you've got wings," laughed Marian. "Mums, he shall have pop's outfit."

"Of course Arthur can," exclaimed the mother. "Watson!" The butler appeared. "Take this gentleman upstairs and get out the master's riding suit."

And thus was Arthur Bryant led away to what he thought was his final doom.

The Fateful Ride.

ARTHUR tried to think of every excuse to get out of that ride, but every excuse broke down under one argument—the girl would think him a coward.

He squared his shoulders. He must go riding, and pray that if he were chucked off he would be chucked on to something soft. Don't think the lad was a coward; but when very small he was savaged by a horse, and grew up eyeing horses with mistrust. They were best left alone, hence the fact that he had never ridden a horse in his life, and he knew that it was no child's play. He didn't mind a fall so much, it was the fact that he would look a perfect idiot in front of Marian and all her young friends.

Why couldn't they go out on motor-bicycles? He'd show 'em a thing or two! But horses! He shuddered, and climbed into the breeches of Pep Day. Evidently the father must be a very tall man, because the breeches fitted nowhere. The clothes fitted well under the arms for length, whilst two of Arthur would have still given the waist line an inch or two to spare. For a moment he decided to plead that as her father's pants didn't fit, he couldn't ride with the daughter.

Cowardice again. No, he would ride even if he did look a perfect sight. His honour demanded this sacrifice.

How Marian laughed when Arthur Bryant came down the stairs. The girl was a charming picture in buff riding breeches, silk blouse, and a French beret.

"You remind me of a comic turn at the theatres," she hooted with laughter. "much to Arthur's annoyance. 'Aren't your breeches a trifle short?' she asked with gentle sarcasm.

"My temper will also be short before I'm through," rasped Arthur, whose nerves were rather on edge.

"Come on, Arthur," she cried gaily.

"All the others are here."

"I'm ready, Miss Day." He said it like a martyr.

"Cut out the miss stuff," cried the girl. "You don't think I'm going to bleed Mr. Bryant all day long, do you? Come on, my lad."

"All right, Marian," answered the ghost of Arthur. "Hope the boss ain't as large as your pop's pants."

"Only sixteen hands." An answer that meant nothing to him. It would have been just the same if she had said "sixteen feet." At any rate, Arthur decided that the horse was a darned sight too tall and big when he managed to tear himself away from the house. To his distorted imagination, Buster looked like an elephant.

Marian waved gaily to a dozen or so boys and girls that were waiting. All sat their saddles as if they were born to them. A groom appeared, and Marian leaped up as if she were a feather. Then a groom came forward with Buster—it was Arthur's turn.

The youngster approached the mount slowly and warily; it seemed to him as if he had never seen a horse with such a nasty expression. The groom gave a swift glance at the girths, just touched the stirrups and stood prepared to help Arthur into the saddle.

Now there is a wrong way and a right way of mounting a horse. You don't want to put your right foot into the left stirrup. A procedure that brought a titter of mirth. Having discovered which foot was required, Arthur managed to get same into the stirrup, but a horse usually moves slightly forward as one mounts and it is advisable to stand slightly nearer the animal's head, so that one is helped into the saddle by the forward movement. Not unlike the mounting of a bicycle.

Try and mount a bicycle and not go with it, and you land on the mudguards and the ground. Well, Arthur landed on Buster's hindquarters, and then slid gracefully to the ground.

More mirth, in which Marian joined. "Buck up, Arthur."

Arthur collected himself together, glared at the horse, squared his shoulders, and went at Buster with a rush. His foot found the stirrup and up he went into the air, so fast that he went clean over the saddle and landed in a heap on the other side.

"He's a trick rider," said one person unkindly.

Arthur summoned a grin, struggled to his feet and endeavoured to do the rush again, but not quite so fast. He landed in the saddle, clutched wildly at the pommel and again slid to the ground with a jolt that did his spine no end of good.

By this time, Arthur was considerably bruised and dusty, but he wouldn't be beaten, and he came at the horse again. This time he reduced the rush, and only half got into the saddle, another wild grab and once more he was on terra firma.

All the party yelled their approval, but Marian was annoyed that her new friend was making such an exhibition of himself. He didn't seem to be able to do a single thing without making a mess of it.

"We're meeting Winnie, Thelma and Archie on the Ridgeway," she called out. "They'll get fed up with waiting if we don't hurry."

The rest were so interested in Arthur's antics, that they didn't want to go, but Marian was a young woman who had her own way. She watched one more fruitless effort, and then turned her horse down the drive.

"You go ahead," called out Arthur, weakly. "I'll catch you up."

More laughter and the party had trooped away. The groom held the restive horse, and it says much for the man that his face never twitched.

"May I show you, sir, the best way to mount Buster?" he said. "Hosses have their fancies, and Buster likes this way best."

Therewith followed a graceful and easy movement, which Arthur watched with envious eyes.

"Let's have another try," he cried, dusting himself down, and hoping that Marian's father didn't often use his riding kit.

This time, Arthur gained the saddle, where he wobbled like a watery jelly. The groom showed him how to thread the reins between his fingers. Simple enough except that Buster would keep on tossing up his head, anxious no doubt to join the other horses. Every time that happened, Arthur was jolted forward and nearly shot over his head, only a desperate grip on the saddle saved the day.

"Buster's got a tough mouth, mister," warned the groom. "Otherwise he's as quiet as a lamb."

"Tough mouth?"

"Been ridden hard by amateurs." Perhaps the groom's mouth did twitch this time. "Always sawing on his mouth—makes 'em tough. So that if you ain't careful, Buster will get the bit between his teeth and be frolicsome. No harm in him, but likes a run."

"What ought I to do?"

"Keep a tight rein, mister," was the warning. "Never let him get his head down. In other words don't let him pry around for rabbit holes." Here he lowered his voice to a whisper. "Take my tip, mister, and trot. Let them others do all the cantering and galloping. Oh, and one thing else." He held up a finger in mysterious manner. "Hosses has a way of knowing when they're going home. A hos will go out all peaceful like, but directly ye turns his head for home, up goes his ears and whatho?"

"Whatho?" puzzled Arthur.

"Goes all out at the first chance," grinned the groom. "That's when you want to keep yer hands up. Good luck, mister."

But Arthur hadn't heard the last sentence, because Buster had grown tired of waiting, had whisked round, and gone down the drive like a streak of lightning. Actually it was only a canter, but to Arthur it seemed like lightning.

Beating the Wind.

FOR a few yards Arthur managed to grip the reins, but a sudden lurch made him feverishly grip the pommel.

Out in the roadway, and every instinct seemed to urge the boy to choose the easy way and fall out of the saddle before it was too late, but though he couldn't ride he had plenty of courage. He would stick on this plaguey horse if it killed him.

Bump, bump, bump! He tried to

visualise other people that he had seen riding. Between his anguish he remembered someone telling him that one must keep in time with the horse, and that if one rose in the air at the precise moment the jolting would cease. After a lot of painful jolting, Arthur suddenly found himself rising and falling. He felt frightfully elated until he rose a trifle too far and was pitched forward, his arms enfolded Buster's neck, and, by the time Arthur had got back into the saddle, Buster had got the bit between his teeth.

If the trot had been lightning, this was greased. His hat was whisked from his head, whilst pop's large coat streamed out like a kite. He endeavoured to lie back and drag the bit from Buster's teeth, and that nearly caused his downfall—only a desperate clutch at the pommel saved him. He remembered about gripping with the knees—advice he had read in a book—but with pants that are about ten sizes too big, it was nigh impossible.

"Oh, look!" cried one of the young party.

The young folk turned to see Arthur boring down on them like an express train.

"Hi, Arthur, stop!" cried Marian.

But Arthur didn't stop because he couldn't. He had found that by lying low over Buster's neck he was able to recover his breath. Hence he looked like an out-of-work jockey as he flashed past.

Buster saw a stretch of open country, and next moment was on soft grassland.

"Help!" weakly moaned Arthur, and saw ahead a large hedge.

Like a bird the horse went up in the air, to disappear from the sight of the gaping party.

"Well, I am surprised!" gasped one youth. "That's daredevil riding, and no mistake. I say, Marian, perhaps that new friend of yours was pulling our legs."

"I expect he was," murmured Marian, forcing a smile.



Arthur gripped Slim Harris by the throat.

She had her own opinions, but was pleased that the others differed.

But let us follow Arthur Bryant and see where he is now—a good mile away. Already two more hedges have been jumped with ease. Arthur began to sit up a little, a strange exhilaration in his heart. If he survived this outing he'd learn to ride.

Why Buster should then have chosen to tear through a wood is beyond comprehension. Branches and bows whizzed over Arthur's head, dirt, twigs, and leaves bespattered his clothes, but still he clung to the saddle. A small branch whipped his cheek and made him yelp with the pain—pain that made him really angry.

"I'll learn ye, you brute!" he cried, and gripped the reins between his fingers. Back he swung in the saddle, and, to his surprise, Buster began to slow, but off went the horse again when another bough caused the boy to duck.

Clear of the wood, and once more Arthur was tugging at the reins. Buster went from a gallop to a canter, and from a canter to a jog-trot, and finally from a walk to a halt.

"Corks!" breathed Arthur. "I'm still alive!"

He decided to get back to the party and show him what he could do, but forgot what the groom had said about Buster going home. Off went Buster on another mad gallop, and, strain as he might, Arthur could not pull in his mount.

"All right, have it your own way!" shouted the lad, and, in a fit of bravado, slapped the horse hard.

Bing! The only word that can describe the amazing speed that Buster suddenly developed. Arthur had a vague idea of skimming over bushes and under trees, flashing over a stream, and then, by some miracle, being once more on the road.

The cloud of dust was spotted by the anxious Marian.

"He's coming back," she cried.

Like a whirlwind the horseman drew nearer.

"Hi, Arthur, stop!" yelled the girl.

But once again Arthur shot by, and they stared after the disappearing cloud of dust.

"Coo, I ain't ever seen Buster move like that before!" gasped a youth.

"Darned if I'd like to chance it!"

Arthur looked up and saw the iron gates ahead, and, like a flash, Buster had whipped round and pounded over the drive, to stop like a lamb before the house. The boy slithered out of the saddle, mopped his brow, and with one hand leaning against the horse's flanks, gasped for breath.

Then he began to realise the sight he presented.

"I'll teach you to play tricks with me!" he growled. "You just wait there a moment!"

Into the house flew Arthur, and was glad to find no one about. Up the stairs he raced to his room, and, forgetting all about aches and pains, changed into his own clothes.

Down the stairs he went, quite unaware that from behind a pillar a man with fierce eyes watched him.

Curiously enough, Buster was still waiting, and Arthur almost flew into the saddle.

"Now you git on down the drive," stormed Arthur, "and make it snappy!"

And Buster, recognising that something had happened to his young rider, obeyed quite meekly.

February 15th, 1930.

The Burglary.

IF Arthur Bryant hadn't been in such a tearing hurry he might have thought it curious that in so big a household there was no one about.

Actually, much had been happening. The gentleman of the straw hat, who had caused Arthur some inconvenience in the train, had also chosen the Day household for a visit. He was a gentleman of the light-fingered fraternity, who earned his livelihood by burglary and such methods. He knew that there would be valuable presents for Marian's birthday, and had come there because he felt they would be very useful to himself.

Being an expert, he had scaled a wall and found his way towards the servants' quarters. Here the sight of a gun caused those worthies to scuttle like rabbits into the cellar, where they had been locked in.

That done, Slim Harris, of the carefully-cut clothes, had walked upstairs. Mr. Day was out; Mrs. Day was asleep, whilst the latter's personal maid was also enjoying forty winks. He had found the room where all the presents were stored, had made his pick, and prepared to depart. This departure was interrupted by the appearance of Arthur, and Slim had gripped a loaded stick in readiness to deal with the boy, but it hadn't been necessary.

Arthur gone, Slim was at liberty to depart, and he decided to go by the same way that he had entered, with the result that Slim was slinking along by a high wall when a thunderbolt landed on him.

Out in the main road, Arthur turned in the direction he had last seen Marian, but, much to his annoyance, he could find no sign of them.

"Just my luck!" he grumbled, and tried the open country.

No sign of his new friends, so he returned to the main road.

A pedestrian was seen approaching, and, with a whoop, Arthur went after the man. The latter was thoroughly scared as Arthur slithered to a stop, because the youngster was so eager to find Marian that in his keenness he stopped too violently and winded himself on Buster's head.

"Have you"—gasp—"seen some"—gasp—"riders"—final gasp.

"Saw a party way back—Mrs. Day and friends," said the fellow.

"Which way were they going?" he panted out.

"Should say they were riding round the estate," was the answer. "Have you lost 'em?"

"I don't look as if I'd found 'em, do I?" growled Arthur. "Many thanks!"

Once more he was off down the road, and when the high wall that surrounded Marian's home turned at right angles, Arthur left the road and tore over brambles and hedgerows in pursuit.

Buster had decided that a joke was a joke, and that he had had quite enough for one afternoon.

Ahead Arthur saw his new friends, and whooping gaily urged the horse to renewed effort. Buster, with ill grace, responded.

His approach was heard, and the whole party pulled up to wait for him, but by this time Buster was in a bad temper. Arthur tugged like mad at the reins, but the horse tore on at a mad gallop.

The riders scattered to right and left, and Arthur gasped with horror as Buster, when close to the spot where the party

had been a moment before, suddenly charged straight at the wall.

"Woo!" bleated Arthur, and the horse stuck out his front legs like bars of iron.

The result was that Arthur flew out of the saddle like a stone from a catapult, up in the air he went, to sail gracefully over the wall. To land with a crash on the shoulders of the man who slunk through the gardens.

In a heap Slim Harris and Arthur Bryant crashed to the ground.

Both were winded, whilst the black bag with the jewels burst open. Arthur was the first to recover, and how his eyes blinked at sight of the man with the straw hat, the open bag, and the loaded stick. It was the pearls that revealed the truth, because they were the actual pearls that Biggs and Higgins had given him to deliver.

Slim Harris opened his eyes and, being a crook, at once thought about safety, but directly he tried to wriggle to his feet Arthur was on him like a terrier.

"No, you don't!" he cried, and gripped him by the throat.

Desperately, the two struggled, but Arthur was grim and determined. This was his chance to get in well with Marian.

"Help, help!" he yelled.

"He's badly hurt!" wailed Marian.

"Oh, we must be quick!"

It was several minutes before they could get to the scene through a private entrance to which Marian had the key. What a surprise to find Arthur having a rough-and-tumble with a strange man, then Mrs. Day appeared on the scene.

"The pearls. Your presents, Marian!" she wailed. "Oh, hold that man, somebody!" The butler, much ruffled in appearance, charged past, and Slim Harris gave up the struggle.

Explanations followed. Mrs. Day told how she had rung for tea and got no answer, and had finally located the servants in the cellar. Arthur was patted on the back, and though he ached abominably, smiled like a conqueror.

"You brave boy!" said Marian, and that was like music in his ears.

They hustled the unfortunate Slim Harris away, and Mrs. Day and the party went off in an excited group. Mrs. Day knew that Marian would want to thank Arthur personally.

All Arthur's new-found courage evaporated when he found himself alone with Marian, who was gazing up at him in a friendly but most provoking manner.

"I'm awfully pleased, Arthur," she said. "I shall ask pops to see that you come here often. That's if you'd like to come and stay."

"Would I—you bet!" mumbled Arthur.

"I don't know how to thank you," went on the girl, and edged a little nearer. "I shan't scream."

"You won't scream!" It was a puzzler to Arthur. "What you want to scream for?"

Marian edged a little closer so that her upturned face was not many inches from Arthur's nose.

"You're very dense, Arthur!" she mocked. "I don't believe you would dare."

A great grin illuminated Arthur's face because the grey cells had suddenly functioned. She wouldn't scream if he kissed her.

And Arthur was so greatly daring that he not only kissed her once, but three times, and Marian never screamed.

(By permission of Universal Pictures, Ltd., featuring Arthur Lake as Arthur Bryant.)

A band of crooks try to prevent a lad inheriting land rich in oil. A brave girl and a daredevil cowboy champion the boy and risk their lives to see justice done. Starring Jack Perrin and Eileen Sedgewick.

"THE VANISHING WEST"



EPISODE 5.

"THE END OF THE TRAIL."

Wells Fargo Takes Control.

AFTER him!" Sheriff El Waldon shouted, brandishing his gun in the air. "He can't have got far, and I reckon he knows more than he will tell."

Three of the deputies made for the door, thrusting their weapons into their holsters as they ran. They were about to pass into the street when the quiet voice of Wells Fargo checked them.

"Let him go, my friends," he said. "He cannot get away, and I dare say I know where to look for him when I want him."

The sheriff immediately protested. He was feeling somewhat sore at the way he had been left in the dark.

"He's a slippery customer, Mr. Fargo," he said, half in anxiety, half in annoyance. "If he's allowed too much rope, he'll clear out altogether."

Fargo shrugged his shoulders casually. He had proceeded too far with the case now not to know what he was doing; at the same time, he was not disposed to take the sheriff into his confidence just yet.

"He'll not clear out. And if he does, who could stop him?" He looked at the sheriff shrewdly. "As I understand things, you brought him here with the others for the purpose of holding an inquiry. Actually, you had nothing against him. Am I not right?"

"I might not have had just now, but I reckon he's as good as confessed," the sheriff retorted. "He's cleared out at a time when things were getting too warm for him, and that's enough for me. I am entitled to hold him until I can complete my inquiries."

Wells Fargo shook his head.

"Tell me, what exactly have you got against him apart from the fact that he

ran away?" He paused, waiting for an answer. None came. "You see, you haven't even the basis of a prosecution." He plunged his hand into his pocket once more and drew out the handful of flint arrowheads that he had shown previously. "What have you found out about these, for instance?"

"Nothing," replied the sheriff shortly. "Except that one was found on the ground after the Toyahvale stage coach was held up and the driver murdered. Another was discovered after the hold-up of the El Paso, Limited, six months ago, and two others were found on Jim Marvin."

Wells Fargo nodded slowly.

"And so you jumped to the conclusion that Jim Marvin was the leader of the hold-up gang," he murmured softly. "At the same time, you knew he was not the type that made robbery and murder his profession. You must have been in a bad state over it."

Sheriff El Waldon swung away savagely. He was quite well aware that Fargo was having a quiet laugh at his expense, and the thought did not please him. But he was unable to make any answers which would establish his standing again. When he came to think over the whole case calmly, he realised he knew as much about it as he did about battleships—exactly nothing.

"Anyway, I am entitled to hold Trent and his men for attempted murder," he said obstinately. "They tried to blow Jim Marvin and some others into small pieces down at the old silver mine."

Wells Fargo looked round slowly, as if weighing in his mind what he ought to do. Then he calmly threw aside the rug that had been tucked round his knees, climbed out of the bathchair, and walked into the centre of the group.

"That little deception was necessary," he explained. "No one ever thinks a cripple is dangerous." He studied the arrowheads in his hand for a few moments, and then looked up once more. "These things are incriminating. As they have been found after a murder, I should say that anyone who has one of them in his possession at this moment is liable to be indicted on the capital charge."

He spoke quietly and deliberately; at the same time, there seemed to be in his expression a far-away, unalert expression, as though he were talking to himself.

The ensuing silence was broken by a slight clatter. In a moment he had swung round.

"Those four men over there!" he snapped, and his whole attitude had undergone a change. "Get your hands up! I am formally arresting you for the killing of the driver of the Toyahville stage."

His gun pointed in the direction of Collins, Skeggs, Maloney, and Perrin.

If there had been any doubt that Collins was completely innocent of this accusation, it was speedily dispelled now. He went dead white, and his hands shook with fright as he held them above his head.

"I didn't—I didn't!" he blurted out. "I had nothing to do with it. I came all along that shooting the driver of the stage up was a mistake, and would land us all in the calaboose."

Fargo stepped quickly up to his side. "You're lying, Collins!" he said. "It was you that fired the fatal shot!"

"It wasn't! I swear it wasn't!"

"Then who did?"

"Jack Trent!"

Wells Fargo returned to where the

sheriff was standing. A faint smile hovered about the corners of his mouth.

"A simple ruse, but it always works," he murmured. "I wonder you didn't think of it yourself. You see, those four men dumped a load of the arrowheads as soon as I said that anyone carrying any would be implicated. That's how I knew it was them."

Jim Marvin stepped forward and touched Wells Fargo on the arm.

"That clears me, doesn't it?" he asked. "I had nothing to do with the hold-up. I was at the Bar X ranch at the time it took place. My brothers and I were working at the dipping troughs, and three of those guys were with me. They denied I was there at the time, and that's how the sheriff began to get suspicious of me. Now it's been proved that they are some of Trent's men, and that they would naturally want to get rid of me, I reckon their story about me being missing at the time of the murder doesn't hold good."

Fargo held up his hand.

"One moment, young man," he said quickly. "As I see things, you are in love with Wally Lee's guardian, which means that in the event of Wally establishing his claim to those oil lands, you would practically control his money. Am I right?"

"You are."

"Then, sit tight a minute. Before I let you go, I'm having this case cleared once and for all."

Jim stood back with Betty as Fargo reached out for a chair. He carried it over to a far corner, placed it with its seat to the wall, and then sat down, his arms resting on the back.

"Mamie Trent, stand forward!" he called.

There was a stir as a door at the back of the saloon opened and she walked into the room.

The Mystery Man.

WELLS FARGO regarded her in silence for a few moments, purposely holding in his hand so that she could see two of the flint arrowheads.

"Mrs. Trent," he said at last, "I have sometimes wondered why you ever put up with your husband. He hasn't treated you too well. Anyway, he has reached the end of his career now, and I don't expect you're sorry." He indicated the arrowheads. "Perhaps you'd like to tell me about these."

She stared at him levelly, and in her eyes he could see uncertainty. Suddenly they hardened.

"I can tell you nothing," she replied coldly.

"No?" He shifted to a more comfortable position on his chair. "Well, perhaps it is not so important, after all, because I think I know all I want to. You see, I have been making a few inquiries. Your father and mother own a granite quarry up in the mountains, don't they?"

"Well, what if they do?"

"The granite got from there is exactly like that of which these arrowheads are made," Fargo went on slowly, his voice never rising above a conversational tone. "Of course, I hate to suggest it, but it might so happen that I have to take along your father as an accessory."

She looked at him wildly, as if she would like to spring on him and tear him to pieces. Then, as if the strain had become too much for her, she broke down, burying her face in her hands.

February 15th, 1930.

"There, there," said Fargo soothingly. "Don't take it like that. I'm only just trying to find out enough to establish the innocence of those who were nothing to do with the murder, and incidentally bring to justice those who were responsible." He paused again, as though remembering something else. "Let me see, your name before your marriage was Coles, wasn't it?"

She nodded, her face still hidden. "I thought so. It was the name of the guard of the Toyahvale stage who disappeared after the driver had been killed."

She looked up at that, and her eyes began to blaze recklessly. Fargo sat back, knowing that he had broken down her resistance.

"You can't implicate him," she cried. "You can't, I tell you. It would kill my father and mother if they knew. I'll admit that Dick was guard on the stage, but he fell into debt with the man who did the hold-up."

"Playing Faro at this saloon?" Fargo interposed gently.

"Yes." The word was spoken almost in a whisper as she realised the trap into which she had fallen. "You've got me to give the game away now. It was into my husband's clutches he fell. Trent had half this township in his hands at one time through gambling debts. Dick was amongst them."

"And Dick had to take the job of guard on the stage to help Trent with his hold-up?" Fargo suggested, seeing the trend of events now that he had heard so much.

"Yes, that was it." Her voice rose almost to a shrill scream. "You clever devil! You've made me squeal on my own husband. You've tied me up until I've had to put the noose round his neck."

"It's my job," Fargo said slowly. "Anyway, he never meant much to you."

He turned to the sheriff. "Sheriff, see that Mamie Trent is escorted to Barstow, where her people live. I shall not want her again. The arrowheads came from her father's quarry, where she made them under Trent's orders. She acted under coercion, and the law can't touch her."

She turned away, and quietly left the room. Her face was still buried in her hands, and she was weeping.

"I think that more or less clears up the murder case," Fargo went on. "Trent did the job, and a few more inquiries will establish the fact that he was the leader of the hold-up gang that has been working in these parts."

"What about Jim Marvin?" the sheriff asked.

"Oh, yes! Jim Marvin." Fargo's eyes flickered for a moment over Jim's face. "His case is more complicated, isn't it? Let me see now. Was Trent present when you found the arrowhead the first time?"

"Yes," the sheriff replied. "You see, Trent had knocked him down, and when I came to help him to his feet I found it lying by his side."

"That disposes of one incident," Fargo commented. "The arrowhead obviously fell out of Trent's pocket, or was dropped from it deliberately during or after the struggle. How about the second time?"

The sheriff pondered for a moment, as though trying to recall the circumstances.

"I found it in Jim's pocket when I arrested him in the deserted hotel at the oil city," he said slowly.

"I put it there without thinking," Jim put in. "It was left on the counter after the box containing Wally's papers had disappeared."

Fargo glanced at him, and then rested his chin on his hands. Dead silence prevailed for several minutes, broken only by the detective drawing in his breath sharply. His eyes were fixed on the doorway.

Everyone in the room turned. Standing before them was the mystery man, his face no longer masked. His head was still bandaged, and under his arm he carried a black tin box.

Wally stared at him dumbfoundedly, and then darted forward.

"Father!" he exclaimed. "It's you! You're not dead!"

Old Robert Lee chuckled.

"Do I look like it?" he added, putting his free arm round Wally's shoulders.

Fargo thought the occasion well worth more personal investigation. He got up from his chair and went over to where the two were standing.

"Robert Lee?" he asked.

"That's me," Lee replied.

"I am Wells Fargo, the man you have been impersonating," the detective went on. "The impersonation was partly my fault, of course, because I told some others that you were me. It distracted attention from my movements. At the moment I am looking into one or two small matters for the sheriff, and I think you can help me. Will you come over this way?"

He led Lee to where the others were standing, and resumed his position on his chair.

The Trump Card.

THE proceedings were interrupted for a while. The sheriff and Fargo held a hurried consultation out of hearing of the others, and then the sheriff went away.

As soon as he had gone Fargo turned to Lee once more.

"You've led everyone a pretty dance this last week, Lee," he said. "A whole heap of people have been looking for you, and you've been around all the time. What's the big idea?"

"Ever heard of a writ of attachment?" Lee asked.

"I have," Fargo replied. "It's an order of the court, subject to defence, attaching all your goods and money for the benefit of a creditor. In other words, if you owe someone a stiff bill and you don't pay it, they can seize all you've got and sell it for their benefit."

"If they can find you," Lee interposed. "The writ can't be enforced unless it's been served on you personally, and you have a chance either to defend yourself or to pay what you owe." Fargo uttered a low whistle of surprise.

"So that was it?" he muttered. "Trent had you as well?"

Lee nodded.

"You see, I always had an idea that those gushers would start up again sooner or later," he explained. "Oil wells don't run dry in such a short time. So, as I'd married Trent's sister, I went to him for loans to hang on when things got bad. He started to worry me for the return of the money long before I was ready to repay, and one day I heard that he had applied to the commissioner for the writ."

"I made myself pretty scarce, I can tell you. You see, if I had had that writ served on me, Trent would have taken the lands, and what I knew to be worth millions would have been sold by him in public auction for a mere few hundreds. I dared not risk that, so I just vanished from sight."

"Wally's coming down here completely took me by surprise. I had reckoned on him being safe in school

at St. Louis. Then I heard about the gushers starting up again, and about Trent making desperate bids to get Wally's proofs that he was my son away from him. I decided that until I could clear myself financially I should have to remain in hiding."

Fargo nodded slowly and smiled. The whole case was resolving itself with complete simplicity, and he had a satisfied feeling that everything would turn out right for everybody. Even the sheriff would be able to have Trent's hold-up gang under lock and key.

A mere ordinary man might have put Collins and the three other confederates in irons then and there, but Fargo was not an ordinary man. On the contrary, he adopted unusual methods which always made him successful in the final issues of every case he investigated, and this one was going to be no exception.

"But why steal your son's papers?" he asked, his eyes half closed.

Lee started and looked at him closely. Fargo had a disconcerting habit of taking people by surprise.

"I suppose I ought to explain that," Lee said. "Especially as I tried to get young Jim Marvin put in the calaboose. You see, Jim was working in Wally's interests because he had fallen in love with Betty, and I knew him of old to be a stiff proposition. So when he made for the deserted hotel in the oil city I followed.

"I waited until his back was turned, and so timed things that the sheriff and his men were approaching. Then I took the box containing the papers from where he had put it on the counter, and left in its place a flint arrowhead that I had found lying on the ground some days before. I reckoned that Jim would pick up the arrowhead and be found with it in his hand when the sheriff arrived.

"Things worked out even better. Jim put the flint in his pocket, and he was arrested. But the plan failed. He escaped.

"There was nothing else to do but to keep him hanging about with me. If I surrounded myself with a certain amount of mystery by wearing a mask so as to throw him and others off the scent—I did not want Wally to recognise me, for one thing—that was all part of my game. I was mainly concerned in preventing Jim from finding out that Robert Lee was still alive, for if I had let him know he would have insisted that I showed up to the sheriff so as to establish Wally's claim. And the moment my face was seen in Black Rock the commissioner's clerk would have planted that writ on me, and the lands would have been swallowed up in my liability with Trent."

Fargo wasted no further time in considering the matter. He turned to Jim at once.

"You're free," he announced. "The sheriff never really had anything on you, only he hadn't the time or the patience to probe to the bottom of what had been happening."

Jim turned to Betty impulsively. Now that

he was clear of the shadow of a crime he had never committed he wanted to say something he had been saving up ever since he had met her.

"Betty, I—"

Fargo's voice cut across the room like a knife.

"Cut it out!" he said. "Leave all that for some other time. What do you think this place is—a bower of roses?"

A yell of laughter went up from those standing around. It was followed quickly by a shout of warning, and a shot sounded abruptly. With an oath two of the deputies made a rush for the door through which Collins had vanished a split second before.

Again Fargo's voice dominated the situation.

"Let him go!" he said calmly. "See that the other three are handcuffed securely now. I don't want them to escape."

Lee stepped forward quickly. On his face was a look of alarm.

"He's gone to warn Trent and help him collect the rest of the gang," he said. "I saw them once all together, and there must be at least twenty. Unless you stop him there will be bloodshed. They'll come back and massacre the lot of us."

Fargo lit a cigar with studied deliberation.

"No doubt they will come back," he said coolly. "For one thing, Trent will want to clear this building of inermittant documents. But as for bloodshed—" He paused and a thoughtful look came into his eyes. "Perhaps you will all excuse me," he went on. "I have one or two arrangements to make. Lee, you had better take your son and Miss Kincaid to the hotel. It will be safer there."

He went to a door leading to the back of the premises and disappeared through it.

"He's got something up his sleeve," said Lee, watching him go. "What it is I don't know, but that man holds the trump card in this little game."

The Attack.

TRENT gathered his band of followers around him in the forest behind the deserted oil city. As each one passed before him he held up a small flint arrowhead as evidence of his identity.

"Things have come to a crisis, men," Trent said, addressing them. "It has been discovered that I am at the head of the hold-up organisation, and Wells Fargo, the detective, is at my saloon making inquiries. The whole of my private papers are in the building also. You know what that means."

A murmur of apprehension went up. They knew well enough. The names of all of them, together with enough evidence to send them to penal servitude, were at Wells Fargo's mercy.

"I can get you out of this if you'll stand by me to the limit," Trent went on quickly. "If you don't, then Fargo will get us. What do you say?"

A shout went up. There was no doubt as to their support. They were implicated to the hilt, and they knew it.

"Then look to your guns, and see that they're fully loaded. That saloon must be burnt to the ground so that not a particle of it remains. And Wells Fargo must burn with it. Come on."

With Trent at their head they rode out of the forest on to the trail and proceeded at a gallop towards Black Rock. Barely had they covered half the distance before Trent suddenly held up his hand for a halt. He shaded his eyes and looked down the trail at a small cloud of dust that moved towards them.

"It's Collins!" he exclaimed, and broke into a gallop once more.

Collins drew rein by Trent's side a minute later, and Trent could see that on his face was a look of fear.

"What is the matter?" he asked quickly. "Has anything serious happened?"

"That Wells Fargo is uncanny," Collins said in an agitated voice. "He's



The room was like a battlefield. Jim sprang at Trent and laid his enemy backwards across a table. Again and again he crashed his fist into Trent's face.

been asking questions, and knows that you did that murder job. He also knows all about the hold-ups and our share in trying to get Lee's lands. He's after you, Trent, and unless you're mighty careful he'll get you, too."

Trent drew back his lips in a snarl. His face was a study of ugly brutality.

"You mean he'd like to get me," he said. "We're on our way now to burn up my saloon and destroy every shred of evidence that could possibly be used against us in a court of law. If necessary, we'll clean out the whole township. You'd better join us. You'll be safer than wandering about on your own."

They rode on, gathering speed as they came within sight of the town itself. Like an avalanche of death they swept into the main street, cleared it from end to end with a fusillade of shots, and approached the saloon at a gallop.

Jim and Steve, watching side by side from the windows, saw them coming. They waited until the last moment, hoping against hope that a battle would be averted.

Suddenly they dropped behind the sill as they saw two forty-fives levelled at them simultaneously. The bullets whined in through the window and flattened themselves on the wall behind.

"Let them have it!" said Jim quietly. "Give them what they came for!"

Steve and Jim, with the remaining deputies, crowded to every available opening from which they could see the street, and their guns began to crack rapidly. Two of the bandits dropped almost immediately, and the remainder hung back.

"Keep them busy!" came Trent's voice. "Surround the building. They can't get out. Remember, if one of them gets away we're for the pen."

His men obeyed with alacrity. They spread out fanwise and closed in on all sides of the building, dismounting and taking cover behind any protection that offered.

Jim saw the move and did his best to counter it. He and his men plugged away at the attackers in the hope that they could break their formation, but their shooting was of no avail. The whole thing had been done too quickly, and Trent had so distributed his followers that fast shooting was almost useless.

"Where is Wells Fargo?" Lee asked. "He said he would see us through, but he seems to have cleared out. Has anyone seen him?"

"He left by the back way," answered a voice. "He took one of the horses from the compound and rode off in the direction of the sheriff's office."

Jim looked grave. He was watching suspicious movements outside.

"I hope he gets along pretty quickly," he said. "They're bringing up brushwood and paraffin from the store opposite. I believe they've—Yes, they've shot old Mike who runs the place and they're looting it." He lowered his voice. "They're going to burn us out!"

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Lee in an agonised voice. "I wish I had taken Fargo's advice and moved Wally and Betty to the hotel."

Jim started, and looked over to where Betty was sitting. She was struggling with Wally, who wanted to get to the windows with his catapult.

"Let me get at 'em," he was saying. "If I can only draw a bead on that chap Trent I'll bust his nose for him."

Jim went across and laid his hand on Wally's shoulder.

"Don't make things too difficult for Betty, son," he said kindly. "She's quite right in not letting you run into danger. If you showed yourself at the windows for one second someone would plug you clean, and you wouldn't even see who did it before you passed out."

"All right, Jim," Wally replied willingly enough. "Sorry. I didn't realise I was making myself a nuisance."

A shout came from Steve, who had been watching the street outside.

"There's Wells Fargo," he yelled. "Come and look."

Jim rushed to his side, and saw the detective engaged in what was apparently a pleasant conversation with Trent himself. He bore his usual calm expression, and appeared quite oblivious to the fact that at any moment someone might send a bullet into him.

"He'll pull us out of this somehow," Lee cut in. "I don't know how he'll do it, but he will. You mark my words."

Trent's Last Bid.

WELLS FARGO had made quick work of his visit to the sheriff's office, spending a quarter of an hour on the telephone. He returned to the saloon in time to see Trent's men ride up, and drew aside under cover of a pile of boxes to await developments.

Presently he watched Trent give orders for the saloon to be surrounded, and moved forward quickly. He made a wide detour until he was behind the building in which Trent himself had taken cover, and climbed in at one of the windows.

Trent, busily taking aim at a small hole in the wall of the saloon through which Steve was firing, did not hear his approach. The first he knew of his presence was when he felt his gun removed from his hand.

He spun round, and emitted a sharp oath. Fargo promptly jabbed him in the ribs with his own weapon.

"Did you think I was still inside there, Trent?" he asked. "What a pity I'm not. Your fellows could have such a cheerful bonfire, and I dare say I would crackle quite musically. But it's not my way to be caught like that. I let Collins go because I knew he would come straight to you and would tell you I was a fool. Take it from me, I'm not."

"I'll fix you, you twister," Trent ground out between clenched teeth, and made a quick movement to get hold of his gun. His hands stopped in mid-air as he heard the sharp click of it being cocked.

"Don't try anything like that," Fargo advised. "It's unhealthy."

"What are you going to do?" Trent demanded, beginning to get scared.

"Completely stonewall you," was the swift reply. "Make things so that neither you nor your men can move an inch for a quarter of an hour. At the end of that time—well, I have a little surprise for you." He motioned towards the door. "Let's go outside. It's stuffy in here."

Like one in a dream, Trent obeyed. Still with Fargo's pressure on his ribs, he walked straight into the exposed position in front of the saloon, and the shooting from both sides stopped from the sheer surprise of the move.

"Going to be pleasant—or awkward?" Fargo asked pleasantly.

"I'm going to tell my men to kill you," retorted Trent savagely.

"I somehow thought you would," Fargo observed. "It shows that you are a man who is completely lacking in imagination." He raised his voice. "Jim Marvin!"

"Hallo!" came Jim's voice from the saloon.

"Trent threatens to tell his men to plug me. Return the compliment if he does, will you?"

"Right."

Trent paled visibly. He saw now the position into which he had been led. His main reason for coming into the open so willingly was that he knew he could have Fargo killed there, but he had forgotten about the defenders in the saloon. If Fargo's position was dangerous, so was his own. They would get him before he could move a single pace towards cover.

"How do you feel about things now?" Fargo asked.

"I'm waiting for your next move," Trent replied. "Then I'll tell you."

Fargo shrugged his shoulders. "There isn't a next move," he said.

"You're through, and if you wait here long enough you'll know why."

For the next ten minutes Fargo did his best to engage Trent in pleasant conversation, and the end of which time he abandoned his efforts. They stood in the centre of the street in silence, the attack stopped in a complete and insoluble deadlock.

Fargo was the first to move again. He turned so that he could see up the street towards the sheriff's office, and nodded with satisfaction.

"I told you I hadn't got a next move, Trent," he said quietly. "I had already made it before I came after you. A company of state troops is coming down the road to look after you and your cut-throats. Have you anything to say to that?"

Trent hung his head. This last revelation had knocked all the fight out of him.

"Only that I'm beat," he replied in a low voice.

Fargo left the final rounding up to the troops, and took Trent and Collins inside the saloon. Piled in one of the corners were Skeggs, Maloney, and Perrin, their handcuffs removed in case fire had broken out.

Jim greeted Fargo cheerfully as he came in, and then turned on Trent. He was about to say something when Fargo's hand dropped on his shoulder.

"Let him be," he said. "He's through."

Jim nodded understandingly and walked over to where Betty was waiting for him. He held out his hands, and she took them.

"Well, that's the end of the trail, Betty," he said. "So now I'm going to ask you that question."

She smiled up at him happily. "You don't need to ask it, Jim, and I don't need to answer. It isn't necessary."

He drew her towards him, while the deputies and others looked on interestedly. They had forgotten everything else for the moment, except the young couple before them.

A shout went up, and they wheeled round instinctively.

"Trent's got my guns," yelled a deputy.

"Get your nits up," came Trent's voice, cutting through the noise of the confusion. "Come on, men! Rush them!"

Jim dropped Betty's hands abruptly and looked round swiftly to fix Trent's

(Continued on page 28.)



JOHN BARRYMORE.

*A recent portrait of the famous
and popular film star.*

"BRANDED A COWARD."

(Continued from page 8.)

The officer made a swift note on his pad, and told the guard that an inquiry would be held in the morning. Then he started out on his inspection of the cabins.

He saw nothing out of the ordinary until he reached that occupied by Bill and Skeeter. Then he saw that Bill's bunk was empty.

"Where is Cadet Dunn?" he demanded in a sharp tone.

Skeeter raised his head above the bed-clothes, and sprang out as soon as he saw who it was.

"I don't know, sir. He went out to wash, I think."

"Tell him to report to me as soon as he returns." Then turned as there was a movement at the door behind him. "Cadet Dunn!" He stared at Bill almost unbelievably, knowing him to be one of the most promising students at the academy. "What are you doing at this hour in full-dress rig?"

"I've been out, sir," Bill explained, saluting. "I'm sorry I'm late, but I was hung up and couldn't get back earlier."

The officer looked at him grimly.

"Very well. You will remain in your quarters until you are sent for. I shall bring a charge against you for striking one of the guards."

Bill stared at him aghast.

"But, sir—" he began, and then stopped. He had seen what had happened in the grounds. "Very good, sir," he finished, and saluted.

From the Jaws of Death.

LIEUTENANT DUNN faced Bill squarely. His face lined heavily with the worry of Bill's arrest, bore disappointment.

"When I received the skipper's message at Washington, I got leave to come across," he said. "There must be some explanation, something I can do to clear things up." He laid his hands on Bill's shoulders. "Come, my boy, tell me about it. You can't ruin your whole career like this."

Bill swallowed hard. The last few days had been agony for him. Accused of striking a superior, one of the worst crimes in the service, he could see nothing before him but the end of all his ambitions. They would expel him from the Navy, and in one moment his whole future would be ruined. It would even be impossible for him to have anything more to do with Betty, for without his pay marriage would be out of the question.

"I'm sorry, dad," he replied slowly. "I have nothing to say."

The old man shook his head sadly. "There's something strange here," he said slowly. "I know you didn't do it, because it wouldn't be like you. For some reason or other, you're shielding someone else. Who is it, and why?"

Bill looked up suddenly. He squared his shoulders.

"Listen, dad," he said firmly. "You are right when you say that I am taking the blame for someone else, and I'm going to tell you why I'm doing it. I had a friend once, and he loves a girl I love also. At one time I had a faint hope that she loved me in return, but this other fellow appears to have won her back completely. She sent a letter by him the other night telling me so. Also he was out at a time when he

February 15th, 1930.

was under open arrest, and you know what that means."

"I do," said his father. "Go on."

"Here is my position. If I report what I know and so clear myself, I get him kicked out of the Service, and that would make the girl feel rotten. It would also look as if I'd shopped him to leave the way clear for myself." Bill lowered his voice to a whisper. "Now what would you have me do? Play a dirty trick by resorting, or keep things as they are?"

His father looked at him for a few moments, and in that short space of time the expression on his face changed to one of intense pride.

"My boy," he said slowly, a catch in his voice, "what an officer you would have made."

Bill had been given his answer. "What an officer you would have made." Not what an officer he will make. Bill's career was ended.

That night he disappeared. The master-at-arms reported that a motor-boat had been seen heading towards the open sea, down the Chesapeake River with a cadet on board. It was Bill's way of putting himself beyond the reach of awkward questions.

Early the following morning, even before divisions, the admiral commanding the academy received a message that a lady desired to see him urgently. The name on the card was "Miss Betty Allen."

"I have never heard of her," the admiral said. "Ask her to make an appointment."

The junior officer who had brought the message persisted.

"She says it is about Cadet Dunn, sir," he said. "She wants to see you most urgently."

The admiral's attitude changed at once. "Show her in!" he ordered curtly, and the junior saluted and withdrew.

Presently Betty was ushered in. Her eyes were heavy, and she looked worried and tired. She was given a chair, and sank into it listlessly.

"Mr. Dunn has disappeared," she said in a low voice.

"I'm afraid so," the admiral replied. "He left last night, making his way down the river. Perhaps it is as well. I shall have his name deleted from the registers, and that will be the end of the matter. It will save both him and the academy from the disgrace of an expulsion."

"But he didn't do it!" Betty protested. "I know he didn't. Please won't you believe me?"

The admiral shook his head. His attitude was courteous but firm.

"I'm sorry. I have to administer a charge of this type entirely upon evidence." He went over to her side and laid a kindly hand on her arm. "Don't worry about it, young lady. Everything has turned out for the best. He has done wrong according to the traditions of the service, and he has made what restitution he can by going away."

Betty looked up at him, and saw that there could be no altering of his decision. He was the last possible source of appeal, and if he refused to consider the case there was no higher authority to whom she could go.

She fumbled at the catch of her handbag, and drew out two letters.

"I had hoped that it wouldn't be necessary to show you these," she said slowly. "It means an even worse disgrace on one of the other cadets, because he's been guilty of something like forgery. Bill—Mr. Dunn—went away because of me."

"Because of you?" The admiral looked at her in surprise. "I do not understand."

"Mr. Luff was out that night when the guard was struck," she went on. "He bragged about it to his room mate, and when the room mate—he's called Bulge, I think, but I don't know his proper name—when Bulge wanted to report what Mr. Luff had told him, Mr. Dunn forbade him to. It was Mr. Luff who struck the guard."

"Cadet Luff?" The admiral snapped out the question almost savagely. He did not like the type of man who would let another bear the blame. "Can you prove that?"

"Yes." Betty selected one of the letters. "This note was supposed to have been written by me, telling Mr. Dunn that I didn't care for him any more. Mr. Dunn had never seen my writing, so he couldn't know that Mr. Luff had written it. This other one is from Mr. Luff to me. It seems that Bulge had told some of the other cadets, and they treated Mr. Luff so badly that he had to give in the end. So he wrote me a confession and left the academy by the early morning train."

The admiral took the letters and read them. The writing of each was identical. One was addressed to Bill and signed in Betty's name, and the other was addressed to Betty and signed by Herbert.

He rang a bell, and sent for Herbert's papers. He compared signatures, and nodded slowly. For a long time he sat quite still, his head bowed in thought. Then he reached out for his telephone.

"Get me aircraft headquarters," he said to the operator, and then waited. "Is that you, Ellendale?" he went on as soon as connection was established.

"Can you send out a search squadron at once? One of my cadets is on the Chesapeake River in a motor-boat heading for the sea. Yes, there's been some misunderstanding here, and he thought he was in disgrace. It's cleared up now, and I want you to find him. What's that? At once? Good man! Report when you have news, will you? Thanks!" He hung up the receiver, and turned to Betty once more. "They'll land him at the slipways in Eastport," he went on. "You can go over in my car if you wish."

He held up his hand quickly to check her thanks.

Meanwhile, far down the river, approaching the Potomac line which marked the beginning of the open sea, Bill stered his tiny craft mechanically. He knew he had reached the end of everything, and was just not caring what happened. All he wanted to do was to get as far away from Annapolis as he could.

Suddenly he glanced at his petrol gauge, and saw that the pointer was approaching zero. He looked round quickly, and sighted another vessel a short distance away. Immediately he changed course, hoping that the skipper of the other craft could replenish his tanks.

The men on the other boat saw him coming. There was a swift scurry on deck.

"It's a revenue man," one of them said. "If he finds this cargo of liquor aboard, he'll take us in."

"Sink him," was the immediate response, and covers were ripped swiftly off a machine-gun mounted in the bows.

A hail of lead pinged against Bill's craft, and he ducked hastily behind the engine housing. Clouds of spray rose

(Continued on page 28.)

"THE ENEMY."

(Continued from page 14.)

his overcoat and five ancient volumes which had cost him much money before the war. But the coat was threadbare, and the last of his books were worth nothing when the whole nation's energy was bent on war. And the egg had cost him twelve shillings; which was a low price, the shopman had said.

"I heard news," the professor said, as Pauli lit the fire. "It may be that Carl's regiment is coming home for a rest. I'm not sure," he went on quickly, "but there is a rumour about it."

"His father will know!" Pauli said eagerly. "He's doing well—making a lot of money, they say. We could ask him."

"He's a profiteer," the professor said. "Fat and well-fed, and—!" He broke off as the door swung open, and Mr. Behrend himself entered.

He wore a fur coat with a gold watch-chain slung across his waistcoat. He had grown fatter during the war, and now there was a smile on his face as he looked around the room.

"Well, well, well!" he said. "I told you, professor, that you'd get yourself into trouble for talking against the war. And how's my little Pauli, eh? You're looking thin! Carl will want to see you with roses in your cheeks, and—"

"Is he coming home?" Pauli gasped. "Yes, his regiment's due now!" the profiteer said. "At any moment they—hear that?"

He raised his hand. The sound of a band came from outside, its strains stirring.

"That must be them!" the professor gasped. "They never play a band now unless it's for men coming back from the front."

"It's Carl's regiment!" Pauli called from where she had rushed to the window. "I can see them in the street, and—here he is!"

She half screamed the words as the door of the garret was pushed slowly open. It slumped wide, but it was not Carl who stood there. It was Jan.

There was a bandage around his head, bloodstained. His overcoat was torn and smothered with mud. He was unshaven. He had no equipment, and his hands quivered and shook as he stared half-unseeingly around the room.

A stricken silence fell as they regarded him, then Paul spoke.

"Where's Carl?" she asked. "The 11-lieutenant?" Jan stared at her, then stumbled farther into the room and dropped into a chair which the professor pushed out for him.

He sat there, his whole body trembling, his eyes vacant, and his lips quivering.

"Shell-shock!" Mr. Behrend gasped. "Th-th-that's r-right!" Jan murmured. "S-shell-shock!"

"Where is Carl?" Pauli rushed to him and caught at one of his shaking hands. "Is he with the regiment?"

"Th-they're here," Jan quavered. "But th-the lieutenant's—d-d-dead!"

"Dead!" Pauli backed from him, her eyes wide and frightened. "Carl—dead!"

"We've had a t-terrible time—shells and—guns and no food!" Jan's voice steadied, though he still trembled. "I've seen trenches full of dead men, and—it was Christmas Eve when they killed him. The shell hit me, too—here." He touched his head. "I can't think. I

wandered about. But I s-saw him fall. He's dead, like a lot more!"

"Dead!" Through the now opened window came the tramp of the regiment as it passed, boots thudding rhythmically on the cobbles, the sound of the band dying, and suddenly Pauli laughed.

"My Carl's dead!" she said. "Ha, isn't that funny? He married me, and then he marched away to the war—like the others are marching! Marching—marching—hear them, all going to be killed, like Carl! Hear the gun-wheels rattling on the road—hear the band playing—that's war! It's war that's killed my Carl!"

Then she sank, swooning to the floor.

From the Schottenring Railway Station in war-trenched Vienna came men from the trenches.

The war was over, and these were the soldiers coming home. England and the rest of her allies had won.

These men came back to the homes they had left years before, but they were different in appearance from when they had marched away. There were wounded amongst them, for whom the hospitals were too full.

There were men who limped, limbless fellows who aided one another. There were soldiers whose uniforms were in rags, who were hungry and worn and deathly tired.

They wandered through the streets, looking for their homes and the folk they had left behind them. In those streets—like the streets in London and Berlin and Paris—people had cheered the outbreak of war. There was no cheering now for the men who had come back from fighting for them.

There was only cold and poverty, hunger and a great weariness. About the gates of the railway stations in Vienna women stood and waited in the hope that, after all, their own men might be amongst the survivors.

Pauli did not wait with those women. She sat in her garret, hopeless. Things were a little better now. Her father had got back his old job in the University, because people were more ready to listen to his talk of peace between all men.

Pauli did not even start when a strange footstep sounded on the bare stairs, but she looked up when the door opened and someone entered.

"Why—Bruce!" she said wonderingly. Bruce stood there. His left arm was missing below the elbow, and the empty sleeve was pinned up.

"Pauli!" He spoke gently. "You said you'd come back after the war." She stood up, still looking at him. "What fools we were! Do you remember how Carl stabbed you? And it's been all for nothing—nobody's won really."

"I had to come and see you, Pauli," Bruce said, as he stepped towards her.

"Is it because you said you loved me?" Pauli asked. "That won't be any good, Bruce. I think you're fine, but I'll always love Carl, even though I've lost him. He was killed one Christmas Eve."

"I was there," Bruce said slowly. "I saw him!"

"You saw him die?" The colour drained from Pauli's face now.

"I saw him hit, and I picked him up and carried him to our lines," Bruce said. "I sent him out of the trenches, and they pulled him through." His voice quickened. "They've kept him prisoner of war, and now I've brought him back to you, Pauli."

"You've—!" Pauli did not seem to understand.

"He's outside," Bruce said, and turned. "Carl!" he called. "Come in now, old chap!"

Carl entered slowly. His cap was battered, his overcoat was worn and old, the once-smart uniform was torn. Pauli looked at him unbelievably, and not until he touched her hand did she speak his name.

Bruce watched his friend take her in his arms, before he moved towards the door.

He stood there for a moment, looking back at them—at the girl he loved, and the enemy he loved just as well.

Then, very quietly, he went out and closed the door behind him.

(By special permission of the Metro-Goldwyn Film Co., Ltd., starring Ralph Forbes, Lillian Gish, and Ralph Emerson.)

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"SCREEN STORIES."

OUT ON WEDNESDAY. PRICE TWOPENCE. February 15th, 1930.

"Branded a Coward."

(Continued from page 26.)

from the side as the stream of bullets thudded into the wooden hull and cut their way through.

Suddenly the firing ceased, and the liquor craft made off at full speed. Bill stood up again and looked after them, wondering what it was all about. Apparently they had not attempted to aim at him personally, and the fact puzzled him.

Not for long did he remain wondering. Water began to filter through the deck boarding as it came awash, and the engine spluttered to an abrupt standstill. In vain Bill tried to get to the leak and stop it up. The bootleggers had done their work too well.

He had reached the highest point of the motor-boat—the roof of the cabin—when there came a steady droning from above. He looked up, and saw four heavy flying-boats above, their long, slender fuselages gleaming in the early sun. Wildly he waved his cap to attract their attention.

They saw him. Swiftly one of them swooped down to the surface of the water, and taxi'd forward.

Bill clutched at the wing as it swept past, and clambered aboard. Slowly he made his way towards the cockpit.

"Are you the young shaver from Annapolis that's been getting yourself into trouble?" bellowed the pilot.

"I am," Bill replied. "But I don't reckon I'm going back there. If you've come to collect me, I'm going overboard. I'd be in the way if I returned."

The pilot leaned over and grabbed him by the collar of his jacket.

"Cut that talk right out," he said. "The skipper of my unit told me to tell you that there'd been a misunderstanding or something, and as I passed low over Eastport slipways I saw the admiral of the academy standing below looking at our squadron. There was a girl with him. Does that convey anything to you?"

"It does," said Bill briefly. "How fast can this old tub go?"

The pilot did not answer. Instead he opened his throttle wide, and Bill held on for dear life while they shot forward and banked steeply for the turn back to Annapolis—and Betty.

(By permission of the Producers' Distributing Company, Ltd., starring Johnny Mack Brown as Bill Dunn.)

The NEWS REEL

(Continued from page 2.)

Nearly Lost His Balance.

While acting in a talking sequence from the roof of a restaurant in London, Carl Brisson nearly lost his balance and fell into the street below.

The picture he was taking part in is "The Song of Soho," and the scene in question shows him seated on a low parapet of a Soho café and singing to Edna Davies, who is listening to him from a window below. Edna Davies, seeing his danger, shouted in alarm, and at the same time an assistant director who was at Carl Brisson's side grabbed hold of him as the star was about to fall.

In the picture, Carl Brisson's singing will be heard in conjunction with the ordinary noises of a London street.

position. Then he leapt across the roof.

Both Trent's guns roared at once, and someone gave a cry of pain. Almost as soon as the reports had died away, there was a yelp. Trent had received the full force of Jim's fist clean on the point, and his weapons clattered to the floor.

Jim did not give him time to recover. With a shout to the others to wade in, he sprang at his enemy and laid him backwards across a table. Again and again he crashed his fist into Trent's face.

The others took up the shout. Within a few seconds the saloon was like a battlefield. Collins, grabbing at one of the fallen guns, gripped it as Steve mounted a table. Steve took a flying leap and landed squarely on Collins' back. The two rolled over locked in a fierce embrace.

Fargo stood apart watching the scene calmly. He turned to Lee, who was standing near.

"A nice law-abiding place," he commented, and grabbed the sheriff, who rushed through the doorway at that moment. "Say, sheriff, you might get my boys along and have this mess sorted out. Take Trent's crowd down to the lock-up. They've caused about enough trouble." He paused, thinking. "Oh yes, and see Jim and Betty Kincaid down to the parson's house while you're about it."

He was about to turn away, when he remembered something else.

"I suppose I'd better stay and fix you up over those oil lands, Lee," he went on. "Somebody's sure to make a mess of it if I don't. This place wouldn't be the same without me." A bottle whizzed past his head. "Have a cigar?" he asked calmly.

"Thanks," Lee replied, accepting one. "What is your next job?"

Fargo gazed speculatively at Trent and his confederates as they were led away.

"Chicago, I expect. I feel the need for excitement. The West isn't what it was."

THE END.

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"Prince of Diamonds."

Rupert Endon, Ian Keith; Eve Marley, Aileen Pringle; Lolah, Fritz Ridge-way; Lord Adrian, Tyrrell Davis; Gilbert Grayle, Claude King; Williams, Tom Ricketts; Li Fang, E. Alyn Warren; Smith, Gilbert Emory; Inspector Betterton, Colonel McDonell.

"Around the Corner."

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William Haines Learns a Useful Art.

"Dramatic art sometimes consists of soaking one's knuckles in alum and water."

So remarks William Haines, and thereby, he says, he's divulging the secret of how he was able to enact a prize-fighter's rôle. The famous star of athletic rôles, after invading football, baseball, even polo, clashed with a professional in the ring in "The Duke Steps Out," Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's new comedy drama. All his success in his fistie encounter, he says, he owes to the alum.

"Jack Roper, the fighter I fought with in the ring, showed me the trick," explained Haines. "The alum hardens the knuckles so you can't skin or hurt them, and this lets you keep your mind on your acting. Also, in my case, it let me use my mind to concentrate on how best to avoid Jack Roper's fists. He didn't know how to fake his blows, never having been in pictures before. He told me to hit as hard as I liked, and said he'd try to remember not to hit back too hard. They say it made a great fight on the screen. It certainly felt like it from where I stood. Once when Jack hit me on the ribs I rang like a drum."

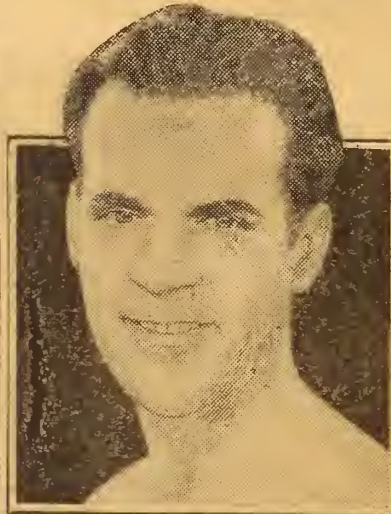
William Haines took intensive boxing lessons before James Cruze began directing the new production. Roper was his teacher, and they rehearsed the fight dozens of times, then staged it before the camera and microphone in the Hollywood Stadium, with an audience of over a thousand looking on.

A Change of Name.

After twenty years on the stage, Van and Sehenk have changed their names to Burke and Glennon.

But the alteration is only temporary, and made for their rôles in "They Learned About Women," their first September 6th, 1930.

NEXT WEEK'S THREE COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



JOHNNY WALKER

— in —

"COUNTED OUT."

Ups and downs in the career of a prize-fighter who stubbed his toes when he snubbed his friends. A drama of the boxing ring.

"TWO BIG VAGABONDS."

A thrilling drama of the West, starring TOM MIX and TONY.

"RED PEARLS."

A story that starts in the office of a Pearl Corporation to the oyster beds in Southern Seas and from the luxury of a West End club to Scotland Yard. Starring Lillian Rich and Frank Perfit.

— ALSO —

The concluding chapters of the mystery serial:—

"THE JADE BOX"

motion picture. The famous songsters play the parts of vaudeville-baseball team mates, and picked out the Irish names to fit the rôles they portray.

Bessie Love plays the leading feminine rôle opposite the singing stars, and the supporting cast includes Mary Doran, Benny Rubin, Tommy Dugan, Eddie Gribbon, J. C. Nugent, and Francis X. Bushman.

Horses.

A troupe of wranglers have been sent down into Mexico by Wesley Ruggles, Radio Pictures director, to round up and bring back to Los Angeles at least a thousand horses. The steeds are required for "Cimarron," Radio Pictures' new film, to be directed by Ruggles.

Thus far Wesley Ruggles has only been able to round up about five hun-

dred horses in and around Los Angeles as against the fifteen hundred he requires.

The horses are to be used in stirring outdoor shots to be done on a panoramic scale, and also to haul that famed cavalcade of a thousand covered wagons which are to be used in the picture.

One of the great problems confronting the director is that of signing up enough skilled riders for his epic of the rise of Oklahoma to statehood. Bronco busters, mule skinner, cow-punchers, and vaqueros of every description who can handle a rein or stick to a saddle are finding it a comparatively easy thing to linc up several weeks' work on this account at the Radio Pictures Studios.

Chester Morris Goes Crook Again.

The police siren, that most effective of all sounds in talking pictures since its efficient use in "The Perfect Alibi," by Roland West, will vie with creaking hinges, shattering glass, screaming ladies, humming motor-cars, and ghostly footsteps in a pro-noise campaign in "The Bat Whispers," Chester Morris' forthcoming all-erie film that Mr. West is directing.

In "The Perfect Alibi" Mr. West got as much drama out of the ticking of a clock during the third degree that was tensely silent. He has been studying the possibilities of dramatising the proverbial drop of a pin. Una Merkel, William Bakewell, Gustav Von Seyffertitz, Ben Bard, and others are in the cast that is hard at work rehearsing at the United Artists Studio.

Jungle Talking Film.

The other week the Universal Company in America despatched an expedition to the island of Borneo to make a talking film which has its locale in the jungle.

The title of the picture is "Ourang," but though it will feature the most formidable of apes, the story will not be just a travelogue. Into it will be woven an exciting drama, with Dorothy Janis playing the leading feminine rôle and a number of Malaysians supporting her in real native parts. The American company itself consists of fourteen members, and precautions have already been taken for their safety.

Before leaving the States they were inoculated against tropical fevers, and, as ourangs on the island are certain to give them an unwelcome reception, the American equipment includes a number of tear-bombs, to keep the huge apes at a safe distance. This is because there is a law in Borneo which prevents the killing of these animals.

(Continued on page 28.)

LOOK OUT for our representative at the seaside resort you are visiting. He is giving away Splendid Prizes and Thousands of Attractive Free Gifts.

To avenge his Texas Ranger pal, a young cowboy runs into the toughest bunch of bad men north of the Rio Grande. A grand thriller of the Old West.

The FIGHTING LEGION



On the Run.

Starring

KEN MAYNARD.



A CROSS the wilderness in a head-long dash for freedom swept a couple of riders, with the long arm of Ranger Law reaching forth in a determined effort to lay hold of them and consign them to a lock-up.

The fugitives were no bad men, being Dave Hayes and Cloudy Jones, punchers who had gone on the spree and become too high-spirited and frolicsome in a town which refused to countenance any wild behaviour. And the long arm of Ranger Law was represented by Tom Dawson, who had been bent on introducing them to the inside of a gaol ever since the moment when young Dave Hayes had sportively emptied the main street of the aforementioned town by some harmless but noisy gun-play.

You will find no scenery more impressive than the scenery of the Texas Desert, with its towering ranges and its curious rock formations that rise up from the scrubby waste land like monstrous gargoyles of a prehistoric world. But neither Cloudy Jones, astride his barrel-bodied sorrel, nor Dave Hayes, on his white pinto Tarzan, had much of an eye for the wonders of Nature during that mad gallop.

Not far from the Border there is a sluggish, sprawling river that has quenched the thirst of many a man crossing the wilderness, but though Dave and Cloudy were both parched by the heat and the desert dust, they spurred through the shallows without a pause, and they had reached the dry ground on the other side when Tom Dawson gained the ford.

The water was scarcely deep enough to cover a bronc's hocks, but it was deep enough to conceal some treacherous hollows where a horse in full career could break a leg. Dave and Cloudy had crossed in safety, but Dawson's mount had the bad luck to find a deep cleft, and as the animal stumbled the Ranger took a heavy fall.

He plunged clean over the bronc's head, and his skull came into violent contact with a half-submerged stone. A low groan escaped him, and then he lay still and silent, with his face buried in the water—and he may have lain there till he drowned but for the fact that

Dave Hayes chanced to look back and saw what had occurred.

Dave drew rein and Cloudy followed suit, pulling his bronc to a standstill a few yards ahead of his pard, and throwing a glance over his shoulder to see what the youngster on the white pinto had already seen. He was a man of mournful visage was Cloudy, and he had looked as miserable as a sick steer ever since Dave had created the rumpus that had brought Dawson on their trail, but on witnessing the mishap that had befallen the Ranger he almost beamed.

"Can ye beat that for luck?" he panted. "He's out to the wide!"

Dave compressed his lips. He was seventy-four inches from head to heel, and he turned the scales at something over thirteen stones, and he was as big-hearted as he was stalwart.

"Luck nothin'," he said. "I'm goin' back to Dawson. We can't leave him there to drown."

And, in spite of the sour expression that at once became apparent on Cloudy's face, he pulled his bronc round and rode to where Dawson was lying.

He dismounted beside the Ranger, and, lifting him, he splashed through the ford to the dry ground again. Cloudy followed him, figuring that Dave had done the right thing after all, but nevertheless maintaining an expression of doleful disgust.

Dave set Dawson down, and, soaking a handkerchief in the water, he dabbed away the blood around an ugly wound on the Ranger's head. About a minute later Dawson opened his eyes and looked up at him, dazedly at first, and then with a dawning intelligence.

"How do you feel, partner?" Dave asked him.

Dawson was staring at him. "Not so good," he answered. "But say, what made you turn back? You must be plumb locoed. You had the chance to get clear away. I reckon."

"That's what I told him," put in Cloudy angrily. "an' though I'll admit it was only right and proper that we

should pull you outa the ford so's you wouldn't drown, there wasn't no call for him to go an' play nursemaid to you. Ranger, that gny sure is loco, an' I'm loco myself for havin' truck with him. I guess you'd better up an' take us back to gaol with ye."

It was plain, however, that the Ranger was in no fit condition to make the return journey across the desert right away, but if Cloudy thought that there was therefore still a chance of himself and Dave making a get-away, he was very speedily disillusioned, for, declaring that the desert was no place to leave a man who might become delirious from the severe head injury he had received, Dave announced his intention of remaining with Dawson until the Ranger had completely recovered.

Cloudy regarded him despairingly. "Pard," he said, "I almost wish I wuz a real bad man, so I could bust this Ranger with the handle o' me gun an' lay him out long enough for me to beat it across the Border."

"Yeah?" rejoined Dave, with a grin. "I'd knock your block off if you did!"

So they made Dawson comfortable in the shade of some stunted trees, and, after tethering the three horses, they settled themselves beside him. It was then fairly late in the afternoon, and along about dusk, after Cloudy had fixed up a scanty meal, they laid their heads on their saddles, pulled their horse blankets over them, and went to sleep.

Cloudy had a dream in which the interior of a gaol figured prominently, and it was a dream that recurred persistently. He was still tossing restlessly in the throes of it when the dawn broke.

He was not the only one who stirred, Dawson having awakened.

The Ranger seemed himself again, in spite of Dave's fears that his head injury would prove troublesome, and, rising noiselessly to his feet, he reached for his sombrero. Then he took out pencil and paper and scribbled a note, which he pinned to the blanket that covered Dave, and, having achieved this

without arousing either of the cowboys, he quietly moved across to where his bronc was standing.

Climbing into the saddle he rode away, and only the white pinto Tarzan and Cloudy's barrel-bodied sorrel noted his departure. But he had scarcely passed out of sight beyond a mass of huge rocks three or four hundred yards away when Tarzan moved over to Dave's recumbent form and nudged him with his muzzle.

Dave muttered drowsily and turned over on his side. In doing so he rolled against Cloudy, who immediately sat up with a start, and next instant Cloudy was shaking Dave by the shoulder.

"Say," he jerked, "the Ranger's gone! Wake up, Dave! The Ranger's gone, an' his boss ain't here neither."

"Gone?" Dave echoed, rubbing his eyes, and then he caught sight of the note that Dawson had pinned to the blanket.

Dave read the message on it. It was addressed humorously to "Two Bad Men."

"My duty was to bring you back and put you in the jug," it ran, "but after what you done I couldn't but think you was too white for any cell. So I'm going to say you gave me the slip in the desert."

"Don't cut loose in any more towns. A sprec's a sprec, but keep inside the margin. So-long, and best of luck."

"Tom Dawson."

"That Dawson sure is a good guy," declared Cloudy, when Dave had finished. "You know, I reckon he's—"

But whatever extravagances of praise Cloudy was about to utter were interrupted by a sound that cut sharp and clear through the stillness of the morning. It was the sound of a rifle-shot, fired at no great distance from their camping-ground, and it brought them to their feet.

It seemed to have come from beyond the barrier of rocks—around which Dawson had disappeared a few minutes before—and, swinging themselves astride their ponies, Dave and Cloudy galloped in that direction. They passed the rock formation in a smother of dust, and, swerving to ride parallel with it, they saw the ill-fated Dawson's bronc careering in a panic across the wilderness.

Dawson himself was lying huddled on the sand of the desert. He was conscious when Dave dropped on his knees beside him and gathered him in his arms, but his eyes were glassy and his face was grey.

"I'm—done for, friends," Dawson whispered feebly. "They got me—clean through the back."

He thrust his hand inside his shirt, and with some difficulty he drew out a badge and a report-book. The effort of producing them brought the blood to his mouth, but he contrived to speak, and, by bending close to his lips, Dave and Cloudy managed to hear his every word.

"Will you do somethin' for me, Hayes?" he said. "Will you see that this here star—an' this here book—are turned in—at headquarters—"

"Sure I will," Dave told him. "But say, Dawson, you ain't passin' out. Why, just as soon as Cloudy and I start doctorin' you up you'll be feelin' as fit as ever you were."

He did his best to sound reassuring, but he could not deceive himself, let alone Dawson, who could feel the chill hand of death on him.

"I won't want that badge no more," the Rainger breathed. "I'm through. Somebody—up there in the rocks—shot

me in the back. No use—lookin' there. Gone by now—I reckon that gang from Bowden heard I was on their trail. I—"

His voice trailed away, and his head fell forward over Dave's arm.

"Dead!" murmured Cloudy, and Dave looked at him grimly.

"Yes, Cloudy," he said, "and something tells me we're headin' for Bowden—"

Bowden.

THERE was the sound of a gunshot in a bar on Main Street, Bowden, and a certain Pete Rogers dropped to the floor with a bullet in his heart.

A killing was a more commonplace affair in Bowden than in most townships, but it was not such an everyday occurrence that it failed to attract attention, and soon a crowd had gathered at the entrance of the bar-room.

Among that crowd were several prominent citizens, and these included John Blake, the banker, a tall, grey-haired individual who elbowed his way through the mob even as two or three men emerged from the saloon.

One of the latter was a notorious character by the name of Denby, a professional gambler who made his livelihood in the bar-room with a pack of cards. Immediately he appeared it was at once clear that he had fired the shot that had killed Rogers, for there was a smoking six-gun in his hand.

Now Bowden was a town where the law had no representative, the place having sprung up almost overnight less than a year before. But John Blake claimed to be one who was all for justice, and, singling out Denby, he spoke to him in stern accents.

"Denby," he said, "this town has had enough gunning, and I reckon it's high time an example was made of somebody. They tell me Pete Rogers is dead—shot by your hand."

Another prominent citizen had followed Blake through the crowd, a powerfully-built man wearing a broad-brimmed sombrero and a store suit, the trousers of which were thrust into a pair of patterned riding-boots. He was known as Burl Edwards, cattle buyer, and, like Blake, he was to all appearances in favour of law and order.

"I'm with you there, Blake," he stated. "Bowden's seen enough o' these killings."

Denby had slipped his gun inside his waistcoat, and now he held out his hands appealingly.

"I hadn't any choice, Blake!" he protested. "Pete drew a gun first. It was him or me. Anybody that was in the bar at the time will tell you the same."

He looked at a bunch of unsavoury-looking individuals who had emerged from the saloon with him. They supported the statement, though, watching them closely, an onlooker might have noticed the flicker of a smile around the lips of more than one of them. Blake, however, merely shrugged.

"Well, we'll have to take their word for it, Denby," he said, and, in company with Burl Edwards, he turned away.

There was a girl on the veranda of the building in which Pete Rogers had met his death. That building was both saloon and hotel, and the girl was Molly Williams, daughter of Pop Williams, the proprietor. Her father was standing with her, and she turned to him as the crowd was breaking up.

"Pete Rogers didn't draw first!" she said hotly. "It's a lie. I was in the

hotel lobby and I saw what happened. He had his back to Denby—"

Her father gripped her arm. "Quiet, Molly," he said in an anxious undertone. "Whatever you saw, keep it to yourself."

Nor was Molly Williams the only one who knew that a dastardly crime—only one of many in Bowden—was going unpunished on a false testimony. For a couple of men who had been in the bar at the time, and who were now moving off with the crowd, were voicing the same sentiments as those which Molly had expressed.

"It was plain murder, Jim," one said to the other. "I saw it with—"

He was interrupted. One of the rogues who had vouched for Denby's story was right behind him, and spoke threateningly.

"Say," the ruffian ground out, "you didn't see nothin'. Get me?"

The man he addressed moistened his lips.

"Sure," he answered uneasily. "I get you—"

In the meantime Pop Williams and his daughter Molly had gone back into the hotel, in the lobby of which Pop was presently joined by two or three honest-looking citizens of serious mien. They looked around them first of all to make sure that there were no eavesdroppers, and then one of them broached the subject of Pete Rogers' killing.

"Williams," he announced, "there's some talk goin' around that Rogers was jest plain murdered, and, knowin' Denby and his cronies, I'm prepared to believe it. It's about time that the good folks in this town got together to protect themselves from the bad element."

Pop Williams nodded grimly. "That's what I've always said," he rejoined, "but the trouble is, that outside you fellers and myself, you can't tell for certain which are the bad 'uns and which are the good 'uns."

There was more truth in the statement than even Pop Williams himself suspected, and had he been in the neighbourhood of Burl Edwards' office at that moment he might have overheard a conversation that would have given him cause for deep thought.

Blake had accompanied Edwards to that office, and in the privacy of it the banker spoke to the other man impatiently.

"Listen here, Edwards," he said, "tell that gambler Denby he's got to calm down, or he'll get us all into trouble. You and I are playing for big stakes, and we don't want any of our men creating any kind of stir that might rouse these law-and-order citizens. Don't forget we're in the position of men who are sitting mighty close to a hornet's nest."

"Aw, forget it!" growled Edwards. "The law-and-order element in this town ain't sure enough of themselves to start anything. And besides, ain't you and I got 'em fooled a-plenty with our talk of justice and right livin'? Why," he added, with an ugly smirk, "there's times when I feel a psalm-book wouldn't be outa place in my hands."

"All the same," Blake grumbled, "Denby ought to keep that gun of his unloaded for a spell."

"Oh, be yourself!" said Edwards. "And listen—I'm goin' across to the hotel to see what Pop Williams thinks o' the affair. I'll look you up later."

They parted, Edwards crossing the street to the hotel and entering the lobby as Pop was seeing his friends off the premises. Pop and those who were of the same way of thinking as himself had

been unable to figure out any plan of campaign, but the hotel-owner was still turning the affair over in his mind when Edwards greeted him.

Pop answered him gruffly. He had no cause to suspect Edwards, but at the same time he was not particularly partial to the cattle buyer, and he had never been in the habit of taking him into his confidence.

"A bad business—the shootin' of Peto Rogers," observed Edwards.

"A bad business right enough," Pop grunted. "A man can't call his life his own when there's folks around that are too free-an'-easy with their guns."

He left Edwards and went upstairs, and Edwards was on the point of taking himself off when his glance travelled to the register-desk at the far end of the lobby. Molly was behind the counter, busy with a ledger, and at sight of her Edwards fingered his moustache and strolled across to her.

Her hands were resting on the counter, and, leaning towards her all at once, he caught hold of them.

"How about a little kiss from the prettiest girl in Bowden?" he coaxed.

She tried to draw away, but his grasp on her hands tightened, and she was actually struggling to free herself when a couple of strangers to Bowden came in through the entrance of the hotel lobby. One was Dave Hayes, and the other was Cloudy, who looked more doleful than ever.

Dave was immediately aware of what was taking place at the counter, for the first object that caught his eye was Molly's pretty face. The expression on it told him that the attentions of the man who was pestering her were by no means welcome, and he at once moved towards the desk.

Coming up alongside Edwards, he brought his heel down with deliberate force on the cattle buyer's foot, and Edwards was unfortunate enough to possess a large-sized corn. He had released Molly in the twinkling of an eye, and with a bellow of pain he began to hop around on one leg.

Dave was profuse in his apologies, but it was all too clear to Edwards that his action had been intentional, and the cattle buyer raved and fumed.

He broke off in his curses to utter a sharp yelp, for Cloudy had come up on the other side of him, and Cloudy was

holding a cigarette which he contrived to stub—apparently by accident—against the cattle buyer's hand. Edwards, carrying his burned finger to his lips, glared at Cloudy, but after a moment he seemed to master his rage and he assumed an ugly smile as he turned his glance on Dave again.

"You'd better be careful whose toes you step on!" he said. "They ain't all as good-natured as me in this town."

Dave turned his back on him contemptuously and was about to address Molly when he saw a look of horror in her eyes. She was staring over his shoulder, and Dave instantly whipped round to see Edwards reaching for his six-gun.

The cattle buyer's hand had actually closed on the butt. He did not proceed with the gesture, however, for in the act of wheeling Dave had jerked his own gun out of its holster and now he was covering Edwards. The man looked at him narrowly for a moment, and then, with compressed lips, he backed towards a pair of swing-doors that opened on to the bar-room.

When he had gone Dave turned to Molly again and announced that he and Cloudy wanted to put up at the hotel, and he was in the act of signing their names when old Pop Williams came downstairs.

"You're aimin' to stay here, strangers?" he inquired, approaching the counter, and as Dave nodded: "Well, if you don't mind, I'd like you to pay in advance, gents," he said. "Folks pass out mighty sudden in this town, an' it ain't easy to collect money from a corpse sometimes."

Cloudy glanced towards Dave uneasily, and then fairly gave a jump as he found himself confronted by a long, lank and dismal individual who had entered the lobby and moved between him and his pard. This man was carrying a tape measure, and he proceeded to take Cloudy's measurements.

"I'm the undertaker," said he of the dismal countenance. "I might as well get your dimensions now as later. It saves time when business is as bright as it is now."

Cloudy retreated hastily.

"Keep away from me, will ya?" he gasped. "Keep away, I tell ya!"

Dave grinned amusedly, and then, as Cloudy blundered through to the bar-

room, he followed him and pushed him laughingly into a chair beside a small table that stood near the street-door of the saloon.

Food was what they needed, and, taking a seat beside Cloudy, Dave called a waiter—and while a meal was being prepared for them he took stock of the crowd in the bar-room.

The place was well patronised, and at the long counter there were enough men to keep three bar-tenders steadily occupied in serving out drinks. As for the customers, they were typical of the state of affairs in Bowden—some of them hard to place either as "good folks" or "bad," others seeming decent enough specimens—and the rest as ugly a set of ruffians as Dave had ever seen.

Dave's attention was diverted presently by the appearance of three men who marched from the street arm-in-arm. They were all men of magnificent physique, but it was not this circumstance that caused Dave to watch them with interest. For they drew notice to themselves by bawling out a ditty in loud, strident but unmelodious voices as they crossed the threshold:

"Bad Bill was an hombre

Who took too big a chance.

So now the undertaker's measurin' him

For his go-to-heaven pants."

This ballad, which rang unpleasantly on Cloudy's ears after his experience in the hotel lobby, was followed by a vast guffaw of laughter from the three newcomers. And then, speaking in unison, they made an announcement.

"Introducin' the Hook Brothers," they said. "Ed"—three hands pointed to the one on the right—"Fred"—the hands pointed to the one on the left—"an' Red."

Once more their gust of laughter swept through the bar-room, and then, bowing over a diminutive waiter in their stride, they crossed to the bar and called for three drinks in one voice.

It was not until then that Dave noticed a familiar figure at the bar—an acquaintance of a few minutes before. It was Burl Edwards, and Burl Edwards had his eye on him. The cattle buyer's glance wavered as Dave stared back at him, and the meal he and Cloudy had ordered arriving just then, Dave paid no further heed to the man.



Then he scribbled a note, which he pinned to the blanket that covered Dave.

As for Edwards, he scowled at the counter, and not until he suddenly became aware that the Hook Brothers had raised their voices in song again did the scowl leave his face, a slow smile following it.

With malicious inspiration Edwards drew nearer to the Hook Brothers and interrupted them in their melody.

"Boys," he said, "there's a couple guys over there plumb disgusted with your singin'—"

The Hook Brothers paused, turned their heads in the direction indicated by the cattle buyer, and then looked at one another and nodded solemnly.

They approached the table where Dave and Cloudy were sitting.

"We understand," they said, "that ye don't care much about the Hook Brothers' singin'."

Dave glanced up at them. Their faces were thrust forward threateningly towards him, but he was not in the least perturbed, and his eyes twinkled.

"Why," he stated, "I never heard tell of the Hook Brothers—and I certainly didn't hear any singin'."

The Hook Brothers were not partial to sarcasm, and their chests swelled. Then, with a sudden forward movement of his shoulder, Red drove his great fist into Dave's chest and hurled the youngster from his chair.

Dave was up in a moment, and the twinkling merriment had gone out of his eyes. Without a word he launched himself at the three brothers like a fury.

Rough House.

THE Hooks were scattered by Dave's whirlwind onslaught, and Red took a smashing punch that caught him below the left eye and knocked him staggering to the bar. There was an immediate uproar as the crowd there became aware that a fight had begun, and shouts of encouragement arose.

The Hook Brothers rallied and closed in on Dave.

From behind the youngster there was the scrape of a chair, and Cloudy climbed to his feet with a war-like howl. Flung himself into the scrimmage, he singled out Red, and once again that worthy received a lusty buffet below the left eye.

Red knew how to take punishment. He bellowed like an infuriated bull and rushed at Cloudy to avenge the punch. Dave, in the meantime, had his hands full with Ed and Fred, but he was a match for the pair of them, and, suddenly enveloping them with his strong arms, he slung them across a table. Fred, deep in the chest and black in the beard, was rendered helpless, one arm pinned down by his brother's weight and the other held in Dave's vice-like grip. But Ed, powerful as a gorilla, clutched at the youngster's shoulder and swung with his right. It was a hammer blow that must have created havoc on Dave's jaw had it landed, but the table capsized before the punch could connect, and the three combatants fell to the floor in a struggling heap.

With arms and legs entangled, they writhed and fought. Dave had his forearm under Ed's chin and his wrist was wrapped around Ed's biceps. With the other arm he was man-handling Fred, but the latter, emitting snarling sounds from amongst his raven whiskers, had secured a hold on the youngster's wind-pipe.

He did his best to strangle the wits out of Dave, and it was only with a tremendous effort that the youngster managed to break his grip and scramble to his feet. The brothers rose with him, but Fred took a count of sixty seconds

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as a shattering right-hander landed on his jaw.

Ed grappled with Dave, and the two of them reeled to the bar, where a couple of bystanders—cronies of the Hook Brothers—suddenly elected to join in the struggle. Climbing on to the counter and kneeling there, they helped Ed to secure Dave, and then one of them wrenched the youngster's face round so that he could take a crack at his jaw.

Dave tore free before the fellow could launch the blow, and, smashing Ed to the floor, he waded into his two sympathisers with both hands.

But what of Cloudy?

Cloudy, as a matter of fact, was having a rough time at the hands of Red, who sent him to the boards with a terrific swing. Two men near by, with kindly sentiments, helped Cloudy to his feet, but Cloudy was too dazed to distinguish this as an act of friendliness, and he blindly proceeded to lay them out.

He knocked them sprawling over a table—and he had hardly accomplished this when Red stepped close once more and gave him a knock-down punch. His eyes grown glassy, Cloudy lay tumbled across an overturned chair, and, while he reclined in that position, Red Hook gripped him by the throat with one hand, and, swinging his other arm to its full extent, began to batter the wits out of him entirely.

Yet Cloudy, though his form was as spare as a scarecrow's, had remarkable powers of endurance, and, swiftly recovering from the punishment inflicted on him, he lurched to his feet the moment Red turned from him.

Red made for the spot where Dave was fighting, but, reeling after him, Cloudy overtook him near the bar and clouted him with such force that he was staggered. And it was at this same moment that a little Irish bar-tender decided to put a stop to the battle in the name of law and order.

He pinned a badge importantly on his chest and ran to the end of the long counter. Two men leaning against a hinged leaf there received a jolt under the chin as the little Irishman flung it up to pass through.

The bar-tender busted up to Cloudy and Red Hook. Each was in the act of aiming a terrific punch at the other, and the Irishman received both of them. He described a somersault, lay quivering on the floor, and then, reaching his feet, stumbled back towards the leaf in the counter. As he threw it up once more the men leaning there received a second jolt under their chins.

Meanwhile, Dave was lashing out at his assailants with both fists, and, having accounted for them, he wheeled wildly towards the bar, which was now lined with men whose sympathies were with the Hook Brothers. They baited Dave and jeered at him, and the youngster, fairly worked up into a fighting frenzy now, sprang pantherishly into the midst of them.

They were scattered, and one of them was tumbled over the counter. Next instant, however, the mob came swarming around him with angry shouts.

Dave leapt on to the bar, planted each hand in a man's face, and then jumped in amongst the crowd and swung at them right and left.

It was as he jumped that something fell from the inside of his shirt, and it slid across the bar-room floor to the feet of a man who had entered the saloon a minute or two before. The man was John Blake, banker, and, stooping, he picked up what appeared to be a book.

It was a book—the report book that

had belonged to Tom Dawson—and between the leaves of it was the dead Ranger's badge.

Blake's face was a study in bewilderment, and then, rousing himself and glancing significantly at Edwards, who stood near by, he forced his way through Dave's assailants.

"Boys," he announced, "meet the first Ranger that ever honoured Bowden with a visit."

There was a blank silence, a silence that was shared by Dave.

"I'm sorry, Dawson," Blake went on, "that these hombres gave you such a rough reception."

It was Dave's first impulse to tell him that he had made a mistake—that Dawson lay dead out on the desert, shot through the back by an unknown hand. But suddenly it seemed to him that, by taking advantage of the error in identity and keeping up the deception, he might find it less difficult to achieve the purpose which had brought him here to Bowden.

He gave the battered Cloudy a side-long glance ere answering Blake.

"I guess you don't have to worry about the rough reception," he stated. "I always did hear that a fight was the best way of gettin' acquainted. But if you don't mind, me and my pard'll be gettin' along upstairs."

"Sure," was the rejoinder. "I reckon you could do with a rest, what with a long ride and a rumpus at the end of it. Look me up some time, will you? The name's Blake—John Blake—and I'm the banker here."

"Sure I'll look you up," said Dave, and then, in company with Cloudy, he passed through the bar-room to the hotel lobby, where Molly Williams was standing with a scared look on her face. For she had heard the sounds of strife in the saloon.

Molly showed Dave and Cloudy to their room, and at the door of it Dave paused to exchange a word or two with her. From the moment when he had first set eyes on her he had been attracted by her, and he was anxious to know more of her.

They parted a few minutes afterwards, and Dave entered the room to find Cloudy sitting moodily on a bed. He settled himself beside his pard, and for a spell the two of them gazed thoughtfully into space.

Dave was the first to break the silence. "Cloudy," he said all at once, "what are we goin' to do now?"

"Do?" Cloudy rose to his feet abruptly and regarded Dave with a determined glint in his eye. "D'you know what we're gonna do? We're gonna get outa this town afore that doggone underliker gets his claws on us!"

"Aw, forget him, Cloudy," urged Dave. "I mean, what's the next move we're gonna to make in clearing up the mystery of Dawson's death?"

"Listen, cowboy—or Ranger—or whatever y' are," said Cloudy. "I've stuck alongside you pretty permanent for more'n a couple years now. But I'm through with lookin' around fer trouble. So-long!"

And, pulling his sombrero farther down over his head, he stepped out towards the door.

"So-long," Dave rejoined casually.

Cloudy reached the door and actually gripped the handle. Then he seemed to waver, and finally, muttering something into the stubble on his chin, he turned round again.

It was not the first time that Cloudy had threatened to leave Dave flat, and it was not the first time that he had changed his mind.

Law and Order.

DAVE, assisted by Cloudy, had fairly installed himself in Bowden, and within a month of taking up his residence there he had fixed up quarters in a vacant shanty close to the Williams' Hotel.

He still posed as Ranger Dawson, and, to lend credence to the well-meant deception, he had hung up a signboard over the shanty, bearing the legend: "Ranger's Office." But that was not all he had done to justify himself in his new rôle. All Bowden was talking of the exploits which he had performed in the interests of Law and Order.

One forenoon, when Dave was sitting at his desk in the office and Cloudy was reclining with his feet on a slow-combustion stove, a small oval patch of reflected sunlight shone through the window and flashed across the shady room. Cloudy took no particular notice of the circumstance until he noticed that the flash kept recurring, and then, turning to Dave, he saw that the pseudo-Ranger was watching the flashes and busily writing something in a book each time they danced through the office.

"What's the idea?" Cloudy demanded. "Just a little code that Pop Williams and I worked out," Dave explained. "Pop is in a house on the other side of the street, heliographin' me with a mirror. Every time anybody passes he signals whether they're good, bad, or doubtful, and I jot down their names. One flash means that a guy's plumb bad, two flashes tell me that an honest citizen is passin', and three flashes signify a doubt."

Cloudy grunted, and then he was silent for a while. When he spoke again it was with great deliberation, as if he had been turning over some deep problem in his mind.

"Did you ever stop to think what would happen," he said, "if the guy that shot the real Dawson ever drifted into town?"

Dave's eyes narrowed.

"That's what I'm waiting for, Cloudy," he answered slowly, "and when he does drift in I'm banking on him showin' his hand in some way or

other. The moment he shows his hand I'll nail him!"

It was at that moment that a long, lank figure passed the window—a figure at the sight of which Cloudy leapt to his feet. It was the figure of the undertaker, and, pausing at the office door, which was open, he bent a mournful eye on Cloudy.

"Five feet eleven," he murmured, "and thirty-seven round the chest." And then he moved on.

A chill perspiration broke out on Cloudy's brow.

"That's the guy that's goin' to nail me," he wailed. "He's goin' to nail me down with coffin pegs. I kin see it in his face. Aw, Dave, what was Dawson to you, anyhow, that we've gotta stick around here an' find his killer?"

"Dawson was one o' the whitest men I ever met, Cloudy," said Dave, "and I happen to know that he left a widow and three kids. And if it's the last thing I do, I'm going to get the bunch of dirty coyotes that were responsible for his killin'."

Cloudy lost his temper and began to rave at him, and he was indulging in some particularly ungentlemanly expressions when a girl appeared on the threshold of the office. The girl was Molly Williams, and as Dave caught sight of her he began to make feverish attempts to silence Cloudy, but not until the latter actually perceived Molly himself did the atmosphere become suitable for feminine ears.

"There's one thing I like about Cloudy," Dave said to Molly, with a grin. "He's just as mild as an old burro."

Cloudy looked daggers at him, but at that moment a diversion was caused by a wild series of flashes from Pop Williams' mirror.

"Gee!" David commented. "Half the town must be headed this way!"

The first men to pass the window of the office were the Hook Brothers, and with threatening mien they marched in across the threshold. They had apparently made some boast about boarding the Ranger in his den, for there was

a fair-sized crowd of ruffianly-looking loafers on their heels, and the mob stood outside the office to listen to what was said.

Cloudy's first impulse at sight of the Hook Brothers was to reach for his gun, but he checked himself and gaped in bewilderment as he saw the three of them wink distinctly. Then, speaking as usual in one voice, they addressed Dave.

"Ranger," they announced, "the Hook Brothers wish ter state that they don't give a coupla cents for you, and if it's thinkin' you are that you'll make law-abidin' citizens out of us—come and try it!"

They spat deftly at Dave's feet, whereupon the mob outside smirked approvingly. Then, advancing nearer, the three Hooks addressed the pseudo-Ranger again. But this time, although their voices sounded as gruff as ever, their words could not possibly have reached the ears of the ruffianly crowd in the street.

"Ranger," they went on, "we're the worst ornery bunch o' wildcats in this no-man's country. But for your private car we'd like to let you know that if you want any help you can bank on us."

They drew back once more, and at the doorway they reverted to their former threatening attitude.

"Bear in mind what we told you, Ranger," they declared, "and you'll save yourself a heap o' trouble."

Then, with another sly wink at him, they turned on their heels and departed, amid the applause of the crowd.

Dave glanced at Cloudy.

"Can you beat that?" he said.

"Those three hard cases are for us." Then his face grew serious. "All the same," he continued, "we need every man we can count on—even with three huskies like the Hook Brothers. We seem to have been keeping things in hand pretty well since we started out to clean up this town. But the wilder elements are only lyin' low for the time bein', I guess, and one day there's goin' to be a show-down!"

He looked at his companions.

"Molly—Cloudy," he told them, "I've



They stood waiting with drawn guns as they heard the newcomers ride up to the shack.

been keepin' my ears and eyes open in Bowden, and this is what I've figured out—that there's some ruling force behind this town's lawlessness, and when we rope in a bunch of rustlers, or horse-thieves, or hold-up men, it don't amount to much."

The "roping in" of rustlers, horse-thieves and hold-up men did not, perhaps, amount to a great deal in Dave's estimation, since it was the bigger game he was after. But at that moment a discussion was taking place at the headquarters of the said "bigger game," and it was a discussion which proved that the activities of Bowden's Ranger were not being treated lightly.

The Man From the Desert.

EDWARDS and Blake moved in across the threshold of the cattle buyer's office to find two or three men lounging there—members of that fraternity of lawlessness of which they were the leaders, and which held wide-spread interest in anything that promised loot.

One of the gangsters was playing a mouth-organ, but Blako interrupted him in his melody-making efforts.

"Hey, cut out that music," he said, "and go down and take care of that stock, will you?"

The man went off, and Blake glanced at the others broodingly.

"Aro you sure it was the Ranger that you saw last night?" he demanded.

"Sure enough I saw him!" one of them declared, and the other nodded emphatically.

Edwards spoke.

"Yeah," he ground out, "only for that Ranger we'd have had ten thousand dollars' worth of cattle stacked away in the hills right to-day."

"Aw, take it easy, Ed!" said Blake. "This Ranger isn't the first man who thought he could beat us—"

He paused, for at that juncture there was a knock on the door, and next moment it was opened to reveal a sinister-looking individual who was powdered with dust from the crown of his battered hat to the heels of his riding-boots.

He was below the average height, but looked a dangerous enough customer—a rat of a man with a pair of shifty eyes and a week's growth of stubble on his face. He was known around Bowden as Jack Bowie, and he had something of a reputation with a gun.

"Howdy," he greeted, coming in and closing the door. "Glad to see you, Blako—and you, Edwards. How about a little mountain dew outa the bottle to wash down this alkali in my throat?" And he moistened his lips as he spoke.

Blake and Edwards regarded him sourly.

"You're a fine one to send out to get somebody, ain't ya?" snarled Edwards. Bowie's expression was one of bewilderment.

"I was just layin' low until it was safe to come back into town, that's all," he protested. "I got my man, an' I didn't have no call to come a-ridin' into Bowden afore the affair had blown over."

"You got who?" demanded Edwards. "Your man?"

"Sure," said Bowie, "the man you hombraes sent me out to get—Dawson the Ranger."

"Yeah?" sneered Edwards. "You musta been cross-eyed when you shot at him. Why, Dawson's right here in town—large as life."

Bowie's expression of bewilderment gave place to one of blank amazement.

"Dawson?" he echoed. "Say, I September 11th, 1930.

plugged him when I was comin' through the pass. What kinda talk is this you're givin' me?"

Blake touched him on the arm. His brows were drawn down in a frown.

"Come here," he said, drawing him to the window. "Look there! If you shot Dawson, who is that man over there by the Ranger's office?"

He pointed. Dave had come out on to the veranda of his quarters with Molly, and was in full view of Blake and Bowie.

"That's Dawson," said Blake, "the man you claim to have—"

Bowie cut in on him.

"Aw—I know Dawson better than I know you. Whoever that hombre is, he ain't Dawson." Then all at once his eyes narrowed till they looked like mere slits in his leathery face. "Say, what's he hornin' in here for?" he blurted, reaching for his gun.

Blake checked the gesture.

"I know a better way than that," he jerked. And, to Edwards: "We've got this Ranger just where we want him."

On the veranda of the office across the way Molly was passing some pretty compliments on Dave for the headway he had made in cleaning up Bowden, and neither of them had a suspicion of the trouble that was brewing.

"You know, I just couldn't have believed that one man could have done all that you've done for this town," Molly was saying, when Cloudy came out of the office.

"Oh, Mr. Cloudy," Molly apologised, as she saw him. "I quite forgot to say 'How do you do?' when I dropped in just now."

"How do I do?" Cloudy repeated gruffly. "Say, I'm right on the verge of nervous prostration—just the same as I have been ever since I hit this town."

"Aw, don't pay any attention to him, Miss Molly," said Dave laughingly. "He takes more pleasure in being miserable than any man I ever knew."

He moved along from the hitch-rack, and Tarzan seemed to be of the same mind as his master, for he gave Cloudy a nudge that sent the dismal puncher staggering. Having slipped its reins from the rack, over which they had merely been slung, the brone proceeded to hustle Cloudy along the street, Cloudy protesting fruitlessly the while—and Dave was grinning over his pard's discomfiture when all at once he perceived a crowd of men approaching.

"Hallo, what's wrong?" he said to Molly. "There's a mob headed this way. Blake and Edwards are leadin' it—and a hombre I never saw before."

The last-mentioned was Bowie, and Blako and Edwards walked him along to the veranda of Dave's quarters with a bunch of their hirelings on their heels. Dave met them in front of his office, and glanced at Blake inquiringly.

"What seems to be the trouble, Blake?" he asked.

"Dawson," said the banker, "I want you to meet Bowie, who's just in from the desert. Shake hands with Dawson our Ranger, Bowie!"

Bowie's lip curled.

"Dawson the Ranger, huh?" he sneered. "So that's the kind of faro this guy's dealin'. Say, listen, folks—this hombre is an impostor."

There was some murmuring, and the situation looked ugly for Dave, but the crowd had been swelled by the appearance of some of his friends—in the shape of Pop Williams, the Hook Brothers, and some of those citizens who had welcomed him as a representa-

tive of the law. And Pop Williams caught Bowie by the arm.

"Wait a minute," he interposed. "Do you realise what you're sayin'? You've made a pretty serious charge, Bowie!"

"I'll be sayin' more before I'm through," Bowie snarled. "I'm callin' this guy's bluff, and he knows it—the same as he knows that the real Dawson was killed out in the desert—shot in the back! He didn't tell ye that, did he? No, an' he didn't know that Bowie was comin' to town to uncover him as the skunk that plugged Tom Dawson. Them's the charges I'm makin', and I'll back 'em up!"

There was an ominous growl from the hirelings of Blake and Edwards, who were vastly in the majority, but again Pop Williams intervened.

"Don't you think the Ranger has a right to say something in his own defence?" he protested, and it was Blake, who answered him with an assumed generosity of spirit.

"Sure," Blake declared. "Fair play in our community. Go ahead, Ranger!"

Cloudy in the meantime had been mingling with the crowd, but now, with an anxious expression on his face, he slipped away to where Dave's white pinto was standing.

"Tarzan," he said, "we've sure got to use our heads. Come on—follow me!" And he took the pony's rein and led him along the street.

Cloudy commandeered every brone that he could find, and a buggy with a pair of restive-looking "plugs" as well. Then he drew his six-shooter.

Flight.

THE crowd was waiting for Dave's statement, and, bracing himself, the young-ter spoke in clear, steady tones.

"Boys," he said, "I'll tell you the truth. I'm not Dawson"—the hirelings of Blake and Edwards growled anew—"but I'm here in his place. This hombre Bowie was right. Dawson was killed out there in the desert—and that's why I came to Bowden—to find the guilty man."

"Yeah!" It was the voice of Edwards. "We've heard that kind of a story before. Come on, boys, let's get a rope an' string him up."

There was a clamour of approval, but Dave made himself heard once more.

"Wait a minute," he said, his eyes on Bowie. "Wait a minute. When Bowie says I killed Dawson, my answer is just this: I wouldn't sneak up on a snake an' shoot him in the back without givin' it a chance to defend itself."

Bowie cringed at the words, for, hired murderer though he was, he had some glimmer of conscience in him. But next instant he whipped round and appealed to the crowd impatiently.

"What are you goin' to do?" he grated. "Stand here an' listen to his palaver all day? By gum! I got a mind ter plug the coyote myself!" And in a moment he had snatched his gun from its holster and rammed the muzzle against the buckle of Dave's belt.

Simultaneously there was a racket of shooting farther along the street, and suddenly those on the outskirts of the crowd raised an uproar. For, firing into the air, Cloudy had stamped the brones that he had mustered, and the mass of horseflesh was thundering through the town.

There was a momentary panic, and Dave took advantage of it, striking Bowie's gun from his fist and jumping into the middle of the street. Blake and

Edwards and one or two others tried to grab him, but while apparently having the same project in mind, the three Hook brothers lunged forward with one accord, purposely missed Dave and fell sprawling at his enemies' feet.

Edwards and Blake and their hirelings tripped over them, and the resulting confusion gave Dave a few precious seconds. He saw a couple of "plugs" swing past him at full gallop, a light buggy skidding and swerving through the dust behind them—and he sprang towards the vehicle.

He tumbled into it and scrambled to the driving-seat, plucking up the reins. There was pandemonium in the rear, and a volley of bullets zipped around him viciously, but not one of them hit him, and, laying on to the plugs, he drove them headlong out of the town.

They swept up on to the trail that led westward, and the buggy swayed wildly from side to side as the horses stretched themselves in a break-away dash. Dave caught himself yelling at the top of his voice—yelling to encourage them—and they answered well. But, glancing over his shoulder, he saw that some of the mob had secured their brones and were galloping in pursuit.

Then he caught sight of Cloudy not more than a hundred yards to the rear—Cloudy in Tarzan's saddle, and rapidly gaining on the buggy.

A bend was turned, and dense thickets hid Dave from the pursuers. Looking back three or four seconds later he saw Tarzan and Cloudy career into view, and in less than half a minute the white pinto was pulling level with the buggy.

Dave dropped the reins he was holding, and as Tarzan raced abreast of him he slung one leg over the pinto's back. Next instant the fugitives were striking to the left through the thickets, leaving the two plugs to speed on along the main trail with the buggy.

When the pursuers swung round the bend they followed the tracks of the wheels—

And in the meantime Dave and Cloudy pushed on through the chaparral till they found themselves in a country of rolling hills, in the heart of which they discovered an abandoned homestead.

The place seemed a likely hide-out, and they pushed open the front door and entered, leading Tarzan after them. Here Dave pronounced himself content to remain for as long as it should prove necessary, and, having settled himself comfortably in a rickety chair, he began to sing high heartedly.

Cloudy was by no means easy of mind, and it was with acute anxiety that he interrupted Dave as the latter was rendering an old-time Western ballad.

"Say," he protested, "I'd be a good deal happier if you'd cut

out that squawkin'. If you ain't careful, Dave Hayes, you'll be a corpse mighty soon, an' I don't want no lilies in my hand. I—"

Cloudy checked, for all at once he heard a sound that filled him with dread—the sound of hoofs clattering on to a stony slope—and in a moment he was at the window.

"A bunch o' horsemen," he panted, "an' they're headed this way. I bet that undertaker is at the bottom o' this. He's had his eye on me ever since we hit town."

"Aw, forget it, Cloudy!" said Dave. "And listen—if this is a show-down we're going to barricade ourselves in that back room and get ready to shoot our way out. Come on!"

He led the way through a door opposite the one by which they had entered, and, having passed into the back room with Tarzan, they proceeded to drag every piece of furniture available across the floor. Then they stood waiting with drawn guns.

They heard the newcomers ride up to the shack, and they heard them troop into the front room. But in the very next moment they knew that the men had not come looking for them, for the familiar voice of Pop Williams made itself audible, and his first words revealed the purpose for which he and his companions were gathered there.

"Folks," Pop announced, "it's taken a long time to find out who can actually be trusted in Bowden, but we all here are honestly fer Law and Order, and that's why this meetin' has been called.

Now listen, I want to state that for a crowd of wise hombres we're the biggest bunch o' jackasses between here and Mexico. We've let our dumbness drive away the best friend we ever had, for, jest because this skunk Bowie shot off his mouth, we sat around wall-eyed an' let the riff-raff chase the young Ranger outa town."

There was a murmur from his audience, which must have comprised almost half the male population of the town—a crowd typical of the Border, with Mex and Yankee intermingling in a common cause to stamp out crime.

One of the Hook Brothers spoke. "Now look here, Pop," he protested, "that ain't fair. If one of us had interferred open-like, we'd been shot dead in our tracks—"

Standing on the other side of the door separating the two rooms, Dave had heard enough, and now he raised his voice and betrayed his presence there.

"Say," he called, "is that meetin' of yours a private game, or can anybody draw cards?"

There was a tense silence, and then Pop gave an exclamation.

"That was the Ranger," Dave heard him say. "I know his voice. Come on out, Ranger—you're among friends."

Dave had the door open in a few seconds, and, followed by Cloudy, he stepped into the front room amidst a volley of greetings. Then he addressed the crowd of citizens.

(Continued on page 27.)



Edwards held the gun, but Dave's grasp was still on his wrist, and he forced the crook's arm outward and upward.

A gripping drama of a man accused of stealing a huge diamond, and how he escaped and the terrible revenge he took. Starring Ian Keith and Aileen Pringle.



"PRINCE OF DIAMONDS"



The Thief.

IT was an unhappy day for Rupert Endon. His home, the home that had been his family's for three generations back, was to be sold.

Rupert did not want to part with the place, but he had no choice. It was a rambling old castle which stood high on the rocks of Maine, as impregnable as a fortress. The solitary road which led up to it from the nearest town had to pass over a drawbridge, and when this was up access to the great doors which guarded the entrance was impossible.

It was built of massive stone on solid rock, and beneath there were passages which descended to the foot of the cliffs. They led to a cove, and occasionally Rupert used it for mooring his small fishing boats on those occasions when he took a quiet holiday.

Rumour had it that the castle was once used by pirates. Certainly it dated back a considerable number of years, for it was one of the show places along the coast. Rupert, who loved it, knew every nook and cranny of its gigantic stone walls.

Times were bad. Several business ventures in which Rupert had been involved, mainly connected with the diamond trade, had crashed with somewhat extraordinary suddenness.

It was a blow—a very serious blow. Barely six months ago his engagement to Eve Marley had been announced, and it had been both his dream and hers that they should make their home in Endon Castle.

All that was ended now. There was no alternative—Rupert was compelled to let it go.

He arrived back at it after a trip to France, where he had been working in order to try to retrieve his fallen fortunes, and looked round longingly. Williams, the old butler who had been September 6th, 1930,

with the Endons all his life, greeted him.

"I trust you will permit me to go with you, sir," he said.

Rupert allowed a smile to play across his tanned face, revealing a row of even white teeth. That smile of his, coupled with a peculiar way of putting his head slightly on one side, had earned him the sobriquet amongst those who knew him of "Charming Endon."

"I'm afraid not, Williams," he replied. "I shall not be keeping up a place like this in future."

"But, sir—"

"Perhaps the new owner will keep you on," Rupert continued evenly, cutting short Williams' protests. "You know him quite well. It is Mr. Gilbert Crayle." He glanced at his watch. "He should be here shortly."

The even hum of a large car was heard coming over the drawbridge. It died away as the car drew up before the outer gateway.

Williams, always courteous and urbane, bowed slightly to his young master and crossed the hall. He opened the door to admit a grey-haired man, faultlessly dressed, on whose face was all the craftiness of a fox.

"Good-morning, Mr. Crayle!" said Williams soberly. "You will find Mr. Rupert in the library, sir."

Crayle nodded briefly, as though the existence of Williams was completely beneath his notice, and departed in the direction of the library.

Williams watched him go with very mixed feelings. So that was his new master! Well, he could see trouble brewing, and he mentally registered then that his stay at Endon Castle was likely to be a short one.

He was about to close the door when another car made its appearance. Williams waited for it to stop, and then hurried forward as a girl descended

from it. Her face was radiant, and her step light and full of vitality. She was looking forward to seeing Rupert again—just to tell him that in spite of the fact that he was poor, it was going to make no difference. She still cared for him, and always would.

She turned as she reached the ground. "Come along, Adrian," she said tolerantly. "Mr. Crayle is already here, and I want to say something to Rupert before he starts talking about business."

The young man addressed slowly alighted from the car. He was rather foppish in appearance, and affected a monocle. Through no fault of his own, he had inherited a peer's title without the necessary money to keep it up; nevertheless, he liked to be called "Lord Adrian" by anyone who was sufficiently impressed with his greatness.

"All right, old girl," he drawled. "Coming, and all that. I don't know why you can't slow up for a change. Ever since I got up at the unearthly hour of nine, I've done nothing but rush all over the place."

Eve Marley laughed good-humouredly. She was used to her brother's indolent ways, just as she was used to his habit of coming to her for money whenever he was hard up—which was quite often.

They went into the castle, and Eve, without invitation, made her way to the library.

Rupert and Crayle were enjoying a cocktail when she entered. They rose at the sound of her greeting.

"Hallo, Eve!" said Rupert eagerly, advancing to meet her, and taking both of her hands in his. He lowered his voice so that Crayle could not hear. "You look wonderful to day, dear."

She smiled her thanks. "I want to see you before you start your business with Mr. Crayle," she

said softly. "Let's go into the morning room."

They left Crayle and Adrian together, and departed. As soon as they were alone, Rupert took her in his arms. She raised her lips to his, and for a few exquisite moments the world was forgotten.

At last she broke away. "We mustn't be too long," she said. "I know you want to finish the details of the sale." She sighed. "What a pity you have to let this place go! We could have been so happy here."

A worried frown appeared on Rupert's brow.

"You know how things are going to be with me from now on, Eve," he said quietly. "I shall be fairly poor, so there is nothing else for me to do but release you from our engagement."

It was what Eve had been waiting for. The last thing in the world she wanted was to break off the engagement.

"Silly boy!" she said softly. "Kiss me again, and never say anything like that again. We are going to be married just as soon as we can."

"Eve!"

"I mean it. And now let us go back to the others."

In the library, meanwhile, Crayle and Adrian were talking earnestly. They were discussing Rupert.

"I've done everything I can to finish him," Crayle was saying. "I've broken him, and I've arranged to buy the castle from him. Yet she still seems set on the idea of their marriage."

Adrian looked thoughtful. He was no business man, but he knew something about the gentle art of squeezing money out of people.

"Leave everything to me," he said calmly. "I have my own methods of dealing with him." He lit a cigarette and puffed a cloud of smoke ceiling-wards. "By the way, Crayle, how much did you say it was worth to you to marry Eve?"

Crayle looked at him shrewdly, and his eyes narrowed.

"I didn't say anything," he replied levelly. "But I dare say I could manage ten thousand. You can count on that."

"Good enough," said Adrian. "Ten thousand it is—on the day you and Eve marry."

"Hush! Here they are."

Rupert and Eve came in. Adrian promptly went up to Rupert and took him by the arm.

"Do you mind if I run up to your room, Rupert?" he said engagingly. "I want to wash and change after our journey."

"Certainly," replied Rupert readily. "If Eve and Mr. Crayle will excuse us, I will come with you."

They went upstairs. Adrian smiled to himself as he followed the man he was plotting to rob of the only thing in life left to him.

When they were in Rupert's bedroom, Adrian flung himself into a chair, and assumed an expression of hopelessness.

"I say, old man, I'm in a deuce of a fix," he began. "I'm afraid I've made a bit of a fool of myself."

Rupert looked at him in alarm. This sudden seriousness on Adrian's part was as disturbing as it was unusual.

"What is wrong? Nothing, surely, that cannot be put right."

"I was in Crayle's office on Wednesday last," Adrian went on. "That was the day on which some—"

"The Rajah Diamond was stolen," put in Rupert. "Yes, I know about that."

Adrian put his fingers into his waist-

coat pocket and drew out a large white stone, clear as water, and with a sparkle from its facets that proclaimed it to be a diamond of the first water.

Rupert stared at it dumbfoundedly. As an expert, he knew that it was the gem which they had just been talking about a few seconds previously.

"You!" said Rupert hoarsely. "You—a thief!"

"Yes," Adrian hung his head in pretended shame. "I—a thief."

False Evidence.

RUPERT took the diamond from him and stared at it as it lay in the palm of his hand. Adrian, of all people! The young fool!

That was what came of spending all his money as fast as he could lay his hands on it. He had run himself into heavy debt probably, with the result that he had to turn thief in order to save himself from bankruptcy.

With what result? In his desperation he had overlooked the fact that discovery was absolutely certain. It was impossible to dispose of a gem like that. Every collector, every jeweller in the world knew the famous Rajah Diamond. They knew, too, that it had been stolen.

So Rupert thought. He did not know that the diamond had never been stolen—that it had been handed to Adrian by Crayle himself, the rumour of the theft having been spread afterwards. Crayle was a clever man. He had done it primarily to get Adrian into his clutches, so that he would have a lever to use on Eve.

It had been his intention to give the diamond to Adrian, then denounce him as a thief when he tried to sell it. Adrian, all unsuspecting, had accepted it. He had asked Crayle for a loan, and Crayle had chosen that way of paying it.

Adrian had seen what was in the wind afterwards. By some mysterious glimmering of common sense he had waited for a day before disposing of it, with the result that he had seen the reports concerning its supposed theft.

He was as much of a rogue as Crayle, and it was obvious to him that if he tried to give it back to Crayle he would still be denounced. It was apparent that Crayle wanted Adrian arrested, so that he could either prosecute or not according to whether Eve accepted his proposal of marriage.

Adrian had to think fast. The result was that he confessed to Rupert that he had stolen it. He knew Rupert, and knew how Rupert loved Eve.

He watched Rupert staring at the jewel, and his eyes gleamed. His plan was going to work!

"This is horrible," Rupert said suddenly, looking up. "If anything of this gets out it will mean a scandal, and we can't have that. We must think of Eve."

Exactly what Adrian wanted to hear! Hurriedly he hid a smile.

"But what can be done?" he asked with a show of helplessness.

"I don't know. Let me think."

Rupert paced and down the room, the diamond in his clenched hand. This was horrible, ghastly.



He spun round and caught the hand that held the knife in mid-air, and by the sheer strength of his arm, forced the man to the ground.

There were no thoughts of rebuke in his mind. He was not like that. Other men might call Adrian some hard names, but not him. His job was to pull Eve's brother out of the mess he was in.

"Perhaps you could see Crayle and explain," Adrian suggested. "He would understand if you talked to him."

Rupert stopped his pacing. Not knowing that Crayle was so ruthless, he thought that the suggestion was a sound one.

"Why, of course," he said. "That is the obvious thing to do. I am often in and out of Crayle's office, and I see no reason why he should not believe that I picked up the diamond as a joke or something. Anyway, I'll see him at once."

They returned to the library, Rupert anxious and Adrian elated. Rupert had fallen for the story better than Adrian had imagined, and he was one of those helpful men who would do anything to save Eve trouble and shame.

As Rupert entered the room he saw Crayle about to try to take Eve into his arms. Eve was backing away from him hastily.

Rupert made no comment. He knew that Crayle loved Eve, and it was only natural for him to try to win her. In a way, Rupert regarded it as something of a compliment, and he knew Eve well enough to realise that there was only one man in her life that mattered—himself.

Crayle backed away hastily as they came in and sat down. Apparently his efforts to make Eve listen to him had not been too successful.

"Er—I was rather interested in that picture up there," he said lamely. "The one of the old lady. It looks like a Rembrandt."

"It is," said Rupert easily. He thought he saw a chance of solving Adrian's difficulties for him. "Incidentally, did you notice the stone in that large diamond pendant she is wearing?"

Crayle, glad of something to relieve his embarrassment, walked over to the picture and examined it closely.

"Extraordinary!" he murmured. "It looks exactly like the Rajah Diamond."

"That's what I thought," said Rupert. He opened his hand, and there in the palm lay the diamond itself. "As a matter of fact, I took the liberty of borrowing the Rajah Diamond in order to compare. I hope you don't mind."

Crayle stared at the diamond in astonishment, then looked up at Adrian. The latter flickered an eyelash significantly. In an instant Crayle understood. He had got Rupert and Eve in the hollow of his hand.

Drawing himself up to his full height, he looked at Rupert coldly.

"I am afraid I do mind," he replied stiffly. "If you only borrowed it, why did you not let me know when I put round the reports that it had been stolen?"

"I didn't trouble," said Rupert calmly. "I knew that as soon as I was able to see you, everything would be all right."

Crayle transferred his gaze to Eve as though to say he was sorry for what he had to do. His manner was becoming more stern.

"I am sorry, Endon, but everything is not all right," he said. "You took the Rajah Diamond from my office, and now try to return it on the pretext that you only borrowed it. People do not 'borrow' articles of such a value

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as that. I have no alternative but to accuse you of theft."

Rupert started back, and his face flushed angrily. Crayle was being perfectly absurd.

"This is ridiculous—" he began.

"Ridiculous, eh?" Crayle was openly sneering now. "The police are hardly likely to take the same view when they look into your present financial position."

Eve started forward, her face drawn with anxiety.

"Mr. Crayle," she protested, "this is quite unbearable. You must be mad to think a man like Rupert would steal anything."

Crayle ignored her. He still addressed Rupert.

"Well, have you anything more to say?"

Rupert shrugged his shoulders. He had no alternative now but to throw the blame where it belonged.

"Just this," he said. "Ask Adrian how the diamond came to be in my possession."

Crayle frowned. He looked at Adrian meaningfully.

"Well?" he asked.

Adrian assumed a perfectly blank expression.

"The fellow is potty," he said succinctly. "I know nothing about it."

"But you gave it to me a few moments ago," Rupert protested. "You confessed that you had stolen it."

"I thought so," Adrian countered. "The man is potty."

Crayle shrugged his shoulders. His hold over Rupert was nearly complete. Calmly he went over to the telephone.

"Hallo!" he called, after he had been connected. "Is Inspector Betterton there? Betterton, you had better come over to Endon Castle. I have here the thief of the Rajah Diamond, and I wish to give him into custody."

Escape.

FOR the next hour Eve and Rupert tried to persuade Crayle that it was all a horrible mistake, but Crayle would not listen. He insisted that Rupert had stolen the gem in order to retrieve his fallen fortunes, and had afterwards invented the story about having borrowed it because he found he could not sell it.

Crayle also pointed out, with heavy sarcasm, that he was not inclined to show any mercy to a man who tried to place the blame for his misdeeds upon someone else. He referred to Adrian.

Of course, he knew the true state of affairs. He realised that Adrian had been clever, and he backed him up to the full. To implicate Rupert in this manner, thus at once ruining him and having him put away for a number of years, was little short of a stroke of genius. It left a clear field with Eve.

Rupert gave up arguing after a while. His attitude was that he would face the music. He knew now that he had been the victim of a scheme to get rid of him; but he had implicit faith in the fact that the true state of affairs would come out once the matter came before a court of law.

He cared only about one thing—that Eve still believed in him. That was all that mattered.

Eve listened to the interchange of words between Rupert and Crayle, and found herself examining the two men critically. She saw in Crayle a ruthless and somewhat sinister business man who would stop at nothing to gain his ends; while Rupert was an easy-going, honourable type who would never sus-

pect villainy until he became involved in it.

In her heart she knew that Rupert did not steal the diamond. She knew, too, that her brother was lying.

Crayle suddenly approached her.

"Eve, I am so sorry that you have had to witness such a distressing scene," he said ingratiatingly. "I think you will realise, though, that Endon's own actions made it necessary."

She looked round to where Rupert was standing, and saw that he was well without earshot. Adrian had left the room. She lowered her voice.

"There's something mysterious behind all this, Mr. Crayle," she said. Her voice hardened. "Won't you tell me what has to be done to prevent Rupert from being arrested?"

Crayle held up his hands in protest.

"Please, Eve, don't put it like that," he said. "Justice must be done."

"Must it?" she asked ironically. She was beginning to get an insight into Crayle's true character. "Let me put the question in another way, then. What must I do—what price must I pay—for this ridiculous charge to be withdrawn?"

Crayle looked at her shrewdly, and decided that his best course was to come into the open.

"Well, I think you will see that I could not prosecute any friend of my wife's," he said smoothly. "You understand, don't you?"

She did not reply at once. The answer she got was the one she expected. Crayle had a hold on Rupert now, and the cost of having that hold released was that she should surrender herself in marriage.

"Very well, Mr. Crayle," she replied coldly. "You win, I suppose. I love Rupert, and I would do anything in the world for him. If I have got to marry you, I'll carry through my share of the bargain; but remember, although yours is the upper hand now, you won't be in that position for ever." She rose. "And now I want to talk to Rupert. Will you leave us, please?"

She was quite calm about it all. At first it had been her impulse to tell Crayle that she suspected him of a conspiracy with her brother, but she had come to the conclusion that she would not be acting for the best by doing anything like that. Crayle was a clever man, and to oppose him at this moment would be madness.

Her brother, too, would not tell what he knew. He was an inveterate liar, just as he was an inveterate borrower of money, and it was quite useless trying to appeal to his sense of honour. He had none.

She waited until Crayle had left her alone with Rupert, and summoned up her courage to play the difficult part that was before her.

"Rupert!" she called.

Rupert had been standing with his back to her on the other side of the room. He turned, disturbed by the strange note in her voice. It had seemed hard, relentless.

"Yes, Eve?" he replied dully.

Slowly she drew off his engagement ring and held it out.

"I wouldn't have minded marrying a poor man," she went on slowly. "But a thief, never!"

He stared at her in amazement. Not knowing that she was breaking the engagement in order to serve him and clear his name, he thought that she had so little faith in his sense of decency was

a terrible blow. It seemed to be the end of everything.

"But, Eve, surely you can't believe—"

She held up a silencing hand. To hear his rebukes was more than she could bear.

"Need we say anything more?" she said wearily. "I know you will see how impossible it all is."

He nodded. Yes, he could see that. Marriage to a girl who did not believe in him was utterly out of the question. Silently he took back the ring.

There came a heavy thundering at the outer door. Williams opened it, to admit an official-looking man who gave the name of Inspector Betterton. Crayle promptly led the detective into the library, and pointed to Rupert.

"That is the man, inspector," he said.

Betterton strode across the room, and came to a halt by Rupert's side.

"There need be no fuss, Mr. Endon," he said quietly. "I shall have to take you along, of course, and I am giving you the usual caution about saying anything that might be used in evidence against you."

Rupert looked at him levelly, and saw that the inspector was by no means inexperienced in the handling of men. He also glanced at the door, and saw two more officers standing outside.

Appealingly he turned to Eve.

"Is what you just said quite final, Eve?" he asked.

"I am afraid it is," she replied, choking back a sob with an effort.

Rupert shrugged his shoulders. By now he was burning with a sense of injustice. Eve believed him guilty, and if she turned against him, the world was against him, too.

A slight frown appeared on his forehead. Into his mind came thoughts of revenge. Yes, that was it. Revenge, even if it took him the remainder of his life. He would get even with Crayle—yes, and with the girl who had deserted him in his hour of need.

His mind made up, he acted swiftly.

A sudden blow in Betterton's chest sent the detective staggering backwards. The next moment he had gained the window, and hung poised for a second.

"I'll come back—some day!" he shouted.

Then he vanished from sight, swinging through a window of one of the cellars, and making his way through the maze of passages that had once been used by smugglers and pirates.

If only he had waited a few moments longer! If only he had heard Eve's agonised cry to Crayle: "Please let him go, Mr. Crayle. Let him go, and I'll marry you!"

Crayle's trump card was played. He told Betterton to let Rupert go, in spite of the fact that Eve said she would be a wife in name only. It was only a matter of time, he reflected, before she capitulated and made him the happiest man alive.

By that belief, he made the one mistake of all his scheming. Retribution, devastating and complete, had already cast its shadow over his future life.

Captain Ruin.

RUPERT got clear away, not knowing that the hue and cry had been stopped before it had really started. He made his way on foot to a neighbouring port, and took the first ship available. He did not know where it was going—did not even care.

That was the last the world heard of him for three years.

At the end of that time he had completely sunk his old identity. To all intents and purposes, Rupert Endon had died, and in his place had come a mysterious man whose name held terror for everyone who heard it—Captain Ruin.

Captain Ruin and Rupert Endon were one and the same man!

In a cheap café by the waterside at Penang, Rupert sat drinking. The life of hardship he had led during the time since he had left Endon Castle showed its marks on his face. It was hard and mer-

iless. "Charming Endon" was no longer to be seen.

The café was in the Chinese quarter, tucked away in a street that was evil-smelling and sinister. Men were murdered every night in that district, but Rupert was not disturbed by the danger he was obviously running. Only once had anyone tried to interfere with him, and the outcome had been so terrible for the attacker that the reputation of Captain Ruin spread far and wide.

The offender had been a drunken Chink, whose befuddled brain conceived the idea that he could knife Rupert and rob him of his money.

Rupert, his ears ever alert, had heard the Chink coming. With a swift, pantherine movement, he had spun round and had caught in mid-air the hand that held the knife, and by the sheer strength in his arm forced the man to the ground.

Five minutes later Rupert arrived at the self-same café in which he was now sitting. Across one shoulder he carried the Chink, unconscious. When that would-be murderer was examined, he was found to have a smashed jaw and a fractured forearm.

Rupert was left alone after that.

He made a living by undertaking dangerous jobs for anyone who cared to employ him, and his name was known throughout the length and breadth of Malay.

The owner of the café was a Chinaman by the name of Li Fang. For years Li Fang had been awaiting an opportunity of meeting someone like Rupert—someone who could be trusted, and who was not afraid of death.

He had hesitated long before approaching Rupert. He had a mission he wanted undertaken, but it was one in which his man had to be selected with care. The mission involved the finding of a hidden diamond mine.

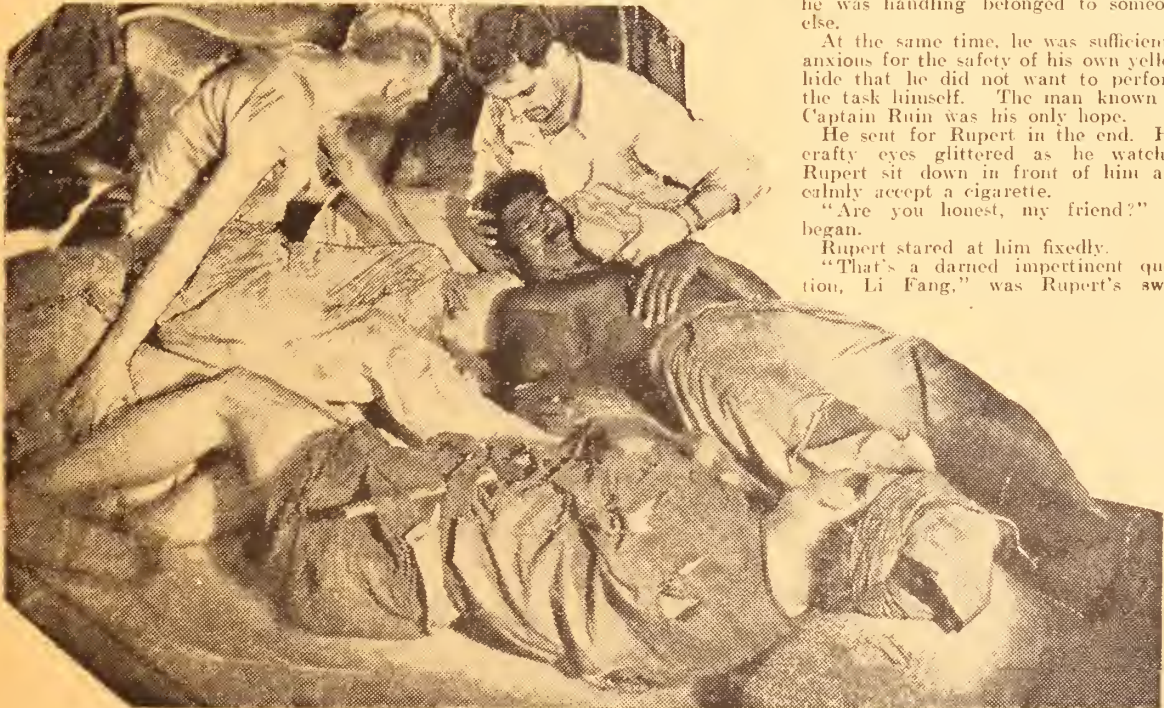
Rupert would suit Li Fang's purpose admirably, for his knowledge of diamonds was the knowledge of an expert. But Li Fang hesitated still. Unlimited wealth could well make an honest man forgetful that the property he was handling belonged to someone else.

At the same time, he was sufficiently anxious for the safety of his own yellow hide that he did not want to perform the task himself. The man known as Captain Ruin was his only hope.

He sent for Rupert in the end. His crafty eyes glittered as he watched Rupert sit down in front of him and calmly accept a cigarette.

"Are you honest, my friend?" he began.

Rupert stared at him fixedly. "That's a darned impertinent question, Li Fang," was Rupert's swift



"The—black—death!" the negro gasped. Then his head fell back.

reply. "I've a good mind to wring your confounded neck."

Li Fang held up his hands defensively. "No, no; that is not necessary," he said, grinning feebly. "I asked only because I wanted to be quite sure." He drew from the folds of his wide sleeves an aged and cracked parchment, and smoothed it out on the table before him. "Ten years ago two brothers discovered a diamond mine in a district infested with typhoid fever. They worked it for a time, and then both died. By various means—we will not discuss how—a plan of where this mine is to be found came into my hands."

"Well?" said Rupert indifferently.

"I want you to find that mine, my friend," pursued Li Fang. "If you will agree to go in search of it, I will pay you sufficient for your expenses, and we will share equally."

A smile flickered across the face of the man who was known as Captain Ruin.

"Tell me, my friend, are you honest?" he asked ironically.

Li Fang grinned again. He could afford to let pass a joke or two at himself. He was in need of Rupert's brains.

"I will repeat my offer in writing," he said smugly.

"Don't bother," Rupert's tone was dry and hard. "You couldn't play a dirty game with me, you heathen. You've offered me half, and I don't need the assistance of a court of law to get it. When do I have to start?"

"As soon as you wish."

Rupert studied the plan which lay on the table. For a few moments he did not speak; then he gave vent to an exclamation of satisfaction.

"You did well to send me instead of going yourself, Li Fang," he said. "It is a suicide country up where that mine is located, and I wouldn't swear that the men I shall take with me will ever come back. As for me—well, I don't suppose anything could ever kill me." He folded up the chart and put it into his pocket. "Get me four of the hardest toughs you can find on the quayside, and tell them to report, sober, at sunrise to-morrow. As the journey is to be made up-river, I'll go and buy a decent sampan which will hold water."

He was about to turn to go, when his eye fell on a girl standing a short distance away. She was Chinese-Malay—a mixture of the two races.

"That's a darned pretty kid you've got there," he commented. "You'd better keep a close watch on some of the men round here, or you'll lose her."

Li Fang turned his head, and saw who Rupert meant.

"That is Lolah," he said casually. "She is quite safe with me. There are none here who would dare to cast their evil glances at her, for she is my brother's daughter."

Rupert nodded, and went away. As he threaded his way through the mixture of humanity that thronged the café, he was completely unaware of the crafty expression in Li Fang's eyes.

"You are very clever, my friend," he murmured softly. "But you will never get that half-share. I will send one of my own men with you, and when you discover that mine you will die." His expression became even more crafty. "And when my emissary returns and tells me exactly where the mine is, I will kill him, too. It is only dead men who keep secrets."

In the Jungle.

THE sampan wound its way slowly up the river that led into the interior. Apart from Rupert, there were four other men on board, a September 1th, 1916.

villainous-looking individual by the name of Smith being their leader. He was Li Fang's henchman.

They were a tough crowd, and it was clear to Rupert, hardened as he was to the ways of men, that he would have trouble with them sooner or later. As a precaution, he carried a heavy-calibre Colt. As a trouble-maker, he could do fairly well on his own account!

The remainder of his crew was made up by an enormous South African negro and two beachcombers who would sell their very souls for half a pint of whisky.

The location of the mine was about two days' journey from Penang. The sampan—a type of boat that is able to go anywhere so long as there is a foot of water in which to float—was inclined to leak. The crew, definitely refused anything to drink by Rupert, were in a bad humour. The only saving grace about the whole journey was that there was none of that driving squall weather for which the Malay Peninsula is noted.

At the end of the first day, just as the sun was beginning to get low in the heavens, the negro let up a shout of fear. He had crawled under the awning of the boat for a sleep, and beneath him something had moved.

"What is the matter, Sambo?" Rupert called sharply.

"There's something here, cap'n," the negro wailed, terror-stricken. "Under that sacking—there!"

He pointed to one of the corners of the sampan, and Rupert, suspecting a snake, drew his gun. With a swift movement, he flung the sacking back.

"Lolah!" he exclaimed.

The half-caste girl, her lips parted in a smile, scrambled to her feet.

"Come with you," she said simply.

Rupert became angry. This was sheer foolhardiness. It was bad enough taking men into this plague-ridden country, but her presence made it ten times worse.

"You had no business to come," he snapped. "If Li Fang finds that you are with us, he'll start trouble, and I think I've just about got enough to contend with on this trip."

"Li Fang!" She spoke the name contemptuously. "What care I for Li Fang? He does not tell me that I am pretty. But you did—so I came."

Rupert's anger left him. He was still annoyed that she had come, but he could not feel bad about a girl who was prepared to face death just because he had called her pretty.

"Very well," he said quietly. "It has put us to a lot of unnecessary bother, but we needn't go into that now." He raised his voice and addressed the crew. "Turn about. I'm going to take her back."

The crew hastened to obey, but Lolah clutched Rupert's arm in alarm.

"Don't let them do that," she said, frightened. "Please don't. Listen to what I have to say." She bent closer to him, and lowered her voice to a whisper. "Li Fang, he says that you are to die when you have found what you are looking for. Li Fang very crafty. He order Smeeth to kill you and the others, and when Smeeth return to Penang he die, too. see?"

Rupert stared at her dumbfoundedly, hardly believing that such treachery was possible; but he had been in the East sufficiently long to know that men cease to be human at times in countries like this.

"I'll remember your warning, Lolah," he said grimly. "Meanwhile you must still go back."

"No, no." Her voice vibrated with stark fear. "If I do, I will be killed. Li Fang, he would know that I had told you."

Rupert realised for the first time the danger she was running in order to warn him of Li Fang's treachery, and he was touched. He had heard before of the blind devotion that a half-caste girl will often give in exchange for a little kindness, but this was the first time he had come into contact with it.

He patted her kindly on the shoulder.

"All right, Lolah," he said gently. "You had better come. When I've done the job I set out to do, and have settled one or two matters with Li Fang, I'll see that you're looked after. You're a good girl."

All through that night they worked their way up-river. The next day their way led them through a jungle, where the trees overhanging on either side seemed to make a natural archway. Now and then wild beasts roared close at hand.

Rupert, sitting in the bows with a rifle across his knees, studied the map. He was searching for a clearing on the right bank where, the map said, there would be found the remains of a small hut.

It was middle afternoon before they reached their destination, and the sampan was run in close to the bank. Rupert, his mind ready for any treachery that might arise, stepped ashore and watched while his men began to unload. Lolah was under the awning, out of sight.

Suddenly there was a commotion. Lolah screamed; then the negro let up a shout of agony. The shout died away to a horrible gurgle, as though the man was fighting for breath.

Rupert leapt aboard in alarm. He found the negro lying on the bottom of the sampan writhing in death agony.

"Get a pan of water," he shouted to Smith. "And hurry."

The water was produced, and Rupert forced some of it between the stricken man's lips. For a few brief moments the agony left the negro's face.

"What happened?" Rupert asked quickly.

"The—black—death—" the negro gasped. Then his head fell back. He was finished.

Rupert stared down at the dead man in puzzlement. The black death! What could that mean? Here was a burly negro, strong as a horse, suddenly laid low without the slightest warning.

Rupert rose to his feet. It was no use worrying about it. Life was cheap in Malay, and one man here or there did not make much difference. The main thing was to get his mission fulfilled as soon as possible and return to Penang.

They weighted the negro's body and buried him in the river. Then, as if nothing unusual had occurred, they began to penetrate into the jungle in search of the mine.

Swift Poison.

"THIS way, men!"

Rupert's voice rang out triumphantly. He had come to a hole in the ground that was obviously a mine shaft of sorts, and he made hasty preparations to descend into it. It might be the one he sought; on the other hand, it might be only an abandoned working from which all the wealth had been extracted.

Smith was the first to hear Rupert's

(Continued on page 26.)

A roaring comedy—hilarious situations—romantic and riotous climaxes. A story that will drive all dull care away. Starring George Sidney and Charlie Murray.



A Tough Customer.

IT was a wet night in June, and the rain was beating against the window of the cosy if somewhat overcrowded little shop parlour, but the state of the weather was not at the moment disturbing either Benjamin Kaplan, pawnbroker, or his friend, Sergeant Patrick O'Grady, of the New York Police.

Benjamin Kaplan, who fancied himself as a musician, was plucking the strings of a harp which had come to him in the course of business and had never been redeemed, and was singing at the top of his rather husky voice:

"Take a trip up the Hudson and down the Bay—
A trip down to Coney and far Rock-away."

Patrick O'Grady, who was neither a musician nor a vocalist, was doing his best to perform some sort of obligato on a jew's harp. The noise was considerable.

Both men, if you had asked them their age, would have told you, probably, that they were in their prime, which is not reckoned by birthdays. Kaplan was short, moon-faced, shock-headed, and possessed a bulge where once his waist had been. O'Grady, on the other hand, was tall, long-faced, red-haired, neither stout nor thin, and, although an Irishman, owned a nose as prominent as his Jewish friend's, though not the same shape. They had not been born with good looks, yet they were both good fellows.

The song came to an end, and the rain made itself heard.

"A fine merry month of June," remarked Kaplan, putting the harp away in a corner. "I'm sorry for you, O'Grady, havin' to go out in it, but cops will be cops—and New York's full o' doorways."

"Kaplan," said O'Grady thoughtfully,

"I was just thinkin' that for the last ten years I've spent three thousand six hundred and fifty nights in this back room of yours, and I've only just discovered something."

"What's that?" demanded Kaplan curiously.

"That you're gettin' homelier-lookin' every day!"

"Is that so?" snorted the pawnbroker.

"Vell, you don't! You couldn't!"

"Is that so?"

"Yes, that's so. And vat is more, let me tell you something— Excuse me, someone's in the shop!"

It was not a good night for trade, but undoubtedly the shop-bell had jangled. Kaplan went out into the shop, with its littered counter and its crowded shelves, and there was a tall, ill-featured young man near the door, with his overcoat collar turned up about his ears and his slouch-hat pulled down over his eyes.

Kaplan had been quick to answer the summons, but the intruder had been quicker to act upon a preconceived plan. Beneath his overcoat was hidden a silver vase which he had snatched up and concealed with the utmost rapidity.

"Excuse, please," greeted the pawnbroker. "Did I keep you waiting?"

"No, that's all right," was the reply.

"What will you give me for this?"

And with elaborate slowness the visitor produced the vase from beneath his coat and dumped it on the counter.

Kaplan picked it up with an expression of disdain and examined it critically.

"Oi, oi," he said disgustedly, "but it's worthless. Such a piece of junk I would not have in my place!"

The stranger chuckled, as well he might.

"On your shop window," he said.

"You have a notice: 'Don't throw it away if you've got no use for it.

Maybe Kaplan has.' It's silver, ain't it?"

"Sure," nodded Kaplan, fingering the vase. "Silver—yes, it's silver. But this sort of thing is a drug in the market. You couldn't give it away."

The young man looked depressed. In his haste, it was evident that he had snatched up the wrong article; but he was not without ingenuity. He proceeded to spin a doleful tale of an aged mother smitten with pneumonia, of no food in the house, and no money with which to buy medicine or obtain proper nursing.

Kaplan was a shrewd old fellow, but he had a weak heart for suffering, a fact very well known to all the shady denizens of New York's East Side.

"Oi, oi," he grunted. "And how old is your mother?"

"Ninety-four," glibly responded the thief.

"Ninety-four, eh? And from scrubbing hotel lobbies she got pneumonia! Oi, oi, oi! My mother had the same. There ought to be a law against it. All right—all right. I'll give you ten dollars for it."

The thief expressed his gratitude, and Kaplan put the vase on a shelf and paid over the specified sum.

At the door the thief paused and turned. Possibly some little stray feeling of remorse had penetrated his ordinarily thick hide. In any case he went back to the counter, fished in his waistcoat pocket, and produced a coin.

"You're a good guy," he said gruffly, "and I'm gonna show my appreciation. Have this!"

Kaplan accepted the coin and inspected it.

"It's a nickel," he said wonderingly, "and it's got two heads on it."

"Sure," was the response. "and it ain't worth five cents for that same reason. But it might come in handy

some day."

"Ha!" chuckled the Jew. "Now I know what that means—that two heads is better than one. Thanks! And don't forget to let me know how your old mother comes out of it."

"Thanks," said the thief. "I won't forget."

He made for the door again, and this time he went straight out into the wet night. Kaplan stowed the spurious five-cent piece in his pocket and retired to the shop parlour.

The Foundling

PATRICK O'GRADY, during this little business interlude, had been puffing at his pipe, seated contentedly in a chair, for, according to a grandfather clock near the window, it was a full five minutes to ten. But his pipe went out, and he consulted his watch, and discovered that by the right time it was really only a few seconds to ten.

He rose indignantly, opened the clock-case, and moved the minute hand forward. The clock began to chime the hour just as Kaplan reappeared. O'Grady picked up his mackintosh and night-stick (or truncheon), and perched his official cap upon his head.

"Where are you goin', O'Grady?" demanded Kaplan. "You're not on duty till two in the mornin'!"

"I've got to get some sleep," said the Irishman.

"Vot's all you do! The trouble vit' you cops is you ain't got no ambition. If I was on the police force as long as you, I bet you by now I'd be at least commissioner."

"Ah!" scoffed O'Grady. "So long!"

Now Kaplan's pawnbroking establishment was on a street corner, and a second door in the shop parlour opened on to a little lobby which led to the side-street. O'Grady turned towards this second door, but among numerous other articles which had overflowed from the shop into the parlour was a plaster statuette of some Greek goddess which stood on an ebony pedestal.

"Vait a minute, now—vait a minute!" cried Kaplan. "Don't go out like that. Button up your mac! I don't want you to catch pneumonia."

"All right," said O'Grady, and raised his arm to obey his friend's instructions, but cannoned against the pedestal and sent the statuette flying.

Somehow he managed, in the very nick of time, to swing round and grasp the plaster goddess by the waist, saving her from destruction.

"Say, what are you tryin' to do?" howled the pawnbroker, his hands outstretched. "I'll sue you! I'll call a lawyer! Oh, it's saved! A hundred times I've told you that you should look out for this thing!"

"Phuegh!" gasped O'Grady, restoring the figure to its resting-place. "Good-night!" And he tugged open the door.

"Good-night!" boomed Kaplan.

And then, with a crash, the statuette fell to the floor and was shattered to fragments. He himself had knocked against the pedestal!

O'Grady looked back from the lobby, to see his friend ruefully surveying the damage.

"Broken at last!" exclaimed Kaplan. "For fifteen years I was afraid somebody would knock that thing over, but now I ain't afraid any more." He began to laugh. "Ha, ha!" he cried. "I'm a new man!"

O'Grady, with a chuckle, opened the street door, but stepped back aghast.

"Well, look what's here!" he cried.

Kaplan ran to him and peered over his extended arm at a wicker-basket on the floor of the porch. There was a

blanket over one end of the basket, and inside, with its head on a pillow, was a brown-eyed baby of about eleven months, crying lustily.

"It—it's a baby!" exclaimed O'Grady. "Don't stand in the way like a dumb ox!" snorted Kaplan. "Didn't you ever see a baby before? Get out of the way—I'll take him in."

The sergeant removed his obstructing arm, and the pawnbroker lifted up the basket and staggered with it into the shop parlour, where he placed it on the table.

"Hurry up, hurry up!" he shouted, lifting the howling mite in his arms. "Get some bottles and milk, and go in the shop and get some toys. Go on!"

But O'Grady was inspecting the child, which was quite warily, though poorly, clad—a round-faced, chubby-cheeked little girl.

"Ah," he cried, "'tis a wee broth of a boy ye are!"

"He's a girl, you fool!" corrected Kaplan. "All my life nothing but junk has been comin' into this place, and look what I've got now. She—she's all wet. She's been out in the rain."

He rocked the baby in his arms, making little crooning noises till O'Grady indignantly took her from him and nursed her on his knee and sang to stop her tears. Kaplan, with his fingers in his ears, declared that O'Grady's voice was infinitely worse than the infant's noise.

Between them, with the utmost clumsiness, they removed the wet frock and the damp underclothes, and Kaplan produced some tiny garments he had taken in pawn. These were substituted, and the baby left off crying, and crowed at them, and seemed to be fascinated by O'Grady's truncheon, with which he performed tricks known to New York policemen.

After a while, however, O'Grady's sense of duty as a policeman began to disturb him.

"Look here, Kaplan," he said very officially, "this baby is a foundling, and we'll have to put it through the proper channels."

"Oi, oi, oi!" snorted the pawnbroker, clapping his hands for the infant's benefit. "This baby don't go through no channels. It was left on my doorstep, and it's mine. Here am I, a lonely widower, and here is the loveliest thing in the world. It's mine, O'Grady."

"Is it, be jabbers? Well, we both found it, so it's no more yours than mine—and I'm a lonely widower, too."

"You're a nice fellow, O'Grady, but this baby belongs to me."

"Say, listen," exploded the Irishman. "I've got just as much right to this baby as you have—in fact, I need a baby just as badly as you do."

The baby began to howl again, frightened by their vehemence, and for some little while both were busy trying to pacify it.

"I want to be fair," announced Kaplan quietly, after considerable thought. "I admit you've got a claim, so I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll throw up a nickel—that's fair enough, ain't it?"

He had remembered the two-headed coin; and, having obtained his friend's grudging consent, he flipped the coin into the air and caught it, crying, "Heads!"

He opened his hand, exhibiting an undeniable head.

"I win!" he cried triumphantly. "Congratulate me, O'Grady. I've got a baby! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Officer O'Grady, I want you to meet my daughter, Rosie Kaplan!"

O'Grady made a wry face. He also made protests.

"If you're goin' to care for the baby,"

he objected, "the least you can do is to let me name it."

"I'll listen. What's the proposition?" "Bridget O'Grady—there's a name for you!"

"Bridget O'Grady?" cried Kaplan scathingly. "Nothing of the kind Rosie Kaplan—that's more like it."

"Over my dead body!"

"Well, I'll tell you vat I'll do. I'll meet you half-way. Bridget Kaplan."

"Never! I'll split the difference with you—Rosie O'Grady."

"Rosie O'Grady? Rosie— Why, that's a song, ain't it?"

"Well, take a look at her," urged O'Grady. "Ain't she a song?"

"You're right, Pat," decided Kaplan. "So we'll christen her Rosie O'Grady."

"Christen nothin'!" retorted Kaplan. "We'll name her O'Grady."

Eighteen Years After.

ON a bright spring morning, eighteen years later, Sergeant O'Grady stepped off his beat into Benjamin Kaplan's pawnbroking establishment and passed behind the counter into the shop parlour.

The table was laid for breakfast, and Kaplan was frying bacon at the gas cooker, his waistcoat unfastened, his tie awry. He was just as bulky as on the night the basket with its live contents had been found on his doorstep, but his hair had turned white and become very thin on top. O'Grady, on the other hand, removed his cap from a head that was as flaming red as ever.

He sniffed at the pleasant odour as he greeted his old friend.

"Top o' the mornin'!" he said cheerfully. "It's a nice day."

"To me," said Kaplan, "it looks like rain."

"Sure ye never could agree with me," chuckled O'Grady. "Where's Rosie?"

"She's comin' right down."

Light footsteps sounded on the stairs beyond an open door, and into the room there stepped a beautiful, brown-haired, brown-eyed girl, slender of build, dressed in a blouse and skirt.

"Good-morning, daddy," she said to each of them solemnly in turn.

"Hallo, darling!" responded Kaplan.

"Look what I've brought you, Rosie," said O'Grady, and produced from behind his back a bunch of spring flowers.

"Look what I got for you, darling," said Kaplan, holding the frying-pan beneath her little tip-tilted nose.

"Look, look! Smell this!"

"How many times have I told you not to bother about my breakfast?" she reproved him. "I'm the cook around here."

"I like to do it, darling," protested the pawnbroker. "It gives me lots of pleasure."

He put the bacon on three plates, and Rosie prepared the coffee and cut bread, and they all sat down to eat and drink.

"You know, Rosie," said O'Grady fondly, "you're looking lovelier every day."

"Daddy," said Rosie archly, "you're getting younger every day."

"Younger?" snorted the pawnbroker. "Bah, you can't fool me—you're on your last legs. Did you take out insurance, Pat?"

"No, I did not."

"Well, I took out insurance last week. For Rosie."

O'Grady expressed the view that it was a very good idea.

"Why don't you take out insurance?" insisted Kaplan. "I'll send Moe Levine around to see you."

"Moe Levine?" echoed O'Grady, wiping his mouth with the back of his

band. "Why should I do business with Moe Levine?"

"Well, it's all in the family, ain't it?"

"Just what do ye mane by that?"

"I'll tell you, Pat. I don't believe in long engagements. Now when Moe Levine and Rosie get married—"

"Just a minute," interrupted O'Grady wrathfully. "Rosie will never marry Moe Levine. 'Tis plain to be seen that she's crazy about Terry Calahan, and I'm tellin' you—"

"Oo, oi, oi!" broke in Kaplan with scorn. "You're getting old, O'Grady—you're getting old. D'you think I'm going to let my Rosie marry a common box-fighter?"

O'Grady rose to his feet; Kaplan followed suit. Rosie, who was quite accustomed to these bickerings, said quietly:

"Well, go ahead—don't mind me!"

"But Terry will be a champion some day," cried O'Grady.

"And I'll be a nervous wreck some day if you two keep this up!" retorted Rosie.

"You see, you see?" exclaimed Kaplan. "Can't you think of my Rosie's feelings? You think I'm goin' to have my grandchildren named Calahan, with cauliflower ears, maybe? You're crazy!"

High words followed, during which Rosie finished her breakfast and rose to her feet. It looked—but only looked—as though her adopted parents were about to rend one another limb from limb.

"Now stop your fighting!" she cried, stepping between them. "I let you pick my clothes, my food, and everything else, but when it comes to getting married, I'll do my own picking. Did you hear that?"

"He started it!" growled O'Grady.

"I shall be late for work if I stop to argue with you," she said. "Good-bye!"

She kissed them in turn and flitted away. The row was at an end.

"Say, Pat," wheedled Kaplan. "let's you and I play a game at draughts, shall we?"

"No," said O'Grady sternly. "I'm responsible for the peace and safety of this entire neighbourhood, and I've no time to play draughts, or puss-in-the-corner, either." And he rammed his cap on his head and departed through the shop.

"And better I'll play it without you!" cried Kaplan after him. "I'll have more competition playing against myself!"

O'Grady strode majestically across the street—and stumbled over the foot of a man who was standing beside a fruit-barrow near the opposite kerb.

He recovered his balance, wandered round the barrow and selected an apple.

"Small, ain't they?" he remarked.

"How much for this one?"

"Five cents," replied the keeper of the barrow.

"Well, a good apple is worth five cents," declared O'Grady, and he went off eating it.

The pawnbroking trade didn't seem to flourish that morning, and Benjamin Kaplan placed a draught-board on the counter and played against himself.

Whito was winning heavily, when a particularly ugly young Jew, long-haired, clean-shaven, thick-lipped, wearing a white felt hat and a striped suit, walked into the shop and leaned against the counter.

He was Moses Levine, the suitor to Rosie's hand, approved by Kaplan and scorned by O'Grady, and he looked troubled.

"Hallo, Moe!" said Kaplan, looking up from the draught-board. "Why, what's happened?"

"Never mind what's happened!" was the reply. "I want you to do something for me."

"All you got to do is to ask," declared Kaplan. "For my future son-in-law nothing is too good—except that I'm short of cash."

"Cash?" scorned Moe. "I don't want it—I want to buy a gun."

"A gun?" echoed the pawnbroker in astonishment, and became aware of the fact that one of Moe's eyes was distinctly blackened. "For what?"

"To show Terry Calahan I'm just as good as he is!" cried Moe savagely.

"For that you need a gun? Shame on you! When did you get that black eye?"

"Half an hour ago, when I saw Terry Calahan. What chance have I got with my fists against a fellow whose business is prize-fighting?"

"Use what all people was born with—brains!"

"He said next time he ran into me he would knock my head off—what good would my brains be then?"

"I picked you out for Rosie, didn't I?" stormed the pawnbroker. "You run right over and tell that rough Terry Calahan he can't intim—he can't intim—he can't get my goat. But first go inside and fix up your eye. You'll find some beefsteak in the ice-box, but remember, don't take too much—we've got to have supper to-night!"

Found Out.

SERGEANT O'GRADY, in the course of his official travels, had to pass the Hudson Gymnasium.

That afternoon he stepped inside the building, gazed thoughtfully at a number of young men who were taking exercise on parallel bars; the vaulting horses, the high bar, and so forth, and moved on into another room where a tall, powerfully-built but not exactly handsome young man was dealing very effectively with a punch-ball.

The young man was Terry Calahan, the suitor for Rosie's hand carefully selected by Patrick O'Grady—mainly because he was of Irish descent.

"What have ye got against that punchin' bag?" demanded O'Grady, after watching for a while the fierce blows administered.

"I'm pretendin' it's Moe Levine's face," responded the boxer grimly.

"Terry," said O'Grady reproachfully, "how many times must I tell you not to hurt Moe?"

"Bah!"

"Well, you can beat him up, once in a while, but don't hurt him. Are you goin' to see Rosie to-night?"

Terry nodded. He was going to pick her up at the office, he said, and take her home.

"Well," confided O'Grady, "you can tell her I've got the house all picked out."

"Gee, that's great!" cried the boxer delightedly.

Now Rosie worked in an office in East Twenty-Third Street, and at six o'clock, when she was due to emerge from the building, Terry drove up opposite the doorway in his little two-seater. But he was annoyed to find that Moe Levine's second-hand and very shabby car was standing beside the kerb, just ahead of his, and that Moe himself was lurking in the doorway. He strode over to him.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded savagely.

There were tables in the inner room for card-players, and they settled down to a game of pinochle.



"I'm going to drive Rosie home," replied Moe.

"You're not—it's me that's driving her home! I'll punch your head if you don't clear off!"

"You can punch from now till Christmas," retorted Moe defiantly, "but you ain't goin' to punch me away from Rosie!"

"Yeah? Well, now I'll tell one. I'm driving her home to-night!"

His fist was unpleasantly close to the young Jew's face, but Moe only flinched and fumbled in a pocket.

"Look here, Terry," he said in a conciliatory tone, "we've got to be fair with each other. I'll throw up a nickel and let that decide."

The nickel had been lent to Moe by the crafty Kaplan, but Terry was not to know that. Declaring that he could beat Moe at anything, he consulted, and Moe flipped the coin into the air and caught it, crying "Heads."

"Heads," of course, it was, and Terry bowed to defeat, just as Rosie came tripping out and greeted them.

"I'm going to drive you home," announced Moe proudly.

"Thanks!" said Rosie. "Will you give Terry a lift, too?"

"It's quite all right," said Terry. "I've got my own car—I'll see you later." And, much to the girl's surprise, he actually helped her into his rival's vehicle.

Two hours later, after she had had her evening meal, both of the young men called for her, and, in the presence of Kaplan and O'Grady, an argument ensued as to which of her suitors was to take her to a fancy-dress dance at the Webster Hall Club.

Moe declared that she had promised him the privilege; Terry was equally positive that the honour was to be his. Rosie declared that she had promised to go with both of them, which suited neither. Finally Kaplan stepped into the argument, so to speak.

"There's always a fair way to settle these things," he said. "Have you got a nickel, Moe?"

Moe had got a nickel, and produced it.

"Now remember," warned the pawnbroker, "that whoever loses has got to be a good sport." And he flipped the coin.

"Heads!" cried Moe, with the utmost haste.

"Heads it is," boomed Kaplan. "Now that settles it."

But Rosie, with a glance at Terry's gloomy face, stuck to her guns.

"I promised to go with both of them," she protested, "and I'm not going to be decided about like this. Let's all go. It would be lots of fun!"

"Me?" cried Kaplan.

"Me, too?" chimed in O'Grady.

"Sure—all five of us. We can hire some costumes."

The suggestion was embraced with enthusiasm by the two elders, if not by the two suitors.

"We're going to a masquerade, O'Grady!" chortled Kaplan. "By golly, I haven't been to a masquerade for years. I know a fine place to hire costumes—they'll give us a discount."

Rosie went on ahead to the costumier's with Moe and Terry. Kaplan flung off the old coat he wore indoors and went upstairs to don a more presentable one for the street. After he had departed O'Grady, yielding to curiosity, plunged a hand into one of the pockets of the shabby and greasy old coat—and fished out a nickel.

For a long while he had had his suspicions; now they were confirmed.

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The nickel was a two-headed one.

O'Grady gritted his teeth and shook his fists.

"For eighteen years!" he growled, and stowed the spurious coin in his own waistcoat pocket, "For eighteen years!"

A Battle Royal.

THE Webster Club Hall was not a haunt of the fashionable, but it was a very popular resort among the male members of New York's East Side "society," and on this particular night the club was holding a fancy dress dance, open to members and to anybody else who cared to purchase a ticket.

O'Grady and Kaplan reached the hall together, the pawnbroker grotesquely attired as Little Lord Fauntleroy, complete with curls on his head and socks on his feet, and the policeman disguised as Robin Hood.

They found themselves amongst a crowd of young people in all manner of costumes, and they caught sight of Rosie, in a red satin skirt and a white satin blouse with a red collar, supposed to be a jockey, Moe Levine, dressed as a very unconvincing treader, and Terry Calahan in football outfit, including leather helmet. A fox-trot was in progress.

"Phew!" exclaimed Kaplan. "I don't care for this dancing. Pat, let's you and me get up a game at pinoche, eh?"

Pat was nothing loth, and the pair made for an inner room, collecting on their way a pirate, a cowboy and a fireman. There were tables in the inner room for card-players, and they settled down to a game of pinoche, which is something like bezique.

Out in the ball-room, both Moe and Terry—in turn—asked the conductor of the band to play "Sweet Rosie O'Grady," and eventually the tune was rendered, as a fox-trot, just after Terry had claimed Rosie for partner.

"D'you hear what they're playing?" cried Rosie delightedly.

"Sure," responded Terry, swinging her round. "I asked them to do it." He did not consider it worth mentioning that Moe had made the same request and accompanied it with a tip.

Terry was not quite as good a dancer as he was a boxer, but Moe was even worse. Having danced with both of them, Rosie announced that she was dying of thirst.

"All right," said Moe eagerly, "I'll get you something."

"No," objected Terry, "I'll go."

"I could drink two lemonades," declared Rosie. "Get me one each."

They went off together to the refreshment bar, and the moment their backs were turned a tall and handsome young fellow in the uniform of a chauffeur bore down on Rosie.

"Hallo!" he greeted her cheerfully. "You supposed to be a woman jockey? Where's your horse?"

She looked up at him indignantly, but decided that she liked his clean-cut face, his clear blue-grey eyes, and his crinkly brown hair, and smiled. "Where's your car?" she countered.

"Downstairs."

"Well, you'd better get into it before an accident happens to you," she remarked significantly.

"Not at all," he laughed. "I love accidents. Dance? Please do—I'm all alone."

"I'm sorry," said Rosie primly, "but I never dance with people I don't know."

"It only took me thirty seconds to find the most beautiful girl in the

place," he informed her. "One dance and we'll be old friends. Two dances, and we'll be comrades. Three dances, and—"

"I think one will be enough," she decided.

Moe and Terry returned together, bearing glasses of lemonade, only to find that the chair in which they had left Rosie was occupied by quite a different girl.

"Look, Terry!" cried Moe suddenly, and pointed. "There she is, dancing with a chauffeur."

"Where did that guy come from?" snarled Terry.

"I don't know," lamented Moe; "but I wouldn't stand for it, if I was you."

"Don't worry!" snorted the boxer. "You wait and watch."

Rosie and her partner seemed, to their jealous eyes, to be thoroughly enjoying themselves—and they were. The young man was very masterful, but very amusing. He had already learned her name and address by heart, and had informed her that his own name was Tommy McLean. He danced perfectly, and she told him so.

"I'd like to show you how well I drive," he told her. "I'm coming round to your place to take you for a run, May I?"

"Maybe," murmured Rosie, and added impishly: "But I'm surprised you ask permission for anything!"

After the dance was over, she led him across to Moe and Terry and introduced him. Moe, with a gulp, expressed his pleasure at the meeting, but claimed Rosie for the next dance. Terry said nothing till Rosie was out of earshot. Then he said, loudly and threateningly:

"This is a one-way street, chauffeur, and as far as you're concerned, that's the way out!"

He jerked his thumb in the direction of the door, but Tommy merely smiled, his hands clasped loosely before him. Terry jabbed a finger in his chest, and Rosie immediately deserted Moe and ran over to them, fearing trouble. She tugged at Terry's left arm.

In the meanwhile a row had started in the inner room. Kaplan, having lost at cards, had deserted the game to look on, and he had hit upon a wily way of assisting his lifelong friend. Having inspected the cards held by the opposition, he proceeded to administer advice by remarks such as:

"Say, Pat, did you hear about the fellow who came into my shop to-day to sell me a diamond?"

He mentioned, at a later stage in the game, that a mutual acquaintance had heart trouble, and, after another hand had been dealt and inspected, remarked that it was a nice club.

Patrick O'Grady, with the aids of these pointers, won heavily, though not without exciting the suspicions of the other players. And when more talk of diamonds occurred, the three players threw down their cards and rose to their feet.

"O'Grady," cried one of them wrathfully, "you're a crook!"

"Wait a minute—wait a minute," begged Kaplan nervously. "Now, boys, let's all be friends."

"Friends!" cried another player scornfully. "You and your heart trouble, and your diamonds! So this is a nice club, is it? Well, take that!"

O'Grady went down with a crash, and Kaplan went down on top of him, dragging the table, the cards and the counters with him.

O'Grady rose up and laid about him. The room became a wreck, out of which,

somehow, the policeman and the pawnbroker managed at last to escape, followed by their foes.

They burst into the ball-room, to find that dancing had stopped and that trouble was imminent between Terry and a young fellow in chauffeur's clothes. Terry's right fist crashed into Tommy's face, and Terry immediately received a straight left on the nose that surprised him.

The other card-players arrived; pandemonium broke loose. Moe received a blow intended for Kaplan, and hit out blindly. The Irish element in the club immediately decided that it was anybody's fight, and joined in with gusto. Girls screamed; chairs were not merely upset, but smashed to pieces—some of them upon unprotected heads. Terry and Tommy fought like gladiators.

The steward of the club, in a panic, pulled the fire-alarm, and the secretary telephoned for the police.

More Trouble.

TOMMY, the alleged chauffeur, had given Rosie his surname as McLean, but actually it was Sinclair. Somewhere about eleven o'clock that night he entered the drawing room of a stately house in Park Avenue with a black eye, a torn cheek, and his hair dishevelled.

An elderly, heavy featured man, who was sitting on a Chesterfield, and who happened to be Tommy's father as well as a millionaire, looked up in astonishment.

"What are you doing in that rig?" he demanded.

"I swapped clothes with McLean," said Tommy. "Just a bit of fun—I wanted to crash into a club I didn't belong to. There was a dance on, and I saw a perfect peach of a girl going into the place. There was a spot of bother—"

"It gives me considerable pleasure," broke in Mr. Sinclair grimly, "to see that somebody gave you a hiding. You're always doing the craziest things."

"It took six of 'em to do it, dad!" chuckled Tommy. And then he fished out a tiny handkerchief, with an "R" embroidered in a corner of it, and added: "She was worth it!"

At practically the same moment, Rosie was having an argument with a bruised and battered Robin Hood, who had perched his police cap on his head, and a semi-baldheaded Little Lord Fauntleroy. She had just reached home, by herself.

"I never saw anything so silly in my life," she declared. "Terry started the fight just because the other boy asked to dance with me."

"Which boy?" demanded O'Grady. "You don't know him?" "Did Terry know him?" "No."

"Well," said O'Grady, "you know it's a very jealous lad Terry is." "What right has Terry to be jealous when Rosie is practically engaged to Moe?" snorted Kaplan.

"Who said so?" cried Rosie stormily. "When it comes to choosing a husband, I'm going to do it myself. Good-night!"

After the storm, a calm. A full fortnight passed almost uneventfully, to all appearances, and then one day Moe Levine walked into the pawnshop, looking very spruce in a brand-new light grey suit and a brand-new hat.

Kaplan stared and questioned, and was informed that Moe had given up the insurance business to become Terry's manager. They had been sworn enemies till that "chauffeur chap" had come

along, but now they were too busy hating him to hate one another, and there was more money in boxing.

"I get fifty per cent of his share, just for the mental work," declared Moe. "And as soon as I clean up big I'm goin' to talk to Rosie."

"Say, don't you worry about that chauffeur chap," said the pawnbroker. "Only last night I told Rosie I didn't want her to go out any more with that good-for-nothing, and when I tell Rosie something—"

He broke off, because Rosie had emerged from the shop-parlour in her best clothes, with a fur collar round her neck. He stared at her, while Moe held out his hand.

"You look fine, darling," said Kaplan. "Nice! Well, where are you goin'?"

"Out with Mr. McLean," responded Rosie quietly.

Moe looked significantly at the pawnbroker, but all the pawnbroker said was:

"Well, don't forget to put on your coat."

Rosie was on her way to the door, when Terry stepped in over the threshold.

"S'pose you don't want to know me any more?" he growled.

Rosie didn't answer that question. She saw a low grey car sweeping up to the kerb outside the shop, and she hissed:

"If you lay a hand on Tommy McLean, I'll never speak to you again, Terry Calahan!"

The car stopped, and Tommy, still wearing the clothes of a chauffeur, stepped into the shop. He greeted Rosie affectionately, and the others in quite a friendly fashion. But Terry, who was suffering agonies of jealousy, scowled at him, and said menacingly: "Some day, when you ain't hidin' behind a girl's skirts, I'm goin' to turn you inside out!"

"I'll look you up," said Tommy calmly. "Ready, Rosie?"

"I'll get my coat," said Rosie.

"I'll wait for you in the car," decided Tommy.

The course of true love never did run smooth. Patrick O'Grady was standing beside the grey car when Tommy went out to it; and the sergeant's notebook was in one hand and a pencil was in

the other.

"How long have you been parked here?" demanded the Irishman sternly.

"About three minutes." "This car's been here for an hour," mendaciously retorted O'Grady. "I've been watching it! Lemme see your licence!"

There was no help for it. Tommy produced his licence, and at the same moment perceived that Rosie was crossing the pavement.

O'Grady stared at the licence, and then stared at Tommy.

"Thomas Sinclair?" he bellowed. "I thought your name was McLean?"

"My name's on that card," responded Tommy unhappily.

"And you're a chauffeur, and you live on Park Avenue?"

"You must have been puttin' in a lot of overtime!" scoffed Kaplan, from the doorway.

"Well, there's your licence," snapped O'Grady; "and here's another little souvenir for you!" And he handed Tommy an official slip demanding his presence before a magistrate for causing an obstruction.

Tommy pocketed the card and the slip, and turned to Rosie. He could have wished that Moe and Terry had not been present to witness the incident, but he seemed fairly calm.

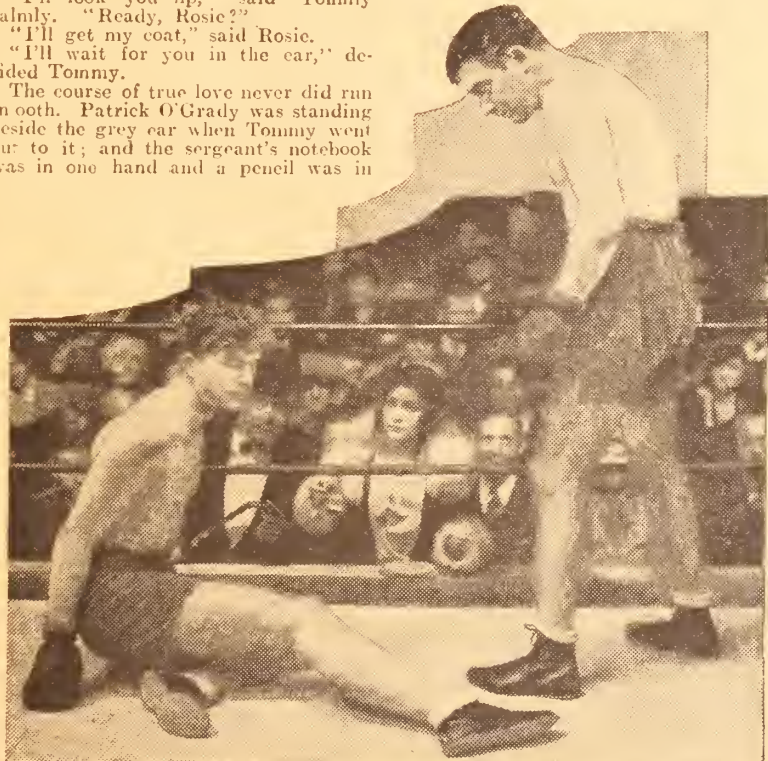
"Come on, Rosie!" he urged.

She let him help her into the car; but as he settled down at the wheel and drove off, she said to him coldly:

"I'm coming with you because there are a lot of things I want you to tell me—Mr. Sinclair!"

It was not a very pleasant ride, and it was not a very long one. Tommy, in the intervals of avoiding the traffic, explained everything and was very humble; but Rosie waxed more and more indignant, and finally ordered him to stop.

He stopped obediently, though they were in a busy thoroughfare, and she



Towards the end of the round he went down with a crash, and Rosie started to her feet with a cry of horror.

got out. He followed her, deserting the car to plead his cause, but she declared that she was going home and that he was not as good a man as either Moe Levine or Terry Calahan.

"I'm a better man than both of them," he retorted. "I can lick Calahan, and I can out-smart Levine—and you know it, in your heart."

"I don't!" cried Rosie, and ran off. A policeman was standing by the car when he returned to it.

"You own this car?" inquired the policeman. "You do? Well, here's a ticket for you, for leaving it unattended in the way of a fireplug."

"Oh, for the love of Mike!" groaned Tommy.

A Shock for Rosie.

ROSIE reached home in tears, and Kaplan and O'Grady, who were playing draughts in the shop-parlour, sprang up in alarm.

"I know what's the matter!" cried Kaplan indignantly. "It's that fellow Sinclair—McLean—or whatever his name is."

Rosie flew past them, making for that refuge of a girl in distress—her bedroom. Said O'Grady sternly:

"I'm going to look up this Sinclair fellow and lay down the law to him."

"I'll go with you," decided Kaplan. "What do you know about law? Listen, Pat, lemme do all the talking. With your muscle and my brains—"

They went off together to Park Avenue, relying on Rosie to attend to any customers who might arrive in their absence. They reached the stately brownstone house which was Tommy's home, and an austere butler opened the door to them, and left them standing in the hall while he informed his master of their presence and their desire to see them.

Tommy's father was in the drawing-room, and, not recognising their names, he told the butler to say that he was out. But the butler had left the drawing-room door open, and they heard:

"You may be out, but we're in!" cried Kaplan, striding into the room with O'Grady behind him. "Show your badge, Pat! We want to see Mr. Sinclair."

Mr. Sinclair was surprised, and eyed them doubtfully, but announced that his name was Sinclair.

"Oh!" exclaimed the pawnbroker. "You're his father, eh?"

"Has my son been getting into trouble of some sort?" asked Mr. Sinclair with sudden misgiving.

"Well, not exactly," admitted O'Grady, "but he's heading for trouble mighty fast. If he thinks he can fool around with my daughter—"

"My daughter!" corrected Kaplan. "I ought to know!"

"Gentlemen!" said Mr. Sinclair. "Please make up your minds!"

"Well, all right," said Kaplan, less violently. "Our daughter—she's our adopted daughter, you understand—"

Between them they managed to make the whole story more or less clear, but it took a long time, and involved considerable bickering between the storytellers. Mr. Sinclair then explained that the whole thing had begun as a frolic on the part of his son, but that he understood Tommy was really keen about Rosie.

"And, of course," he added, "having begun with deception, he had to go on with it. I can see that! McLean is my chauffeur. But, of course, if your daughter is engaged to this Levine—"

"Terry Calahan!" barked O'Grady.

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"I'll speak to my son," hastily interposed Mr. Sinclair.

Evidently he did speak to Tommy; but what he said had considerably less effect upon that very determined young man than what Rosie had already said. For the next morning Tommy stalked into Moe Levine's little office in an unattractive street not far removed from the Webster Hall Club.

Terry was in the office, arguing with Moe because, as his manager, the young Jew had not provided him with a satisfactory number of boxing contests. They stopped short and stared at the intruder.

"You!" exploded Terry. "Didn't I tell you the next time I saw you I was going to knock you silly?"

"That's just what I've come to see you about," was the retort. "But just a moment—I understand you're a prize-fighter. Well, I've done a little boxing myself, and I think I can lick the tar out of you!"

"You can what?" bellowed Terry, advancing upon him.

"Vait, vait, vait!" cried Moe hastily, launching himself between them. "Never give away anything that you can sell." He turned to Tommy. "What's your proposition?"

Tommy laughed. "I'm willing to bet five thousand dollars," he said, "that I can put your man to sleep in eight rounds."

Terry made unpleasant noises of derision, but Moe silenced him.

"Sit down, Mr. Sinclair!" he said eagerly. "Tell me anything you want to tell me—I'm open for business."

As a result of that interview, announcements of a forthcoming fight between Terry Calahan and a "Mystery Man" appeared in the papers.

Moe had used his brains, and he continued to use them, making all the capital he could out of the circumstances. A day or two later headlines in the papers announced that Calahan's mysterious challenger was none other than Thomas Sinclair, son of the Wall Street millionaire.

The fight, which was to take place at the Madison Square Gardens on a Saturday night, became quite a topic, and seats were booked at a premium. Moe was delighted, and even Terry beamed. It seemed to both of them that here was a wonderful opportunity of putting an ignominious end to their rival and of making quite a lot of money at the same time.

On the Wednesday evening before the fight Tommy walked calmly into the pawnshop and crossed behind the counter into the little parlour. Rosie was alone in there, and she frowned up at him.

"What can I do for you?" she inquired icily.

"You can forgive me for being a fool," said Tommy earnestly. "That chauffeur stuff, Rosie—I wish you'd forget it."

"I have forgotten it—and you!" she retorted. "And if you will take my advice you'll get out of town before Saturday afternoon."

"You tell that to Calahan!"

"Why, Terry will kill you!" she cried.

"Oh, no, he won't—I have other plans. Aren't you interested in them? No? Well, you ought to be—you're part of them. In fact—"

The door opened, and Kaplan and O'Grady entered together.

"Good-evening, gentlemen!" said Tommy affably.

O'Grady scowled at him, but Kaplan looked him thoughtfully up and down.

"Say," he exclaimed, "how old are you?"

"Twenty-six," replied Tommy.

"Why? Twenty-six, and you're goin' to fight Calahan? Why, you might have lived to sixty, or seventy. Well—"

"We're bettin' everything we have on this prize-fight," broke in O'Grady.

Rosie looked up, aghast; but Tommy said cheerfully:

"Is that so? Who are you betting on?"

"A sure thing!" boomed Kaplan.

"Calahan!"

"Really?" said Tommy. "Calahan? Well, well—bye-bye, Rosie!" And without another word he went out.

Rosie looked blankly at the door he had closed behind him, then jumped up and put on her hat and coat.

"Where are you going, Rosie?" asked O'Grady, barring the way.

"I'm going to see Terry," she said, with a curious little catch in her voice. "I'm going to stop that fight."

"You can't do anything like that!" protested Kaplan. "The papers are all signed, the money's put up, and the seats are sold!"

"And besides," chimed in O'Grady, "you can't see Calahan, anyway—he's at some place in Jersey, training."

"Oh, but that poor boy will be killed!" faltered Rosie. "It isn't fair, and I'm going to stop the fight if I have to burn down the building!"

It was then that Kaplan made an indiscreet remark. He declared that Tommy wasn't worth her tears—even his own father had said so.

"How do you know that?" she stormed.

"Because we went to see him."

The fat was properly in the fire then. She insisted upon being told all about their visit to Mr. Sinclair, and she raved at both of them for doing such a thing, and went off with tears in her eyes and an entirely new determination in her heart.

"Now do you see what you have done?" hissed Kaplan after she had gone. "A fine mess you have made of the whole thing, O'Grady!"

The Winners.

ROSIE made straight for the house in Park Avenue, and, as it happened, Tommy was out and Mr. Sinclair was at home. She was ushered into his presence, and she poured forth her fears and begged him to stop the fight.

"It isn't fair!" she cried. "It won't be a fight, I tell you. It will be murder!"

Tommy's father had taken full stock of her, and had decided that she was not merely a beautiful girl, but a sensible one—one who would be very good indeed for his wayward son.

"You don't think much of Tommy, do you?" he said regretfully. "But he thinks a great deal of you. He must do, for this is the first time I've ever known him do anything really definite. He has made a bet of five thousand dollars on himself. I didn't give him the money—he dug it up somewhere. And I'm not going to stop the fight, my dear. He's going to win it! I'm a conservative man by habit, but I'd stake everything I've got on that."

"You would?" exclaimed Rosie, looking up at him with eyes that shone.

"I certainly would. Oh, and, by the way, last time I saw him he invited me to his wedding, and it may interest you to know that he intends you to be the bride. I can't question his judgment in the matter, but I'm afraid you're going

(Continued on page 25.)

An ominous secret surrounds the box; many people try to steal it and learn its secret. A mystic force of terrible malignity lurks in the background. Don't miss the grim adventures of a daring youngster and a pretty heroine. Starring Jack Perrin and Louise Lorraine.



EPISODE 7.

"The Temple of the Sacred Jade."

The Secret of the Jade.

MORGAN'S cry of terror rang through the disordered room as the Shadow Man forced the revolver around until its blackened muzzle was pointing at the financier's own head. Jack saw Morgan's arm and hand quivering under the strain as he tried to resist. He saw the man's finger being forced down on the trigger by the pressure of the ghost-like hand about his own—and then Jack flung himself across the floor, with Percy shifting at his side.

They grabbed at the revolver together, jerking it upwards. Both felt the strength of the Shadow Man's resistance as they struggled, while the weapon exploded, smashing a bullet to the ceiling so that flakes of plaster came showering down.

White of face, Helen watched the fighting figures, Morgan helping to try and wrest the revolver clear. Over them reared the terrible form of the Shadow Man, black as ebony, as impalpable as a phantom, and yet gifted with amazing strength.

Again the revolver exploded as the three struggled against the thrashing black figure, and this time its bullet seared through the carpet. With the shot, Jack wrenched madly on the weapon, tearing it away so that it went flying across the room. It struck the wall and dropped to the floor.

Jack saw the Shadow Man sweep across the room towards it, and he tried to beat him to the weapon, but the daylight ghost travelled faster. A filmy

hand closed on the butt of the gun, lifted the weapon, and pointed it at the open window.

It blazed the remaining shots into the empty air outside, and then, very swiftly, the Shadow Man faded out, and the gun dropped to the floor.

All that was left after that was the revolver, with smoke wreathing up from its reeking barrel, and Morgan slumped against the wall, trembling like a man stricken with palsy, while Helen clutched the jade box and the sheet of paper which gave the key to opening it.

Morgan had been nearer to death than ever before when he looked down the barrel of that revolver, and he realised it. He had openly shown his enmity to Jack in trying to get the jade box from him, and the Shadow Man had wrecked his attempt to gain the secret.

Quivering against the wall, Morgan forced his brain to clarity, obliged himself to think quickly. He saw Helen staring at him, her eyes wide in horrified surprise. Percy Winslow was watching him, his face set and his gaze calculating. Jack turned to regard him, frowning and with his fists hunched.

"So you were trying to hold us up," Jack said grimly, as he moved across the carpet. "You were holding us up for the box, eh?"

"You're wrong!" Morgan pushed himself off the wall. "I—I was just trying to save you from yourselves."

"It looked like it," Percy cut in quietly. "You said that if we didn't hand the jade and that paper to you, you'd shoot us where we stood!"

"I know I did, but I was only threatening you!" Morgan was recovering fast, while his glance darted about the room to make certain that all sign of the Shadow Man had gone. "You

see, there's a deadly secret in that jade box—something terrible. I was afraid that you might harm yourselves with it if you opened it, and—"

"And so you stuck us up with a gun to get it for yourself!" Percy grunted.

"No. I was startled—I had to think quickly," Morgan answered. "I did the first thing that came into my head, that's all. I didn't mean any harm."

Jack glanced at Percy. Both knew perfectly well what Morgan's game was, and they also remembered that he was Helen's uncle—revelation of his duplicity would only distress her. It was better, Jack decided, to appear to fall in with him and not to let him guess that they knew more than he thought.

"You certainly seared us!" Jack exclaimed, and Percy took his cue from his friend.

"I thought you meant business, Mr. Morgan!" he said.

"Why, uncle wouldn't shoot anybody! He was only kidding!" Helen laughed a little nervously. "But—but the Shadow Man—"

"He meant business all right!" Percy eyed Morgan narrowly as he spoke. "The way he turned that gun on you looked as though he knew something!"

"I'll pump lead into him the first chance I get!" Morgan said desperately, and moved towards the gun as he went on: "Let's look at that paper!"

"We'll do that downstairs," Jack suggested. "Percy, help bring Helen's suit-cases below, then we'll all study this key to the box!"

Soon they were gathered in the wrecked room on the ground-floor, and Helen set the jade box on the financier's desk.

"Do you think we ought to open it?"

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Percy asked doubtfully as Jack studied the paper.

"If the Shadow Man hadn't meant us to, he wouldn't have given these directions," Jack answered.

"Open it—open it!" Morgan exclaimed.

Jack glanced at him as he passed the paper across to Percy. Morgan's hands were trembling and his face was pale from eagerness. Helen pushed the box across to Jack, and he picked it up.

He searched for the two queer characters on the sides, then placed his thumbs on the idol's head in the lid of the box. He found that his fingers fell naturally into position indicated by the diagrams. He held his breath a moment.

"Press downwards!" Percy exclaimed as he held the paper.

Jack pressed with fingers and thumb. He felt all three parts of the box move almost imperceptibly, then the ridged lid split in the centre and flung back.

Inside, on a little bed of cotton strands, lay a glass phial. Helen reached in and lifted it out. They saw that it was filled with some jet black liquid, and she pointed to it as she exclaimed:

"The secret of the jade box—I know what it is! It's stuff which will bring the Shadow Man back to his proper form—that is why he was so anxious to get it!"

Behind her, Morgan was bending forward, his hands reaching eagerly towards the little glass container. But he restrained himself, and Percy asked: "Is there anything else in the box, Jack? It looks as though there might be room for something more."

Jack lifted out the cotton strands, but there was nothing to be seen. He noticed that the under part, where the phial had rested, was thick and deep, as though there was space for yet another compartment in the strange green casket.

"Nothing else," he said. "And no instructions, or anything."

"Perhaps the Shadow Man will come for it!" Helen exclaimed. "Perhaps—"

Her voice died away.

Martin Morgan had stepped back, and in his hand now showed the revolver which had lain in his desk-drawer before the Shadow Man had wrecked this room. Swiftly the financier was slipping fresh cartridges into the chambers, and the weapon locked as he raised its loaded shape and covered the three.

"Put that phial down!" he snarled, and there was a menace in his voice which made Helen obey. "Step away from the table—and leave the Box there!"

His face was distorted to a grin of triumph as he watched them obey. There was now absolutely no colour on Morgan's features. The Jade Box and its secret were on the desk before him, the things for which he had schemed and worked for so long; rather than lose them now he would have used the revolver ruthlessly.

He believed that the secret of the box would pave the way to power, to riches and wealth beyond computation, and that the contents of the small phial were far more potent than Helen imagined.

His threatening weapon sent them away from the desk, and he drove them towards the hall.

"Out of it!" he snarled. "Pick up those bags and get out—quick!"

Jack could see that he would shoot on the slightest provocation. He picked up Helen's suitcases, and Morgan followed them closely as they moved out to where Percy's car still waited.

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The three of them crowded in, always with Morgan watchful behind them.

"Now get away—and don't come back!" he rasped.

The Black Phial.

JACK stopped the car when they were on the main highway and half a mile from the house, then spoke for the first time.

"Now we do know where we are!" he said quietly. "Helen, I'm going back there to get the Jade Box. I want you to drive on to my apartment and wait for me there."

"Jack, you can't go back. He'll shoot you and—"

"I believe that there's something else in the Box besides the black phial," Jack said, "and I'm going to get it! Your uncle took us unawares that time—but if you hadn't been there we'd have made a fight for it!"

"We would," Percy agreed. "I'll come back with you, Jack!"

"But why should uncle turn like that?" Helen asked.

"He's been like it all along," Percy told her. "He's behind most of the trouble that we've had, and—"

"We'll tell you the whole story later," Jack said. "There's no time now. Helen, you drive on"—he dropped out of the car with his companion—"and we'll come to you as soon as we can. Then we'll all three start for Kublik-Kehn—taking the Box with us. Ready, Percy?"

After some persuasion, Helen agreed to do as Jack suggested, and she drove on. The two watched the car out of sight before they turned back to the house, with the trailing shadows of dusk darkening the trees about it.

"I've got an idea that there's something else in the Box, besides that little bottle," Percy said.

"I think that, too," Jack agreed. "But I didn't get a proper chance to examine it. What d'you think the phial is for? D'you think Helen's right? She said that the stuff would bring the Shadow Man back to his proper form."

"I don't know," Percy answered. "It doesn't matter much, anyhow. We've got to get it away from Morgan before he can do anything, and that's going to be our problem!"

"Well, he'll start on the job straight away," Jack told him. "He may have done something about it already for all we know."

They hurried on. They reached the drive and went up it cautiously. The hall door still stood wide open, and the hall beyond was still cluttered with wrecked furniture. There was no light showing in the darkened building except the yellow glow of electric which came from the big room on the ground floor that Morgan used.

Cautiously the two entered the building and stood listening.

Absolutely no sound came to their ears, and they picked their way carefully down the hall. They stopped as they came in sight of the grille which guarded the big room.

A table and some chairs had been piled up to keep it closed from the inside. A carpet had been flung over the pile as though to disguise from prying eyes anything that went on, and over a gap in the top of this the light streaked out.

"He's up to something in there," Percy said.

"He must have the windows covered as well," Jack guessed; "we couldn't see the light from outside as we came up."

"We can't see through that lot," Percy told him, indicating the barred grille. "And if we shout to him he'll probably start shooting—he looked mad enough for that when we left him!" He added: "Isn't there another door to the room?"

They found it further along the passage. It was locked, but a slit of light came out through the keyhole. They listened, but heard nothing.

"D'you think that one of the keys to the other doors might fit this lock?" Jack suggested, and when they tried out the idea they found that the wards of the lock shifted under the first key they inserted.

Gently, Jack pushed the door open. It was shielded by a heavy velvet curtain meant to keep out draughts. The two of them slipped in under the cover of this, then drew the end of it back and looked into the barred room.

They saw that Morgan was seated at his desk. Before him was the Jade Box, and in both hands he held the black phial. He was turning it over and over as he stared at it, while the light played on the glass—and on the steely bulk of the revolver which lay at his elbow.

His eyes were blazing as he twirled the phial and held it up to the light. Its contents were absolutely black. He set it down and then inspected the Jade Box. Jack could see that, like himself, Morgan suspected there might still be some hidden compartment. He was searching for it, but he did not find it.

"He's going to do something with that phial," Percy whispered. "Think it's any good trying to rush him?"

"No. He'd shoot us down before we got half-way across the room," Jack told him. "We'll watch for a bit."

Again Morgan turned his attention to the phial. It was quite plain that, now he had the Box and had penetrated its secret, he did not know what to do with it. Yet again he turned the gleaming glass bottle around in his hands, then, with a resolute gesture, he tried to remove the stopper.

It appeared to be stiff, and he pressed the phial down on the desk as he strained anew. Finally, with a rasping, grating sound, the stopper came out.

He set it aside and sat looking at the phial as it stood on the desk.

Jack and Percy could see that the black stuff in it was fuming, giving off twirling, smoke-like vapour. Morgan stared at this and then bent, sniffing at the fumes.

The watching pair saw the fumes trail up into his face, and instantly he became rigid where he sat. On his features there awakened a frozen expression of alarm and horror, dead and impotent surprise.

The fumes from the bottle grew more and more strong. They swirled about him, and as they hazed his form, Martin Morgan began to fade away where he sat!

They saw the back of the chair show through his rigid and immobile figure. The edges of the desk appeared through the arms that rested on them. He faded out swiftly until all that was left to their sight was an unreal shadow hunched up in the chair.

"Gosh! The stuff's turned him into a Shadow-Man!" Percy gasped. "And—look! He's moving now!"

They saw Morgan's shadow lift in the chair and stand up. They could see him only faintly, like a dark patch on the air. He moved from the desk, while they gazed spellbound, and it seemed to them that he was trying to realise what had happened to him.

He turned back to the desk, and they saw the stopper of the phial lift and rasp home into the neck of the little bottle, cutting off the fumes that it was throwing out. They died away, while the Shadow remained looming above the bottle.

It moved again, lifting things about the room, and dropping them almost at once. It was as though Morgan was trying out his new state. To Jack and Percy it appeared as if he was just as he had been before, except that his body was almost invisible—was, in fact, apparent only as a shadow.

Morgan shifted a chair, then switched the light off and on again. He went to the telephone and lifted the receiver, and it was uncanny to see the shadowy figure bending in ghostly fashion over the instrument, with the receiver poised in mid-air.

The two heard the thin, squeaky sound of the operator's voice as the call was answered, but the Shadow did not reply. It made no sound, and suddenly the two realised that Morgan could no longer speak! His voice had vanished with his body.

He slammed the receiver down and moved from the desk. It appeared, then as though complete under-standing of his position came to him.

He was voiceless, and he had no body—and there was no way in which he could regain his own form save by death, when the power of the black phial passed.

Right at the beginning of things, the Shadow-Man of the Jade Box had warned him that a fate worse than death would be his if he persisted—and now that fate had overtaken him!

He was doomed to wander the world as a shadow; formless, voiceless—a ghost.

Quite motionless, he remained in the centre of the room, and then he seemed to go mad. He rushed around the floor, pulling at broken chairs, tearing pictures from the walls and smashing them as though by physical demonstration of the power left in him he could convince himself that he still retained his old form.

He fluttered about the room like a wild bat, moving in a silence shattered only by the shifting of furniture and the breaking of glass. Finally, he rushed to the barricaded grille and began to wrench away the furniture he had piled there. He slung it behind him, and the two saw his filmy hands wrapping on the bars of the grille as it grated open.

He passed through it, and his dim-seen form merged with the darkness of the hall beyond.

Gasping, some of the colour blanched from his face, Percy Winslow turned to Jack.

"Poor devil!" he breathed. "If that's the secret of the Jade Box—"

"We must get the Box and the phial before he comes back!" Jack cut in. "Quickly now!"

They stepped clear of the curtains and ran across the room. The black phial was standing harmlessly on the desk, and Jack saw that its stopper

was firm before he lifted it. He dropped it into the Jade Box, scooping up the cotton fibres which still lay there, and using the wool-like mass to protect the glass.

That done, he closed the strange lid of the green casket and slipped the whole thing into his pocket.

They hurried from the room, peering into the hall. There was no sign of Morgan's shadow. Night had completely fallen outside, and they stepped warily into the open air. They moved on to the grass which fringed the drive, and hurried down it to gain the road at the end.

"We've got to get away from here without him suspecting us," Jack told Percy. "He'll find the box gone the moment he goes back to that room and—"

"And he'll come after us if he thinks we were there!" Percy agreed. "We'd better collect Helen and our kit and start for Kublih-Kehn before anything else can happen to stop us!"

"That's talking sense!" Jack agreed, and they went down the road at a run.

They paused once to look back at the house.

It was in utter darkness. As gloomy, as menacing and forlorn as the new-made Shadow they had seen haunting the room in which the Jade Box had rested.

The Fuming Jar.

TROPIC' sunlight scared down on the narrow, dusty ways of Kublih-Kehn, beating from the smooth, plastered walls of the buildings and shining on the awnings over the little shops and the mysterious, cool-looking bazaars.

Down a narrow way Jack and Percy and Helen walked. Natives stared at them, vendors cried to them from the little hole-in-the-wall shops which they owned. Camel drivers steered their lumbering beasts carefully, so that their plodding, clumsy feet might not cast dust to soil the white lady's dress.

"This was the bazaar," Jack said quietly, as he touched Percy's arm, and all three paused. "Here's where they

stabbed the man who sold the Box to us!"

He nodded to the dusty threshold of the bazaar, where the earth had drunk deep of the blood of one who had proved traitor to the Keepers of the Jade.

"And this is where the trouble started, eh?" Percy asked.

"Yes. Here's where it started, and here's where the end of it begins, too," Jack said slowly.

The three had reached Kublih-Kehn without the least hitch through all their long and, sometimes, hazardous journey. They had seen nothing of any Shadow-Man, nor any sign of Morgan.

"From here we went to the Café of the Seven Seas," Jack went on. "That's where my father disappeared. If any of the set who really own the Jade Box are about, they'll see and recognise me. If none of them approaches us, then I'll have to think out some other way of getting into touch with them."

"We haven't been in Kublih-Kehn more than three hours," Helen said. "It's a bit early yet for anything to happen."

Helen was wrong. Things were happening even then.

Upon a balcony which overlooked the entrance to the bazaar two men were standing, half-hidden by the drooping fronds of a palm which grew from a wooden bowl ribbed with brass. One was tall; he wore a crimson cloak drawn high so that it half concealed his black beard. The other was shorter, and his cloak was blue and yellow, while both wore turbans of faded green.

The one in the crimson cloak was Abuk, and his hand rested on the haft of the long-bladed dagger with which the treacherous bazaar-keeper had been struck down weeks earlier. Now his fingers gripped the weapon with such force that his whole arm quivered as he snarled:

"By the sacred hair of Mahomet, it is the son of Lamar!" he breathed.

"Come back to Kublih-Kehn!" muttered his companion.



Behind her Morgan was bending forward, his hands reaching eagerly towards the little glass container.

"Come back to lay his bones in the desert dust!" Abuk snarled. "Ere the sun goes down, I'll lay his body cold against the hot sand!"

"Does he bring the jade?" his companion whispered.

"How can he bring the jade when no man knows where it be?" Abuk asked. "Long have I waited for his return, and now he is come he shall pay the price!"

"And the one with him?"

"He, too," Abuk snarled, "and the girl! There is no mercy in my heart since these thrice-accursed infidels found that which we sought and took it for themselves. May their bones rot, may scorpions share their beds, may pigs defile their graves!"

He cursed in his beard and watched the three move on along the street. Abuk and his companion descended swiftly from the balcony, and, while the other watched, Abuk darted into the bazaar below.

He strode swiftly, his red cloak fluttering, to where a sandal-maker stitted slowly at soft leather.

"The son of Lamar has returned!" Abuk bent low and whispered in his ear. "Give the word, good Yakoub—and spread it swiftly! Say they pass even now by the Street of Many Feet. Bid the Keepers watch and wait a sign from me. I will parley before I kill."

"I go, Akub, swifter than the hot wind of the desert's morn!" Yakoub answered, and he rose as he spoke, to dart along the bazaar.

Jack and Percy and Helen strolled slowly along the narrow road, and always Jack's arm was pressed above the bulge which was the Jade Box in his breast-pocket. In his coat he also carried a loaded automatic. Percy was similarly armed, and Helen carried a lighter—but just as deadly weapon—in her handbag.

"We'll go into the Café of the Seven Seas," Jack said. "I've got a feeling that the Keepers of the Jade have their Temple somewhere near there."

"And I've got a feeling that they're liable to start a fight if they learn what you've got with you," Percy told him.

"I don't see how they can," Jack answered. "Not when they know we've come to hand the box back to them, and—and to release my father. That's if he's still alive."

"He's alive all right," Helen reassured him. "The messages from the Shadow Man prove that."

They walked on, and it was Percy who first got the feeling that they were being watched. A beggar, squatting on a corner in his dusty rags, and with his wooden gourd outstretched for alms, eyed them with a peculiar glance, while a mat that draped the wall behind him shifted, and Percy thought that two black and staring eyes glared out.

From the parapet of a flat roof, where palms formed a green fringe, another man watched them, his eyes expressionless above the garment that screened his face. Once a man passed, staring full at them, his lips drawn from his teeth in a half-snarl that made Percy reach for his gun.

As they neared the Café of the Seven Seas, the traffic in the streets thinned. Shopkeepers no longer cried their wares to them; water-sellers no longer swung their goat-skins temptingly, nor pointed to the sherbet they carried on their trays. All whom they passed looked at them peculiarly, and Jack became aware of it presently, so did Helen.

"Something brewing," was Jack's comment. "I guess I must have been recognised. I certainly did turn this town inside out before I stopped looking for dad! Anyhow, there's the café."

He nodded ahead. The other two saw a long, low-fronted building with yellowed walls and an entrance shaded by reed screens. They paused when they reached it and looked in.

They saw that the interior was almost empty. None of the tables around the walls were occupied, but a few natives sprawled on the cushions scattered about the floor.

Jack led the way in, and made for a table near one of the fragile walls, which were made for the most part from cane and plaited leaves. The natives stopped chattering the moment that the three entered, and silence fell, to be broken again while the men eyed Jack and Percy covertly.

The three sat down at one of the tables, and a native came to ask them for their order. Jack called for sherbet, and, as he did so, Abuk stepped alone through the entrance.

"Percy, see that man! He tried to get the box from my father just before the fight here, and—"

"And he's coming over to have a word with you!" Percy broke in.

Abuk strode straight towards them. He stopped and bowed to Jack, then said softly:

"The young white lord has returned, and he seeks—what?"

"My father," Jack answered.

"Not the jade?" asked Abuk, and his teeth glittered as he smiled. "Has my lord forgotten how a man died in the bazaar? Or that the buzzards strip the bones of those who cross the Keepers of the Jade?"

"I want to meet those to whom the jade box belongs," Jack said slowly. "I have it here."

Abuk straightened with a jerk.

"May thy lying tongue curl in thy mouth and choke thee!" he said simply.

"I do not lie!" Jack told him gravely.

"See!" From his pocket he drew the green casket. At sight of it Abuk stepped back. Behind him every man in the strange building rose, and one of them gasped:

"The Jade Box of Quabilya!"

"By the bones of the Prophet, it is the jade!"

Silence dropped, then Abuk's hand slid beneath his cloak and the chill steel of his dagger flashed as he drew it.

"White lord, be wise! I will spare thy life—for the jade!"

The others crowded behind him now, all men whom Yakoub the sandal-maker had roused. More knives glinted as they began to press close about the table.

"Release my father—and the jade is yours!" Jack answered.

"The jade!" Abuk stretched out his hand. "Give me the jade, and its Keepers shall be merciful."

"My father is—"

Jack broke off, and his automatic jerked from his pocket. He fired as Abuk leaped at him, the bullet splintering the boards at the man's feet. Abuk stopped dead.

Percy's gun came out, then Helen's nicked automatic glimmered in her small hand as the three of them faced the group of natives across the table, holding them at bay.

"I came here to return the box to those who own it," Jack said tensely. "Release my father, and you shall have it. But try and take it from me, and we'll shoot—understand?"

He met Abuk's eyes, and the big native lowered his raised dagger.

"As my lord wills!" He bowed, and a gesture made the men behind him back away. "As my lord wills!"

He moved down the café, then reached out and pulled a hidden cord on the wall. Immediately a section of it lifted,

disclosing broad steps which ran downwards. Abuk bowed as he spoke again.

"The Temple of the Sacred Jade lies below," he said. "Descend and meet those to whom the box belongs. Speak with them about thy father."

Jack glanced at Helen and Percy, then looked towards the steps. Candles, set in niches on the wall, lit them, but they were gloomy and strange.

"You stay here, and I'll go down," he said.

"No, let's all go," Helen answered. "I don't suppose I shall be much good if there's any more trouble, but I can help. Go on, Jack!"

They stepped towards the opening. Abuk watched them in silence, and Jack led the way through. The three were descending the steps when Abuk followed. At the bottom was a door. Jack pushed it open, and discovered a wide, empty, stone-walled chamber.

To the left of this was a green door; opposite was one made from timber, heavily barred with iron. Abuk moved to this and pushed it open, then stepped aside and motioned for them to enter.

Jack saw that it was lit by four high candles which were placed about a great jar, made from green jade like the box that he carried. The jar was crowned by a massive lid with a handle formed in the shape of the idol which the box itself also bore.

This chamber was quite small, and Abuk followed them only as far as the threshold.

"If my white lords and the white lady will wait here," he said, "I will tell the Priests of the Jade that you bring that which they have long sought."

He was smiling as he spoke, and there was something in his voice which made Percy look at him keenly. Bowing, still smiling, Abuk stepped back, then, with a quick movement, he crashed shut the heavy door.

Percy jumped towards it, but he discovered that there was no handle on the inside, and he heard the rasp of heavy bars falling into position from the outer chamber.

"He's locked us in!" he exclaimed.

"That's nothing to worry about—we've got guns if they start any tricks!" Jack said. "We've got the Box, and that's what they really want. We're safe until they can get it off us—and they won't do that until I know that my father is all right!"

They looked round the chamber, and at the straight flames of the four big candles around the jar.

"What's in that?" Helen asked.

"What's the— Look!"

Her exclamation was almost a scream. All three saw a shadowy hand forming on the air above the jar, and behind it swiftly appeared a tenuous form.

It was a Shadow-Man looming above the candles, and they saw his dusky fingers close about the lid which crowned the green vessel. He lifted it with a sudden snatch, almost as though he was answering Helen's question.

He lifted the lid high on the air, and as it rose thin, smoke-like trails rose with it. They thickened, rising from the jar's mouth.

"Fumes!" Percy yelled. "Fumes, Jack—like those which came out of the phial in the Jade Box!"

They thickened as he spoke, forming a cloud which rolled sullenly out on the air.

"They're the fumes that turned Morgan into a Shadow-Man!" Jack gasped.

(To be concluded next week. By permission of the Universal Films, Ltd., starring Jack Perrin and Louise Lorraine.)

"Around the Corner."

(Continued from page 20.)

to have a deal of trouble managing that young man."

Mr. Sinclair was a wily father and a man of the world.

"Oh, no, I'm not!" immediately declared Rosie with considerable warmth. "So you don't think we ought to stop the fight?"

Mr. Sinclair chuckled.

"On the contrary," he said, "I think we ought to see it—it's going to be a good one. Miss Rosie O'Grady, may I have the honour of your company on Saturday night? I've bought two ring-side seats."

"Just try to keep me away!" cried Rosie excitedly.

She never quite knew how she lived through the rest of the week. She wanted to see Tommy, but resisted the temptation to seek him out at his training quarters. She wrote a number of letters to him, but tore them all up. The days dragged. Work was a torture; rest was unrest, because she was in such a fever of impatience.

Saturday night came at last, and Mr. Sinclair called for her in his car and swept her off to Madison Square Gardens. The boxing theatre was crowded as they made their way down the central aisle to their seats.

"Why are you trembling?" he asked her, after they were seated side by side immediately below the ring. "You're not up there."

"Oh, yes, I am!" whispered Rosie. "You're really sure he'll win?"

O'Grady and Kaplan had been presented with tickets by Moe Levine, and had arrived early. They were seated not very far away, and were obviously excited.

"Look," said Mr. Sinclair, "there are your—your guardians."

"They don't know I'm here," Rosie informed him. "I didn't tell them, and they'd gone before you called for me. They've put all their savings on the fight, and I got them to let me place the bets for them. There's a man at my office who knows a really good bookmaker—"

"Whom are they betting on?" inquired Mr. Sinclair.

"Calahan."

He looked round at her.

"And you placed the bets, eh?" he exclaimed. "Well, well, truly the ways of women are wonderful!"

Two unimportant boxers put up a sparring match as a sort of curtain-raiser, and then a shout went up. Calahan was making for the ring in a jazzy dressing-gown over his shorts.

Tommy followed a few moments later, and received almost as great an ovation as his better-known opponent, because of all the newspaper publicity he had received and the fact that he was the son of a millionaire.

"He looks good!" groaned Kaplan, as the athletic-looking young fellow bowed to the audience.

"Listen to me for the tenth and last time!" snorted O'Grady. "Calahan can't lose!"

"Yes," grunted Kaplan. "Well, you know it, and I know it, but does Calahan know it?"

The announcer lifted up his voice from the centre of the ring. It was a powerful voice, but not by any means a musical one.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he shouted, "the main event. Ten rounds. Terrible Terry Calahan in this corner, and in this

one Tommy Sinclair, the Park Avenue Kid."

The referee caused the contestants to shake hands for the benefit of some camera-men, and Kaplan asked O'Grady what they were taking pictures for.

"So as Sinclair's family can remember what he looked like before the battle," was the reply.

The first round went entirely in Terry's favour. He got in a left and a right to Tommy's face, a heavy blow over the heart and a left hook to the chin. But Tommy showed up gamely enough, and seemed quite a glutton for punishment.

Towards the end of the round he went down with a crash, and Rosie started to her feet with a cry of horror. But almost instantly Tommy sat up. Terry stood over him as he rose to his feet, but he backed briskly, adopted a fighting attitude, and caught his opponent fairly and squarely between the eyes.

"He couldn't stay down!" cried Mr. Sinclair proudly. "He doesn't know how!"

"Look! Look!" cried O'Grady to Kaplan. "There's Rosie over there—with Mr. Sinclair."

Kaplan stood up and waved, shouting:

"Hallo, Rosie!"

"Sit down!" bellowed a man behind him. "Sit down, or I'll nail you down."

Tommy and Terry were in a clinch, and the referee was parting them when the gong went. Tommy went back to his corner, seemingly no worse for wear than his opponent, who confided to Moe that the fellow was a shock absorber, but could be put out at any minute.

The next round, however, suggested that Terry was mistaken, for in it Tommy carried everything before him, on points, and landed a number of blows that jolted the professional badly.

"Tell him to use his left!" yelled O'Grady frantically.

And Kaplan chimed in:

"Tell him to use his left, Moe—if he's got anything left."

"That was a beauty!" cried Mr. Sinclair almost in the same second. "Right on Calahan's nose! Go it, boy—go it!"

Terry was on the ropes several times in that round, and one eye was nearly closed, and he was breathing heavily when, at the end of it, he tottered to his corner.

"It's awfully brutal, isn't it?" shivered Rosie. "Will it go on like this for ten rounds?"

"No," replied Mr. Sinclair confidently.

He was perfectly right; it didn't. Half-way through the third round Tommy landed a terrific upper-cut, and followed it with a straight left to the point of the jaw. Terry Calahan went down to stay down—though O'Grady shouted frantically to him to get up.

He was counted out and carried across to his corner, while O'Grady mopped his own brow, and Kaplan flung his hat on the floor and danced with rage upon it. Tommy was greeted with cheers from his supporters and with a certain number of hisses from those who had backed Terry to win.

Ten minutes afterwards, Tommy's manager and seconds stepped out from his dressing-room because his father and Rosie were about to enter it. Tommy's face had been sponged and his hair tidied, and he bore only a very few scars of battle upon his handsome face.

"Hallo, Tommy, my boy!" cried Mr. Sinclair. "That was one of the greatest fights I ever saw!"

"I was afraid you'd be hurt," said Rosie.

At that moment there came a loud bang at the door, and O'Grady and Kaplan burst into the room, uttering congratulations.

"I knew all along you could lick that fellow," said Kaplan.

"That's why you bet on Terry, eh?" jeered O'Grady. "The best man won, but two good men lost!"

Rosie ran across to them.

"Daddy," she said to Kaplan, "do you remember what you told me when you gave me the money?"

"We told you to put it on your future husband," said O'Grady. "At least, I did!"

"Well I did it," cried Rosie triumphantly. "I bet it on Tommy—and I got five to one, too! You've won about twenty-four thousand dollars!"

Kaplan gulped; O'Grady closed his eyes and screwed up his mouth.

The pawnbroker was the first to recover from the shock.

"Now, now, now," he cried. "don't get excited. Twenty-four thous— Well, it's nice you should have rich relations on both sides, ain't it?"

Rosie had been swept into Tommy's eager arms and was hugging him rapturously. Mr. Sinclair invited them all to supper and celebration at his house, then discreetly disappeared. But O'Grady and Kaplan lingered till Tommy said significantly:

"We'll see you later."

The sound of kissing reached their ears as Kaplan was closing the door behind them. Kaplan winked and pulled his friend along the corridor.

"I hope the first is a boy," he said.

"Won't it sound fine—Benjamin Kaplan Sinclair!"

"You're crazy!" snorted O'Grady. "The son of a fighter like that! It'll be Patrick O'Grady Sinclair!"

"Don't be a fool, you fool! I tell you—"

"Now wait a minute! I'll flip a nickel for it, I will, see?"

"All right—certainly," nodded Kaplan.

And thereupon O'Grady fished a nickel from his pocket, made sure that it was the one he wanted, and tossed it into the air.

"Heads!" called Kaplan hurriedly.

But it wasn't. It was tails!

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"PRINCE OF DIAMONDS."

(Continued from page 14.)

shout. He called to the others, and between them they lowered Rupert down out of sight. Lolah stayed silently up above with the men, watching and waiting.

Rupert found himself in a small underground cavern. It had been hewed out of gravel soil, and had been propped by cuttings from gum trees. Obviously it was a newly erected mine—probably not more than ten years old.

For a few minutes Rupert hacked away at the gravel walls, examining each pebble, and sorting out a pile in the middle of the floor. Every moment he was becoming more and more excited.

Suddenly, forgetful of Li Fang's treachery, he called to the men above. "Smith!" he shouted. "Come down here. This is the place!"

Smith descended, and his eyes gleamed as he saw the pile of pebbles Rupert had collected. Hastily producing his hunting knife, he hacked away at a few, and caught the gleam of a diamond beneath the rough surface.

"We'd better get up top again," said Rupert, suddenly remembering that he had now reached the critical stage of his mission. "I want to—"

The words died in his throat as two horrible shouts of pain reached his ears. One of the men above gasped out the words:

"The black death!"

He and Smith hauled themselves out of the mine, and a horrible sight met their gaze. Their companions lay on the ground writhing pitifully, and the shadow of death was on their faces. Lolah sat indifferently on a near-by mound, her chin on her hands, gazing into space.

Rupert bent down over one of the men to see if there was anything he could do. He was startled by a scream from Lolah.

"Beware!" she cried. "He will kill you!"

Rupert straightened his back abruptly, jerking his gun out of its holster as he moved. He side-stepped without turning round, and caught someone's wrist as it swept past his shoulder. It was Smith.

"Swine!" shouted Rupert. "This is where you finish."

They swayed backwards and forwards in a death grip. Suddenly Smith gave a yell and staggered backwards, his face ashen. With a crash he fell to the ground.

"The—black—death—" he gasped, with his last remaining breath.

Rupert spun round, amazed at the suddenness of it all. He looked down at the dead man, and then transferred his gaze to Lolah, who was still sitting some distance away. Apparently she had not moved.

"This is ghastly," he cried hoarsely. "We might be the next to go."

Calmly the half-caste girl shook her head.

"No," she said indifferently. "You see this?" From the folds of her dress she produced a long, thin tube. "This is the black death—a poison that acts quickly and surely. They would have

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killed you but for the darts that come out of here."

Rupert passed his hand wearily over his brow. A blowpipe! This girl, who had followed him into the depths of the jungle just because he had called her pretty, had saved his life! The thought left him numb, dazed.

With an effort he pulled himself together. Li Fang's treachery had been proved to him beyond all doubt. Now must come the time of reckoning.

"Come, Lolah," he said gently. "We'll collect all the gems there are and get back. The time has come for me to take my revenge."

"On Li Fang?" she asked.

"No. On a man back in my own country—a man and a woman!"

Just Deserts.

BACK in Endon Castle, Crayle was having a bad time. Ever since Rupert had gone away Eve had been like a woman dead. She spurned him every time she saw him. In spite of the fact that she was his wife, she avoided him always.

That was not Crayle's only trouble. Someone was flooding the markets with diamonds.

He had, only a few months previously, bought large stocks of the precious stones at a big price. A mysterious individual who said he was the agent of the Prince of Penang had offered Crayle a quantity of the gems, and Crayle had taken them because they were of such excellent quality.

No sooner had he paid for them, using almost the whole of his capital to do so, than he found it was impossible to sell them again. Every buyer in the country was getting the same kind of gems for a considerably lower price.

In vain Crayle tried to undersell. His competitor dropped his price lower still.

The battle of finance lasted for a month. At the end of that time Crayle was ruined, and on the verge of bankruptcy.

He returned to Endon Castle one day with disgrace staring him in the face. Whoever had been responsible for his downfall had done his work thoroughly. The career of Gilbert Crayle was ended.

Williams, who had still kept on at the Castle at Eve's request, announced a visitor. The visitor had given the name of "The Prince of Penang."

The mysterious personage strode into the room—the self-same library in which Crayle had brought his charge of theft against the man who had gone away.

Crayle stared at him in amazement. He rubbed his eyes and stared again.

"Rupert Endon!" he exclaimed. "You—the Prince of Penang!"

Rupert smiled.

"What is in a name?" he asked carelessly. "In Penang itself they call me Captain Ruin. An appropriate title, isn't it? I merely used the other name so that you wouldn't know who it was fighting you." He sat down in a chair and lit a cigarette. "Well, Crayle, how do you like the situation now?"

"You fiend!" Crayle gasped. "You infernal fiend!"

"Not at all!" Rupert puffed clouds of smoke ceilingwards. "Six years ago you did the same to me that I have now done to you. It was a compliment to your power, Crayle, that it took me so long. By the way, where is Eve?"

He spoke indifferently, but Crayle was aware of the hidden eagerness in his voice.

"I don't know," he replied shortly. "She's in the castle somewhere, I suppose."

Williams entered, and bowed deferentially to Rupert.

"There is a young person outside, Mr. Rupert," he said. "She says she is accompanying you."

"Oh, yes! That will be Lolah. I left her in my car." He looked at Crayle inquiringly, but Crayle made no response. "Tell her to come in," he continued. "I'm sure Mr. Crayle will not mind."

Lolah entered the room nervously. All her life had been spent in half-primitiveness, and she had never seen before the luxury of a wealthy Western home.

Rupert waved her to a chair. He was completely indifferent to the pretiness that he had commented upon in the café of Li Fang, but he had a use for her. She was his means of revenging himself upon Eve.

Eve joined them a few minutes later. She was not aware that Rupert had arrived, but as soon as she saw him, she ran towards him gladly, her hands outstretched.

"Rupert!" she cried. "Thank goodness you have come back!"

Rupert looked at her calmly.

"Meet Lolah," he said, indicating with a wave of his hand the half-caste girl.

Eve ignored her. Her whole attention was upon Rupert himself.

"Rupert, I've cleared your name," she went on quickly. "Adrian confessed that he and Gilbert conspired together to ruin you. And I—well, I married Gilbert so that you could escape."

Rupert changed his expression abruptly. From sheer indifference, it became remorseful.

"You mean you sacrificed yourself, for me?" he said.

"I mean just that."

Crayle, watching, sprang to his feet in sudden rage. Financially ruined, he could now see himself losing the woman he had in vain striven to win all these years.

His hand flashed to his hip-pocket, and he produced an automatic pistol.

"The last laugh is mine, Endon," he snarled, and levelled the weapon murderously.

He never pulled the trigger. With a hoarse shout, he threw up his hands, and even as he crashed backwards his features turned the familiar ashen hue of the Black Death.

"Lolah!" cried Rupert hoarsely. "You've killed him!"

Lolah's eyes filled with tears. She looked at him wistfully.

"If I had let him live, he would have killed you," she replied, and her voice sounded infinitely tired. "Now that he is dead, you can be happy."

She folded her arms slowly. Suddenly her own face changed colour, and she closed her eyes, swaying from side to side.

Rupert sprang forward. It was too late. Her legs crumpled under her, and she collapsed to the floor, one of her poisoned darts thrust into her arm.

Rupert bowed his head. He looked at Crayle's dead body; then at Eve, who was weeping silently by his side.

"Revenge!" he said brokenly. "And at what a price!"

(By permission of the W. & F. Film Service, Ltd., starring Ian Keith and Aileen Pringle.)

"The Fighting Legion."

(Continued from page 9.)

"Listen, boys," he stated, "what I said to-day was the truth—I'm out to round up the coyote that killed Tom Dawson. What's more, I've got a pretty good idea who he is. But I want to make him show his hand first, and I'd sure like to depend on you all to help me if the rowdies step in."

There was a chorus of approving cries as his listeners assured him of their aid. "Thanks, boys," Dave went on, "that's fine. And now I'll tell you what I'm goin' to do. I'm goin' to have a notice posted up in town, and I'm goin' to have a round-up in the saloon tomorrow at midnight."

Towards Midnight.

AN unknown hand had pinned a notice to the veranda post of the cantina or saloon. The hand might have been the Ranger's. At any rate, the message which had been written on the sheet of paper bore his signature.

"I am coming through the saloon doorway on the stroke of midnight," it ran, "and I am coming for the man who killed Tom Dawson."

The hands of the clock behind the bar of the cantina had moved round to ten-thirty, and it was ticking away the fateful seconds with unflinching solemnity. The sound of the ticking was lost in the prevailing clamour of men's voices and the clinking of glasses, but it was a sound that one man heard all too plainly—a sound that seemed to hammer at his brain till he could have cried out in the agony of a tortured mind.

That man was Bowie, and, seated at a table near the door with Blake and Edwards, he watched the swing of the pendulum as a hypnotised victim watches the swaying of a cobra-snake's head.

Outside, the notice on the veranda post was flapping dully in a gusty wind that brought sheets of stinging rain in its bosom, and before the clock had chined the quarter the downpour had become a veritable deluge.

Those inside the saloon could hear it crashing through the black night on to the roofs of the houses, and the wind shrieked and whistled through the street as if all the demons of the nether world had been let loose. And this unholy din was presently added to by a rumbling of thunder.

"Tough outside, ain't it?" someone was saying. "Meanest night I've ever known. Hey, d'ye think that hombre will show up to-night?"

"Ef he does," another man rejoined, one of the rogues in the pay of Blake and Edwards, "there's a lot of us boys has bones to pick with him."

Many others in the saloon were of the same way of thinking, but in a corner sat a group of men whose hands were ready on their six-shooters—men who knew that, unless they stood by Dave, Bowden would not be fit for an honest man to live in.

There was a plot afoot, a plot to unnerve the man Bowie till he was ready to blurt out the truth, and that plot had its culmination on the very stroke of midnight, when Bowie, with fingers clutching at his gun-butt, wheeled to see the door swing wide.

Bowie whipped out his "iron," and was not alone in doing so, for several

of the ruffians at the bar followed suit. But in the same instant, from behind them all, there came a sharp command reiterated in a dozen voices.

"Drop those .45's! Come on, thar—down with yer artillery an' up with yer mitts! Shove 'em high, will ye?"

Cloudy Jones and a party had entered by the back of the saloon. Together with the Hook brothers, Pop Williams, the bar-tenders and every law-desiring citizen in town, they held up the entire bar-room.

Dave Hayes walked across the threshold. His eyes were fixed on Bowie.

"So you drew your gun, huh?" he drawled. "You knew it was you I was comin' for, huh?" Then his tone changed, and he gripped the cringing scoundrel by the shoulder. "Come on, rat!" he blazed. "Tell 'em who killed Dawson the Ranger. Tell 'em, or by Heaven—"

"I'll tell!" sobbed Bowie. "It was me killed him. Yeah, me—shot him in the back like you said—"

"I know that," Dave ground out; "and now I want to know something else. Who were the men that hired you to bump Dawson off? Better talk, Bowie," he added, as the rogue hesitated. "It's your once chance of savin' your neck."

Bowie moistened his lips. "John Blake," he faltered, "was one. An' the other—"

A shot crashed out, and from Bowie came a strangled cry that ended in a death-rattle. Lifeless he pitched to the floor, and in the same moment there reached Dave's ears, from the direction of the hotel register-office, a scream in Molly's voice.

Dave sprang to the curtains that hung over the doorway which led to the lobby, and as he wrenched them aside he saw the figure of Burl Edwards, a smoking six-gun in one hand and his free arm around Molly's waist. The man had vanished with the struggling girl an instant later, plunging out of the hotel into the rain.

Dave stumbled across the lobby in pursuit, and as he gained the street he saw Edwards shoving Molly into a building some little distance away. He reeled towards that building through the storm, and, fairly hurling himself against the door, he blundered over the threshold into a dark room.

The muzzle of a six-shooter was jabbed viciously into his ribs.

"Keep still," said the voice of Edwards, and then there came the sound of the door being kicked shut.

Edwards spoke again: "Ranger," he snarled, "I'm goin' to send you on a long trip—ter Kingdom Come. The walls of this place are thick, an' the storm's ragin'. No one will hear this gun. And when you're gone, Ranger, I'll make a long trip myself—with Molly Williams—"

Dave took a chance, and brought his hand slicing down to clutch at the gang-leader's wrist. The .45 went off with a smashing detonation, but the bullet thudded into the floor, and next second the two men were swaying across the room in a fierce struggle for possession of the weapon.

"The light, Molly!" jerked Dave, and a moment later, with furniture crashing about her as the combatants overturned it in their savage scuffle, the girl found matches and a lamp.

She struck one of the matches, held the flame to the lamp and then turned. The two men were sprawled across a couch. Edwards held the gun, but Dave's grasp was still on his wrist, and the weapon blazed harmlessly at the ceiling as Dave forced the crook's arm outward and upward.

Edwards broke free, but a flashing punch to the jaw flung him in a corner, and the six-gun slid from his hand. When at length he struggled to his feet Dave was covering him.

"I reckon it's you who'll take that trip, Edwards," he said, "by way of the hangman's noose—and John Blake will be the one to travel with you, not Molly—"

A double ceremony was taking place in Bowden, Dave and Cloudy being the principals. No, it was no wedding ceremony, but the ceremony of taking the oath of enlistment in that world-renowned force—the Texas Ranger Service.

Had Bowden possessed a newspaper at that early stage of its career it might have mentioned in its report on the function that Mrs. Dave Hayes was present, looking the proudest as well as the prettiest girl in town.

(By permission of the Universal Films, Ltd., starring Ken Maynard and his horse, Tarzan.)

COMPLETE FILM NOVELS.



Greta Garbo and Conrad Nagel in "THE KISS."

"THE KISS." The drama of a woman caught in the toils of jealousy and suspicion—fighting for her life and unable to tell the truth.

"THE QUEEN'S NECKLACE." France in the years immediately before the great revolution. Marie Antoinette, its selfish queen, caught in a network of intrigue which involves a necklace worth a small fortune.

"SPRING IS HERE." Cupid at large in a gale of laughter. A romantic comedy, starring Bernice Claire, Lawrence Gray, and Alexander Gray.

"CRAZY THAT WAY." A hilarious comedy of three men and a maid—she preferred two fiancés to one husband. Starring Joan Bennett.

Don't miss these four grand complete novels in this week's issue of

"SCREEN STORIES."

Out on Wednesday.

Price 2d.

September 6th, 1930.



(Continued from page 2.)

Conquering Our Language.

Language is something to be conquered, like any other task or obstacle. Ulrich Haupt, actor and artist, went to Hollywood a few years ago with a Teutonic accent. He painted a few pictures, then devoted himself to an actor's career, and won a splendid reputation.

When talking pictures came along, Haupt devoted himself to studying English pronunciation under the best masters. To-day, acting in Norma Talmadge's latest picture, "Dr. Barry," for United Artists, Haupt hasn't a trace of an accent. His English is so perfect that he talks like a Londoner.

Intimate Facts About Famous Talkie Stars.

Noah Beery will bark for a medicine show, sing opera, work before the camera or on the stage, clown for friends, but his knees tremble and his voice shakes with terror when confronted by a radio microphone.

Walter Pidgeon is a "Bohemian," a noted singer, and film and stage leading man, Canadian born and an ex-service man from two years of the World War, but he has never taken a drink of liquor in his life.

Marilyn Miller is unquestionably the world's most famous musical comedy star; she is blonde, blue eyed, a former member of the Ziegfeld Follies. It is a fact, well known in professional circles, that she has been a victim of more "gold-digging" by girls and men with hard-luck stories than any other Broadway celebrity.

Bernice Claire, "the youngest prima donna," of the San Carlo Opera Company, went as a favour to Alexander

Gray to play and sing opposite him in a film test made for First National in New York.

Gray got his contract, but Bernice thought no more of it, and had no intention of entering the movies—until she was overtaken by an emissary of the movie company, with a fat contract for herself! Now, of course, in one year she has become one of the most successful young actresses on the screen.

Loretta Young had decided not to go in for a film career, so as to leave the field clear for her elder sisters, Polly Ann Young and Sally Blane. But she had to fill a "coll" for one of her sisters who could not take the job, and was so successful that she won a contract and is now a star, and by far the most famous of the three.

Lila Lee was a perfectly formed little woman at the age of thirteen, so she was starred in a series of pictures as a regular leading woman, with Harrison Ford playing opposite. Two years later she grew five inches taller, got "gawky," and had to postpone her film career another four years—until the talkies came in!

Alice White used to be a red-head, and when she first came on the screen she photographed so nearly like Clara Bow that everyone accused her of imitating the Paramount star. So did Miss Bow, one day when they met "socially." This made Alice so angry that she bleached her hair, reduced by ten pounds, and became a willowy, petite, blonde screen star not at all like Clara!

Now it develops that John Barrymore gave Richard Barthelmess his first lesson in make-up, and prophesied that he would go far in motion pictures or the stage.

Joe E. Brown, the famous comic of films, vaudeville and musical comedy, began his career in the show business by realising his boyhood ambition to

become an acrobat. He went through all the Horatio Alger Jr. trials and tribulations as a circus boy, including treachery and cruelty from the boss of his act!

Fred Kohler, who is to be starred by First National in rough-and-ready "he-man" rôles, owes his film fame to the fact that he spent his latter "teens" coalmining, which developed his tremendous physique. He weighs two hundred and thirty pounds, and is "hard as iron." He is the only movie star to live throughout the year on a ranch and work on it himself between pictures.

Sidney Blackmer, zeon of a "first family," was hobnobbing in New York for adventure, and needed some money. He took his stand in a line of men beside a skyscraper under construction, supposing he was applying for a labourer's job. He was chosen, and found himself an extra in a Pearl White thriller, to be filmed on the skyscraper's girders! That put the acting notion into his head for the first time.

David Manners, who has scored successes in "Journey's End" and "Sweet Mamma," came through Los Angeles en route to Honolulu on a quiet honeymoon. As usual, wife's relatives got him into trouble. Mrs. Manners had them in Los Angeles, they secured the stage juvenile a film test, and the honeymoon never went west of Hollywood!

Conrad Nagel developed his fine singing voice, and keeps it in training, by church singing.

Antonio Moreno, a Spaniard by birth, speaks faultless English and faultless Spanish, so he is able to play in either English or Spanish talkies; his latest in the latter language is First National's Spanish version of "The Bad Man," in which he plays the title rôle, which is enacted in the English version by Walter Houston.

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Boy's Cinema

"The Criminal Code," "Tom Sawyer" and
"Wild West Whoopee."

Complete Film Stories in This Issue.

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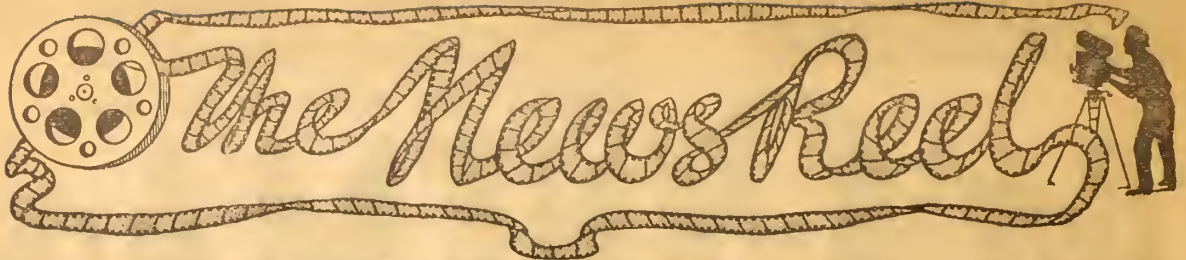
EVERY TUESDAY.

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of the West.
Starring
**BUCK
JONES.**

DESERT VENGEANCE



The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"Desert Vengeance."

Jim Cardew, Buck Jones; Anne, Barbara Bedford; Hugh Dixon, Douglas Gilmore; Bill McBride, Al Smith; Beaver, Ed Brady; Winnipeg, Bob Fleming; Parson, Buck Conner; Alabam, Pecwee Holmes.

"The Criminal Code."

Warden Brady, Walter Huston; Robert Graham, Phillips Holmes; Mary Brady, Constance Cummings; Gleason, De Witt Jennings; Galloway, Boris Karloff; Runch, Clark Marshall; Dr. Rine-wulf, John St. Polis.

"Tom Sawyer."

Tom Sawyer, Jackie Coogan; Huckleberry Finn, Junior Durkin; Becky Thatcher, Mitzi Green; The Teacher, Lucien Littlefield; Muff Potter, Tully Marshall; Aunt Polly, Clara Blandick; Mary, Mary Jane Irving; Mrs. Harper, Ethel Wales; Sid, Jackie Searl; Joe Harper, Dick Winslow; Widow Douglas, Jane Darwell; Injun Joe, Charles Steven.

"Wild West Whoopees."

Jim Logan, Jack Perrin; Ginger Rogers, Josephine Hill; Captain Rogers, Henry Roquemore; Smoky King, Fred Church; Sheriff Tim Ward, Charles Austin; Lew Larson, John Ince; Top-Hand Norton, Buzz Barton; Slim McGee, George Chesbro; Pete Weddel, Benny Corbett; Joe Harris, Walter Patterson.

Another Spectacular Epic for Richard Dix.

The high-water level in spectacular production set by "Cimarron" is to be maintained in another Richard Dix picture, entitled "Marcheta."

"Cimarron" dealt with the vivid action and colourful characters to be found in the south-west frontier of America, when this part of the continent was being wrested from the Indians and made habitable. In this picture Richard Dix, as the outstanding character of Yancey Cravat, made a new reputation for himself.

In "Marcheta" the scene changes to glamorous Spain, but the scope of the production is said to be as wide and as universal in its appeal as that of "Cimarron."

No expense is being spared in obtaining authentic atmosphere, and in this respect it is interesting to hear that Victor Schertzinger, who is to direct the picture, left for Spain recently with a complete camera crew for atmospheric shots in connection with the film.

"Marcheta" is based upon the famous song of the same name, which enjoyed a phenomenal popularity a year or so ago, and one of the principal reasons for Schertzinger's trip to Spain July 4th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S THREE COMPLETE FILM STORIES



LEW AYRES and ROBERT ARMSTRONG

"THE IRON MAN."

A stirring story of the boxing ring and how a young boxer rises to be the light-weight champion, but through swollen-headedness loses his championship and, becomes a man.

"SHIPMATES."

Traditions—loyalty—iron nerves—tingling romance and thrilling drama among the thundering guns of the mighty fleet. Starring Robert Montgomery, Dorothy Jordan and Ernest Torrence.

"THE APACHE KID'S ESCAPE."

A daring outlaw, tiring of his life of crime, determines to run straight and as a humble cowpuncher on the Bar X Ranch becomes involved in a strange adventure. Starring Jack Perrin.

is to photograph and record the world renowned guitar symphony of 60 pieces.

This symphony will be used to lend local colour and authentic Spanish atmosphere through the picture.

Electricity Facts.

Two billion watts of electric current! Enough to operate 80,000,000 average-sized lights.

Or 10,000,000 homes.

Reduced still farther down the dizzy scale of statistics, this vast annual power consumption of the Radio Pictures studio will nightly light a city of 33,300 homes, or 100,000 population.

A mathematical genius—only a genius could do it—might translate this tremendous equation into terms of bread toasters, washing machines and vacuum cleaners. However, this current has a more romantic usage.

Under the watchful eye of William Johnson, chief electrician, it feeds into the studio's six gigantic generators, turns camera motors, projection machines and lights the sets.

It takes a lot of power to burn a single motion picture incandescent lamp

—from 500 to 2,500 watts—and there have been times when 300 lamps on a single set were insufficient.

The actual power input metered into the studio is actually 2,003,610 kilowatts for the year ending March, 1931—a kilowatt hour corresponds to a thousand watts of current measured over a period of an hour.

The studio's ranch near Encino, California, consumes an annual power consumption of 6,730 kilowatts.

Handling this immense power is a man's job.

In normal times 150 electricians are employed in the various branches of Johnson's department. At peak times, when production is at its highest, 280 operators are engaged.

Ancient Mexican Chapel Reproduced in New Barthelme Picture.

Richard Barthelme's favourite chapel was recently reproduced on a stage at the First National and Vitaphone studios. A chapel of delicate colourings, of blue and gold and silver; a little chapel of old Mexico.

A year and a half ago Barthelme, accompanied by his wife, made a pleasure trip to Mexico City. While there he visited many of the old landmarks, one of which was an old church just outside the city limits.

Entering the little chapel of this ancient building, he was spell-bound with its reverent beauty—a quiet, serene loveliness.

"What a lovely thing for a picture!" thought Barthelme.

Fortwith he purchased postcard photos of the church and the chapel. The result is that now

motion picture audiences will be able to see that self-same place of worship in all its details.

The chapel has been incorporated into the San Gabriel Mission set which plays such an important part in the enfoldment of "Adios," the current Barthelme production.

Frank Lloyd directed "Adios," with Mary Astor and Marion Nixon in the feminine leads. The balance of the cast includes Fred Kohler, Arthur Stone, Mathilde Comont, James Rennie, Erville Alderson and Robert Edson.

Answers to Questions.

"Silver King," the late Fred Thomson's horse, is still alive, Douglas (Guernsey). Tom Tyler has not given up acting and his latest appearance is in the serial, "Phantom of the West." It has ten exciting episodes.

The four Marxes, Groucho, Harpo, Chico and Zeppo, were in "Animal Crackers," Bertie (London, W.). Yes, David Torrence was born in Edinburgh. He is 6ft. 1in. in height and Ernest Torrence is 3in. taller.

A feud between two outlaw bands—a girl who fell in love with a dashing bandit, and proved to be herself a crook—and a scheme of revenge that reacted on the schemer. A whirlwind drama with a terrific climax. Starring Buck Jones and Barbara Bedford.



DESERT VENGEANCE

The Man Who Lost.

THE smoking-room of the steamship *Alloa* was fully justifying its name: the atmosphere was thick with the reek of cigars and cigarettes. A retreat for male passengers, this big pillared room, ten stairs down from the promenade deck, set with tables, provided with a bar. And at most of the tables the men were playing cards.

"Quite a game at No. 2," remarked a waiter to the bar-tender, as he picked up a loaded tray. "The big mining man who came on board at San Diego sure is lucky."

"Aha," said the bar-tender without any show of interest. "On your way, Sam!"

The waiter went off with his tray, setting filled glasses before various players; but even as he threaded his way among the tables his glance strayed frequently to the four men who were seated round No. 2. They were playing poker, and they were immersed in the game.

One of them was a white-haired man with the face of a lawyer; another, a long, lean, red-headed Scotsman, had already made it known to everybody that he was an oil-pro prospector. But Sam, the waiter, was more interested in the other two, one of whom had been plunging wildly and had lost heavily, while the other was decidedly the biggest winner.

The winner, James Cardew, was a powerfully-built young man, clean-shaven and dark, not exactly handsome, yet one who would inevitably attract attention, even in a crowd. He had a pair of steady grey eyes and the face of a poker-player—a face that did not betray its owner.

The loser, Hugh Dixon, was of quite a different type. He was slighter of build, and quite handsome in his way, with his curly little moustache; but there

was a cleft in his rounded chin, and the gaze of his hazel eyes was seldom direct. A young man who would doubtless appeal to the fair sex, but who did not appeal to Jim, who was a judge of men.

"Four hundred dollars," said Dixon, studying his cards.

"I'll raise that two hundred," announced Jim Cardew in his slow, quiet way.

"I'll see you!" retorted Dixon, not without an air of strain.

"What have you got?"

"I'm calling you!" snapped Dixon.

Quite calmly Jim spread out his cards on the table—two kings, three queens. Dixon threw down his hand with the sigh of a beaten bluffer.

"That cleans me," he said gloomily. "I'm through!" And he rose from his chair.

"Better luck next time, son," said the red-headed prospector sympathetically.

"There won't be a next time for me," growled Dixon, and pushed across a pile of chips from his side of the table, then turned about and made his way from the smoking-room.

"Sam!" called the man who looked like a lawyer. "Bring a couple of Manhattans!"

An onlooker slipped into the vacant chair.

"Well, what are we waiting for?" he boomed cheerfully. "If I win every pot between here and Frisco, I'll still be a loser. Going to play, gentlemen?"

Jim stood up.

"Deal me out, gents," he said. "I've had enough for to-night."

He made his way to a caged-off portion of the long bar.

"Cash these chips in, steward," he requested.

"Certainly, sir," responded the steward with respect, and exchanged the pile of counters for notes and cash.

Jim went out and climbed the metal-edged stairs to the promenade deck. The air seemed clean and sweet out there, after the stuffy atmosphere of the smoking-room. A full moon was lighting up the still waters of the Pacific Ocean, and away to leeward stretched the dark coast of California.

But Jim was not beguiled by the beauties of the night. A silhouetted figure was balanced upon the rails of the deserted deck, just as he had expected. Dixon was about to throw himself over the side!

With a sudden spring he reached the rails, gripped the young man by the arms, and pulled him down.

"What are you trying to do?" he inquired gruffly.

"Why don't you mind your own business?" stormed Dixon.

"You ain't going to do nothing like that, young fellow," retorted Jim, still holding him. "That water's kind of wet down there. Where are you bunkin'? Let's go down and talk it over. Come on!"

"No!" cried Dixon savagely. "Leave me alone!"

But Jim was masterful. He marched his companion off along the deck, virtually a prisoner, compelled him to descend a staircase, and having propelled him into a cabin he admitted was his, shut and fastened the door.

"Take your coat off and get in that bunk!" he commanded; and reluctantly Dixon obeyed. Then Jim went to a locker, poured a fairly stiff drink into a glass and went over to him with it.

"Here," he said in a friendly way, "put that inside you, buddy. Do you good! You know, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, a great, big bull-calf like you trying to kill yourself."

Dixon gulped down the whisky-and-soda, and held up the empty glass with a trembling hand.

"Can't you see I'm all shot to pieces?" he complained. "I'm a wreck—a failure—"

"If it's the money you lost to-night and last night, I'll see that you get that back," interrupted Jim.

"Do you think I'd let you give it me back?"

"Aw, forget it—I've got plenty of money."

He deposited the empty glass on a dressing-table. Dixon was lying on the bunk whimpering like a woman, and that disturbed Jim badly. He found himself staring down at a framed photograph of a girl by the mirror—a beautiful girl, dark-haired, dark-eyed. He picked it up.

"Sweetheart?" he questioned.

Dixon looked round.

"Sister," he blurted. "It was her money I lost to-night. It—it was the last of a lot more that went the same way. Oh, I tell you, I'm not fit to go on living!"

Jim put the framed photograph back on the dressing-table and leaned over the writhing figure on the bunk.

"Pull yourself together," he admonished. "There's a lot better ways out than the one you tried just now. Say, it's kind of lonesome down my part of the ship—think I'll just stay here a while. That is, if you don't mind?"

Dixon did not reply.

"I'm staying," said Jim grimly.

He went to the door of the cabin, opened it, and looked out into the long corridor. Then he closed the door and bolted it, and seated himself resolutely in an easy-chair.

"You'll feel better in the morning, young fellow," he said calmly, "and I'm seeing that you live till morning. I've got a gun in my pocket!"

He settled back in the chair. The whimpering sound gradually died away, and it seemed that the figure on the bunk had fallen asleep. With a sigh of relief Jim fished out paper and tobacco and rolled himself a cigarette.

It was towards dawn that he dozed. The quiet of the cabin, combined with the lap-lap of the water against the sides of the vessel, lulled him to slumber. He woke with a start because someone was knocking at the door. Morning sunlight was streaming through the two portholes of the cabin.

"First call for breakfast!" called the voice of a steward.

Jim yawned, stretched his arms, and looked about him. The bunk was empty, the porthole immediately above it was wide open! He himself could not have scrambled through that porthole, but a determined man of slenderer build very well might!

He gazed blankly about him, and, propped against the photograph on the dressing-table, he found this note:

"You tried to do me a good turn, but I can't go on. This leaves my sister all alone. She'll be waiting for me on the quay—meet her and tell her in your own way what I've done.—H. D."

Jim called a steward, who fetched a mate. The mate went off and fetched the captain.

"I sure feel bad about this, captain," declared Jim, after he had explained matters for the third time. "I shouldn't have been so dog-gone careless as to drop asleep."

"There's no reason for you to feel

July 4th, 1931.

responsible," was the reply. "These things happen in spite of all of us."

Beaver Pays a Call.

THE Alcoa was already passing through the Golden Gate into the big land-locked Bay of San Francisco. In less than an hour she had docked, and passengers were streaming down a gang-plank to the quay. Jim, dressed in tweeds, but with a big cow-hat on his head, made straight for a slim and graceful girl who was standing patiently there—the girl of the photograph; he would have known her anywhere.

A little felt hat covered most of her dark brown hair, and she was dressed quietly in navy blue with a white collar. Her eyes were a luminous blue, and she turned them on Jim in surprise as he swept off his hat before her.

"Miss Dixon?"

"Yes," she said, staring at him.

"My name's Cardew. You see, I'm— I'm supposed to meet you here. It's about your brother; he isn't on the boat."

"Isn't on the boat?" she echoed blankly. "But he wired me that he would be. Please—has—has something happened?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Jim. "He disappeared last night."

"I—I don't understand," she faltered.

Jim fished the note from his pocket and handed it to her, hating his task. Her hands trembled as she read it; her head drooped. The sheet of paper fell crumpled to the stones, and she reeled.

"Oh, I'm awfully sorry, miss," he said hoarsely, and caught her by the arm. "I'll take you home now, shall I?"

She nodded gratefully, and he led her away to the road, where he hailed a taxi.

She was living, it appeared, in a furnished flat on the Hunter's Point Boulevard, and he took her to it. He was clumsy of speech, perhaps, but there was a quiet strength and self-reliance about him which was very soothing to frayed nerves.

She asked him into a pleasant sitting-room, and they talked. She confided to him that her brother had always been a reckless gambler, and she was not really surprised that he had decided to drown himself.

Jim, irresistibly drawn towards her, invited her to have dinner with him at the hotel where he proposed to stay in San Francisco for a few days, and much to his joy she promised. She seemed to have recovered fairly completely from the shock when he left her, and she seemed almost radiant when he called for her in the evening.

He had come to San Francisco for a brief holiday with the avowed intention of spending money and enjoying himself, but he had not bargained for making the acquaintance of a charming girl. He became a daily caller at her flat; he took her out and about, and he was still at the Humberstone Hotel four weeks after he had landed!

Every morning, after that first meeting, she received a box of roses from a florist's with a card: "To Miss Anne, from Jim." And every morning Jim arrived at the flat within an hour of the flowers. It was the first time he had ever been in love, and he was very self-conscious about it.

She played the piano rather well, and he became particularly attached to a piece of MacDowell's, called, "To a Water-lily." As she had played it on the second day of their acquaintance, he associated it with her—asked her to play it every time he visited her.

"That was mighty pretty, Miss Anne," he said to her one morning,

leaning over her at the piano in the living-room.

She smiled up at him.

"You must like it," she said, "I've played it for you every day!"

He grinned shamefacedly.

"You know," he said, "I was supposed to be in town only two or three days—instead, I've been here a month."

"It seems only a few days," she told him softly. "You've been wonderful to me, Jim. My brother's debts—and all that money."

"It makes me mighty happy if I've been able to help a little," he assured her.

She got up from the piano, and, taking a rose from her waistband, put it in his coat.

"You're a dear!" she said.

"Would you mind playing that piece again for me?" he asked.

She laughed merrily, re-seated herself at the keyboard, and played the piece all over again.

Two days later an obvious Westerner came to the Humberstone Hotel—a man with a scrubby chin and a drooping-moustache, whose ready-made suit of serge looked as out of place on him as a bowler hat on the head of a baby. He was slightly bow-legged, as one who was more at home on a horse's back than on his own feet.

This visitor gave his name to the clerk in the inquiry office as Robert Beaver, and he said that he had urgent business with Mr. James Cardew. A page-boy accompanied him in a lift to the fifth floor, but there left him.

"No. 407," he said pertly. "Bottom of that corridor on the left."

The little man walked widely down the carpeted corridor, examining the numbers on the doors. Before 407 he stopped short, rubbed his chin thoughtfully, then stooped and applied an eye to the keyhole.

Inside the room—a sitting-room—Jim was kneeling at a chesterfield with a book in his left hand, and his right hand raised as though in pleading. Beaver blinked, removed his eye from the keyhole, and applied an ear in its stead. He heard this remarkable utterance:

"My beloved, have pity upon a heart that is tortured with love and longing—a heart that you can crush with but an unkind look. From the first moment I looked into your heavenly eyes I became your slave. In token of my complete—"

Beaver arose, turned the door-handle gently, and stepped into the room, gazing with rapt attention at the kneeling figure.

"And, knowing my unworthiness to even so much as touch the hem of your robe, I offer you my heart and my hand!"

"Them was sure purty words, Mr. Cardew!" exclaimed Beaver.

Jim jumped violently, swung round, and sprang to his feet, dropping the book.

"What are you doing here, Beaver?" he cried, ashamed to have been caught in such circumstances.

"Purty words, Mr. Cardew!" guffawed Beaver, contemplating him. "Mighty purty words!"

"Shut up and sit down!" barked Jim. "What do you want?"

Beaver seated himself on the chesterfield and picked up the book. It was called "The Art of Making Love." He heaved a sigh, put it down beside him, and cleared his throat.

"Well," he said slowly, "after a month had went by, and you hadn't showed up, the boys began tiggerin' something had happened. So they decided I'd better come along and find out."

Jim, who was in his shirtsleeves, shrugged and grinned.

"The boys are right, Beaver. Something has happened!"

"Same thing happened to me once," declared Beaver. "She was a red-head."

"How are things back home, Beaver?"

"Pretty bad. Your friend McBride's startin' trouble again."

Jim frowned.

"Is that so?" he growled.

"Yes, him and his gang has joined forces with Winnipeg."

"What a fine bunch of cut-throats that'll be!"

"Yes," nodded Beaver solemnly, "and if you don't come on back we might as well quit, because they swear they're goin' to wipe us out clean!"

"Is that so?"

"Yes, and the boys are gettin' kinda nervous without you, Jim."

"Well," said Jim, pacing the carpet, "you go on back and tell the boys I'll be in on Friday night."

"We'll be there to meet you."

"Right! Now, go on! Get out of here, will you?"

Beaver picked up the book and moved slowly doorwards with it.

"I'm going to try this on the red-head hoochie dancer over at Sharkey's place," he said.

But Jim retrieved the book before he bundled his henchman out into the corridor.

A Shock for Jim.

ON the following morning Jim went off to Anne's flat full of determination to declare his love for her in flowery phrases before he bade her farewell. But, sitting awkwardly on the edge of a chesterfield beside her, the words deserted him, and finally he blurted this:

"Miss Anne, I've gone and fallen in love! I just couldn't help it!"

She glanced sideways at his face, which was very red, then looked down at her hands, which were folded in her lap.

"Oh, you don't have to give me your answer now," he said hoarsely. "I'd rather have you wait, and sort of get used to the idea."

Her hands came up and held his face, and she looked laughingly into his eyes.

"Oh, you big goose!" she cried. "I thought you were never going to ask me! Aren't you going to kiss me?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Jim bashfully, and gave a little peck at her cheek.

She kissed him full on the lips, and then, possessively, he took her in his arms and hugged her like a bear. But after a while a frown settled about his brows, and he got up and walked away from her.

"I've got something I want to tell you, Miss Anne," he said, with gloom.

"Anne!" she insisted, and followed him.

"Anne, I mean," he amended. "It—it's something I've been ashamed of since I met you."

She tugged him round at that, so that he faced her.

"I know," she nodded. "You're going to tell me that you've been in love with another girl."

"No, ma'am," he contradicted. "Much worse than that. Fact is, I've been a pretty bad fellow in my time, and when you find out how bad, I'm afraid you won't—"

She put a little hand over his mouth.

"If you love me," she said, "nothing else matters."

"Just the same," he persisted, removing the hand and holding it, "there's something you've got to know before—"

"I forgive everything in advance, so there!"

"Gee!" he exclaimed, with infinite relief. "That's mighty fine!"

He groped in a pocket and brought out a little book.

"That's for you," he said.

She took the book and examined it. It was a bank-book, in her name, in which she was credited with five thousand dollars.

"Jim," she exclaimed, round-eyed, "you know I can't take this!"

"Sure you can," he responded. "And besides, young lady, hereafter you're going to do as I say, and, just to keep you out of mischief, I want you to go shopping every day, and buy a lot of pretty things to wear on our honeymoon."

"Your mine must be awfully rich, Jim," she said. "Where is it?"

"Well, you see," replied Jim airily, "I have a lot of 'em, scattered all around."

"I wish I could go back with you, Jim. I'd give anything to see your mines. It must be terribly interesting."

"Yes, ma'am," said Jim, a trifle grimly. "It does get quite interesting sometimes."

He looked across at the gilt clock on

the mantelpiece. It was eight minutes past eleven.

"Say, I'd better be moving along," he remarked ruefully, "or I'm going to miss my boat."

"Oh, I wish you didn't have to go!"

"So do I. But I'll be right back in a couple o' months for our wedding."

He left her soon afterwards, and returned to his hotel to pack. He had filled one suitcase, and was placing a framed photograph of Anne on the top of his shirts in a second one, when there came a knock at the bed-room door.

"Come in!" he called.

The door opened, but it was not the page-boy with his bill who entered. It was a tall young man in a light grey suit, whose eyes were a curious sandy brown and penetrating.

"Mr. James Cardew?" inquired the stranger.

"Yes."

"I'm Inspector Brant, of the Coast-line Steamship Company."

"Glad to know you," said Jim. "Sit down!"

And he removed the second suitcase from a chair.

"Thank you," said Brant, and, seating himself, fished out an official-looking sheet of blue paper. "Mr. Cardew, you were a passenger on the s.s. Aloa, arriving here on the 19th of last month, weren't you?"

"That's right."

"You remember a young man by the name of Hugh Dixon, who committed suicide on the night before the vessel docked?"

"I sure do," replied Jim wonderingly. "Why?"

The big sheet of paper was extended in his direction.

"Is that the man?"

Jim studied the paper. It was headed:

"ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD"

There was a picture, which unmistakably was of Hugh Dixon, and beneath the picture was this surprising statement:

"Wanted for Larceny, Embezzlement, and Fraud.—Hugh Dixon, alias

"I'll get you for this!" hissed the swarthy bandit, as he handed down the bag.



Martin Carraway, alias Stephen Jackson, alias Flash Hughie."

There were also details concerning the wanted man's height, weight, colour of his eyes and hair, and so forth.

"Is that the man?" insisted the watchful inspector.

"Yes," said Jim slowly.

"I thought so. Well, I'm looking for that bird."

"What do you mean? He—he's not dead?"

Brant laughed scornfully.

"Listen," he said impressively. "That fellow's committed suicide at least a dozen times, and he's teamed up with a woman who's supposed to be his sister. Now, I don't want to be too personal, my friend, but did you happen to console that bereaved sister, or take up the family mortgage? Did you?"

Jim turned away, holding the sheet of paper as if to get more light from the window with which to study the picture of Hugh Dixon. His visitor had no idea of the blow he had administered, the dream of happiness he had shattered. Jim was slow of speech but quick of thought, and he was thinking more rapidly than usual.

"Why, no—no," he said at last. "I didn't meet the sister."

"You're lucky! Lots of them have!"

"Lots?" echoed Jim.

"Lots! For my own sake I was rather hoping you had met her, because he's bound to come back to her, and you might have led me in the right direction. I've reason to believe she is in San Francisco, but she changes her address like a chameleon changes its colour."

Inspector Brant departed, congratulating Jim on the fact that he was returning that same day to his mines in the Western Sierras—a place where the Hugh Dixons of the world would find it difficult to ply their nefarious trade.

Jim dumped himself on the bed and grappled with the situation for some little time. So Anne was a crook—and he loved her! He had been hoodwinked—cheated! He thought of the money he had given her, the gifts he had lavished on her.

He began to chuckle mirthlessly. She had certainly deceived him; but, after all, he had deceived her, too, though he would have told her the truth if she had let him.

He unpacked the suitcases, dressed with care, and set out for her flat.

"When Greek Meets Greek—"

BY some freak of fate Hugh Dixon had chosen that very morning to walk back into Anne's life. He arrived in a taxi, without luggage, while Inspector Brant was talking about him in the bed-room on the fifth floor of the Humberton Hotel.

Anne, who opened the door of her flat to him, seemed none too pleased to see him; but he greeted her effusively, and walked into the sitting-room as though he owned the place.

"Well," he said cheerfully from the hearthrug, "I've been dead just a month and a week to-day! That makes the third time I've died this year. It sure was a lucky day when we teamed up on this brother and sister act!"

"One of these days perhaps you'll stay dead," said Anne, "and I may get a little peace. Jim Cardew is a fine fellow."

"A he-man from the sage-brush, eh?" jeered Dixon.

"I don't know about the sage-brush," she retorted, and moved across to a little bureau from which she took

the bankbook Jim had given her that morning.

"Hugh," she said, holding it out to him, "I've been thinking. We might split this, and with it our partnership—for a time, anyway. It's hard work playing on your heartstrings. I need a rest."

Hugh Dixon took the book and examined it. He tossed it back to her with a scowl.

"You think of dropping me, and playing this bird yourself?" he demanded angrily.

"Oh, don't be silly," she said. And then, almost wistfully: "You know, for a while I thought I was really falling in love with that big boy. It wouldn't be so hard to do, at that."

She dropped rather wearily on to the chesterfield, and he lit a cigarette before he dealt with this unexpected confession. Then he said fiercely:

"Look here, Anne, no nonsense! This bird is full of money, and we're going to take it from him—right?"

"We'll talk about that later," she evaded. "There's plenty of time—he won't be back for weeks. Run along, Hugh, I'm tired."

He went, smoking his cigarette, smiling maliciously back at her from the door. And she flew to the window to watch him leave the building.

A taxi had drawn up at the kerb as he emerged into the sunlight, and Anne, at the window, gasped. For it was Jim who descended from the taxi. Hugh viewed his victim with some alarm, and would have made off, but Jim grabbed him by the arm.

"Dixon!" he cried, as though in amazement. "Why, you old son of a gun, why—er—I thought you—"

"Yes, I know," said Dixon glibly. "I guess it's my fate to go on living. You see, when I went overboard that night I woke up being pulled aboard a tramp steamer bound for South America."

"But why didn't you let me know, man?" demanded Jim, dissimulating.

"Well, I knew you'd told my sister, and I really intended completing the job later. Guess I lost my nerve."

"You don't know how glad I am to see you!" cried Jim, thumping him in the back and holding him while he paid the taxi-driver. "Come on—let's go in! I guess Anne has told you about our engagement?"

"Well, yes," admitted Hugh.

They made their way together up the stairs to the flat, and Anne, with a book in her hand, admitted them.

"Look who's here!" exclaimed Dixon.

"Jim, darling!" cried Anne. "So you didn't go?"

"No, I missed my boat," Jim replied. "And glad of it, too. I don't think I could go back without you now, Anne."

She seemed genuinely pleased to hear that.

"Oh, you're a dear!" she declared, and pulled him into the sitting-room and sat beside him on the chesterfield. "Weren't you surprised to see Hugh?"

"I should say I was," he drawled, and looked up at the man who was wanted for larceny, embezzlement and fraud with a friendly smile.

"You know," he said to him, "Anne wanted to see how I worked the mines, and now that I've missed my boat I've come back to tell her she can come along. You might come along, too, Hugh. Maybe you're interested in gold mines?"

"I'll say I am," responded Dixon quite eagerly.

"Is there a town where we're going?" asked Anne.

"Sure," nodded Jim. "Skyfields isn't much of a town, but it is one of sorts. You see, I practically own the place. Sort o' one-man town, you might say."

"Don't tell me you're the mayor?" breathed Anne.

"Yes, ma'am," chuckled Jim. "And just wait till you meet my councilmen! What do you say, both of you? To-morrow's boat?"

"Suit me fine," declared Dixon with enthusiasm.

"I shall just love it!" cried Anne.

They embarked next day upon the steamship Paxton, belonging to the Columbia line, for San Diego; and at San Diego they boarded a train on the Southern Pacific Railroad for Riolite, the nearest mining-town to Skyfields, as Jim explained.

"It's right on the fringe of the Colorado Desert," he said. "It's going to be a real experience for you. We shall just about make Riolite in time for breakfast."

The Train from San Diego.

R YOLITE was a typical mining-town at the foot of the Sierras, within a few miles of the great desert—a town of frame buildings and log cabins, in which men lived more or less at peace with their wives and children, subject to disturbances from three rival gangs of bandits who occasionally rode into its main street, bent on amusement or pillage.

The centre of attraction for the wilder spirits of the place, and for those who rode into town, was the Riolite Bar, a long, low-built saloon which boasted a dancing floor as well as some sort of orchestra. And at about the hour that the night mail left San Diego on its long journey across the Colorado Desert into Arizona the swarthy and bearded Bill McBride, leader of one bandit gang, was in close converse with a mean-faced rascal known as Winnipeg at one of the tables.

Winnipeg was leader of a gang that operated largely in the region of Palm Springs, and consequently was not a rival of McBride in any true sense. But McBride had invited Winnipeg to join forces with him even as Beaver had reported to Jim, and this meeting was concerned with the fusion.

"I'm surprised," grunted Winnipeg, puffing at his foul pipe, "that Cardew hasn't been hung already."

"It ain't too late for hanging to happen," responded McBride significantly. "That's why I sent for you."

"I owe him plenty," said Winnipeg. "Thanks for lettin' me in on the frolic. Goin' to string him up, eh?"

"Kinda thought you'd like it. You and me don't get in one another's way—he gets in both your way and mine. Been gallivantin' off to 'Frisco, but he's due back 'most any time now."

"Guess we'll get ready for him!"

"Yeah, we—"

McBride broke off abruptly as the door of the saloon was pushed open and Beaver ambled across to the bar, followed by eight other men in cowboy clothes. He dug an elbow into Winnipeg's ribs.

"Cardew must be comin' in to-night," he said in a hoarse whisper, "or they wouldn't be here!"

He pushed back his chair and, rising, went over to the bar.

"You didn't expect to see me here to-night, did you?" he said menacingly to Beaver, whose companions were looking at two dancing girls.

Beaver, in the act of ordering drinks, swung round and blinked. McBride's right hand was on the butt of his six-shooter.

"Please, mister," he said quietly, "I don't know you."

"Well, maybe this will introduce us!" snarled McBride, and the six-shooter was in his hand, its barrel pointed straight at Beaver's heart. "You expectin' anybody to-night?"

"You—you wouldn't shoot a poor little fellow in the only stomick he's got, would you?" faltered Beaver in seeming terror.

"You've got three seconds to answer civil," snarled McBride. "One of 'em's gone!"

Winnipeg leaned forward in his chair and chuckled. The bar-tender ducked, and the dancing-girls fled.

But Beaver was not by any means as scared as he appeared. Covertly his right hand had crept round to his holster, and covertly he had drawn his gun. He fired it from the hip, not at McBride, but at the big hanging lamp which illuminated that end of the saloon—and as he fired he dropped on all fours.

The lamp was extinguished amid a shower of broken glass. Shots rang out in all directions. But Beaver, crawling under a table, whistled twice, then made for the swing-door.

The eight men who had entered the saloon with him crawled out behind him.

In the semi-darkness of the saloon guns were still being fired as Beaver and his men got to their feet in the comparative safety of the moonlit roadway.

"Everybody here?" inquired Beaver softly.

"Yeah, we're all here," responded a burly bearded fellow in a checkered shirt named Alabam; "but what's the idea o' runnin' away from that outfit? You know how I like funerals!"

"Son," admonished Beaver, "we're men of peace! Let's go!"

Their horses were tethered to a rail outside the saloon. They mounted them and rode out of town towards the desert. Other men came tumbling out from the saloon, but, finding the horses gone, did not pursue.

On the moonlit alkali, far beyond the town, Beaver halted his followers.

"Listen!" he said. "We'll get enough fighting before we're through with McBride. Come on—we've got a train to meet!"

Across the edge of the desert they rode for hours, with the foothills of the mighty Sierras on their right, and the mystery of night about them. They came to the built-up track of the Southern Pacific where it crossed this end of the dry waste, and there they halted.

In the distance a whistle shrieked at the night, and a long train came rushing and roaring towards the waiting horsemen. Beaver unhitched from his saddle-bow a red lamp he had acquired in Ryolite. He lit and handed it

to one of his men—a bearded fellow who rejoiced in the nickname of Whiskey.

Whiskey dismounted and walked along the track towards the approaching train, swinging the lamp, while the others clustered together on their horses, waiting.

The driver of the night mail shut off steam and applied his brakes; the long train came creakingly to a standstill, its bell clanging stridently. Beaver and Alabam slid down from their saddles and climbed up into the first coach.

"It ain't robbery, Mister Conductor," said Beaver pleasantly to the official who would have barred their way. "We just want to see a Mister Cardew, that's a-ridin' on your train."

"But I don't know Mr. Cardew," snapped the conductor. "Besides, I can't have my passengers disturbed—they're all asleep in their bunks."

"I wouldn't think of disturbin' nobody!" declared Beaver at the top of his voice. And with that he went running along the corridor of the sleeping-car, while Alabam stood truculently in the conductor's path.

"This way, Beaver!" boomed a voice. "What's the trouble?" And in the dimly-lighted corridor between the curtained bunks Jim's head appeared.

"Better get off here, Jim," urged Beaver. "Tell you more about it later."

"Right!" said Jim and, in his shirt and trousers, moved further along the corridor.

"We're getting off here, Anne!" he shouted. "Hurry, please!"

"All right, Jim, darling," responded the voice of Anne from behind a curtain. "I'm nearly dressed."

"Did she say 'darlin'?" inquired Beaver delightedly.

Hugh Dixon clambered out from a bunk, half-dressed and yawning.

"What's the matter, Jim?" he inquired nervously. "Train held up?"

"Naw, you ain't held up," laughed Beaver.

"Get the grips," said Jim. "It's all right, Hugh—we're getting off here. Put on your coat!"

In a very few minutes Anne and Dixon, fully dressed, stood beside Jim, who marched them off to the steps at the end of the coach. Beaver had collected the luggage from a startled negro attendant, and they all descended to the track.

The conductor had said everything he could think of by way of complaint. The horsemen who had surrounded the massive engine put away their guns, and the train moved noisily off into the night. Jim stepped aside with Beaver, while Anne and Dixon stared blankly about them.

"Kinda looks like McBride meant what he said," confided Beaver. "He's been meetin' all the trains at Ryolite, and swearin' he was goin' to string you up. I got your wire, and I thought, on account o' the lady, you'd sooner see McBride later."

"You're right, Beaver," approved Jim. "You've brought horses, I see. Let's mount 'em up, and go."

Meanwhile:

"What do you think this means?" asked Anne nervously of Dixon.

"I'm wondering," was the reply.

Jim whistled shrilly, and his own big white horse, Silver, came trotting up to him. Beaver led two other horses over to Anne and Dixon.

"We're ridin', miss," he said. "Did you ever paddle a horse canoe?"

"I learned to ride at college," replied the girl. "How far is Skyfields from here, Mr. Beaver?"

"Beaver's the name, ma'am—and it's forty miles."

"Forty miles?" gasped Anne. "I thought there was a railroad running through the town?"

"Why, no, ma'am," said Beaver cheerfully; "you see, they ran out of railroads just before they got to it. Right this way, miss. Get aboard, son—we're travellin'!"

"Don't call me 'son'!" snapped Dixon.

When they were all in the saddle, they set off across the desert, Jim riding beside Anne, Beaver beside Dixon, and the rest of the party bringing up the rear.

The parson was sitting at a table with Jim; they had just finished a meal. She poured a cup of coffee for him then held one out to Jim.



Robbing the Robbers!

WHEN dawn broke, the travellers had reached the foothills to the south, where patchy grassland mingled with rock. But the sun was up before they came in sight of any human habitation.

Dixon had been complaining at intervals throughout the long ride; now he stared at a cluster of tumbledown buildings in a dip, and his jaw dropped. Broken walls, paneless windows, and a general air of neglect enabled him to guess that before him was a "ghost city"—a mining town created in the days of some gold rush, and abandoned to its fate by those who had dug for gold and found nothing.

They swept down a sandy slope into what had once been a main street, and Anne looked about her wide-eyed. They came to a galleried building on the far side of the ghost city—a building in a better state of preservation than most of the others. Over its main entrance was the mocking sign: "Skyfields Hotel, Casino & Saloon."

Jim slid from the white horse and flung out his arms.

"Welcome to Skyfields!" he cried ironically. "Sorry I haven't got a key to offer you, but the town is wide open. We're mighty proud to have such fine company!"

The men dismounted and streamed into the building, after hitching their horses to a long rail. Dixon and Anne climbed wearily down from their saddles. Jim pointed to the open doorway significantly.

"Here we are," he said, "and if you get dissatisfied, you're welcome to go any old time. But, remember, there's forty miles of desert between here and the next drop of water!"

Anne resisted a temptation to burst into tears, and followed him into a typical miners' saloon. A cracked mirror hung awry on one of the walls; but there were plenty of chairs, tables, and forms, and there was a long bar. Jim led the way to a staircase, mounted to a landing, and flung open a door.

"Your room," he said curtly to Anne. And then, to Dixon: "That's yours down there. Guess you'd like some sleep before you have a meal."

Dixon, with a shrug of his shoulders, made for the indicated room. He was dead tired and thoroughly dispirited. Anne passed in at the open door of her room and closed it behind her. She looked out of an uncurtained window across miles and miles of desert and sandy hills; she gazed down at broken walls and roofs.

As she turned away from the window she caught sight of a poster pinned to one of the walls of her room. She studied it with horror. It intimated that a reward of five thousand dollars was offered for the capture of the notorious bandit, Jim Cardew, dead or alive!

She burst into a peal of hysterical laughter, which echoed through the building. Jim, who had gone off to change into his western clothes, tapped on her door and opened it. Derisively she jerked her head at the poster.

"The big mine-owner!" she shrieked. "Mayor of the town!" Sobs mingled with her laughter. "Just a common crook!" she screamed. "You've got a nerve, bringing me here!"

"A man needs plenty of nerve to deal with a woman like you," he said sternly. "We're both crooks, but here's the difference between us: when you go after something, the only thing you risk is a few of your rotten kisses! Oh, I

know all about you and your precious brother!"

"My kisses weren't so rotten while they lasted, were they?" she flung at him. "Listen, here's the difference between us: I'm smart enough to outwit your kind, while you're too dull-witted to get anything except with a gun."

With a sudden movement he grabbed her in his arms and kissed her fiercely.

"I didn't need a gun to get that!" he said with a laugh; and turned his back on her contemptuously. She snatched up a hair-brush and flung it after him; but it struck the wall above the door, and he laughed again as he went out and shut the door behind him.

Down in the saloon the men were gulping hot coffee, which a plump and elderly woman had prepared for them; they called her "Princess." She beamed at Jim as he descended, and set a steaming tin cup before him as he dropped into a chair at one of the tables.

Ten minutes later he and his men were in the saddle again, riding out into the desert. Jim had decided to meet McBride. The day was very young as yet, and the opportunity seemed too good to be missed.

The bandit's hide-away was somewhere in the foothills between Ryalite and Nogales and, having failed to find his enemy, McBride would doubtless be returning to it by now—and probably not empty-handed. There was a State Bank in Ryalite, and McBride had an affection for State Banks—as a general rule he blew their safes up with dynamite for his own profit!

Jim knew his man well, and judged him rightly. McBride and his gang had broken into the Ryalite State Bank just before dawn that morning, and were riding out of the town with their loot a while before Jim and his followers set out from Skyfields.

Jim made for the foothills, and from the cover afforded by them he watched the enemy's approach. Imagining him to be hundreds of miles away in San Francisco, they rode quite openly across the sage-brush and the sand.

They paused beneath a mass of rocks to scan the landscape before turning into a gap that led up to their retreat.

"All clear," chuckled McBride. "And, as the old saying goes, 'the goose hangs high.'"

"You'd make a pretty cooked goose, Bill," commented one of his men.

"Shut your head!" snapped McBride angrily. "Let's ride!"

"Just a minute, boys," boomed a voice from behind a rock. "Stick 'em up!"

The hands of all the members of the gang went up automatically, and Jim stepped calmly out from his hiding-place, a six-shooter in each hand, and a broad grin on his lips.

"Well, if it isn't my old pal, McBride!" he said facetiously. "How are you?"

"Thought I warned you to stay out of these parts, Cardew!" snarled the discomfited bandit.

"So you did!" nodded Jim. "Get the guns, Beaver!"

Beaver, Alabam and the rest came streaming down from the rocks. With the celerity of an expert, Beaver relieved McBride and his followers of their weapons. Then Jim thrust away his own guns and calmly held out his hands for a big canvas bag attached to McBride's saddle-bow.

"I'll get you for this!" hissed the swarthy bandit as he handed down the bag.

"Yeah?" drawled Jim. "Which is it this time—a threat or a promise? From

now on, this part of the country is my diggins. Savvy? Now drift!"

McBride turned his horse towards the gap in the rocks, and his men followed him. Jim tossed the heavy bag to Beaver, and whistled his horse.

"Split that with the boys," he directed. "Anything that coyote touches is just poison to me!"

"It's as good as split," rejoiced Beaver.

Sunday Night.

BY the time Jim and his men got back to Skyfields, the Indian "Princess" had prepared a meal for them.

Jim sat down with Beaver at a table near the swing-doors, the bag of money between them. It appeared, from the squaw's report, that Anne and Dixon had slept away most of the morning, and had then demanded food to be served in their own rooms.

The men were drinking coffee, when the swing-doors were pushed open, and a tiny bare-headed man walked into the saloon. He was wearing patched trousers and a coloured shirt, and he had a mane of white hair and a bushy white beard. There was something venerable about his face, and he had the blue eyes of a fanatic.

"Hullo, parson!" greeted Jim.

"Back again," said the little man, "without any bullet-holes in your hide."

Beaver, who always felt uncomfortable in the presence of this remarkable minister, who had come to Skyfields during the dead and gone gold rush, and had remained ever since to preach the gospel in a tumble-down church—often with no congregation at all—rose and picked up the stolen bag.

"Think I'd better attend to that business with the boys, Jim," he said, and went out, calling the men after him.

"Cup of coffee, parson?" suggested Jim, and reached over to a big metal pot and filled a cup. The little man sat beside him and drank.

"God's been good to you, Jim," he said, "in spite of your cussedness. You lead a miserable life, my son, always in hiding from your fellow-men."

"How long have you been here, parson?" inquired Jim evasively.

"Forty years preaching the Word."

"Forty years is a long time—especially all alone in a place like this, most of it. I like you, parson! Guess I'll turn in for a bit of sleep now."

His men, presumably, followed his example; the afternoon wore monotonously away, even the princess dozing on a chair in the kitchen.

But after the lamps in the saloon had been lighted the men came trooping into it and lounged there.

Alabam had brought his guitar with him, and presently he began to pluck the strings and sing the famous cowboy song, "Red River Valley." The others chimed in at the top of their voices, and Jim looked on with amusement for a while, then mounted the stairs and knocked at Anne's door.

Hugh Dixon, who had wandered down into the saloon to see what all the noise was about, looked after him with a scowl, then went to the bar. Alabam was perched on a stool with his instrument, and a gnu projected temptingly from his holster.

Dixon drew nearer, brushed against the player, and quietly annexed the weapon. He slipped it into one of his trouser pockets and slipped back to the stairs.

Anne had refused to admit Jim in response to his demand, but he turned the handle and strode into the room.

"Well," he taunted, "I'm in!"

She was fully dressed in a grey frock that became her, and she was standing just inside the door, with her hands on her hips.

"You're even lower than I thought!" she said with intent to hurt. And then abruptly she smiled, for Dixon was standing behind Jim with Alabam's six-shooter in his hand.

"Put up your hands, Cardew!" he rasped.

Jim raised his hands and looked at Anne with a curious expression in his grey eyes as these words of the song floated up the staircase:

"I've been waiting a long time, my darling, for those sweet words—"

He turned slowly and faced the gun. "I'd like to kill you now," said Dixon, "but we're leaving here—and you're taking us!"

Jim looked over the speaker's shoulder out into the deserted passage.

"It's all right, Beaver," he said.

Dixon turned his head, just as Jim had expected him to do, and in that second the gun was wrested from his hand and a fist came up, caught him on the point of the jaw with a resounding thud, and sent him flat on his back, half unconscious.

With a quiet grin Jim stowed the gun in a pocket, then picked Anne up in his arms and carried her out to the stairs.

"I only came up to invite you to our little party," he told her calmly, and strode down the stairs with her into the saloon.

The singing stopped dead; the men stared.

"Strike up a tune, Alabam," directed Jim, and deposited Anne on her feet. "Make it a dance," he added.

Alabam obediently plucked the strings of his guitar, and Jim took Anne in his arms and began to move about the floor with her. Hugh, nursing his aching jaw, crept down the stairs and stood gloomily in a doorway, watching them.

And then, abruptly, a cracked bell began to ring, somewhere on the outskirts of the ghost city—the cracked bell of the dilapidated little church.

Jim stopped short, and motioned to Alabam to cease playing.

"It's Sunday night," he said solemnly. "I forgot! Come on, everybody!" And he marched Anne to the swing doors.

The others followed—all save Dixon. But Beaver went back for him.

"Come on!" he barked menacingly. "Everybody goes to church here!" And he grabbed the reluctant crook by the arm and pulled him out.

In a straggling procession the whole party moved across the sandy ground to the isolated wooden church; and there was the parson, standing on the top step with a Bible in his hand, waiting for them.

"Good evening, parson," said Jim. "Meet a new member of our congregation."

"Glad to have you with us this evening, sister," said the little man, shaking hands with Anne.

"Shake hands with the parson, son," commanded Beaver, pushing Dixon forward, and Dixon reluctantly held out his hand.

A remarkable congregation; but then everything was remarkable about Skyfields. The men made their way to long forms in the body of the building, and Jim sat beside Anne on the left, while Beaver pulled Dixon down beside him on the right.

The parson mounted to a roughly fashioned pulpit, after he had distributed hymn-books.

"I want you all to join me in singing the grand old hymn, 'There's a Great Day Coming,'" he said. "Page 167—one, six, seven."

Evidently these bandits knew the hymn quite well, for they sang with gusto. A prayer followed, with everyone on their knees; and then came a Scripture lesson, taken from a number of passages from the Old Testament prophets. Anne sat amazed; Dixon could hardly believe his ears; for this tiny parson, with his fervid manner, hurled at his listeners denunciations such as these:

"My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer, but ye have made of it a den of thieves. . . My face will I turn also from them. And they shall pollute my secret place—for the robbers shall enter and defile it. And if ye will not be formed, I will bring a sword upon you."

After it was all over they trooped back again to the saloon, quiet, subdued. Next day they might embark upon some fresh robbery, but to-night they had the manner of law-abiding, God-fearing people.

In the Desert.

IN the weeks that followed there were many mysterious comings and goings on the part of Jim and his gang, but always two men were left behind to guard Anne and Dixon, both of whom were set to menial tasks. Anne was made to fetch and carry and help the princess in the kitchen; Dixon was compelled to do all manner of odd jobs for which he had no liking.

"I'm getting to look more like you every day," Anne said bitterly to the squaw one morning, as she picked up a loaded tray.

"Onah!" retorted the princess in her own language, and then curtly: "They are waiting!"

Anne went out into the saloon to serve Jim and his followers with coffee.

The parson was sitting at a table with Jim; they had just finished a meal. She poured a cup of coffee for him, then held one out to Jim.

"This coffee's cold and weak," he complained, after he had sipped at it.

"Well, why don't you keep some wood in the kitchen?" she retorted angrily. "Or perhaps you'd like to have me do that, too?"

Dixon looked apprehensive.

"Where am I to get any more wood?" he growled. "I can't grow it!"

"There are plenty of broken-down cabins in the place," snapped Jim.

Anne went back to the kitchen to make fresh coffee, but she was sitting at the big table with her face in her hands when Dixon came in at the back door with an armful of wood, which he threw viciously on the floor, and proceeded to re-light the fire. The princess was out in the saloon, gathering up the used plates.

"I wish I were dead!" exclaimed Anne tragically. "I'd rather die a thousand times than stay here another day."

"We're not going to stay here another day," declared Dixon in a low voice, feeding flaring paper with broken wood. "Listen, Anne, we've only got one chance. The horses are guarded night and day. We've got to walk it—are you game?"

She rose and went over to him.

"I'm game enough," she said eagerly. "When?"

"To-night."



His finger was on the trigger when Alabam saw him standing there, and fired.

July 4th, 1931.

While the fire burned and a huge kettle boiled, he arranged the details with her, breaking off every now and then, as the Indian woman bustled in and out of the kitchen.

The rest of the day passed depressingly for them both, but they were eager for the night, neither of them realising what forty miles of desert mean to those who would cover them on foot.

At eleven o'clock they crept out from their respective rooms, and like shadows flitted down the stairs.

Dixon drew the bolts of the back door, and they went out into the moonlight, keeping in the shadows of the tumble-down buildings till they were well away from the saloon. Then they ran out across the sage-brush into the sand—ran as though pursued, though no one pursued them.

But the sand soon wearied them of running, so that hand-in-hand they walked, walked resolutely towards the undulating line where sand and sky seemed to meet.

For hours they walked, and a chill air grew into a little wind that blew the dust against their faces. Thirst began to assail them both, and walking became an agony.

Anne stopped short at last, holding out her hands to her companion, and he unscrewed a water-bottle he had brought with him, slung about his shoulders, and she took it and drank greedily.

"No more," he said thickly, and snatched away the flask and put it to his own lips.

They walked on again—on and on and on. And dawn crept up over the desert before they had covered twenty miles.

Anne's walk had become almost a totter when a bleached skeleton stared up at them. Anne stumbled over it, screamed, dragged her aching limbs away from it in fear, and fell flat on her face.

"Anne! Anne!" cried Dixon, kneeling beside her. "Anne! We've got to go on! Anne!"

He dragged her to her feet, and they covered another agonising mile before she fell again—this time so exhausted that he could not raise her, because her limbs refused to function. He unsung the water-bottle, unscrewed it, lifted her head, and held the rim of the bottle to her lips. But she could not drink—she was unconscious!

He lowered her head to the sand again and looked wildly about him.

Nothing but sand and scrub, with here and there a dune, and here and there a cactus! He replaced the cap of the bottle, slung the bottle once more about his shoulders and got stiffly to his feet. Then, without another glance at her still form, he plodded on, climbed a sand-hill, and disappeared from sight.

The sun had been up for over three hours when Jim, searching the desert for the fugitives, came upon her. Beaver and the others had gone off in different directions. He sprang down from Silver's broad back and knelt beside her.

"Anne! Anne!" he whispered in her ear and hugged her close.

His vengeance had turned to ashes; he knew now how much he loved her. He kissed her dry lips, then laid her gently down and went back to his horse. A water-bottle hung from the saddle-bow. He unfastened it, soaked a handkerchief, and returned to her.

He lavied her face with water; he poured water into cupped hands and dripped it between her lips. And at last she opened her eyes and looked up into his face.

"Why—take—so much—trouble," she faltered wonderingly, "if you—hate me so?"

July 4th, 1931.

"I don't hate you, Anne," he said brokenly, and pressed her wet cheek against his. "I love you!"

She sighed and closed her eyes again, and then he lifted her up and carried her to the horse, and presently he went riding back to Skyfields, holding her in his arms.

Some hours later, Dixon, almost at his last gasp, reached the region of rocky foot-hills where McBride and his gang had their fastness. The solitary figure had been seen long before he reached the rocks, and some of McBride's men were waiting for him.

They gave him water, his own bottle being empty, and they half-dragged, half-carried him into the bandit's presence.

Winnipeg and McBride had joined forces for a determined attack upon Jim, and Winnipeg was with McBride when the drooping Dixon was brought into the camp.

"What are you doin' in these hills?" demanded McBride without a trace of sympathy in his voice for the exhausted condition of the captive.

"Why, I—I was going in search of officers," stammered Dixon.

"Yeah?" drawled the bearded Winnipeg. "And then what?"

"My—my sister and I were kidnapped, and held for ransom."

"Is that so?" quoth McBride with sudden interest. "Well, we're the officers you're looking for, young fellow. Rangers we are. Talk free and easy." And he winked prodigiously at Winnipeg.

"Well," lied Dixon, "we were driving through your country here. We were overtaken and captured. Cardew and his men were on us before we knew it."

"Cardew?" exclaimed Winnipeg.

"Did you say Cardew?"

"Yes, Jim Cardew," said Dixon venomously. "You know him?"

"It's him we're trailin', son," declared McBride. "We know he lurks around these parts, but not exactly where. Know his hideaway?"

"Back there," said Dixon, jerking his thumb. "A deserted town."

McBride and Winnipeg exchanged glances.

"Can you ride?" demanded Winnipeg.

"You can? Well, after you've rested a bit, and had some grub, you can show us the way. There's more than one deserted town on the desert."

— 4 — **The Way of Salvation.**

IT was high noon when one of Jim's men came rushing into the saloon at Skyfields with the news that fully a score of horsemen were galloping towards the town.

"It's McBride," decided Jim. "Get the men set right away, Beaver. Anne!"

Anne was up in her room, resting on her bed. He darted up the stairs to her.

"What is it?" she asked nervously, springing in alarm from the bed.

"There's going to be a serap," he told her. "It'll be pretty serious, Anne, but no matter what happens, don't leave this room—and stay away from that window!"

He shut her in and raced down to the bar. Beaver had got all the men there together, and their guns were in their hands.

"You all loaded, boys?" he inquired.

"Right! Let's go!"

They went out into the sunlight, and stood ready before the building, but Jim darted back to the staircase and appeared on the balcony above their heads. McBride and Winnipeg and their united gangs had reached the far

side of the town, and were firing as they came to intimidate the besieged.

"Get inside," yelled Jim, "and guard the windows and the doors! There are more than a score of 'em!"

His men dived obediently into the building. Jim, from the balcony, saw, to his alarm, that the little parson was standing on the steps of his church. He howled a warning, but the parson did not budge.

Down what had once been a street swept the invaders, and with them was Dixon. Jim fired at one of the foremost figures, whom he recognised as McBride, and McBride rolled from his saddle.

Shots answered his shot. Bullets whizzed past his head. He climbed in at the nearest window and took cover.

From windows and doors downstairs guns spoke and spat. The horsemen swept by, firing as they passed, then turned about and rode again.

Men fell from their horses and lay still. Winnipeg, taking command, directed the operations of the remaining invaders, leading them away to cover, where they dismounted, to return to the attack more cautiously on foot.

An arm came up over a windowsill, a shot rang out, and Beaver fell in a huddled heap.

Like a panther, Jim sprang to the window, firing right and left. He had the satisfaction of seeing five men bite the dust, then ran back to his fallen henchman, who had crawled to a wall. He tied a handkerchief about a wounded forehead, but Beaver was mortally hurt, and fell forward against his knee, dead.

From all sides the besieged were attacked, but the attackers had dwindled considerably in numbers. Winnipeg had gone down with a bullet in his heart; the score or more of ruffians outside had become little more than a mere half-dozen.

Jim, greatly daring, pushed a wrecked polyphon before him towards the swing doors, and he and Alabam, using the tall mahogany case of the instrument for cover, picked off several of those who were lurking outside the white walls of the building.

Alabam, returning from a tour of inspection, cried out:

"There's only three of us left—you and me and Bill!"

"Let's pour it into 'em!" shouted Jim. "They're down to half a dozen!"

At that moment Dixon, with a gun in his hand, came stealing into the saloon from the kitchen. He had borrowed the gun, but hitherto had kept well out of the way. Now, judging the time to be ripe, he had crept into the building from the rear, in the hope of catching Jim unawares.

Jim's back was towards him—an easy mark. His finger was on the trigger when Alabam saw him standing there and fired.

Simultaneously the shots rang out, and Jim fell forward against the polyphon and rolled thence to the floor, while Dixon flung up his hands and crashed down on his face, to trouble this world no more.

"Are you hit bad, Jim?" asked Alabam anxiously, going down on his knees beside his fallen leader while a final fusillade rang out, and the man Bill at the window collapsed.

"Not—too—bad," gasped Jim, and he dragged himself up, picked up his fallen gun, and clung to the polyphon.

"Run for it, Alabam," urged Jim. "I've got it in the leg, but you may be able to get away."

Alabam went reluctantly, but as he

(Continued on page 28.)

A gripping drama of life in a prison and how a youngster committed for an impetuous act, lives a life of misery and hardship for six long years before winning his parole.



The Jute Mill.

CEASELESSLY the awful noise went on, and on—and on! Gears crashed together, pulley-rods whined in their bearings, and the teasing looms chattered with the nerve-racking hammering of metal upon metal.

It was the jute mill of San Quentin prison.

Men lived in that terrible racket—yes, and died in it, too. Some had been there only a short time—five years or so—and some had been there all their lives. Day in, day out, they spent their existences in the mill, becoming less like human beings and more like brute beasts as time rolled slowly by.

It was in these mills that Robert Graham worked. The crash of the machinery had been breaking his nerve for full six years, until the once progressive and ambitious broker's clerk was little more than a wreck.

At the end of the sixth year, he was in a pitiable state. His eyes were dull and hopeless, his shoulders drooped, and his hands, roughened and cut by the sharp jute strands that passed on their way to the rope-making machines, moved mechanically. He had ceased to be a man. He was a machine, like those monsters of shrieking metal around him.

The breaking point had to come, and it came with remarkable swiftness.

He was standing at the input end of the rope-maker one day, his fingers running along the unending strands feeling for crimps. He had been there, in just that same position, since breakfast time—three hours ago.

On and on went that eternal jute strip, but he was hardly conscious of it. A sudden hammering had started in his brain. It was loud and insistent, drowning the noise of the machinery.

He paid no attention to it, thinking that some new horror of noise had been introduced into the mill. Yet he was conscious of a tightening of his muscles and a tingling of his nerve-ends.

Then, without warning, he let out a cry, and flung himself full at the jute strip—fighting it, clawing at those tough strands as though they were an enemy whose throat he wanted to reach. He was gibbering like a maniac.

Starring
WALTER HUSTON,
PHILLIPS HOLMES
and
CONSTANCE CUMMINGS.

Another convict standing close by heard his shout and turned.

"Gosh!" he screamed. "Help me, somebody!" and leapt forward.

His hands closed on the unfortunate Robert Graham just as he was being dragged slowly into the intake of the machine. He fixed his fingers in the unfortunate man's clothing and dragged him clear.

Robert Graham fought like a madman, the last vestiges of his self-control gone. He bit and swore and kicked.

The convict who had saved him tried to calm him down.

"Easy now, big boy," he said between laboured breaths. "You'll do some damage in a minute."

Graham did not reply. He merely fought all the harder. There was only one thing left for the convict to do, and he did it. He swung his fist back, and sent it crashing home to the side of Graham's head.

Graham stiffened, a streak of blood coming from his mouth. He started backwards, his eyes wide with hate, then, with another awful cry that echoed and re-echoed across the mill, he slumped forward, and pitched clean on to his face.

The convict who had hit him stepped clear.

"Poor devil!" he said in a low voice to someone standing near. "This place had to get him. It gets them all in the end."

"Quiet!" said a voice. "The screws!"

Another Job.

TWO of the prison warders came up, and discovered what was the matter. They asked no questions and made no fuss; they were too familiar with happenings like this.

"Pick him up, two of you," said one of them. "Take him over to the hospital."

The convicts obeyed.

When Graham came to his senses, he found himself lying on a couch in the medical officer's surgery. He opened his eyes and stared round him wildly, suspicious of the unusual peace and quietness that pervaded the room.

He found himself staring up into the grey eyes of the medical officer himself. The doctor was stroking his beard thoughtfully, a grave expression on his face.

"Well, young fellow, how do you feel?" he asked.

Graham went on staring, hardly comprehending what was being said to him. Then he started to think coherently.

"I'm all right," he replied tonelessly.

"Sit up, and let me look."

Graham obeyed, and the doctor examined under the lids of his eyes. He sounded the convict's heart, and laid a gentle hand on the quivering body.

"Come over here and sit under the light," he said. Then, when Graham obeyed: "Try to look up with your eyes open."

Graham tried, and uttered an exclamation of pain as the glare from the overhead lamp smote upon his sensitive optic nerve.

The doctor nodded thoughtfully.

"You're in a bad state," he said quietly. "Where do you work? In the jute mills?"

Graham nodded.

"I thought so." He beckoned to the warder standing close by. "Take this man back to his cell. He is to be re-

ried of duty for the day. I'll see the warden at once, and obtain an order for a change of occupation."

"Very good, sir," replied the warden, and went out, taking Graham with him.

The medical officer made a few notes on a pad lying on his desk, then left his surgery and made his way to the warden's office. He knocked at the door and entered.

The warden was seated in an arm-chair on the other side of the office, a towel round his neck. His face was lathered, and standing over him was one of the convicts, a keen razor in his hand.

"Who's that?" the warden snapped.

"Mc—Dr. Rinewulf."

"Come right in, doc," replied the warden. "Sit yourself down somewhere. I'll be through in a minute." He looked up at the convict standing over him. "Get on with it," he said calmly.

The convict bent over him and started the shaving. The warden felt the steady sweep of the razor over his face, and nodded appreciatively.

"You've handled a razor before," he remarked. "You do it darned well, too. How long are you in for?"

"Life," was the short reply.

"That's tough," said the warden. "What for?"

"Slitting a guy's throat," said the convict, starting to shave under the warden's chin.

The warden laughed.

"Well, don't slit mine," he said easily. "It'll only make more work for the doctor there."

The convict finished his work, and departed. The warden wiped his face, and crossed the room to where the doctor was sitting. He looked with amusement at the doctor's face, which was bathed heavily in sweat.

"Hot?" he asked.

The doctor mopped his forehead.

"You're a cool one, Brady," he said. "That man might have slit you from ear to ear, yet you never so much as turned a hair."

Brady grinned hugely, shaking his head.

"Not him," he said. "Those trusties are all right. They know what's best for them." His grin broadened. "When I tell you that I think I recognise the man, and that it was me who sent him here when I was district attorney, you'll see that he's as safe as a railway." He slipped into his jacket, that had been hanging on the back of a chair, and sat down at his desk. "Well, doc, what's bothering you?"

The doctor cleared his throat.

"I have just been examining a young man who collapsed in the jute mill, and I would rather like you to take a look at him," he said. "He's a good type of fellow, and I think he has possibilities, but the mill is dragging him down. Will you see him?"

Warden Brady looked at the doctor admiringly.

"What I like about you, doc, is the interest you take in the men in your charge," he said pleasantly. "Yes, I'll see him. Have him sent up."

"Thanks so much," said the doctor; "I will. My idea is that he needs a change of occupation—something out of doors, if you know what I mean."

"O.K. I'll do my best. Shoot him along."

The doctor went away, and in about half an hour the captain of the guard appeared in the doorway. His name was Gleason, and he had a hard, merciless look in his eyes that made him hated by every convict in the prison.

"No. 159 to see you," he said in a voice that was cold and relentless. July 4th, 1931.

"Doctor Rinewulf said you were interviewing him."

Brady, still seated at his desk, looked up from his papers.

"Bring him in," he said. "And when he's here, get out. I'll speak to him alone."

Gleason hesitated and withdrew. He never liked the idea of the warden seeing men alone. They might start trouble—or worse, they might make complaints against Gleason concerning some of his unreported brutalities.

Convict No. 159 was shown in. Warden Brady looked him over, and decided that he rather liked this young-looking prisoner with the clean-cut face and the tall bearing. Even prison life had not spoilt him entirely. He was clean all through.

Brady went to his card-index cabinet, and produced No. 159's record. He took it to his desk and sat down.

"Your name is Robert Graham?" he said.

"Yes."

"In for manslaughter—fourteen years. H'm!" Brady's eyes flickered over the man before him thoughtfully. "I seem to remember you. Let me think, now. Oh, yes, I remember. It was I who put you here, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"Got mixed up in a quarrel in a café. Some guy insulted the girl you were with, and you crowned him with a bottle. Manslaughter proven." Brady shrugged his shoulders. "Well, son, you had it coming to you. If anyone'd insulted my girl, I'd have done the same thing, I expect; then I'd have been where you are now. That's how things are in life." His eyes came to rest on Graham's face. "The doc's seen you, and says you can't stand the jute mill. Is that right?"

"Yes," said Graham in the same dull voice. "I hate it."

"So do they all, but some are tougher than others," replied Brady evenly.

"Well, Graham, you look the sort of guy that deserves a change. You've kept out of trouble, and that's more than most of them can do. Can you drive a car?"

"Yes." The tone was a little more cheerful—a little more certain. As Brady had found in the past, humanity pays.

"Got any grudge against me for putting you here?"

"No."

"All right. You are relieved of all duty for five days, and will report to the doc. for hospital treatment. When you're better, you'll come back here and be my chauffeur. All right?"

For the first time for years, Graham's eyes began to glow. The end of the jute mill had come, and he was to have a decent occupation.

"Thank you, sir," he began fervently. Brady snorted in annoyance.

"If you say that again, I'll put you back in the mill," he said roughly.

"No man has to thank me. There's no obligation on either side. You have a job to do, and you'll do it properly. I also have a job to do, and I'll do it the way I think. Now get out."

"But—" protested Graham, wanting to express his gratitude.

"Get out!" roared Brady.

Graham got out. It was the safest thing to do.

The Escape That Failed.

WARDEN BRADY made a point of having as many good men on his personal staff as possible. It saved him doing things for himself.

He selected men who had earned the "trusty" badge, which meant that they were of proven good behaviour,

and could be relied upon to get on with their work, and not harbour thoughts of escape.

Graham, in his capacity as chauffeur, had many opportunities of leaving the walls of San Quentin behind him, but he never availed himself of them. He was too busy winning back for himself his self-respect and faith in life.

Other "trusties" on Brady's staff were Galloway, a tall, powerfully-built, and evil-looking ex-gangster, who acted as butler; three clerks who worked in the office; and a man named Fales, who looked after the gardens. There was the barber, too, who acted as valet in addition.

Graham's duties were light. When Brady wanted to go in to the railroad station, or when something was wanted from the adjacent town, it was Graham who took the car there and back.

About a week after Graham had got his job, Brady sent for him. He reached Brady's office, to find his boss looking quite human for once. He was wearing a white flower in his button-hole, and his usually stern and immovable face was relaxed in a smile.

"Graham," he said, "I want you to go down to the station for me. I'm hung up by the prison commission, who are waiting downstairs. Meet the twelve-fifteen train, and pick up my daughter. She's on her way home from school."

"Yes, Mr. Brady," he replied, and went out.

He was at the station sharp on time, and the train drew in a few minutes after. He watched the alighting passengers with interest, wondering how it was he had never heard of Brady's daughter before. He explained it to himself by reflecting that Brady seldom talked about himself—he was not that sort of man.

A girl approached the car, and stopped.

"Are you from Mr. Brady, at San Quentin?" she asked.

Graham sprang out of the car with alacrity. Unlike Brady, she was beautiful, with a fresh complexion and frank blue eyes that seemed to be perpetually smiling.

"Yes, miss," he said.

"I'm Mary Brady," she went on. "Isn't father here to meet me?"

"No, miss," replied Graham. "He had to attend a meeting of the prison commission, and told me to explain."

"All right," she said. "Would you mind getting my grips?"

He obeyed, loading her luggage in the back of the car. She seated herself beside him, and within five minutes they were on their way back to the prison.

As he drove along the straight, flat road, he was conscious that she was looking at him with open curiosity, and somehow he felt a thrill at her presence. It was a long time since he had seen anyone so lovely as she was, and, his new job having softened him, he felt that there was nothing in the world that he would not do for her.

They were half-way towards the big steel gates before she spoke. Then she said:

"I haven't seen you before. Are you—?" She hesitated.

"Yes, miss, I am," he said quickly. "I haven't long had this job."

He could sense her sympathy.

"I'm sorry," she said. "You don't look the kind who makes a habit of coming to San Quentin. Was it an accident? Were you framed, or something?"

"No, I wasn't framed," he replied.

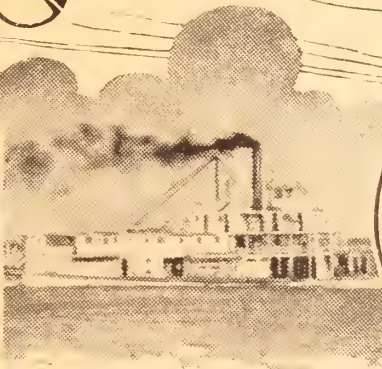
(Continued on page 17.)

The adventures of a fearless youngster and his harum-scarum friend, Huckleberry Finn. Mark Twain's famous story as a film.



Jackie Coogan

"TOM" IN "SAWYER"



Tom and Huckleberry Finn.

A ROUND-FACED boy of fourteen frowned over his task—the covering of jam-jars for his Aunt Polly. Of course, he ought to be pleased to do anything to help his aunt, because the kindly old soul had undertaken the upbringing of the three orphaned children of her dead sister, and she had been thorough. Too thorough sometimes when she used the birch, though she always said it hurt her more than Tom.

Tom's sister Mary was sixteen, and a model of virtue and kindness, and yet though she was so good and helpful Aunt Polly had to admit that Tom was her favourite, in spite of the fact that he was the "wickedest-ever." Sid was eight, very studious, clean, but labelled as a "toll-tale." Tom frowned this glorious sunny day because he hated jam-jars, and he wanted to go fishing with his buddy, Huckleberry Finn. A startled look came to the blue eyes as he heard the hoot of an owl.

"Fancy an owl at this time of the day," Aunt Polly, busy with a rolling-pin, peered over her spectacles; her sharp eyes studied Tom, because she was ever on the watch for mischief. "Don't go sticking your fingers into the jam, Tom."

"No, aunt," meekly answered Tom, and tried to peer out of the window—Huckleberry had given him the signal.

"Sid tells me you were out yesterday with Huckleberry Finn," Aunt Polly gave the dough a vigorous punch. "Must you bring grey hairs to my head by associating with the son of the village black sheep?"

Sid, in a neat velvet suit, gave his brother an anxious glance round the edge of a book—Tom would swear vengeance—and Mary shook her curls because, though she was a good girl, she hated tale-telling.

"May I go out and play, aunt?" Tom asked as he finished the last jam-jar.

"Well, I have some more that should be done." Aunt Polly peered over her spectacles and saw his dismal look. "All right, go out and play; but don't go with that there Huckleberry." Tom had grabbed up an old straw hat and was already out of the door. His aunt shook her head. "I never did see the like of that boy!"

Down near the banks of the river Tom found his friend. Huckleberry was a year older, his clothes were in rags, his face dirty, and he was smoking a corn cob pipe. One brace supported ragged trousers, his flannel shirt was in tatters, his straw hat was a disgrace, and yet the grin on his lean face won your heart. His father never bothered about the boy, and Huckleberry usually slept under a hedge or in a barn at nights, and was always playing truant from school. A tall, thin youngster against whom all mothers warned their children, and did not appreciate that Huckleberry, for all his grime, had his heart in the right place.

"Say, what you got in there?" Tom pointed to a sack.

"Dead cat," was the answer. "Bough him from a boy down at the slaughter house for an old knife. Cats is mighty good for warts."

"Playing with frogs brings warts," answered Tom. "What's your way of curing warts, Huck?"

"You got to go to the graveyard at midnight," Huckleberry was very serious. "You got to go there after someone wicked has been buried. At midnight a devil will come, and you heave the cat at him and say: 'Devil follow corpse, eat follow devil, wart follow cat, I'm done with ye!' That'll fetch any wart. They buried Hoss Williams, the worst rascal in years, on Saturday, and—"

"But to-day is Monday."

"Devils don't slosh around much on Sundays," argued Huck. "Are you game to try it out to-night?"

"I ain't afeard," cried Tom. "You meow and I'll meow back."

"Don't keep me meowing round too long," grumbled Huckleberry. "Last time old Hays went throwing rocks at me and shouting: 'Dern that cat!' and I love a brick through his window—but don't you tell!"

"I'll meow quiet," decided Tom. "Aunt Polly sleeps with one ear open. Let's go fishing, Huck."

Arm in arm the two made their way towards the banks of the Mississippi.

What Happened in the Churchyard.

TOM had a happy knack of always getting into trouble. One bright day he decided that crab-apples would be had for the tender digestion of Sid, and so the apples disappeared. Now it happened that Sid was accusing Tom of taking them when Aunt Polly appeared and wanted to know what all the argument was about, then who should come along the road but the doctor's wife.

"Where are your manners, Tom?" reproved his aunt. "Take off your hat at once, sir!"

Tom obeyed, and out tumbled the crab-apples from their hiding-place. When his aunt recovered from her anger she ordered Tom to whitewash the fence.

What a day of woe faced Tom! But his brain was keen, and he did the whitewashing with such gusto and evident enjoyment that boys who came to watch and jeer begged to be allowed to try their skill. By the time the fence was finished—in record time—Tom had collected a kite, a kitten, a jew's harp, some marbles, a dog-collar, a key, a dog's tooth, a bat skin and other treasures.

His next adventure was to fall in love. The school had a new pupil in demure Becky Thatcher, and her smile, curling ringlets of fair hair and pretty

(Continued on page 16.)



Jackie Coogan as Tom Sawyer. On right, Aunt Polly (Clara Blandick) has a few words to say to Tom when she finds out how Sid (Jackie Searl) lost his crab apples. They were inside Tom's hat.

Tom has traps for girls, but until the arrival of Thatcher. He does work with his cat school in order to be the punishment of being with the girls.

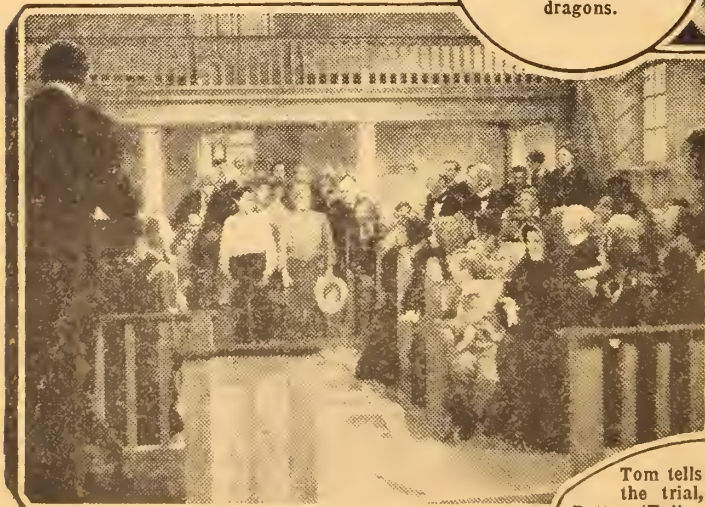


Joe Harper (Dick Winslow) is incensed because Tom jeers at his smart clothes. The boys have a great fight, but afterwards become friends.



Tom builds castles in the air, and the chief people in those castles are the Prince and Princess. Tom is always rescuing his Becky from dragons.

Tom goes with Hank churchyard and they a brutal murder. Tom so scared that they that they must never of what they have seen overhears the town dis the crime—the wrong has been arrested



In the midst of the morning service the run-aways return, and afterwards receive a well-deserved hiding.



Tom tells the truth at the trial, and Muff Potter (Tully Marshall) is acquitted. He is seen kissing Tom's hand, whilst Becky again recognises Tom as her hero.



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Tom gets the desired punishment and sits beside Becky, who does not seem to mind Tom using her slate to write his messages. On right they are seen plighting their troth.



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Worried by the murder, and because Becky is angry with him enables Tom to persuade Huckleberry Finn and Joe Harper to run away to Jackson's Island and play at pirates.



The school are taken for a treat to some old caves. There is a tea fight outside in honour of Tom Sawyer, who is all dressed up for the occasion. Later they go into the caves and Tom gets lost with Becky.



They meet Injun Joe, the real murderer, and see him with a casket of treasure. The half-breed chases them and falls down a fissure to his death. Huckleberry Finn finds them and leads them back to safety.

"TOM SAWYER."

(Continued from page 13.)

clothes won his heart. It was considered a terrible degradation to have to sit with the girls. The teacher knew the power of the birch, but to sit a boy amongst the girls was worse than a caning.

There was a vacant place on the form next to Becky. Tom got busy with his catapult and pieces of hard paper. The teacher, with a fiendish grin, ordered Tom to sit with the girls, and the whole school gasped and Becky blushed when Tom eagerly went and sat beside her.

The love affair made such rapid progress that after school they plighted their love by carving their names on a tree. Unfortunately Tom made a grave mistake when, in a moment of bravado, he mentioned that he had been "engaged" before to Amy Lawrence. Becky was angry, and when Tom explained that he did not care for Amy any more than Becky gave way to tears. The lovers were parted, and Tom went off vowing that he would never marry—not even if he lived to be a thousand.

That night, whilst thinking of his troubles as he lay in bed, he heard the meow of a cat. Almost had he forgotten about Huckleberry Finn and the cure for warts.

Without disturbing the sleeping Sid he dressed and cautiously climbed out of the window. He meowed softly and slithered to the ground down a drain-pipe. Like shadows the two boys stole towards the churchyard.

A faint wind moaned through the trees, and Tom shivered. The boys

spoke seldom and then under their breath. Near the grave of the bad man were three elms, and when Huckleberry clambered up into the branches Tom was not long after him.

"Hucky, do you believe the dead people like it for us to be here?"

"I wish I knowed," whispered his buddy. "It's awful solemn like, ain't it?"

The hooting of a distant owl made them start, the wind seemed to get up, and the branches to form themselves into strange shapes and shadows. Just when the boys thought nothing was going to happen Tom clutched at Huckleberry's ragged sleeve and pointed. At the far end of the churchyard was a moving light.

"It's the devils, sure enough," Huck whispered after a while. "Three of 'em. Oh, Tom, I guess we're goners!"

The light came closer, and the quaking boys saw that there were three men.

"They're humans," muttered Huckleberry, vastly relieved. "Look, it's Muff Potter, Dr. Robinson, and Injun Joe—that murderin' half-breed. Why for they come here?"

Then the boys witnessed a drama so bloodcurdling that almost they thought it was a nightmare. These men had come to rob the graveyard, and Dr. Robinson was the ringleader. The doctor was not liked, and was something of a mystery. The work was almost done when Potter and Injun Joe began to demand their money, and when the doctor refused till the task was completed a quarrel ensued.

The boys saw Potter and Dr. Robinson milling round, and gasped when the doctor felled the older man with a spade, and they nearly gave themselves away when Injun Joe, knife in hand, crept up behind the doctor and stabbed him with a knife that Muff Potter had dropped when the fight first started.

But the villainy did not end there. Injun Joe stooped over the two motionless figures and placed the knife in the hands of Muff Potter. He chuckled fiendishly when his task was done, and calmly seated himself on a barrow to await the return to consciousness of his companion.

The moon went behind a blanket of clouds, and the two boys slithered down the tree and ran for dear life.

"Tom, we got to keep mum," Huckleberry told his friend after a long discussion on the murder. "That Injun devil wouldn't think any more of drownin' us or cutting our throats than he would a couple of cats. We got to swear to keep mum—we got to swear on our blood."

They pricked their thumbs, and on a piece of old parchment wrote the following:

"Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer swears they will keep mum about this, and they wish they may drop dead in their tracks if they ever tell and rot."

When Tom crept in at the bed-room window he thought the gentle-snoring Sid was asleep, but Sid was very much awake. When Tom awoke after appalling nightmares, Sid was dressed and gone, and his Aunt Polly appeared and lectured him on the evil of stealing out at nights. A flogging Tom could have stood, but when the old lady began to cry, Tom felt mighty like tears himself.

What with losing Becky, the murder and this trouble with his aunt decided Tom that life was a mighty miserable thing. When he got to school his cup of misery was complete, because the prized jew's harp that he had given Becky was reposing on his desk.

(Continued on page 27.)



The three chief characters: Jackie Coogan (Tom Sawyer), Mitzl Green (Becky), Junior Durkin (Huckleberry Finn).

July 4th, 1931.

"THE CRIMINAL CODE."

(Continued from page 12.)

"I deserved it. Lost my temper, and—well, the man died."

"What a relief you are!" she exclaimed. "They all say they're innocent as a rule!" She paused, thinking. "How long are you going to be here for?"

"Another eight years, less remission," he said.

"Good!" Her gladness was quite open and unashamed. "I rather like you. I certainly feel safer with you than—"

She stopped suddenly. Above the noise of the engine came the scream of the prison siren.

"What's that?" she said quickly—almost nervously.

"Someone's making a break for it," said Graham grimly, and slammed on his brakes.

The prison was less than a quarter of a mile away, and the siren's awful din swept over the countryside like some cry of agony. Almost immediately afterwards was heard the sharp, staccato rattle of machine-guns.

It lasted a bare minute, then died away. Graham remained where he was, listening. A full five minutes passed before he spoke.

"What do you want to do?" he then said. "Go on, or wait until all the danger is over?"

"I'll go on," she said. "And please hurry. My father might be hurt, or something."

Graham slammed in the gears, and pressed hard on the accelerator. The car shot forward in a cloud of dust.

"Who Killed Runch?"

THE scene back at the prison was serious. Two men had tried to get away, and the news was already spreading like wild-fire that they had been caught because someone had squealed. The guards, waiting for the squealer's story to be verified by actual happenings, had bided their time until the two convicts were in the act of climbing over the cockhouse roof and so on to the wall behind, and had then ordered them to surrender.

The convicts were reluctant. Freedom seemed too near. So Gleason ordered his machine-gunners to persuade them.

Streams of bullets had ripped into the stonework at the escaping convicts' feet, and they had surrendered. But the other convicts—and there were more than a thousand of them—knew the inner secret of what had happened, and word began to pass round swiftly.

"Runch squealed! Someone must get him!"

When Graham and Mary reached the warden's private gate, they found the guard on it doubled. Graham, not knowing what had happened, left Mary in the car while he made inquiries.

"Is it safe to bring Miss Brady in?" he asked.

"I guess so," replied the guard. "You'd better go straight to the warden's office, though. There's trouble brewing."

Graham took her there, and found Brady pacing up and down in agitation, his hands behind his back and a dead cigar in his mouth. He greeted Mary abstractedly, and sent her straight to her room. Graham waited for further orders.

The door opened, and Gleason entered.

"I've got Runch outside," he announced.

"Bring him in," said Brady abruptly. He appeared to have forgotten that Graham was still present. "I'll talk to him."

Gleason went out, and presently returned with a cringing, quivering life-sentence man.

"Well?" Brady demanded, looking at him with contempt. "What do you want?"

Runch crossed the office in a series of short, jerky hops, and caught Brady by the hand. Fear was written on every line of his craven face.

"They're after me, warden," he squeaked. "It was me who told about the two who tried to escape, and the others have threatened to kill me."

"Who?" said Brady quickly, a glint in his eye.

"I don't know. Someone scratched

a message on the wall outside my cell." For a moment he swayed as though he would collapse. "They'll get me! I know they will! Do something, warden—send me away from here!"

Brady looked at Gleason sharply. "Is what he says true?"

"Yes," replied Gleason. "But for him, the other two would have been missing for good."

Brady shifted his eyes back to Runch with distaste. He disliked a squealer; at the same time, by law, it was the duty of every convict to report a projected escape.

"All right," he said. "I'll make a report to the commission and have you removed. Meanwhile you'll work in this office as one of my clerks. That'll keep you out of danger for the time being."

Gleason nudged Runch from behind. "Come on," he said. "Go and get your kit and move into the trusties block."

Runch was about to turn away, when a noise came from the exercise-yard. It started softly at first, and gradually swelled in volume until it was almost deafening.

"What's that?" he said in sudden fear.

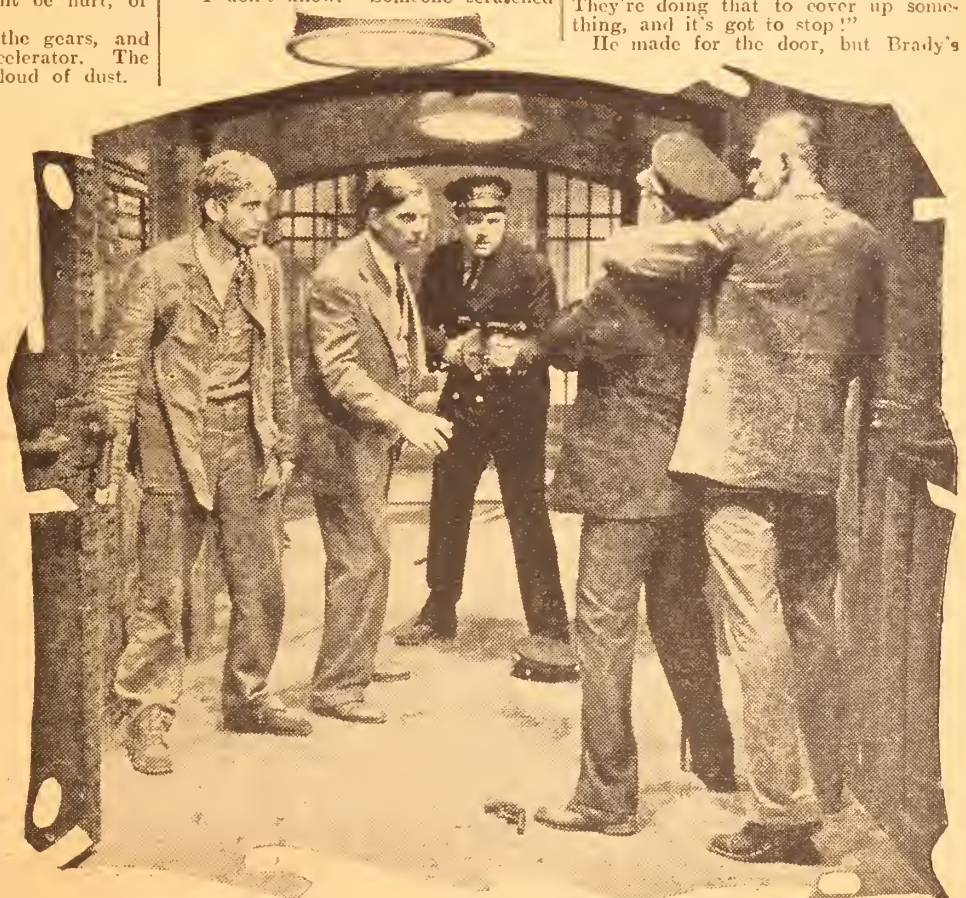
"They're yammering," said Gleason; "and if you don't know what that is by now you ought to."

The sound seemed to get louder and louder, until a thousand powerful voices were raised in a long-drawn-out "Ah-h-h-h!"

Gleason went to the window and looked down.

"I'll soon settle them," he grated harshly. "Half a dozen machine-guns will darn quickly quieten them down. They're doing that to cover up something, and it's got to stop!"

He made for the door, but Brady's



"Look out," he shouted, "or you will hit Gleason!"

incisive voice cut through the yammering and checked him.

"Cut that out, Gleason!" he said quickly. "You can't do anything with tommy-guns, short of murdering every man in the place. I'll handle this." He saw Graham standing on the other side of the room. "Stay here with Runch, Graham. I'll be back."

He and the head guard hurried from the room, and Graham stood waiting, listening to the awful din from the exercise-yard. Suddenly the door leading to the warden's private quarters opened, and someone entered the office. It was Galloway, Brady's convict butler.

"The warden wants you in the yard," he said, his black eyes glinting from his bullet-like head. "Get going—he's in a hurry. I'll look after Runch."

Graham obeyed, leaving the door open behind him. Galloway waited until his footsteps had died away on the stone floor outside, and then crossed and shut it. When he turned a knife was in his hand. Its broad blade gleamed evilly.

"Well, Runch," he said slowly, "we've got you! You know the code, don't you? Any one of us who squeals has to die."

Runch, taken by surprise, did not even cry out. The shock of the way in which he had been trapped left him bereft of speech. His eyes stared as Galloway walked slowly towards him, the knife held low.

He began to back away, his hand to his quivering mouth. A whimper escaped his lips.

"No—no!" he whined. "Not that! I didn't mean—"

He felt himself against an open doorway, and backed through it, turning to run. Galloway's hand lifted sharply, and a flash of light gleamed for a fraction of a second between the two men. It was the knife, thrown with deadly precision.

"Gosh!" screamed Runch in agony. "It's in my back! You've got me! You've—"

His voice died away as he stumbled forward. There was a thud as he fell. A minute later Graham opened the door leading from the prison corridor and stepped inside.

"He didn't want me, Galloway—" he began, and stopped.

The office was empty. Everything was deathly quiet. Even the yammering had died down.

"Runch!" he called sharply. Brady's footsteps sounded in the corridor outside. He thrust past Graham, and strode into the room, saying nothing; but there was a look in his eyes which told clearly that he already knew what had happened.

He crossed to the far door and flung it open. For a full minute he stood looking inside, then slowly he turned to Graham.

"Graham," he said deliberately, "who killed Runch?"

Third Degree.

IN a flash Graham realised the whole situation. He knew what had happened, and he knew who the killer was. He also knew that, by the law of the criminal, he could not squeal.

Brady waited for his answer, but it did not come. Brady, too, knew the law of the criminal, and he knew that he was face to face with it now. He had every sympathy with the rotten position Graham was in, but he had to do his job, and, by heck, he was going to do it!

"Come on now, Graham!" he said. "Who did it?"

July 4th, 1931.

Graham hesitated no longer.

"I don't know," he lied.

"All right, Graham," Brady said. "I know what's on your mind—you don't want to squeal on a fellow-convict. I'll put my question another way. Who was it told you to leave this room?"

Graham returned his gaze fearlessly.

"Sorry," he said, "I can say nothing."

Brady stood before him, savagely chewing the cigar that was stuck in the corner of his mouth. Suddenly he turned away, and sat down at his desk. His face was stern—unrelenting. It was a face of a man who had a battle before him, and who was going to fight it to the last ditch.

"Listen to me, Graham," he said, and as he spoke he hammered on the desk with his fist to emphasise the words. "You are keeping silent because of some notion that it's not right to squeal on a fellow-crook. That's the criminal code; but there's one code which is stronger—the code of law and order. The State demands that you shall do everything in your power to help me find out who committed this murder." He half rose from his chair. "Come on now, who did it? Who did it? I order you to tell me!"

The tension in the room was terrible. Beads of sweat began to stand out on Graham's brow, but not for one moment did he waver.

"Again, warden, I'm sorry," he said. "I can't!"

"No?" Warden Brady slumped back in his chair, and regarded Graham steadily. "You are a fool, Graham," he said; "and you will see why in a minute."

He picked up a paper from his desk and tapped it significantly.

"For the last time, will you tell me?"

"For the last time—no!"

"Very well." Slowly Brady unfolded the paper and held it up for Graham to see. "Here's the position. When you were brought to me a few weeks ago by Dr. Rinewulf, I weighed you up pretty thoroughly, and I decided that you were the kind of man who ought not to serve his full sentence. There was a meeting of the prison commission to-day, and I put it forward that you should have your release on parole. The commission gave me a release warrant, and this is it."

He paused significantly.

"Are you still of the same mind now?"

The silence that followed was deep and penetrating. Graham stood before Brady's desk, his eyes glowing dully, his position clearly before him. Brady's meaning was obvious. Either confess, or the parole warrant was not going to operate.

What could Graham do? He was not of the criminal world—never had been. The crime which had put him in prison was that of manslaughter, the striking down of a fellow human in sudden rage.

It was a thing that might have happened to anybody.

What made the present position worse was that a new factor had entered into Graham's life only that day. For the first time in his existence he had met a woman to whom he wanted to devote the whole of his life. It was the warden's daughter, Mary Brady.

Liberty was to his hand. All he needed to do was to give the name of Galloway as the murderer of Runch, and he could walk out of San Quentin a free man. He would be able to start life anew, perhaps with a woman such as Mary by his side. And he couldn't

speak. The unwritten code of the wrongdoer bound him irrevocably.

He had to decide at once. Brady's last question had been—was he still of the same mind? There was only one answer he could give—

"Yes," he said tonelessly. "I'm still of the same mind."

Brady took the cigar out of his mouth and flung it across the room. He stood up, and, with his hands behind his back, paced back and forth. Suddenly he swung round, facing Graham once more.

"I like you, Graham," he said more quietly, "and I want to do the right thing by you. You're in a jam, and so am I. Your silence is going to mean a cancellation of this parole warrant, and failure to discover the murderer of Runch will put me in queer with the State Governor." He pointed dramatically to the door behind which the body of Runch lay. "Think tho thing out along these lines," he went on. "There's a man lying in there, stiff and cold. He's got a knife in his back, and the least that could be said for him is that he was worthless. He was an habitual criminal, and the world is well rid of him. I'm not saying that out of irreverence for the dead—I'm just facing facts. That's the man you are going to throw away a chance of freedom for. You are going to jeopardise the whole of your future life and happiness for some skunk who wasn't worth two cents. Come now, Graham, be reasonable over this. The exchange is a bad one, and you know it."

He paused, expecting Graham to reply, but Graham stood there in silence. It was apparent that he did not intend to speak.

Brady went up to him, his patience suddenly breaking down. He gripped him by the revers of his jacket, and shook him like a terrier shakes a rat.

"You will drive me crazy in a minute, Graham!" he shouted angrily. "I thought you were a man of some intelligence, who would play the game by you, but it seems that I was mistaken. Well, I'm through with trying to reason with you. So far I have spoken to you as man to man. Now I will speak to you as prison warden to convict. Who killed Runch? Answer me! Who was the man you left in this room alone with him?"

"I won't tell you," persisted Graham. "I can't!"

"You are being obstinate," cried Brady, "but I will darn soon break that obstinacy down. I will give you one minute to tell me the murderer's name, and if you don't you will go into solitary confinement for thirty days. Now think, and think hard!"

He released Graham and walked over to the window. Deliberately he took his watch out of his pocket, and held it in front of him, his eyes riveted on the second-hand. Slowly the hand made one complete revolution.

Brady thrust the watch back into his pocket, and, without another word, crossed to a door and flung it open.

"Gleason," he shouted, "come here!"

Gleason appeared in the doorway. Brady turned and pointed at Graham.

"Thirty days solitary," he said incisively, "but if he wants to see me at any time, bring him back here."

Gleason nodded and crossed to Graham's side.

"Come on!" he said.

Graham shrugged his shoulders. It was no more than he expected. With dragging footsteps he walked out of the room.

(Continued on page 26.)

A daring young cowboy sets out to win a rodeo and his employer's daughter, but through jealousy of the ranch foreman, he loses the former and after a terrific struggle wins the better prize.

"WILD WEST WHOOPEE"



Starring
**JACK
PERRIN.**

The New Hand.

THERE was trouble on the rancho of old Cap Rogers, late of the U.S. Cavalry, and now one of the wealthiest cattle-barons south of the Yosemite Valley.

There had been trouble in that section of the grazing country ever since his daughter Ginger had cut her first tooth and displayed to the eyes of her fond but harassed parent her first crop of carrotty hair.

Ginger was now nineteen, and her hair was of a still more fiery hue. It was the crowning glory of a small, slender figure, a pink-and-white complexion and a pretty face.

"Young woman," said old Cap Rogers, "I want you to understand once an' for all that I won't have you hangin' around with this no-account cow-hand Logan. So I'm packin' you off to Carson City, up in Nevada, to stay with your Aunt Emma for a spell."

Ginger looked at him appealingly, and the expression in her blue eyes was well-nigh irresistible.

"Oh, dad," she appealed, "not before the rodeo. You know I'm dying to see it. Promise not to send me to Carson City until then."

Her father wavered, and gradually his sternness of mien vanished. He would have been the last to admit it, but when Ginger looked at him with those big blue eyes of hers she could generally twist him around her little finger.

"All right, then," he agreed. "But remember—you're leavin' for Carson after the rodeo."

Ginger smiled happily, tugged the strings of his necktie with a sudden, saucy gesture, and then ran off towards one of the corrals, where a tall, hand-

some youngster was swinging himself out of the saddle of a white pinto.

With pursed lips Cap Rogers strode back in the direction of the ranch-house; but, passing a barn en route to the trim dwelling, he was accosted by his foreman, a lynx-eyed individual by the name of Smoky King, and after some conversation on business affairs King indicated a group of punchers lounging near the bunk-house.

One of them was strumming on a guitar, and the others were singing the chorus of a favourite ballad of the cow-camps. Smoky King regarded them sourly.

"I reckon them hombres ain't gonna make much of a show at the big rodeo in town, boss," he observed. "I'll take a bet that this outfit don't finish up with any prizes to its credit, anyways."

"I guess you're right, King," Cap Rogers murmured.

The foreman turned his head, and with the movement caught sight of Ginger and the youngster who had dismounted from the white pinto. That youngster was the same Jim Logan who had roused Cap Rogers' resentment by his friendship with Ginger.

King's face took on an ugly expression as he saw that they were holding each other's hands.

"Boss," he drawled, "I don't like to interfere in your personal affairs. But it seems to me that that new hand Logan is payin' a heap too much attention to Ginger. You only signed him on a day or two back, but you'd think he had some kinda claim on the girl the way he acts."

Old man Rogers followed his foreman's brooding glance, and glared at the young couple.

"Yeah?" he ground out, his temper rising again. "Well, you leave him to

me." And he stamped towards the corral beside which Jim Logan and Ginger were standing.

Jim Logan was a bronzed, good-looking specimen of the great South-West. He let go of Ginger's hands and greeted the rancher genially as the latter came up.

"Oh, howdy, Cap?" he said. "Don't 'Cap' me," Rogers retorted angrily. "You're fired! D'ye hear? An' the quicker I see your back, the better I'll like it."

Jim stared at him in bewilderment.

"Fired!" he echoed. Then, in a tone of protest: "But you can't fire me, Cap," he said. "Leastways, not until you've given me a try-out. When you signed me up that was the stipulation."

"Well," the Cap declared savagely, "I'll give you a try-out." And, turning, he called out in a loud voice to the men lounging by the bunk-house.

"Hey, some o' you hombres," he shouted. "Bring Lightning outa his stall!"

"Lightning, dad!" gasped Ginger, as two or three hands ran to obey her father's command. "That killer!"

"Yeah, Lightning," the old man growled. "I want horsemen on this outfit, not lady-killers. An' if this guy Logan can't ride him he's no use to me."

The brone in question was led to the corral. He looked restive, and his eye was bloodshot and wicked. Bred among the wild herds that had roamed the plains since the days of the early Spanish settlers, he was viciousness personified whenever human burden attempted to straddle his sleek back. No man had ever stayed on him for long, and many who had matched their skill against his dynamic ferocity had counted themselves fortunate to escape with broken limb or trampled ribs.

"Jim," Ginger panted, "don't ride him!"

The tall young puncher looked down on her smilingly. "He looks pretty tough," he said, "but don't worry. I can take care of myself."

The wild brone was already being saddled. He quivered as he felt the girth-strap tightening around his belly, but strong hands held his head till Jim Logan had swung himself astride.

The mustang was released, the men who had brought him from the stall springing away and leaping to the fence, which was already lined with expectant cow-hands. Next instant Jim Logan was battling with one of the

worst animals it had ever been his experience to ride.

Stored up inside that bronc's hide there was a natural reserve of fury which was cyclonic in its outburst. The cow-hands accentuated it in the usual way by firing off their six-guns and whooping shrilly, and for the next two or three minutes pandemonium raged.

The wild bronc circled the corral in a series of frenzied jumps. Back arched, head and haunches down, hoofs drawn together and legs rigid, he strove fiendishly to throw his rider from the saddle. But Jim kept his seat, and even seemed to enjoy the dangerous duel, for, snatching off his sombrero, he slapped it lustily against the animal's flank.

The onlookers began to realise that they were watching a youngster whose horsemanship was a delight to behold, even for men living in a country where rough-riding was a normal accomplishment. Excitement and admiration mingled in their tones as they yelled uproariously, and, his antipathy towards Jim forgotten for the moment, Cap Rogers shouted as loudly as any.

"Gee, dad! Isn't he great!" It was the thrilled voice of Ginger, and it recalled to the old man the circumstances under which he had ordered Jim Logan to ride the wild bronc.

"No!" he snapped angrily, and for the remainder of the duel 'twixt man and beast he was a silent, glowering figure.

The bronc continued his desperate efforts to unhorse Jim, but failed signally, and, lathered and blown, his temper was steadily curbed. He was beginning to realise that he had found his master, and a little while later he came to a meek standstill in the middle of the corral.

Jim dismounted amid a shower of congratulations, to which the foreman, Smoky King, did not lend his voice. Nor did old Cap Rogers join in the applause.

"Well, Cap," said Jim with a grin, "any time you want another goat exercised, jest let me know."

The rancher chewed at the end of a cigar.

"You can ride, young feller," he admitted grudgingly, "an' this outfit can do with a hombre like you in the rodeo. But meantime—keep away from my daughter."

The Rodeo.

A BUCKBOARD rolled over the trail that led to town. Cap Rogers plied the reins and Smoky King sat alongside him. Ginger occupied a seat just behind the two men.

About forty or fifty paces in the rear of the vehicle rode the cow-hands, with Jim Logan well to the fore, and between the latter and the girl in the buckboard signs were continually passing.

Jim had not been permitted to talk to Ginger throughout the journey, but had found this means of communicating a suggestion that she should share his saddle, and as the girl nodded eagerly he suddenly spurred forward and dashed abreast the buckboard.

Ginger stood up. Jim reached forth one strong arm and lifted her bodily, perching her safely in front of him. Next moment, and before Cap Rogers or Smoky King realised what had happened, he and Ginger were galloping ahead.

A shout escaped the old rancher as he saw them, and he whipped up his team angrily, shouting to the rest of his hands to follow him and give pursuit. But Jim's white pinto, Starlight July 4th, 1931.

by name, showed the rest of the cavalcade his hoofs, and fifteen minutes later he was out of sight, in spite of the fact that he was carrying a double burden.

Some time afterwards, Cap Rogers lit town in a smother of dust and a dangerous mood, and when he had disposed of the buckboard he and Smoky King stamped off through the throng that crowded the vicinity of the stadium where the annual rodeo was to be held.

The stadium was a regular Mecca for the foremost ropers and riders of California, and already some magnificent feats of horsemanship were being performed in the arena. But, raging around the chutes where the steers and the wild broncs were lodged, Cap Rogers had no eye for the events that were taking place. He was searching for Ginger.

He failed to locate her, however, and, giving up the quest at last, he settled his squat form on the top bar of a strip of fencing near the chutes. From that vantage point he watched husky cowmen matching their skill against mustang and steer, and he was engrossed in a display of fancy riding when someone pushed him mischievously and almost toppled him off the fence.

He swayed precariously, but with a frantic clutch saved himself from falling. Then he glared round and saw that the culprit was Ginger.

"You, huh?" he grated. "What did you mean by runnin' off with that ornery cow-hand? Where is Logan, anyway? I want to give him a piece o' my mind!"

"He's along at one of the chutes," Ginger said. "He's due to ride Dynamite in a few minutes—the fiercest bronc in the round-up!"

"I hope the critter busts his neck," snapped her father. "And, listen to me, young lady. It's you for Carson City the minute I—"

Ginger scrambled up beside him and stroked his cheek. He flung her hand away impatiently, but she slipped her arm around his shoulders, and his ire began to dwindle.

"Don't be angry with me, dad," she soothed.

"Young lady," he growled, "one day you're gonna make me lose my temper, an' then there'll be trouble!"

Meanwhile Jim Logan was standing with one or two of the other hands near Dynamite's chute, and the group was presently joined by Smoky King, who shot a vicious glance at Jim. The young puncher returned it coolly, well aware of the foreman's hostility, which had been marked ever since Ginger had first shown a partiality for the new hand's company.

"Reckon we better get that wild bronc saddled, Jim," observed one of the other men. "You'll be ridin' him any minute now."

"Okay," Jim answered. "Go ahead." The boys set to work, while Jim climbed to the top of the stall and watched operations. He took the measure of the horse, too—noting the ugly restlessness that he revealed as the saddle was thrown over his back, noting the rolling white eye that bore out the animal's reputation as a killer.

It might have served Jim better to keep his eye on Smoky King just then, but, at that early stage of his acquaintance with the foreman, the young puncher did not suspect the extent of King's villainy.

King was standing at the front of the chute, looking through the bars at the savage-tempered animal within, and suddenly he saw the girth-strap of the saddle dangling before his gaze. He paid no particular attention to that

strap until all at once a sinister thought occurred to him, when he looked around to assure himself that no one was like, y to observe his actions.

The foreman slipped a clasp-knife from his pocket and opened it. Then, reaching a hand through the bars surreptitiously, he caught the cinch-buckle and drew the dangling strap towards him. The keen edge of the knife cut deep, almost severing the band of leather, but not quite. It would hold—for a spell, until the strain thrown on it by the wild bronc's plunges out in the arena finally proved too great.

The flap of the saddle effectively concealed King's dastardly handiwork, so that there was little chance of the flaw being discovered before the bronc was let out of the chute. In fact, only a second or two after the foreman had returned his knife to his pocket, one of the boys laid hold of the strap and fastened it by means of the buckle.

Poised on the top of the stall, Jim prepared to lower himself into the saddle of the restive animal, the boys shouting words of advice in the meantime.

"Careful, Jim! Easy, there, easy!"

Jim slipped astride the bronc cautiously. Next instant the chute was flung open, and the horse plunged forth, charging straight across the arena till it was close up against the far barrier of the parade ground. Then all at once it started to buck.

It took Jim five seconds to realise that the creature he was riding was true to its name. The mustang he had conquered at Cap Rogers' rancho had been fierce enough, but this pony had ten times more devil in him. He was concentrated fury.

Yet Jim did not look like coming off, and towards the end of a minute the crowds up in the stands were yelling encouragement. It was an uproar to which Ginger and Cap Rogers' ranch-hands lent their voices—all with the exception of Smoky King, who watched the upright figure of Dynamite's rider narrowly.

The seconds slipped by. King began to wonder if his knife had slashed deep enough, or if the half-severed leather was going to hold out against the strain after all. Then suddenly Dynamite's hind legs came up in a vicious kick, and simultaneously Jim Logan shot from his back and hurtled head foremost towards the fencing of the barrier.

His skull struck the woodwork with a smashing shock, and he fell to the ground in a crumpled heap. The wild bronc, rearing up wildly, brought his fore hoofs down on the cowboy's prone body. From thousands of throats there arose a shout of horror, from Ginger a shrill scream.

Two or three of the boys sprinted across the arena, and Dynamite was roped and dragged towards the chutes. Two more of the cow-hands from the Rogers ranch dashed to where Jim Logan lay.

From the stands it had looked as if Jim had taken a straight fall, but, running through a swirl of dust, the two men who were running towards the young puncher's body stumbled upon Dynamite's saddle and trappings. One of them picked it up and gave vent to an exclamation.

"The girth-strap bust!" he jerked. The other took hold of the leather, and then looked at his companion keenly. He had seen the straight white snick that had been ripped in the strap by a keen blade.

"Bust nothin'!" he ground out. "It's been cut!"

The Road to Carson City.

A WEEK had passed since Jim Logan's experience at the rodeo, and an ugly cut in his head had now quite healed, though he was still suffering a certain amount of stiffness as the result of bruises.

Jim reclined in a chair on the bunk-house veranda and allowed his mind to dwell on the incident. The fact that the girth-strap had been severed had not been withheld from him, and he had a pretty shrewd notion as to the identity of the culprit. But he was not the man to make accusations without definite proof, so he said nothing but thought plenty.

His reflections were interrupted by footfalls, and recognising Ginger by her step, he immediately leaned back in his chair limply, like a sick man. Ginger approached him sympathetically.

"How are you feeling, Jim?" she asked him.

"Oh, so-so, so-so," he murmured. "I always feel at my best when you're around, though."

Ginger looked solemn.

"In that case you're liable to have a relapso right away," she said. "Because dad's just told me that he's packing me off to my aunt 'way up in Carson City at once."

"What?" Jim exclaimed, sitting bolt upright.

"He's driving me to Fresno in the buckboard," Ginger told him, "and I'm taking the stage from there. Jim, I don't want to go. What are you going to do about it?"

He grinned at her.

"Do!" he echoed. "I'll tell you what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna marry you."

"Oh, Jim," she cried happily, "I knew you would!"

"Listen," he whispered. "After you leave here with your dad I'll saddle up Starlight. Somewhere on the Carson road the stage is gonna be held up—see? And you're gonna find yourself my prisoner—see? Then we'll elope. Is it a bet?"

She nodded quickly.

"You can count on me, Jim," she said.

At that moment her father's voice was heard calling her name, and Ginger hurried away to finish her packing. She had hardly disappeared when old Cap Rogers stamped into view, and, coming up to the bunk-house veranda, planted himself in front of the puncher.

"Where's my daughter?" he demanded.

"I saw her around a minute ago," Jim murmured.

The old man fixed him with a baleful eye.

"Well, let me tell you somethin', young feller," he announced. "You don't see her around any more. I'm sendin' her to Carson City to-day, an' she'll be well outa your way up there. I'm goin' to have no loafin' cow-hand makin' up to my little girl and turnin' her head. Get that!"

He marched off,

and, having given orders for the buckboard plugs to be harnessed, was joined by Ginger at the ranch-house. He helped her up into the vehicle, and then, taking his position beside her, drove the ponies forward with a flick of the reins.

They picked up the Fresno road, and wheels powdered with the limestone of the rocky trail, finally ran into town as the stage was preparing to set out on its long trip.

"Clem," said old Cap Rogers to the driver, when he had bought Ginger's ticket, "my daughter is goin' along to Carson City with you. Take good care o' her for me, will you?"

"I will, sir," answered the driver. The old man handed him a cigar and then turned to Ginger affectionately.

"Reckon you're gonna miss your old dad, ain't you, honey?" he said, as she was on the point of climbing into the stage.

"Yes, dad," she answered, bestowing a kiss on him.

The Cap looked wistful.

"Reckon I'm gonna miss you, too," he mused.

"Then I won't go!" said Ginger eagerly; but with that her father grabbed her arm.

"Oh, yes, you will," he told her hastily. "Go on—get in there!"

Ginger obeyed him without protest. After all, she reflected, she was not going to Carson City. Before the coach had travelled many miles, Jim would be stopping it to take her a willing prisoner.

Had Ginger known what was afoot at the ranch just then she might have looked forward to the journey by stage with less satisfaction.

For just outside the bunk-house Smoky King and one of the hands were covering Jim Logan with their six-guns, having taken him completely by surprise.

"What's the idea?" Jim demanded,

as he found himself looking into the barrels of the shooting-irons.

"I'm doin' this on behalf of the boss," Smoky King replied smugly. "You see, I happened to hear you arranging that little scheme o' yours with Ginger."

Jim bit his lip.

"Then why didn't you break the bad news to the Cap?" he demanded.

King's eyes narrowed shiftily.

"That's my business," he retorted.

"Come on," he added to the ranch-hand who was with him, "get his hands tied."

The cowboy obeyed him—not by any means willingly, for Jim was popular among the punchers—but orders were orders.

Jim's wrists were bound behind his back, and, once the youngster had been secured, King thrust his gun back into its holster. Then he spoke to his companion again.

"Keep an eye on him," he said, "an' see that he don't get away."

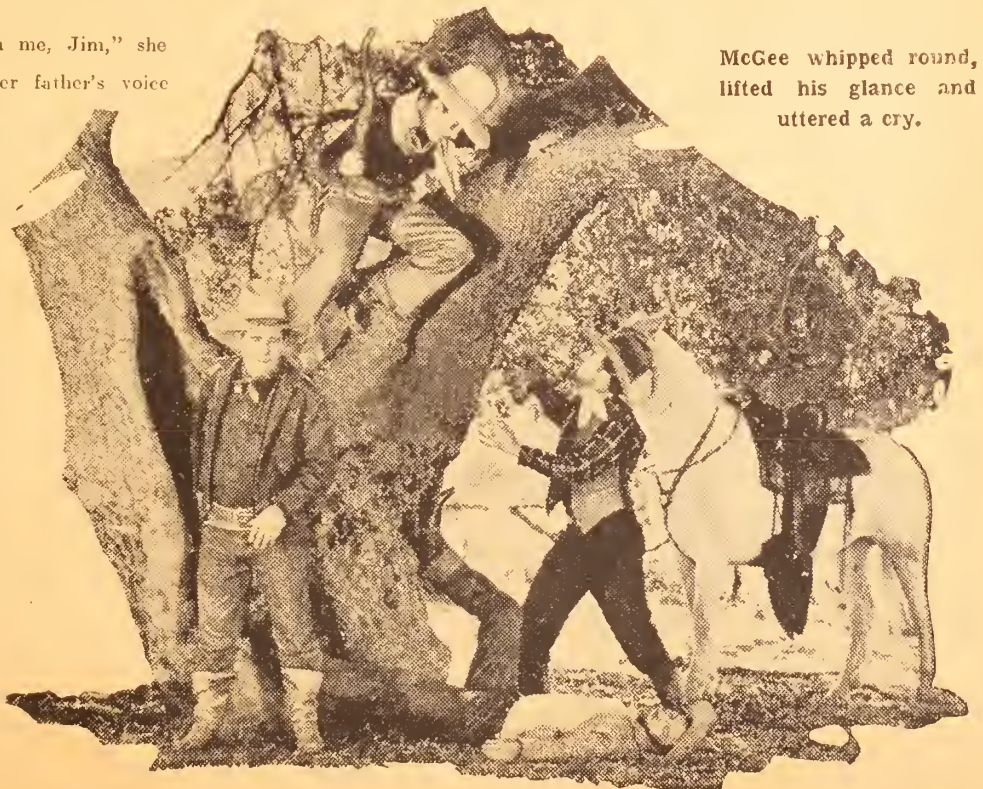
Even as the foreman uttered the words, Jim chanced to turn his head and see his pony Starlight near by. The horse was watching King and the other man, and in a flash Jim realised how the animal might assist him. For Starlight was no ordinary bronc. Training, and a natural sagacity, had given him qualities both of mind and body which would have been difficult to find in any other dumb creature.

Puckering up his lips, Jim gave vent to a shrill whistle, and the pony immediately responded to it. With a toss of his noble head, he began to trot forward, his steps quickening as he approached nearer, and all at once King and the other man realised that he was bearing down on them menacingly.

Panic seized King.

"Hey, what the—?" He rounded on Jim. "You tell that pinto to beat it, will yuh?"

Jim's answer was to shout a cheerful



McGee whipped round, lifted his glance and uttered a cry.

word of encouragement to Starlight, and the horse broke into a gallop. King backed in alarm. The man with him snatched up a stick, and, as Starlight dashed up in a smother of dust, he jabbed at the animal tentatively.

Starlight rose on his hind legs, his fore-hoofs striking out at his attacker. The man dropped the stick, squealed and ran as fast as his feet could carry him to an out-house about fifty paces distant.

Starlight swerved towards Smoky King, who was crouching close to the bunkhouse wall. The foreman let out a terrified yell and dashed after the other fugitive with the pinto in full chase.

Both men plunged into the out-house and slammed the door behind them. Coming up a moment later, Starlight hammered against it with his iron-shod hoofs two or three times, each impact striking chill terror into the men within. Then he wheeled and galloped back to where Jim awaited him.

Jim turned his back towards the animal and held his bound hands against the horse's muzzle. Starlight's strong teeth fastened on the cords and tore at the knots, and a few seconds later the puncher was free.

He leapt into the saddle and with a pressure of the knees sent Starlight past the ranch-house at top speed, setting his course towards the north to pick up the Carson trail somewhere in the Sierras. He was almost clear of the Rogers outfit, when Smoky King and his companion plucked up sufficient courage to emerge from shelter.

King voiced a bellow of chagrin as he saw Jim riding over the plain, and, plucking out his six-gun, he blazed at the young puncher's flying figure. But his aim was bad and the shots went wide, and, a belt of chaparral swallowing the fugitive, the foreman saw him no more.

King returned his revolvers to the holster on his hip, and then, leaving the man whom he had pressed into his service, he made his way to a barn. From behind some bales of hay there he dragged forth a basket in which three or four carrier pigeons were crooning.

The foreman brought out one of the birds and attached to its leg a message he had written just before his attempt to make Jim Logan a prisoner. Then he released the feathered courier, and watched it circle above the ranch buildings for a moment ere finally winging its way northward in the direction of the hills.

King had claimed that he had been acting in Cap Rogers' interests when he had tried to foil Jim's plan of elopement. But the missive attached to that bird might have made it clear that he was at loggerheads with Jim only because the puncher stood in the way of a certain scheme of his own.

The Hold-Up.

THREE unsavoury-looking men standing outside a lone cabin in the hills were attracted by the appearance of a bird fluttering above their heads, a bird that suddenly swooped down into a kind of coop some distance from the shack.

One of the men, Top-Hand Norton by name, made his way to the wire netting of the coop, and, passing inside, secured the carrier pigeon that had just dropped out of the sky. He returned presently to join the other two men, reading the message that he had taken from the bird.

"It's from the boss," he stated.

"Smoky?" put in one of the others, July 4th, 1931.

a burly ruffian known as Lew Larson. "What's he say?"

"Listen," Top-Hand Norton rejoined. "There's a girl travellin' by the Carson City stage. I want her taken off the coach and brung up to the hide-out. Hold 'er there till I show up— That's what it says."

The third man spoke. He answered to the name of Slim McGee, a name that might have interested the sheriffs of certain sections not very far remote.

"Supposin' there's two gals, or three gals, on the coach," he growled. "How're we ter know which one ter grab?"

"Smoky gives a full description of her here," explained Norton. "I didn't bother to repeat it, but we'll memorise it on the way down to the Carson trail. Blue eyes, pink-an'-white complexion, slight build, ginger hair— Ginger hair! Say, that oughta be enough. C'mon, let's hit the saddle an' get goin'." That stage should be among the hills right now accordin' to schedule."

They dived towards a small corral at the side of the cabin, and a minute or two later they were riding down through a narrow valley that extended in a southerly direction. Clear of this, they continued to push on as hard as their broncs would carry them, and about thirty minutes after leaving the shack they sighted the Carson road.

"Look," said McGee, pointing over the tops of some trees, and, as they followed the direction indicated, the other two men observed the coach.

The crooks were sliding down the slope of a steep embankment overlooking the road, and, amid a shower of dirt and stones, they reached the trail even as the stage rocked past. The rogues swerved to give chase, drawing their guns as they did so, and in less than sixty seconds they were level with the coach's team.

Larson covered the driver and his mate, while McGee and Norton snatched at the reins and brought the six prancing ponies to a standstill.

"Better reach for the air," Larson warned the two men on the driving seat of the vehicle, and he stressed the words with a gesture of his six-shooter.

They raised their hands, and McGee moved back to the door of the equipage. As he was approaching, it was flung open from the inside, and Ginger presented herself.

"Take it easy, ma'am," said McGee, expecting her to throw a faint or go into hysterics. "we ain't meanin' no harm, but you gotta come with us."

Ginger seemed perfectly at her ease, but looked puzzled as she glanced around and saw no sign of her brone-busting Romeo.

"Where's Jim?" she inquired.

McGee gaped at her for a moment, and then switched his narrow eyes towards the faces of his companions.

"Aw—Jim," he murmured. "Oh, yeah—yeah—he'll be up at the cabin pretty soon. C'mon now, we gotta beat it, ma'am."

"Sure, I'm ready," Ginger declared cheerfully and once again McGee exchanged glances with Larson and Norton. All three ruffians were plainly bewildered.

McGee spurred nearer and took Ginger on his saddle, but as he was about to ride away she checked him.

"I haven't got my ease," she exclaimed. "It's in the coach."

McGee thought it best to humour her. He was glad she was taking things so quietly. So, locating the travelling-bag, he handed it to Norton.

Larson was still covering the two men on the driving-seat of the coach, and McGee called to him.

"All set, Lew," he said. "Send 'em on their way."

Larson flourished his revolver.

"Get goin'," he ordered the coach-driver, "an' keep goin'."

The reins were picked up. The stage lumbered on its way. With his curiously willing captive, McGee put his horse at the slope of the embankment, Norton and Larson bringing up the rear.

The laborious journey back through the cabin took them the best part of an hour, for it was uphill work. But, the hide-out reached at last, Larson dismounted and helped Ginger to the ground.

"What's this place?" Ginger asked. "Oh, it's where you're gonna hang out for a little while," said Larson.

"Till Jim arrives, I suppose," Ginger mused. "When do you expect him?"

Larson fingered his chin.

"To-morrow sometime, I guess," he informed her. "I don't rightly know."

"To-morrow!" Ginger echoed. "Then something must have cropped up to delay him. Never mind! I'll make myself at home in the meantime."

As she went into the cabin the three men looked at one another in amazement.

"What do you make o' her?" McGee demanded. "Who's this feller 'Jim' she's allus talkin' about?"

Top-Hand Norton suggested an explanation.

"I reckon Smoky ain't been usin' his right name," he declared. "This gal knows him as Jim—see? An' we had things all wrong from the start. It wasn't a kidnappin' job. She knowed she was a-comin' here."

"I guess you're right, Top-Hand," said McGee.

On the Trail.

STRIKING through the hills via every short cut that he knew, Jim Logan picked up the Carson road and raced along it at full gallop, knowing that his adventure with Smoky King at the ranch had delayed him considerably in his project of taking Ginger off the stage.

Conceive Jim's astonishment when, keyed up with the hope of overtaking the coach somewhere within the next fifteen or twenty miles, he suddenly saw it swinging round a bend towards him.

He signalled the driver to halt, and the cumbersome vehicle pulled up alongside him.

"What's the big idea?" Jim demanded. "Aren't you supposed to be headed for Carson?"

"We were," blurted the driver, "but we're a-headin' right back for Fresno as fast as we can."

Jim glanced inside the coach, expecting to discover Ginger there. As he realised that the interior was vacant, his jaw dropped.

"Wasn't there a girl travelling with you?" he asked.

"There was," the man with the reins answered, "an' that's why we're doublin' back to Fresno. About five miles north of here we was stopped by three ornery-lookin' hombres that took her off the coach and ordered me to drive on. I did drive on for a spell, but turned around mighty soon. That girl was Ginger Rogers, old Cap Rogers' daughter, and I'm gonna locate him and put him wise."

There was an expression of anxiety on Jim's face as he fired another question at the driver.

"Which way did they go?"

"North-east from the Belmont Pass," was the rejoinder. "That's all I can

tell you. But, say, I heard the Rogers girl mention somebody by the name of Jim—"

The young 'puncher did not wait to hear more. With a pressure of the knees he sent Starlight forward again, and the pinto casted itself into that long, loping stride of his which could cover ground so rapidly.

He ate up the miles as the road-runner eats up the rattlesnake, and not long afterwards Jim found himself at the point where the coach had been held up by Ginger's captors. He made out the tracks leading up the embankment and followed them. But some distance farther on the ground yielded no signs which would have enabled him to trail the men into whose hands the girl had fallen, and he was compelled to ride at random, on the off-chance of locating them.

Night overtook him in his vain search, but still he persevered, and not until the small hours of the morning did he abandon the quest temporarily and snatch a brief sleep. When he awoke the sun was in the sky, and the crisp clearness of early day had thrown the colourful sierras and the varied greens of trees, mesquite, and brushwood into vivid relief.

Jim saddled and mounted Starlight, who had been grazing hard by, and soon he was pushing through the hills again, his eyes on the qui-vive for Ginger and her kidnapers. Thus he continued riding for another hour or so, when all at once the drumming of hoofs caught his attention.

The sound came from behind him, and, with a caution that was almost instinctive, Jim switched the rein and drew Starlight behind the cover of a thicket. From that vantage-point the young 'puncher discerned a lone horseman galloping from the south, and as he drew nearer he recognised Smoky King.

King was following a course that must

bring him within a few yards of the thicket, and, to safeguard himself against the possibility of being discovered, Jim forced Starlight to lie down.

Jim had no qualms about meeting Smoky King. In fact, he fully intended to confront him in due course and square accounts. But at the moment it suited his purpose better to let the foreman go by unhindered. For, seeing him here among the hills, Jim had a pretty shrewd idea that he probably knew something of Ginger's whereabouts, and as probably had some connection with the men who had stopped the stage.

The foreman galloped by without observing Jim, and when the foreman was about a couple of hundred yards away the young cowboy brought Starlight to his feet with a sharp command and vaulted into the saddle.

Ho began to trail King.

In the Pass.

FROM the facts that he gleaned first from the driver of the stage-coach and then from the 'puncher who had been so innocently concerned with Smoky King in the attempt to hold Jim Logan a prisoner at the ranch, old Cap Rogers put his own conception on the affair.

He believed Jim Logan was responsible for Ginger's disappearance, and the chance discovery of the basket of carrier pigeons in the barn gave him the impression that Jim had used them as a means of communicating with those three rogues who had waylaid the coach.

The old man's first move was to send for the sheriff, who arrived with three or four of his deputies. Then, in the presence of posse and ranch hands, he scribbled a note and attached it to one of the pigeons, the entire party spurring forward in the direction that the bird took.

They could not hope to trail the bird

to its destination, but they at least gained an idea of the quarter in which that destination lay.

The bird vanished amid the sierras and was lost to view. Some time later it dropped into the coop beside the hide-out of Smoky King's associates, and was seen by Larson.

Larson found the note that was attached to the feathered messenger, and, after reading it, he made his way back to the cabin in haste.

"Listen to this, boys," he jerked to his companions. "A message from old Cap Rogers—addressed to a guy called Jim Logan. The old man says he'll never consent to his daughter's marriage with this Logan, an' he's gonna make hash outa him if he can come up with him. What do you make of it?"

Consternation was written on the faces of Norton and McGee. Then the latter voiced an opinion.

"I'll tell yuh what I think," he rasped. "That red-head gal ain't acted normal ever since we took her off the coach, an' I reckon I know why. We've got the wrong dame!"

"The wrong dame!" ejaculated Larson.

"That's what I figure," McGee continued; but before he could say more there was the faint sound of hooi-beats, and, striding to the window, the three ruffians saw Smoky King riding through a narrow valley that formed the only pass to the hide-out.

They walked out of the cabin and confronted King as he cantered up to the dwelling and dismounted.

"Well," said the foreman, "did you get the girl?"

McGee answered him sheepishly.

"We got a girl," he rejoined. "Ginger-headed, just like you wrote. But I guess she ain't the right one, for all that. Look at this message we just had from Cap Rogers, the boss o' the outfit you've bin workin' for."



"This bronc belongs to that ornery cow-hand, Logan," said Cap Rogers.

He handed the note to King, who read it and grinned.

"You've got the right girl, sure enough," he stated. "Where is she?"

"In the back room," McGee told him. "But wait a minute, Smoky. This Rogers seems to have got the dope on them carrier pigeons. It seems to me that when he let loose the bird that brought his message he'd most likely start out after it."

King laughed in a scoffing tone.

"Tell me another story," he sneered. "How's any man gonna follow a carrier pigeon through these hills, unless his bronc's got a pair o' wings?"

"Well, I don't like the looks of it," McGee protested insistently.

"All right," King retorted. "You three get down to the pass and keep on the watch, while I have a word with Miss Ginger."

McGee, Larson, and Norton moved away, and King strolled on into the cabin. He crossed the living-room, and rapped on the door of an apartment that was connected with it.

Ginger's voice answered the summons. "Come in," she called, and, pushing open the door, Smoky King stepped over the threshold.

Ginger was brushing her hair before a mirror, but she turned with an expectant smile as the newcomer entered the room. The smile faded from her pretty face as she recognised King.

"You!" she stammered. "Why, I—

"You was expectin' Jim Logan, huh?" drawled the foreman.

A look of anxiety appeared in Ginger's blue eyes.

"Where is Jim?" she demanded.

"Snoopin' around somewhere, I guess," King observed, "but not so close that he should bother me any. Listen, Ginger, you ain't elopin' with that cow-hand. You're ridin' with me—see?"

He had drawn nearer to her while he had been speaking, and now he tried to take her hands. But she retreated quickly.

"Keep away from me!" she panted.

"Now don't get het up!" he rapped out. "You and me are takin' the same trail, and maybe we'll be married, so's I can fall heir to your old man's rancho. And if that proposition don't appeal to you—well, then, I reckon it'll cost your dad a whole lotta dough for ransom. C'mon now, be sensible, girlie, and let's get going. For I aim to take you some place else where we'll be safe from visitors."

Ginger was still holding the brush with which she had been smoothing out her hair. With a sudden movement she flung it at King's head, and then darted towards the doorway.

King ducked, and the hairbrush went flying into the living-room. Ginger tried to follow it, but with a jump King overtook her and seized her. There was a frenzied scuffle, the girl scratching and kicking violently, so that King soon bore the marks of conflict.

Ginger managed to break away from him, and almost escaped through the living-room. Smoky King caught her again as she was darting across the threshold, however, and with a wrench he dragged her back.

Fight.

RIDING up to the mouth of the pass which Smoky King had entered before him, Jim Logan dismounted in the shadow of some trees and looked forward to descry the hide-out of the rascally foreman's associates.

Jim's first concern was to dispose of Starlight, and, taking the pony's rein, he led him into a mass of dense thickets, July 4th, 1931.

where he was effectively hidden from view.

He then made his way back to the trees, and as he glanced in the direction of the cabin again he caught sight of Lew Larson, Slim McGee, and Top-Hand Norton striding towards the pass.

They were talking animatedly, and kept turning their heads and looking over their shoulders at the dwelling whence they had emerged a minute or two before.

They had not discerned Jim, but he realised that unless they changed their course they must approach the very spot where he was standing. He looked around him, and a forked tree near by provided him with an inspiration. Clambering up its divided trunk, he settled himself in the fork, and snapped off a thick piece of dead branch that would serve as a formidable weapon in his hands.

King's three accomplices entered the pass, and came to a halt immediately beneath Jim's hiding-place.

"You know," said McGee, "I don't like the way things are shapin'. If that gal's father finds his way here with a posse we're liable to be in a jam. We better keep a pretty strict look-out."

They turned their faces southward, and Jim decided that the moment was opportune. He singled out the centre man, who happened to be Larson, and with stunning force brought his cudgel crashing down on the rogue's head.

Larson sagged with a hollow groan. McGee whipped round, lifted his glance, and uttered a cry, a cry that was cut short as Jim struck again, felling him as effectively as he had stretched Larson.

Top-Hand Norton had taken the alarm, and, his hand diving towards his hip, he wheeled with an oath. Jim dropped on him from the fork of the tree, and bore him to the ground with the impact.

There was a fierce struggle, during which Norton made desperate efforts to drag his six-shooter from its holster. But ere he could succeed Jim plied the cudgel once more, and scattered the rogue's wits with the shock of the blow.

He climbed to his feet in time to see McGee attempting to rise. Managing to straighten up, the crook stumbled towards him, but Jim tapped him playfully over the skull and with a stupid expression on his unshaven countenance, McGee sagged limply.

Starlight had trotted out of the thickets where his master had concealed him, and from the peg on the saddle Jim took his lariat and bound the three senseless ruffians securely. Then he reached for his pinto's rein and turned the intelligent creature so that he was facing southward.

"Take the road to the ranch, old-timer!" he said. "And bring Ginger's dad right here. Go on, beat it!"

Starlight tossed his head and bounded forward into a gallop, his hoofs drumming over the mesquite grass. Jim watched him till he had disappeared, and then began to advance towards the cabin beyond the pass.

As he set foot on the veranda he heard the commotion that was going on inside, and, striding into the living-room, he discerned King and Ginger struggling in the apartment beyond. With a shout he sprang through to the bed-room, caught the foreman by the shoulder, swung him around and drove the bunched knuckles of his right into the kidnapper's mouth.

King staggered back, his lips cut and bleeding. A snarl escaped him, and he reached for his forty-five, but as he pulled the weapon clear of its holster Jim pounced on him and gripped his wrist.

He twisted the rogue's arm, and King

let the weapon fall with a clatter. But next moment he slammed his left to the puncher's jaw and knocked him halfway across the room.

Jim recovered himself, and made a flying rush. The foreman whipped up a chair and hurled it with all his strength, but the young cowboy ducked, and it swept over his head and crashed into the wall.

The two men closed, and, wrestling grimly, they lurched towards the doorway. Then Jim pulled his left free and drew blood from King's nose with a stinging punch.

King reeled into the living-room, and Jim followed him up to connect with a right swing that lifted the foreman off his feet and flung him headlong against a stove in the corner. The stove-pipe came down with an ugly clangour, but King collected his wits and leapt at Jim with an angry bellow.

He broke through the young cowboy's guard and knocked him across the table, then flung himself upon him and fastened his hands on Jim's throat. His fingers clenched in a vice-like grasp, and Jim felt the blood surging to his head, while a red mist seemed to dance before his eyes. But he mustered all his strength with a tremendous effort of will, and, breaking the foreman's hold, threw him aside.

King leapt at him again, and they grappled. A wild stagger took the pair of them out on to the veranda, where they tripped and came sprawling. They were up in a second, and hit out at each other savagely, their fists thudding home against face and body.

Ginger had followed them to the door of the cabin. She watched with bated breath, and followed every blow, her heart beating high when she saw Jim score, and sinking when she saw him take punishment.

King was fighting like a madman, and for a spell the advantage seemed to rest with him. But Jim was standing on the defensive against a whirlwind onslaught, and he was only biding his time ere turning the aggressor.

He saw his chance when King left himself wide open, and before the ruffian could lift his guard the young cowboy ripped his fist to the jaw. The foreman fell, and Jim flung himself upon him. But King was by no means at the end of his tether, for, with a desperate effort he heaved the puncher aside, and scrambled to his feet.

Jim was struggling up when the scoundrel kicked at him savagely.

Starlight.

GALLOPING from the pass that led to Smoky King's lair, Starlight picked up the Carson road and swerved southward, his hoofs drumming on the sun-cracked surface of the trail.

He covered ground at top speed, and less than twenty minutes later his quick ears warned him of the approach of a body of horsemen. As he swung round a bend he saw them cantering towards him—Cap Rogers, the sheriff and a posse.

Starlight came to a standstill and waited for them to ride nearer. They reached the spot where he had halted, and looked at him curiously.

"This bronc belongs to that ornery cow-hand, Logan," said Cap Rogers. "So I reckon Logan can't be far away. Sheriff, I want that hombre put in gaol. Understand?"

The sheriff made no answer. He was watching Starlight, who had begun to act in a manner that compelled attention, wheeling first of all and dashing off in the direction whence he had come, then returning as no one followed him, and tossing his fine head in a fashion that suggested impatience.

"What's wrong with that pony?" the sheriff demanded. "He seems like he's got something on his mind."

Starlight repeated the procedure of galloping to a little distance, and then returning, and old Cap Rogers frowned.

"You'd almost think he was tryin' to tell us to chase him up," he murmured.

"By golly, you're right, Cap!" the sheriff declared. "That's just what he is doin'. He wants us to trail him. There's somethin' important he wants us to see. Leastways, that's how I figure things."

Rogers glanced at him quickly.

"Sheriff," he said, "I'm inclined to think your figurin' is correct. An' if it is, then that horse is the smartest critter I ever saw—smarter'n any circus pony, an' a lot less dumb than a good many human bein's."

"Come on," rejoined the sheriff crisply, as Starlight trotted off again, and this time, as the whole party spurred after him, he kept going at a rapid pace along the trail.

Several miles from the point where he had encountered the Cap's party Starlight left the Carson road and entered the hills. Here his followers found it difficult to keep him in sight, and he paused every now and then to let them come up with him.

The pass was reached at last, and Cap Rogers and his companions were riding into it when the sheriff observed something ahead. It appeared to be a writhing bundle, and on closer approach was made out as the figures of Larson, Norton and McGee—that trio of rascality which Jim Logan had roped with his lariat some time before.

The crooks had recovered consciousness, and were struggling to escape from the coils of the lasso. With one or two of the knots already slackened, they managed to gain their liberty when the approaching horsemen were still some little distance away.

McGee was the first to see the newcomers, and he uttered a shout of alarm as he recognised the man riding at Cap Rogers' side.

"The sheriff!" he yelled, and, reaching for his hip, he dived for the shelter of the scrub.

Larson and Norton followed his example, taking cover and plucking out their six-guns to open fire on Rogers and the representatives of the law.

There was an ugly racket as three shots smashed out in quick succession. None of them took effect, though one deputy's stetson was whipped from his head and another man's cheek was grazed.

The posse outnumbered the crooks, but they were in an exposed position, and McGee, Larson, and Norton had only to steady their aim to pick them off with comparative ease and very little risk to themselves.

The sheriff bellowed a command, and all sprang from the saddle, plunging into the same mass of thickets in which Jim Logan had concealed Starlight just before he had tackled Smoky King's associates single-handed. From this vantage-point the posse returned the crooks' fire, and the valley echoed to the crash of the gun-play.

Cap Rogers was posted near the sheriff, and presently he spoke to the latter.

"These thickets extend to the back of that patch of scrub where those guys are skulkin'," he stated. "Suppose two or three of us keep givin' 'em lead from here while the rest work around and take 'em in flank and rear?"

"Good idea, Cap," the sheriff agreed.

"You ain't forgot your military tactics, huh?"

Thus two or three of the posse kept King's satellites occupied while the remainder of the party stole through the brush, and the crooks were blazing at the spot where the sheriff and his companions had first taken to the thickets when suddenly a curt voice ordered them to cease fire.

They scrambled around and saw that four deputies were covering them, their fingers ready to draw trigger at the first sign of resistance.

"Drop them irons and reach for the air," said the one who had first spoken. "Go on, you heard me!"

The crooks hesitated, but realised that defiance was futile. Larson was the first to let his six-shooter fall to the ground. Norton followed suit, and then McGee did likewise.

The rest of the invaders of the outlaw lair emerged from the thickets, and manacles were snapped home on the prisoners' wrists, the sheriff eyeing them grimly the while.

"A nice bunch o' rough-necks," he mused in a tone of satisfaction. "Larson, Norton, an' McGee, huh? Wanted on more charges than I could count on my two hands. Well, you'll answer for 'em all—"

He did not finish the sentence, for at that moment his attention was diverted by the spectacle of two men fighting like tigers just beyond the pass. They were Jim Logan and Smoky King.

Jim had caught King's ankle and brought him low in the very instant that the latter had attempted to kick him, and now he and the foreman were rolling over and over in the dust.

They had heard the sound of shooting, and Jim had guessed the meaning of it. So had King, and he was battling all the more savagely.

The two rose, and King aimed a tremendous blow at Jim. The cowboy flung up his arm and partially deflected it, but it caught him in the temple and staggered him, and the foreman wheeled with the intention of leaping into the saddle of his brone and making his getaway.

Jim sprang after him, and, dazed as he was, clutched him around the waist and flung him to the ground. By the time King rose, the puncher's head was clear, and the ruffianly foreman straightened up only to receive a straight left flush in the face.

King reeled backward, but with an infuriated snarl he gathered himself for a fresh onslaught. He rushed at Jim madly.

The rush was stopped by a blow that Jim planted in the scoundrel's eyes. Brought up with a jerk, King lifted his hands to his head, and was instantly doubled by a hard right to the body.

Jim proceeded to rain punches on him from all angles, till the foreman was in a sorry plight. Meanwhile Cap Rogers and his party came up, but for the time being they made no attempt to interfere, and watched Jim Logan's exhibition of the noble art with admiration.

King was pitched into a clump of brush by a heavy jolt, but he struggled up again for more punishment. He received it without stint, and, badly battered, collapsed at last under a pile-driving right.

He lay on his back and counted imaginary stars. The earth underneath him seemed to spin and reel crazily. His body from the waist upward seemed to be composed of innumerable aches and pains.

"And if you ain't satisfied," observed Jim, standing over him with clenched hands, "I've still got a wallop or two left."

Smoky King bestirred himself, but not with any idea of prolonging the fight. He gained a sitting posture with an effort and raised one arm in order to describe a feeble gesture of surrender.

"I know—when I'm licked—Logan," he managed to say.

Cap Rogers stepped towards Jim and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Now the entertainment's finished, young feller," he stated, "maybe you'll explain."

(Continued on page 28.)

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"THE CRIMINAL CODE."

(Continued from page 18.)

The Fight in the Dungeons.

IT was some hours before Brady eventually left his office to go and see Mary. He was worried. He hated himself for what he had done, because he appreciated Graham's point of view.

The trouble was that they were both working under two different types of law—Brady from the law of the State, and Graham from the law of the criminal. Graham, of course, was wrong. That was understood. At the same time, Brady saw there was no chance of making any change in the present position.

When he ultimately went into Mary's room, he found her unpacking her things. Tough and hard-bitten though he was, there was just one thing in his life about which he was really human, and that was the daughter who had filled his life since his wife had died ten years back.

She looked up as he entered and ran to him.

"Is everything all right?" she asked anxiously. "No more trouble?"

He shook his head and forced a smile. "No; no more trouble," he replied.

"I don't believe you," she said. "You've got such a worried look on your face." She paused, thinking. "By the way, who was that awfully nice young man who called for me at the station to-day? I rather liked him."

Brady winced. The last thing he wanted to think about at the moment was Graham.

"Just one of the trusties," he replied offhandedly. "He's a nice lad, but I'm afraid I have had to get rid of him. You won't be seeing him any more."

He was startled by the sudden change that came over her face. Her smile vanished, and was replaced by black disappointment and unhappiness. To his amazement, he distinctly detected the quiver of her lips.

"What's the matter?" he said sharply. "I—I—oh, I want to see him again!" she cried. "I know he is a convict, but he's the only real man I have ever met!"

Brady snorted angrily. "Don't be a fool!" he said. "You've never seen him in your life before to-day. This is nonsense!"

He stopped abruptly at the look which had appeared in her eyes, and drew his breath in sharply.

"Gosh!" he muttered.

For the first time in his life, he found himself face to face with a phenomenon which could be guided by neither argument nor reason. By some strange twist of fate his daughter, Mary Brady, had fallen in love at first sight with a San Quentin convict, Robert Graham!

"Gosh!" he repeated again. "I reckon I am too tough and unthinking to know much about such things, but do you really feel the way you look?"

She nodded. No words were necessary.

For two whole days after that he wandered about in a brown study, unable to think what to do. For Mary's sake there was hardly anything he would stop at, yet he knew that if he capitulated and had Graham released from solitary confinement his action might be taken by the convicts as a sign of weakness, and they would revolt in a determined effort to escape.

Suddenly he hit upon a plan. He

July 4th, 1931.

gave Gleason instructions to spread throughout the prison the story of Graham's captivity—of how a man due for freedom was lying in the dungeons because he refused to give the name of a murderer.

The news had swift effect. Galloway, working in the prison kitchen the following morning, was told the story by a fellow crook. As he listened his black, glowing eyes glinted.

"So that's it, is it?" he said. "Well, I reckon it's up to me to do something about it. Graham's not going to take the rap for anything I've done."

"What's on your mind?" asked his companion.

Galloway's face set in an expression of hatred.

"I'll tell you. There was a time when a certain man in this prison got me sent to the dungeons for something I didn't do, and I swore I would level up. I've got to go under over that Runch business anyway, so I can attend to the other matter at the same time. Give me a knife!"

He took the broad-bladed carver that was held out to him, and hid it in his clothing. Then he deliberately picked up a bucket of water and flung it at the nearest guard.

The cookhouse was in an uproar. Other guards rushed in to find out what the trouble was about, and quickly ranged themselves on each side of Galloway.

"What's the big idea?" asked one of them.

"Nothing," replied Galloway. "I just felt that way."

The guards looked at each other significantly and nodded. With a concerted action, they seized Galloway and pinioned his arms.

"You're for the dungeons, Galloway," one of them said.

"It suits me," Galloway replied. "Get busy!"

They dragged him off, and took him down into a dark chamber below the main part of the prison. On each side of this chamber were steel doors, behind which offenders against prison law suffered the agonies of solitary confinement.

One of the guards unlocked a door, while the other jammed a revolver into the small of Galloway's back.

"Get inside, Galloway!" said the man with the gun.

Galloway calmly took a step forward, then twisted round. His hands, moving with the speed of lightning, closed over the gun and wrenched it from the guard's grasp. The two guards lurched themselves forward, and simultaneously Galloway pressed the trigger.

The bullet went wide, but the crash of the explosion stopped the attack. The two guards lunged back, and Galloway surveyed them with a sardonic smile.

"Get out of here!" he said. "I will surrender only to Brady and Gleason."

The two guards did not stop to argue. They cleared out to the end of the dungeons, and while one hurried to Brady's office, the other remained on guard to ensure that Galloway did not escape.

A minute later Brady and Gleason arrived, followed by two men with a tear-gas pistol and a tommy-gun.

Brady held the others back. He was not able to see Galloway for the moment.

"Come out of there, Galloway!" he shouted. "You've got no chance!"

Galloway's voice came from the open doorway of the cell that had been intended to receive him.

"I'll come out when I feel like it, Brady," he replied. "Meanwhile, listen to what I have to say. It was me that

killed Runch. I did it because he was a low-down, squealing rat. Our code demands that a man who squeals shall die, and maybe you won't understand it, Brady, but the same code also demands that none of us shall allow somebody else to take the blame for what we do. So you can send Gleason in here and get him to release young Graham. When you have done that I'll talk about surrender."

Brady hesitated the merest fraction of a second.

"You've got a gun, Galloway," he called back. "Tirow it out!"

"I will throw it out when Graham's free."

Brady said no more. He made a sign to Gleason, and Gleason entered the dungeons. There was the sound of a key rasping in a lock, and of a steel door being flung open. The moment Graham had appeared from the interior of the cell there was a clatter as Galloway's gun hit a wall and fell on the ground.

"Now, Gleason," came Galloway's voice, "I'm ready for you."

He stepped out of the cell in full view of the man with the tommy-gun and looked at its barrel with faint amusement.

"Quite a little party, Brady," he said sardonically. "You'll need the irons on me!"

Gleason eyed the crook grimly as he approached. He reached out to snap handcuffs over Galloway's wrists, when suddenly he felt himself grasped in a powerful grip and spun round.

The guard with the tommy-gun pressed his finger on the trigger, but Brady's voice checked him.

"Look out," he shouted, "or you will hit Gleason!"

He turned to Graham quickly.

"Get out of this," he said sharply. "Get up to my office and wait for me. I am allowing that parole warrant to stand, and there is a lot I want to talk to you about before you leave here. It's going to have a lot of influence on what you do in your future life."

Graham looked at Galloway uncertainly, but did not move.

"Go on, Graham," said Galloway. "Do as he says, I'm all right. Good luck!"

"Good luck!" replied Graham, and slowly made his way up the steps to the main part of the prison above.

As soon as he had gone, Brady turned to Galloway sternly.

"Now see here, Galloway," he said. "I don't want you to get hurt. You've played the game over Graham, and I'll see to it that you don't go to the electric chair for Runch. Stop making a fool of yourself and surrender."

"And spend the rest of my life in this joint?" scoffed Galloway unrepentantly. "Not on your life, Brady! I've got a knife at Gleason's back, and even at this moment he's wishing he'd been a better man. He's for it, and nothing you can do is going to save him!"

Even Brady turned sick just then. He sprang forward, but he was too late. Gleason's face suddenly went grey, and he started slipping to the floor.

"Let him have it!" Brady roared.

The tommy-gun started to chatter. Galloway threw up his hands with a cry.

Brady watched him fall, his eyes hard and merciless.

"It was coming to him," he said briefly.

He surveyed the two bodies before him for a minute, then calmly turned away, and walked with slow steps in the direction of his office.

(By permission of United Artists Corporation, featuring Walter Huston, Phillips Holmes, and Constance Cummings.)

"TOM SAWYER."

(Continued from page 16.)

The Boys Vanish.

TOM SAWYER was not his usual self; fate had marked his name with a fatal star. Muff Potter's knife had been found beside the body—Injun Joe had seen to that—and the old man had been arrested. Wherever Tom went he heard the murder discussed, and it was the general opinion that Potter would hang. Huckleberry was scared stiff, Becky ignored the two boys, Aunt Polly was in a bad temper, and everything was all wrong.

In a depressed mood Tom, two days after the murder, met Joe Harper, a youngster whom Huckleberry and Tom occasionally permitted to join in their adventures. Joe was unhappy because his mother would make him wear shoes and fine clothes. Joe wanted to dress like Tom and Huck.

The three strolled towards the river, and then Tom had his bright idea. Close to the bank a raft was moored, and there and then a counsel of war was held. They would be pirates, and run away from all their miseries. That night they captured the raft, their "galloon," and under a sail of old bits of sacking, moved down stream. Next morning found them camped on Jackson Island, four miles down stream.

For two days they played pirates, and it was great fun; then Joe began to grieve about his mother, and Tom began to think of his Aunt Polly, whilst Huck kept on talking about evil spirits, and how he dreamed Muff Potter and Dr. Robinson were watching them.

On the night of the third day of their adventure Tom discarded most of his clothes and sneaked down to the edge of the island. He was a strong swimmer, and knew how to use the power of the stream. An hour later he was on the opposite bank and hurrying through the night to the town.

On arriving home he wrote a note to his aunt, but this he pushed into the pocket of an old coat when he overheard two men talking outside his bed-room window—Sid was blissfully sleeping. Tom learnt that they were thought to be dead, and that next day a funeral service was to be held. Tom fled back to Jackson Island with all speed.

What a surprise the congregation got the next day! The minister had just finished his sermon on the goodness of the deceased boys, how the town had suffered a heavy loss in their death, what models of virtue they had been, and everyone had wept openly, including Aunt Polly and Becky, when three heads popped up in the empty gallery of the church—Tom, Huck, and Joe, prepared to be welcomed back from the dead.

Aunt Polly's tears vanished, and that night three lads were unable to sit down, but Tom was happier because Becky had forgiven him. If only he could plan some solution of the Muff Potter trial, which was duo to take place on the morrow! The murder, now the boys had returned, was the chief item of interest. Muff Potter would hang, was the certain verdict.

Tom went to the trial, and his eyes nearly darted out of his head when he saw Injun Joe there.

Tom thought of his vow; but as the evidence piled up against Muff his conscience urged him to speak, and at last he stepped forward.

"Huck and he knows something," he spluttered. "That night we was in the churchyard. We went there to cure our warts. Huck reckoned a dead cat in a graveyard near a bad man's grave was a sure cure. We hid in the trees near Hoss Williams' grave, and we saw Muff Potter and Dr. Robinson quarrelling, but it was Injun Joe what stabbed the doctor."

The truth of this statement was confirmed by Injun Joe making his escape by a wild dive through a glass window.

Tom and Huck at once became heroes, whilst Muff Potter was released. Becky kissed Tom, but the boy was not quite happy. Would Injun Joe try and kill Huck and himself?

The Pirates' Treasure.

IT was a great day, a week later, for the school—a picnic to the strange caves in the nearby hills.

Every child was given a candle, and told to keep close to the teacher. It was a most thrilling adventure, and Tom was in his element because his companion was Becky.

Hand in hand they wandered through the gloomy passages, and paid little attention to the stalactites and stalagmites that glimmered in the flickering lights of the candle. They wandered away from the teacher and became lost.

They shouted, and there was no answer, and Tom tried to pretend he wasn't scared. They tried to trace their way back, but now there seemed a myriad of passages. When their candles were getting low Tom saw a light ahead, but some instinct made him whisper to Becky:

"Let's surprise them, Becky."

It was Tom who got the surprise. He saw not the teacher and his pupils but Injun Joe. The half-breed had dug a great hole in the floor of the cave, and was lifting forth a strange old casket. It was rotten with age, because the half-breed easily wrenched off the lid.

Hundreds of coins, which Injun rolled, picked up, and let trickle through his hand. His chuckles of fiendish gloating ended in a snarl, because Tom had given vent to his amazement with a gasp. Next moment the two children were fleeing through the caves with the sinister Injun Joe racing after them.

Becky soon became exhausted, and begged Tom to leave her, but the boy had a clever idea. He made her hide in a crevasse, and before running on made a great din by kicking loose stones so that Injun Joe might not see her. But as the rascal was intent on killing Tom, he had eyes for only the boyish figure ahead. It was difficult running with a candle, but there was no draught.

Gradually Injun Joe gained, and Tom almost thought he was beaten.

His light showed him a yawning crack in the passage, a terrible fissure that was hundreds of feet deep, and Tom could not hope to jump to the other side. He could not turn back, and already he could hear the laboured breath of his pursuer.

There was a ledge, and along this Tom crawled, hoping to work his way to

another passage, but it was almost an impossible task holding a candle. Almost he lost his balance, and only saved himself by dropping the candle.

With a moan of fear, he clutched the bare face of the rock. A glimmer, and then Injun Joe, carrying a storm lantern, appeared. How the fiend chuckled when he saw the boy! Placing the lantern on the ground, he began to crawl towards the boy, but his weight was more than Tom's, and suddenly part of the ledge gave way!

Never will Tom forget his scream of fear, that seemed to go right down into the bowels of the earth. It seemed minutes before a faint thud came to his ears.

Somehow Tom got back to safety, picked up Injun Joe's lantern, and hurried back to Becky.

"We can't stay here," he whispered. "Injun Joe's fallen down a great crack in the caves." His arm was round her. "Let's shout for help! Perhaps they'll hear us."

And his shout for help brought Huckleberry Finn. Huck used the caves as a dwelling-place, and he had seen Injun Joe and had been stalking him.

"I seed him and Dr. Robinson here one night," cried Huck. "They talked about some treasure, but I never paid much account, being too scared of the half-breed. Show us where you saw the old box, Tom."

Tom wanted to get out into the daylight, but he would not let Becky see how feared he was. They found the treasure, but it was much too heavy to lift, and instead they marked a trail on the walls so they could find it again. Then Huck led them back to the sunshine and an anxious teacher.

It turned out that the gold must have belonged to river pirates in early settlement days, and was worth a considerable amount.

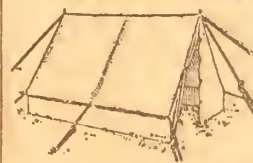
Again Tom and Huckleberry were heroes. There was a big reward, and it was divided amongst the three children. Huckleberry found himself wealthy—a dollar a day for keeps—but his only misfortune was that the town insisted that he mend his ways, and Widow Douglas undertook his adoption.

Thus all was bright again, and Aunt Polly even went so far as to let Tom go fishing with Huckleberry. The boys went, but they took Sid's rod when he wasn't looking, and almost caught a hiding.

(This is the story of the Paramount Film, which is based upon "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," by Mark Twain. The stars include Jackie Coogan as Tom, Junior Durkin as Huckleberry, and Mitzi Green as Becky.)

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July 4th, 1931.

"DESERT VENGEANCE."

(Continued from page 10.)

crossed the threshold a wounded follower of Winnipeg's, lying out there in the sun, raised himself with an effort on one elbow. His six-shooter spat fire, and Alabam fell with a groan into the dust and lay still.

A few minutes afterwards Jim dragged himself painfully out from the building. The uneasy silence was explained. Dead and dying men littered the ground all about the building, and in the distance the remnant of the attacking gangs were galloping into the desert.

Contrary to Jim's instructions, Anne was at her bed-room window now, her white face pressed against the panes. She saw Jim down below and rushed away to the stairs. But when she reached the swing doors he had disappeared.

She ran out across the sand, and there he was, staggering across to the church. She followed him fearfully; she saw him mount the steps and enter the little building. Calling his name, she, too, reached the steps, ran up them to the doorway, and looked into the dim interior.

The parson was lying at the foot of the altar, to which he had crawled, badly wounded by a stray bullet.

"Parson! Parson!" cried Jim brokenly, and went down on his knees beside the dying man.

Anne moved forward, sobbing, and then the little, white-haired minister opened his eyes and looked up at Jim, kneeling there, and at Anne, standing close behind him.

"My son," he murmured haltingly, "if thine heart is wise—my heart—shall rejoice evermore."

"Amen!" said Jim hoarsely.

And then, as the parson's head fell back, he looked up at Anne. His face was drawn with suffering, but there was a great light in his eyes.

"Anne," he whispered, "from now on we're going straight—together."

"Yes, Jim," she whispered back, and tenderly put both arms round his neck, while tears streamed down her face.

(By permission of Columbia Pictures and United Artists Corporation, Ltd., featuring Buck Jones and Barbara Bedford.)

"WILD WEST WHOOPEE."

(Continued from page 25.)

"Sure I'll explain, Cap," Jim answered. "This cayute got his three side-kicks there to take Ginger off the stage. I trailed him here and bust it on him."

Cap Rogers looked at him doubtfully. "What did King want to kidnap Ginger for?" he demanded. "I'll tell you that, dad."

It was a girl's voice, and, turning, the rancher saw his daughter, who had emerged from the cabin a few seconds before.

"King had me kidnapped because he wanted to marry me," Ginger said. "Failing that, he planned to hold me till you paid a heavy ransom for my release. And if it hadn't been for Jim—"

Her father did not wait for her to finish. "He had wheeled on Smoky King, who had been dragged to his feet by a couple of deputies, and his fiery temper threatened to break the bounds of his self-control as he glared at the rogue.

"An' I thought you were the best foreman south of the Yosemite!" he ground out. "You dirty, low-down, double-dealin' skunk!"

He drew back his hand for a blow, but the sheriff intervened, laying a restraining grasp on the rancher's wrist.

"I wouldn't bother to do that, Cap," he said. "I reckon this hombre is past sufferin', considerin' the hidin' he's taken from young Jim Logan."

The sheriff was right, for Smoky King could not stand, and hung limply on the arms of the deputies, his head sunk on his breast.

Cap Rogers let his hand fall to his side, and the sheriff spoke to the deputies.

"Take him away an' put him with the others," he ordered, and the ex-foreman was propelled towards the spot where Lew Larson, Top-Hand Norton, and Slim McGee were standing in forlorn attitudes.

The crooks were taken up on the saddles of their captors, and the posse was ready to set out on the return journey to Amarillo. Before joining his men, however, the sheriff addressed Rogers again.

"Oh, by the way, Cap," he drawled

casually, "I don't believe you know it, but this Jim Logan here is Dave Logan's boy. I told him when he came to Amarillo that I wouldn't let on, but I guess it's time somebody put you wise."

Old Rogers was staring at the sheriff. "You don't mean Dave Logan, of the Circle H, on the San Joaquin?" he exclaimed.

"The same," the sheriff told him. "This here is his son."

Cap Rogers turned to Jim and held out his hand.

"Say, your dad and I went to school together," he declared. "An' we've been friends ever since, though I ain't seen him in the last five years. Why didn't you tell me you were Dave's boy?"

"Oh, I thought I'd like to make good on my own account, like an ordinary cow hand," Jim said, with a grin. "You see, dad wants me to start managing his ranch for him, but I figured I'd get some wide experience first."

"Well, boy," said Cap Rogers, "I reckon I've called you some pretty hard names, but I want to take them back. And I want to tell you that I consider myself in your debt over Ginger. Now how about hittin' the trail back to the ranch?"

"Pretty soon I'll be hittin' the trail back to the San Joaquin country, Cap," he observed. "an' if you hadn't any objections I'd like for Ginger to go along with me—as Mrs. Jim Logan. Would you mind, Cap, if I tore up that ticket to Carson, City and bought her one that would take her nearer the Circle H?"

"Make it two," said old Rogers. "Ain't it a father's duty to give away the bride?"

He climbed into the saddle of his bronc and cantered after the posse. Jim and Ginger did not follow him at once, but took the opportunity to steal a kiss.

They had not been left entirely alone, however, for Starlight was in the background, and, moving forward, the pony insistently thrust his sleek muzzle between their faces.

"Starlight says 'time's up,'" Jim announced laughingly, "and what Starlight says goes."

He lifted Ginger into the saddle, climbed up behind her, and rode in the direction which the posse and Cap Rogers had already taken.

(By permission of the W. & F. Film Service, Ltd., starring Jack Perrin and Josephine Hill.)

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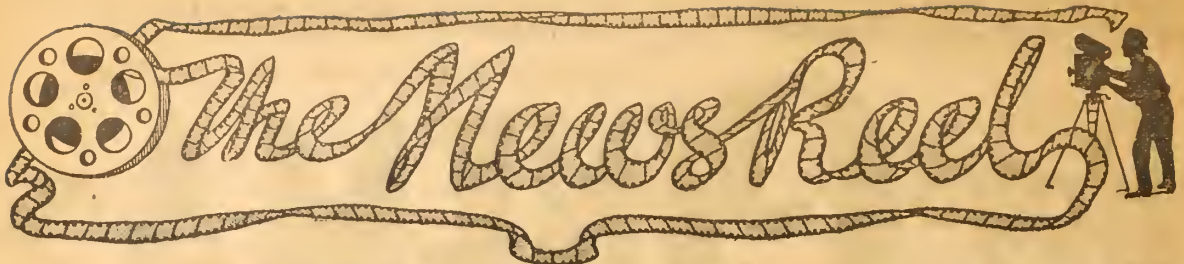
Boy's **CINEMA** 2^D

No. 604.

EVERY TUESDAY.

JULY 11th, 1931.





The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"The Iron Man."

Kid Mason, Lew Ayres; George Regan, Robert Armstrong; Rose, Jean Harlow; Paul H. Lewis, John Miljan; Jeff, Eddie Dillon; McNeil, Mike Donlon; Rattler O'Keefe, Morrie Cohen; Gladys de Vere, Mildred van Dorn; Riley, Ned Sparks; Mandell, Sam Blum.

"Shipmates."

The Pacific battle fleet of the United States navy "rehearsed" a solid year for one thrilling scene in "Shipmates," Robert Montgomery's first starring picture.

Culminating a year's practice and preparation, the fleet steamed out to sea for the annual force-firing exercises in which the entire battle resources of the squadron were brought into play for ten roaring minutes. With the dreadnaughts and their turret batteries of 16-inch guns were the destroyers with intermediate batteries and torpedo tubes, the bombing planes from floating carriers and the fighting seaplanes, launched by catapult from the big ships' decks.

In this great tactical feat some 40,000 men took part, and countless tons of ammunition was used in the mighty panorama of destruction staged every year to determine the fitness of Uncle Sam's watch-dogs.

Mounted at various vantage points, shielded from the terrific gun blasts by layers of mattresses, were the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer cameras grinding on the spectacle, tripods sagging at every concussion, the men wiping blind sweat from their eyes as they followed the fleet manoeuvres in the lenses. Down below on a searchlight platform, a sound man plugged more cotton in his ears and wrapped another blanket around a microphone to spare its sensitive diaphragm from the splitting vibrations.

The cast of this fine sea drama is as follows: Jonesy, Robert Montgomery; Scotty: Ernest Torrence; Kit, Dorothy Jordan; Admiral Corbin, Hobart Bosworth; Bilge, Cliff Edwards; Mike, Gaxin Gordon; Mary Lou, Joan Marsh; What-It, Edward Nugent; Captain Beatty, George Irving; Ammie, Hedda Hopper; Admiral Schmyler, William Worthington.

"The Apache Kid's Escape."

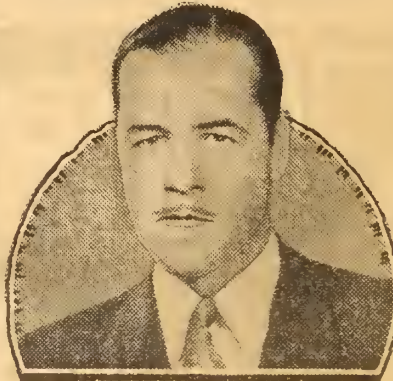
The Apache Kid, Jack Perrin; Ted Conway, Fred Church; Jane Carter, Josephine Hill; Betty Carter, Virginia Ashcraft; Frank Conway, Henry Roquemore; Bill Buckley, Bus Osborne; Sheriff Ward, Fred Burns.

"Storm Havoc."

Losses on camera and sound equipment reached some sort of record through freak weather conditions when Robert Montgomery's first starring picture, "Shipmates," was filmed.

When the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer unit first went aboard the U.S.S. Colorado for battle practice scenes, four microphones were listed as casualties because July 11th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S THREE COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



JACK HOLT

IN

"THE LAST PARADE."

The powerful story of a newspaper man turned gangster who pitted his wits against law and order although his biggest chum was a policeman.

"BREED OF THE WEST."

A gripping drama of the range and how a dare-devil young cowboy frustrated a rascally foreman's plans to rob a rancher. Starring Wally Wales and Virginia Browne Faire.

"SOUTH OF SONORA."

Horse thieves are making mysterious raids on the Diamond Bar Ranch. A handsome stranger and his queer friend take many risks to help the ranch owner and his pretty daughter. Starring Buffalo Bill, Jun.

of the terrific blast of the turret guns. The real overhead casualties came later, however, when the film company tried to leave the ship during a freak squall.

Unable to lower the portable sound apparatus in the heavy swell, the company was obliged to leave it aboard. Two sound camera tripods are at the bottom of the harbour with a microphone boom.

The next casualties were suffered when the company went to Laguna to make love scenes on a rock just beyond the surf line. Montgomery and Dorothy Jordan were the romantic pair.

Although the day was calm and peaceful, a freak blow whipped up unexpectedly, and before Director Harry Pollard could move his equipment and company, a huge conber broke over the rock, washing everything into the surging sea. What wasn't broken by the crash was soaked beyond repair before recovery from the salt water.

Office Boy Lands Film Actor's Job.

Property boys have been turning actor overnight at the Fox studios for

a long time, and now an office-boy rises to demonstrate screen talent can be found in other departments. William Maddox, 20 years old, late of the reception-room at Movietone City, is now a full-fledged actor.

For a year Maddox worked as general utility boy in the office, greeting visitors, answering telephone calls and delivering mail to authors and stars. All the time he hoped for a chance to act.

Maurine Watkins, Fox writer who adapted the novel, "Doctors' Wives," to the screen, was impressed with young Maddox's personality and winning smile. She mentioned the fact to Director Frank Borzage, who forthwith had a test made of the youth. The result was a total loss to the ranks of office-boys. Maddox was given the part of Warner Baxter's laboratory assistant in "Doctors' Wives."

Maddox has passed the word along that his job in the office need not be held open for the time when he finishes the picture. He's not going back to it. This first taste of screen acting is too sweet not to follow up.

Fake Photographs Better Than the Real Thing.

The statement that the camera can't lie has been proved a fallacy by film producers time and time again.

This was proved once again whilst Radio Pictures were making their first Lily Damita picture, tentatively entitled "The Woman Between."

In this picture there is a marble staircase which is faked by "marble paper" manufactured by the paint department of the Radio Pictures studio. Not only does this look as natural as the real article, but, what is more important, it photographs better. Real marble either is so delicately lined that it fails to photograph, or is so bold and prominent that it actually looks faked.

The marble staircase used in this Radio picture, if duplicated in real marble, would have cost a fortune.

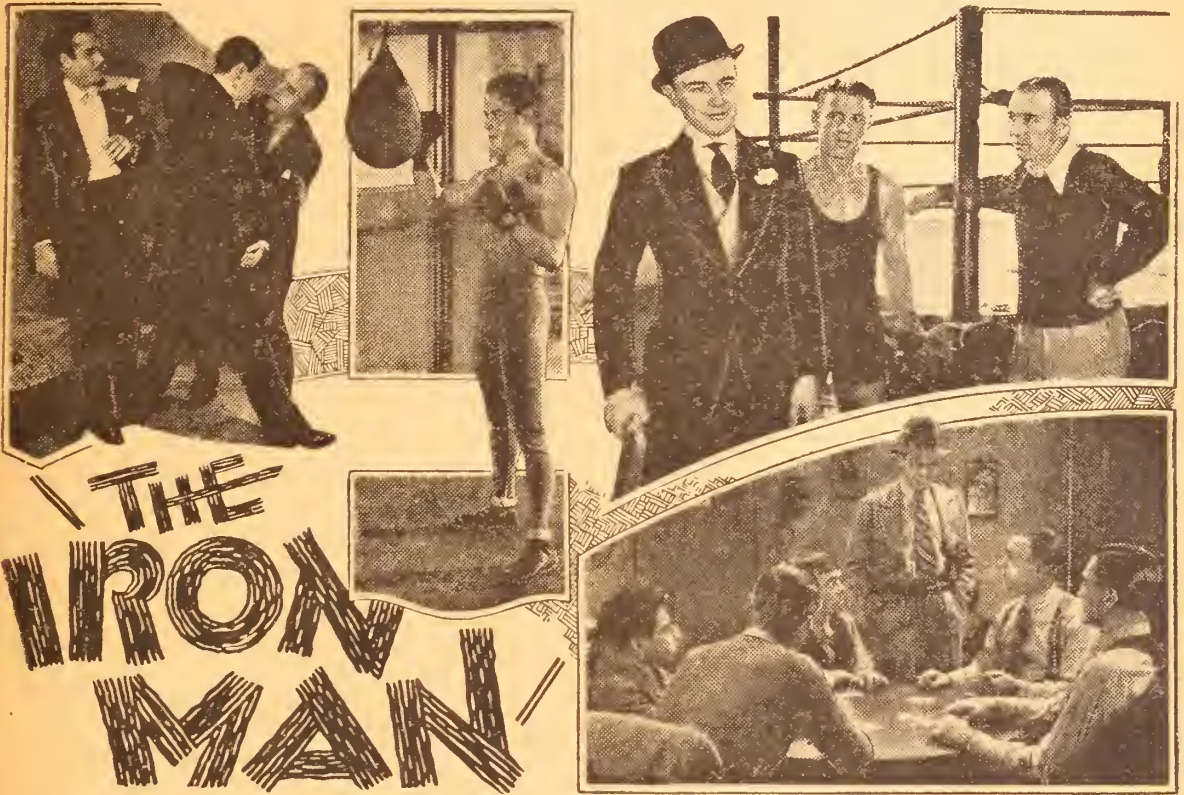
Buster Keaton's Joke.

Buster Keaton gave Lew Cody a nasty shock recently. Lew has several precious vases in his home, where he has a little museum. Unknown to Lew, Buster had replicas made of some of these vases, and during his friend's absence from home one day had the fakes substituted among the treasures. That evening Buster called on Lew, and after a time expressed a wish to see his collection.

"Gee, Lew," he said, picking up one of the fakes, "this is a swell vase you have here." A moment later he clumsily dropped it. The vase crashed in unpeeped pieces.

Lew yelled with dismay. Buster, serious-faced, muttered an apology, and picked up another fake vase and then dropped that also. Lew nearly fainted. Then he was told the truth!

A stirring story of the boxing ring and how a young boxer rises to be lightweight champion, but through swollen-headedness loses his championship and becomes a man.
Starring Lew Ayres and Robert Armstrong.



THE IRON MAN

The Failure!

THE Kid waltzed into his man, plastered face and body with left and right and drove the Illinois-bred Italian around the ring amid the delighted yells of a section of the crowd, but to the chagrin of his manager.

There was something almost tigerish in Kid Mason's attack, yet the comparison was not altogether to his credit as a craftsman of the roped square. When the tiger is desperate he loses his cunning, and so it was with the Kid. In the ferocity of his onslaught there was a dangerous lack of judgment and finesse, dangerous because Toni Petrelli was not the man with whom to take chances.

For a moment Petrelli seemed overwhelmed, and, driven to the ropes, fell into a clinch. The referee separated the two fighters, and the Kid, the wild light of battle in his eye, pounced on his opponent again. This time Petrelli was ready for him.

The Kid left himself wide open. Petrelli ducked a pile-driving left, and whipped a right-cross to the point of the jaw. The smack of his glove was followed by the thud of the Kid's body as he hit the boards.

The Kid rose at "five," but was hammered off his feet once more after sixty hectic seconds of "mixing." He struggled up at the count of "nine," plainly groggy, and covered himself in a vain effort to block the rain of terrific punches that Petrelli showered on him from all angles. The Italian was the aggressor now, but he was fighting with a precision that Kid Mason had not displayed since the opening round.

A crisp left bruised the Kid's eye. A right slammed to the face drew blood from teeth and nostrils. He struggled on gamely against the turning tide of

fortune, but his fierce, ill-timed rush of a minute and a half before had cost him dear, and he was taking the consequences in one grand orgy of punishment. He was practically "out" on his feet, with Petrelli pouncing him relentlessly.

Dismay was registered on the faces of three men standing just below the edge of the ring at the Kid's corner. One of those men was George Regan, Kid Mason's manager, and his particular impression implied disgust as well as dismay. The other two were seconds.

With the exultant yells of Petrelli's faction dining through the hall, one of the seconds spoke to Regan. He was an old-time pug known to the sporting fraternity as Jeff, and a familiar personality at Regan's training-quarters, where more than one champion had been coached. A towel folded over the sleeve of his sweater, he peered up through the ropes at the wilting Kid and the Illinois slayer.

"What are you goin' to do, George?" he blurted to Regan. "Let him get murdered?"

Regan spoke through clenched teeth. His habitually pleasant face was the picture of resentment.

"It ain't murder," he ground out. "It's suicide. He's done everything I told him not to."

The words were punctuated with a couple of ugly snarls as Petrelli's gloves snapped home to the body. The Kid sagged pitifully.

Old Jeff stirred himself. "The towel, George," he groaned. "I'm gonna throw it in."

"No, you ain't," jerked Regan, gripping his arm.

Kid Mason at that instant made a feeble attempt to rally. He started a right swing but never finished it. For

Petrelli's glove ripped into his solar and folded him like a clasp-knife, and next moment the Italian sent another blow crashing to the point.

The Kid pitched face-forward, and the referee began to count. "One—two—three—four—" The youngster on the floor tried to rise, but his cheek sank to the resin again. "Six—seven—eight—nine—" The Kid stirred, but could not gain his feet—until the referee was announcing the winner.

While the battered form of the Kid leaned sorrowfully against the ropes, the referee raised his conqueror's arm aloft. Pandemonium broke loose. Mind galled by defeat and brain dazed by the mauling he had received, Kid Mason was but dimly aware of Petrelli waving to the crowd genially, while his camp-followers mobbed the ring and clamoured boisterous congratulations.

In his dressing-room, huddled on the edge of the masseur's table, with face and body showing the marks of punishment, the Kid sat in a forlorn stupor as George Regan paced up and down before him.

Jeff and the other second, McNeil by name, stood in the background.

"Yeah, it's funny," Regan was saying. "I've been knockin' around with you since we was kids, and all the time I thought you had the makin's of a fighter. But I was all wrong. You're a born manager!" And he rapped out the words with bitter, seething sarcasm.

The Kid did not meet his eyes. He was staring dully at the floor.

"That's what you are," Regan continued in the same tone. "And so long as you don't need me, why, I'll just—"

He did not finish the sentence, but shrugged his shoulders eloquently and moved in the direction of the door. The

Kid, looking up for the first time, shot an appealing glance at him.

"Are you—droppin' me, George?" he moaned.

"Not me!" said Regan. "You're givin' me the gate. Well, why shouldn't you, since you've got your own system? Listen! I asked you to go in there to-night and lay low—let Petrelli play himself out—box him. An' what did you do? Tried to knock him down for the count the minute the bell rang. Left yourself wide open, played into his hands!"

The Kid bit his lip.

"George, I—I started to fight like you told me," he faltered. "I tried—but I had somethin' else on my mind. I needed that dough, George. I had to be on the big end of the purse."

Regan glared at him.

"Rose!" he ground out. "Didn't I know it? Say, if you're in this fight game just to get enough money for that wife of yours, it's about time you knew that she—". He checked himself and made a hopeless gesture. "Oh, what's the use?" he added sourly, and walked on to the door.

On the threshold he turned.

"Good luck to you," he said, his voice curt. Then, running his eye over the Kid's bruised body: "An' put on your robe," he snapped. "Do you wanna catch pneumonia?"

The door slammed behind him. He was gone.

The Break.

TWO girls who looked as if they had stepped straight off the vaudeville stage were perched on a couple of high stools at a soda counter. They were flashily-dressed, and heavily rouged and powdered.

One of them, a brunette, was doing most of the talking, and the other girl was the subject of her conversation, a conversation into which she had drawn the burly bartender of the "soft drink" emporium.

"She got fair warning from me," the brunette declared. "I said, 'Rose, don't marry a fighter.' Didn't I say that to you, Rose?"

The other girl was staring resentfully into space. Her face was beautiful, but far from pleasing. Her eyes were hard and calculating, her lips seemed too ready to sneer, or pout into an expression of peevishness.

"She was right, Mrs. Mason," put in the bartender, vouching for the sagacity of the brunette's remarks. "It's like she says. The fight game's a pretty tough racket. Everything goes along dandy for a while. Then—wham! Nobody ain't got no more use for you. Now Kid Mason's all right. He's a pretty good scrapper, but—"

The brunette interrupted him reminiscently.

"There we were on the stage like a couple of angels," she said disgustedly. "Then Rose jumps the act and marries the Kid. And why? 'Cause she thought fighters made a lotta dough. That's why!"

Rose Mason spoke for the first time.

"All right," she snapped. "Lace it into me! I did it! I'm the sap!"

She slipped off the stool and walked out into the street. A bus took her to the very entrance of the humble apartment-house in which the Kid rented a flat. She climbed to the third floor, let herself into the suite and found the Kid already home, sitting haggardly in an arm-chair in the living-room.

He looked up, and conjured up a rueful smile that only made his battered face seem the more pitiful.

"I—I guess I don't look so good, do July 11th, 1921.

l?" he murmured. "I—I went after him too fast. I kinda had a hunch that I could lick him before he got into his stride. I guess I guessed wrong—"

Her eyes flashed contempt, and her lip curled cruelly.

"So did I—guess wrong," she sneered. "I guessed I'd be wearing that fur coat you've been shooting off your head about. And I guessed we'd be moving out of this hole we're living in now. Wasn't I a mutt?"

"You'll get your fur coat, Rose," he said huskily.

"Sure," she retorted. "If I go out and shoot a couple of cats!"

The Kid rose to his feet and pressed one fist into the palm of his other hand nervously. He seemed shaken mentally as well as physically.

"It was my own fault," he groaned. "I didn't fight the way George told me. And now he's through with me—"

"Oh, him!" Rose cut in fiercely. "You should have been through with him years ago. You doing all the dirty work while Regan sat back and grabbed his fifty per cent!"

"He didn't take it most of the time," the Kid answered stoutly. "Not when we needed the money at home. George has been my best friend all along, and he gave up a lot for us."

Her glance seathed him.

"He gave up a lot?" she blazed. "What did I give up when I married you? Oh, you make me tired! I'm finished with you!"

She walked through to the bed-room. The door closed behind her with a bang, and a key turned in the lock as the Kid tried to follow her.

"Rose!" he cried. "Honey—"

Her curt voice reached his ears. "I'm packin' my bag!" she said. "I'm leavin'—"

Fifty minutes later the Kid took a cab to Regan's rooms down-town. He found George Regan with Jeff and two or three other men. They were playing cards, but there was a pause in the game as Kid Mason entered, and an awkward silence fell.

"George," the Kid said hoarsely, "I've got to see you."

Regan's face was expressionless.

"I got nothin' to talk to you about," he answered shortly.

"George," the Kid pleaded, "it's important."

Regan looked up at him. There was something in the youngster's eyes that might have softened a harder man than big-hearted George Regan, and, somehow, he could not forget the friendship that had existed between them for so many years.

"In the bed-room," he said, not without some reluctance, and as the Kid made his way into the other apartment, Regan rose and followed him.

"Well?" the fight manager asked, closing the door.

"Rose has gone," the Kid told him shakily. "She—left me. Aw, I know what you're gonna say, George! But don't call her no names."

Regan's good-looking face was like granite, and his lips were a thin, firm line. But this eventuality was only something that he might have expected of a woman for whom he had never had any regard.

He laid a hand on the Kid's shoulder as he saw the grief that was written on the youngster's features.

"It's happened to a lot of other guys," he muttered. "Forget her." And he added, somewhat cryptically: "You don't know it yet, but you needed this!"

The Kid drew his hand dazedly across his forehead.

"It's all happened so sudden!" he moaned. "I don't know what to do."

"You're gonna get to bed and get some sleep," George told him. "That's what you're gonna do."

"George, I can't go back there!" the Kid blurted, and at that Regan's grasp on his shoulder tightened in an eloquent token of friendship and sympathy.

The woman Rose had left the Kid in the lurch. He was not going to abandon him now.

"Of course you can't go back there," he said. "You're gonna stay right here with me. Now hit the hay. Go on!"

The Road to Fame.

THE hall was packed with a yelling crowd of fight fans. The are-lights, concentrating their glare on the ring, threw into vivid relief the two men circling and feinting between the ropes.

It was a noteworthy contest—for Kid Mason a stepping-stone to further recognition as a coming world-beater.

A dusky Filipino was his opponent, a tear-away fighter with a notorious right. The Kid boxed him guardedly for three rounds, standing on the defensive, baffling that vicious, lightning-like hook with side-step and parry.

His footwork was a delight to behold, his ringcraft a wonder to the eyes of the true connoisseurs of the prize-fighting art. There were others among the crowd who had paid for seats in the hope of seeing battle and bloodshed, and who appreciated a fierce exchange of blows more than they appreciated skill. But for these, too, the fight was to become momentous.

The bell clanged for the fourth round, and marked a change in the Kid's tactics. He had the measure of the Filipino now, and, back in the corner during his "breather," Regan had whispered words of shrewd counsel.

The Kid danced into his man with both hands at the sound of the gong. A crisp left jared the Filipino, and a six-inch jolt with the right rocked him to the heels. They were the first two blows of a fistie hurricane that piled the Islander against the ropes and then drove him to his knees.

The Kid sprang back as the referee began to count. The Filipino seemed to be in a bad way, but, playing for time, he rose on the word "nine" and sprang at the Kid. A punch that pierced his guard staggered young Mason, but he fought back and overwhelmed his man, the crowd howling encouragement.

The bell saved the Filipino, but it could not save him midway through the next round, when the Kid sent his glove crashing to the jaw and stretched him for the full count.

Next morning the headlines were blazing the result across the sporting columns of the newspapers.

"KID MASON WINS BY KNOCK-OUT ROUTE."

"GEORGE REGAN'S WONDER BOY SCORES FOURTH STRAIGHT 'KAYO.'"

It was this victory which led to articles being signed for a contest with Prince Pearl, that being the high-faluting title of an Alabama nigger with a formidable reputation in the first ranks of the prize-fighters, and a day or two after he had gone into more or less serious training the Kid may have been seen in the gymnasium at Regan's quarters.

Regan sat at a table and played solitaire, but his attention was divided between the cards and the youngster who was working off a few pounds of superfluous weight at the other end of the gym. The Kid was busy at the punching-bag, and the thud of his fists lancing into it, together with the

shuffle of his feet, were the only sounds to be heard.

Presently the Kid took a turn at the rings, swinging back and forth through space like a trapeze artist, and finally dropping to the floor a pace or two from where Regan sat.

Regan looked up at him, his keen eye travelling over the youngster's bare, lanky chest.

"Put on your robe," he said curtly. "Do you wanna get pneumonia?"

The Kid reached for a dressing-gown and pulled it about his shoulders. He looked a vastly different specimen from the hopeless failure who had been abandoned by his wife Rose in the culminating bout of a series of defeats. He was virile, confident—self-assured without being objectionably so.

Old Jeff stood near by, and the Kid turned to him.

"Gimme a cigarette, will you, Jeff?" he drawled.

The old-timer voiced disapproval. "Aw, Kid," he protested, "you'll cut your wind."

"Give him one, Jeff," put in George Regan. "Prince Pearl will cut his wind for him."

The Kid leaned across the table. His jaw registered determination. "You think I can't lick that guy, don't you?" he said.

"I don't think," Regan replied sarcastically, still playing his lone-hand game. "But I can read the newspapers, and all the smart money's on the black boy. That's where I'm settin' my wad, too. He'll have his left hand in your face so often you'll think it belongs there."

"All right," snapped the Kid. "Go ahead an' bet on Pearl." And he turned and walked through to the shower-room angrily.

"Say, boss," Jeff said to Regan when the youngster was out of hearing, "why don't you lay off the Kid? You know, when he's training he's just like a caged animal—"

"You let me handle him," George interrupted him, with a smile at the back of his whimsical eyes. "I understand him better'n anyone else in the world. He's got a chance to beat Pearl—a slim chance. But do you think I want him to think so? Do you think I want to swell him up and spoil him?"

"I know, boss, but if you was to encourage him—"

"Encourage nothin'," growled Regan. "He's a prize-fighter, not a prima donna."

McNeil, the Kid's other second, came into the gymnasium at that moment. He had news to impart.

"Say, boss," he announced, "I just saw them two gamblers Mandell an' Riley outside. Maybe they've come around to look the Kid over before they lay out their dough."

Messrs. Riley and Mandell entered the gym. Riley was thin, quick of eye and thought, slow of speech—not too scrupulous, but with something likeable in his manner.

Mandell was of a different stamp, fat and loud, with a false heartiness—a crook without a redeeming virtue.

"Hallo, George!" greeted Riley. "We thought we'd drop in, me an' my handicap, and take a peek at your boy."

"Don't eost nothing to look," said Mandell, with an oily chuckle. "No?"

"He's in the shower," observed Regan, rising and leading the way through to where the Kid was busily towelling himself.

"Hey, Kid," the manager said, "here's a coupla guys heard you were

runnin' a peek show. You know Mandell and Riley, don't you?"

The Kid wrapped the towel about his waist. "I don't wanna know 'em," he answered shortly.

"Cheerful lad," commented Riley. "Well, it wouldn't do any harm to know us," he added significantly. "As a matter of fact, Kid, we were aimin' to lay a little money on you."

Regan faced the gamblers. "Come on, spill it," he said. "What's on your minds?"

Riley looked round to make certain that there were no eavesdroppers.

"We've just had a little chat with—Prince Pearl," he explained. "Now, the nigger is willin' to lay down an' lose the fight for five grand—five thousand dollars, Regan—"

The Kid turned from a mirror at which he had been standing and moved over to Regan and the gamblers. His face was expressionless, but there was a tiny glint deep down in his eyes.

"Do you get it, Kid?" said Mandell suavely. "The nigger lays down to one of your punches. Then, later on, you get his chance at a fight with the champion—Mike Shay."

George Regan's face was likewise expressionless. "What do you say, Kid?" he asked slowly, deliberately.

"Well, let me get this straight," said the Kid. "Mandell, you want me and George to give you five thousand to fix the contest. Is that it?"

"Sure, you got it," Mandell replied. "Then there's the other side to it. The odds will be five-to-one against you, at least. You can bet on yourself, and be certain of makin' a big clean-up. And so can we!"

The Kid was playing with him, but Mandell did not know it.

"Well," the youngster murmured, ap-

parently wavering, "I hardly know what to say. How about it, George?"

"Aw, don't be a sucker, Kid," urged Mandell. "You can make more money from this one fight than you can make from fourteen others. You know, lots o' boys do it. Come on—give us the 'okay.' Yes?"

The Kid's right hand closed so that the knuckles stood out white against the skin. Next instant he had whipped his fist to the fat rogue's leering face.

The blow smashed home with an impact that hurled Mandell through the doorway and laid him sprawling on his back.

"What do you think I am—a set-up?" blazed the Kid. "Do I look like a dirty crook? Get out!"

"George!" gasped Riley. "Talk to him, George!"

"He's doin' right," jerked Regan, and he was equally certain that, in felling Mandell, the Kid had floored the instigator of the scheme—Riley merely being a subordinate party to it.

"Get out!" roared the Kid. "Get out, will you?"

Riley ducked swiftly from the shower-room and beat a hasty retreat across the gym. Mandell followed on all fours, groaning loudly. As the gamblers vanished Regan turned to the Kid and reprimanded him.

"How many times have I told you not to throw away punches unless your hands are taped?" he snapped.

"Huh?" the Kid mumbled. "Oh—oh, yeah, I forgot, George!"

"Go an' put your clothes on," growled George Regan. "Do you wanna get pneumonia?"



The referee raised the conqueror's arm, and pandemonium broke loose
July 11th, 1931.

Rose Again.

A BANQUET was being devoured in a private room of one of New York's hotels. It was the night following the Kid's smashing victory over Prince Pearl, and, bearing no signs of punishment except a strip of plaster over one eye, the Kid sat at the head of the table with George Regan on his left hand.

The rest of the party included a number of old-timers who were not too favourably situated as regards money, and seldom had the price of a square meal. It had become the Kid's commendable custom to entertain these unfortunates after each contest that brought him nearer to the peak of Fame—the world's championship.

The Kid was making a speech. "I only lost three or four fights in my whole life," he was saying, "and that was because I didn't listen to what George said. See? He's the best manager in the whole world—see? So I reckon we all oughta give George a hand."

There was loud applause, and George Regan climbed to his feet.

"I'll have to admit the Kid was right when he said a little while ago that I won that fight," he declared, with a twinkle in his eye. "I won it all by myself. The Kid didn't have a thing to do with it"—he grinned—"except, maybe, a couple pounds of dynamite in each hand and a body and chin that must be made of iron. Of course, maybe it's pig iron. Well, boys, I haven't anything more to say except that—well, the next feed the Kid throws will be on the night he takes the championship away from Mike Shay!"

The Kid went to bed that night with the cheers of his admirers ringing in his ears. But the next morning he and George received at their rooms a visitor who had not hitherto been numbered among the coming young prize-fighter's friends. He was Riley the gambler.

"I know you've always been on the square, you and the Kid, George," Riley told Regan, "and I guess I musta been crazy when I tried to fix you guys with Mandell."

"Well, you learned your lesson," George Regan said. "I ain't tryin' to preach, Riley, but the Kid's got where he is because he's always been on the level. The newspapers know it, too. That's why they've been fightin' so hard to get us a match with Mike Shay, the champion."

Riley pursed his lips.

"Yeah, I know," he murmured. "But I think you pulled a rotten deal when you let Mike Shay arrange it so he'd get all the purse."

"Hey, wait a minute," the Kid broke in, from the other side of the room. "What do you mean—Mike Shay get all the purse?"

"The match is for winner take all, ain't it?" said Riley.

"Well, how does that get Shay a dime?" scoffed the Kid.

Riley laughed.

"Oh, that's the way you feel about it," mused Riley. "Kinda confident, huh?"

"Well, Mike will probably murder the Kid," observed George Regan, already beginning to bait his protégé over his coming contest in that scathing, but effective, style which he had learned to employ. "But what's the difference? He's made plenty of money already."

The telephone bell rang at that moment. The caller was a girl by the name of Gladys De Vere, and her motive in ringing up was to threaten breach of promise. Now, the Kid, who was still

legally the husband of Rose, had made no promises. But Gladys De Vere's particular "graft" was to become acquainted with celebrities and then attempt blackmail, knowing that in nine cases out of ten they would pay up rather than face the undesirable publicity of a court action.

For her, the Kid's case proved the unlucky tenth. George Regan saw to that, and, with the invaluable assistance of Riley, convinced her that she was treading on dangerous ground.

Immediately after the situation had been relieved a telegram arrived for the Kid, and as the latter was ripping it open George Regan gave him a few words of advice.

"After this, watch your step, Kid," he said, "watch your step."

"Don't you worry," the Kid declared emphatically. "I'm through with the fair sex for life." Then, as he read the contents of the wire he had received, his face changed colour, and: "Oh, George—George," he panted, "come in here."

He backed into the bed-room, and Regan followed him.

"What is it, Kid?" he demanded.

"It's from—from Rose," the Kid answered. "She's in town—she wants to see me. Look, it says she's sick. She—she might even be dyin'—"

Regan's mouth had hardened.

"Don't fall for that," he began, but the Kid interrupted him.

"We've gotta see her, George," he jerked. "We've gotta see her!"

Argument was in vain. Twenty minutes later they were alighting from a cab outside a dingy boarding-house, to which they were admitted by a harassed-looking landlady.

"Your little wife's been a mighty sick little woman, Mr. Mason," the woman said, as soon as the Kid and Regan had introduced themselves.

"Yeah, I know," the Kid rejoined hurriedly. Then, turning to his manager excitedly: "This is the place all right, George," he stammered, scarcely knowing what he was saying.

"What do you want me to do?" growled Regan. "Kiss it?"

The landlady led the way upstairs, singing Rose's praises en route, while George Regan listened shrewdly and thought his own private thoughts.

In a second-floor room a girl heard their approaching footfalls. She was Rose, and, the picture of health, she was reclining at her ease in a deep arm-chair. The moment the Kid's voice reached her ears, however, she gathered some cushions about her and lay back in a wilting attitude, like one recuperating from a long and dangerous illness.

The Kid came into the room, and Rose looked at him with an expression guaranteed to arouse pity.

"I was afraid—you wouldn't come," she said in a frail voice.

The Kid dropped on his knees beside her.

"Why shouldn't I, honey?" he protested.

"I've been awful sick, Kid," she told him with a catch in her voice. "I almost died. And I missed you so. Oh, Kid, forgive me."

"There's nothing to forgive, Rose!"

Just outside the door George Regan was talking to the landlady in an undertone.

"How much does that baby owe you?" he demanded. "Aw, I'm not a sap, ma'm. How much is it?"

"Oh—er—four weeks' rent," the landlady answered. "Forty-eight dollars. And meals—and private baths—"

"I knew it," said Regan, handing over a sheaf of notes. "Rose wouldn't have

bothered to send that wire if things had been going well with her, or if the Kid had not made good—"

Regan walked into the bed-room, and looked down at the re-united couple.

"Tricks been comin' kinda tough lately, huh?" he said to Rose, not the least impressed by her play-acting.

"Show business?"

"Movies," she told him. "All the directors admired my talents, but you've got to be on the inside at Hollywood. Maybe I'd have been all right if I hadn't taken the 'flu.'"

"Well, you don't have to worry," Regan drawled in a queer tone. "The Kid's been knockin' 'em over lately."

Rose leaned her head against the young boxer's shoulder with exaggerated affection.

"Oh, I read every word of it," she breathed. "That's all I had eyes for."

"Oh, you've been followin' his doings, huh?" Regan murmured. "I thought you'd be interested. But let me tell you somethin'. You'd better take a long look at the Kid, because you ain't gonna see much more of him until after Mike Shay gets through plasterin' him around."

Rose sat up with a jerk, her "sickness" for the moment forgotten.

"Mike Shay?" she exclaimed. "Not the champion?"

"Sure, the Kid's matched to fight him," said Regan. "You'll be able to nurse him back to health after Mike's finished with him."

"Yeah?" mocked the Kid, raising his glance. "You thought the same about Prince Pearl. Well, let me tell you somethin'. You're lookin' at the next champion right now!"

The Championship.

IT was the afternoon of the big fight, and champ. and challenger were weighing in. The Kid, first to step on to the scales, posed for a Press photographer, then drew aside for Shay, whose powerful frame and rugged countenance looked as forbidding as they were formidable.

The Kid walked to the background, where George Regan presently joined him.

"George," said the Kid in a husky undertone. "I—I've gotta win that fight to-night. I've gotta be champion—"

That evening Madison Square Gardens was the Mecca of fight fans from all over the American Continent, and thousands passed under the imposing archway.

Fifty minutes after the last seat had been occupied, and when one or two minor contests had been staged, the principals of the big battle for the championship stepped into the ring, amid an uproar of cheering.

Preliminaries over, the seconds ducked outside the ropes, and to the sound of the bell champ. and challenger slid from their respective corners.

They shook hands, turned, and then circled warily under the arc-lights, the Kid bearing in mind every word of counsel that George Regan had ever uttered, Shay hiding his time and taking the measure of his man ere loosing off his big guns.

The Kid feinted for the body and ripped a punch towards the champion's jaw. Shay parried and slammed his right to the ribs with a shock that brought a grunt from the challenger. But the Kid connected with a stiff left, raising a murmur of approval from his supporters.

Ten seconds later Shay scored heavily in a hard spell of in-fighting, his strongest card, and as the Kid tried to dance out of range he leapt after him and crowded him to the ropes with a

bombardment of punches that brought the spectators to their feet.

The Kid's defensive tactics in the face of that onslaught were magnificent, covering all vulnerable points, blocking the champion's route to a quick knockout. The Kid was punished, but only where he could stand punishment. No hammer-blow smashed home to jaw or solar.

The bell intervened when Shay was still striving to plaster the Kid with telling punches. Shay took the honours for the first round.

The second round found the Kid remaining on the defensive. His whole being yearned to launch an attack that would overwhelm the champion's, but George Regan's advice was drumming through his brain, and he held himself in check.

Shay, battling savagely, piled up the points in his favour, but he could not break through the challenger's guard to land a decisive blow, or one that would weaken the Kid's stamina and leave him wide open for a clean-cut "kayo." The Kid's body was marked, but when the bell changed once more he slithered to his corner with an agile stride and a tireless grin.

Round three opened with a fierce rally, both men "mixing it," giving and taking punches that snapped home with the smart thud of padded leather pounding flesh and bone. The crowd roared, and, mingling with the din, the voice of an announcer broadcasting the fight rose to a shrill pitch of excitement.

The Kid was fighting back. Attack and defence skilfully balanced, he planted left and right in the champion's face and body, and plainly had him worried. But Shay came in again towards the end of the three-minute spell and finished strongly. The round was even.

Shay used all he had in the beginning of the fourth round, for he could see that the Kid was settling down, and he aimed to break him before he could get into his stride. He came dangerously near to succeeding, but the Kid weathered the fury of the onslaught, and as it waned he gradually opened himself out and took the offensive.

The champ, was rattled with a volley of punches, and, as he let himself go, the Kid's attack became something that was as dynamic as a storm. Shay was battered into a corner from which he failed to escape. His ribs and chest began to show raw weals of punishment, and a right-hook brought him to his knees at the close of the round, which was the challenger's.

The champion opened shakily when the bell had signalled the seconds out of the ring again, and the Kid waded into him, raining blows from every angle. The crowd rose as one man and howled encouragement. Amid the clamour the thudding of the Kid's mitts could be heard planting punch after punch with deadly effect, smashing Shay's rugged physique, smashing their way to the title.

Shay tried to cover up, but a crisp drive to the solar bored under his guard. His hands dropped, and the Kid whipped his right to the jaw with an impact that numbed the champ. He dropped, and pandemonium seemed to break loose among the spectators. Shay was down, and looked as if he were to stay down.

"Six—seven—eight—"

The champion struggled up gamely. But he was a beaten man, and in no shape to stave off the end for long. The Kid slithered close to him again and slammed his glove to the point once more. Shay came up on his toes and toppled face forward, and he was counted out amid scenes of the

wildest enthusiasm and excitement.

The Kid was the first to help Shay to his corner, and then, carrying the title belt, he came to the ringside and leaned through the ropes to speak into a microphone that the wireless announcer was indicating.

"The new champion of the world, Kid Mason, is going to say a few words to you," the announcer called. "Talk right in here, champ."

"Hallo, folks!" said the Kid, his voice querulous with the thrill of his achievement. "I'm—I'm mighty glad to be champion, and—and I want to say for Mike Shay that he was no easy cinch—see? He's a good scrapper. And—and—" He stammered for a moment. Then, with a sheepish grin: "Hallo, Rose," he added, "I won! I'll be right home—"

Later that night the new champion might have been seen with his striking wife at one of the exclusive restaurants in town, an uncomfortable and rather wistful figure in a starched shirt and an elegantly-cut evening suit, his good humour somewhat damped by the fact that he was not celebrating his victory in the customary way.

"What's the matter?" Rose asked with a sidelong glance at him. "Aren't you enjoying yourself?"

"Oh, sure!" the Kid told her hurriedly. "Sure. I was just wishing you'd let me ask George to come along—"

A look of impatience appeared in Rose's eyes. The expression was quickly curbed.

"But you're the champion now, dear," she protested. "We must associate with the better class of people—people of refinement."

The Kid stared gloomily at his champagne glass.

"Yeah, I know," he muttered. "But I was thinkin' of the boys. I always used to throw a feed for them—you know, the fellers that were down on their luck."

"Oh, celebrating your victory with a lot of riff-raff!" Rose snapped peevishly.

And, meanwhile, in a private room of a certain modest hotel, George Regan was doing his best to explain the Kid's absence to the so-called "riff-raff."

It was an absence that was prolonged far beyond the duration of the banquet, as Mr. and Mrs. Mason repaired the following day to Miami, Florida, where smart Society gathered during the season; and in the weeks that ensued, George Regan took to drink occasionally.

It was a habit that he had not indulged in before. But with the Kid's departure to the south something seemed to have gone out of Regan's existence—that

companionship which had meant more to him than anything else in the whole world.

Once the Kid sent a postcard. "Greetings from me and Rose," it read. "Your old pal, Kid Mason."

And as George scanned it he raised a glass from which he had been imbibing liquor.

"Here's to you, Rosie," he toasted. "You're a better man than I am."

At that very moment, over a thousand miles away, Kid Mason was engrossed in conversation with a bell-boy of the sumptuous hotel at which he was staying.

"It's like I said," the Kid was telling the lad, "it ain't easy—see? You got to train hard and live clean. You got to take a lot of hard knocks. But if you're on the up-and-up about this—"

"Oh, I am, Mr. Mason!" the boy assured him eagerly. "Gee, I don't know what I wouldn't do to become a real fighter—I mean a fighter like you! A champ!"

Rose, appearing at that juncture, the conversation was interrupted. When the bell-boy had gone she remonstrated with the Kid.

"Dearest," she appealed, "how many times must I ask you not to be familiar with the hotel staff?"

"Yeah, I know," the Kid protested. "But that boy's been fightin' amateur, and he looks pretty good—"

"But you forget you're the champion now, dear," Rose argued. "You're a big man—you're important!"

The Kid looked pleased, and adjusted his tie with a gesture that was almost snug. "Yeah, I guess you're right,"



The blow was hardly struck ere the Kid regretted it.

he murmured. "Say, have you noticed how everybody looks at me when I walk into the dining-room?"

"Well, why shouldn't they?" The Kid's clean-cut face registered self-satisfaction. Already it seemed as if the first seeds of an unbearable conceit and vanity were being sown in him by this woman who could influence him so much.

The Return.

IN the sparring ring at George Regan's quarters two masked figures were engaged in a work-out. One was a young fellow by the name of Rattler O'Keefe. Of the same fighting-weight as Kid Mason, he as yet lacked the champion's experience, and would probably never possess the Kid's sheer genius for ringcraft and footwork, which Regan had so skilfully developed. But he was a "come-on" with plenty of promise, bidding fair to go a long way in the glove game under George's expert handling.

George Regan called him over at the end of the bout.

"Hey, Rattler," he snapped, "come here! How many times have I got to remind you that you have two hands? Your left hand—what's that for? Do you get me?"

"Yes, sir," said Rattler, a willing pupil.

"What?" jerked Regan.

"Yes, George," Rattler corrected hastily.

Regan's eyes twinkled.

"That's better," he began, but before he could say more there was a commotion at the entrance to the gym, and the voice of old Jeff was heard to give utterance to a joyful exclamation.

"Hurrah! It's the champ!"

A resplendent figure crossed the threshold. He carried an ebony cane and was dressed in a bowler-hat and morning suit, silk shirt, diamond tiepin, and patent shoes finishing off the picture. It was difficult to reconcile him with the old Kid Mason, for his manner as well as his appearance seemed changed.

"Gee," old Jeff murmured, "but you look swell! How've you been, champ?"

"Oh, fine, Jeff—fine!" the Kid drawled airily. "See you later." And he sauntered past the old fellow to where George Regan was standing.

They shook hands.

"Hallo, Kid!" George greeted.

"What are you made up for?"

The Kid's laugh was almost condescendingly good-natured.

"Still the same kiddie, George," he observed. "You haven't changed a bit."

Regan's latest protégé approached.

"Hallo, champ!" he said, holding out his fist. "I'm Rattler O'Keefe."

The Kid raised his eyebrows and pointedly ignored the other's hand. Rattler seemed nonplussed, and glanced at Regan awkwardly. The fight-manager was watching the Kid, a queer, shrewd glint in his eyes.

"O'Keefe?" said the Kid, with a pretence of being puzzled. "Oh, yeah—yeah—I think I did read something about you in the papers down in Florida."

"George here bought up my contract," Rattler explained. "We're working in the same stable now, champ."

"Yeah?" The Kid's lip almost curled.

"Well, that's great." Then, as Rattler moved away discomfited, the Kid looked around with contempt. "The same bunch of mugs," he mused with a sneer. "Never getting any place. Well, how've you been getting along without me, George?"

"Oh, fine!" said Regan. "I've been July 11th, 1931.

busy—training fighters; fighters who'll fight, I mean. You don't seem to be in any hurry."

"There's no rush, is there?" the Kid argued. "Matter of fact, we've just been getting settled in a new apartment, and Rose—"

"Oh, the missus, eh?" said Regan, with involuntary sarcasm.

The Kid's eyes narrowed angrily.

"Now, listen, George," he ground out. "If you've got any more to say about that, you'd better not say it. Because what I do for Rose is my business and nobody else's. Oh, what's the use?" he added, cooling down. "I didn't come here to start a row with you. I just wanted to ask you to come over and see the new apartment."

"Why, I'd like to, Kid," George muttered. "But—you know Rose doesn't want me up there."

The Kid smiled.

"Well," he stated, "you're going to get the surprise of your life if you think Rose doesn't like you, George. I'm telling you. Wait till you see her. She's a changed girl—you'd never know her. Oh, come and see for yourself!"

So George Regan was coaxed into accompanying the Kid to his magnificent suite not far from Fifth Avenue.

An elevator took them to the tenth floor of the pretentious building in which it was located, and as their shoes sank into the pile of a thick corridor carpet George expressed his admiration.

They reached a door above which a cunning electric sign bore the name "Mason."

"Oh, by the way, George," the Kid mentioned, "in a place like this you've gotta have a lot of servants, you know. Matter of fact, Rose has a butler. But what I was going to say is—please don't wise-crack."

The Kid rang a bell, and the door was opened by a man in morning dress who happened to be in the hall—a tall, pallid, immaculate man with a small, dark moustache.

The butler, thought George, and handed him his hat. The man took it, looked at him curiously, and then spoke to the Kid.

"Mr. Mason, I presume," he said. "My name's Lewis—Paul H. Lewis. I've been delightfully entertained by Mrs. Mason. She's a very dear friend of my wife. We met her in Hollywood."

"Oh, I've heard her talk about you!" the Kid answered. "Meet my manager, Mr. Regan."

George acknowledged the introduction sheepishly and grabbed back his head-gear.

"How are yuh?" he said. "Er—I'm sorry about the hat."

They walked through to a sumptuous lounge where Rose and Mrs. Lewis were sitting, and sure enough, George Regan found Rose peculiarly charming to him, though he had the feeling that her friendliness was not sincere.

Lewis, who was connected with the screen and the stage, had once been a fight manager, and some conversation on that subject followed. Then Rose suggested that the Kid might show George over the rest of the apartment, and Mrs. Lewis insisted on accompanying the two men in their tour of the rooms.

Lewis and Rose were left alone. Pausing a little way beyond the threshold of the lounge, Regan looked back and saw that they were sitting close to each other on a davenport couch, and, regarding them for a moment, it struck Regan that they seemed rather more than friendly now that Mrs. Lewis and the Kid were out of the way.

Some time later, when George Regan

announced that he must be going, the Kid accompanied him to the front door.

"Yes, sir, the place is a knock-out," Regan declared emphatically. "Silk sheets, futuristic furniture, servants an' everything." Then: "Say, Kid," he added all at once, "do you have black coffee with your supper here?"

"Why, yes, sure," the Kid answered in a puzzled fashion. "Afterwards, if you want it."

"Good idea," said George Regan cryptically. "Keeps your eyes open. Keeps you awake. Drink a lot of it, Kid."

The Kid stared after him wonderingly as he went out into the corridor.

The Split.

THREE nights later, as Kid Mason was strolling into a smart cabaret-restaurant in which Paul Lewis was interested, a reporter buttonholed him.

"I'm from the 'Morning News,'" the Press man explained. "Can you tip me off when you intend to give Sailor Hess a match, champ?"

The Kid's eyes glittered.

"You've got your nerve, waylaying me!" he rapped out. "Listen, I've got nothing to say—except that I'll fight Sailor Hess when he's good enough to get up against me! You can print that."

The reporter looked at the Kid disgustedly as the latter turned on his heel. Then he called after him:

"Oh, how about Joe Savella? He's spoilin' for a fight with you, too."

"When I'm ready to take on gas-house pugs, I let you know," the Kid said over his shoulder.

The reporter sneered.

"Oh, I see!" he muttered under his breath. "What size hat do you wear?"

The following day the "New York Evening Post" came out with two-inch headlines concerning that brief interview.

"NEW CHAMPION'S HEAD TOO LARGE FOR CROWN.

Iron Man Kid Mason,

Now Training in Night Clubs, Says Challengers are Gas-house Pugs!"

George Regan read those scathing comments at the gymnasium, and with a bitter expression on his face took a cab to the Kid's apartment, meeting the boxer in the hall.

From the direction of the lounge came the sound of lazy music and drawing voices.

"I'm sorry," Regan apologised; "I didn't know you had a party. I wanted to talk to you about this razzing you're getting in the newspapers."

The Kid looked annoyed.

"This is not the place to talk about that," he said, "in a man's home."

"Well, I have to come up here if I want to see you," Regan reminded him bluntly. "You're never at the gym."

"Aw, we'll talk about it later," the Kid rejoined. "Come in and have a drink before you go."

He led him into the lounge and over to a table that was laden with bottles. George took one drink—then another—and another. The reason for his call was almost forgotten; he began to talk reminiscently of their early days, and the Kid, his old self for the moment, laughed heartily over some of the incidents that were recalled. Then a girl came up and insisted that he should dance with her, and George Regan was left to himself.

Rose and Paul Lewis were already among the couples who were gliding across the floor to the music of a radio-graphophone, and presently the two of them paused beside a wide, carpeted

sight of steps that ascended to the hall. A significant look passed between them, and, first glancing round to make certain that they were unobserved, they slipped from the lounge and moved across the hall. It was at that moment that George Regan chanced to turn his head, and, slightly fuddled though he was, the spectacle of them vanishing into one of the other rooms sobered him instantly.

He set down his glass and walked in the direction that Rose and Lewis had taken. He entered an apartment at the other side of the hall. It was empty, but, looking through to a small room beyond, he saw the Kid's wife in Lewis' arms.

Regan closed the door of the larger room noisily. Rose drew away from Lewis with a start, turned swiftly, and then came into the apartment where the fight manager was standing.

"George," she panted, "you shouldn't come in here!"

He did not answer her, but the contempt in his glance was eloquent. Wheeling, he went out into the hall again and back to the lounge, where he poured himself another drink, almost savagely.

Rose and Lewis appeared in the lounge a few seconds afterwards. Both of them seemed uneasy, but, looking viciously at Regan, Rose spoke to a butler and asked him to tell the Kid she wished to see him.

The message was delivered, and the Kid came across the lounge.

"You've got to get George out of here," Rose said, her voice quivering with anger. "He's bothering people—trailing them into the other rooms. I don't want him in my house!"

The Kid bit his lip.

"Let me talk to him," he jerked, and made his way to where the fight manager stood.

"George," he said firmly, "you've gotta cut out bothering the guests, see? Otherwise, I'm gonna ask you to go home. Rose tells me you've been follow-

ing people into other rooms an' pesterin' them. Well, you can't do that."

Regan stared at him for a moment, and then brushed past him en route to the hall. At the steps he paused and addressed Rose vehemently.

"So I've been bustin' into other rooms, huh? I've been spyin' on people, have I—"

Lewis planted himself in front of Rose. "Now listen, Regan," he snapped. "Try to behave like a gentleman. Go on—get out!"

George glared at him truculently. "So Rose told the Kid what I was doin'," he grated. "Why didn't she tell him what I saw?"

"Get out of here!" Lewis snarled. "You're drunk!"

George Regan's restraint was sundered by a surge of violent rage. With a hoarse cry he launched himself at Lewis, striking him and then grappling with him.

Lewis staggered back to the wall, his face white and scared. There was an outcry among the guests. Then Kid Mason leapt across the room, seized George Regan and dragged him away bodily.

"George, George," he protested, "have you gone crazy?" His voice became more heated in its tone.

"You'd better go on home. Go on home, I said. You hear me? Get out!"

"Why, you poor dummy!" Regan blurted. "If you had any brains at all you'd see that this double-crossin' wife of yours—"

He never finished the sentence, for, eyes blazing, the Kid lashed out at him. His fist drove crashing into Regan's jaw, and, hurling him off his feet, sent the fight manager sprawling across the stairs.

The blow was hardly struck ere the Kid regretted it, and, with an exclamation, he ran forward and fell on his knees beside the man who was his best friend.

"George!" he groaned. "George!" "Throw him out in the street!"

It was Rose's voice, but the Kid scarcely heard her. Turning, he called

to the butler, ordering him to help him with George Regan's prone form.

When Regan recovered consciousness he was back in his own room near the training quarters. He was stretched out on a bed, and the Kid was bending over him, having apparently been making anxious efforts to revive him.

"George, I didn't mean to go so far," the Kid pleaded, "but I had to do it!"

"Aw, get out of here an' leave me alone!" Regan flung at him.

"George, you—"

"Get out of here!" Regan said fiercely. "Leave me alone!"

The Kid turned slowly.

The New Challenger.

MENEIL and old Jeff were talking in the gym.

"Look what he done to Sailor Hess," McNeil was saying. "Did you see the Sailor? Teeth knocked out, nose bleedin', broken jaw! A beautiful picture!"

"Well," declared Jeff, "Rattier O'Keefe can thank George Regan. George learned him everything he knows. Just the same, I'd like to know what George is holdin' him back for. Why don't he fix him up with more fights?"

"I can't figure George out lately," returned McNeil, "except that he's drinkin' too much—"

While these two discussed him and his latest protégé, George Regan was reclining on a sofa in his room, lost to his surroundings in the oblivion of a heavy slumber. In fact, a loud knocking on the door, followed by the entry of a man and a woman, failed to disturb him—so deep was his sleep.

The visitors were Rose Mason and Paul Lewis, and only by tapping the surface of a table with his cane did Lewis succeed in awakening Regan. The fight manager looked up, then blinked dazedly, and then heaved himself into a sitting posture.

"I hope you'll pardon our intrusion," said Lewis contemptuously, "but they told us at the gymnasium that we'd probably find you here."

"Drunk," added Rose. "Listen,



Still struggling savagely, the Kid was dragged from the dressing-room.

George, we've come here to tell you that you and the Kid are through. We had a talk with him last night, and he agrees with us that you're the wrong man for him."

"Oh, I see!" George Regan murmured. Then, nodding towards Lewis: "Is he the new manager?" he demanded.

"I have the honour of representing Mr. Mason," put in Lewis, "and I'm here to buy back that contract you had with the Kid. I presume you'll be willing to sell it to us."

"I will not," Regan answered. "But I'll give it to you. Only you'll have to understand this. Before I tear up that contract, the Kid will have to sign a paper. He may not remember the fact, but there's a clause in the contract that says he's got to fight whoever I say—any time—any place."

Rose looked at him venomously. "Oh, what a sap he was to sign a thing like that!" she bit out.

"Yeah, just a sap," agreed Regan carelessly. "But, all the same, before I tear up the contract, he's got to agree to give my new boy, Rattler O'Keefe, a shot at the championship within four months."

"He'll sign it," said Rose.

Regan grinned up at her.

"Fine," he observed. "Well, there's nothing more."

Rose took the hint.

"Come on, Paul," she said, turning towards the door.

"Certainly, my dear," Lewis drawled. Thus, two or three months later, somewhere on Long Island, smart Société crowds may have been seen flocking to the grounds of a villa which bore the sign, in large letters: "Kid Mason's Training Quarters."

In a room overlooking those grounds Kid Mason raged to and fro like a caged lion. He looked strung up, ill-tempered, out of harmony with his surroundings.

Old Jeff was with him, for, even after the Kid's treatment of Regan, the old fellow had not found it in his heart to abandon the champ.

"I hate to tell you this, Kid," Jeff was saying, "but we ain't gettin' nowhere. You ain't taken off a pound since we been here, and you're fightin' O'Keefe in two days—"

The Kid rounded on him.

"Well, I don't need to train to fight that guy!" he rapped out. "A fine camp this is, anyway. I gotta be promoter, manager, main attraction, and everything. Well, I can do it, see? I know more about fightin' than all you saps put together."

He turned to the window again, and suddenly his expression became still more resentful.

"Here comes Lewis," he said bitterly. "To see him swaggerin' out there you'd think he was the champion! Where's he been lately? He ain't showed up since last Saturday!"

Lewis entered the room a few seconds later.

"Hallo, Kid," he greeted breezily, and then, observing he was dressed in sweater and flannels: "Come, come," he went on, "get into your fighting togs, Kid. The crowd's waiting for an exhibition."

"Well, I don't feel like clowning for a bunch of yaps," the Kid shouted violently. "Tell them to beat it! D'you hear? Tell 'em to beat it! And listen, Lewis, it's a funny thing you can find so much to do in the city that you can't be down here."

Lewis' expression became uneasy.

"What do you mean?" he muttered.

"Just what I say," the Kid rapped out, and swung on his heel.

July 11th, 1931.

"Where are you going?" Lewis demanded.

"To see my wife," was the curt rejoinder. "Joe, get out the roadster!"

Lewis made his way to another room, picked up a telephone and asked for "Long Distance." A minute or so later he was in touch with the Kid's apartment in New York, and speaking to Rose.

"Listen," he said, in low but deliberate tones. "The Kid's on his way into town to see you. Now, I don't know if he's wise to anything or not, but he's been acting mighty funny."

"Oh, Paul," came the scared voice of Rose, "what'll I do?"

"Just watch your step," Lewis told her. "He's getting dressed now. He should be up there in about three hours."

And within three hours Kid Mason was at his suite in the City, confiding to Rose his hatred of the man who had taken George Regan's place as his manager.

"A fine manager that guy is," he ground out. "Where's he been all this last week, anyway?"

"Why, how should I know, Kid?" said Rose, a look of assumed innocence in her big blue eyes.

Mason v. O'Keefe.

ONCE again, as on the night when Kid Mason had defeated Shay, the famous Madison Square Gardens were packed with an eager throng, fight fans from all over the States awaiting the appearance of the contestants in the ring.

The odds were in favour of the champ., but in his dressing-room Kid Mason was pacing to and fro nervously, listening with impatience to the conflicting advice of his camp-followers.

"No, suh," a big Negro was saying. "De bcs' 'ting fo' de champ to do is to stop O'Keefe in de firs' round."

"Aw, you're crazy," put in old Jeff. "He's got to stall like he always does—see? Like George Regan always—"

Paul Lewis entered the room.

"How are you feeling, Kid?" he asked, approaching the champion. "Your bandages all right, eh?"

The Kid glared at him.

"Are you goin' to keep askin' me that all night?" he snapped. "Ain't you gettin' on my nerves enough?"

"What the Kid's got to do," old Jeff was saying, "is to wait for a perfect opening—"

"Shut up!" barked the Kid. "I'm rnmnin' this show, and I'll fight the way I want to!"

There was a knock on the door at that moment, and Lewis answered it. A messenger appeared with a batch of letters and telegrams wishing the champion success. The Kid did not look at them, but slung them on to a table, and he was pacing the dressing-room again when the official "inspector" dropped in with George Regan, rival manager, to examine the title-holder's bandages.

The inspector crossed to the Kid and took hold of his hands. George Regan remained in the doorway, and was standing there when his glance encountered the pile of correspondence that the Kid had flung on the table. Suddenly that glance fastened upon one of the letters, and with a surreptitious movement he picked it up and slipped it into his pocket, thinking that the gesture had passed unseen.

"You want to see the Kid's hands, George?" the inspector inquired a moment later.

"No, they're okay," Regan answered,

and he was turning to go when Lewis restrained him.

"Mr. Regan," Lewis said, "I don't believe that letter you took from the table belongs to you."

The Kid started violently and then strode past Lewis to confront Regan. "What's this?" he jerked. "Say, you gimme that letter. Come on—hand it over!"

"After the fight," George answered quietly, and the Kid's eyes blazed.

"Who are you to tell me when?" he stormed. "Come on, give me that letter!"

George Regan shrugged his shoulders. "You asked for it," he said between his teeth, and, throwing the missive on the table, he made his way back to O'Keefe's quarters.

The Kid ripped open the letter.

"Dear Mr. Mason," he read,— "Having come to Reno to secure a divorce from my husband, Paul Lewis, I think it only fair to advise you that I am naming your wife as the reason for my taking proceedings—on the basis of sufficient evidence in my possession.

"Respectfully,
"MRS. LOUISE LEWIS."

There was a moment's silence, and then the Kid, letting that message fall to the floor, wheeled suddenly and sprang at Lewis like a madman.

"You dirty hound!"

Jeff and two or three of the other men in the dressing-room clutched the Kid as Lewis stumbled back in alarm. There was a frenzied scuffle, interrupted by the advent of the official caller.

"Come on there, come on," the latter shouted. "They're waiting. Get your champ. in the ring."

Still struggling savagely, blind to everything but the revelation which that letter had contained, the Kid was dragged from the room. Only when he had gone did Lewis recover something of his composure, and stooped to snatch the tell-tale epistle from the floor.

A glance at its contents told him the reason for the Kid's outburst, and a few minutes later he was at Rose's flat, explaining the circumstances to her.

Rose took the news coolly enough at first, not realising the magnitude of the disaster.

"So your wife's going to sue me?" she sneered. "A fat chance she's got!"

"That isn't the half of it," said Lewis. "The Kid's read the letter and he's wise. Now listen. Get your jewels and grab all the money you can lay hands on, and let's get out of here."

Rose stood with her hands on her hips and regarded him insolently.

"So that's it," she mocked. "What do you think I'm going to do—support you? Do you think I'm going to be your meal ticket?"

Lewis stared at her, his eyes narrowing.

"I see, the angle," he ground out. "It's every man for himself, eh? All right, that's great. But before I go, I'm going to give you a nice little present."

He moved nearer to her, a queer smile playing around his lips. Then all at once he took his hand across her face in a resounding slap that left a broad red weal and raised a scream of pain from her.

About that same time, the first blow was about to be struck in the fight for the Middleweight Championship at Madison Square Gardens.

The clang of the bell had brought holder and challenger from their respec-

(Continued on page 28.)

Traditions—loyalty—iron nerves—tingling romance and stirring drama among the thundering guns of the mighty battle fleet! Starring Robert Montgomery, Dorothy Jordan and Ernest Torrence.



Shore Leave.

THE bugler rang out a call on the United States battleship Colorado one bright, summer morning, and a crowd of men at the double poured on to the foredeck. They formed up, and stood stiffly at attention as Captain Beatty, followed by his officers, stepped from his quarters on to the deck, and walked forward to a position just in front of the two great twelve-inch guns that peered out from their barbettes towards the bow.

Captain Beatty reached his post, and, with his staff, also came rigidly to attention. A moment later Admiral Corbin, in command of the fleet, came from his cabin to the deck. Grey-haired, tall and stately, with an unmistakable air of authority in his look, the admiral advanced to the group of officers. Salutes were exchanged, and the admiral indicated by a nod that he was ready to address the men.

The whole crew of the battleship was assembled on the foredeck to hear Admiral Corbin speak. Over a thousand men were gathered there, and yet the silence was profound. Only now and then a gust of wind flapping the bunting overhead broke the deep quiet as the admiral began his speech.

"Officers and men of the flagship Colorado, I have before me on this table the silver cup awarded by the Admiralty to the ship having the best record in gunnery at the last battle practice. You won the cup six months ago, and you must keep it when the fleet goes out again next week for another practice."

The admiral paused, and suddenly there smote upon the horrified ears of the crew the sound of cheerful voices upraised in song, seemingly from the stern of the battleship.

Chief-bo'sun's-mate Scott, standing at

the right hand of the group of officers, turned to a lieutenant near by.

"It's those 'gobs' on the oil barge alongside," he whispered hoarsely. "Shall I go and stop 'em making that row, sir?"

The lieutenant nodded assent, and the petty officer ran off to the stern. Chief-bo'sun's-mate Scott, known as "Scotty" to the whole crew, was a hard-boiled individual of splendid physique, stern of face and heavy of fist, who was feared and yet respected by the men under him.

He reached the stern and looked over the side. Just beneath was a naval oil barge which had come up that morning with a supply of fuel for the battleship, and on its deck were two sailors reclining at their ease and singing away heartily.

"Hi, you gobs!" yelled the petty officer wrathfully. "Stop that row! The admiral is making a speech!"

"Is he, really? Tell him to speak louder; we can't hear him."

Scotty glared at the speaker, one John Jones, a thin, wiry-looking fellow called "Jonesy" by his pals on the oil ship. Jonesy was not under the chief petty officer's orders, and he was well aware of the fact.

"If you must be a blinking canary," cried Scotty, "you might choose some other time to sing your song!"

Jonesy turned lazily to his pal Bryan, a short fat sailor, known to everyone as "Bilge."

"Say, Bilge," he remarked, "have you noticed that thing dressed up in all sorts of stars and stripes hanging over the rail up there? Do you think you would know it again if you saw it anywhere?"

"Take a good look at me, sailors!" shouted the petty officer furiously. "And you'll know me again, maybe!"

Gosh! If I had you aboard this ship I'd soon show you what I am."

"Says you!" said Jonesy, getting slowly to his feet. The admiral had finished his speech by this time, and a crowd of sailors had gathered around Scotty to listen with immense enjoyment to the altercation.

Jonesy made as if to go below, but he suddenly stooped and picked up a sponge, a very oily one. Turning, he lurled it straight up at the petty officer. The unsavoury missile struck Scotty on the forehead, knocking his cap off his head, while trickles of dirty oil ran down his face.

"You darned cuss!" roared the petty officer as his shipmates burst into hilarious laughter. "I'll have you in the cells for this. I'll—"

A bugle-call rang out, and Scotty could say no more. He went off at the double, after retrieving his cap, his shipmates following him, and Jonesy turned to Bilge with a cheerful grin.

"Guess he got what was coming to him, anyway," he laughed. "Well, that's enough of that! You coming on shore to-night, Bilge?"

"Sure I am, Jonesy," said his pal. "I reckon to find a girl somewhere this evening."

Jonesy looked at Bilge and grinned, for his pal did not rejoice in a form of manly beauty, and his efforts to obtain a girl had so far proved unsuccessful.

An hour later a jovial party of sailors on shore leave landed at the quay and made for the Sailors' Home at the double. Presently they streamed out again, no longer in the regulation blue uniform and white cap, but clad in ordinary civilian attire.

"Say, what you got there, Jonesy?" cried Bilge, noticing a parcel under his friend's arm as they came out together.

"Present for your girl, eh? You got a girl?"

"Sure I have, Bilge," replied Jonesy. "Met her last week. She's a real good-looker. I bought her some silk stockings for a present, and I'm off to her place right now."

"Has your girl got a sister who wouldn't mind walking out with me?" asked Bilge wistfully, surveying his tubby figure with considerable disgust.

"Huh!" snorted Jonesy scornfully. "My girl thinks I'm a big oil man from Oklahoma. You keep off; you might spill the beans!"

Jonesy sprinted off, leaving Bilge staring dismally after him.

"Guess I'll have a woman tattooed on me," he growled. "That's all I'm ever likely to get, I reckon."

Meanwhile Jonesy had turned into a garage to hire a car for the day. Getting into it, he drove away and out of the town for some miles until he came to a fair-sized house in the country. Here he got out and walked up to the door. A burly, ruffianly-looking fellow answered his knock.

"Er—docs Letitia live here?" he murmured, taken aback by the fierce glare the man cast upon him.

"Yes; she is my wife!" growled the fellow angrily.

Jonesy had met the fair Letitia only once, and he had no idea who she really was. He edged away from the truculent individual before him, and then a brilliant idea came into his mind.

"Can I interest you in some silk stockings?" he remarked persuasively.

"Not so much as you have interested me in this," shouted the man, producing a telegram. "Your name's Jones, I reckon. You sent this to my wife to say you were calling this evening, and now I'm going to bust you up till you can't stand!"

Discretion was undoubtedly the better part of valour at the moment. Leaving the question of the silk stockings, Jonesy began an immediate strategic retreat. He turned and bolted for the car at the top of his speed, followed by the indignant husband of the deceitful Letitia, breathing threats and slaughter. Reaching the car thirty yards ahead, Jonesy sprang in, and got her going in record time. He slid away just as the man made an ineffectual grab at the back of the car, and in another moment the unlucky sailor was driving down the road at a furious pace, well out of the reach of pursuit.

"And I told Bilge I'd got a girl!" he muttered as he drove along. "I've done with women! I'd better stick to old Bilge after this."

Another car, driven by a well-dressed young man of about his own age, ranged up alongside. Jones stepped on the gas, and forged ahead, but not for long. The other driver accelerated, too, and soon the cars were racing furiously side by side. Jonesy was not a very experienced driver, and he missed a collision by the narrowest margin as he strove to outdistance the other car. Presently he managed to get a little ahead, and turned to grin at his rival. The next second the car hit a barrier that stretched across the road, and the steering-wheel was jerked out of Jonesy's hand. The car slewed across the road to the gateway of a house on the other side, smashed through the gate, and overturned in the garden.

The other motorist pulled up, got out, and went to help. He approached the overturned car, and peered beneath it for the dead body of the driver, but in vain. Walking round to the other side, he observed Jonesy stretched flat on the ground under a tree, quite motionless, but with a cigarette still stuck in his mouth. He went up to the prone figure, July 11th, 1931.

expecting to find that the reckless fellow was badly injured, if not dead, but as he approached Jonesy sat up.

"Gimme a light, pal!" cried the sailor cheerfully. "My cigarette's gone out, I've lost my girl and I've busted the car. But John Jones, the oil expert from South America, is okay—sure!"

The Millionaire from Brazil.

THE young fellow who had been racing with Jonesy was a gay blade from the town; Edward Watkins by name, though most of his friends never called him anything but "What-Ho!" He surveyed the nonchalant Jonesy with a grin as the sailor rose to his feet, but his amusement immediately turned to surprise.

Jonesy's first action was to pick up a big stone and hurl it straight at a statue of the goddess Venus which stood in the garden. Crash! And a piece of the arm flew into the air. Another stone, and Venus was deprived of her head!

"What's the idea, boy?" asked What-Ho in amazement as Jonesy stooped to find another stone.

"I'm not going mad, if that's what you mean," cried Jonesy airily. "I'm a woman-hater, that's all. Here goes!"

"So am I!" exclaimed What-Ho, seizing a lump of rock and throwing it at the statue.

In two minutes there was nothing left of the goddess of beauty, and the young men paused to take breath.

"That's what I should like to do to all these cheap dames one meets," said Jonesy. "I guess I feel better now."

"You come up to my place, boy, and just clean yourself up and have a rest," said What-Ho heartily. "Never mind the old car. We'll send someone from town to collect the pieces."

"Thanks," said Jonesy. "I'll sure come, Mr. —"

"Aw, shucks, don't call me 'Mister'! My name's Watkins, but my pals seem to reckon it's What-Ho. Hop in my car, and I'll step on it."

What-Ho stepped on it to such purpose that in a few minutes his car drew up outside a fine mansion on the outskirts of the town. Jonesy looked at the house, and then at his new acquaintance.

"Say, What-Ho, is this your house?" he asked dubiously.

"Sure it's my house," laughed his companion. "Come right in."

Jonesy, not without some inward tremors, stepped right in, and found himself in the most palatial residence he had ever seen. What-Ho led him upstairs to his dressing-room, and told him that there was a swell party that evening.

"You stop, boy, and I'll fit you up right," said the good-natured Watkins. "You're just about my size, and I've got more dress suits than I know what to do with. Let's hurry up and give them a treat."

They hurried up, and soon Jonesy, clad in evening dress, was surveying himself in a glass.

"Good-evening, I'm pleased to meet you!" he remarked, smiling to his own reflection.

"Come on, big boy!" cried What-Ho, and the pair went downstairs together, until half-way down they met a lady.

"Hallo, here's auntie!" exclaimed Jonesy's new pal jovially. "Auntie, meet my friend Jones, big oil man from South America, Brazil, I believe. Jones, kiss auntie!"

Jones did not go quite so far as to kiss auntie, but he shook hands cordially with the lady, trying hard to feel that he really was an oil magnate from Brazil.

"You boys go down, and give the folks a surprise," said auntie, and down into the ball-room they went. The room was full of men and women dancing, and the first persons whom Jonesy noticed were two of the officers of the flagship.

His first impulse was to bolt before they saw him, but he reflected that though he knew them by sight, it was highly improbable that they would recognise a sailor from the oil-tanker, and he accompanied What-Ho across the room coolly enough.

"There's Mary Lou!" cried his host eagerly. "Come and meet her, Jones."

"Thought you were a woman-hater," remarked the sailor surprisedly.

"So I am. She's why. Hallo, Mary Lou! This is my pal from Brazil, Mr. Jones."

Jonesy pulled himself together and bowed politely to a pretty girl with light fluffy hair, who looked past him and smiled at What-Ho.

"Yes, he's in oil," continued What-Ho, as a beautiful little lady, with lovely dark hair and a bewitching smile, came up with her dance partner. "Hallo, here's Kit!"

Jonesy looked at Kit, and his fate was sealed. He fell for her then and there. Mary Lou was well enough, but to his mind she was not in the same state with the charming newcomer.

"Meet my friend Jones, Kit," boomed What-Ho. "Oil millionaire from Brazil. Jones, meet Kit and Lieutenant Michael of the Colorado—we call him Mike, of course."

"May I have the next dance, please?" said Jonesy to Kit.

"You must ask my partner," replied the girl, indicating the lieutenant, who was regarding the young sailor with anything but a cheery eye.

"I want to dance the next with this lady," said Jones, quailing inwardly, but putting a bold face on the matter. "Do you mind?"

"Of course I mind!" snorted the lieutenant. "This lady is my partner."

And he swung Kit away, leaving Jones stranded helplessly in the corner until What-Ho left Mary Lou and came over to him.

"What's the matter, Jones?"

"Nothing!" said the young sailor shortly. "My girl has gone off with that officer fellow, that's all."

"Your girl, eh?" laughed What-Ho. "I'll say you've got some nerve. Do you know that she is— Why, there's some stiff making off with Mary Lou! I'll get her back. You watch me."

He rushed off, slapped Mary Lou's partner on the back, and, as the startled man turned round, What-Ho seized the girl and danced off with her. Jonesy followed his example, and managed to detach Kit from the lieutenant.

"I think you're swell!" remarked Jonesy as he danced round the room.

"Do you?" said Kit softly.

She rather liked this bold young stranger with his handsome face and his air of recklessness, and she gave him a shy glance from under her dark eyelashes. That looked finished Jonesy completely, in spite of his resolution to have done with women.

"Yes, I do," he replied in a voice that actually trembled. "Say, are you engaged to that officer?"

"Lieutenant Michael? I don't know why you should ask," said Kit. "But if you want to know, I'm not, not really, though my father wants me to be."

"Well, you're not going to be," stated Jonesy firmly. "I want you."

Kit laughed, and a heavy hand fell on Jonesy's shoulder. He started convulsively, and the lieutenant snatched Kit from him.

Once again Jonesy stood alone, but presently he strolled over to What-Ho. "Are you game for a swell scheme I've got?" he asked. "You get Mary Lou, and I'll get Kit, and we'll go down to the beach."

"Great idea!" laughed his friend. "Only one snag in it. Mike won't let Kit out of his sight this evening."

"Oh, won't he?" cried Jonesy. "I'll fix him. You get the car out, and I'll bring Kit along."

Jonesy vanished, and five minutes later Lieutenant Michael was informed that he was wanted on the telephone. Rising with extreme annoyance, for he had been making love to Kit, and fancied that she was responding to his advances, he went hurriedly to the instrument.

"Is that Lieutenant Michael?" came a voice. "This is the Admiralty office calling. You are to report on the flagship at once."

Mike did not recognise the voice, but it did not occur to him that the message might be a fake, and he set off hastily for the battleship, while the jubilant Jonesy piloted Kit down to the car. Long before Mike returned, furious with anger at the trick that someone had played upon him, What-Ho, with Jonesy and the two girls, were miles away on the beach.

"I'm staying in the car," said What-Ho, pulling up and putting his arm round Mary Lou. "You go down to the beach if you want to."

"Get up," said Mary Lou. "Don't be so lazy."

"You might as well tell a volcano to stop sizzling," replied What-Ho. "Here I am, and here I stay. And so do you!"

Jonesy helped Kit out, and they strolled down to the beach and sat down on a rock. The waves were breaking gently on the shore, the moon was shining brightly overhead, and everything in the scene invited romance. Able-Seaman Jones, of the oil-tanker Galveston, found himself alone with a charming girl who thought he was a millionaire from Brazil. It was Jonesy's opportunity, and he seized it to the full.

In ten minutes he had made more progress in Kit's affections than Mike had made in six months. The girl was startled by his whirlwind way of love-making, but secretly she was pleased that she had inspired such an ardent affection in so short a time. And when presently the sky clouded and it began to rain she asked Jonesy to accompany her home to see her father.

Another splendid mansion was destined to receive a visit from the supposed millionaire that night, and when Jonesy saw the girl's home he was a little startled. Kit's father, a tall, grey-haired gentleman of commanding presence, welcomed his daughter affectionately, and she introduced Jones as an oil magnate from South America.

"Yes, I'm in oil," said Jonesy, as he shook hands. "Only able to get away week-ends, and not always then."

Kit's father retired, and Jonesy talked to the girl for so long that presently he realised with a start that he would have to hurry to reach his ship before his leave expired. Taking a hurried farewell, which included a considerable amount of kissing, he rushed

away, promising to come next week-end.

"Wish I could see you before that, Kit darling," he cried regretfully, "but I can't possibly get away till then."

Jonesy's wish was granted. He saw his "girl" the very next day, though he had not been able to "get away." And the next day he was not "Mr. Jones from South America," but merely Able-seaman Jones, just a "gob" in the American navy, a person of no importance whatever. And little did he guess in what circumstances he would meet the charming Kit again.

On the Flagship.

THE bugler got busy on the reveille next morning much too early for Able-seaman Jones. He roused himself, opened his eyes, heard sailors muttering and growling all round him, and sank back again in his bunk, but not to sleep.

"Come along, sailors! Tumble up! Step lively!" yelled a petty officer.

"I think I'll have my breakfast in bed this morning, if nobody minds," remarked Bilge, yawning.

"Able-seaman Jones to report to executive officer at once!" shouted the petty-officer. "Now, Jones, step on it. Put on your regulation kit, and hurry."

Jonesy got up reluctantly and dressed himself, thinking of his next week-end with delighted anticipation. Presently he knocked at the executive officer's door, and a sliding hatch was pulled open.

"Able-seaman Jones, sir!"

"Ah, yes," said the officer. "Well, Jones, a draft of five men is detailed to be transferred to the flagship this morning. You will take charge of the draft as the senior man, and report on the Colorado at ten o'clock. The names are Jones, Bryan, Wilson, Edwards, McConnell. Go and warn the others, get your kit together, and report here in an hour for further instructions. Got that?"

Jones had most certainly got it. The order came like a knockout blow to him, for there would be few week-ends from the flagship, and on the flagship was a petty-officer who was thirsting for his blood.

"I'm not going on the flagship. I'm stopping here," he announced loudly to the closed door.

The hatch opened again and the officer looked out.

"Who the dickens asked you to say what you're going to do?" he barked fiercely. "Go and carry out my orders, and quick, too!"

"Okay, chief!" said Jones sheepishly, edging away.

At ten o'clock the draft reported, as ordered, on the Colorado, and soon Jonesy and Bilge with the others were busily engaged in swabbing the deck.

"I don't like this draft we've fetched



"Why, if it ain't the canary!" cried a jubilant voice. "My prayers are answered!"

up in," moaned Bilge dismally. "I wanna go back on our little oil-barge. There's going to be too much work here, and anyway, I want something to eat right now."

"Huh, you got too lazy on that oil-barge!" grunted Jonesy. "You did nothing but eat. Work on, kid, and take some of that fat off your bones!"

"Why, if it ain't the canary!" cried a jubilant voice. "My prayers are answered!"

Jonesy, kneeling on the deck, looked up and saw the huge form of Chief Petty-officer Scott towering over him. Scotty had an expression of fiendish joy on his face, and Jones remembered with inward trepidation that little incident of the oily sponge.

"I'll teach you to throw sponges at me!" howled Scotty, seizing Jonesy by the neck in a powerful grip. The victim wriggled helplessly, and the petty-officer pushed his head down into a pail of water that stood conveniently near. The water was not exactly clean, and Jonesy spluttered and gurgled furiously, but all in vain. Down went his head again, and yet again, while the other ratings standing round rolled about in paroxysms of laughter. Scotty had certainly had his revenge.

"There, sailor, that'll show you I ain't the man to be monkeyed about with," cried Scotty, at last letting his victim go. "Now you and the other men from the oil-ship come with me."

Scotty led the five men to the officer on duty, and they were detailed for various jobs in the afternoon.

"Jones—about all we've got left, sir," said Scotty, indicating the new man with a contemptuous wave of the hand when duties for the others had been arranged.

"Well, he'll do, I suppose," said the officer. "Jones—admiral's barge. That's all, bos'n. Take 'em off now."

So in the afternoon Jonesy went off as one of the crew of the admiral's barge, a smart motor launch, to fetch Admiral Corbin out to the flagship.

"Fine old man, the admiral," remarked one of the crew to Jonesy. "You seen him?"

"No," replied the young sailor. "I know Captain Beatty by sight and two of the other officers, that's all."

"Boathook there, Jones!" yelled a petty-officer as they approached the shore.

Jonesy seized a boathook and steadied the barge alongside the jetty. A moment later Admiral Corbin, accompanied by a lady, came down the sloping way towards the barge, and Able-seaman Jones found himself staring incredulously at Kit and her father.

The recognition was mutual. The admiral glanced at the sailor standing on his launch, and knew him at once. Without moving a muscle of his face, he handed his daughter on board and gave the order to return to the flagship. Kit had not so much self-control, for she flushed violently, and then became very pale, but she pulled herself together by a great effort and passed Jones without even looking at him.

Later that day Admiral Corbin faced his daughter in the seclusion of his cabin on the Colorado.

"So your millionaire from Brazil turns out to be a seaman on my flagship, transferred to us this morning from that oil-tanker alongside," he said.

"After all, father, the joke's on me," replied Kit, smiling a wry sort of smile.

"He had something to do with oil."

"He sailed under false colours—ashamed of his uniform," growled the admiral. "You must not speak to him again, Kit."

"I don't think he was ashamed of his uniform," said the girl. "It was just a joke, that's all."

"Making love to you, and staying very late in my house—jokes, too, eh? I tell you, girl, this business must finish. You don't seem to realise the seriousness of it. If that fellow talks about you—"

"He won't say a word. I know he won't!" cried Kit.

"He'd better not," said the admiral grimly. "I can't understand you, Kit. You saw this man for the first time last night at the Watkins party, you say? I wonder how he got there, by the way. And now—it's ridiculous. I want you to marry into the Navy and keep up the family tradition; but there's Michael, a very good fellow."

"I know he is," replied Kit in a low tone, "and I like him very much; but I love John. And you can't turn love on and off like a fountain."

"Love at first sight, eh? Now listen, girl. You are all I've got. Don't break my heart. I'll suffer enough when I leave the Service in six months' time. Don't speak to this man Jones until after I retire. Will you promise, Kit?"

There was a silence for some minutes, while the girl looked earnestly at her father. She saw that he was deeply affected, and at last she spoke.

"Okay, dad! Okay, skipper!" she said, drawing herself up and saluting the admiral solemnly.

So when, a little later, Jonesy saw the admiral's daughter step on to the barge to return to the shore, and looked eagerly at her, she passed him as though he did not exist. When the launch reached the jetty, she ran very rapidly up the slope to her car and jumped in.

To the astonishment of the crew, Jones raced after her, in spite of an indignant bellow from the petty officer in charge.

"You might give me a chance to explain. You might—well, you didn't tell me who you were, anyway!"

"Okay, skipper!" murmured Kit, letting in the clutch without looking at the young sailor, and starting off, while Jones gazed after her with growing indignation.

"Okay, if that's the way you feel about it," he cried. "Okay, okay, okay!"

Battle Practice.

ABLE-SEAMAN JONES, feeling not just in the best of spirits, was cleaning the smoke-stack next morning when a shout from the deck startled him.

"Jones, come down," cried Scotty. "I've got a much better job for you."

Jonesy got down, and observed the traces of a grin lingering on the petty officer's face. He followed Scotty to the officer's quarters, wondering what new misfortune was to befall him.

Scotty knocked at a cabin door and entered.

"Here's the man, sir," he said, hauling Jonesy in, and forthwith retiring.

Jones found himself face to face with Lieutenant Michael, and he had perforce to stand to attention, and to compose his face to a suitable expression of respect.

"I won't ask you what game you

were up to the other night, Jones," said the lieutenant with ominous calm, "but I'll tell you this. If ever I see you approaching Miss Corbin again, I'll knock you through the side of this ship."

An inarticulate sound came from Jones.

"What did you say?" demanded Mike.

"I said 'Very good, sir,'" replied Jonesy, backing slowly away towards the door.

"Shut the door," cried the lieutenant angrily.

"Very good, sir," replied the young sailor. He saluted and went out, shutting the cabin door with exaggerated care. In the passage stood Scotty, waiting for him.

"C'mon, Jones," cried Scotty. "You're detailed for gun number three—my gun—and the practice is on Monday. We've got to get busy. C'mon!"

Down in the casemate of gun number three, the old hands scented fun when they saw Scotty bring along a new man.

"Three men were killed on this gun the last time we had battle practice," remarked a gunner lugubriously.

"Yeah! And the first one to go was the one who had the job you've got—lifting up the shells," said another.

"Aw, shut your mouth," growled Scotty. "Don't you believe 'em, Jones. They're trying to make you quit. But I ain't having quitters on my gun, see? And now get to it, sailors, and we'll try for the record again."

Monday came, and the Colorado steamed out to sea with the fleet. Racing along at twenty-five knots the great battleship came level with her target, an obsolete cruiser anchored some miles away. Up above, the gunnery officers were busy getting the range, and presently orders came down, and the great guns roared out, sending their shells over miles of water to crash into the target.

On the bridge, the admiral, the captain and a group of other officers watched keenly, noting the rapidity of the fire of each gun, and the hits made, so far as could be observed through the smother of smoke that surrounded the ship.

"Number three gun is too slow," remarked the admiral presently. "It's a couple of rounds at least behind all the others."

The remark was true, for in the midst of the hurry and bustle of loading the unlucky Jones had dropped a shell. In spite of the heated words of Scotty, the consequent delay could not be made up, and the gun finished with the worst record of any on the ship.

A lieutenant came hurrying down at the end of the practice.

"Admiral says your gun's too slow," he cried. "Bos'n, you're in charge here. You'll answer for this."

"I'll answer for this!" howled Scotty, turning furiously on Jones when the officer had gone. "You spoil our record, you yellow pup, and I answer for it! You'll answer some, too!"

With a leap he came at Jonesy, and a terrific straight left took that unfortunate sailor in the right eye. He went backwards with a crash, and when he got up, ruefully enough, Scotty had gone.

"You saw that, Bilge!" howled Jonesy. "I'm lodging a complaint, and you're a witness, and don't you forget it."

Jones duly brought his complaint

against the petty officer, and the matter was dealt with on the next morning at the hour of "Divisions."

"Able-seaman Jones!" called the first lieutenant.

Jonesy stepped forward briskly, removed his cap, and stood stiffly to attention. The commander took a document and began to read:

"Able-seaman Jones complains that on the seventh instant, after the conclusion of practice, Chief Bo'sun's Mate Scott struck him in the right eye and knocked him down, thereby causing a contusion on his eye and bruises about his body."

"Relate the circumstances, Jones," said the captain.

"Sir, I was a bit nervous—it was my first gun practice—and I dropped a shell, and Scotty—"

"Who?" barked the captain.

"Chief Petty Officer Scott, sir. He wasn't very pleased about it, so he hit me in the eye and knocked me down."

"What have you to say to this accusation, bo'sun?" asked Captain Beatty.

Scotty came smartly to attention, fixed his gaze on the horizon, and in a perfectly expressionless voice he told his tale.

"Sir, I have to say that Able-seaman Jones fell down a hatch just after the gun practice, and dented his lamp—I mean damaged his eye—in so doing."

Captain Beatty suppressed a smile as a guffaw came from the ratings standing around, and he surveyed Jonesy's right eye, which bore every evidence of a direct blow from a hefty fist. He looked at the petty officer dubiously, and then turned to Jones.

"Any witnesses, Jones?"

"Yes, sir! Able-seaman Bilge, sir!" "Able-seaman—who?" asked the captain.

"Able-seaman Bryan, I mean, sir."

The captain looked down at another document on his table, and everyone guessed that he had glanced at the charge-sheet.

Bilge came forward, and Scotty fixed him with a fierce glare under which the tubby little fellow visibly wilted.

"Well, Bryan," said the captain, "you saw the bo'sun strike Jones in the eye, or, alternatively, you saw Jones fall down a hatch, did you?"

"N-no, sir!" stammered Bilge, with one eye on the petty officer, and unheeding the reproachful gaze of his pal.

"Well, what did you see?"

"Nothing, sir—nothing at all!"

The captain looked at Scotty, Jones and Bilge in turn, and remained in deep thought for some moments.

"It's obvious that either Petty Officer Scott or Able-seaman Jones is not detailing the exact facts about this incident," he said at length. "Go away, both of you, and come back when you have settled the truth between you. Next!"

The first lieutenant took up the charge-sheet and read aloud:

"Able-seaman Bryan is charged with using profane language in the presence of the admiral this morning."

"Anything to say, Bryan?" asked the captain.

"Well, sir," said Bilge hurriedly. "it was like this. I was swabbing down of the deck, sir, and the admiral was standing not very far away. And a sailor was painting the mast, and he tilted his can so that the paint ran down my neck."

"Go on," said Captain Beatty, hiding a smile as Bilge paused for breath.

"Sir, I got up and I says—I says: 'You—er—you sailor up there, you must be much more careful, you really must.'"

"That was all you said, was it?"

"Well, sir, I may have put in one or two extra words," admitted Bilge. "The paint was a-running down my neck, sir, and I didn't feel what you might call very happy at the moment."

"Well, Bryan," said the captain, "when you have occasion in the future to ask a comrado to be 'much more careful,' don't do it near the admiral. That's all. Case dismissed!"

Bilge ran off joyfully just as Scotty and Jones came back. The spectators observed with interest that the seaman's face was now adorned with two black eyes.

"I have to report, sir," said Jonesy slowly, "that I have just—fallen down another hatch!"

"Case dismissed!" said the captain.

Scotty Tells the Truth.

THE crew of the Colorado assembled once more on the foredeck one day nearly six months later, and Admiral Corbin again addressed the men.

"We are going out on gun-practice to-morrow," he remarked. "This will be for me the last practice, for, as you know, I retire next week, and Admiral Schuyler takes over the flagship. I want you to make to-morrow's gunnery a record even for the Colorado!"

When the crew had been dismissed, Admiral Corbin turned to Captain Beatty.

"I showed you that letter from the Admiralty," he said with a break in his voice. "That was my death-warrant, that order to retire."

"Oh, don't say so, sir!" cried the captain reproachfully. "I trust you have many more years before you yet."

"No, I shall not be able to live an inactive life," replied the admiral, shaking his head. "I am sixty-four next week, and I have been in the Navy, boy and man, for nearly fifty years. The deck of a warship is my home. When I haul down my flag next week I feel that will be the end."

"But—Miss Corbin, sir," the captain reminded him.

"Ah, yes, Kit!" said the admiral thoughtfully. "She will do her best to make my retirement happy, but—well, enough of this. We must excel our record in gunnery to-morrow, and then I shall go out satisfied. See Bos'n Scott about that number three gun. He must do better this time."

Scotty intended to make sure that his gun did better. He instructed his men individually and minutely in their duties; but when, an hour before the practice was due to begin, Able-seaman Jones was nowhere to be seen, the petty-officer's anger boiled over.

Jonesy bent over the lieutenant in triumph. "Now perhaps you'll understand that Kit is mine!" he cried.



"Where's that darned skunk Jones?" he vociferated. "I'll break that pup's neck before I've done with him!"

"He's in the ward-room playing cards with two marines," said a voice.

"Two marines!" howled Scotty. "I'll teach him to play at cards with marines when he ought to be at his gun."

Out of the casemate went Scotty at the double. He found Jones, sure enough, with the marines.

"I reckon I've had enough of this ship," said Jonesy, just as the petty-officer rushed in. "I'm tired of being bossed about by Scotty. I'm going to quit this Navy."

"Going to quit the Navy, are you?" yelled Scotty, yanking Jones to his feet. "Not just yet you ain't. Out of this! Your job's on the gun!"

Jonesy wriggled free and punched Scotty on the jaw. The move was more plucky than wise, for the petty-officer fell upon him, floored him with a tremendous right, knocked him down again as soon as he got up, and finally hauled him off to gun number three, battered and helpless.

"Now get to it!" he shouted. "You drop a shell this time, and I'll drop you overboard! Get to it!"

Jones got to it. He was no match in brute force for the stalwart petty-officer, and he had realised long ago that complaints to the officers were useless.

Once again the great guns roared, and the knot of officers on the bridge watched the results eagerly.

"Number three gun is better this time," said the admiral, as the practice neared its end. "In fact, I think it has registered more hits than any other."

The crew of number three gun had toiled with desperate and unceasing vigour, and Jonesy in particular had worked this time with great speed and accuracy. And when the results of the practice were ascertained it was found that the flagship had surpassed its own previous record in gunnery, and that Bos'n Scott's gun had more hits to its credit than any other gun on board.

When the news came, Scotty was beside himself with joy. His grim face relaxed into a smile when the admiral and the captain congratulated him, and later he held a parade of the gun's crew in order to give each man the small piece of cloth on which the letter "E"—standing for "Efficient"—was embroidered.

"Here's your 'E,' You should be proud of that, kid," said Scotty to Jones, when his turn came. "You worked darned well this time."

Jonesy took the letter, turned it round and round in his fingers, sidled away and dropped the bit of cloth through the nearest porthole, while Scotty watched him out of the corner of his eye, but said nothing at the moment.

The flagship returned to port, and a day or two later the officers arranged for a dance to be held on board. Many guests were invited, and all the Colorado's launches were busily employed in bringing parties from the shore to the battleship.

"You go on the admiral's barge again, Jones," ordered Scotty early that evening, and Jonesy made several trips to and fro, wondering whether he would see Kit, and whether, if he did, she would this time speak to him.

On the last trip the launch made. Lieutenant Michael, resplendent in the glory of full uniform, assisted the admiral's daughter to embark on the barge, and guided her carefully to a seat. Jonesy stood moodily by the gangway, but Kit did not so much as glance

at him, and once more he vowed to himself that he had done with women.

The barge reached the battleship, and Miss Corbin was helped out by Mike. She began to climb the gangway, and the officer was stepping off the swaying launch to follow, his eyes still fixed on Kit as she ascended the ladder. At that moment Jones, who was also gazing fixedly at the girl, let slip the boat-hook with which he was keeping the barge to the side of the ship. Before he could recover his grip the launch yawed away, and instantly a cry arose.

"Man overboard!" shouted a score of voices.

Lieutenant Michael had fallen between the barge and the ship into the sea.

Lifebelts and ropes were hastily thrown down, and in a couple of minutes the officer was hauled back to the deck of the barge. Dripping with water, minus his cocked hat, and with his dignity completely gone, he shouted angrily for Jones.

"You're under arrest for gross neglect of duty," he cried. "Go up on deck and report yourself. Bos'n, see to it."

Jonesy slowly climbed the ladder, followed by the enraged lieutenant. At the top a crowd of guests, hanging over the rail, watched eagerly, and Kit, forgetting for the moment her promise to her father, spoke to the young sailor as he reached the deck.

"I'm sorry you're in trouble," she murmured softly.

Jonesy glanced at her indignantly, and then, lifting his head high and squaring his shoulders, he marched off in the wake of the petty-officer. Next morning he found himself once more in the presence of the captain at "Divisions."

"Able-seaman Jones is charged with gross neglect of duty in that last evening, being engaged in assisting at the disembarkation of guests, he allowed the admiral's barge to yaw off from the side of the flagship, so causing Lieutenant Michael to fall into the sea."

The commander read out the charge in a funeral voice amid the suppressed chuckles of the bystanders. Evidence was given by Mike, who accused Jonesy of deliberately allowing him to fall overboard.

"One question, Lieutenant Michael," said the captain. "Do you know of any reason why Able-seaman Jones should act in such a way towards you in particular?"

"No, sir," said Mike, after a moment's hesitation, though he knew, of course, that there was a very good reason—Kit. But it would not do to say so.

"Anything to say, Jones?" asked Captain Beatty.

"Sir, it was an accident," replied the seaman. "The barge rolled just as the lieutenant was stepping off, and I lost grip for a moment."

"H'm!" said the captain. "Witnesses?"

Scotty came forward, and as Jonesy looked sideways at him his heart sank. Here was a glorious opportunity for the petty-officer to get his revenge for that complaint about the black eye.

"I saw Lieutenant Michael stepping off the barge, sir," he began, "and it swung out just at that moment. Didn't notice what Jones was doing, sir, but I observed that the lieutenant was not looking where he was going."

"Well, and what was he doing?" asked the captain.

Mike glanced fiercely at Scotty, whose face was even more impassive than usual as he continued his evidence.

"He was looking at—at some of the guests going up the ladder, sir."

The captain, with a great effort, preserved his iron composure, but stifled coughs behind him betrayed the feelings of the other officers.

"Ah, I see," remarked Captain Beatty. "Well, lieutenant, I think we must put this unfortunate occurrence down to one of those accidents which will happen at times. The case is dismissed," he concluded formally.

The Admiral Retires.

JONESY made his way below to find Scotty, for he was completely bewildered by the unexpected attitude of the petty officer. He found the bo'sun at length, and stood looking at him for a moment in silence.

"Why did you do that for me, you old gorilla?" he asked.

"Huh!" growled Scotty. "You're one of my gun's crew, and I don't let my men down. Besides, I told the truth, anyway."

"Well, thanks, bo'sun!" said Jonesy heartily.

"You come here and sit down, kid," replied Scotty, quite amiably. "I wanna talk to you some."

Jonesy sat down by Scotty's side, wondering what was to come next.

"You're a strange kid, Jones," said the bo'sun. "You're stubborn, and you want your own way, but you've got pluck. Ay, and you're better educated than most of the gobs. You've the makings of an officer about you, if only you knew it!"

"Says you!" laughed Jonesy.

"You wished you were up on deck last night, dancing with some of those dames," Scotty went on. "Well, I reckon you might do that some day. Where's your 'E,' kid?" he asked, breaking off suddenly.

"I lost it," muttered Jonesy.

"You pitched it out of a porthole. Oh, yes, I saw you. You're a young fool if you throw your chances away as you threw away that 'E,' boy."

"I oughtn't to have done that," admitted Jonesy; "but I guess I was mad with you that morning, bo'sun."

"Now look you here, kid," said Scotty. "I was asked to recommend twelve men to take the entrance examination at Annapolis, and I put you down among 'em, and the admiral has passed the list. He asked me specially about you. I dunno why he should. And I told him you were a downright smart kid."

"Annapolis?" exclaimed Jonesy in amazement.

"Sure, Annapolis! You pass that exam, and you get your four years in the Naval College. You come out and give orders instead of taking 'em. Why, if you stepped on board here, and you said 'Chief-bo'sun's-mate Scott, go for'ard and call up your gun crew,' I should salute and say 'Yessir!' and I should be glad."

With that Scotty went out, and Jonesy leaned back in his seat thinking.

"That's certainly some idea," he murmured, "me giving orders to Scotty. I sure must think about it!"

A few more days passed, and the crew of the Colorado mustered for the solemn ceremony of the hauling down of Admiral Corbin's flag, and the hoisting of that of his successor. For the last time the shrill trilling of the bo'sun's pipe welcomed the old man on board, for the last time a quota of sideboys sprang to the rail as he mounted the gangway, while on the quarter-deck a company of marines was drawn up in imposing guard formation.

"Officers and men of the flagship Colorado," said the admiral in a voice just as firm as ever, "I have but few words to say. The day has come for me to haul down my flag, and I cannot ex-

press the regret I feel at leaving the Service in which I have spent all my life. I thank you all for the loyalty and devotion which has made this ship the pride of the fleet, and I am sure that you will give the same loyalty and devotion to my successor, Admiral Schuyler. And now—good-bye!"

The crew cheered Admiral Corbin again and again, but as his flag came fluttering down from the mast-head their cheers died away into silence. An officer seized the flag and ceremoniously presented it to the admiral, who retired to his cabin as Admiral Schuyler's flag was hoisted aloft.

Presently Admiral Corbin came on deck again, dressed this time in civilian clothes, and carrying his flag over his arm. He shook hands with his officers one by one, and then left for the shore amidst thunders of cheering from the crews, and a salute of guns from all the warships in the harbour.

"I feel that my life is over, Kit," he said later that day to his daughter, as they sat together in a room of the hotel near the harbour, where they were staying for a few days before going home.

"Oh, dad!" cried Kit reproachfully. "Fancy saying that when you're still got me. Now you'll be able to have a nice peaceful time ashore, and I'll be able to see something of you. So cheer up, skipper!"

"I'll try, though I'm no longer the skipper," said her father mournfully.

"Dad," asked the girl rather timidly, "now that you have retired, may I—may I speak to—John?"

"John?" queried the admiral. "Oh, you mean young Jones! Well, I don't know. I suppose you'll do as you please in the end, whatever I may say. He's no longer on the flagship; he's gone elsewhere."

"Where, dad?" asked Kit eagerly.

"You will find out soon enough, Kit. I was talking about him to Captain Beatty yesterday, and the captain told me something about him that would please you. But perhaps I had better leave him to tell you his news himself."

"Oh, dad!" cried the girl. "Then I may speak to him?"

"I suppose I must say yes," said her father. "And now run away for a while, Kit. I've got some letters to write, and presently I shall go down to the quay to have another look at the ships."

Kit went out and sat on the veranda,

wondering when she would next see Jonesy, and what his news could be. Lieutenant Michael had arranged to call for her at seven o'clock, but she had forgotten the appointment altogether, and in fact Mike did not even enter her thoughts.

At a quarter to seven a young man dressed in a civilian suit entered the lounge-hall of the hotel and approached the clerk.

"I'm Lieutenant Jones from Amapolis," he remarked. "Is Miss Corbin in the hotel?"

"She is out on the veranda, sir, I believe," said the clerk, and the cadet forthwith made his way to the veranda to look for Kit.

He stood hesitating when he saw the girl seated there, for he felt very doubtful as to the reception he was likely to meet. But Kit, as soon as she saw him, sprang to her feet with a joyful cry.

"Why, it's you!" she exclaimed. "Whatever are you doing in those clothes?"

Jonesy instantly forgot that the girl had ignored his existence for the last six months. Kit seemed pleased to see him, and that was enough.

"Didn't you know?" he said. "I took the entrance examination at Amapolis last week, and somehow I managed to come top of the list, and I'm entered there for the four years' course."

"How lovely!" cried Kit, beaming with joy. "How glad I am!"

"Come down to the beach, Kit," said Jonesy. "You know—where we went that night. I've got a car outside."

"Oh!" exclaimed the girl, suddenly remembering. "I can't! I said I would go out with Mike this evening."

"Never mind him," urged Jonesy. "Make him wait. I'm taking you with me."

And so, when, at seven o'clock, Lieutenant Michael asked the clerk for Miss Corbin, he was informed that a naval cadet named Jones had called for her, and that she had gone out with him.

Desertion.

CHIEF-PETTY-OFFICER SCOTT had come on shore leave that evening, and he was strolling along the road near the hotel when a car

moved away from the front of the building and went slowly past him. He glanced casually at its occupants, and then fairly jumped with surprise.

"I must be dreaming," he exclaimed. "I'm the son of a sea-cook if that ain't young Jones and the admiral's daughter!"

He stood gazing after the motor until it disappeared, and then resumed his walk. A few yards along the road he met Lieutenant Michael.

"Have you seen that fellow Jones this evening?" asked Mike.

"Yes, sir," said Scotty, saluting. "I saw Lieutenant Jones a little while ago."

"Lieutenant Jones, eh? Well, where did you see him?"

"Driving a car along this street, sir," answered Scotty.

"Was there anyone with him?" demanded the officer.

"I think Miss Corbin was in the car with him, sir," Scotty replied, concealing a grin.

He guessed the state of affairs, and was not surprised when Mike turned angrily on his heel and returned to the hotel, muttering language of a distinctly naval type.

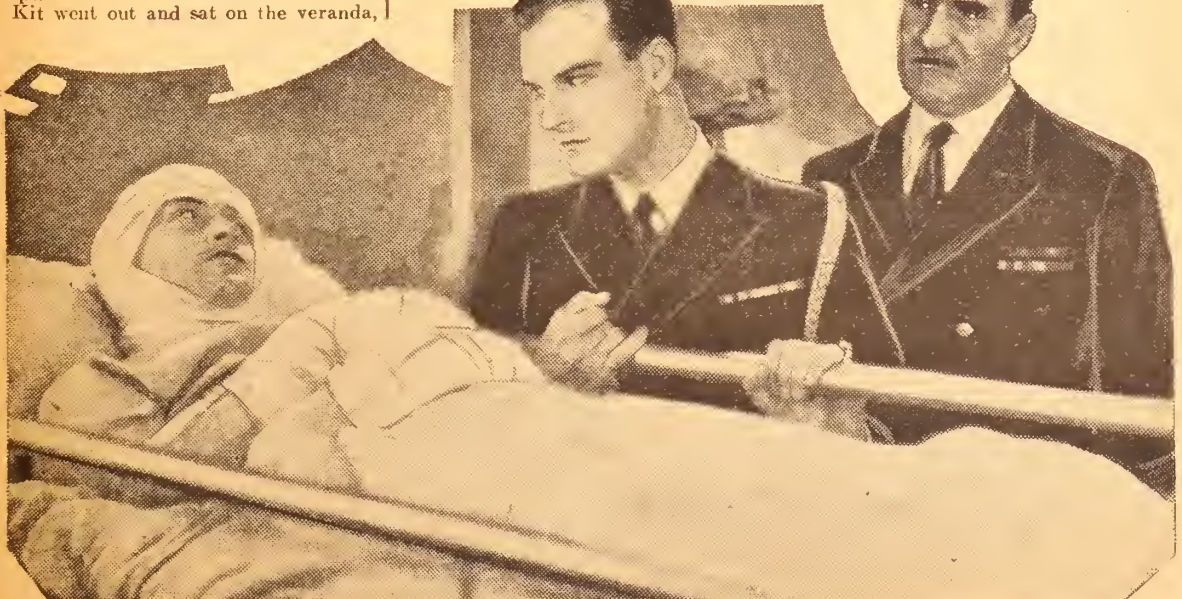
"Seems to me," remarked Scotty to himself, "I'd better anchor myself somewhere around here this evening. There'll sure be trouble when these young men meet."

Scotty cast anchor in the lounge-hall of the hotel, and sat there placidly for a long while, watching for Jonesy, while Mike paced restlessly up and down, and went in and out of the hotel, growing more and more angry as time went on.

Just before eleven o'clock Scotty grew anxious and walked down the street to see if the young cadet was coming, and by so doing the petty officer missed him, for the car came round the other corner of the street, and Jonesy escorted Kit into the hotel, to be instantly confronted by the irate Mike.

"Good-evening, Kit," said Mike. "I've been waiting for you since seven o'clock."

"Oh!" cried the girl in dismay. She had entered the hotel bubbling over with joy, but now her face clouded



"Feeling better, Jones, eh?" smiled the lieutenant. "Guess I'll soon be okay!" whispered the young cadet. July 11th, 1931.

over as she looked in dismay from Mike to Jonesy, who were glaring fiercely at one another.

"You have been in pleasanter company than mine, I suppose," sneered Mike. "And may I ask you, Lieutenant Jones," he continued, with heavy politeness and a tremendous emphasis on the word "lieutenant," "at what time your leave of absence expires?"

"I don't know that you have anything to do with my leave of absence from Annapolis," retorted Jonesy hotly. "At ten o'clock, if it's of any interest to you."

"Then you've overstayed your time by an hour or more," said Mike, with evident satisfaction. "You'll hear of this! As you're so late, I will see Kit—Miss Corbin—to her room."

"I think not," replied Jonesy, with ominous calm. "I will have that honour myself. I'll see you later."

Taking Kit's arm, he led her away to the lift and up to her room on the first floor. When he returned to the lounge-hall, Mike was waiting for him, obviously ready for battle. Of Scotty there was as yet no sign.

"Come outside!" growled Mike. "I've a few words to say to you. Can't say 'em here."

"There's a yard at the back," returned Jonesy. "It's quiet enough there."

"Now, Jones," snarled Mike when the rivals confronted each other in the dimly-lighted yard. "I promised to knock you through the side of the flag-ship if you dared to approach Miss Corbin again, and anyway I'm going to knock your head off—here and now! How dare you have the infernal impudence to take her out when she had promised to meet me? You leave my girl alone!"

"Kit is not your girl!" cried Jonesy fiercely. "She's mine!"

Mike replied by clipping him deftly on the jaw, and Jonesy went to earth with a thud. He was up again in a moment, however, and he waded into the fight with both hands. Jonesy had been no match for Petty Officer Scott, but the lieutenant was a different proposition. He was much about the same size and strength as Jonesy, and so the two were pretty equally matched. In two minutes both men were considerably the worse for wear. Mike had stopped a nasty one with his right eye, and Jonesy's nose was beginning to swell. Up and down over the yard the two furious men raged, and the fight would no doubt have gone on for a long time before either obtained the victory but for an accident.

Gradually they had approached nearer and nearer to a large water-butt which stood in a corner of the yard. Just as Jonesy got beneath his opponent's guard with a left to the jaw, Mike slipped on a stone, and the blow sent him with a great crash against the butt. His forehead came into violent contact with it, and he crumpled up on the ground in a heap.

Jonesy bent over the lieutenant in triumph.

"Now perhaps you'll understand that Kit is mine," he cried.

Mike did not move, and from the gash on his forehead blood was flowing fast. His rival's triumph changed to alarm, and Jonesy picked up the unconscious form of the lieutenant and carried him into the hotel. No one seemed to be about, and the young cadet placed Mike's body on a couch in an empty room just as hurried footsteps came along the passage outside, and Scotty came running in.

"You young fool!" said the petty officer as he stooped over the still

motionless lieutenant. "He's badly hurt. This means ten years for you!"

"You look after him," cried Jonesy. "I've done wi' the Navy. I'm going to desert!"

He ran wildly out of the room, out of the hotel, and down the street without in the least knowing where he went, for Jonesy had completely lost his nerve, and he felt sure that his career in the Navy was over for good and all.

Saving the Fleet.

ADMIRAL CORBIN finished his correspondence and strolled out of the hotel to the harbour, not far away. He passed through the gate, and was going down to the edge of the quay to take a last look at his beloved ship when an old man hobbled out of a shed and confronted him.

"Hey, you!" he cried. "What are you doing here? Civilians ain't allowed in these docks. You go out right now!"

The admiral had never in his life experienced such a keen sense of humiliation as the words of the old dock-keeper caused him. It was true. He had no longer any right to enter the dockyard, or to board a warship, except by the invitation of the officer in command.

"I was only about to look at the ships," he said gently.

"That's all very well," grumbled the old man. "It's too dark to see 'em now, and I've got to be very careful. There's no knowing what may happen if strangers get about."

"Strangers are dangerous, eh?" said the admiral, smiling a little.

"Reckon you're right. Why, one spark might send the whole fleet into the air. There's hundreds of tons of explosives in this harbour, if they ain't fired 'em all away to-day. They were saluting some old buffer of an admiral this morning. And now you get out—sharp!"

"Very well," said the "old buffer of an admiral." "I'll go. You're only doing your duty, I suppose, in warning me off."

Slowly Admiral Corbin retraced his steps, sad at heart to think that he was not to be allowed even to look at the fleet. He paused at the dockyard gate and glanced back. A few lights in the harbour showed the position of the ships, but the night was too dark for him to see more than the vague outline of one or two that lay fairly near the shore.

The admiral turned again and walked on. Suddenly he stopped once more. Hurried footsteps were coming down the road towards him, and a moment later he saw Jonesy rushing wildly along.

"Why, Jones, what's the matter?" asked Admiral Corbin, in surprise. "I thought you were at Annapolis."

"Don't stop me, sir," said Jonesy heavily, pausing as he recognised Kit's father. "I'm in trouble. I've hurt Michael in a fight, and I'm leaving the Navy right now."

"You mean you're too yellow to face the music, eh? You're going to desert!" thundered the admiral.

"Yes, that's the word. I'm a deserter," said the young man bitterly.

"You coward!" stormed Admiral Corbin furiously. "You—"

The old man got no further, for Jonesy suddenly clutched him by the arm.

"Look there, sir!" he shouted, pointing towards the harbour.

A sudden glare of bright light had appeared in the middle of the harbour, and seemed to be moving slowly towards the shore.

"That's the oil barge!" cried the admiral. "It's on fire!"

"And what's that, sir?" asked Jonesy,

pointing his finger a little to the left.

"Good heavens!" shouted Admiral Corbin. "That's an ammunition barge, and the oil-tanker is drifting down upon it! Hurry, Jones! We must sink that barge, or the fleet will be blown to pieces!"

The admiral turned and made for the harbour as fast as his sixty-four years would allow him, and Jonesy, forgetting all else in his excitement, kept pace with him. Brushing aside the old watchman, the two rushed down to the quayside and looked eagerly about for a boat.

"There's a motor-boat at the foot of those steps, sir!" cried Jones.

"Pray heaven it's fit to sail!" said the admiral, going down the steps.

The glare from the drifting oil-tanker grew fiercer and fiercer, and the whole harbour showed up as in the light of day. Everywhere the crews of the warships were hurriedly launching boats, for the only hope was to sink the ammunition barge before the flames reached it. None of the big ships had steam up, and to sink the burning ship by shell-fire would take too long, besides involving the awful risk of a shell striking the ammunition barge.

Admiral Corbin and Jonesy jumped into the motor-boat, and while the old man hurriedly cast off, the cadet rushed to set her going.

"Okay, sir, we're off!" cried Jonesy as the screw began to turn.

In a couple of minutes the motor-boat was nearing the ammunition barge, long before any of the launches from the warships could get under way. The flames from the burning tanker were already dangerously near as the admiral and his companion swung themselves on board.

"Where are the men on guard?" gaped the admiral.

"Can't see 'em, sir. I reckon they've bolted."

There was no one on board the ship, which had been brought into the harbour and anchored only that morning. Three civilians of the dockyard staff had been put on board; but those men had lost their heads when the oil-tanker caught fire, and they had gone off in a small boat.

Down below hurried the admiral and the young cadet, down the ladders leading to the lower holds, and soon they were well below the water-line. At last they came to what they sought, the hold in which were the sea-cocks of the vessel.

"Hammer, admiral!" cried Jonesy. "We must find hammers to break open the sea-cocks."

"Not necessary, my boy," said the admiral coolly. "These ammunition barges are fitted with special apparatus for use in emergency. Just turn those wheels, and the sea-cocks will open."

Admiral Corbin threw himself upon one of the wheels which he had pointed out and began to turn it. A stream of sea-water gushed in at the sea-cock thus opened, and Jonesy, furiously twisting another wheel, set another stream flowing. In a few minutes four streams of water were rapidly filling the hold, and the ammunition barge began slowly to settle down, just as the first of the launches from the warships came up at a frantic speed.

But by this time the flaming tanker had drifted right alongside the ammunition barge, and the officer in charge of the launch hesitated to go too near. He saw that the ammunition ship was settling lower and lower, and guessed that someone on board was opening the sea-cocks. Then he noticed

(Continued on page 27.)

A daring outlaw, tiring of his life of crime, determines to run straight, and as a humble cow-puncher on the Bar X Ranch becomes involved in a strange adventure.



A Lone Hand.

THE plains of the great South West sheltered many notorious outlaws, among them being Jesse James, the Younger brothers, the Dalton Gang, and the one, perhaps, who stood out as the most reckless and daring of them all—the Apache Kid.

Except that he was quite young, slim, and clean-shaven, could speak English like a well-educated person, throw a knife with deadly aim and draw a gun like lightning, little was known of him. Big rewards were offered for his capture, but the sheriffs lacked a fitting description, and the Kid was as elusive as an eel. The reward was tempting, but otherwise the cowpunchers were friendly disposed towards the outlaw, who mostly robbed the rich or those that made money by graft or ill practices.

Many a posse had chased the Kid, and not cared too much that the elusive bandit, who always masked his face with a silk handkerchief, had again made his escape.

But sheriffs have a duty to perform, and if their territory suffers from the attention of robbers and crooks then they are likely to lose their positions unless big steps are taken to round up the bad men.

Sheriff Ward was a dogged, determined sheriff, and his one aim was to capture the Apache Kid. If the Kid could carry out his robberies under the nose of the law it would encourage other bad men to come to the South West, therefore the Apache Kid must be laid by the heels.

The posse had chased the Apache Kid through two nights and two days, and at last the sheriff had to call a reluctant halt.

"I reckoned with a change of horses we'd tiro the Kid out," the sheriff confessed in his frank manner. "Guess that yere Demon of the Kid's is a sure stayer. Boys, you'd better beat it back to town and make it snappy. There's that round-up due in a few days, and the punchers will be getting up to high larks when that's through. Anyone who starts shooting you clap him in the lock-up."

"Aren't you coming back with us, sheriff?"

"Nope!" The tall, gaunt sheriff

"The APACHE KID'S ESCAPE"



Starring
JACK
PERRIN

twirled his long, grey moustache. "I'm sticking to this trail for a while. A lone man can trail the Kid better than a bunch of mavericks. I'll be sitting quiet and maybe I'll take him by surprise. I'll stay around on the trail for ten days, and it won't be my fault if the Kid don't come back with me. Now beat it, boys, and if you want me urgent send a message to the Bar M that lies just over yonder ridge. 'Bye!"

The Treacherous Friend.

HIGH up in the hills a white horse grazed, whilst on a huge boulder sat a young, clean-shaven man. His neat blue breeches and coloured flannel shirt showed signs of dust from hard riding; on the rock lay a sombrero. From time to time he wiped the perspiration from his brow and laughed softly.

"Gee, that was a fine gallop, Demon," he said softly to the horse. "We can always show Sheriff Ward and his posse a clean pair of heels."

When he was certain that the posse had abandoned the chase the Apache Kid prepared a meal for the horse, and himself, for it was as well to be prepared for another hard ride. Far below lay a winding trail that curled like a white snake along the wide valley. The Kid had held the stage-coach up on more than one occasion, but not of

recent months, because pay-rolls of hard-working punchers were not in his line.

Three faint cracks brought the Kid to his feet, whilst Demon pricked his ears. There was shooting down in the valley.

Shading his eyes from the sun, the Apache Kid peered downward, and his eyes gleamed as he saw the stage-coach. A hold-up! Yes, and he could see the driver with hands held high, and a mounted man that threatened him. The Kid shook his fists when he recognised the outlaw's horse.

"So that is why my name is beginning to stink in these parts," muttered the Kid. "Why Bill Buckley quit me to start a new life—the four-flushing skunk."

Quickly the Apache Kid got to horse and whispered his commands.

"We gotta trail a snake, old boss, so go canny."

Like a swift-moving shadow the Kid slithered through the pines to more even ground. From a belt of trees he watched the stage-coach drive on, and cursed as he saw that one man on the box-seat sagged back. Then his eyes sought for the stager of the hold-up, and found him riding towards the pines.

The Apache Kid dismounted, and hid his horse in a clump of mesquite. Fate was sending the four-flusher into his hands,

Under the trees the robber reined in his horse, dropped several bulky packages on the ground, and slid from the saddle. The man hitched his horse to a pine, and squatted down on the ground beside his loot. A dark-haired, red-faced ruffian of dago descent—a halfbreed of the worst sort. Portuguese ancestors had gifted Bill Buckley with a smooth tongue and a keen brain.

Soon a great heap of notes lay on the grass, and Buckley laughed hoarsely at the welcome sight; little did he guess of the figure that edged so quietly towards him. The ruffian spoke his thoughts aloud.

"A thousand bucks for the asking. Gee, there'll be a big reward offered now for the capture of—"

"The Apache Kid!" drawled a quiet voice. "Don't move, Buckley, and don't try to drop yer hand to yer belt. Get up, you skunk!"

Bill Buckley's small eyes flickered nervously. He knew the Kid's voice, and he wondered what kind of treatment he was going to get. The law of the West is hard on double-crossers, and revenge is often swift and bitter. He shivered as if he felt a bullet tickling his ribs.

"Get up, you yeller dog!" snapped the Apache Kid. "My fingers fair itch to fill yer carcass with lead."

Reluctantly Bill Buckley stood up and raised his hands heavenwards.

"You ain't got any need to get sore, Jack," he muttered, his eyelids flickering with shifty cunning. "I got sick of punching away up in Tennessee, so I decided to beat it back here. I was riding down the valley, and I saw the stage-coach, and I held it up, but the spoils I would have brought to you to share fifty-fifty, as of old."

"Oh, yeah?" drawled the Kid, smiling gently. "That was sure thoughtful. You did the hold-up just to convince me that you wanted to be my pard again. Sort of bringing me a dot like one of those French dames when they get married. A swell idea, Buckley, and you expect me to swallow that mush."

"I'm on the level, Jack," whined the other. "I was just counting out the swag, and then I was going to find yer."

"And, of course, you knew where to find me," mocked the outlaw. "You lying dog, you intended to keep that pay-roll for yourself, and let the world think the Apache Kid did the hold-up—yeah—and the shooting." He did not miss the fear in the other's eyes. "I watched it from yonder peak, and you plugged one of the guards. Now I want the truth, you dog—did you hit him bad?"

"No, Jack, I swear it was only in the shoulder," whined the wretch. "He tried to draw, and I had to shoot."

The Apache Kid strode forward, and with a quick movement wrenched a coloured and spotted handkerchief from the breast pocket of Buckley's dirty blue shirt.

"One of mine!" he snapped. "Kept so you could rob and pillage and let the sheriffs reckon the Apache Kid was the guy. Now I know why Sheriff Ward and others are so mighty hot on my trail. You've never been near Tennessee, you dirty crittur. I ain't ever shot to kill yet, but my fingers itch to pump you full of lead!" He whipped the gun from Buckley's belt. "Pick up that mail bag and stuff those notes inside."

"What yer aiming to do, Jack?" muttered the crook. "I swear you've got me all wrong."

"Do as I say!" roared the Kid, and shook the two guns ominously. "Jump to it."

Swiftly Bill Buckley knelt and began to gather together the notes.

"You're taking that lot to the Bar July 11th, 1931.

M." The Apache Kid pointed up the valley. "Dunp 'em with a message that they're returned with thanks. The Apache Kid will add a message of his own, then you can beat it. Don't try any tricks, Buckley, because I'm going to watch you like I'd watch a rattler."

Greed gave Buckley sudden courage, for he swung the heavy mail bag at the Apache Kid's guns. One gun went spinning, but the Kid could have shot his erstwhile friend with the other.

Instead, he dropped his gun and adopted the attitude of a fighter. Buckley tried to get powerful arms round the slim figure, but the Kid whipped a right and left to the unshaven jaw.

"Now take yer medicine!" snarled the Kid, and patted the thickset ruffian with every kind of punch he knew.

Buckley tried to kick and get to grips, but the Kid was much too quick on his feet, and at last a right upper-cut and a left to the jaw put the exhausted Buckley to the ground, where he lay moaning and staring up at his old master with swollen, bloodshot eyes.

"Now you'll do as I say," ordered the Kid, picking up his gun. "That time I used my hands, but next time I fire! Get busy, you—" He broke off and swung round. His keen ears had caught a sound.

Demon also had heard, because the horse stood rigid with ears pricked. Someone was riding through the pines.

Keeping Buckley covered, the Apache Kid stepped back towards his horse and then sprang into the saddle.

"I'm keeping you covered." The Kid edged his way into the mesquite.

"Don't try any tricks." Bill Buckley rubbed his aching head. He felt too sore to try any tricks. Slowly he scrambled to his feet and stared through the pines.

Riding towards him came Sheriff Ward, and the sheriff had drawn his gun.

Buckley Strikes a Bargain.

SHERIFF WARD dismounted, but always he kept Bill Buckley covered.

"And so, Apache Kid, we meet at last," he drawled. "Stick yer mitts up high, Kid, and don't get fresh."

"Sheriff, I ain't the Apache Kid," cried Buckley. "Listen—can you hear anything—a horse?"

The sheriff was puzzled, but he listened.

"Yeah, I can," he admitted after a while, and glanced towards the mesquite. "Stay there, and not a movement."

The Apache Kid had gone, but the sheriff glimpsed a distant figure riding up through the pines, and the horse was white. Rubbing his chin thoughtfully, Sheriff Ward came back to where Buckley stood with hands held high. He glanced at the thin, badly-fed colt that must be the robber's horse and asked a question.

"If you ain't the Apache Kid," he said, "then who are you?"

"My name's Buckley," came the quick answer. "I trailed the Kid after he held up the stage-coach. Yeah, he held it up less than an hour ago. We had a fight here, and then the Kid heard your boss and vamoosed, the yeller quitter."

"He did, did he?" The sheriff's eyes bored like gimlets into the other's mind. "You're lying, but you ain't the Apache Kid, that's certain. You're the guy that used to work with the Kid until he kicked you out or you quit. We ain't got a description of the Kid, but we got a picture of you. Yeah, now tell me some more."

Bill Buckley shifted uncomfortably.

"I found the Kid's camp fire, and I read it like a book," the sheriff went

on. "That fire told me he couldn't have robbed the stage-coach an hour ago; but I guess the coach was held up—I saw it from the upper trail with one man sagged across the driver badly hit. And I heard the shooting and did some quick riding. Now tell me some more fairy-stories."

"The Kid made me hold up the stage." Buckley was cornered and lost his head. "I didn't hit that guy badly, sheriff; he'll be—"

"Come clean!" The sheriff kicked the mailbag with his foot. "You held up the mail and hoped I'd think it was another robbery by the Apache Kid. The Kid saw it all and was just about to take the swag when I came along."

"Yeah, yeah, that's right." Buckley was thinking quickly. "I've been starving and I was desperate. He held me up, and, having taken away my gun—" he pointed—"there it lies, where he flung it—he started in to beat me up, but in one hand he held his gun. You saved my life, sheriff, and I reckon I can pay you back. You don't gain much by capturing me, but maybe I could help you capture the Kid. If I help you get the Apache Kid will you overlook this and forget I ever worked with him?"

"I promise nothing," Sheriff Ward's eyes gleamed. At last had come a real chance of capturing the most desperate of outlaws. He could read men pretty well, and he knew this man Buckley hated the Apache Kid.

"If you can help me get the Kid maybe I might do something." He picked up Buckley's gun and lowered his own. "What's yer scheme?"

"The Kid has a shack along them ridge of hills—a hide-out," hissed Buckley. "I'm the only man what can lead yer to it, and I'm sure that the Kid will ride there to rest up for a spell. Sheriff, I'm on the level, for I'd give a year's prison to get that guy."

The sheriff looked his disgust, but he showed no signs of this in his next words.

"Right, lead the way!" He tossed Buckley his gun after taking out the shells. "You go first, and remember that when I shoot I always get my man."

"I swear, sheriff, I wouldn't double-cross—"

"You'd better not try," came the quick answer. "And remember this. If you don't help me get the Apache Kid you'll swing from a tree. Now get moving."

The Shack in the Hills.

THE Apache Kid was in a very thoughtful frame of mind as he rode through the forests and ravines towards his lonely shack. He was reviewing his life and regretting his past deeds.

His father he had never remembered, but his mother had been a sweet woman. But all people make mistakes, and she had married again—a man who had a smooth tongue, a crafty mind and a dissipated nature. The Kid had received a good education, but now he saw new and unpleasant companions as his step-father dragged them lower and lower in the mire. The brute forced him to help in a robbery that had started his life of crime. The step-father had died and his mother soon followed. Adventure, the pitting of brains against fellow-men, and danger became the spice of life.

Yet now he sickened of this career. The Kid did not rob for personal gain, but to help others as much as anything else, yet every other outlaw was so different. Filthy and callous and capable of any evil—scum such as Bill Buckley,

Why not give up the life? No one knew his face, and he could make his way to Tennessee or Utah, and after a while he would be a forgotten name. In a new land as a cowpuncher he could work out his redemption.

He laughed as he thought of the paltry sums of money he had kept for his own ends, but the laughter was genuine when he remembered the tricks he had played with many of the sheriffs and their posses.

How lonely and dismal seemed his shack. By the hitching-rail he left his horse, and with a key let himself into the interior. In spite of closed windows dust lay everywhere, and the air was musty, so that the Kid decided to open the windows and go outside till the atmosphere was clearer.

Little did the Kid know that Buckley and the sheriff had ridden hard and had reached the hills some hours before him, had cached their horses by a woody stream and then crawled to a mound to watch. Directly their prey had entered the shack they raced forward.

Thus the Kid, when he stepped out into the sunlight, got a nasty shock when a harsh voice snarled:

"Stuck 'em up, Apache Kid, we got yer covered!"

The outlaw swung round, and his jaw set ferociously as he saw Buckley standing behind the sheriff. The crook leered mockingly.

"You dog!" he spat out. "And this is how you repay me. Soon I'm going to square this account."

"You're going to gaol," was the sneering answer. "How you propose to square the account?"

"I ain't in gaol yet." The Kid edged a trifle nearer the sheriff. "You two guys have twelve hours' riding afore you, and you're dead tired. Maybe you might close an eye, and then—"

"Stop dreaming!" scoffed the sheriff. "I never sleep—not when I got a skunk in my clutches."

"Can I get some kit?" The Kid edged nearer and nodded his head towards the open door of the shack. "Ain't you going to look for traces of my crimes? You've only got this galoot's word that I'm the Apache Kid."

The sheriff glanced uncertainly at the shack, and in that moment the Kid acted. His clenched fist came down on the sheriff's wrist, and the gun was sent spinning. Buckley, with a gun that was unloaded, could do nothing but stare.

The Kid wasted no time, but banged a heavy right to the sheriff's jaw, and the older man sagged back in Buckley's arms; then the outlaw whipped up the sheriff's gun.

"I said you were tired, sheriff," he chuckled. "Sorry if your jaw's a bit sore, but you sure got me riled. Just hold up yer hands high, and I'll take back my shooting-iron, and don't you blink an

eyelid, Bill Buckley, because you're the lowest of double-crossers I've ever met, and my finger itches to pull the trigger."

"You'll get a heavy sentence for this!" blustered the sheriff. "Striking the law."

"If the law ever gets me," was the answer. "Now lead the way to where you've hidden your horses."

With hands above their heads, they were forced to obey, and when the strange trio came to the stream the Kid snapped out the order for them to mount.

"Downstream, buddies," ordered the outlaw. "And don't come back. I'll be watching till your dust is out of my vision. You can come back at your own risk; maybe you find me gone, and maybe you don't, and it will be unhealthy if I should decide to stay. Think it out, sheriff, and remember, Buckley, that the first shot goes to you. Now beat it afore I get fresh."

The sheriff made Buckley come back an hour later, but there was no sign of the outlaw.

"I'll trail the Kid," raged Buckley. "And it ain't the reward I want. I'll trail him if it takes me all my life."

"Okay, Buckley." The sheriff took a chance. "I'll parole you, and when you bring in the Kid I'll scratch your name off my books, but until then it remains. Remember, Buckley, I've got your description, and we'll soon lay you low if—"

"It's revenge I want!" hissed the other. "I'll not double-cross you, sheriff."

Thus did the sheriff return without a prisoner.

At the Bar X Ranch.

PEACEFULLY the great herd of cattle grazed, whilst on the outskirts, and always on the alert, were the cowpunchers. These men of

the Bar X rolled cigarettes, smoked, and talked, but they were ready for any emergency, for it is surprising how quickly a huge herd can be stampeded into a mad panic. Mostly they were in ones and twos, because not only had they to prevent a stampede, but to keep the herd from straying.

The cattle were being driven to a station on the other side of the high hills, and soon would pass along a barren ravine; thus they were having a final rest.

Two 'punchers were taking it easy, and, strange to relate, one of them was the Apache Kid. The other was a big, rather clumsy young man, who possessed an air of great good temper and good fellowship, yet did not look as if his brains were half as strong as his fine physique.

"You seem mighty thoughtful," the Kid broke the silence. "Anything on your mind, Ted—no trouble between you and Jane?"

"Nope, Jack, no trouble with Jane." Ted Conway puffed at his cigarette. "Jane ain't a troublesome sort, Jack, as you may have noticed. Since you joined this outfit four months ago, Jack, you've never seen us rowing, though maybe you may have seen us looking somewhat dismal. Nope, that ain't our trouble."

"I know Jane isn't a jealous or troublesome sort," laughed the ex-outlaw. "In fact, I reckon she's too darned considerate, but I haven't been blind to the fact that something was worritting you two young folk. It ain't done to ask questions out in the West, and you didn't ask none about me, though maybe you wondered what sort of a hombre I'd turn out."

"A mighty good 'puncher," Ted Conway laughed. "There ain't a guy that can touch you and your horse.



"I shall have to be careful, Ted," laughed the Apache Kid. "That yere description seems to fit me!"

Gee, how you collared the prizes at the last rodeo."

"Wish they'd been cash ones," rejoined the Kid. "Gee, I'm just about broke! That ride to town skinned me, and pay-day a week away."

"Jack"—the other was serious—"you haven't asked what was worritin' me and Jane, but I'll tell you, though maybe you've guessed—money! Yeah, money!"

"Money?" Jack was surprised. "Gee, I could see something was wrong, but you've sure handed me out a surprise. Ain't you the son of old man Conway what owns this yere ranch, and yet you say you're broke?"

"Pop's a tough guy to handle," spoke Ted. "I'm foreman, and I get foreman's pay, but I gotta work to hold on to the job. If I fly off the handle, and haven't got a cent, then I've got to beg, borrow, or steal from my buddies until next pay-day. No good going to pop."

"You sure got me beat," cried Jack, and asked a question. "Don't he sorta cotton to Jane, Ted?"

"Oh, he likes Jane a lot!" Conway rumped his thick thatch of unruly hair. "But every time I talk of marriage he gets kinda riled, and says he don't want no women around the place, that he ain't satisfied that I'm a capable foreman, and until he is satisfied—"

"But if he shouldn't be satisfied." The outlaw-cowpuncher frowned. "Suppose that should happen—what then? I don't hand out bouquets, Ted, but I've seen many worse foremen in my day. But just supposing he did make someone else foreman, he would have to do something for his son. Why, Ted, your pop could buy the Woolworth Building and still be rich."

"Dunno, Jack, it sorta puzzles me," Conway sighed. "He's kinda mean, maybe. It's Jane's birthday to-morrow, and I haven't got a cent. She knows the old man don't fling his money around, but I ain't ever missed giving her a present on her birthday yet."

A half-smile twitched Jack's lips. "Would a scarf be of any use, Ted?" From his pocket he drew a spotted, coloured silk handkerchief. "I haven't got much use for this, and you're welcome."

"You're a pal." Ted held out a glad hand. "Gee, she'll be tickled with this! Jane likes you." The foreman drew himself erect in the saddle. "Guess we'd better get going, Jack, or else we'll never get this blamed herd to the station."

The Apache Kid, or, as he was known at the Bar X, Jack Norton, did a lot of thinking during the next few hours. Many things puzzled him, but he had a mighty good idea why Ted's father was all against his son marrying Jane Carter.

The punchers handed over the cattle at the station and made the return journey with all speed. Ted Conway and Jack were the first to get back—the foreman was anxious to be home for Jane's birthday. Ted was so eager that he would have ridden on alone, except that Jack made him rest up for a few hours during the night.

"You could make it by noon," agreed Jack. "But what's the use of going back to a gal looking almost dead beat."

When they reached the ranch it was to find a number of men gathered round a notice pinned to a post on the veranda of the store. Two girls, who were talking to a fat portly little man broke away and ran to greet the arrivals.

The slim, fair-haired girl, who looked so dainty in her sheepskin chaps and neat silk shirt ran to meet Ted with

open arms, whilst the short-skirted young woman with her dark curls flying in the wind ran towards Jack. They were Jane and Betty Carter, aged respectively eighteen and fourteen. Betty had adopted the handsome young rider as her own beau.

The fat little man, who was dressed in grey serge with a heavy gold watch-chain across his extensive chest, puffed angrily at his cigar and snorted like an angry old buffalo. What could have angered Frank Conway, the owner of the Bar X Ranch?

Ted Conway leaped out of the saddle and put his arms round the girl—the boys of the ranch grinned and were envious; Jack swung Betty on to his saddle, pinched her nose, and then put her gently down again. Everyone laughed except Frank Conway, who strode off.

"Hallo, pop!" called out Ted, but the old man did not stop. "I can't understand him lately, Jane."

"No—nor can I." Jack did not miss the girl's distress, and it again proved one of his theories. The girl changed the subject quickly. "Oh, Ted, do look at this notice. It's all about a desperate outlaw and a big reward."

"Who cares about it when it's your birthday?" whispered Ted. "Why, Jane, I ain't properly wished you many happy returns of the day."

"Read that first," insisted Jane, smiling up at the big man. "Then maybe you can take me home."

Ted strolled up to the notice and at first he did not take much interest. Often these posters with their offers of rewards were sent and according to law pinned in a prominent place for all to read. This one was all about a daredevil fellow named the Apache Kid, who had apparently vanished and was suspected of taking the trail towards Tennessee. It was the drawing of a bandit with a scarf over the lower part of his face that made Ted read eagerly. The Apache Kid was described very accurately and concluded with a note about the spotted silk handkerchief that the Kid always used on his escapades.

Sheriff Ward had tired of waiting for Bill Buekly to bring in the Kid and had drawn up this notice—he hated to lose a man.

Out of the corners of his eyes Ted Conway flashed a glance at Jack Norton—the description was very similar. The boys were satisfied that Jack was a genuine cowboy, but Ted had seen a lot of the newcomer and remembered now moments when his friend had been strangely thoughtful, but most convincing of all was the scarf that reposed in his pocket.

It was young Betty who dragged Jack over to read the description, and the keen eyes picked out from a distance the words "Apache Kid." Slowly Jack read the reward notice through, and then grinned cheerfully at Ted.

"I shall have to be careful, Ted," he laughed. "That yere description seems to fit me. Jane and Betty, you may be harbouring a nefarious scoundrel, who according to this notice robs and steals in a most callous manner, assaults the law and other desperate deeds."

"If you were a robber I shouldn't mind," cried Betty.

"If I were an outlaw I'd carry off one person," chuckled Jack. "Come on, Mischief, and help me unsaddle Demon and give him a well-earned feed."

Ted Conway had little to say when he went off with Jane, who wondered and waited patiently for him to tell her. At the small poultry farm, two miles

from the Bar X, that belonged to Jane's father, Ted spoke.

"This is your birthday, Jane, and a mighty good moment to ask Pop about our marriage. Your father is agreeable, and it's up to my old man to help us through. He's thinking of buying the Dobsons' place away towards the border, and maybe he might make me boss. You stay right here, Jane; I gotta tackle pop whilst I'm in the mood."

"Best of luck, Ted!" cried the girl, and waved to him till her lover was out of sight.

It was an unsatisfactory ride as far as Ted was concerned, because he found his father had gone out for a ride. Actually, Frank Conway had taken the trail for the Conway Hacienda, but being fat and portly had taken the longest and easiest route—Ted going across the hills had missed his father.

What Jack Overheard.

AS Jane had gone off with Ted, the one-time outlaw decided to ride over with Betty to her home. Demon had to be rested, but Jack soon borrowed a horse.

Arriving at the ranch, Betty wanted him to stay and play with her, and Jack, who loved the child dearly, was nothing loath. The game was hide-and-seek.

"Two packets of gum to a kiss you don't find me," chuckled Jack. "Count a hundred, a proper hundred, and then after me."

Jack hid in a half-empty hay-cart, pulling the sweet-smelling hay over him. Old Man Carter had bought the hay from the Bar X for his poultry.

Scarce had Jack hidden when he heard male voices, and recognised them as Frank Conway and old man Carter.

"The matter I want to speak about deals with my son." It was the pompous owner of the Bar X. "I dislike being personal, Carter, but I am a business man. For health reasons you came here and invested your money in poultry. A venture that has not proved too successful, as you have had to borrow certain sums from me."

"I'm expecting a big dividend from some shares—"

"I don't doubt it for a moment," interrupted Conway. "I know you're sound, but you are not a rich man, and you want to make provision for your daughter. You would not encourage a man who had no prospects. You are pleased that Jane shall marry Ted because he is the son of the owner of the Bar X ranch."

"Well—er—Hallo, Betty, what you want?"

"Have you seen any signs of Jack Norton?" asked the girl. "He's hiding, and I can't find him."

"Run off and play somewhere; he's not here," answered her father. A pause. "What makes you mention this matter, Mister Conway? I'm sure my daughter—"

"A sweet girl," was the quick answer. "Far too good for Ted. Listen, Carter. I am worth at least a million dollars, and as this land is increasing in value it will soon be much more. And most important of all—Ted Conway is not my son."

"Not your son?"

"Nope. My first wife suffered poor health and she made me adopt Ted as a son," Conway explained. "She died years ago and I've let the decision remain, though I am far from satisfied with Ted as a son. He is not my own blood, and I consider him a great clumsy clodhopper. Frankly, Carter, I

don't favour the marriage, and if he does marry Jane, then I disown him entirely."

"But why?"

"Your daughter is far too good for Ted," was the surprising answer. "I have a better husband in view for her. I will clear your poultry farm of all debt and make you a handsome allowance, Carter, if you are agreeable to that husband."

"Well, she might do better than Ted," agreed the poultry farmer. "I won't let them marry if he isn't your son and hasn't any money. But, say, who is this husband for my Jane? You don't mean—"

The Apache Kid heard no more, because Betty came again, seeking for Jack. The two old men retired to the house.

How Betty laughed when Jack poked his nose out of the straw.

"I've been here for hours," laughed Jack. "Guess we'll call the game off. Let's go and find your sister, 'cos I got something I wanna say to her right now."

The Arrest.

JACK often rode over to the Carter Hacienda, but most times he went alone, and one day Jane, who liked him immensely, asked the reason.

"I'm treading on dangerous ground if I say anything against Ted," answered the Kid. "But I kinda feel he's avoiding me. Can't place anything he has ag'in me. Maybe he's worrying over money, and don't want to talk about his affairs."

"He acts strangely with me," Jane said. "Oh, look—there is Ted now!"

Ted Conway nodded to Jack and grinned in a nervous, sheepish sort of manner. Both Jane and Jack were puzzled at his manner.

"Howdy?" Conway found himself under the accusing gaze of young Betty. "Hallo, Kid!"

"Hallo yourself," was the somewhat rude answer. "we reckon you oughta see a doc. Oft-times Jane and I got down in the dumps, but that don't do us any good."

"Oh, I'm grand!" cried Ted. "Maybe I'm anxious over some of those herds we bought; then the wells are mighty low; and still another week till payroll."

"Hallo, look at that dust!" Betty pointed. "Someone's riding in a hurry."

Jack was the only one who saw how Ted half-slid a hand to his belt. What the blazes was the matter with Ted? The foreman was a bundle of nerves.

The Kid felt inclined to slide a hand to his own belt when he saw the riders were the local sheriff and a posse of half a dozen riders. They did not waste time. They ranged up alongside the foreman.

"The stage-coach to El Paso has been held up," spoke the sheriff. "The money that Mr. Conway was sending to the bank has been taken by a masked man, who was wearing a spotted ban-

dana. Hank Jennings glimpsed the gunman's face when the bandana slipped, and he recognised the face. I arrest you, Ted Conway, for the hold-up of the stage and the stealing of your father's money."

"But that's absurd." It was Jane who spoke. "You must be mad, sheriff, to think that Ted would hold up the stage."

"Hank saw his face and is prepared to swear to it," was the answer. "I've reported the matter to Mr. Conway, and he says you must stand your trial or prove an alibi."

"I've been out riding range," spluttered the foreman. "I was by myself, and I went to see the wells—water getting low. But, sheriff, I wouldn't hold up the stage. Maybe it was this desperado who did it. Wasn't he wearing a bandana, and didn't that yere reward state that the Apache Kid—"

Jack gritted his teeth. Used to fighting for his life and acting quickly, he saw danger almost before it threatened. Like lightning he threaded two and two together and guessed the truth. What the sheriff had to say strengthened that conviction.

"Apache Kid," the sheriff laughed, "that bandana was sure like one the Apache Kid used to wear, but Jennings is prepared to swear that the face was that of Ted Conway. The case you got to fight, Conway, is this one: that you impersonated the Apache Kid and hoped we would put the blame on the outlaw, who is thought to be in these parts. But for the slipping of the bandana you would have got away with it. Ain't for me to express any opinion, but it sure was a surprise to me and all the boys, and I'll be sure glad to see you cough up an alibi, but Hank was so certain

sure that I ain't got no other course but to take you back."

"Say something, Ted," wailed Jane. "Can't you think of anything to prove you were out at the wells. Didn't you see any Injun?"

"Yeah, I saw Injuns, but they'll be mighty hard to find." Ted would not look any of them squarely in the face. "Guess I'll be set free directly I've had a talk to pop. Don't you worry about me, Jane."

When the sheriff and the prisoner were out of sight Jane flung impetuous arms round Jack's neck.

"You're his friend—do something for him," she cried. "Ted could never have done this. I believe his father's framed him. He hates him, Jack."

"Ted is not Mr. Conway's son." Then Jack told what he had heard as gently as he could. "It upset your pop badly, so best keep mum until he says something. I'm riding to the Bar X right now, for I've a hunch I can help Ted prove an alibi."

With hearts relieved strangely of much worry, the girls waved their hands till Jack was but a speck on the horizon.

Two hours later Jack was admitted to the cell of the foreman, who laughed nervously.

"Fine mess I'm in," he said. "No chance of proving an alibi. Now I've learnt that the boss ain't my old man at all, and—"

"Listen to me, Ted," interrupted Jack. "I've persuaded the sheriff to let me have three minutes alone with you, and if you want me to help you, then you must open out. Hank Jennings saw you plain enough, Ted, and—"

"You don't think I held up the stage?"

"I don't think—I know," was the



"I arrest you, Ted Conway, for the hold-up of the stage and the stealing of your father's money!" cried the sheriff.

fierce answer. "You wanted the sheriff to think the Apache Kid stole the money, but I'm saying this for your credit: you did not think the Kid would ever be captured. You wanted money because Conway was a thorough old skinkint and hated you because he wants to marry Jane himself. That had at last penetrated your thick noodle, and you reckoned that with the money you could marry Jane."

Ted Conway looked a picture of guilt. Jack was merciless.

"You know who the Apache Kid is," he snapped. "You wore the bandana I gave you, but, being a poor sort of bandit, you fixed it wrong and Hank saw your face."

"Gosh, you're too smart!" moaned Ted. "Guess I'd better confess I held up the stage. Jack, I ain't got a thing to say for myself. Except that none but myself knows what kinda father Frank Conway has been to me, and when I knew he wanted Jane I got desperate."

"Jane loves you, and I don't hate you as much as I ought," Jack answered. "Time is going, Ted. Tell me where you hid the money, and what did you do with my bandana?"

"I recognised you about a week ago," mumbled the foreman. "I've sure handed you a nasty crack."

"Tell me where you hid the money, and stop blithering," snapped the Apache Kid. "You've got to trust me—Jane does."

"I hid the money and the scarf in that old tree on Injun Hill," was the reply. "The tree that's dead through being struck by lightning. There's a hollow trunk, and under some earth I—"

"Shush, here comes the sheriff!" hissed the Apache Kid. "Not a word about this. Just go on swearing you're innocent, and that Hank must have been loco." He turned to grin at the sheriff. "Thanks for what you've done. Reckon from what Ted's told me, I'll soon have him out of this place. So long, Ted, and put your trust in"—he paused, and did not answer till outside the cell—"the Apache Kid!"

"What did he mean by that?" the sheriff muttered, as Jack strode out of the lock-up.

"Dunno, sheriff," mumbled Ted. "But I'm blamed certain that he'll get me out of this hole if anyone can. Reckon what he said about the Apache Kid was a joke."

Late that night a horseman left the Bar X Ranch and rode silently away. Horse and rider moved like shadows through the darkness, and an hour's riding brought them to Injun Hill.

Jack soon found the old tree, and, after scraping away the earth, the heavy leather satchel and the bandana.

The early hours of the morning found a horseman lurking in the small wood near the ranch, and round the lower part of his face was bound a spotted bandana.

The Apache Kid was playing a desperate part to save the friend who had almost betrayed him.

The Desperate.

FRANK CONWAY sat in his office; before his big desk stood the sheriff and the deputy.

"He's no son of mine," the boss of the Bar X cried. "He's acted like a snake to the man who's been a father to him. I made this ranch and the town that's grown up round it, and what I say is law. You'll summon a jury and try Ted Conway. He'll get the full punishment if—"

July 11th, 1931.

The door opened and a masked man stood there. Two guns were in his hands.

"If nothing, you fat gasbag," came a harsh voice. "Just hold yer hands high. No tricks, sheriff, for I'm a mighty angry man. I'm the Apache Kid, and your fat boss is causing me a whole lot of trouble—that's why I'm here. Stand still whilst I help myself to the armory."

"The Apache Kid," the sheriff gasped out. "What you want of us?"

"Don't shoot, Kid," whined the trembling Conway. "You can have all the money in the safe. It's only a few dollars, for I was robbed only a few—"

"Can it!" The Apache Kid swung his guns round. "I'm gonna do the talking. See this?" They noticed that a satchel swung over his arm. "Do you recognise it?"

"Why, it's the satchel I sent my money in!" quavered Conway.

"Yeah, your satchel, and your money inside." The Apache Kid laughed. "News carries quick in these parts, and that's why I'm here. The Apache Kid plays a lone hand. He had a partner once; and no guy ever double-crossed me again. You've got some poor boob in your lock-up, and trying to prove he held up the stage coach. How can he have robbed you, you fat fool, if the money is in that satchel? No man goes to jail or swings for what is my business. Take a look-see."

The Kid tossed the satchel on to the desk. His eyes glistened as Conway feverishly dragged out the bundles of notes.

"It's all there," grunted the outlaw. "This fat fool said his word was law; well, so is mine. I held up your rotten stage—never seen such a bunch of seared coyotes!—and I took this money. I've got plenty of money, but the temptation to scare a stage just tickled my ribs. Maybe I would have kept this money, but when I heard some poor boob had been corraled for my fun I had to come right back. Fifty miles over your dusty plains have I ridden."

"Guess we've made a mistake, stranger," cried the sheriff.

"Say, aren't you clever!" was the sneering answer. "Just listen to what I'm going to command. If that boob ain't released afore I'm out of range I'm a-comin' back. Keep your money, Frank Conway, and I'll be a-comin' back to talk to you if you don't do the right thing by your adopted son. Oh, yeah, I know all that goes on in this little burg."

"The sheriff shall release Ted at once," Conway was almost blubbering with fright. "I'll see Ted gets a fair deal."

"Then I'll be beating it for the wide-open spaces." The Apache Kid backed to the door. "And if I come this way again I come a-shootin'."

The sheriff made a move towards the gun that lay on Conway's desk. A gun spat, and the weapon was shot off the desk. Conway gave a moan of fear.

"Keep your hands up," he cried. "We don't mean any harm, Kid. The sheriff wanted to wipe his nose."

"I'll wipe it with a bullet if he moves again." The outlaw had flung open the door. "Now follow me anyone who dares."

The Apache Kid flung himself into his saddle. A few seconds later the sheriff and his deputy—with Conway in the background—appeared. A cloud of dust showed them the trail of the outlaw.

The shot had been heard by most of

the cow-punchers of the Bar X, and they stared after the galloping horseman until the sheriff's frenzied yells awoke them to action.

"That's the Apache Kid," he cried. "There's a thousand bucks reward for his capture, dead or alive. I want a posse of twelve of the best mounted."

The Kid laughed grimly when he saw that pursuing posse. He might have laughed still more if he knew that one of the posse was the released Ted Conway. Poor Ted had gained his release—would it be at the expense of the Apache Kid?

The Apache Kid's Plans.

THE Apache Kid had made his plans. He would lead the posse a good old dance, and by the superior speed of the Demon eventually cross the border. There must he bid farewell to pleasant memories and dear friends, and to find refuge and solace at some other ranch, provided the minions of the law did not hound him back to the old life.

But the Apache Kid had reckoned without Bill Buckley.

For weeks the renegade had trailed the Kid. Several times he had got in touch with Sheriff Ward to report. The sheriff, convinced that Buckley was for once playing straight, offered him the reward of a thousand dollars if he could bring about the capture of the outlaw. The reward and hatred spurred the dago to keep to the trail, and after many wrong scents had at last headed for the Bar X.

Buckly was certain that the new hand, by name of Jack Norton, was the Apache Kid, and already he thought of the big reward, but it was as well to take no chances, and the rascal kept to the hills and the forests in his ride to the Bar X.

The scattered firing and beat of many hoofs came to his ears. Up a tree swarmed Bill Buckley, and he saw a sight that made his eyes gleam—the Apache Kid on Demon, and, behind, a posse of a dozen or more riders!

If the Kid reached the border and the dense forests, Buckley's chances of the thousand dollars would be gone. He must get the Kid now!

The first intimation that Jack had of trouble from an unexpected source was a bullet that whined mightily close to his eyes. The shot had come from a clump of mesquite. The Kid at once turned his horse and reached the woods without further shooting.

Bill Buckley mounted his horse and charged after him.

Now it happened that the Apache Kid's lead over the posse was about half a mile, and the posse had been firing just to show they meant business; when Buckley took a hand the chase was proceeding along a twisting valley, and so the posse did not see the Kid turn towards the woods.

Thus the Apache Kid twisted through the pines with Buckley close behind, whilst the posse, shouting and firing, rode on down the valley—till a straight stretch showed no sign of their quarry and they realised their mistake.

Jack heard the crashing behind and decided that perhaps he had better get moving. He hadn't bargained for the ambush. Soon his ears told him that but one man was on his trail.

The Kid reached the brow of the hill, rode down through the trees to an open stretch of land. A mile beyond lay jagged hills. Turning in his saddle, Jack looked back, and he got a surprise when the other rider broke cover. Bill Buckley, and the skunk was armed with

a rifle. Two more bullets whined past his head. It would be a desperate plight for him if Buckley should attempt to shoot at Demon.

"Old hoss, we gotta make those hills," he whispered, and the gallant animal strove his utmost.

Time after time the outlaw avoided death by swerving his horse so that Buckley wasted his ammunition on a difficult target. A quarter of a mile from the hills and Demon, usually so sure footed, stumbled over a half-buried root and went lame.

Used to all emergencies, Jack thought furiously. Two bullets whining dangerously close gave him his idea. He sagged across the saddle as if badly wounded, whilst Demon limped towards the hills on three legs.

Bill Buckley rode alongside. He had replaced the rifle for a revolver, and his tanned face was alight with evil satisfaction—at last he had settled the Apache Kid. He decided to stop Demon, drag the Kid out of the saddle, bind him and then wait for the posse.

But as Buckley stretched forward his gun-hand to catch at the bridle, the lifeless body suddenly woke to life, and his gun-hand was gripped by steel-like fingers. The gun dropped to the dust and, snarling like a wild cat, Buckley freed his other hand and flung both arms round his enemy.

Demon heard an order that he understood, and at once turned sharply so that his master's feet shot out of the saddle. Buckley half out of his own saddle had the full weight of the Apache Kid on his neck, lost his balance, and next moment both men were rolling in the dust.

"This is where we settle accounts," the Kid managed to splutter as he drove a fist to Buckley's ribs.

Desperation and fear lent the double-cropper added strength, for he managed to free his arm and drive his fist into the Kid's face. Next moment they were on their feet, facing each other like two fierce gladiators.

The Kid could have drawn his gun, but he had decided to beat Buckley in a fair fight—give the coyote the hiding of his life. They swapped punches, but the Kid's hurt most, and when an uppercut opened Buckley's right eye the latter decided to beat it for the hills. He had a gun hidden inside his shirt—a trick that had served him well in many a shooting—and if he could get a few yards from the Kid he might have a chance to reach for it, but the Kid must never guess his intention or else another gun would speak first. The Apache Kid was the quickest man on the draw in the South-west.

It was exhausting work running up the loose-stoned slope, and both men stumbled. Several times Buckley felt for the hidden gun, but he seemed to see the Kid drawing his own gun.

The Apache Kid gained on Buckley, and at the crest of the first slope, where there was a small plateau, the two men came to grips again. Buckley was a dissolute rascal and he was all in. A straight left sent him crashing to the ground. Fear made the crook try to get out the gun, and just in time did the Kid jump forward and grip the weapon.

The posse on the opposite hill heard the firing of the gun, and with a yell took up the new trail.

The Kid yanked the exhausted Buckley to his feet.

"You dirty hound," he spat out, and slammed a right and left to the coarse mouth.

Buckley staggered back, swayed dangerously on the edge of the slope and then

toppled backwards with a scream of despair. Over and over rolled the body, and the Kid shuddered when he saw the great boulder that Buckley must crash into with sickening force.

When the Kid reached the boulder one glance showed him that Buckley was out of sight. A desperate idea flashed to his keen mind. Here was a chance of the Apache Kid dying for ever.

The posse were not yet in sight, and the big boulder screened them from the opposite slope. The Kid was wearing a coloured shirt and Buckley's was blue. Swiftly the exchange was made, and then the Apache Kid partly covered the blood-stained mouth with the spotted bandana.

The task was just complete when a glance round the boulder showed the posse dashing down the woods. They saw the two horses in the valley and knew their quarry must be near.

What a surprise they got when they saw Jack Norton appear, dragging a figure after him. The boulder was almost in the valley, just as well, as the Apache Kid was almost all-in.

"Hallo, Norton," cried the sheriff. "What's happened? By gar, that's the Apache Kid? He's dead!"

"Yeah, I was out early," Jack gasped out. "Too hot to sleep, so I went riding. Heard shouts and shooting, and saw a lone rider with the lower part of his face masked." He pointed to the bandana. "I give chase, for I guessed it was the Apache Kid, and we came to grips on that small plateau up yonder. I could have shot him in the back, but I only shoot snakes that way. He drew a gun, and I just got to him in time. I landed two hard punches and the Apache Kid lost his balance and toppled over the edge before I could shout a warning. See that boulder, well that's the boulder his head hit."

"Well, that sure beats me." The sheriff peered at the crumpled figure and battered, crushed face. "I kinda expected the Apache Kid to look more refined. He looked sorta younger when I seed him a while back, but maybe the bad light was deceptive."

Ted Conway stepped forward and his large face was one great grin. He held out his hand.

"Gee, Jack, I'm mighty glad you got the Apache Kid," he cried. "I mind seeing this guy prowling round the ranch a few days ago." He winked. "How about riding over to the Carters, Jack? I want to thank you and so will Jane."

The two men gripped hands.

A week had passed, and Demon and his master were fit again. Jane and Betty Carter, old man Carter and Ted Conway, were bidding farewell to a true friend.

The Apache Kid kissed the two girls heartily, clapped old man Carter on the back and had a final handshake with Ted.

"Frank Conway has fixed you for that new ranch, and soon you'll be getting married," cried the outlaw. "And I'm wagering you make a big success of both. If it wasn't for the cursed wanderlust that gets me about every two months I'd be staying around."

As Sheriff Ward had cabled that he might come himself to present the reward there was every reason why the Apache Kid should lit the trail. The two girls now knew the true identity of Jack, but that made them like him, if anything, more than ever.

"When the sheriff has gone you will come back," said Jane. "There is a dead pine near the summit of Injun Hill, and until Ted tells that tree you'd best keep away."

"I'll look out for that good omen." The Apache Kid swept off his wide sombrero. "You've been real good pals, and I'm sure coming back—some day." There was a huskiness in his throat as he smiled at the girls. "You'll wait for me, Betty."

"What about the reward, Jack?" demanded Ted.

"That's the wedding present of the Apache Kid," cried the outlaw, and next moment was galloping away from the Hacienda.

They watched till he was out of sight, but they were very doubtful if the Apache Kid would ever come back to the Bar X Ranch again.

(By permission of Butchers Film Service, Ltd., featuring Jack Perrin.)

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"REDUCING."

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"SCREEN STORIES."

ON SALE WEDNESDAY.

PRICE 2d.
July 11th, 1931.



CHARLES BICKFORD
*as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police-
man in the stirring Warner Bros. film,
"River's End."*

July 11th, 1931.

"Shipmates."

(Continued from page 18.)

the motor-boat fastened alongside, and he was sure.

"Stand by," he ordered, "there's someone on board that ship. Keep a good look-out, men."

Down in the dark hold of the ship the admiral and the cadet turned on the last of the sea-cocks, and scrambled for the ladders, with water swirling higher and higher round their feet. Up they went in desperate haste, well knowing that at any moment the ship might be blown sky-high. They reached the deck, which was almost flush with the water, only to find that the upper works of the vessel were on fire. The burning oil-tanker was close alongside, and sheets of flame were sweeping over the sinking barge.

They crawled to the side of the ship. The heat was terrific, and even the deck, though water was beginning to splash over it, felt hot beneath them. Jonesy tore off his coat and threw it over the admiral's head as a fiery gust of flame swept over them. Another flaw of wind carried the fire away for a moment, and Admiral Corbin rose by the rail of the ship, scorched and nearly stifled, but not so badly burnt as his young companion.

"I'm sorry I called you a coward, boy," he gasped, helping Jonesy to rise. "Come, we must jump for it!"

Jonesy was very badly burnt about the face and arms, and his clothing was on fire. He staggered up, to poise himself with the admiral by the rail, and just as another burst of flame came down upon them, the two men dived.

A second later the ammunition barge disappeared beneath the surface, and a swarm of launches churned their way to the spot to rescue the two heroes who had been seen to jump from the ship.

"Starboard your helm!" howled the lieutenant in charge of the boat. "I saw one of them—there!"

Eager hands reached out and hauled a seemingly lifeless body to the deck of the barge.

"Good heavens! It's the admiral!" gasped the lieutenant. "Admiral Corbin! Full speed for the flagship!"

The Reward of Bravery.

EVERY ship of the fleet had her flag at half-mast. Solemn minute guns boomed out a farewell salute, and on the deck of the flagship Admiral Schuyler and a group of sad-faced officers stood stiffly to attention. A squad of marines carried a body, draped with the star-spangled banner, to the side of the ship, and gently lowered it into the sea.

Admiral Schuyler stepped forward and cast a wreath over the side, and one by one all the ships of the fleet steamed slowly past the spot for each captain to throw the tribute of his ship to the memory of a very gallant sailor.

For Admiral Corbin had been picked up indeed; but the plunge into the sea after his strenuous work on the ammunition ship had proved too much for him, and even as he was lifted on to the deck of the Colorado he had breathed his last. And as he had long before requested, he had been buried from the deck of the flagship at sea.

While the wreaths floated over the ocean grave of Admiral Corbin, Jonesy lay in hospital, his head heavily swathed in bandages. He had been picked up unconscious, but youth and health were on his side, and gradually

he recovered until at length he was able to speak.

"Is the admiral okay?" he whispered faintly one morning to the doctor who stood beside his bed.

"Yes, son, he is. He did what he aimed to do—the fleet was saved. The admiral is okay, sure," said the doctor.

A smile came over Jonesy's face, and, closing his eyes, he went off to sleep again. When he woke he saw Lieutenant Michael bending over him.

"Feeling better, Jones, eh?" smiled the lieutenant, whose face was decorated with a great strip of plaster.

"Guess I'll soon be okay," whispered the young cadet feebly.

"What happened that night is a personal matter between us," said Mike quietly. "You'll hear no more of it from me."

"Thank you, lieutenant. I'm sorry you were hurt," said Jonesy, smiling. "I'll say you're a real good sport."

Mike went away, and Jonesy hoped against hope that Kit would come to see him. But the girl was plunged in such deep grief at the death of her father, heroic though his end had been, that the doctors positively forbade her to see Jones until he was off the danger list, and so he waited for many days in vain.

Jonesy was at length well enough to get up, and then the girl, clad in deep black, came to see him.

"Why, Kit," said Jonesy, looking with astonishment at the girl's pale face and her mourning attire, "what's wrong? Is it—your father? They told me he was okay."

"He is—okay," said Kit. "But he died on the flagship that night after he was picked up."

Jonesy rose shakily to his feet and saluted solemnly.

"Admiral Corbin was a real white man," he said, "and I'm proud to have served under him."

A few weeks later the cadets at Annapolis formed up on the parade ground for an inspection by Admiral Schuyler. After a march past the saluting base where the admiral stood, they formed a hollow square, stood rigidly to attention, and waited expectantly.

Admiral Schuyler came forward, followed by the officers of his staff.

"I have now a very pleasant duty to perform," said the admiral. "One of the cadets of this college has been distinguished by an act of most remarkable bravery. Lieutenant Jones!"

Jonesy stepped out of the ranks and stood before the admiral.

"I am instructed by the Admiralty to present to you the medal awarded for specially courageous deeds of valour," said Admiral Schuy-

ler formally, "and to congratulate you." He pinned the medal on the uncomfortable Jonesy's breast, and shook hands with him, while the cadets cheered lustily.

For Jonesy's rash actions had been officially overlooked, and nothing more was heard either of his attempt at desertion, or of his fight with Lieutenant Michael.

Later on that day Jonesy and Kit were strolling together in the grounds of the college.

"I shall be here for nearly four years," said Jonesy. "I hope you're not going to fall for—one of those big oil men, as you did before."

Kit Corbin laughed merrily. "Don't be so silly!" she cried.

"Four years is a long time," remarked Jonesy thoughtfully.

"I shall be waiting," was the girl's earnest reply.

Jonesy looked hurriedly around, and saw that they were alone.

"Clear the decks for action!" he cried. "Commence fring!"

His arms went round her shoulders, and action commenced rapidly—on her lips—and went on until Kit laughingly pushed him away.

Jonesy glanced at the wall, on which was a metal slab in memory of the famous American admiral of the eighteenth century, John Paul Jones. He drew himself up stiffly and saluted.

"I have to report, admiral," he said solemnly, "that I have the situation well in hand!"

(By permission of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Film Co., Ltd., starring Robert Montgomery and Dorothy Jordan.)

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"The Iron Man."

(Continued from page 10.)

tive corners, and at the outset Kid Mason launched a whirlwind attack that drove O'Keefe to the ropes. The Kid's face was grim and set. It seemed almost as if he were trying to vent on O'Keefe all that rage which the letter from Lewis' wife had aroused in him, but O'Keefe covered up skilfully, taking the minimum amount of punishment, and finally slithering out into the centre of the ring again.

There was a hard spell of give-and-take in the middle of the roped square, and then a right-cross dropped Rattler O'Keefe to the boards. The referee waved the Kid towards a neutral corner and began to count, but at "three" O'Keefe was on his feet, smiling gamely.

The Kid rushed him, and battered him mercilessly during the remainder of the round, in which he piled up a formidable array of points. But O'Keefe's stamina, as he walked to his corner, seemed unimpaired. He had the appearance of a man who had been holding himself in check, as indeed he had—in accordance with George Regan's instructions.

The second round opened with a tear-away attack by the Kid, and more than one hammer-blow crashed home to O'Keefe's face and body with staggering effect.

At the ringside, near the challenger's corner, one of Rattler's seconds spoke to Regan anxiously. "The Kid's hurting him, George," he said. "You'd better let the Rattler go to him."

"Not yet," George answered, his eyes on Kid Mason's grim face, "not yet."

The round ended and O'Keefe came back to his stool. "You're doing fine, Rattler," George Regan told him, and then he glanced in the champ's direction—a little regretfully, perhaps, for though he aimed to guide O'Keefe to victory, it was hard to sunder the bonds of friendship utterly, and deep down in his heart he was wishing that he was in the Kid's corner.

Meanwhile the Kid was leaning back while his seconds fanned him with the towels and tried to offer advice.

"You're going too fast, Kid," old

Jeff protested, noting the youngster's heaving chest. "Don't you remember how George used to—"

"Shut up!" the Kid barked. "I'm fighting this fight! Listen, I've hit him with everything, an' he won't stay down. But I'm goin' in now, and I'll murder him!" His eyes blazed fiercely, and: "I'll murder him!" he repeated.

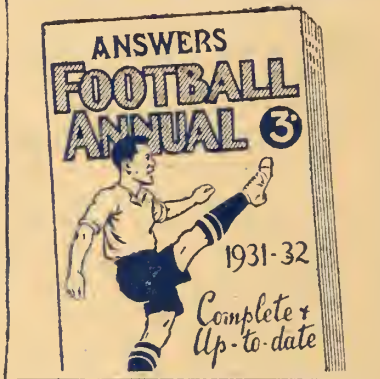
From the opposite corner George Regan saw his expression, and he laid a warning hand on O'Keefe's arm.

"Watch him, Rattler!" he jerked.

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"He's goin' wild. This is your round—get him!"

O'Keefe nodded, and at the sound of the bell slid into the middle of the ring. He saw the Kid coming for him like a tiger, and he saw the Kid's right start to travel.

The Rattler blocked the punch and whipped his own right to the point. The Kid went over heels-high, amid a roar of exultation from the crowd, but he was up at the count of "five," and by the sheer fury of a terrific onslaught he sent O'Keefe to the boards.

O'Keefe climbed to his feet and put himself on the defensive. Once again the Kid launched forward, and this time

left himself wide open in the madness of his attack.

"Now, Rattler!" yelled the voice of George Regan above the roar of the crowd, and with that O'Keefe slithered to meet the Kid and let loose a shattering punch to the jaw.

The smack of it seemed to cut through the clamour. The Kid checked, tilted like a stricken ship and then thudded to the boards, a dead weight. Ten seconds later O'Keefe was being lifted on to the shoulders of his seconds and carried round the ring in triumph.

Some time elapsed before Rattler was able to reach his dressing-room, where George told him to take a shower, and as the new champion hurried off to indulge in that luxury McNeil spoke to Regan.

"Well, it was certainly a big surprise to me," he declared. "I never thought the Rattler would beat the Kid."

George Regan smiled a twisted smile. "He didn't," he answered cryptically. "It was the Kid's wife that beat him." Then, without another word, he left O'Keefe's quarters and made his way along the corridor to the door of young Mason's dressing-room.

He opened that door quietly. The Kid was sitting on a chair near the far wall, and his face was covered with his hands. From chopping-block to champion, and then back to the bitter dregs of failure. Such was his story, and all on account of a woman to whom loyalty was unknown.

The Kid was sobbing. Old Jeff was standing beside him, pleading with him to let him take off his shoes.

"Leave me alone!" Kid Mason groaned. "Leave me alone!"

Jeff looked round and caught sight of George Regan. Regan signed to him to quit the dressing-room, and, as the old-timer obeyed him, walked slowly over to where the Kid was sitting.

The Kid continued to sob, but presently he took his hands from his face and saw his former manager standing before him. His bloodshot eyes rose to Regan's in an expression that seemed to hold despair, shame, appeal.

George Regan pointed to his bare chest.

"Put on your robe," he said quietly. "Do you want to catch pneumonia?"

(By permission of the Universal Films, Ltd., starring Lew Ayres and Robert Armstrong.)

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Boy's Cinema

"BREED OF THE WEST" and "SOUTH OF SONORA."

Complete Film Stories in This Issue.

Boy's CINEMA 2^d

No. 605.

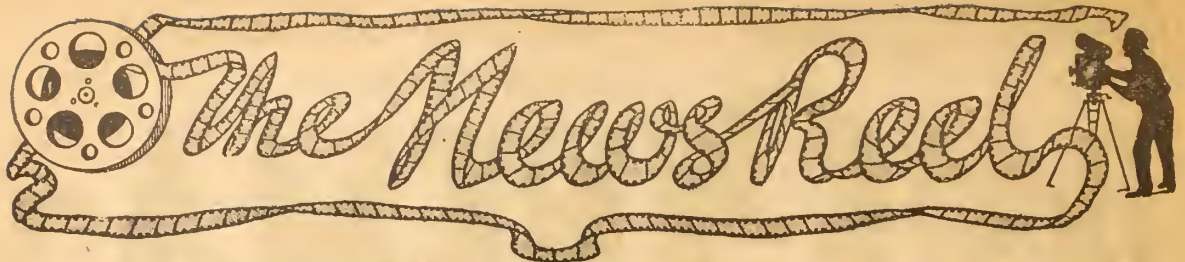
EVERY TUESDAY.

JULY 18th, 1931.

JACK HOLT in a Gripping CROOK DRAMA —



The LAST PARADE



The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"The Last Parade."

Cookie Leonard, Jack Holt; Mike O'Dowd, Tom Moore; Molly Pearson, Constance Cummings; Larry Pearson, Gaylord Pendleton; Marino, Robert Ellis; Lefty, Earl D. Bunn; Chief of Police, Ed Le Saint; News Editor, Edmund Breese; Alabam, Clarence Muse; Joe, Gino Corrado.

"Breed of the West."

Wally Weldon, Wally Wales; Betty Sterner, Virginia Browne Faire; Long-ropo Wheeler, Bob Walker; Colonel Sterner, Lafe McKee; Jim Sterner, Buzz Barton; Shorty, Bobbie Dunn; Cook, George Gerwin; Sheriff Cole, Hank Bell.

"South of Sonora."

Bill Tracy, Buffalo Bill jun.; Betty Williams, Betty Joy; Heine Schmultz, Gene Schuler; Buck Harris, Fred Church; Blackie Wells, Lew Mochan; Mr. Williams, Horace B. Carpenter; Sheriff Kilne, James Merrill.

A Director's Pride.

Regard for human safety is a shifting quantity in the movies.

In the re-enactment of the Dakota land rush for the Fox picture, "Not Exactly Gentlemen," Director Benjamin Stoloff employed 15,000 persons, more than 1,000 cattle and hundreds of horses. For two days men, women and children ran helter-skelter, cattle milled and horseback riders charged. Stoloff took pride in the fact that by observing rigid safety precautions he brought the scene to a close without an injury to person or animal.

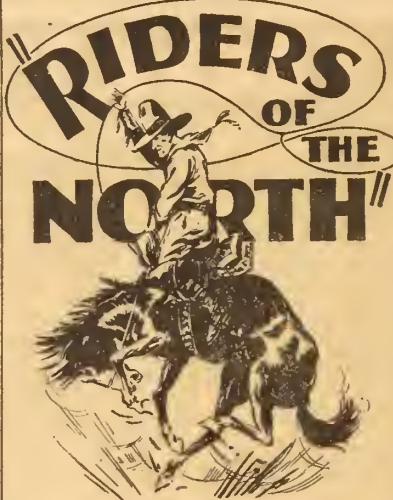
A few days later another scene was filmed in which Victor McLaglen, the leading man, was called on to clean house in a frontier gambling establishment occupied by Robert Warwick, Franklyn Farnum and sundry expugilists. The latter were instructed not to pall their punches, and no director has yet succeeded in persuading McLaglen to pull his. Stoloff took pride in this scene also, based on the amount of work provided for the company doctor in the way of cuts and bruises.

Pugilist and Actor.

Few people are aware that Conway Tearle, the outstanding British actor, playing in "The Truth About Youth," First National's latest release, was once ambitious to become a pugilist, and, moreover, he followed this profession for two years prior to taking up acting.

Conway Tearle, indeed, holds many distinctions. His family had been on the stage since 1712. One of his ancestors played in support of the celebrated Mrs. Sarah Siddons, while another was a famous Shakespearean actor. Conway's father, Osmond Tearle, was also a noted classical actor, and his brother Geoffrey is to-day one July 15th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S THREE COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



Fur stealing in the far North, and how the Royal Canadian Mounted Police set out to capture a desperate band of outlaws. A gripping story of the frozen wastes, starring Bob Custer.

"THE MIDNIGHT SPECIAL."

Train wreckers after bullion of untold wealth—a young railway operator blamed for the dastardly deeds—his kid brother fighting to clear his name. A thrilling railroad drama, starring Glenn Tryon and Merna Kennedy.

"THE SUNRISE TRAIL."

The daring exploits of a young cowboy who sets out to bring a ruthless band of rustlers to justice, starring Bob Steele and Blanche McHaffey.

of the most popular figures before the footlights of England.

Conway Tearle's own first appearance on the stage was at the tender age of five, when he appeared at the Academy of Music in New York. His pugilistic career terminated when he accepted an engagement at the Drury Lane Theatre in London. Later he became leading man at the Garrick Theatre. His London experience has been in support of such famous stars as Sir Charles Wyndham, Ellen Terry and Lena Ashwell. He is a real veteran in pictures, having made his film debut as long ago as 1914, when he played lead in a picture called "The Nightingale."

"A Fowl Affair."

Meet Genevieve Leghorn, or "Jenny," as she is usually called. Sorry I have no picture of her, but you will see her on the screen. Jenny is one of

Hollywood's new leading ladies, and she is said to have no nasty temperament, or even an idea of what she is worth to her film producer.

Jenny—for it seems a shame to keep you all mystified any longer—is a White Leghorn hen, and she appears in a starring rôle in a talking comedy entitled "A Fowl Affair." Opposite her in the picture is a Plymouth Rock rooster, and "supporting" them are a number of farmyard folk such as chickens, ducks, roosters and turkeys. This is the first time that fowls have appeared in a talkie comedy, and however tender the birds might be otherwise, the producers say it was a tough job getting them to do their different parts.

A Real Fire Thrill.

A fire in a London street is one of the big scenes in the British International picture, "The House Opposite." Incidentally, the fire proved to be really exciting for the chief artists taking part.

The set representing a Bloomsbury quarter was built on the "lot" of the studio at Elstree, and comprised eight houses made of asbestos. From one of these Renee McCready, Celia Glynn and Henry Kendall had to make their escape in the presence of a crowd of two hundred people. To create the big blaze about 1,000 smoke bombs, about 50 gallons of inflammable liquid and half a hundredweight of "white fire" were used. Two fire-engines with fire brigade were engaged to add further realism to the picture.

Then, "according to schedule," the fire was started. The alarm was raised, people crowded on to the scene from neighbouring houses and elsewhere, and soon the fire-engines dashed up and a dozen hoses were quickly brought into play. All this was "play acting," but after a few minutes the onlookers suddenly realised that the three artistes were in real danger.

They were on the roof with a drop of fifty feet to the ground and a blazing stairway behind. Huge tongues of flame were all around them. For several seconds the three artistes could not be seen. The firemen now worked in real earnest. Then it was seen that Kendall had his arms round the really frightened girls and was trying to shield them.

In a few seconds, however, one of the firemen was able to reach them, and when the three artistes were eventually rescued it was found that the girls' dresses were partly burnt, and that Henry Kendall's hair and that of Miss Glynn had been singed. They had experienced one of the narrowest escapes in their lives.

Harry Carey's First Serial.

Years ago a Western drama was not considered good by many picture-goers unless it starred Harry Carey. His

(Continued on page 27.)

The powerful story of a newspaper man turned gangster, who pitted his wits against law and order, although his biggest chum was a policeman. Starring Jack Holt, Constance Cummings and Tom Moore.



An Unintentional Recruit.

THE chief news editor of the New York "Morning Herald" looked up with a scowl from the sheets of written matter which he had been blue-pencilling and shouted for the copy boy, who immediately shot off his stool and rushed to the big desk.

"Take that down to Room Three and ask Martin where his eyes are!"

The boy scurried off with the sheets of paper, and the chief news editor whipped up a telephone.

"Give me Cookie Leonard," he said gruffly to the girl at the distant switchboard. "L-e-o-n-a-r-d—Mr. Leonard."

The chief news editor's name was Bettinson. He was a middle-aged man, rapidly going bald, and still more rapidly losing any human qualities he may once have possessed. His job was a harassing one, even under normal conditions, but now that America had entered the war, even his sanity was threatened. For edition after edition of the "Herald" was daily being poured forth from the giant presses, and all the news must be up to the minute.

But Chauncey Cook Leonard—known on the staff as the "Inquiring Reporter," and proud of the title—seldom permitted anything to distress him. He was lounging in a swivel chair in his own small den, and his feet were planted firmly on the desk before him, with the telephone between them.

He was studying a lively little weekly publication called "Pep," and he was pleased to smile at some scandalous paragraph he had discovered in it just as the telephone-bell shrilled.

Cookie—everybody called him Cookie—was a long-legged, powerfully framed young fellow. Among a variety of other characteristics, he possessed a quantity of sleek brown hair,

brushed well back from a high forehead; a pair of shrewd—and sometimes menacing—brown eyes; a clipped moustache, which accentuated a mouth that could close like a steel trap in one straight and very cruel line; and a jaw that gave more than a hint of pugnacity.

He tossed the copy of "Pep" across the room, and, taking his feet from the desk, removed the receiver from the telephone. The voice of the chief news editor assailed his left ear-drum.

"Good-morning, sweetheart!" he answered cheerfully. "This is the Inquiring Reporter. Will you have fish or cornflakes?"

"Cut out the comedy!" blared Bettinson. "There's a war going on! War! Understand? War! And the first of the volunteers are parading over on Broadway, so shake the lead out of your feet and cover that parade. And don't call me sweetheart!"

The last sentence was thundered at Cookie, but with a grin he responded: "All right, you bald-headed old baboon!" And lunged up before the explosion that followed could deafen him.

The offices of the "Morning Herald" were in West 40th Street, which is only a step from Broadway. In less than five minutes Cookie had forced his way through a crowd of onlookers into the roadway, where the first batch of recruits were marching towards downtown, preceded by a band.

Flags were waving, handkerchiefs were fluttering. Cookie plunged into the procession and fell into step beside a spectacled young man in a shabby overcoat.

"Good-morning," he said brightly as he marched along. "I'm from the 'Herald.' What noble impulse

prompted you to answer your country's call?"

The spectacled young man looked sideways at him in surprise, and at that moment an irate policeman, who had been helping to keep the spectators out of the roadway, clapped Cookie on the shoulder.

The reporter, by reason of his profession, knew practically every cop in New York City—and practically every cop knew him. This one, Patrolman Michael O'Dowd, knew him well.

"Leonard!" he said angrily. "Will you leave those men alone?"

Cookie took no notice, but continued to march beside the man he had addressed. The blue-eyed, chubby-faced policeman gripped the shoulder he held.

"Did you hear my orders?" he demanded.

"Well," the spectacled man said mildly, "we're in the war now, and I think everybody ought to do their bit."

"Quite so—quite so," approved Cookie. "The spirit of '76."

"Did you hear my orders?" bellowed O'Dowd.

Cookie turned and appeared to become aware of the policeman.

"Listen, Mike," he said facetiously, "you can't walk in this parade. That's the wrong kind of uniform to go to war!"

"I got enough war with mugs like you," retorted Mike. "Now beat it!"

But Cookie did not beat it; on the contrary, he continued to march with the recruits. Police headquarters of the precinct loomed up on the left.

"Oh, the saints give me patience!" cried Mike, resisting the temptation to resort to violence with this imperturbable newspaper man.

Cookie merely grinned and looked across at the big police-station. On its July 13th, 1913.

steps several of O'Dowd's superiors were standing, watching the parade, and among them was hook-nosed Chief Donovan, waving to the recruits in a spirit of patriotism.

Possessed by a sudden imp of mischief, Cookie raised his voice and his arm.

"Hi, chief!" he shouted. "What d'you think of Officer O'Dowd? He's going to war!"

Mike gasped.

"Well, what the---" he began.

"Yes, sir, he's joined up!" cried Cookie.

Donovan swooped down from the steps of the police-station and made his way through the crowd.

"The first volunteer from the police department," laughed Cookie.

The chief fell into step and offered his hand to the flabbergasted Irishman.

"Congratulations, O'Dowd," said he enthusiastically. "I'm proud of you!"

"But, sir," stammered Mike, "I—I—I—"

"Now don't be modest," said Donovan, gripping a reluctant hand. "You don't have to explain—you're doing a very fine thing."

"That's the spirit, chief," cooed Cookie, thoroughly enjoying O'Dowd's discomfiture. "We're all in it, and everybody should do his bit."

"Good luck, O'Dowd!" boomed Donovan. "And don't be worried about your job. It'll be waiting for you when you get back."

Inwardly O'Dowd was boiling, but there was no escape now! He managed to mutter unfeeling thanks, and Chief Donovan skipped back to the steps of the station. The procession moved on.

"Good-morning," said Cookie cheerfully to his victim, for all the world as though he had never seen him before, "I'm the inquiring reporter from the 'Herald'—and what noble impulse prompted you to heed your country's call?"

Mike made no answer. Mere words were incapable of expressing his feelings; but his eyes were murdering Cookie all the way to the recruiting office.

Even into that building Cookie marched with the man he had thrust into the Army. In the clothing department he stood beside him while he got his cap, his boots, his tunic, his slacks and his puttees, none of which he wanted.

A wooden rail divided those who approached the open windows from those who had acquired their outfits and were streaming back to a doorway leading to the dressing-room. A burly sergeant kept the men moving as rapidly as possible, for all these recruits, apart from the two, had been examined and passed for active service before the parade.

O'Dowd, with his bundle, was close to the doorway when Cookie delivered a final insult.

"You've gotta give me credit, Mike," he said pleasantly. "If it hadn't been for me you wouldn't be in this man's Army."

"Give me patience with that fellow!" exclaimed Mike wildly.

"You don't realise what you owe me," pursued Cookie.

That was the last straw.

"I know exactly what I owe you, brother!" roared Mike, dropping his bundle. "And that's it!"

His left fist shot out with the force of a steam-hammer, and Cookie was caught unawares on the point of the jaw. He went down with a crash and rolled under the rail. O'Dowd disappeared into a corridor; other men passed in after him.

July 15th, 1931.

"Do you hear the little birdies?" jeered a recruit who was just behind.

Cookie had received a very nasty jolt, but his jaw was built to withstand jolts. He sat up, nursing the jaw, blinking at stars. A score of men streamed past him before he got to his feet, intent on retaliation.

He reached the doorway, his fists clenched, his mouth set in a straight and murderous line. But a massive sergeant caught at his arm and dragged him back.

"Hi, where are you going?" demanded the sergeant.

"I'm going to get the guy that socked me in the jaw!" snapped Cookie.

"You can't go in there till you're signed up!"

They were blocking the doorway to the bundle-bearing recruits, and one of those recruits decided to have his say in the matter as Cookie stood hesitatingly there.

"Sure you're big enough to fight?" he taunted.

"Maybe he's afraid to fight," suggested another. "He's too good-looking to fight!"

Cookie scowled at this second speaker.

"Oh, yeah?" he drawled savagely.

"All right, sergeant, put me in the same outfit with that guy who socked me, and I'll join your cock-eyed army!"

"Buddy," chuckled the sergeant, "you're in!"

He caught hold of Cookie's arm and propelled him down a wide passage and into a room on the left, where a young subaltern sat at a desk.

"Lieutenant," he said, "here's a man who just can't wait to join up."

The lieutenant looked Cookie up and down and grinned boyishly at him.

"In a hurry, eh?" he said.

"Yeah," responded Cookie. "I've got a date with a guy in there!" And he jerked his head in the general direction of the heart of the building.

"What's your name?"

"C. Cook Leonard."

"What's the 'C' for?"

"Chauncey," replied Cookie quietly.

"But don't let that fool you!"

In No Man's Land.

FRIENDSHIP is often born of unpropitious circumstances. As a reporter Cookie had fallen foul of Mike O'Dowd on numerous occasions, and the two misunderstood and disliked one another; but having got into the army and fought out their private hattle during the period of training, they sailed for France to fight in greater battles the staunchest of chums.

They quarrelled in billets, they quarrelled in the trenches, for such was their nature; but they had grown to understand one another and to appreciate one another's qualities.

How deeply the friendship went was demonstrated one night after a raid on the enemy. Both men took part in the raid, with shells and bombs bursting in all directions, and Very lights illuminating the tangled waste of No Man's Land.

"They've sure stirred 'em up out there," growled a private on the fire-step to a lieutenant beside him.

"They're coming back," said the lieutenant.

"Well, I hope Cookie comes back," remarked another man known as "Lefty." "He owes me forty francs!"

They watched the dark figures crawling through the broken wire entanglements.

"Looks like they've got a prisoner!" exclaimed one of the watchers.

"They've got two of 'em," rejoiced the lieutenant.

The men of the raiding party approached the parapet, covered with mud, but triumphant. They scrambled down into the trench with their two prisoners, one of whom had been knocked almost senseless by Cookie.

"Good work, Leonard," approved the lieutenant. "Fine! Here, take this man to Major Watson, quick!"

A corporal relieved Cookie of his captive.

"Well, are we all back?"

"I don't know, sir," replied Cookie, almost unrecognisable in his dirt.

"Seen Mike, any of you?"

"Sergeant O'Dowd?" questioned the lieutenant. "Anybody seen O'Dowd?"

"Ho was with me when they opened fire," stated a private. "I think they got him in the legs."

Cookie sprang up on to the fire-step and peered out across the waste.

"I see him!" he growled. "He's hung on the wire, the fathead!"

The lieutenant, beside him, looked through his glasses.

"They're coming out to take him prisoner," he said.

"Gimme that typewriter!" barked Cookie, and one of the men obediently handed him a portable machine-gun, with which he raked the advancing Germans, some of whom fell wounded, while the rest retired in haste.

"Good work!" quoth the lieutenant.

"Yeah—rough on rats—that's me," drawled Cookie, and, dropping the machine-gun, began to climb over the parapet.

"No you don't, Leonard!" exclaimed the lieutenant, grabbing at his legs.

"Well, what are you goin' to do?" demanded Cookie indignantly. "Leave him out there in that hot spot?"

"But you can't get to him!"

"I've got a date with him," snapped Cookie, and, breaking free, he climbed over the sand-bags, and went crawling towards the wire.

A bomb whistled through the night and burst close to where he was crawling, sending up a great mass of earth and debris that for a time blotted out everything.

The lieutenant shivered, and several men fell backwards with the force of the explosion.

"That got him!" gasped one of them.

But it hadn't! For a few moments Cookie lay stunned; then resolutely he crawled on again, reached the barbed wire and the dim figure attached to it, and rose to his knees to ply wire-cutters with feverish speed.

"Where'd they get you, Mike?" he demanded gruffly as he worked.

"In the legs," was the faint reply.

"Lie still—I'll get you out."

"Don't be a fool," mumbled Mike.

"Go back!"

"Aw, go and lay an egg!" retorted Cookie savagely. "There! Now come on—crawl up!"

Ho tugged with all his might, helping his wounded chum to free himself.

"Now swing on top of me," he commanded. "and keep low. Get higher up on my back."

Riffo fire broke loose, and bombs were thrown, as the enemy saw Mike's rescuer crawling away like a misshapen tortoise, with the man he had saved on his back.

"He's bringing him in!" exclaimed the lieutenant.

"Yes—but he'll never make it," growled a private.

A bomb exploded quite near the crawling figure and its burden, blotting them out from sight.

"Too bad!" murmured the lieutenant.

"Well, boy," said one of those who

had been watching, "you've got to give him credit for trying."

Time passed. "There they are!" cried a voice suddenly. "They didn't get him!"

The tortoise was crawling forward again—less vigorously than before, but none the less surely.

"Come on, Cookie! Come on!" urged voices. And with a final effort Cookie reached the sand-bags, rose up over them, and rolled down into the trench.

Eager hands grabbed both men, set them on their feet. Cookie's left eye was closed and blood was trickling from it, but he held himself erect. Mike's clothes were in ribands, and he could not stand, but two of the men held him between them.

"How do you feel, Mike, old boy?" inquired Cookie.

"I'm all right," replied Mike feebly. "How about you?"

"Okay."

"Dashed fine work, Leonard!" enthused the lieutenant, gripping his hand. A Very light flamed overhead.

"Cookie!" gasped Mike. "They got you! Your eye!"

"What's an eye among friends?" retorted Cookie, with a twisted grin. "I've seen too much, anyhow!"

"I'll never forget this, Cookie," declared Mike fervently. "Never, as long as I live."

"We'll get you both down to hospital as soon as we can," said the lieutenant.

Convalescence.

THEY were both in a field hospital before the night was out; and from the field hospital they were conveyed to Base Hospital No. 131, where the din of warfare was only faintly heard, and health and strength came slowly back to them.

Nothing could save Cookie's left eye, but in all other respects he became himself again. Shrapnel was removed from both of Mike's legs, just above the ankle, and the surgeon promised him that he would be able to walk, sooner or later, with barely a perceptible limp.

The two occupied adjacent beds, and both were greatly smitten with their brown-haired nurse, Molly Pearson—and vied with one another for her favour. But Molly was wisely non-committal.

In due course Mike left his bed, in the day-time, for a wheel-chair, while Cookie prowled about the ward with a black shade over the shattered eye.

One morning while the nurse was attending to other patients, Cookie sat before a mirror which he had propped up on his bed, shaving himself carefully with a safety razor.

"What's the big idea?" demanded Mike. "You got a date?"

"Maybe," replied the shaver briefly.

"Well, it'll take more than a shave to make that face of yours look human," taunted Mike.

"Oh, I don't have to be good-looking," retorted Cookie. "I've got sex-appeal!"

He re-applied the shaving-brush and some soap splashed into his good eye. He wiped it hastily with a towel and blinked round at Mike, who was laughing.

"So you think that's funny, do you?" he cried. "Well,

laugh at that!" And he plunged the brush into soap and water and shook it into the face of the man in the wheel-chair.

"You trying to drown me?" cried Mike indignantly. And then Molly swooped down on them.

"What do you boys think this is?" she demanded. "A kindergarten?"

"Sure!" chuckled Cookie. And then they sang to her in voices by no means musical:

"Through the war's great curse
Stands a Red-Cross nurse—
She's the Rose of No-Man's Land!"

"For Heaven's sake be quiet!" laughed Molly. "Don't you think there's anyone in the ward but you two?"

"Well, nobody that matters," Cookie immediately responded.

Molly assumed a professional manner. "How are you feeling to-day, Mike?" she inquired.

"Much better now you've arrived," was the prompt reply.

"How about you, Cookie?"

"Oh, I feel terrible, Molly—I've got an awful headache."

"Your head was all right a minute ago!" barked Mike.

"Say, whose head is this?" demanded Cookie, holding his hands to his brow.

"You can have it!" gibed Mike. But Cookie turned plaintively to the beautiful girl and winked at her with his sound eye.

"Don't you think you could fix it up with the doctor," he said, "for me to go out and get a little air?"

"Can't be done," replied Molly gravely. "The doctor won't let you go out without a nurse."

"But I could go out with a nurse, couldn't I?"

"Oh, well," said Molly, "I'll ask the doctor!"

The two men watched her as she sailed across the ward to the door.

"There you are!" cried Cookie triumphantly. "Old Man Sex-Appeal himself!"

A number of rude remarks followed, and then Molly came back—with a blanket.

"I've fixed it," she said.

"You're a honey and a darling!" declared Cookie. "I don't know what I'd do without you." He turned comiseratingly to his chum. "Good-bye, sweetheart," he said maliciously. "I'm sorry you can't go along."

"But he is going," laughed Molly, and arranged the blanket over the knees of the invalid in the wheel-chair.

"What?" cried Cookie. "But you said you were going to take me!"

"Well, Mike needs the air, too," retorted Molly, a mischievous twinkle in her grey eyes. "And you need the exercise! Come on—push!"

"Yes, snap into it, Mister Sex-Appeal!" ordered Mike.

So Cookie, with an air of gloom, pushed the wheel-chair across the ward into a corridor, and from the corridor out into the grounds, while Molly walked serenely beside him. And on one of the wide paths, screened by bushes, Mike cheated.

"My left ankle," he said plaintively: "would you mind looking at it?"

Molly stooped to lift the blanket.

"I don't see anything wrong with it, you big baby!" she exclaimed; and no sooner were the words out of her mouth than a pair of powerful arms were round her neck and Mike's lips were pressed against hers.

"Stop it!" cried Molly, breaking away from him. "What's the matter with you?"



He turned and left them, but Mike wasn't going to let him go like that.

"That's what I'd like to know," quoth Cookie, and swept her into his own arms and hugged her.

"I don't want to get well," sang Mike. "I don't want to get well!" And then Cookie, releasing Molly, chimed in:

"I'm in love with a beautiful nurse."

And they both meant it.

For Services Rendered.

AFTER the war was over and the American troops had returned to their native land, Cookie and Mike took part in another parade along Broadway—a parade of men and women back from France, celebrating peace.

The excitement among the onlookers was almost greater than it had been on the occasion of that other parade when Cookie had pushed Mike into the Army by a trick and followed him to return a sock on the jaw. Flags hung across from lofty buildings, confetti showered down on the marchers, paper streamers whizzed in every direction, and the cheering was terrific.

Cookie strode along beside Mike, and Mike walked with hardly a perceptible limp, as the surgeon had promised; but Cookie wore a black patch over his sightless eye.

A slim and graceful figure shot out from the crowd on the pavement and made for them. It was Molly, in a blue serge frock with a lace collar, waving and shouting to them.

"Mike! Cookie!" she cried. "Hi, wait for me!"

They looked round, grinned a welcome, and placed her between them without losing step.

"Oh," she told them breathlessly, "I didn't get your letters till it was too late. But here I am!"

"And maybe I ain't glad," said Cookie, squeezing her arm.

"And maybe me, too," rejoiced Mike. "Say, Molly, where can we get some ice-cream?"

"Ice-cream my eye!" scoffed Cookie. "Lead me to some beer!"

"Beer!" echoed Molly. "Don't be a foreigner—times have changed."

"Molly," said Mike earnestly, "we were saying on the boat that when we got back here we three were going to stick together always—the same as we did over there."

"Sure," chimed in Cookie. "One for all and all for one!"

"That's right," laughed Molly. "Faith, Hope and Charity!"

"That's me," declared Cookie. "Charity!"

"Charity?" said Mike contemptuously. "You? Ha, ha—you'd give away the ash off your cigar any time!"

"Haw, haw!" mocked Cookie.

Near the City Hall a clean-shaven young fellow in tweeds ran out from the crowd to them. Molly pointed excitedly as he approached.

"Here he is!" she cried. "This is my brother Larry. Larry, this is Sergeant O'Dowd—and Cookie Leonard."

"How d'you do?" greeted Larry. "The other two musketeers, eh? Gee, I'm glad to know you."

"Same here," said Cookie politely, studying the newcomer with interest.

At the City Hall the parade finished, the ranks broke up amid shouts and hand-shakes and kisses. The four stood together on the big patch of asphalt beneath the steps of the building.

"Well, I've got to be going," announced Molly. "See you all later."

"That's right, Molly," boomed Cookie. "Dinner at seven."

"See you there, sergeant," said Larry, offering his hand.

July 18th, 1931.

"I'm afraid not," growled Mike. "You see, I haven't been invited."

"Haven't been invited?" exclaimed Molly, frowning at Cookie. "We're having a reunion at my house to-night—didn't Cookie tell you?"

"First I've heard of it."

Molly frowned still more heavily at Cookie, who grinned guiltily.

"Forgot all about it," he said.

"Mike," cried Molly, "you've been double-crossed! Just for that you shall sit next to me, and you"—jabbing a finger into Cookie's chest—"will eat in the kitchen! So long!"

She tripped away with her brother, and Mike stood looking after her for a while, then turned to Cookie.

"Well, au revoir, Chauncey," he said, with intent to irritate. "Haw, haw!"

"Where are you going?" inquired Cookie.

"Down to the police-station, to get some work to do."

"Well," decided Cookie, "I'll trail along with you, because if there's any free lunch in town the cops will know where to find it."

"Quite so, Chauncey—quite so," jeered Mike. And they strolled together up Broadway, which had now become almost normal again.

The police-station was reached; the two mounted the steps and entered the spacious charge-room.

"Company, attention!" bellowed Cookie. "Here's your hero!"

A score of policemen crowded round them. Chief Donovan, disturbed by the noise, came out from his office, stopped short with an exclamation, and then moved briskly forward to thump Mike in the middle of his broad back.

"Say, it's sure good to see you back again, boy!" he cried.

"It's good to be back, chief," declared Mike gratefully.

"We're proud of you! All of you!" And the chief's hand swept round to include Cookie. "When do you want to get back to work, Mike?"

"The sooner the quicker, chief."

"All right—get into your old uniform!"

"What?" howled Cookie, in pretended disgust. "After Mike has won the war for you, don't he rate a new one?"

Donovan chuckled, dived back into his room, and reappeared with a big cardboard box.

"Here's a little present the boys fixed up," he said. "Open it."

"Wh-what is it?" faltered Mike, holding the box nervously.

"Judging from the size of it," remarked Cookie, "I should say it was a new pair of shoes!"

Mike tore off the string and opened the box. Inside it was a complete uniform, which he took out garment by garment. On the sleeves of the jacket were stripes.

"Well, I'm—What the—" gasped Mike. And then, joyfully: "A sergeant! A police-sergeant!"

"Sure!" drawled Cookie. "Once a sergeant always a sergeant!"

"You were a sergeant over there!" boomed Donovan. "You don't think you'd let those Army officers put anything over on us, do you?"

"Well, boys—I—that is—chief—" stammered Mike, completely overwhelmed.

Cookie swept an arm round his shoulder.

"Be brave, Gladys," he cooed, "and cry on your papa's manly chest!"

"Don't let him kid you, Mike," urged one of the men, and Mike slapped his chum's face playfully and managed to voice his thanks.

"Well, so long, boys," said Cookie,

wiping away an imaginary tear; and he moved doorwards.

"Where are you going?" called Mike.

"I'm going to the 'Herald' office to get to work," was the immediate rejoinder. "After what they've done for you, they'll probably make me managing editor! Good-bye, sweetheart!"

He stepped briskly out into the sunlight, and he made his way straight to the giant "Herald" building in West 40th Street.

In the doorway he paused to look up at an imposing brass plate affixed to the wall, on which the names of all the members of the staff who had enlisted in the Army were engraved. He saw his own name there—"C. Cook Leonard"—and whimsically saluted it. Then he plunged into the building, passing an aged attendant who recognised him and waved.

In the general office, on the first floor, a black-haired girl at the inquiry desk looked up at him indignantly as he went to sail past her.

"Hallo, sweetheart!" he greeted cheerfully.

"Do you wish to see somebody?" she asked him frigidly.

"Yeah," he replied. "I'd like to see somebody I know!" And with that he strode straight down an aisle between desks and typists and reporters to the chief news editor's room.

The girl flew after him, but was too late. He turned the handle and went in.

Bettinson, more bald than ever, was sitting at his desk, stabbing the air with a blue pencil and barking at a member of the staff.

"All right, Bill," he roared, "don't give me any argument. If a man can't do it, why don't you hire a boy?"

Cookie stepped over to the desk as the discomfited Bill backed away from it.

"How are you, sweetheart?" he drawled.

"Busy!" snapped Bettinson, and stared at him. "Cookie!" he exclaimed. "So you're back!"

"Yeah—and ready to go to work on your old scandal sheet."

Bettinson scowled from under his bushy brows.

"Well, Cookie," he said gruffly, "I'm sorry—"

"What do you mean, you're sorry?"

For once in a way the chief news editor lost his bullying manner.

"Well, I—I haven't got any place for you right now," he stammered.

Said Cookie, folding his arms and setting his jaw:

"I don't get my old job back, eh?"

"Cookie, you're the fifteenth guy that's been here! When you fellows went away we had to hire other people to fill your jobs. We can't fire 'em now, just because you're back."

"I get you," nodded Cookie grimly.

"I'll tell you what to do—you come back. Come back—er—say, in a month, and I'll see if I can't find a job for you. I will, on the level."

"Sure!" replied Cookie airily. "Okay, sweetheart."

He went out from the room with his one eye glowering and his mouth set in an ugly line. He strode down the stairs to the doorway, and there he looked up at the imposing brass plate. He made an uncomplimentary noise at it with his mouth, then shoved his way out through the swing-doors.

Upstairs in his room, Bettinson spoke into a house telephone.

"Hallo—Miss Dean?" he blared.

"Look here, if any more of those tin hats come in, tell 'em I'm out, or tell

'em I'm dead—or anything. But don't let 'em loose on me!"

At Bay.

THAT night, at Molly's Lome in Brooklyn, Cookie was the life and soul of the reunion celebration. Nobody dreamed that he had been scorned and rejected at the "Herald" office. Larry thought he was wonderful; Mike decided that he had never seen him in a more jovial mood.

But after it was all over, he went out of the house with Mike, walked with that promoted policeman till their ways parted—and was swallowed up by the city.

Weeks passed by—workless, hopeless weeks for Cookie. No one seemed willing to provide employment for a one-eyed soldier returned from the battlefield, and no one ever knew how he lived in those weeks of growing despair.

But one evening he was loitering in the doorway of a cinema, watching more fortunate people enter the building, when a familiar voice hailed him.

"Hi, Cookie, you old son of a gun!"

It was Mike—Mike in a lounge suit, a big tweed overcoat, and a soft felt hat. It was a chilly evening, and Cookie was feeling none too comfortable in a very shabby suit, minus its waistcoat; but he returned the greeting cheerfully enough.

"Hallo, sweetheart!" he said, and they shook hands.

"Where have you been hiding?" demanded Mike. "I've been trying to get hold of you."

"I've never met a cop yet who could find anybody he was looking for," said Cookie lightly. "How are your flat feet?"

"Fine!"

"Where's the harness?"

"My night off!"

Mike had arranged to meet Molly at this particular cinema, and Molly at this moment arrived, caught sight of them standing there, and darted forward, crying: "Cookie!"

Cookie, his hand still held by Mike, swung round with almost a dismayed expression.

"Hallo, Molly!" he said.

"I haven't seen you for weeks and weeks," she reproached him. "Why, you've been neglecting me shamefully."

"Yes," chimed in Mike. "I thought we were going to stick together the same as we did over there."

"Well," lied Cookie, "I've been pretty busy."

"It's great to see you," declared Molly. "Just like old times! Mike and I are going to the movies—now we can all go together."

"Yeah," said Mike with surprising eagerness for him. "I'll get another ticket."

But Cookie shook his head, released his hands, and thrust them deep into his pockets.

"I'm afraid I can't go to-night," he told them. "I've got a date with a fellow. Some other time."

"Oh, come along!" urged Molly.

"Break your appointment," chimed in Mike.

"No, no, I can't do that. I'll ring you up soon. I've got to run along now. Good-

bye." And he turned and left them.

But Mike wasn't going to let him go like that. With a hurried word to Molly he ran after him, grabbed him by the arm.

"Cookie!" he insisted. "Wait a minute—I want to have a talk with you."

"No, officer," said Cookie facetiously, removing the detaining hand, "I don't want to buy any tickets for the policeman's ball!"

"Listen!" insisted Mike earnestly. "Have you any money?"

"How much do you want?"

"Now, now, quit the stalling—you know what I mean. You're having a hard time getting located, and I've got a few dollars that aren't doing me any good."

If Cookie was moved by this offer of help, he did not show it.

"Listen, sweetheart," he retorted, "if you've got a few bucks saved up, you'd better hang on to them. It costs money to get married these days."

"Who said anything about getting married?" growled Mike.

Cookie looked round and saw that a motor-bus was approaching.

"Here comes my bus," he said. "So long, Romeo!" And with that he shot off into the roadway and jumped on to the step of the vehicle.

"Bull-headed sap!" exclaimed Mike. "I know he's broke!"

As a matter of fact, Cookie was so broke that he hadn't even a penny for a bus fare, and he remained on the step only long enough to turn a corner, then dropped off and slouched northwards.

That day he had had nothing to eat; next morning he had no breakfast. An

empty warehouse on the river-front had provided him with a free night's lodging of sorts. He felt as he looked—an outcast with a black patch over his left eye. And being a strong man, he began to nurse an active resentment against the world that didn't want him.

Round about midday, determined to get something to eat, he wandered into one of the numerous down-town establishments in New York City where one may help oneself to bread and sausage and cheese, provided one buys tea, coffee, or soft drinks. The bar was a long one, well equipped for customers, and a number of men were eating and drinking there. Cookie went up to the bar and helped himself liberally to bread and to liver sausage.

The bar-tender, who was serving a more profitable customer, saw what he was doing, sized him up at a glance, and shouted:

"Hi, Cluck, take your snout out of that trough!"

"Go and lay an egg!" retorted Cookie calmly with his mouth full, and reached over for more sausage.

"You heard me!" snapped the bar-tender, hearing down on him.

"What's wrong?" demanded Cookie. "This is some of that free lunch I've heard so much about, isn't it?"

"That's for the customers, not for the panhandlers!" And the bar-tender snatched away the sausage. "How did you get in here?"

"On my feet!"

"Well, if you want to go out the same way, you'd better start moving. Beat it!"

"When I get good and ready," said Cookie quietly. "And don't interrupt me when I'm eating, either."



He whipped up a huge Bologna sausage and struck the newcomer viciously in the face with it.

The bar-tender tried to seize the plate on which the unwanted visitor had piled bread and sausage, but failed.

"I wouldn't do that, either," Cookie told him.

"Oh, you're a tough guy, eh?"

"Yes, sir. Sometimes I don't even know my own strength!"

"No? Well, we'll find out about the strength!" And the bar-tender shot out a formidable fist intended for Cookie's jaw.

But Cookie quietly parried the blow, whipped up a long loaf of French bread, and brought it down with all his might upon his assailant's head.

The bar-tender staggered backwards, then snatched up a heavy glass mug with intent to use it as a weapon. But again the loaf descended, and this time the white-coated assistant went down on his back.

"Do you hear the little birds going tweet, tweet?" inquired Cookie, sarcastically. "Let's go!" And he turned towards the door.

Opportunity.

At a table against the wall, opposite the bar, three men were sitting, one of them obviously an Italian, another a stockily-built curly-headed fellow, the third a lean-faced individual with shifty eyes.

"Well, what do you think about-a dat?" said the Italian with some amusement.

A burly fellow employed by the proprietor of the cafeteria to maintain order, appeared from nowhere in particular between Cookie and the door.

"This is the chance of a lifetime!" he cried, advancing with clenched fists.

"You're going to take the air!"

Cookie backed briskly to the bar, grinning as though he were thoroughly enjoying himself.

"D'you like boloney?" he inquired with mock politeness, and without waiting for any reply, he whipped up a huge Bologna-sausage and struck the newcomer viciously in the face with it.

With the roar of a bull the "bouncer" received the blow, then struck out with right and left. He imagined himself to be invincible, but he had met more than his match. The Italian sprang up from his chair to watch the fight that followed.

"I like-a dis guy!" he crowed.

Cookie was parrying blows and biding his time. The time came, and his left fist swept up almost as it seemed from the region of the floor. The recipient of that terrific blow was lifted clean off his feet by its violence, and sent crashing among the tables, to fall in a huddled heap while glasses and cups and saucers rained down upon him.

"What a fighter you are!" taunted Cookie, striding over to where the bruiser lay. "Fighting with your back against the floor!"

"I tell-a you I like-a dis guy!" cried the Italian, almost dancing beside his table. "He's got-a what you call in esse!"

He watched Cookie return to the bar, and grinned delightedly as that wrathful young man pelted the bar-tender with sausages and loaves of bread. He touched him on the arm.

"Hullo, one minute," he said in a friendly way.

"What do you want?" demanded Cookie, ready for further battle, but not necessarily inviting it.

"Nothing," was the eager reply. "I just-a own da place."

"Oh, is that so?" drawled Cookie.

"Well, I wouldn't brag about it. Any objections to my eating here?"

July 15th, 1931.

"Help-a yourself," said the Italian, and called a waiter. "Pete," he directed, "fix him a plate!" He indicated the table he had left. "Como, sit down!"

"Thanks," said Cookie.

The curly-headed man, addressed as Joe, was requested to move over, which he did; and Cookie and the Italian sat side by side. Food was brought, a huge glass mug of near-beer. Cookie ate and drank with relish, studying his chance companions without openly appearing to do so.

"What's your name?" inquired his benefactor.

Cookie told him, omitting the "Chauncey."

"You're a pretty tough guy!"

"That ain't half of it, brother," was the somewhat boastful rejoinder. "You ought to have seen me when I had my health. Why, I was so tough I was scared of myself!"

"If dat's only ten per cent true, I could-a use you in my business."

"Doin' what?"

"Drivin' a truck."

"What is your business?"

"Meat packing. The Three Star Packing Co. Marino is my name."

The owner of a meat-packing company running a cafeteria which was frequented by rough-looking customers? Cookie, as an old-time reporter on the "Herald," knew quite a lot about gangsters and boot-leggers.

"I see," he remarked gravely. "You get your stuff from Canada, don't you?"

Marino looked suspiciously at him, but most of his face, at the moment, was hidden by the glass mug. His one eye gleamed.

Marino decided to be frank. He nodded.

"Sure must be a lot of profit in that Canadian bacon," said Cookie, and put down the empty mug.

"Dat's why we can use tough guys like-a you."

"Thanks for the compliment—but I don't know."

"Well, as you like." Marino took out a card-case, extracted a card, and wrote on it with a fountain-pen. "You take-a dis card to Mulligan," he said. "He's in charge of my trucks."

Cookie examined the card. The warehouse of the Three Star Packing Company, it appeared, was in Clinton Street, near the water-front. The message Marino had written ran: "This guy is O.K.—Marino."

"All right, Marino," said Cookie, stowing the card in a pocket. "But don't set your heart on it."

Two hours later, Marino paid a visit to his warehouse in Clinton Street, passing through a gateway into a yard where motor-lorries were being loaded with quarters of beef, some of them genuine, some fakes filled with bottles of wine and spirits.

He crossed the yard to a flight of stone steps, accompanied by Joe, and went through the warehouse into a private office.

He seated himself at a desk and rang a bell, while curly-headed Joe helped himself to a cigarette.

A tall negro entered the room, obviously in a nervous state, and the story he had to tell drove Marino into a state of fury.

Cookie, it appeared, had called while Mulligan was out, and the negro—who was known as Alabam—had dealt with him, or, accurately, Cookie had dealt with Alabam.

"You—you idiot!" spluttered Marino, and burst into a string of Italian oaths.

"How was I for to know dat guy was a hi-jacker?" protested Alabam. "He had a card from you, boss!"

"Sure," bellowed Marino. "Ho gives you a card vit my name on eet, and you make-a him a present of a motor-truck vis a hundred cases!"

"I didn't make him no present," cried Alabam wildly. "While I was readin' of the card, he pinched my rod and stuck it in my ribs, and what was dis nigger a-goin' to do?"

"I tell-a you what you're goin' to do!" roared Marino. "Porto lo furo! You're through! Joe! Joe! Porto lo furo—throw heem out!"

Joe, thus commanded, seized hold of the terrified black, and struck him violently between the eyes. Then, as Marino darted across the room and tugged open the door of an emergency exit, Joe bundled Alabam out to the top of a flight of stairs, and knocked him backwards down them.

"Boss! Boss!" moaned the black, sitting up on the mat at the bottom and nursing his jaw. But the door was closed with a crash, and Alabam picked himself up and tottered out by a back way to the water-front.

A Birthday Re-union.

A YEAR later one of the most popular restaurants off Broadway was situated in Eighth Avenue, not far from Times Square. Appropriately enough, it bore on its discreet windows, in letters of gilt, the single word: "Cookie's."

It had an imposing entrance with a glass canopy over its revolving doors, and its interior was luxuriously furnished. In the big, pillared room downstairs an orchestra played dance music for the benefit of its patrons, and the polished floor between the rows of tables was reputed to be one of the finest in New York. There were upstairs rooms for private parties.

A big negro attendant in a chocolate uniform, decorated with much gold braid, guarded the revolving doors, bowing and scraping to the wealthy and fashionable folk who streamed in and out.

Cookie's had become the meal-time mecca of pleasure-seeking New Yorkers!

Alabam made an excellent attendant, from Cookie's point of view, for he knew by sight nearly every gangster, every tough, and every policeman in the city; and his job was not quite so innocent as it seemed.

The negro started violently one evening as a thick-set, chubby-faced man in evening clothes, who had stepped out from a taxi, touched him on the arm and greeted him by name.

"Want me, lieutenant?" gasped Alabam.

"Not this time," replied Mike O'Dowd with a grin. "I want to see Mr. Cookie—but don't worry, it's a social call."

He made his way into the foyer and mounted the wide stairs, but Alabam followed him.

"Coming up, eh?" said Mike.

"No, sub—just 'phoning the boss," was the reply.

"Don't trouble," barked Mike. "I tell you it's a social call."

Alabam, more or less satisfied, went back to his post. Mike deposited his hat and coat in the cloak-room and entered the restaurant.

The place was crowded with men and women in evening clothes, and the orchestra was playing a fox-trot. Mike caught sight of Cookie in the distance, hovering near a table in a little recess—a round table set against a semi-circular seat—and made straight for him.

"Top of the evening to you, Chauncey," he said, offering his hand.

Cookie, well groomed, immaculately clad, grinned broadly.

"Well, if it isn't Detective-lieutenant O'Dowd himself!" he exclaimed. "How are you, sweetheart?"

"All right. And you?"

"Fine!"

Mike stared. The black patch had gone; Cookie's left eye looked quite as good as his right one, except that it did not move.

"Oh, pipe the new headlight!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," drawled Cookie. "Eighteen earat glass, and guaranteed to look on the sunny side of life!"

"It's a knock-out!" quoth Mike. "You know I could hardly tell the difference myself, if I didn't remember the night over there."

"Forget it," recommended Cookie, and sat down at the table. "Well, I'm glad to see you, old flatfoot."

"Same here," declared Mike, seating himself. "You know we haven't seen much of each other lately. Molly was speaking of it the other day."

"Well, I've been pretty busy."

"Yeah—and a year has certainly done a lot for you, Cookie."

"Well, you haven't done so badly yourself, lieutenant." He waved a hand.

"What do you think of the joint?"

"Swell!" conceded Mike. "And to think that you started with only one truck-load!"

"Why, lieutenant," said Cookie innocently, "whatever do you mean?"

"You're not kidding anybody! I know how you got your start—and so does Marino!"

"You don't believe everything you read in the papers, do you?"

"No, but I happen to know! Cookie, you remind me of the fellow who wears a toupee—he doesn't fool anybody but himself." He dropped his voice. "Kidding aside, Cookie," he said earnestly, "you can't get away with it."

"Are you speaking personally, or professionally?"

"Both. We've been through a lot to-

gether, and I'm not forgetting it, but if you stay in this racket, it's only a question of time—"

"Until the strong arm of the law reaches out in the person of Lieutenant O'Dowd and nabs poor little Cookie Leonard. Is that it?"

Mike toyed with a serviette on the plate before him.

"It's not so funny," he said slowly. "I hope that time never comes."

"And if it does—friendship ceases, eh?"

"It would be a tough spot for both of us."

"Aw, go and lay an egg," growled Cookie. "You're always singing the blues."

Mike lit a cigarette. Cookie looked about his restaurant.

"There's Molly!" he exclaimed suddenly.

They jumped up and went together to meet Molly, who had entered the restaurant with her brother Larry. She was in an evening gown all black satin and white lace, with a fur collar round her neck, and she looked wholly adorable to both men. Larry cut an excellent figure of young manhood in his dinner-jacket suit.

It was Molly's birthday, and Cookie, who forgot nothing, had invited all three to celebrate it with a dinner at his establishment.

"It's great to see you again," Molly told him, after greetings had been exchanged.

"Look at Cookie's new lamp," directed Mike, and three pairs of eyes were focused on the artificial one.

"It's wonderful," breathed Molly.

"Why, I wouldn't know which was which!"

"That's easy," jeered Mike. "The fake one is the one with the honest look in it!"

"Oh, these cops," groaned Cookie.

"Maybe if we don't pay any attention

to him he'll go home. How about a little birthday kiss?"

"Of course," nodded Molly, and kissed him without the slightest embarrassment. After all, the floor was crowded with dancers, and nobody seemed to be taking any notice. Except Mike!

"Hi, break away!" he growled. "Does that one for all and all for one stuff still go?"

"It does," said Molly emphatically, and transferred her lips to his.

"Be careful," said Cookie dolefully.

"You may have to marry the girl."

"Maybe I will!"

"Over my dead body!"

They walked on together to the little recess draped with gold curtains behind the semi-circular seat.

"Oh, what a lovely table!" cried Molly.

"Speaking of tables," said Cookie.

"I'm working on a new invention—a table without legs, so Mike can get his feet under them."

"Another jibe from you, and I'm going to plant one of those big feet where it'll do most good," threatened Mike.

"In that case," decided Cookie, "I think we'd better sit down."

They sat; Molly in the middle with Cookie on her right and Mike on her left, Larry in a chair pushed forward by a waiter.

Molly admired the flowers with which the table was decorated, and Mike tugged a blue Morocco case from his pocket.

"A little present for you, Molly," he said gruffly. "It isn't much, but—"

Molly opened the case. Inside was a gold wrist-watch with a band of gold mesh.

"Oh, Mike," she cried, "how sweet! Look, Cookie!"

Cookie looked.



Marino, scowling, said fiercely : " And if my name don't stay out of the newspapers, it's just gonna be too bad ! "

"Say, that's great," he declared, and produced a longer case from his own pocket—a case covered with white lamb-skin. "I've got a little present for you, too."

He opened the case, displaying a necklace of pearls. Molly gasped.

"Oh, it's beautiful," she said in an awed whisper. "It's the loveliest thing I've ever had!" She looked at the presents in turn and from the presents to the faces of their donors. "I adore them both," she declared. But Mike looked gloomily down at his plate. Compared with his gift, Cookie's was magnificent!

Marino Pays a Call.

THEY had finished dinner and were drinking their coffee when a dark-skinned, thick-set man of Italian appearance approached their table—Marino!

"Hallo, sweetheart," said Cookie pleasantly. "Want to see me?"

"Just dropped in to say hallo," replied Marino easily, and glanced curiously at the others.

"Well, I want you to meet my folks," said Cookie. "This is Detective-lieutenant O'Dowd, but don't let that bother you—this is his night off! Won't you join us?"

"No, tanks," said Marino, bowing. "I really came-a on business."

"Oh, you want to see me on business?" said Cookie. "Mr. Marino, you know, folks, is in the packing business."

"Yes, I know," said Mike grimly.

"And Mr. Leonard," said Marino, "being in the café business, sometimes uses my beef."

"They say it's very good—before it's cut," remarked Mike, somewhat pointedly.

"Mr. Leonard seems to t'ink so," said Marino blandly.

"You know Larry Pearson, don't you?"

"Oh, yes," Marino acknowledged. "Da bright boy of da 'Herald.' Knows all—sees all!"

"Yes," said Larry brightly. "You'd better put me on your pay-roll, Marino—I know a lot I haven't spilled yet!"

Marino's face clouded and his manner changed.

"Dere is such a t'ing as a newspaper man knowing too much," he said menacingly. "When-a I want publicity I pay for it. Remember dat."

"Why not come up into my office, and we'll talk about this beef," suggested Cookie hastily, aware of Molly's troubled face, and annoyed at the threat.

Marino nodded.

"Glad to have met you," he said to the others. "See you again—eh, O'Dowd?"

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised," responded Mike tartly.

Cookie and Marino went off together. They passed through a side door to a carpeted staircase, mounted to a corridor, and entered a big room furnished as an office, where they approached a massive desk.

"Well, sweetheart," said Cookie pleasantly, "what are your views on the disarmament conference?" And he thrust his hand into his pocket where a bulge appeared.

"I vote yes," said Marino.

"And shall we approach the altar and go through the ritual?"

"It ees okay wit' me."

Cookie tugged open a drawer in the desk and produced a formidable gun from his pocket. Marino produced a gun from his pocket. Simultaneously they dropped their weapons into the drawer, and the drawer was closed.

July 19th, 1931.

Cookie sat and pointed to a chair. Marino sat beside him.

"What's on your mind?" inquired Cookie.

"Last night eight of my trucks disappeared!"

"Well, well, you don't say? Did you notify the police?"

"You are not so funny as you t'ink."

"All right, then, sue me. Only I've got a better idea. Take your sign off, and they won't be spotted so easily."

He fished out a cigarette-case and offered it to Marino, but the Italian would not accept a cigarette.

"Another t'ing," he said angrily.

"Some of your boys are butting into my territory. Now I don't want a no trouble, and there ain't gonna be no trouble."

"Oh, I see," mused Cookie. "We're going to kiss and make it up, is that it?"

"Yes—if you stay out of the south side."

Cookie frowned.

"But the doctor ordered me south for my health," he said plaintively.

"From now on the south side ain't gonna be so healthy for you!"

"Oh, is that so?" drawled Cookie, lighting his cigarette.

The door opened and Larry burst into the room. Outside a watchful attendant had tried to prevent him from intruding, but knowing him to be a friend of Cookie's had not dared to use violence.

"What do you want?" demanded Cookie frigidly.

"Why, I just wanted to use the phone—"

"Use the one outside!"

"But I was just going—"

"Beat it!" Cookie's voice was harsh, peremptory. Larry reluctantly obeyed the command.

"That kid's got the habit of nosing in where he isn't wanted," complained Marino.

"Oh, the kid's all right," said Cookie. "He doesn't know what it's all about."

"He knows-a too much to suit me," snapped Marino. "Somet'ing's gonna be done about it."

"Lay off that kid," warned Cookie. "I think a lot of him."

"Oh, you wouldn't want to lose him, eh?"

"I don't intend to lose him! I've appointed you his life insurance!"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, for instance, if he should—er—slip on a banana peel, or get hit by a truck—or stung by a bee— You know what I mean—well, there'll be two funerals instead of one. So you'd better take pretty good care of him, Marino."

Marino, compressing his lips, got to his feet.

"Not going?" said Cookie. "Yes? Well, I'll go as far as the door with you."

He opened the drawer, took out Marino's gun, and offered it to him by the butt. Then he thrust his own gun back in his jacket pocket.

They walked to the door, which Cookie opened.

"Drop in often, Marino," he said pleasantly. "The police are not always here. Just drop in, but let me know when you're coming. I may want to bake a cake!"

Marino went out into the corridor. Mike was standing by the stairs with Larry, but he passed them without a word. Cookie joined them.

"What's all the excitement?" he inquired. "Go and carry on with the party, Mike—I'll be right with you. I just want a word with the kid. Come in, Larry, and shut the door!"

The Lure of the Racket.

MIKE descended the stairs; Larry followed Cookie into the office and closed the door.

"What's Marino all burnt up about?" demanded Cookie sternly.

"Oh," said Larry casually, "I had a little spare time on my hands so I battered out a couple of stories about him."

"You'd better find another way of killing time. Lay off Marino."

But Larry was young and eager to establish himself in the job Cookie had procured for him.

"I'm a newspaper man," he said defiantly, "and he's great copy. Why, you told me yourself to bang 'em on the nose with it—make it sensational. Well, I'm on velvet. I'm in with you, and in with Mike, and—"

"And in with an undertaker, if you don't bottle up!" snapped Cookie.

"Aw, be yourself! Why, I'm doing you a big favour! If I can get Marino put away, you'll be the big shot in this town."

"Well," growled Cookie, "I'll fix you, that's all!"

He picked up the receiver of the telephone on his desk. "Chickering 9510," he said into the transmitter, and then, glaring round at Larry: "You haven't got the sense of a ground-hog!"

A voice rang in his ear.

"Hallo, 'Herald'?" he demanded. "Gimme that old half-wit, Bettinson, the news editor."

The familiar voice of Bettinson came over the wire.

"Hallo, you bald-headed baboon!" greeted Cookie. "This is Cookie Leonard, former reporter on your half-baked sheet. Get this straight, sweetheart—take young Pearson off the underworld stuff. Understand?"

Bettinson, hard at work in his room with a blue pencil in his fist, promptly shouted back:

"We're running a newspaper here! It's our business to get the news. If I wanted your advice I'd hire you back again—and don't call me sweetheart!"

"All right, sweetheart," chuckled Cookie. "But I am telling you, and you'd better listen, you fathead, or I'll buy your cock-eyed paper and throw you out on your face. Good-bye, sweetheart!"

He slammed down the receiver and turned to Larry with a wry grin.

"And that," he said, "is what's known as telling the chief news editor!"

"Oh, boy," cried Larry adoringly, "I'm waiting for the day when I can tell him where to head in!"

"Don't be a chump! And listen! If you're going to be a newspaper man, stick to the newspaper game, and steer clear of the racket. D'you get me?"

He grabbed the youngster by the arm and marched him off downstairs to the restaurant. Mike was sitting beside Molly, who looked worried. The place was more crowded than ever.

"Well, Mike, what do you think of the joint now?" inquired Cookie proudly. "See any customers?"

"Oh, I guess you'll get along all right—for a while," quoth Mike.

"And, as the poet says, 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave!'"

Larry, soon afterwards, announced that he was due at the office, and took his departure. Cookie suggested that Molly should give him a dance, and they mingled with the couples on the polished floor. Mollie had put on the wrist-watch, and Cookie noticed it.

"Looks nice, doesn't it?" he said, looking down at it as they waltzed. "I believe you like Mike's present better than you do mine."

"Well, Mike had to work for his," Molly said non-committally.

"So did I—only we work differently."

"If you can call it work!"

"It's work all right—and some day I'm going to make a big name for myself."

"And a number!"

"They'll never stick a number on me. They leave us big shots alone."

"You're not the only big shot in the racket! Marino doesn't seem to like you much!"

"I'm not afraid of him. I was a pretty good student in that school in Franco—even if I did get a glass eye for a diploma."

"What did you learn?" inquired Molly curiously.

"I learned that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Triggernometry—with the accent on the trigger. I'll make a million dollars in a year at the rate I'm going."

"At the rate you're going a million dollars won't do you any good in a year," she told him. "Oh, you can't get away with it, Cookie—pull out before it's too late."

"Wait a year, then ask me," he said, and held her a little closer. "Aw, let's cut out this stuff. This is a birthday party. I haven't been able to say it before, but there's something I've been wanting to ask you."

He looked fondly down into her grey eyes. But Molly, avoiding his gaze, avoided the question, too.

"You said something a moment ago about the shortest distance between two points being a straight line."

"I get you," said he, reversing skilfully, as a couple nearly collided with them. "Strait and narrow—is that it? But, Molly, I want to ask you—"

"Wait a year," she interrupted, "then ask me."

The music stopped, and he took her back to the table, disappointed, but outwardly as gay as ever. Mike rose as they approached, and she asked him to get her cloak, declaring that she must go home.

The cloak was fetched.

"So long, Cookie," said Mike. "Sorry we have to go so soon."

Cookie sat watching them till they had vanished through the distant doorway, then he looked down at the table. Beside his plate lay a long, narrow case covered with white lambskin. Molly had scorned the present he had given her!

Not, however, because she scorned the giver. Mike escorted her home in a taxi, and she invited him into the little drawing-room, while she went off to change into a negligée.

On a table stood a framed photograph of himself, side by side with a framed photograph of Cookie. He turned the one of Cookie face downwards, and felt in his waistcoat pocket for the engagement-ring he planned to slip on Molly's finger before he left. But when Molly came back there were tears in her eyes.

"Oh, Mike," she said miserably, "what are

we going to do about Cookie? We've got to get him out of the racket."

"Why don't you ask him to cut it out?" suggested Mike.

"I did, but he stalled me off. He wants another year."

"Isn't that funny?" he growled. "I thought he'd do anything in the world for you. You know he's awfully fond of you, Molly."

"I know. He tried to propose to me to-night."

"What did you tell him?" demanded Mike anxiously.

"I told him I'd listen when he decided to play the straight game."

"Do you love him?" he asked, taking her hands in his.

"I don't know," she confessed. "But if it would get him out of the racket, I'd marry him to-morrow."

"I guess that's love all right," he growled. "Pretty hard to take, though. You know I—"

"I know, Mike," she nodded. "But he needs me more."

Mike drew a long breath, and contrived to grin.

"I'll have a talk with him to-morrow, Molly," he promised. "You won't have to wait a year."

"Oh, Mike, you're a darling!" she whispered. "I don't know what I'd do without you."

He urged her not to worry, and he bade her good-night without saying a word about the ring in his pocket. On his way to the door he restored Cookie's photograph to its rightful position!

Missing!

TWO mornings afterwards, Marino sat at his desk in his big, panelled, private room at the warehouse, glaring down at a screaming headline on the front page of the "Morning Herald":

"Police Start War on New York Underworld."

Joe Pagano and two other men were present, one of them an ugly little rat of a man known as Shorty, and evidently Marino had been saying something vitriolic about the newspaper

story he had just read, for Joe responded savagely:

"Yeah, with all this stuff breaking in the papers, we can't walk the streets in safety. Every twenty feet the cops stop us and frisk us. We're getting more attention than Lindbergh!"

"They got Tony and Spike last night," announced Shorty.

"Dat-a is all right," said Marino. "I bailed 'em out dis morning."

"Who's breaking these stories?" demanded Joe.

"Dat kid who hangs out wit' Cookie Leonard. He talk-a too much."

"There's only one way to shut his mouth," exploded Joe. "Waut the finger on him?"

Marino scratched his chin thoughtfully, recalling Cookie's warning.

"You bring heem here," he directed.

What happened to Larry that day had its sequel on the morning of the next, when Cookie, alarmed because Molly's brother had not been home all night, sent out men in all directions, and at last rang up Mike at police headquarters.

Lefty, a hireling, had served with Cookie in France, and wore his bowler hat at an angle and looked a typical prize-fighter, was ushered into the private office, above the restaurant, by the dusky Alabam.

"What did you find out at the 'Herald' office?" demanded Cookie.

"Not a thing."

"What did you hear from the rest of the boys?"

"Nothing—and they're still out trying to get some dope."

"Boss," said Alabam excitedly.

"Ah'm 'most sure I saw him yestidy aft'noon. Ah'll say Marino's outfit picked him up, put him in a car and took him down to the packing plant. Ah worked for Marino once, boss!"

The black had but confirmed Cookie's own fears. He opened a drawer in his desk and took out two formidable guns, which he slipped into his overcoat pockets.

"Didn't know you were a two-gun man, chief," remarked Lefty admiringly.



"This is a two-gun job," snapped Cookie. "Let's go!"

He put on his hat, and he and Lefty went off, disregarding Alabam's pleading to be allowed to go with them.

Outside the restaurant Cookie's limousine stood waiting. They went off in it to the warehouse in Clinton Street.

Ten minutes later Mike entered the restaurant, which at that early hour was in the hands of the cleaners. On the staircase leading up to the office he encountered Alabam, who professed not to have seen his master at all that morning.

"He telephoned me from here ten minutes ago!" snapped Mike. "This is not a pinch, Alabam—I want some information."

"Information?" echoed the negro innocently. "Oh, that's something I ain't got nothin' of!"

"Where's the kid?"

"Lieutenant, I dunno nothin'."

But Mike was not to be fobbed off so easily as that. Direct questions failing, he resorted to subterfuge, and finally tricked Alabam into admitting that whatever had happened to Larry, Cookie had gone off to Marino's warehouse.

"That's just what I wanted to know!" cried Mike triumphantly, and he went off in haste, fearing that something pretty serious was liable to happen, if it hadn't happened already.

The high wooden gates of the Three Star Packing Company's premises were wide open when Cookie and Lefty approached them on foot, after leaving the limousine round a corner. Motor-lorries were being loaded, some in the yard, some in the warehouse itself.

"Wait here, Lefty," directed Cookie. "You ain't goin' in there alone, chief?"

"This is a one-man job!" snapped Cookie, and strode into the yard and across it into the warehouse.

Men in white coats were weighing and carrying great quarters of beef, shrouded in muslin; several tough-looking fellows were wandering about, watching the operations; and Marino himself, smartly dressed and carrying a stick, was talking to his man Joe, who was lounging against the packing platform.

"Hallo, sweetheart!" greeted Cookie, walking straight up to the gangster.

"Hallo, Cookie!" said Marino, staring. "You come south for your health?"

"No, just to buy a little beef. Better send me a couple of sides to-morrow."

"All right," nodded Marino. "They'll be good!"

Joe's hands had sought his overcoat pockets, and Cookie was quite aware of the fact.

"When you come to see me," he said calmly to Marino. "I take you into my private office. Where are your manners, sweetheart?"

"All right," said Marino reluctantly. "Come on!" And he led the way through the packing department to a plainly furnished room fitted with desks. In accordance with the law of the underworld the two approached one of the desks and placed their respective guns in a drawer.

"The peace pact of the Hague and Hague," said Cookie.

"And Johnny Walker," added Marino.

"Yes," said Cookie, looking about him. "So this is your office, eh? You know I figured it differently. I could see you sitting in a great big room with Oriental rugs and trick lights, and perhaps even a pipe-organ."

July 18th, 1931.

"Not me, Cookie," declared Marino. "This is good enough for me."

But Cookie wasn't satisfied. Everything, so far, was too open, too straightforward—and he knew his man.

"Aw, come on," he drawled, "show me round: How about trotting out some of that old Southern hospitality?"

Marino, with a characteristic shrug, stepped across to what appeared to be a big safe set in the wall of the room.

"All right, Cookie," he said, and turned a lever and tugged the door open, disclosing beyond it a stone passage leading to a flight of stairs. "To tell-a you da truth, my own office is up here."

"I thought so," remarked Cookie, and followed him through the doorway. "You know, I think I'll have to get one of those gadgets for my little place."

They mounted the stairs together, and at the top of them, Marino opened another door, through which they passed into the large room with panelled walls—a room sumptuously furnished, with a costly Persian carpet on its floor.

Four men were in there: Joe, Shorty, a fellow Cookie recognised as Mart Soames, and Larry!

As Cookie entered, Joe and Shorty sprang to their feet, and their hands flew to their coat-pockets, while Larry, who was sitting in a hide-covered easy-chair nursing his overcoat and hat, started up with a cry.

"Okay, boys!" said Marino. "My friend Cookie."

"Hallo, boys!" drawled Cookie.

"Hallo, kid, what are you doing here?"

"I was just going," said Larry, taking his cue from his would-be rescuer.

"Oh, were you?" growled Cookie. "All right, come on, then—and if I ever hear of you intruding on Mr. Marino's privacy again, it's just gonna be too bad for somebody!"

Larry moved hastily over to Cookie, but Marino, scowling, said fiercely:

"And if my name don't stay out of da newspapers, it's just gonna be too bad-a for somebody else!"

"How much do you weigh?" inquired Cookie.

"Eh? Oh, a hundred and sixty-eight pound. Why?"

"I was just thinking how well you looked in your clothes. A hundred and sixty-eight pounds, eh? Be careful you don't put on weight!"

"Me? I don't never put on no weight."

"You might! With a couple o' pounds of lead under your belt, you'd weigh a hundred and seventy, wouldn't you? Think it over, sweetheart!"

Joe had started forward menacingly, but Cookie's hand was in his overcoat-pocket, and it was obvious that he had something there that he was prepared to use. He motioned to Larry to precede him, then backed through the doorway and closed the door.

If Lefty had been present he would have known now why that second gun had been taken. But Lefty was waiting impatiently in the limousine, to which Cookie lost no time in piloting his charge, retrieving his first gun from the drawer in the office downstairs on the way.

But Marino was not prepared to lose his prisoner without a struggle—especially after that last threat of Cookie's. No sooner had the door of his private room closed than he barked: "Put the finger on him! Back way! Joe, you take-a care of dis yourself."

Cookie had anticipated some such action. He whisked Larry behind the gates in the yard half a second before two shots rang out. Then, from between the hinges of a gate he fired at a figure

creeping along the wall outside. Mart Soames threw up his hands and fell on his face.

From the top of an outside staircase across the yard, a man took aim and fired, but in the same instant a shot rang out from beyond the gates, and the man pitched headlong, to fall with a sickening thud on the stones of the yard.

Cookie, with a grin, dropped his gun into his pocket and tugged Larry out from their hiding-place into the street.

Mike was standing there with a police revolver in his hand, which he was firing into the air, and policemen were running to the scene from all directions.

Cookie took not the slightest notice of him, and Mike took no notice of Cookie or of his companion. The car was reached, and Larry was bundled into it. Lefty, at the wheel, drove off in the direction of Broadway.

"Boy, what a story this'll make!" cried Larry excitedly.

"Yeah?" snorted Cookie. "Well, you're through with stories, kid! Maybe you don't know it, but you quit the 'Herald' this morning."

"Oh, don't talk like that, Cookie!" expostulated Larry. "I'm not afraid of Marino."

"You haven't got sense enough to be afraid!" barked Cookie. "But you're washed up in the newspaper racket. Get me?"

In a gloomy silence the car swept northwards till Cookie directed Lefty to stop it. Then he opened the door.

"Beat it, kid!" he commanded. "Go home to Molly—and stay there till you hear from me."

"But I can't—"

"Do as I say!" thundered Cookie.

And Larry descended to the pavement, and the car moved on.

A captain of police by this time had reached the yard of the Three Star Packing Company. The two wounded crooks were being carried out to a motor ambulance, and a third body—a dead body—was discovered in an alley-way almost immediately afterwards.

"Joe Paganò, eh?" remarked the captain. "Good work, Mike!"

A Warning.

LARRY had been staying with Cookie for some months past in a flat over the restaurant; now he had been ordered to go home to the house in Brooklyn and stay there. He felt rebellious, indignant, treated like a child. Here was a perfectly good front page story going to waste!

He passed a tobacconist's shop, stopped short, and retraced his steps. He entered the shop, bought a packet of cigarettes at the counter, and asked the man behind it if he might use his telephone.

A few minutes later he was talking to Bettinson, the chief news editor of the "Herald." And Bettinson listened, enthralled, and, acknowledging that the story was a scoop, took it all down himself in shorthand.

The man behind the counter listened, too.

"That's the biggest scoop you've ever had," Larry wound up, "and I've given it to you out of the goodness of my heart, you bald-headed baboon, for I quit your half-baked sheet this morning. Good-bye, sweetheart!"

He hung up the receiver and grinned at the tobacconist.

"That's what's known as telling the editor," he chuckled.

"You sure told him, boy!" nodded the tobacconist. "And what it was! They'll rush out an extra with that, I guess!"

Larry proceeded from the shop to a restaurant, where he had a meal, and it

(Continued on page 25.)

A gripping drama of the range and how a dare-devil cowboy frustrated a rascally foreman's plans to rob a rancher. Starring Wally Wales and Virginia Browne Faire.



Longrope.

HALF a dozen of the boys were gathered outside the bunkhouse of the Lazy Y outfit, which lies to the south of Amarillo, Texas. They were taking great pains with their personal appearance, in anticipation of a jaunt to town, and a diminutive puncher known as Shorty was fastidiously removing some stains from his sombrero.

"There ain't no use you slickin' up, Shorty," observed a whiskerando answering to the name of Ransie Conning. "I got all them gals in Amarillo corralled this time."

"Yeah?" sneered Shorty. "Well, don't forget what happened last trip, when I took that blonde right from under your eyes. She was a beautiful dame," he added with a profound sigh.

A tall, elderly man came into view at that moment with a young girl in riding-clothes, and the boys greeted them respectfully as they passed by—the man being none other than Colonel Sterner, owner of the rancho, and the girl his daughter Betty.

The colonel nodded to the boys and walked on to where a grizzled cowhand was leaning against the fencing of a corral. The colonel greeted his employee solemnly, and then handed him a sheaf of bills.

"That pays you off in full, Thomson," he said, "and I guess you'll have to look for another job. I hate to see you go, but Longrope is my foreman, and I can't have fellows around that don't get on with him."

The cowhand bit his lip.

"Colonel," he answered quietly, "I can work with most any man, but when a low-down pot-hound like that Longrope ramrods an outfit, I'm ready to leave. Good-bye, Miss Betty," he added to his employer's daughter.

Betty looked at him with an expression

of regret. She was a pretty, fair-haired girl of nineteen, and obviously did not share her father's sentiments.

"Good-bye, Bob," she said, holding out her hand.

The man's bronzed fist closed about her slender fingers, and then he walked away. A moment later a lean, sallow individual showed up. He was that same Longrope whom the colonel had mentioned, and if he had won old Sterner's confidence he had at the same time made himself none too pleasant to the majority of the men who worked under him.

"Where's Wally?" Betty asked him curtly, without returning the suave smile that he bestowed on her and her father.

"Oh, I put him to watching those critters down at the big corral," the foreman answered, a curious glint playing at the back of his eyes. "He ain't good for much else, I'd fire him if it wasn't for you, Miss Betty."

"I would like it a lot better if you would fire yourself," Betty retorted vehemently, whereupon her father voiced a protest.

"Betty, Betty," he appealed, "don't talk that way."

Betty made no rejoinder, but, turning on her heel, walked quickly in the direction of the big corral, where she found the aforesaid Wally tending a calf that had sustained a sprained ankle.

Wally was a slim, good-looking youngster with a crop of dark hair and a pair of level grey eyes. He straightened up as Betty appeared, and gave her a genial "Good-morning!"

"Wally," the girl said, "I came down here to tell you that if you wanted to go to town with the rest of the boys, you could. I'll fix it with dad."

"Why, that's mighty nice of you," the young puncher answered gratefully. "I sure would like to go along."

Betty laid a small hand on his arm.

"Listen, Wally," she went on seriously, "Longrope is doing his best to turn dad against you. Will you please try not to offend him, for my sake?"

"Sure I will, honey," Wally told her, with an affection that had perhaps been mainly responsible for Longrope's dislike of him. "You know I'd do anything in the world for you."

The cowboy's horse was near-by, and, swinging himself into the saddle, he cantered towards the ranch buildings. Meanwhile, Colonel Sterner was discussing him with the detested Longrope.

"What have you against Wally?" he was inquiring. "I always thought he was a top hand."

"He don't respect me," Longrope complained, and, Wally coming up at that moment, he flashed an ugly glance at the youngster ere moving off to where his own pony was standing.

Wally was on the point of riding by when the colonel hailed him.

"Say," he called, "don't you want your wages, young feller?"

"No, thanks," Wally replied. "I've got enough for this little trip, colonel. Just put mine in the bank the same as usual."

The old man gazed after him as his bronc carried him towards the bunkhouse, and as Betty approached he shook his grey head sadly.

"There goes a good boy," he murmured. "I hate to lose him."

"Why, dad, what do you mean?" Betty exclaimed anxiously.

The colonel pursed his lips.

"Well, he doesn't seem to hit it off very well with Longrope," he pointed out, "and I have to uphold my foreman."

"So that's the way the wind blows, is it?" Betty snapped.

Trouble in Town.

A MARILLO was an orderly town. Free fights there were in plenty, but at the first sign of gun-play the sheriff and his deputies appeared with rattling of handcuffs, and the gaol became the abode of the malefactors.

There was a fist-battle in progress when Wally rode into Main Street, accompanied by Shorty, who had waited for the young cowboy while the rest of the hands had gone on ahead. But the disturbance did not attract Wally's attention. What held his interest far more was the figure of Longrope, whom he saw at a distance of some thirty paces.

The foreman had come to town with a couple of ranch hands who were his cronies, and, a bully by nature, with a perverted sense of humour, he had seen in the shape of a timid Chinese laundryman a likely victim for his cruel horse-play. Quite distinctly Wally heard him voice his intention of affording himself some "amusement" at the Oriental's expense.

"Watch me spill the Chink," he said to his associates; and, taking his lariat from his saddle-peg, he made a deft cast and dropped the noose neatly over the little yellow man's shoulders.

The Chinaman squealed. Next second he was whipped off his feet and dragged headlong through the dust as Longrope clapped spurs to his brone and galloped down the street.

Wally plucked out a six-gun, took steady aim and fired. The shot crashed out, and the leaden slug split the lariat three feet from the tautened noose.

Longrope drew rein with an imprecation, and glared round to see Wally ride forward to the Chinaman and help him to his feet. As the foreman recognised the young cowboy his face became livid, and his eyes were glinting maliciously when Wally cantered up to him.

Longrope's hand moved involuntarily to his hip, but, though Wally had returned his six-gun to its holster, his fingers were close to the butt, and the foreman restrained his impulse, particularly as he became aware that the town marshal was approaching.

"Longrope," the representative of law and order warned, "you're altogether too fresh. You start anything and I'll finish it. Understand?"

The foreman scowled.

"Aw, I was only fooling," he ground out.

Wally had turned away, a contemptuous smile lingering about his firm-lipped mouth. The sheriff glanced in his direction and then back at Longrope.

"You fool kinda rough," he observed. "Now you go on an' shake hands with young Wally there. Go on, get going."

Longrope was the reverse of willing to comply, but the sheriff's tone was menacing, and he urged his brone forward to where Wally had rejoined Shorty, outside a saloon. As he held out his hand, however, his face registered an expression far from friendly.

"I'll get even with you for this," he said under his breath.

Shorty had dismounted in the meantime, and with a sudden inspiration he now took his own lariat, surreptitiously making one end of it fast to the hitch-rack and the other to the girth-strap of Longrope's brone. The foreman, unaware of what was proceeding behind his back, continued to glower at Wally savagely for a few moments, and then pushed past him and rode on at a smart pace.

Shorty's lariat uncoiled itself and suddenly sprang taut, bringing up Longrope's pony with a ierk. The foreman

uttered a yell as he plunged over the creature's neck and fell sprawling in the dust—a yell that was drowned by a shout of laughter.

By the time Longrope had struggled to his feet Shorty and Wally were no longer in view, but, apart from the two cronies who had accompanied him from the ranch, the foreman had a good many associates in town. Several of these now approached him, and one of them swore to having seen Shorty fix that lariat to the foreman's saddle.

"He and his pardner beat it into the saloon," the man informed Longrope.

Bruised, shaken and enraged, Longrope snatched his forty-five out of its holster and strode towards the swing-doors through which Shorty and Wally had passed a moment before. As he pushed the doors open he saw the two cowhands standing at the bar with their backs to him, and heard the voice of Shorty raised in boastful comments.

"When he hit the ground it was the funniest sight I ever saw," the little puncher was stating. "And say, that ain't all. I can lick forty-five men like him. I wish he'd come in here right now. Y'd—"

"Fill your hand with your six-shooter, you little rattlesnake!" Longrope snarled from the threshold. "I'm gonna pump you full o' lead."

Shorty and Wally whipped round, and the bravado vanished from the former as he saw the weapon in Longrope's fist. Too scared to reach for his own "iron," he stood there shivering as the foreman crooked his finger round the trigger.

The man was in a mood that knew no reason, and there was no doubt that he intended to fire. But with a lightning gesture Wally whipped out his forty-five and let loose from the thigh, and the bullet tore the foreman's wrist, so that he dropped his Colt with a sharp cry of pain.

Longrope's associates had followed him to the doorway, and now they swarmed into the saloon with vengeful shouts. Wally immediately grabbed Shorty by the arm and propelled him towards an open window overlooking the veranda.

"Beat it," he jerked. "They're too many for us!"

One after the other they took a header through the window, darted across the veranda and sprang into the saddles of their brones. A moment later they were galloping along the street.

Longrope and his sympathisers came blundering out of the saloon, to run full tilt into the sheriff. They brought up short at sight of the representative of the law, and fidgeted sheepishly.

"You guys lookin' for somebody?" the sheriff inquired.

"No," Longrope made haste to explain; "just playin' around a little, sheriff."

"Playin', huh?" was the rejoinder. "Well, playin' is all right—but don't get gay."

Fired!

POWDERED with the dust of limestone roads, Wally and Shorty were swinging round a bend in the trail that led to the rancho when the figure of a lad of some fifteen or sixteen years appeared immediately in their path.

They were travelling fast, and the boy had no time to jump aside. The right flank of Wally's horse caught him a heavy buffet and pitched him into a clump of scrub.

Wally drew rein and assisted the lad to rise. He began to make apologies, but the boy answered him cheerfully.

"That's all right," he said, "I'm not hurt. Honest I'm not. Say, I'm glad

you two fellers ran into me, anyway. I'm tryin' to locate my dad. You don't happen to know anyone in these parts by the name of Bradley, do you? I'm Jim Bradley."

"Bradley?" Wally echoed. "No, I don't know anyone by that name around here."

"Here's his picture," the boy went on eagerly, producing a faded photograph, but neither Wally nor Shorty could recognise any acquaintance from it, and the boy seemed disappointed.

"Well, I'll have to keep on makin' inquiries," he murmured. "You don't happen to know if there's a town or ranch near here, do you? I—I'm kind o' hungry."

Something in his tone made Wally look at him shrewdly.

"Have you got any money?" he asked.

The boy coloured a little.

"No, I haven't," he confessed.

Wally and Shorty exchanged a glance, and then the former spoke again.

"Say, my boss is looking for a cook's help," he mentioned. "I reckon you could most likely get the job. How about swinging up behind me and takin' a ride over to the outfit?"

"Gee, that 'ud be great," the lad replied, and a moment later he had hoisted himself lithely astride Wally's brone.

"Boy, you swing up like you knew something about horses," Wally commented, as he sent his pony forward with a pressure of his knees.

They reached the ranch some time later, and were met by Betty. Wally introduced young Jim Bradley, and then asked the girl if she could tell him where he would find her father.

"Oh, dad's gone to Denver to meet some cattle buyer," Betty answered. "He won't be back till Sunday."

Wally frowned.

"That's too bad," he said. "I was hoping he might take this kid on as a cook's help."

"Why, I guess that would be all right, anyway," Betty declared, and told Shorty to take Jim to the cook.

When they had gone, Wally spoke to Betty earnestly.

"Listen, honey," he said; "I had to break the promise I made to you to-day. I had some trouble with Longrope, and I had to hurt him."

"You did quite right, Wally," Betty told him, after she had heard the full story.

Thus, during the two days that ensued, there was an air of tension about the ranch, and matters almost came to a head on the evening that Colonel Sterner was due to arrive home, when young Jim Bradley appeared outside the bunkhouse in chaps and sombrero.

"Say, what's the big idea, kid?" demanded Shorty, who was standing near the horse's drinking-trough with three or four of the other men.

"Well, Wally's goin' to let me ride that buckin' horse in the stables," the boy announced, "and he says that if I'm half as good a rider as I claim to be, I'll be a cowboy pretty soon, instead of a cook's help."

It was at that moment that the cook appeared on the scene, a savage-tempered, husky individual, who was one of Longrope's special favourites.

"Hey, what's the idea of dollin' up like this?" he rasped, eyeing young Jim Bradley sourly. "You get in that galley an' help me with the dishes! Go on!" And he clutched Jim and dug his fingers into his arm till the lad squirmed.

"Say, you big stiff, you let go o' my little pal!" Shorty blurted, but he was sent sprawling by a forceful shove.

Next second a hand fell upon the cook's shoulder, and whipped him round so violently that he released Jim. The bully found himself face to face with Wally, and lashed out at the puncher. But Wally parried the blow and banged his fist to the cook's jaw.

The man went over like a ninepin, but scrambled to his feet and rushed at Wally with an angry bellow. A fierce battle ensued, the bystanders forming a ring and shouting encouragement, and two minutes after the first fall Longrope's satellite bit the dust again.

Once more he straightened up, but Wally had the measure of him, and he stretched him a third time. The cook attempted to rise, but could not, and, stooping, Wally swung him up in his powerful arms and dumped him into the horse-trough.

The man plunged into the water with a terrific splash and a spluttering yell, and Shorty immediately pounced on him to seize him by the hair and souse him enthusiastically. Time and again the little puncher thrust the cook's head below the surface, and it seemed as if he intended to repeat the process indefinitely, till Wally restrained him.

"Get an careful of this, men," said Wally to the assembled punchers, several of whom were eronics of Longrope. "Anybody who picks on young Jim Bradley picks on me."

A voice spoke from behind Wally, and he wheeled round to discover that Longrope had cantered up on horseback, in time to witness the final stages of the cook's discomfiture.

"Huh, so the fire-eating trouble-maker is busy again," the foreman sneered, addressing Wally.

"Maybe you would like to get in on the argument," was the curt rejoinder. Longrope's lip curled.

"Not now," he drawled. "I think I'll leave this for the colonel to attend to." And he pointed to his wrist, which had been bandaged ever since the encounter in Amarillo.

Wally said nothing, but a few minutes later he had a heart-to-heart talk with Betty.

"Well," he told her, "I guess I'll be lookin' for a new job now. Honest, I've tried my best to get along with that foreman, but it's just no use."

"I know," Betty answered, "and I'm going to have a word with dad about him."

Wally shook his head.

"That won't be any use," he opined. "Longrope has all his confidence, I reckon."

Wally's prophecy was correct, for when the colonel arrived back at the ranch, in company with the cattle-buyer from Denver, Longrope made straight for the old man's study.

He entered it as the cattle-buyer was tendering a thick sheaf of hundred-dollar bills in payment for a shipment of beeves Sterner was to deliver, and shortly afterwards the man from Denver took his departure. Longrope watched the latter crossed to a safe

and deposited the money that had been handed to him in a pigeon-hole.

The old man locked the safe again, and then turned round to face his foreman.

"Sit down, Longrope," he said, "and tell me how everything's been going."

The foreman held out his injured wrist.

"Outside of being shot and insulted," he answered grimly, "I guess everything's been all right. Colonel, I can't get along with that fellow Wally. Can't hit it off nohow. He's been doin' everything to make trouble. Now, the other day, in Amarillo, . . ."

He proceeded to give a fictitious account of what had happened in town, and when he had finished the story the colonel frowned darkly.

"I'll settle this once and for all," he announced, and, followed by Longrope, he strode out of the ranch-house.

A commotion at one of the corrals attracted their attention, and they saw that the entire outfit was gathered at the fencing, watching a young boy riding an untamed bronc in masterly fashion.

The colonel was compelled to pause and admire the lad's display of horsemanship, and when the wild pony had come to a defeated standstill the old man turned to Longrope.

"Who's that boy riding?" he inquired.

"Oh, some little tramp Wally picked up," the foreman sneered.

The colonel's mind reverted to the unpleasant duty he had to perform, as he saw Wally, Shorty and Betty helping young Jim Bradley from the mustang and congratulating him enthusiastically. He went forward alone and joined the group.

"You ride well, young man," he said to Jim, and then addressing Wally: "If you'll join me at the house I'll pay you off," he continued. "I think you understand."

Betty caught at his sleeve and tried to reason with him, but he had made up his mind, and refused point-blank

to reconsider his decision, whereupon Shorty stepped forward.

"You can give me mine, too, colonel," he stated grimly.

"Very well," old Sterner said. "How about you, young man?" he added to Jim.

The boy spoke quietly.

"This is the first real home I've ever had," he confessed, "but if my pals leave, I must go, too, sir."

Hand in Glove.

JIM BRADLEY was walking past the cook's galley to collect one or two trivial personal effects from the bunkhouse, when a fragment of conversation arrested his attention.

It came from the galley, where the cook and Longrope were in close conversation, and it was the latter's voice that young Jim heard.

"Now listen, Cooky," the foreman was saying, "it's up to us to get together and grab that money to-night. There's 25,000 dollars in that safe, and it's a cinch for us to make our getaway. By golly, I've waited a whole year for the old man to market those cattle, and now it's time for me to rake in."

"Are you sure that dough is in the colonel's safe?" the cook demanded.

"Yeah, I saw him put it there myself," Longrope told him.

The cook said something else in a lower tone, and, his curiosity thoroughly aroused now, young Jim tiptoed up the galley steps and actually set foot across the threshold, very gingerly. In that position he was able to overhear every word distinctly.

"How are we going to do it?" This from the cook.

"Well," Longrope answered, "Wally an' Shorty 'an that kid are pullin' their freight. There won't be nobody around here but our own gang, fifteen minutes from now. We can make the colonel open the safe."

"Sounds all right," said the cook, and with that Longrope chanced to turn his head and see young Jim Bradley standing in the doorway.



As they stumbled across the threshold they saw the prone figure of Jim Bradley.

An oath escaped him, and, taking the alarm, the cook whipped round and caught sight of the boy. Jim wheeled and tried to run, but with a swift movement the cook jerked his gun from its holster and fired.

The smash of the shot synchronised with the sharp cry that broke from Jim's lips. Next moment the lad pitched to the floor and lay still.

The report of the six-gun had been heard all over the ranch, and one of the first to come running towards the cook's quarters were Wally and Shorty. As they stumbled across the threshold they saw the prone figure of Jim Bradley, and by his side a Colt .45.

"Say," blurted the cook with sham concern, "can you imagine what happened? I was cleanin' my gun an' it slipped right outa my hand."

"Yeah," put in Longrope, "an' when it lit the floor it went off. An' the bullet plugged the kid."

Wally did not pause to question them, but gathered Jim in his arms and carried him out of the galley. As he came down the steps, Betty ran towards him.

"Wally," she gasped, "what's happened?"

"The kid's been shot," the cowboy answered, "but I think he's got a chance to live. I'll take him into the house. You run on ahead and phone a doctor."

By the time Wally entered the ranch-house with his inert burden, Betty was on the telephone and old Colonel Sterner was waiting to lead the way to a spare bed-room. It was as he was helping Wally to lay Jim on the bed that something fell from the boy's pocket, something which the colonel picked up with a strange expression on his face.

"Where did this come from?" he faltered.

Wally looked round and saw that he was holding the photograph which young Jim had shown him and Shorty on the Amarillo trail.

"Oh, that's a picture of his father," the cowpuncher explained.

Colonel Sterner walked through to the living-room. Betty was telephoning a Dr. Crandall, but her father took the instrument from her and spoke into the mouthpiece.

"Dr. Crandall?" he said, "Listen, doctor, my boy has been shot. Yes, my own son. I don't care whether you know I had a son or not. I want you to get out here as quickly as you can."

He hung up the receiver and turned to Betty slowly. "I've got a confession to make, honey," he murmured, as he saw that she was staring at him in amazement. "When you were a little tot of three years old, I left your mother and took you with me. It was a case of insane jealousy on my part, which I've regretted bitterly ever since. I came West under an assumed name, Betty. Our real name is Bradley, and this—indicating the photograph in his hand—"this is a picture of myself as a young man. Jim Bradley is your brother, Betty."

Meanwhile, in the bed-room, Jim Bradley was beginning to stir restlessly, and all at once he opened his eyes and recognised Wally.

"Hallo, little pardner!" Wally said. "Tell me how it all happened."

"The cook shot me," Jim answered feebly. "He was planning to rob the colonel's safe with—"

His voice failed him and his eyes closed again. Wally knew that he had sunk into oblivion once more, and he was stooping over him when Colonel Sterner entered the room, followed by Betty.

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"Is my boy conscious?" the old man asked.

"Your boy?" Wally echoed.

Betty swiftly explained.

"You see, Wally," she said, "we've just found out that Jim is my own brother. How is he, Wally?"

"Oh, I guess he's all right!" Wally answered, and then, hurrying from the ranch-house, he made his way over to a corral, where Shorty was waiting for him.

"Come on with me," said Wally, tapping the diminutive puncher on the shoulder. "We're still workin' for the colonel, see?" And he led Shorty in the direction of the cookhouse.

Longrope was lounging around outside the building, and with an unexpected gesture Wally pulled a six-gun and jammed it against the foreman's ribs. By looking through the doorway, behind Longrope, the young cowboy could see that the cook was no longer in his quarters, and he aimed to find out just where the fellow might be located.

"Where did that cook go, Longrope?" he demanded. "You better talk up or I'll smoke you plenty."

The menace of the .45 loosened Longrope's tongue. He spoke in a voice that sounded almost whining.

"I didn't think the boys would understand," he said, "so I told him to beat it."

"Get back in that galley!" Wally ordered curtly. "Go on, get back. And, Shorty, keep this coyote penned up here while I chase up that cook. The two of them have planned to rob the colonel!"

"What do you mean?" jerked Longrope.

Wally laughed grimly.

"You know what I mean," he said. "I reckon I ain't makin' any mistake by pickin' on you. Now, Shorty," he added to his undersized pard, "watch him, for he's foxy."

"Okay," Shorty rejoined, drawing his revolver and compelling Longrope to retreat across the threshold of the cookhouse.

Wally wheeled round and sprang astride the bronc that Shorty had been saddling. Sixty seconds later, having heard from a loitering cow-hand that the cook had last been seen riding towards town, Wally sent the pony forward along the Amarillo trail at full gallop.

In the five-mile burst over the limestone road, he saw no sign of the fugitive, but as he clattered into town he caught sight of the rogue hitching his mount to the rail outside the saloon, and, coming up with him in a smother of dust, he flung himself on the fellow.

The cook uttered a shout as he was borne heavily to the ground. A fierce struggle ensued, and the man reached for his gun. But Wally twisted his wrist till he let the weapon fall with a groan, and then he dragged the ruffian to his feet and threatened him with his own six-shooter.

It was at this juncture that the sheriff and a couple of his deputies elbowed their way through a small crowd that had gathered to watch the scuffle.

"What's the trouble here?" the sheriff demanded, taking Wally's iron from him.

"This bird shot the colonel's son," Wally answered. "Yeah, I said 'son,' sheriff, for old Sterner has a kid about sixteen. The cook claimed it was an accident, but he was lyin'. He and another guy were plannin' to rob the colonel's safe, an' I've got a hunch that other guy was Longrope."

The sheriff spoke to his deputies.

"Take him over to the office," he ordered, indicating the cook. "We'll make him talk."

It was no idle boast, for five minutes afterwards the cook was stammering out a full confession, to which Wally and the representatives of the law listened attentively.

"And what gave you and Longrope the idea of robbing the colonel?" the sheriff inquired.

The cook moistened his lips.

"Well, Longrope wanted money to make a getaway," he said. "He was afraid maybe he would get rounded-up some time for that slayin' last fall."

"What slayin'?"

"You know that guy you found dead over on Squaw Flats?" the cook went on. "That hombre who was investigatin' the steer-rustlin' for the Cattle Association? Well, Longrope and some o' his gang had a cow stretched out for brandin' when this feller steps out on 'em and tries to hold 'em up. Longrope shot him. You see, all the time he was playin' foreman for ole man Sterner he was doin' a big private business in cattle-thievin'."

The sheriff rose to his feet.

"Boys," he said to his deputies, "I reckon we're ridin', pronto."

"You won't forget to put in a word for me when it comes ter my trial, sheriff, will you?" whined the cook, ere he was taken to the cells.

The Tables Turned.

SHORTY and Longrope sat facing each other at the table in the cook's quarters, and Longrope was the picture of uneasiness and discomfort.

For Shorty was brandishing a six-gun with a dangerous disregard of its trigger, and as he levelled it at Longrope the foreman positively quailed.

"I have waited a long time," began Shorty, ominously and deliberately, "for a chance like this, and I've got a notion to pop you off 'stead o' waitin' for the sheriff."

Longrope looked at him haggardly.

"Put that 'iron' down, Shorty," he pleaded. "Put it down, will yuh?"

Shorty seemed in no hurry to comply, but a moment later the sound of footsteps caught his attention. Five or six of the ranch-hands came into the cookhouse, looked at captor and captive with some surprise and then exchanged meaning glances.

"What's the big idea, Shorty?" one of them asked.

"I caught a rat," growled Shorty, "and I'm playin' with it."

The cow-hand who had addressed him leaned his elbows on the table.

"You don't say," he drawled. "Caught a rat, huh? That ain't a friendly name to call a hombre, Shorty. What's Longrope been doin', anyway?"

As he spoke another of the newcomers moved up behind Shorty and thrust his hands towards the little puncher's throat tentatively.

Holding Longrope covered with a gun in each fist, Shorty had never an inkling that he was about to be assailed from the rear. For he did not know that the group of men who had just entered the cook's quarters were hirelings of the treacherous foreman.

"Well," said the man who was leaning on the table, "you ain't answered me yet, Shorty. What's the idea in trainin' your artillery on Longrope this-a-way? What's he been up to?"

"What's he been up to?" Shorty reiterated vehemently. "I'll tell you what he's been up to. Wally Weldon

claims that that mangy cook shot young Jim Bradley, because the boy overheard him an' Longrope Wheeler plannin' to rob the colonel's safe. Young Jim wasn't plugged by accident—no, sir! And so—

Shorty never completed the sentence, for at that instant the man behind him seized him in a vice-like grip.

A strangled cry escaped the little cowboy. He tried to spring to his feet and turn on his attacker, but the shooting-irons were knocked out of his hands, and as the weapons clattered to the table, Longrope reached across swiftly and snatched up one of them.

Shorty managed to wrench away from the rogue who had grasped him by the throat, and, wheeling round, he hit out at the fellow lustily. His bunched knuckles landed flush on the ruffian's mouth with a healthy impact that knocked him flying. But Longrope clubbed the gun he had lifted, and, diving round the table, brought the butt smashing down on the back of the little puncher's head.

Shorty staggered dazedly, but made a gallant attempt to throw off the effects of the cowardly blow, the crown of his sombrero having muffled the shock of it to some extent. Longrope whipped off the hat, however, and again struck the diminutive cowboy over the skull.

Shorty's knees gave way, and with a hollow groan he slipped to the floor. The scoundrelly foreman looked down at his sprawled form for a moment, spurned it savagely with the toe of his riding-boot and then faced the men whose arrival had been so timely—so far as he was concerned.

"That was a pretty near thing," he ground out. "I was beginnin' to think you guys was takin' your afternoon siesta or somethin'."

"We was driftin' by when we saw this ninety-eight pound skeeter playin'

around with them six-guns, boss," one of the gang declared. "Lucky for you we did, or everything mighta gone wrong."

"How does the land lay now?" Longrope demanded.

"Fine en' dandy," was the rejoinder. "There's no one around the rancho but our own fellers, Longrope, an' we're all broke to leadin'. Say the word an' we'll lift the coin."

The foreman expressed his satisfaction with a curt nod. "We'll grab the money outa the safe an' pull our freight right now," he said. "Come on."

He paused to bestow another kick on Shorty and then led the way from the cook's quarters and strode in the direction of the ranch-house.

The gangsters were still some little distance from the building, when Doctor Crandall was seen to drive up in a touring-car, and, calling a halt, Longrope watched the medical man cross the veranda and enter the house by the front door.

"Reckon we'll hang up a while," the foreman mused. "We don't want any more trouble than we can help, and we'll let Crandall get off the outfit afore we start business. When he's gone I'll stroll into the house casual-like. Two of you keep pretty close on my heels. The rest of you can stick around outside and watch out for any visitors that might not be welcome—"

Meanwhile the doctor was being conducted by Betty and Colonel Sterner into the room where young Jim lay. The medical man's diagnosis of the boy's hurt did not take very long, and he was soon able to give the old colonel a reassuring verdict on the ease.

It was a verdict which was borne out by Jim's cheerful appearance when he recovered consciousness again and sat up in bed.

"You see, colonel, it's just a graze," the physician told the elderly rancher. "That's all. Why, the boy could ride a bronco right now, without any bother."

"I'm powerful glad to hear it, doc.,"

the colonel said in a relieved tone. "This boy means more to me than he knows. But let me see you to the door."

He escorted the doctor as far as the veranda, watched him drive off in his auto, and then returned to the room in which Jim had been put to bed.

Betty had remained with the lad, and she and her father proceeded to tell him of their newly discovered relationship. It was a piece of information that came as a tremendous surprise to Jim, and one that revived him more than any medical attention could have done.

He rose shortly afterwards, and father, son and daughter repaired to the colonel's study, where they were talking animatedly when a knock on the door interrupted their conversation, "Come in!" called old Sterner, and Longrope crossed the threshold.

"Can I see you a minute, sir?" said the foreman with the habitual air of respect that he affected in his employer's presence.

"Oh, hallo, Longrope!" the colonel greeted him genially. "What's on your mind?"

Before the foreman could make any answer, young Jim had pointed an accusing finger at him.

"Dad," he flashed, "that's the man who was planning to rob you with the cook!"

There was a blank silence, which Longrope was the first to break. With an ugly imprecation he stepped towards Jim threateningly, but pulled up short as the colonel pushed between him and the boy.

"What's the meaning of this, Longrope?" he rapped out.

Across the threshold came two of Longrope's gang, Shane and Haggerty by name. Their six-shooters were in their hands, and they menaced the colonel with the weapons.

Longrope spoke. "The meaning's just this, colonel," he drawled. "We want the money you have in that safe."

"You'll never get it from me, you dirty rat!" the old man blazed, and in a sudden, blind passion he launched forward and tried to strike his foreman.

Longrope thrust him back roughly and gripped him by the throat, but



Holding Longrope covered with a gun in each fist, Shorty had never an inkling that he was about to be assailed from the rear.

young Jim sprang to his father's rescue, and the foreman was compelled to release the old man to handle the lad.

He hurled Jim aside, and the boy staggered to the far wall, finishing up near an open window. Jim acted on the impulse of the moment, and, realising that resistance against Longrope and the two armed men who had followed him into the room was hopeless, he scrambled over the sill and sprinted away in the hope of obtaining help.

Jim did not know that Longrope had left four other members of the gang outside the ranch-house, with orders to plant themselves at various vantage points and guard against interruption. But at that very instant a stealthy form was creeping up behind one of those sentinels, near the well from which the outfit drew its water.

The stealthy form was that of Shorty, who had recovered consciousness but a minute or two before and crawled out of the cookhouse.

One of Longrope's gang had taken the precaution of relieving Shorty of his six-gun, but the little puncher had discovered a hefty cudgel lying hard by, and with this grasped in his fist he came within striking distance of the man at the well.

The cudgel swept down on the rogue's head, and without a sound he toppled stupidly. He fell towards the low parapet of the well, tumbled over it, and vanished into the depths of the cavity.

Shorty caressed the bludgeon tenderly, and was complimenting himself on having disposed of the gangster, when he heard the voice of one of Longrope's men coming from beyond an out-house.

"Art," the voice called. "Where are you, Art?"

Shorty took cover, and a moment afterwards Art's seeker hove into sight. He approached the well, and was gazing about him when a feeble hail reached his ears from the bottom of the shaft.

The gangster leaned over the parapet. "What are you doing down there, Art?" he shouted.

"He's waitin' for you to take a bath," said Shorty, stepping out of his hiding-place and swinging the cudgel again.

Art received company at the foot of the well, his colleague "dropping in on him" like a bale of hay.

Shorty now proceeded to make a tour of the outfit, and not far from the ranch-house, close to a clump of brushwood, he discovered young Jim Bradley in the grasp of a burly crook.

"Where do you think you're goin', young feller?" the ruffian inquired of the lad, covering him with a six-shooter.

"I'm in a hurry!" Jim panted. "You're in too big a hurry, I reckon," the gangster began, but ere he could say more Shorty stole up from the rear and laid him low with the bludgeon.

"That worked out all right," the little puncher declared, looking down at the rogue's prostrate form. "Let's go."

"Where to?" Jim asked, and Shorty grinned.

"To the well," he stated, and the unconscious crook was dragged off, to be served in the same manner as his two associates.

The fourth man was likewise taken unawares, but as he was carried to the well three heads rose above the parapet—the heads of the men who had already been consigned to its depths. Shorty smote them lustily, and they disappeared. The fourth man was dropped after them like a plummet, and Shorty wiped his hands with a gesture of satisfaction.

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"Where's Longrope?" he asked Jim. The boy nodded in the direction of the ranch-house.

"He's in there with two of his men," he answered, "trying to make dad open up the safe so he can get the money."

The Dash to the Ranch.

AS the cook was escorted from the sheriff's office in Amarillo and taken to the cells, Wally turned to a telephone fixed to the wall.

"I'm going to call up the ranch, sheriff," he stated, "and satisfy myself that everything is all right."

"Go ahead," the sheriff told him. Wally picked up the receiver, but the operator at the exchange failed to connect him with Colonel Sterner's outfit, and when the cowboy hung up and turned to the sheriff there was an expression of anxiety on his clean-cut face.

"I reckon there's something wrong at the ranch," he ground out. "The line is dead. Listen, sheriff, I'm goin' ahead. Hit the saddle as quick as you can, will you?"

"I'll have a posse together inside a few minutes," was the answer, "and we'll round up the whole gang."

Wally dived out of the office, unlatched the pony and vaulted on to the animal's back. In another moment he was riding out of Amarillo and taking the trail that led to the outfit.

He covered the miles 'twixt town and ranch in record time, and, powdered with the dust of the road, dismounted near one of the corrals, and advanced with his six-gun in his fist. It was as he drew rear the house that he distinguished voices, and recognised one of them as Longrope's.

The voices came from beyond the window of the colonel's study, and, stepping cautiously towards the sill, he peered inside and saw the crooks and their victims.

"Are you going to open that safe, colonel?" Longrope was demanding ominously.

The old man drew himself up defiantly.

"No, I'm not going to open that safe, you rat," he made answer.

"I don't want to hurt you," Longrope threatened, "but there's ways an' means o' makin' you do what I want. Get me?"

"You can't scare me," the colonel retorted, and with that Longrope moved nearer to him.

Betty slipped between the foreman and her father, and beat the scoundrel furiously with her small, clenched hands. Longrope was momentarily driven back by her attack, but caught her by the wrists.

"Hold on, you little spitfire," he snarled. "An' listen to me. You know the combination o' that safe as well as your old man. Get over to it—go on! And he pushed her across the room.

"Don't open up that safe, Betty!" the girl's father called, and Betty faced Longrope as defiantly as the colonel himself had faced him a moment before.

"You won't get any help from me!" she flashed.

Longrope's eyes narrowed viciously. "Oh, I won't, huh?" He turned to his men, and indicated the colonel. "Bring that old fool over here."

The rogues obeyed him, and Longrope addressed the raneher in harsh, rasping accents, brandishing a six-shooter as he did so.

"Now, colonel," he said, "tell her to open the safe. I mean business, an' I ain't wastin' any more time—"

"Stick 'em up!"

It was the voice of Wally from the

window, and the three crooks wheeled in alarm, to find the cowboy's forty-five covering them. Slowly they raised their hands, and at a sign from Wally the colonel relieved them of their fire-arms and pitched them from the room.

Wally climbed over the sill, and it was as he was dropping to the floor that Longrope and his hirelings made a concerted rush at him. His revolver was knocked from his grasp, and a savage swing from Haggerty took him in the jaw and battered him against the wall.

Longrope sprang for the gun that had fallen from the cowboy's hand. But, throwing off the effects of Haggerty's punch, Wally pounced on the foreman and caught him a terrific upper-cut that hurled the crook to the far side of the room, where he lay groaning.

Shane closed with Wally, but the cowboy swung him up in his powerful arms and flung him to the floor. Next instant, however, Haggerty was grappling with him.

Shane reached his feet and started forward to Haggerty's assistance. The colonel made a gallant attempt to intercept him, but the old man's fighting days were over, and the gangster felled him with a cowardly blow, then snatched up Wally's gun.

Wally glimpsed him out of the corner of his eye, whirled Haggerty round as Shane tried to "draw a bead" on him, and sent the former staggering into his armed comrade with a mighty heave. Both men fell, and the revolver spun into a corner.

They scrambled up again, and Shane seized a vase from the mantelshelf and slung it at Wally. The cowboy ducked, and the ornament shattered to fragments against the wall. Next second he had leapt towards the ruffians and was hammering them unmercifully with his fists.

They blundered backward under a storm of blows, and their combined efforts failed to stem the youngster's onslaught. Shane wilted under a hard drive to the solar, and was smashed to the floor with a punch that broke his teeth and brought the blood streaming from his nose. Haggerty was pounded into a dazed condition which left him capable only of pawing feebly at the air, and Wally finished him with a flashing right-hook.

Haggerty hit the carpet and did not move. But there was still some fight left in Shane, and, springing at Wally, he scored with a lucky blow and almost felled him. But the cowboy came back at him like a tiger, and slammed three punches to the crook's unshaven chin in quick succession.

Reduced to limp insensibility, Shane lay spreadeagled near an overturned table.

Meanwhile, Longrope had had time to collect his wits, and he made a fierce rush that drove Wally to the far side of the room. The youngster took some hard knocks during the foreman's desperate rally, but he was possessed of a stamina that could endure punishment, and a sudden opening gave him his chance to take the offensive.

He took it with a vengeance, and laid into Longrope with both hands. The foreman was rocked with a couple of stiff lefts that were mere preliminaries of a terrific hammering. He did his best to cover up, but the cowboy's blows crashed home through his guard, and the crook's battered face became distorted with pain, while his breath escaped him in hoarse, laboured gasps.

He was knocked to the floor, and rose only to fall again. When he gained his feet once more it was to attempt escape,

(Continued on page 28.)

Horse thieves are making mysterious raids on the Diamond Bar Ranch. A handsome stranger and his queer friend take many risks to help the ranch owner and his pretty daughter.



Starring
BUFFALO BILL JUN.

STORY OF THE SONORA

The Ambush.

TWO men rode slowly along the dusty trail. On either side were frowning cliffs, with jagged stones that threatened to fall at any moment. In the far distance could be glimpsed green hills, but here was only stifling heat and desolation.

"Dreary Gulch would be a good name for this place." The tall, handsome young rider on the spirited chestnut spoke. "I'll be glad when we get through to the shade of the trees."

"Yeah, I feels as if I climb Vesuvius." The other man was short and thick set; his mount was a slaggy and unkempt cow-pony.

They were strange pards—Bill Tracy and Heine Schmultz. Tracy was tall, well built and weather-tanned; his Western outfit was good, and he held himself like an athlete. His smile had won many a girl's heart. Heine's nose proclaimed his origin. An excitable little man, whom Tracy had helped in the fording of a river, and for two weeks they had ridden together.

Heine had come West because he had always had the wish to be a cowboy. His business of making shoes had gone bust, and as the business had gone West he had done the same. Tracy stated that he was a cowpuncher with the wanderlust, and that he was on his way to the Diamond Bar Ranch in Sonora. About this time they would be needing hands, and Tracy had heard that Williams, the boss, paid good money. Schmultz had better come along.

Crack! Crack!
"Vot vas dat?" cried Heine, reining in his mount. "Don't say, Tracy, dat it was pistols."

"Sounded mighty like it," laughed the youngster. "Expect some guys have got a bit fresh. Come on, Heine.

They don't shoot at strangers out in the West without giving due notice."

The valley seemed quite peaceful as they rode forward.

"I should have said dem shots were about here," Heine whispered after they had ridden some distance. "Yet dere don't seem no folks about. Maybe we was mistook, Tracy."

"Yeah, maybe we were and maybe we weren't," answered Tracy. "Who knows but an army might be hidden among those great rocks."

Crack!
A bullet whined over their heads.

Crack! Crack!
To their amazement two shots came back from the other side of the ravine. They even saw two puffs of blue smoke.

"Gosh, this looks like a feud," cried Tracy.

Crack!
A bullet passed uncomfortably close to their ears.

"Get behind that boulder," barked Tracy. "That shot came from the south-side."

"Yeah, but suppose de guys on de north side start shooting mitt me," wailed Heine, looking very perturbed and seared.

"Then you jump round to t'other side of the rock." Tracy had to laugh. "In fact, the quicker you jump the safer you'll be. Now get to cover."

"Where you going?"
"I aim to stay here," Tracy pointed to a boulder. "I'm going to try and get above our friend."

Crack! Another bullet whined close, and made them duck their heads.
"That's a warning to keep off the grass. Get to that boulder, Heine, and trust that the North are friendly; leave the rest to me."

Bill Tracy began to work his way up the cliff side, but had not gone far when

he realised that the cover was so scattered that there was little chance of getting above his quarry without being sighted.

He was hesitating what to do when shouts and howlings from below proclaimed that Heine Schmultz was in trouble.

"Help! Murder! Bill! They're killing me!"

Now guns began to pop from both sides of the ravine, and bullets were ricocheting off the rocks. Who were the two combatant sides Tracy had no idea. At the moment that could wait until he had seen what was happening to Heine.

Swiftly the tall Westerner clambered down the hill side, and twice bullets went dangerously close. On the trail below he saw several struggling figures, and as he got closer perceived that three men were on top of Heine Schmultz.

Tracy yanked one man off by the scruff of his neck and slammed a vigorous right-handed punch to an unshaven jaw the rascal slumped in a heap. The other men, turning, saw what had happened, and left Schmultz to rush at Tracy.

One came at the boy with waving fists, whilst the other leaped on his back. By a ju-jitsu trick Tracy neatly dislodged the man on his back, and by bending his body forward catapulted the fellow into the other's face. Both crashed to the ground, but got to their feet, and, breathing fearful threats, waded in for more trouble.

Bang! Not a shot, but Tracy's fist. One man dropped like an ox.
"You leave him to me," shouted Heine Schmultz, who was jumping round waving his arms. He flung himself on the prone man.

The other rascal was more cunning
July 18th, 1931.

and milled round Tracy, seeking for an opening. All the while a miniature battle was going on above their heads.

Bill tried to rush in, but was stopped by a lucky swing to the ribs. He squared that with a quick left that hurt the other's nose.

Heine's man was showing signs of fight, much to the small man's fright.

"Quick! Quick! Bill, he's getting fresh," wailed Heine. "Can't hold him much longer. Take that, doggone, cuss yer!" He banged the foe on the nose with his clenched fist.

Bill waded into his man, and by clever foot-work and quick-moving arms managed to manoeuvre an opening that enabled him to get in a heavy punch to the jaw. That broke the other's caution, and he came wading in with arms flying.

Bang! Bang! A look of pained surprise on the rascal's face as those blows landed and hurt. His legs gave way and he sank to the ground.

The youngster took no chances, but flung himself forward to pin the defeated one to the dusty trail. The man Tracy had slumped had recovered sufficiently to turn the tables on the little German, but they backed away like coyotes when the tall cowboy waded into them.

Down the sides of the hill a dozen men came running. Every now and again they would stop to fire. This fire was returned, but came from much higher up—one side was on the run. On the run because three of their men had apparently fallen into enemy hands.

Heine Schmultz, when he had dodged behind that rock, had nearly fainted away when the three jumped out on him. These men had crawled down to the trail to wait for any attack from the North, and had apparently decided that Schmultz was an enemy.

It was a great consolation to Tracy to look up and observe that a thin, gaunt man that was running towards them wore a star on his shirt.

"I'm Sheriff Wilson," he barked out. "I'm mighty obliged to you two strangers."

Willing hands relieved Schmultz and Tracy of the battered rascals.

"If it ain't a rude question," cried Tracy, brushing the dust off his clothes, "what was going on—a small war?"

"These three men are rustlers," was the answer. "Hardly a week goes by without horses being run over the border into Mexico, and I sure thought that we had corralled them at last. I should reckon they were about eight or ten strong, and we might have gone on shooting at them for ever if you hadn't happened on the scene."

"We're mighty looky to be still on der scene," said Heine dolefully. "I am covered in bumps and lumps."

"So those guys were rustlers," Tracy seemed interested. "They're the type of skeeter I detest. Glad we helped you out, sheriff. We're on our way to the Diamond Bar Ranch after a job—what are the chances, sheriff?"

"Good, after what you've done today," was the answer. "Mister Williams has lost more horses than any other ranch, and he'll receive you with open arms. After I've housed these three beauties I'll be coming over to see Williams. This trail leads to Silver Fox, a small cowtown where I've got my gaol, but you turn half right after leaving this ravine and that takes you to the Diamond Bar. Meet you later, strangers."

Schmultz and Tracy shook the sheriff heartily by the hand and for a mile rode with the posse. Tracy gathered quite a lot about the rustlers and their deeds, and gained the sheriff's heart by July 18th, 1931.

promising to ride in any posse the representative of law and order might require.

Then the sheriff and his prisoners took one trail and two wanderers another.

The Diamond Bar was but an hour's ride, but before they reached their destination they were due to have another adventure.

Beauty in Distress.

HEINE SCHMULTZ was full of chatter about the recent adventure and his own stirring part.

"Bet those rustlers we captured don't talk," Tracy remarked in a thoughtful manner. "If they'd squeal we'd know the leader of the gang and that would save a lot of trouble."

"You seem mighty interested in dem rustlers," murmured Schmultz. "I don't care if I don't see no more of dem fellers. Say, Bill, this yere valley seems real peaceful and—"

His words were interrupted by a piercing scream. The sound came from some way ahead. It was a series of screams that seemed to be trailing off into the distance.

"Very peaceful, ain't it?" remarked Bill and then urged his horse into a gallop. Schmultz charged after his friend.

They came to a clearing and Tracy reined in his horse, he stood up in the stirrups and shaded his eyes with his hands and then saw where the shrieks were coming from. Below them was a grassy valley and a horse was careering along that valley with something bobbing about half in and half out of the saddle.

"A vumans in distress," panted Schmultz, and saw Bill go down the slope and through the trees at a pace that made him shudder. "Vere mein freund go so must I," he muttered, but his pace was something like that of a fast snail.

By taking an angle of forty-five degrees, Tracy would eventually overtake the runaway provided he could maintain a fast gallop. How the horse kept his footing was a miracle, and how Tracy avoided being swept out of the saddle by the boughs of the trees was even more miraculous. Luckily the runaway was only a frightened pony and tiring fast.

Through a belt of brush dashed Bill Tracy and in a few strides came alongside the runaway. Strong hands reached out and caught at the trailing bridle. The pony was checked and soon Tracy had it under control and brought the animal to a quivering halt.

Tracy's strong hands helped the girl back into the saddle and he was not slow to notice that she was young and exceedingly pretty, though her cheeks were pale from her terrifying experience.

The girl soon recovered and smiled quite bravely at her rescuer. She smoothed her ruffled hair and smiled, deciding at once that the stranger was a very handsome young man.

"Thanks—you saved my life." Her voice was soft and clear. "Pop's told me a long time that I should have some fresh saddlery, to-day a stirrup leather went as I was reaching up to pick some flowers from a bank, and when I almost fell out of the saddle Tommy took fright and bolted. He's not a bit scared of guns, things he knows, but anything out of the ordinary sends him real loco. I'd given up hope when you appeared on the scene."

Her gaze expressed curiosity. What

was this handsome young man doing here? She was even more puzzled when a perspiring fat little man zig-zagged into the picture.

"Gut! Gut!" murmured Schmultz, raising his battered old felt hat. "Very lucky for you, miss, dat I hear ze screams."

"This is Heine Schmultz," laughed the youngster. "I like to have trouble trailing around with me—that's why Heine comes along. My name is William Tracy, better known as Bill. We're heading for the Diamond Bar Ranch."

"Is that so?" The girl's eyes sparkled. "I'm Betty Williams—my pop is the boss of the Diamond Bar."

"You don't say," cried Schmultz. "Den you gets mein freund and me zee jobs. You tell heem how we save—"

"That will be enough, Heine," growled Tracy. "Sorry, Miss Williams, but my pard rather oversteps himself at times."

"You're wanting work," the girl smiled. "I know father will be pleased to do—"

"But I don't want to get in under false pretences," Tracy smiled back. "I sure feel now that I'd like to work for your father, but I'm kinda cautious. Your pop may not want any hands and I might kinda feel the wanderlust urging me to keep to the trail."

"Can I show you the way?" suggested the girl. "Tommy always pulls when he's on the home trail, and it will be hard to hold him with only one stirrup." She cast admiring eyes at the chestnut. "But if there is another horse, or a man, around then Tommy's as good as gold."

"Sure that will be fine," answered the boy and scowled at his pard. "Heine, you ride back and look for the stirrup iron. You needn't hurry."

"But vy—oh, I see, two is a company and three is zee army," Schmultz grinned.

Betty blushed whilst Tracy watched her with admiring eyes. They were good friends by the time the ranch was in sight, then the boy halted.

"I'll wait for Heine," he told her. "Then we'll take a look around and if Heine wants to stay then we'll come right along and see your pop. An hour ago I wasn't at all sure about hitching up at the Diamond Bar, but now I'm full of enthusiasm."

"What's made you change your mind?" asked the girl, with a mischievous smile. In her neat riding habit she was a pretty picture. An oval face, cheeks that were now warmed by a healthy colour, and the fairest of hair. She held herself gracefully, but Tracy reckoned that it was the blue of her sweet eyes and the smile that was winning his heart.

"I think the scenery round here is so grand," was his laughing answer.

"Will you be staying long?"

"That all depends," Tracy glanced back and saw Heine. "But it won't worry me if it's a long spell."

"I'll tell pop to expect you round to our hacienda in about an hour." The blue eyes were full of friendship. "I shall be expecting you, anyway."

And when she was almost out of hearing, Tracy cupped his hands and shouted:

"In an hour's time, Heine says yes."

"Vat you talks about," muttered the perspiring German. "I not find dat stirrup, and now vy does I say 'yes'?"

"We're mooring in this port," chuckled Tracy. "But before I see her

old man I want to have a look round. Just as well to see the other punchers and especially the foreman before you take a job. But it'll be a mighty tough foreman to keep me from joining the Diamond Bar. Come on, Heine."

Deputy Sheriff.

BILL TRACY did not hurry because he had reasons of his own why he wanted to have a quiet look round. Without seeming to be noticing, he sized up the Diamond Bar Ranch, the number of cowpunchers, the various buildings and corrals.

"Reckon they mostly handle horses, Heine," Bill said. "I've always heard that round these parts hosses was profitable. They can turn 'em loose most months of the year and then have round-ups for selling, branding, foaling, and all that. Old Williams does cattle as well and he reckons he must have twenty or more boys on his pay-roll." He pointed to a tin shanty with a veranda round it. "What would you say that building was, Heine?"

"A saloon."

"Yeah, you're right," Tracy rubbed his smooth chin. "If they've got their own saloon they may be a very bright crowd and it is possible I may find them too bright. Buck Harris is the foreman."

"How you know so much about dis yero ranch, Bill?" asked Heine.

"Using my eyes and ears," was the vague answer. "As they run the saloon for profit what say to a mild hibrant, Heine?"

"You bet." The little man was all eagerness. "I'll go first."

They strode towards the saloon and had got to the swing doors, when there came a crackle of gunfire. Heine jumped back as if he had been shot.

"Donner und Blitzen," he gasped. "Dis ain't a saloon, it's a shooting gallery."

"Come on." Tracy pushed the small man forward, and they passed through the swing doors.

The atmosphere was thick with tobacco fumes, whilst the lighting came from oil-lamps suspended from the ceiling, a number of cowpunchers were gathered round a prone figure, and the place stunk of cheap alcohol.

Tracy motioned to Schmultz to keep quiet, and quietly joined the group. He picked out at once the man who interested him most—a big, burly fellow in a bright-coloured flannel shirt, khaki

breeches and Mexican boots. Bill took a quick survey of the ten or twelve men in the saloon. Several seemed quite decent sort of men, but the majority Bill put down as a tough bunch of cut-throats.

"I guess he won't try that trick again." It was the burly fellow who spoke.

"You bet he won't, Buck!" cackled a rat-faced, dishevelled-looking rascal. "He drew first, Buck."

The swing-doors opened and a round-faced, pleasant man rushed into the saloon. His grey sergo suit of good cloth, collar and tie, gold pin and clean appearance, told Tracy that this could be only one person—the boss.

"What's happened?" he demanded.

"Wanting a new deputy," sneered Buck Harris. "Been drinking like a fish and tried cheating at cards." He indicated a coarse-featured specimen.

"Rawson drew on Blackie, and Blackie had to shoot mighty quick. We all saw it, boss, it weren't Blackie's fault." Tracy looked at the dead man over someone's shoulder, and decided that the deputy had not been a healthy specimen of manhood.

"You choose the deputy," cried the boss. "This is the second shooting in a month, Buck, and I won't stand for it. If you can't keep better order I'll get a new foreman. This matter must be reported at once to Sheriff Kilne."

"Is that all the thanks I get!" snarled Harris. "Why I—" The foreman checked an angry speech. "Sorry, boss, but I can't blame you for them hard words. It's mighty difficult to get hands—this rustling has scared punchers away. What ye gonna do about a new deputy?"

"I'd like a big fellow!" cried Williams. "A guy that wouldn't stand for this sort of racket. Any volunteers for deputy?"

Bill Tracy pushed several men out of his way and stepped forward, for the first time they became aware of the stranger.

"My name's Tracy." He indicated Schmultz. "This is my buddy, Heine. We want jobs as punchers on this ranch, and if I'm big enough, Mister Williams, I'd like to handle the job of deputy."

"We don't want any darned strangers," cried Buck fiercely.

"Are you the Bill Tracy that helped my daughter?" asked the boss. "Yes, I

can see by her description that you're the man. I'm a quick thinker, Tracy, and I'll take you as deputy, but I warn you that it's a risky job—your life is in your own hands."

"My hands are pretty capable." Tracy did not flinch before the scowls of Harris and several others. "I've met Sheriff Kilne. Me and Heine helped to corral some of this rustling gang."

Did Buck Harris peer sharply at the new deputy, and some of the others glance quickly at each other?

"Then you're the new deputy." Williams stepped forward, took the star from the shirt of the deceased, and next second it had been pinned to Tracy's shirt. "You and your buddy better come along to the hacienda—Betty would like to thank you."

There was silence in the saloon as Tracy and Schmultz followed the boss, and many a hand slipped instinctively to a gunbelt.

Heine Saves Bill's Life.

A WEEK went by without any undue happening, except that one of Harris' underlings was foolish enough to call Tracy a "long-legged hobo," and for that lost two teeth and received as compensation a black eye.

There was one other matter, but that only concerned Buck Harris. The foreman noticed the smiles and laughter of Miss Betty towards Bill, and his ugly mouth snarled hate and mischief behind Tracy's back. Heine noticed the scowl one day and shivered.

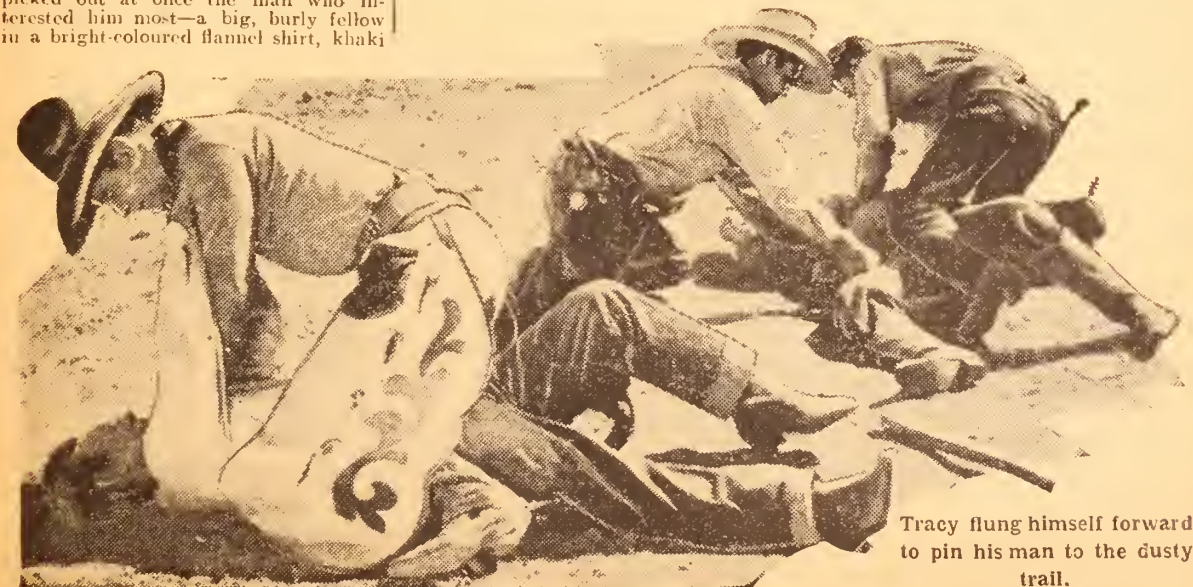
Mister Williams spoke in glowing terms to Harris about the new deputy.

"I ain't saying anything." Buck Harris saw a chance. "But what do we know about these two men? Two nights I've seen Tracy prowling around, and I reckon that several of your horses from Craggy Canyon have gone over the border."

"Maybe you're right," was the answer. "But I believe you're wrong."

That evening there was a barn dance, as it was Betty's nineteenth birthday, and Buck Harris dressed himself up in his best. He must try to oust this fellow Tracy in the affections of Betty. What a hope Buck had! First of all, Betty had never liked Harris or any of his cronies, and Bill was a really fine specimen of manhood.

Betty danced most of the time with Bill, and when she wasn't dancing she



Tracy flung himself forward to pin his man to the dusty trail.

was sitting out with the deputy. Buck Harris went off to the saloon, and when he returned he had imbibed sufficient spirit to inflame his jealousy almost to mad rage. It was an interval, and the two young people were out in the moonlight, but shielded from the ranch by a great tree that spread its branches and leaves almost to the ground.

Heine Schmultz knew where Bill and Betty had gone, but wisely stayed where he was—a tree stump near the veranda, where he could smoke his ancient corn-cob without the ladies turning up their noses. He observed Harris evidently looking for someone.

Heine put away his pipe when Harris, hearing the distant murmur of voices, crept like a cat towards the big tree.

Harris parted some of the branches. "Girls ain't ever meant much to me up till now." Bill was holding Betty's hands. "I've got a sister, and she is always bringing forward her friends. I liked them all—some were mighty pretty—but that was all they meant."

"And why am I so different?" was Betty's answer. The girl leaned towards the young man, and her eyes made no secret of her love.

"You're just too cute and sweet for words!" Tracy drew the girl close. "Directly I saw you that day when you lost your stirrup, I knew Mister Cupid had caught me at last."

"Somebody else's got you!" hissed Buck Harris, under his breath, and stealthily drew his gun.

Heine Schmultz saw the gleam of the gun in the moonlight, as Harris raised the heavy weapon and pushed it between the overhanging branches. Bill had found Heine a gun, which he had endeavoured to learn how to use. So far, his practising had been so dangerous that the other punchers had told him to lay off. Perhaps if he fired the gun it would warn Bill.

The little man dragged out the gun, and just as Buck Harris, his face transformed by hate, was about to press the trigger, he fired blindly. That shot would have won a medal in a competition, because it whizzed straight through Buck Harris' sombrero, so close to the scalp as almost to make a parting.

It cured the rage of Buck Harris, because he spun round to find out who was daring to shoot him from behind. He would have done it himself, but that anyone else should dare was beyond belief. Harris saw Schmultz, and slowly he trailed the weapon on the fresh target.

"Press that trigger and I'll shoot out your teeth," Tracy spat out. The deputy had released Betty in a flash, at the report of the gun, and had fairly hurled himself round the big tree. "Throw the gun before you and stick yer hands up high."

Buck Harris was forced to obey. At once Schmultz ran forward and began to excitedly explain what he had seen. Betty, with hands to cheeks, remained where Bill had left her, but she could hear what was being said.

"It's a lie!" bluffed Harris. "There are a lot of wild dogs and coyotes round here, and that yere tree often has a hawk or some such night-bird. They're always swooping down on Miss Betty's chickens."

"So you were shooting at a hawk," Tracy said. "Schmultz was quite wrong in thinking you would want to shoot at me. Why should you? Besides, a foreman would never shoot a man in the back. Not even the filthiest skunk would descend so low." Tracy's eyes were steely as he spoke. "I should go a bit farther afield next time you want to
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do your fancy shooting. I don't believe what you've told me, but I'm gonna accept it. Maybe you thought I was a rustler, and maybe you thought different. Pick up your gun, Harris, and if you want to please me try and use it—funerals are fun sometimes."

"You can laugh now, Mr. Clever." Buck Harris picked up his gun. "But that don't say the laugh mayn't be on the other side of your face mighty soon. The sooner you hit the trail the safer you'll be."

And, without another word, Buck Harris stalked off.

"Dat guy would have got you, Bill," whispered Schmultz. "He's a killer, and, in my mind, der crook what's doing all dis yere rustling."

"I was sure of it directly I saw the gentleman," laughed Tracy. "I'm obliged, old-timer, for what you've done puts us square."

"Yeah, and now I'm gonna get vun up." Heine Schmultz rubbed his hands together. "You tink he is der rustler, and so does me. Gut! Listen, Bill, to how we catch him."

Buck Harris had doubled back on his tracks directly he was in the shadows. It was not to murder, but to hear what these two might say about him.

"What's your scheme, Heine?" "Buck's horse is hitched to the rail," Heine said. "If we untie him and give him a wallop across der flanks dat horse will go to vere der headquarters of dese rustlers is."

"Dunno about headquarters, Heine," answered Tracy. "But Mister Williams reckons a lot of his rustled cattle and horses are in a valley round here that no one knows, and that from time to time the rustlers push them over the border according to the demand. Buck's horse might lead us to this hide-out. Heine, we'll try it. I must take Betty back to the dance. I'll be right back in five minutes."

And as Betty and Bill returned to the ranch arm-in-arm, a figure shook his fist after them.

"I got a trump for that acc," threatened Buck Harris. "A trick that may win me the girl as well. No man dare thwart Buck Harris and get away with it."

A Neck-Tie Party.

BUCK HARRIS watched and waited. He saw Bill Tracy and Heine Schmultz release his horse, and the creature got galloping away into the moonlight with the riders in close pursuit.

Then the foreman went off to find Mr. Harris. Why had Tracy and Schmultz stolen off like this? Where did the two intend to go? What mischief did they plan? Buck Harris then gave his explanation to the questions. Tracy and Schmultz were in with the rustlers, and if a posse were formed at once and the two trailed, it would lead to "Last Valley," and probably the horses and cattle. It was a chance that should not be missed.

Buck Harris had his own plans for what should happen in Last Valley. The boss would see Tracy and Schmultz, and would be bound to think them guilty. Harris could easily get some of his men to act as false witnesses.

"I believe you're on a false trail," decided the boss. "Let's go and see if you're right."

Then Betty came up and wanted to know what was afoot. She insisted upon riding with her father. Could Bill be in with the rustlers? No, but Harris might be plotting some deep scheme.

Tracy and Schmultz had ridden a considerable distance, and came at last

to a small ravine, where the youngster called a halt.

"I've got quick hearing." He dismounted and laid his ear to the ground. "We're being trailed!" He jumped to his feet. "Heine, ride on after Buck's horse. I'm going to stay around here. I'll join you later."

Bill Tracy had not been in hiding long before there was a thunder of hoofs, and half a dozen riders, headed by Mr. Williams, Betty, and Buck Harris. They slithered their horses to a halt quite close to the mesquite where Tracy was hiding.

"Ain't I right, boss?" Harris shouted. "This is a new trail, and look yonder. See that cleft in the cliff? I've never seen that before. There's the Last Valley, where all the rustled cattle and horses have been concealed. It's as clear as daylight these two skunks are rustlers."

Buck Harris chuckled at his cleverness. Last Valley only contained a few horses that had been left there because they were of poor quality.

"Seems like you're on the right trail," muttered the boss, "though I ain't usually wrong in a man." He turned to his daughter. "There is danger, and you must go back to the ranch. No arguments—I insist!"

Betty, after many protests, rode away, and then the posse dashed off; it was Bill Tracy who kept close to their tail, but the youngster took good care they never guessed. Heine Schmultz found himself in the Last Valley, and he saw at once what an excellent hiding-place it made. A few horses and some cattle were grazing, and he went closer to see their brand.

A yell of exultation made him jump, and he spun round to find a number of horsemen tearing down on him. Feverishly he pulled out his gun and waggled it about in a hopeless sort of way. A rope snaked through the air, and Schmultz found himself sprawling in the dust.

Buck Harris did not waste time. He winked slyly at his men to act up to him.

"Caught in the very act!" yelled Harris. "A darned rustler, and cattle and horses from the Diamond Bar all round him. We know the way to treat rustlers, don't we, boys?" There were angry cries and shouts. "I know what I reckon is the only punishment this skunk deserves."

"A necktie!" yelled one man. "String him up to that tree!" shouted another. "It's the law of the West."

"But you must try him first." Boss Williams tried to intervene. "It sure looks as if he has rustled my cattle, but you must give him a chance."

"I ain't taken any cattle!" wailed Heine. "Dese men, they lie. Dis is der valley where der rustlers keep yer horses. I trailed der foreman's—"

"A lot of lies!" Harris began to bluster. "This crook has stolen my horse—that's proof enough for us. Sling yer rope over that branch, Ned, and we'll give this guy a swing for his money."

"Save me, mister!" moaned Heine, struggling hard, but without avail. "I ain't a rustler! Himmel, here come Bill! Now you hear something."

Bill Tracy rode up, and his hand was mighty near his hip.

"What's going on here?" he demanded.

"That's the other rustler." Buck Harris pointed at Tracy. "That's the other guy what's been stealing your horses and cattle."

"I'd like a word with you, Mister Williams." Bill ignored the foreman. "Just tell your foreman and his bunch of

thugs to lay up on my buddy. It looks mighty black against us, Mister Williams, but I'd like a quiet talk without those critters yelling and cackling." He made a motion with his head. "Would you come over here, Mister Williams?"

"Lay off Schmultz!" ordered the boss. "I'll talk with the deputy and hear what he has to say."

When they were about fifty yards from the suspicious Harris and his men, Bill began to talk rather loudly, but he kept so close to the boss that his actions could not be seen.

"I was just out for a moonlight ride, boss." He made his voice rather whining. "I wouldn't want to take any cattle, and my buddy, Heine, wouldn't hurt a fly. The boys have got me all wrong." A shining star with "Cattle Owners' Protection Association," lay in the palm of his hand. "You'll give us another chance, mister?" Then he lowered his voice: "How is this for an alibi? They sent me here because you wrote to them. Now I want you to act as if you don't believe my story, but you haven't got enough evidence to warrant swinging us up to a tree." He put the star back in his shirt-pocket. "When we walk back to your foreman, who is the real rustler, I want you to go for me like mad, and take the deputy star off my chest. Get the idea?"

"So you're an official of the association. Smart work!" approved old man Williams. "I take any orders you care to give. After I take the badge, what do you do?"

"Hold you up, protest that Heine and myself are innocent, and ride away," was the whispered answer. "Let's get going, boss."

Buck Harris was delighted, and could hardly suppress his grin as the boss gave Tracy a slatting, finally wrenching the star off his and throwing it to the ground. The foreman thought he was going to have a necktie party, but Tracy was too smart.

Out came two guns, and Harris, the foreman, and the posse reluctantly shot their hands skywards.

"Come here, Heine!" rasped Bill. "Get to horse and ride to the cleft in the rock and wait for me there." He scowled at his prisoners. "I ain't been given a square deal, but I'm coming back, Buck Harris, and I'll come—ashootin'."

Slowly he backed his horse, keeping them covered, waited till he thought Schmultz was almost to the cleft, and then whirled round his horse. In a mad gallop he tore up the valley.

Buck Harris and his men would have followed, but old man Williams stayed them.

"That was all bluff on his part," he hinted. "That coyote will ride for the border, and we won't ever see his shadow again."

Buck Harris called his men together in the saloon directly he got back.

"I got my suspicions that we're being bluffed," he told them. "Old man Williams was full of buck after that scene with Tracy, and I believe they staged that show."

"Let's have a big clean-up, Buck, and beat it over the border," suggested Blackie.

"That's my idea, and we'll vainoose to-night," was the answer. "During the siesta-time, when Williams and his daughter rest, you boys round up as many horses and cattle as you can get and corral them in Last Valley. We get them out through the pass at the east end, which Mister Clever Tracy ain't found, but guard the entrance that he knows, and shoot the skunk if you sight him."

"How about you, Buck?"

"I'll meet you in Last Valley just before sundown," was the answer. "I aim to have a cut at the Williams' strong-box. Get about your job, boys, in case the boss gets wise."

Betty in Peril.

BILL TRACY had ridden over and had a long talk with Sheriff Kilne, who acted at once directly he saw the youngster's badge.

"Heine has overheard talk of a final round-up," stated Tracy. "I reckon Harris plans to clear up some of that pedigree stock as a last coup before fittin' over the border. Now we've found Last Valley, it ain't worth his while to stay; besides, it means risking his skin for nothing. Get your map out, sheriff, and I'll show you how we could place several posses so that there would not be a chance for this rat to slip through our hands."

"I can raise forty men within two hours," cried the sheriff. "Guess my

job will be a bit safer if I can capture this rustler. It does look as if Harris is the man. Here's a map."

When everything was arranged to their satisfaction, Tracy announced that he would be getting back to the Diamond Bar.

"Harris might try some rough stuff with old man Williams," he stated. "A lot of the Diamond Bar men are trust-worthy, but they're scared of Harris. Heine's got a torch, and he'll flash it three times from Cactus Bluff when the rustlers are on the move. See you later, sheriff."

At a canter Bill went to the ranch, but he would have made it a wild gallop if he had known that Betty was in danger.

For a long time Buck Harris had admired the boss' daughter, and he had kidded himself that it would be easy enough to win her. Buck thought himself a very handsome man, and that any girl would fall for him, but when Tracy had appeared on the scene he knew he definitely took second place. But Harris was determined not to lose the girl. He would carry her over the border with him into Mexico, and there she would soon forget Bill Tracy.

Harris got rid of the boss by getting one of his men to spin a yarn that a well was poisoned and several cattle dying. Would the boss go out at once to see the mischief? With the master out of the way, Harris brazenly walked round to the private quarters of the daughter.

When Harris walked into her room the girl was most indignant.

"Don't you usually knock" she said coldly. "What do you want?"

"You!" Buck grinned evilly. "I wanna take you for a nice little ride. You see, kid, I've kinda fallen for you, and for a long spell I've had a mind to make you my wife."

"Your wife?" Betty was on her feet. Her face was white with anger. "Are you mad, or have you been drinking?"

"Neither, Betty," was the calm reply. "I'm beating it into Mexico before nightfall, and I want you to come with me."

"You're crazy. I'll call my father."
"He's out looking at a well that's supposed to be poisoned and isn't." Harris laughed at his cleverness. "The only folk around here are several of my



Buck Harris struggled for a moment and then sagged under the strength of those strong arms.

boys—the rest I've sent off repairing boundary fences. You can scream if you like, but that won't stop me taking you with me. Are you coming quietly, or must I carry you off by force? I like 'em wild, so I can tame them."

The girl edged towards the window. Everything that the foreman was saying must be true. She had always hated and mistrusted this man, and now she saw him in his true colours.

Suddenly the girl turned and made a wild rush for the open window.

"Oh, no, you don't!" cried Buck, and dragged her back as she tried to scramble over the ledge.

"Dad! Dad!" she cried. "Bill! Bill!"

"Call him, and it may mean his death!" the brute mocked. "Tracy is out, but should he come back and hear your call he will come straight here, and I shall shoot him."

But when Harris tried to fold the girl in his arms and kiss her, then did fear make her cry:

"Bill! Bill!"

The cry was heard, and the youngster fairly leaped from his horse. He had just ridden in, and wondered at the strange silence; then came Betty's shout for help.

When the door burst open Buck Harris tried to get at his gun, but Betty seized his wrist. Bill covered the man.

"Throw that gun down, you snake!" he ordered. "Now, you're going to get the hiding you deserve, rustler. Oh, yes, I'm wise to your game. When your men drive the horses to the border they will walk into the hands of Sheriff Kilne, just as you have walked into mine."

"Curso you!" snarled Buck Harris, and flung the gun to the floor. "Suppose you're going to show off on a defenceless man. You wouldn't dare fight me without a gun in your hand."

Calmly Bill pouched his revolver, and Buck Harris' eyes lit up. He was the best bruiser for miles around, and no man had ever dared to stand up to him; he could whip this stripling with one hand. He believed in the first blow and a surprise. Like lightning he flashed a right to Bill's ribs, and the youngster went down. Betty uttered a cry of fright, but Bill was up in a flash.

Betty's sitting-room was soon in a sorry state, because Harris tried every trick he knew. When he found boxing got him nowhere he picked up a vase and hurled it at his enemy. Bill had to dodge flying missiles of all descriptions.

Once, after a hand-to-hand struggle in which both men got their shirts half ripped from their backs, Harris broke free and tried to get to his fallen pistol. How he yelled when Bill's foot came down on his fingers!

Struggling fiercely, they crashed into Betty's desk and fought amidst books, pens and papers. They completely wrecked the desk. How Betty rejoiced to see that her lover was slowly gaining the upper hand and that Harris was puffing with exhaustion. Bill landed a fierce upper-cut to the rustler's chin and the scoundrel crashed backwards, but the man was game. From the floor he grabbed a broken vase, and it missed Tracy's head by inches.

"You swine!" cried Bill, and jumped on his man.

Over and over they rolled, with Bill straining every muscle to pin Harris to the ground. The rustler got his feet round the table and dragged that over on top of them. This ruse managed to gain for him his freedom, and he scrambled to his feet. Now the bully was scared and desperate.

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Bill rushed towards him, and then Harris made his final bid. Small rugs covered the floor, which Betty had polished and stained herself. Thus was the floor somewhat slippery, and in a flash Harris gripped a rug and heaved.

The youngster's legs shot from under him, he strove to regain his balance, to finally crash on to his back and hit his head an awful crack against the edge of the table. The blow completely knocked him out.

Buck Harris stood there panting, too exhausted to act for a moment, but when Betty again edged to the window he sprang forward and gripped her.

"Tracy's dead and now you're mine," he cried, and swung her up in his arms. "You're going to Mexico with me."

A shrill whistle brought several of his men on the scene. They had been hiding near a rocky bluff within hailing distance of the ranch.

"The sheriff is out after us," yelled Harris as he held the struggling girl. He placed her on her feet, but cruelly gripped her arm. "Keep quiet, darn yer."

"The sheriff after us," cried Blackie. "What—"

"Go find the rest of the boys and warn them of the danger," ordered the rustler. "You've got the horses in Last Valley." Blackie nodded. "Drive them through the other pass when it's dark and don't make any noise; let some of you cover the flanks. You should be close to the border before that fool sheriff gets wind of you, because he'll be watching everywhere but the Last Valley. And if he did watch the end he knew he wouldn't see much, because Tracy never knew there was a smaller valley further down and nearer the border. I've finished Tracy, got the girl, and so everything's fine."

"What ye gonna do with the gal?" cried Blackie. "Women have caused ruin to more than—"

"Do as you are told!" blazed Buck Harris. "I will deal with the girl and meet you on the other side of the border."

When the rustlers had disappeared Harris swept the girl up in his arms and strode towards the big tree with the overhanging branches. Under its shelter a two-horse buckboard was hitched.

Harris freed the horses, pushed the girl towards the driver's seat, and clambered up beside her. She tried to wriggle free, and he grabbed her in a fierce clutch close to his shoulder, whilst his other hand urged the horses to a trot.

Betty screamed with fright, and the name she called was: "Bill! Bill!"

Harris laughed his scorn and urged the animals to a gallop.

He did not know that Bill Tracy was only dazed and was at that moment rubbing a sore and aching head. The youngster heard the shout and lurched to his feet.

A Daring Leap.

BILL TRACY dashed some water in his face and felt revived. The open air soon brought him back his strength, especially now that he knew Betty was in dire peril.

One leap and he was on the back of his trusty animal. Deep wheel marks and a cloud of dust made the trail easy, and at full gallop he raced to the rescue.

As he rode Bill vaguely wondered whether Heino would have seen the change of plans of the rustlers and warned the sheriff. The two queer friends had found out the rest of the secret of Last Valley only the previous

evening, and Bill suspected that Harris would attempt the narrow cleft for the final round-up. But his chief worry now was the buckboard ahead.

Buck Harris had a good start, and the two horses were fresh. Soon the trail would become narrow and winding along a rocky ravine, and if Harris had a rifle there would be little chance of overtaking him. For Betty's sake he must not give Harris an opportunity of shooting him; could he get the man by surprise?

Buck Harris had heard the sound of pounding hoofs and had guessed who pursued. The foreman cruelly lashed out the galloping horses, whilst Betty clung to the rocketing seat of the buckboard.

A bullet whined over Bill's head, and he knew that his enemy had a rifle. At once he swerved from the trail and put a daring idea into force.

The dusty road soon would be lost in the twisty canyon, and it was possible to cross a lofty mesa, jump a small stream, and work his way to a spot that overlooked the road. The horse cantered sure-footed over the difficult ground, and soon Bill was making his way down a slope back to the trail. If he failed his chances of stopping Harris were gone, as the road passed between two lakes and eventually came to the pass through the foothills to the border.

Bill flung himself out of the saddle and raced to the edge. Already the approaching buckboard could be heard, and the youngster tensed himself for a hazardous leap. The drop must be twenty feet, and no mean task when you aim to hit a fast-moving objective.

With arms raised to maintain his balance, Bill Tracy hesitated on the very edge, and when Harris appeared he made the brave leap. On hands and knees he landed in the swaying buckboard, and he had to clutch the sides to prevent himself from being whirled overboard.

Harris had a vague impression of something flashing through the air, and not till he heard the crash of Tracy's fall did he guess what had happened. His gun was half out of its holster when Bill reached him.

With the rocketing buckboard swaying from side to side, completely out of control, there was fought a fierce battle. Harris kicked and scratched, tried to free his gun arm, but all in vain. A hard punch caught the rascal a terrible blow on the mouth, and next moment he was dragged backwards.

Betty, seeing her sweetheart alive, awoke from her daze of fear and grabbed at the reins. Her strong wrists strained at the runaways, and slowly their mad gallop eased.

The two men had almost gone over the tail when Betty dragged the frightened horses to a halt, then she dared to look round.

Bill, afire with fierce rage, was flinging his fists into the rustler's face. Harris lashed out with a heavy boot, and the blow caught the younger man on the ankle. He had to relax his grip, and Harris wriggled free, but only for a moment. As the rascal jumped to his feet and made to leap off the buckboard Tracy shot out a hand and seized his ankle.

Harris staggered, lost his balance, and hit the driver's seat a mighty crash with the back of his head. Bill had got to his feet and now dived like a rugger star at the half-dazed rustler, who struggled for a moment and then sagged under the strength of those strong arms.

(Continued on page 28.)

"THE LAST PARADE."

(Continued from page 12.)

was not till early in the evening that he reached the house in Brooklyn. Molly found him in the drawing-room when she reached home from the office where she worked, and he, having had plenty of time for reflection, was beginning to wonder whether he had done a wise thing in defying Cookie.

"There's something on your mind, Larry," she said, studying his troubled face. "Why have you come here? And what is it?"

"Nothing," growled Larry. "Leave me alone—it's nothing!"

A knock at the front door startled both of them. Molly ran out into the little hall, and Larry nervously followed her.

She admitted Cookie, stern of face and carrying a newspaper in his hand; and behind Cookie stood Lefty.

"You fathead!" shouted Cookie wrathfully, thrusting the special edition of the "Herald" under Larry's nose. "What did you want to print this story for?"

"Well," replied Larry defensively, "it was a great story. And, besides, what a chance it was to tell that old bald-head where to head in."

"I've got a good mind to sock you right on the nose!" roared Cookie. "Get packed!"

"What for?"

"I'm buying you a one-way ticket to California."

"What are you going to do—put me in the movies?"

"I'll move you!" roared Cookie. "Get packed! Lefty, go with him, and when he's ready, take him down the back way. Idiot!"

Lefty went off with the crestfallen young man. Molly, clinging to Cookie's arm, faltered:

"Oh, what is it, Cookie? What has he done?"

"Plenty!" was the gruff reply. "But don't worry—he'll be all right."

"Oh, if anything should happen to Larry, I'll never—"

"Nothing's going to happen to him," declared Cookie. "Will you leave it to me, please?"

The door-hell rang. It was Mike—Mike in a state of trepidation.

"Where's Larry?" he demanded as he stepped into the hall.

"Packing," replied Cookie. "I'm keeping him under cover for a couple of days, and then get him out of town."

"You beat me to it," growled Mike. "Good for you!"

"Oh, what's it all about?" cried Molly. "What are you hiding him away for? Oh, what has he done?"

"He's just too good a newspaperman," replied Mike, "that's all."

And he flung down a copy of the newspaper he himself was carrying.

"I'm glad you're here, Cookie," he went on. "I want to talk to you. Wait a minute, Molly—I guess this is just as important to you as anybody else. I went down to headquarters this afternoon—to resign."

Molly stared. Cookie bit his lip.

"What for?" he inquired, though he guessed.

"Because I can't be on the level with them and you, too. I'm through with playing both ends against the middle. Cookie, you're the greatest guy I know—I think more of you than anyone in the world. That's why I took the shock for you this morning."

"What do you mean?" growled Cookie.

"You know what I mean. I was down there. I could have seen everything. I could have put my hand on you—but I didn't!"

"You don't have to give me any breaks."

"You gave me a break in France—and lost an eye doing it," declared Mike with emotion.

"I see," drawled Cookie. "An eye for an eye, eh?"

"No—a neck for an eye. But now we're quits."

"Okay, we're quits," nodded Cookie. "So that's that."

"That's not all. This afternoon, instead of resigning, I was made captain in charge of the Homicide Squad. Donovan, as he handed me the shield, said 'Fine work, O'Dowd—and you're going to do still better in this new line of action. I'm banking on you, boy.' I didn't resign—so you know what that means!"

"Friendship ceases, eh?" grunted Cookie, pacing the carpet, and he looked across at Molly's worried face with a rueful grin. "Okay!"

"I don't want that to happen," insisted Mike. "So I'm asking you for the last time to quit the racket—to get out while you're still ahead of the game."

"But I'm not ahead—I haven't even started. There's no telling where I'll stop."

"I know where you'll stop," said Mike sternly. "'X' marks the spot!"

"Aw, go and lay an egg," growled Cookie, and strode towards the door. But Molly flew after him, pulled him back.

"Oh, can't you see he's right, Cookie?" she cried. "Can't you see it? You're losing the best friend you ever had. He can't be true to you and his principles, too. And you're not the only one involved—Larry's mixed up in it now."

"Never mind about the kid," said Cookie reassuringly. "I'll see him through."

"Oh, but I'm worrying about you, too," she pleaded. "Get out of this deadly game before it's too late, Cookie."

Tears were streaming down her cheeks, and he wanted badly to take her in his arms and comfort her; but he would not give in.

"I told you I'd pull out if you'd give me a little time," he said obstinately, "but I can't quit now. It's you I'm thinking of all the time—I want to give you everything in the world."

"There's only one thing I want," she said, holding his hands and looking up at him through her tears. "The thing that every woman wants—a sense of security—a husband she can look up to. She wants to feel, if she has children, that she won't have to wonder every day if their father's coming home, or if she'll have to go down to the morgue to bring him home. She—"

"All right, Molly, I'll pull out. Give me six months!"

"No!" she cried. "No!"

"Well, six weeks—a month."

"No," she repeated. "I'll give you just one more day. I'll give you till to-morrow."

"To-morrow? Why to-morrow?"

"We said we three would always stick together, and to-morrow's Armistice Day. Mike and I will be marching in the parade. Will you be with us?"

"Oh, what do parades mean to me?" he said impatiently.

"This one will mean something to you," she told him eagerly. "If you march with us to-morrow, we'll know you've quit the racket. We'll declare an armistice all round, and I'll listen to

anything you want to ask me. What do you say, Cookie?"

"Yes, come on, Cookie," urged Mike, clapping him on the back. "Join the parade!"

"Aw, I've seen my last parade," growled Cookie, and left them without another word.

With Marino's Compliments!

NEXT morning an Armistice parade took place in the streets of the city, with bands playing and flags waving—a parade that almost recaptured the old war-time fervour.

Comrades of the distant days marched side by side; soldiers, naval ratings, nurses, gathered together, as far as possible, in their old companies, regiments, or units, some in uniform, some in mufti.

Molly, in her nurse's garb, marched beside Mike and others that she knew, though she protested that she ought to get back to her own outfit. But Cookie was not there, and several of the men who had fought with him commented on his absence.

"I'm afraid he's busy," Mike told them.

The procession passed up Broadway, and the enthusiastic noise of it reached Cookie's private office above the restaurant in Eighth Avenue. Larry was there, virtually a prisoner in Lefty's care; Cookie himself was busy at his desk.

"What the Sam Hill is this?" complained Larry. "A gaol? When are you going to put me on the train?"

"I'll tell you when," snapped Cookie. "I'm doing your thinking from now on!"

Alabam's black face appeared in the doorway.

"What's all da choutin' about, boss?" he inquired.

"It's the parade," replied Larry instead of Cookie. "It's Armistice Day."

"Armistice Day?" echoed Alabam. "Wonder if Marino knows about dat?"

The music of the band came nearer and consequently louder. Alabam moved across the big room and opened a window. Larry, close behind him, cried:

"Here they come, right by us! Come and look, Cookie! Gee, don't they look great? Kinda gets under your skin, don't it, old man?"

Cookie stood by the window looking wistfully down at the marching columns, his lips compressed, a curious expression in his sound eye.

"Hi, Cookie, isn't that your old outfit?" exclaimed Larry, pointing. "Sure it is! There's Mike—and Molly's with him! They're marching together. Gee, I bet they wish you were there!"

Cookie suddenly swung round, made for his desk, and from one of its drawers fished out his old army cap.

"Lefty," he said, "make it three tickets to California—get 'em right away, and meet me here after the parade."

"What are you going to do?" demanded Larry.

"Do?" cried Cookie, in a voice that rang with jubilation. "I'm going to join the parade!"

He raced out and down the stairs; he shoved his way through the crowd and scampered after the men of his own regiment, shouting like a schoolboy.

"Hallo, Cookie!" greeted some of his old comrades; and then he was beside Molly, and had slipped his arm through hers. Mike let go of her other arm and reached his hand across to grip Cookie's free one. Molly's face was radiant; this must mean that Cookie was going to quit the racket!

"Molly," said he, as they marched, "how would you like to live in an orange grove?"

"In California?" she breathed. "I'd love it!"

"And we'd send Mike a big box of lemons every Christmas!"

He burst into that war-time ditty, "I don't want to get well," singing at the top of his voice; and all the men around him elined in with: "I'm in love with a beautiful nurse!"

After it was all over, Mike went back to duty, Molly went home to pack—and Cookie returned to his restaurant to make arrangements for the long journey.

He found Lefty in his office with the tickets. He had left Larry with Alabam in the apartment above it.

Cookie indulged in an orgie of destruction, so far as personal papers were concerned, and he almost convinced Lefty that he had taken leave of his senses by announcing:

"The café and the rest of the junk is yours, Lefty. Give Alabam a good break—he's not a bad chap. You can take over the mob, if you want to, but I think you're a fool if you do. Why don't you pull out, same as I'm doing?"

"You can't pull out," declared Lefty. "Gee, I don't know what to say about what you're doin' for me, but once you're in the racket, you die in it. Something always happens."

"Always singing the blues!" jeered Cookie. "I'm pulling out, ain't I?"

Molly arrived in a taxi, with hat-boxes and suitcases, some hours later, and ascended to the office. Cookie waved the strip of tickets at her.

"Hallo, babe!" he cried. "All set?"

"All set," she replied gladly. "Oh, Cookie, it's almost too good to be true!"

"But it is true!" he laughed gleefully. "And how!"

"I'm still afraid something may happen. I'm not going to let you out of my sight for one minute till that train leaves!"

"And I'm not going to let you out of my sight for the rest of my natural life!" he retorted. "Now will you quit worrying? When I say I'm through, I'm through."

He turned to Lefty.

"Go up to the apartment and bring the kid down here, will you?" he said.

Lefty departed, and Cookie grabbed Molly in his arms and kissed her.

Down at the back door of the restaurant a motor-lorry drew up noisily, and one of Marino's men jumped down from it and made his way to the kitchen.

"Got some meat for you, buddy," he said to the white-clad chef.

"All right," replied that worthy "Bring it in."

Cookie employed a considerable number of men about the premises—men who carried guns in their pockets and kept their eyes open. One of them promptly darted upstairs to the office, knocked at the door, and entered.

"Chief," he said nervously, "one of Marino's trucks has just pulled up in the alley."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Cookie calmly. "I ordered some beef from him yesterday."

The man went out, and Cookie said to Molly:

"Let's telephone Mike and have him over for a farewell party!"

"Oh, I wish we could," said Molly. "But he's on duty to-night. He's seeing us off on the train, though."

"He's sure one swell guy," quoth Cookie.

Lefty opened the door, and his face was white.

July 15th, 1951.

"Oh, chief," he said hoarsely, "can I see you a minute?"

"Right," responded Cookie. "I'll be back in a minute, Molly." He joined Lefty on the landing and closed the door. "What's the matter?" he inquired.

"The kid wasn't upstairs—nor Alabam neither. And that beef—"

Cookie gave him one startled glance, then went rushing down to the kitchen with Lefty at his heels.

The kitchen staff had uncovered the alleged beef—and covered it up again in haste. They and the chef were standing by the big table looking at one another in horror as Cookie and Lefty burst in upon them.

No need to ask questions. Lefty pulled back the muslin covering, pointed to a tab.

"Compliments of Marino," he said gruffly. "It's the kid!"

Cookie looked down at the still form in its shroud, his face working.

"Take care of him, Lefty," he said, closing his eyes—the one that could see this dreadful thing and the one that could not. "I'm going to take care of Marino!"

He went back to Molly, and she, studying his face, faltered:

"Cookie, what is it? Is it something about Larry?"

"It's something I've got to do," he said grimly. "I want you to wait here."

He shut her in, and rushed up to his own deserted apartment, where into a leather bag he tumbled a portable machine-gun and bands of cartridges. He would need the "typewriter," he decided, as well as the guns he carried in his pockets!

The Last Parade!

MOLLY did not remain in the office for long. She went out on to the landing, calling his name, then sped down to the restaurant looking for him. The place was full of customers and the orchestra was playing a gay quick-step, but there was no sign of Cookie. She opened a side door leading to the kitchen, but two men were guarding the passage.

"Where did Mr. Leonard go?" she asked them anxiously.

"I don't know, miss," replied one. "But you can't go in there, because that's the kitchen."

She went back to the office, dreadfully afraid that something was horribly wrong. The office was deserted. It hardly seemed likely to her that Cookie would have gone up to his apartment, but she ascended to it.

Cookie had slipped out while she was in the restaurant, and the rooms were deserted—except that, in one of the bedrooms, Alabam lay on the floor in a pool of his own blood!

Resisting an almost overwhelming impulse to shriek, she tottered out to the stairs and down into the office. There she fought for a measure of self-possession, and finally picked up the telephone. She rang up Police Headquarters and asked for Mike, and eventually into Mike's startled ear she poured her story.

"Where are you now?" he inquired. "Oh—well, listen; don't get excited. You just stay right where you are, and I'll call you again as soon as ever I can."

In a very few minutes Mike had issued an urgency call to several stations and rounded up a number of his own men, uniformed and plain-clothed. They crowded into cars, carrying rifles; and the cars shot off down-town, following the one in which he himself rode with three detectives.

"Well, Mike," said one of the three

as they careered through the lighted streets, "what's the dope?"

"We're bringing somebody in," replied Mike briefly.

"Who?"

"Marino—for murder!"

"Say, who are we protecting?" growled the detective. "Marino, or Cookie?"

Cookie had already reached the high wooden gates of the Three Star Packing Company's premises, but they were closed and locked. He was meditating a difficult climb, cumbered with the heavy bag, when a motor-lorry came rumbling along. It was the one in which the body of Larry had been conveyed to the restaurant!

Cookie shrank back into the shadows while the lorry stopped outside the gates and a man sitting beside the driver jumped down to unlock them. Then, without the slightest hesitation, he hoisted himself over the tail-board into the back of the vehicle, and presently was carried into the yard.

The two men descended, opened a door of the warehouse, and disappeared. They had gone to report to Marino, who was waiting in the downstairs office.

Cookie waited till their footsteps had died away, then clambered down from the lorry and reached up for the bag. He took out the portable machine-gun and waited.

After a while Marino came out from the warehouse, making all unsuspectingly for the gates and the street. He reached the lorry, and from behind it Cookie suddenly pounced on him, seized him by the throat.

"I've come to return the compliment," he snarled between his teeth. "Do you still weigh a hundred and sixty-eight pounds, Marino? Well, here's where you take on those two extra pounds!"

He sent Marino floundering backwards against the warehouse door and snatched up the machine-gun. It spat fire.

Not very long afterwards the police cars arrived outside the building, which was surrounded. Mike, with four plain-clothes men, made for the big gates, but again they were shut and fastened. Three of the detectives helped the fourth to climb over the top, and he admitted the rest. They streamed across the yard and were followed by uniformed policemen.

Mike and his companions entered the warehouse, flashing electric torches about its darkness. A ray of light illuminated eareases hanging on hooks, and came to rest upon a Toledo weighing-machine, from the hook of which a human body was hanging. It was the dead body of Marino!

"Too late!" exclaimed a detective.

"I'll say we are," lamented Mike.

"That's Cookie's work," declared another, "and he must be in here, somewhere."

"He's in here all right," barked a third. "Come on!"

They proceeded through the packing department to the plainly furnished office, switching on lights as they went. The imitation safe door stood wide, and they plunged through the opening and mounted the stairs.

Outside the closed door above the stairs they stopped short. A thin line of light showed beneath the door—a tell-tale line of light.

"He's in here," whispered a detective triumphantly, and raised his voice. "Cookie," he shouted, "we've got you covered—come on out!"

"Come in and get me!" defied the voice of Cookie from Marino's sumptuously furnished room.



(Continued from page 2.)

The detective looked round at Mike—head of the Homicide Squad, but friend of Cookie.

"It's Cookie," he said. "We've got him cornered. Well, what are we going to do now, Mike?"

Mike was leaning gloomily against the wall, but at that challenge he stepped resolutely forward.

"There's only one thing to do," he said heavily. "We're cops, aren't we?" And he faced the door.

"Careful, Mike," warned one of the men. "He's got a typewriter—and he sure knows how to use it!"

"I know he does," responded Mike. And then: "Cookie! This is Mike. I'm coming in to get you!"

"You'd better not try it, Mike," warned Cookie.

But Mike had made up his mind, and nothing could stop him now.

"Here I come!" he announced, and with that he burst the door open and stepped into the big room.

Cookie was standing by Marino's desk with the portable machine-gun to his shoulder, but he did not fire. Instead, he grinned.

"Put that typewriter down, Cookie!" commanded Mike.

"All right, Mike," responded Cookie cheerfully, and laid the formidable weapon on the desk. "It's written the only name I ever wanted it to write," he said quite cheerfully, and advanced with outstretched wrists to be handcuffed.

As a result of the trial which followed some weeks later, Cookie was sentenced to be electrocuted. Money was not spared in his defence, and the plea was put forward that he had rid the city of a dangerous gangster; but neither the money nor the plea was of any avail: Cookie himself was a gangster, as the prosecution pointed out—and he had committed murder.

At a quarter to four on a brilliant summer morning Mike and Molly came to bid him a last farewell—he was to go to the electric chair at four o'clock. A warden admitted them to his cell, and Molly clung to him, weeping.

The warden appeared, and a priest, who was present, looked sadly at the condemned man. From the cell to the room of execution was only a little way down a wide corridor.

"Aw, cheer up, Mike!" said Cookie, holding his head erect. "It only happens once in a lifetime. All set, Father!"

"Oh, Cookie!" wept Molly. "What are you shaking for, baby?" said Cookie gruffly. "Come on—pull yourself together!"

He turned to the warden. "Say, how about that last request stuff?" he asked. "Does it still go?"

"Anything within reason," responded the warden, considerably moved by this pitiful leave-taking.

"These are two pals of mine," said Cookie. "We've been on many a march together. How about letting them walk with me—to that door? Just as far as that door?"

"I guess it'll be all right," was the reply.

"Thanks," said Cookie gratefully. "Come on, soldiers—we're holding up the parade!"

And so, with Mike on his right and Molly on his left, his arms round both their shoulders, Cookie marched bravely in his last parade.

(By permission of Columbia Pictures and United Artists' Corporation, Ltd., featuring Jack Holt, Constance Cummings, and Tom Moore.)

quick gun-work and excellent riding made him a big favourite with lovers of cowboy pictures. He had been a real cowboy at one time, and for some time after his temporary retirement from pictures he settled down on his ranch.

Then, following the example of a few other "old-timers," he returned to studio work, and before long will be seen by his many admirers in this country in "The Vanishing Legion." It is a twelve part all talking serial and the first in which he has appeared, for all his former plays were short, complete dramas. Among the cast will be Rex, the horse, and Frankie Darro, the popular juvenile player.

Answers to Questions.

Besides "Dynamite," in which you saw Charles Bickford, T.H. (Blackburn), he has also appeared in "Anna Christie" and "The Sea Bat." He was born in Cambridge, Ohio, and is 6ft. in height, with red hair and blue eyes. He began his screen career in 1928.

Here are two of the casts you want, D.S. (Bath). "Song of the West": John Boles (Stanton), Vivienne Segal (Virginia), Joe E. Brown (Hasty), Marie Wells (Lotta), Sam Hardy (Davolo), Marion Byron (Penny), Eddie Gribbon (Sergeant-major), Ed Martindel (Colonel), Rudolph Cameron (Singleton). "The Ship from Shanghai": Conrad Nagel (Howard Vazey), Kay Johnson (Dorothy Daley), Carmel Myers (Viola Thorpe), Holmes Herbert (Paul Thorpe), Louis Wolheim (Ted), Zeffie Tilbury (Lady Daley), Ivan Linow (Pete), Jack McDonald (Reid). Greta Garbe was born on September 18th, 1906, Conrad Nagel on March 16th, 1896 and John Boles on October 28th, 1900.

Yes, there are two artists on the screen named William Boyd, Arthur (Portsmouth). The one you saw in "The

First Command." is now known as Bill Boyd to save confusion with his namesake, who was for some years on the stage and not very long ago made his film debut in "The Locked Door." Bill Boyd was born in Cambridge, Ohio, on June 5th, 1898, is 6ft. in height and has blond hair and blue eyes. William Boyd, who does not give his age or birthplace, is 5ft. 10½ in. in height and has brown hair and blue eyes. Thanks for your appreciation of the "B.C." I hope your charm is now ordering it for himself, for I am glad to hear that he also likes it.

Only recent numbers of this paper are obtainable, J.N.V.R. (Mooreburg), as not more than three months' issues are kept in stock. The price of a single copy is 3d. post free, and you should write to the BOY'S CINEMA, Back Numbers Dept., Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. The cast of "The Blue Eagle" is as follows: George O'Brien (George D'Arcy), Janet Gaynor (Rose Cooper), Robert Edeson (Father Joe), William Russell (Big Tim Ryan), David Butler (Nick Galvani), Phillip Foyd (Limpy), Ralph Sipperly (Slate Mulligan), Margaret Livingston (Mary Rohan), Harry Tenbrook (Bascom), Lew Short (Captain McCarthy), Jerry, the Giant (Baby Tom). Among the films in which George O'Brien has appeared are "The Man Who Came Back," "Noah's Ark," "Blindfold," "Honour Bound," "Fair Warning," "The Last Warning" and "The Seas Beneath."

Though I am pleased to hear, Charlie (Graveley), of the successes you have scored in amateur plays produced locally, I fear you will find it extremely difficult just now to impress film producers. They are deluged week after week with applications from artistes who have professional experience and yet cannot get parts. However, if you like to try there are the British International Pictures Studios in Shenley Road, Flstree, Herts.

Yes, Buck Jones, you will be glad to know, Alice (London, E.), is still acting for the films. His latest films have appeared in the "B.C." in story form.

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PRICE 2d.

July 18th, 1931.

"BREED OF THE WEST."

(Continued from page 18.)

and not to fight. But Wally brought him to his knees with a shattering right, and, whining, the foreman held up his arm in a gesture of surrender.

Wally was aware of the sound of hoofbeats as he stood over Longrope, and guessed that the sheriff and his posse had arrived. Nor was he mistaken, for a few seconds later the officers of the law came tramping into the study.

The sheriff looked at the grovelling forms on the floor.

"Pretty nice bunch o' scum," he commented, and then, to the colonel: "Well, it don't look as though there's much left for me and the posse to do around here—except use the manacles."

"No, sheriff," old Sterner agreed. "I guess Wally has got the job pretty nearly finished."

The sheriff glanced sidelong at the young cowboy, who had moved over to where Betty was standing.

"That's the breed of the West, colonel," the sheriff drawled. "He'll make good at anything. All right, boys," he added to his deputies, "get these guys outa here. And say, colonel, are any more of your men mixed up in this?"

Old Sterner shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know," he answered. "After the eye-opener I've had with Longrope, I can expect almost anything. I had all the confidence in the world in Longrope."

"Well, 'twas misplaced," the sheriff observed. "He's been carryin' on a private business in cattle-rustlin' for a twelvemonth, and he's wanted for a killin'. But come on, colonel, let's go out and look over the rest of your hands."

The posse filed out with their prisoners, followed by the colonel and the sheriff. Wally and Betty were left alone, and there was none to see them when he took her in his arms and kissed her, for by that time the colonel and his companions were thirty or forty paces from the house.

Movements in the vicinity of the well attracted the colonel's attention, and, together with the sheriff and two or three of the posse, he made his way in its direction. Shorty was standing there with young Jim, and as the colonel and his party were drawing near a damp head came into view above the parapet. It was the head of Art, the first of Shorty's victims.

"Oh, how I'd like to sock you one," Shorty was wishing to say. "An' I'm gonna get my wish."

He punctuated the words with a stroke of the cudgel, and the head of Art dropped out of sight.

"Say, what you got down there, Shorty?" the sheriff inquired, striding to the little puncher's side.

"A quartet," was the answer. The sheriff looked puzzled.

"A quartet?" he echoed. "What kind of animal is that?"

"Have a look and see," Shorty advised, and the sheriff peered into the depths of the well and made out the

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figures of the four gangsters clinging to a rope from which a water-bucket was suspended.

They were raised by the winch, and reached firm ground both drenched and dazed, with not an ounce of resistance left in them; and some time later, with Longrope and his entire band of ruffians as captives, the sheriff and his posse set forth along the Anarillo trail.

Old Colonel Sterner watched them till a bend in the road took them out of his sight. Then he turned towards the ranch-house—and at the window of his study saw Wally and Betty in each other's arms.

A slow smile played around the rancher's mouth.

"Breed of the West," he murmured. "Yep, that boy Wally sure is."

(By permission of Filmophone Renters, Ltd., starring Wally Wales and Virginia Browne Faire.)

"SOUTH OF SONORA."

(Continued from page 24.)

"I've got him this time, Betty," panted Bill. "All the fight's knocked out of the skunk. Give me his belt, lass, and I'll strap his wrists against further mischief."

Then Bill brought his horse down the bank, and with Betty driving the buckboard, they retraced their steps. Not far did they go when a number of horse-men appeared, and Bill saw the sheriff and Heine Selnmultz.

"Your pal warned us," said the sheriff. "And I got my men hidden just in time. They walked straight into us, and when we appeared they gave in without firing a shot. Gee, so you've got Buck. Guess this will clear up rustling in the South of Sonora."

"Yeah, I just pops out and says 'Hands up,' and dem bad men looked plum scared," laughed Heine. "I could have done it all, but all them prisoners would have made for me much troubles."

"Like mo to relieve you of Buck?" grunted the sheriff. "I won't be happy till this bunch are in the lock-up."

"That suits me," cried Bill, and he gave Selnmultz a meaning glance. "You can go with them. I've got important business to talk with Miss Betty."

An hour later an infuriated Williams returned after a fruitless ride, but his scowls changed to smiles when he heard of the capture of the rustlers. When Bill put his arm round Betty and the girl smiled her happiness, the old man looked even more pleased.

"Say, Bill, I don't know what kind of pay they give in the Cattlemen's Association," he hinted, with a sly wink.

"But I'm needing a foreman and a deputy, and maybe we'd see you don't lose by it. Sonora needs you, son—and that includes the little man."

"The pay don't mean so much, boss," Bill looked down at the girl. "It's up to a certain young person whether I hand in my resignation and stay right here—or not."

Of course Bill Tracy stayed. (By permission of Butcher's Film Service, Ltd., featuring Buffalo Bill Jun. and Betty Joy.)

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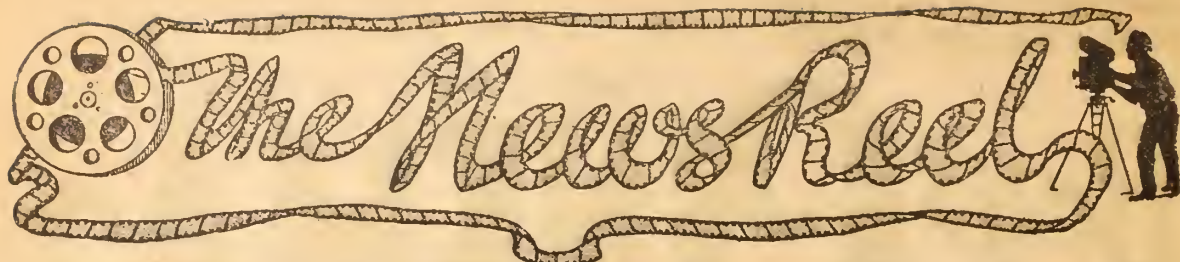
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story of
the Mounties.
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RIDERS OF THE NORTH



The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"Riders of the North."

Sergeant Ned Stone, Bob Custer; Ann, Blanche Mehaffey; Tim McGuire, Eddie Dunn; Tom, Buddy Shaw; Leclere, George Rigas; Inspector Devlin, William Walling; "The Parson," Frank Rice.

"The Midnight Special."

Gerald Boone, Glenn Tryon; Ellen Harboard, Merua Kennedy; Dan Paddon, Tom O'Brien; Mrs. Boone, Mary Carr; George Walton, Richard Kane; Billy Boone, Norman Phillips, junr.; Joe Lessing, Jimmy Aubrey.

"The Sunrise Trail."

Texas, Bob Steele; Goldie, Blanche Mehaffey; Kansas, Jack Clifford; French Sadie, Germaine de Neel; Raud Kennedy, Eddie Dunn; Sheriff, Fred Bunn.

"The Headless Man."

People in some of the streets of Los Angeles recently had the shock of their lives when they saw a headless man, walking nonchalantly along, carrying his head under his arm. When some of the feminine pedestrians felt on the verge of fainting from fright, the man turned about, and it was then seen that he had a big sign on his back which read:

"I Laughed My Head Off When I Saw Harold Lloyd in 'Feet First.'"

When people looked more closely they saw that the "head" which the man was carrying was made of papier mâché. His coat had been so made that the collar was level with the top of his head, and two small holes in the breast of his coat enabled the man to see where he was going.

To Film Bengal Tigers.

Ernest B. Schoedack is one of those men who love the jungle—for which picturegoers should be thankful. It was he who helped to film "Chang" during a stay of about eighteen months in a Siamese jungle, and later gave us "The Four Feathers," and more recently "Rango." For this last named picture he stayed over a year in the interior of Sumatra, where he risked his life repeatedly to obtain some amazing "shots" of tigers, apes, panthers, pythons and other jungle life for the film.

Now he has just set off again at the head of an expedition that will penetrate into the jungles of India. There, with sound cameras, he will conduct a hunt for Bengal tigers for the Paramount picture at present called "The Lives of a Bengal Lancer," and in which Clive Brook and Phillips Holmes will play the two principal dramatic rôles.

Car Crash at Dover.

Our British producers can, when required, stage a thrill just as effectively as their American colleagues. Mr. July 25th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S FOUR COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



BOB CUSTER

in

"UNDER TEXAS SKIES."

The girl owner of a horse ranch becomes the prey of a notorious band of rustlers, but a stranger comes to her aid and by amazing escapades turns the tables on her enemies.

"THE SPY."

A gripping drama of a young boy fighting to save his mother and father from the treachery of the secret police of their country. Starring Freddie Frederick, Kay Johnson and Neil Hamilton.

"FIREBRAND JORDAN."

The thrilling story of a daredevil ranger who is sent into the high Sierras to assist the local sheriff in capturing a mysterious band of counterfeiters. Featuring Lane Chandler, Sheldon Lewis and Yakima Canutt.

"MONSTERS OF THE DEEP."

The amazing exploits of a daring band of men in pursuit of the giant "devil" fish at Santa Margarita Island.

Walter Summers, of British International Pictures, is, for example, no new hand at the game of film thrills.

You will find a number of them in "The Flying Fool." Several, as the title implies, in the air, and one of the most recent, on the Dover road. It was on the last-named location that a Bentley car was sent crashing over a three-hundred foot cliff at St. Margaret's Bay.

The car, which had set up records on the Brooklands track, was secured, together with the services of two of Sir Henry Birkin's mechanics. To prevent the Bentley going off her course, a wooden track was laid down, as otherwise the lives of the cameramen, who stood at a vantage point for a close-up

upon the edge of the cliff, would have been in danger. The gears of the car were then locked, and the engine warmed up until, at the word "Go," its brakes were released and the Bentley roared along the track.

Even the watchers of the scene felt the thrill as the car, having attained a speed of 72 miles an hour, shot over the edge of the cliff with the straightness of an arrow in flight, and then fell 300 feet below with a great and glorious crash. This was filmed by a second cameraman, and the sound of the crash was also recorded.

Two days had to be spent in waiting for the weather to be fine for the taking of this scene. A re-take was impossible if anything went wrong. Then the sun came out from behind a bank of clouds, and the Bentley was sent racing on its last journey over the cliff.

A Lucky Six-Year-Old.

Just as Jackie Coogan put his feet on the road to fame and fortune by his appearance in "The Kid," so another Jackie, with the surname of Cooper, has done the same by his remarkable performance in "Skippy."

Jackie Cooper is six years of age, but already he is to be paid a salary far larger than that received by the Prime Minister of England. Jackie's first two years with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer will bring him the nice sum of £20,000, with a bonus of £800.

In one other respect, too, he will be following in the footsteps of Jackie Coogan, for Jackie Cooper is to appear in a new version of "Oliver Twist," which starred the other Jackie some years ago. Each year, too, Jackie Cooper will have a three months' holiday, as provided in his contract. Well, I won't blame any of you for envying him!

Spoilt By An Ear.

The following is vouched for as a true story, though it has been thought best not to disclose the actor's name. He has often been seen on the screen in leading rôles as a romantic lover. Though he appears to have a head of heavy, thick hair, he is in reality bald, and, furthermore, his ears stick out very prominently. But they do not do this in his pictures, for he keeps his ears back by flattening them against his head with a combination of putty and glue. This little trick has usually been a success.

When one of this actor's recent pictures was being shown privately in the studio theatre, he saw to his dismay that, just as he was taking the heroine in his arms, one of his ears became unstick and jumped outwards like a signal.

"Hang it," yelled the actor from his seat, "there goes my ear."

The scene had, of course, to be taken again.

(Continued on page 25.)

Fur stealing in the North-West and how the Royal Canadian Mounted Police set out to capture a desperate band of outlaws. Starring Bob Custer.



The Fur Thieves.

"HAPPY lot of boys, Jones. Suggests the hunting has been good!"

"Sure, sergeant!"

"Better ride down and follow them up a bit. I'll keep the top trail. Meet you later on."

Trooper Jones, of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, nodded and turned his horse from the edge of the cliff from which he and Sergeant Ned Stone had been watching.

Ned remained where he was for some minutes, listening eagerly enough to the musical voices of the happy go-lucky hunters who were canoeing their pelts towards the trading post.

There were two canoes, each of which contained two men. From his lofty perch, Ned could see the bundles of furs in the centres of the canoes—big bundles. He was too far up to recognise the returning hunters, but one of them, he could see, sported a big, black, pointed beard.

It was from his direction the most melodious singing came. His voice rose from the silvery lake, drifted through the softly murmuring pines, and gave added peace to the atmosphere of beauty and tranquility.

The work of the Mounted Police was not always pleasant, but in the present moment Sergeant Ned Stone found plenty to admire. The picturesque canoes, the fanciful clothes worn by the returning trappers, the gentle dipping of the paddles, the smell of the pines, and the singing all tended to the impression that here was nature at its very best.

It was with considerable reluctance that Ned turned his horse from the edge of the cliff and rode for the top trail down which he would slowly ride until he met Trooper Jones at the point where lower and upper trails met.

He did not know that he was being

watched—that a man whom he would have recognised instantly as Tim McGuire, from the trading post, was mounted, silent as a statue, behind a thick, tall bush. The moment Ned had turned, however, McGuire swung his horse and rode in the opposite direction to that taken by the Red Coat, stopped twice to look down upon the canoes, and broke into a gallop as the singing stopped to permit the trappers to exchange farewells.

"See you down at the post!"

"In five days!"

"S'long!"

"S'long!"

And the canoe which contained the big, bearded man and his companion was paddled towards the lake edge, grounded, and dragged up into the undergrowth.

The two men had not explained why they had come ashore, but those that had gone on were pretty sure of the reason. The trappers had hidden away some of their earlier pelts, and this was a vantage-point for landing and hiding their canoe until such time as the skins could be fetched and added to the number in the canoe.

But it was destined that the hunters should not get very far that day, for scarcely had they turned their backs to the lake than a quiet, laughing voice broke upon them.

"Put your hands up, my frien's—it ces so much better for you!"

In a moment the trappers had reached for the skies, and their startled, angry eyes were staring down the muzzle of a rifle held easily in the hands of a French-Canadian they knew as Leclerc.

"What game you play, Leclerc?" demanded the bearded man angrily. "We are in a hurry!"

"So are we, my frien's," said Leclerc. "It ces getting very near selling time, and we have not the number of skins

that we should like! Stand away from that canoe!"

The men obeyed—it was useless to argue. But their eyes burned fiercely as a man came from behind Leclerc and commenced pulling the skins from the canoe. It had taken them months of hard work and much travelling to obtain those skins, and the knowledge that they were being stolen from them just at a time when they were counting their profits was bitter.

"You cannot take them, Leclerc! We have just—" began the bearded hunter fiercely.

"No?" Leclerc laughed easily. "See—but I can! You take the rifle, my frien', and persuade our trappers to stay where they are for a few minutes—jus' while I show them that I can take the skins!"

And he laughed again as he handed over the rifle to his confederate, snatched at the bags containing the skins, and disappeared into the thick undergrowth.

He was still smiling as he burst into a hut that was half-hidden amidst the stately pines and flung the purloined skins into a far corner.

The hut was not empty. A youth was there, swaying unsteadily upon his feet, his face haggard and drawn, his eyes dulled by the amount of spirit he had consumed.

"I tell you I'm through with this!" he blurted out as Leclerc came in. "I did not know when I came out here that you and McGuire were thieves. You told me—"

"We told you that we knew where skins could be had for the peekin' up, my frien'," laughed Leclerc. "Well, is this jus' peekin' them up?"

"I'm through—I'm going back!" mumbled the youth. "The Red Coats are sure to find us one day—"

"Gettin' afraid, eh?" interrupted Leclerc.

Leclerc, and his eyes glistened. "We have a way of dealin' with—"

He broke off suddenly. From the distance sounded a shot, and an instant later there came the sharp snap of another shot. Then—silence.

"You heard that, Tom?" murmured Leclerc, a smile against the corners of his lips.

Tom scarcely seemed to hear. His dulled eyes were staring unblinkingly at the door, as though they would try and pierce the thick wood and ascertain exactly what had happened.

"They've—they've shot somebody!" he stuttered.

"Jus' two trappers who knew too much to be allowed to get away," commented Leclerc with a shrug of his shoulders. "Are you still leavin' us, Tom?"

Tom did not reply. He staggered to the table and gripped again the bottle from which he obtained so much mental relief. The spirit gave him courage, and Leclerc, watching him, half-closed his beady eyes as he saw Tom's lips setting obstinately.

"Yes, I'm through, and you are not going to stop me!" he snarled suddenly, and lurched towards the door.

But it was opened before he could reach it, and before even the watchful Leclerc could get there.

A moment later man and youth were staring at the red-coated form of Trooper Jones, of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

"I heard a shot—what's up?" demanded Jones truculently.

His keen eyes roamed from the occupants of the hut to the bags of pelts.

"I told you I'n through—I told you they would come!" almost howled Tom. "You can't take me! I wanted to break away—"

"Here, not so fast!" growled Trooper Jones, as he thrust the youth from the door. "These skins—where did you get them?"

"From leetle animals," said Leclerc, with an attempt at humour. "Nice leetle oblogin' animals—"

"Pretty good hunting for two!" commented Jones. "And what does the kid want to break away from—eh?"

The words stirred Tom into activity. With a rush he made for the door, but Trooper Jones settled him with one blow under the chin. His fist crashed home, brought up the youth with a jerk, and, before he could recover himself, another straight right on the point of his chin sent him spinning against the far wall of the hut.

Then his knees sagged, his head fell forward, and a moment later he was lying unconscious on the floor.

"That's him!" said Trooper Jones. "Now I guess you can start explaining how you got these skins—and what the boy meant when he said we were sure to come!"

Leclerc did not attempt to explain in words. He made one mad dash for the door.

He was in a different state to Tom, and the trooper's whirling fists were guarded and parried, and the two of them dropped into a clinch from which only one would emerge and be ready to continue the fight.

Backwards and forwards across the rough wooden floor of the hut the heavily booted men struggled in fierce embrace. A table tottered and almost fell; the bags of skins were kicked out of the way; an empty tin and a half-full bottle clattered and rang as Trooper Jones' spurred boots sent them flying to the side of the hut.

Their heavy, panting breathing

drowned the slight noise of the door being slowly opened, and neither of them saw the fur-hatted head of Tim McGuire peeping cautiously into the hut.

McGuire did not interfere, though his hand was resting upon the butt of his revolver. At the terrific pace the men were fighting there was no certainty of being able to bring down the red-coated enemy. He watched—ready to interfere the moment it was possible.

Leclerc began to gasp for breath—slowly but surely Trooper Jones was getting the mastery. None knew that better than Leclerc himself, and his wild, frantic eyes searched for a weapon.

His very expression brought McGuire half into the hut. If Leclerc was beaten, the game was up. But as if he sensed danger, Trooper Jones fought harder than ever to get in a knock-out blow.

He landed one fierce right under Leclerc's chin, and staggered his man with a second blow to the side of the head. Leclerc spun round dizzily, tottered a few inches, and fell across the table.

"Lay up, will you?" growled the trooper angrily. "You can't get away with this!"

Leclerc did not answer. He was panting for breath, dazed by the two quick blows, his eyes staring wildly with the indescribable expression of the hunted.

He moved his hands across the table—felt for and found the gun he had seen there a few moments before. McGuire saw the move and opened his lips to give a shout of warning.

But he was too late. There was a flash, a report that was thunderous in the confined area of the hut, and Trooper Jones sagged at the knees.

The men stared dully at him. They saw him move his hand feebly for his own gun, saw the hand drop as though numb to his side, and a moment later the hut shook under the crashing of his falling body.

"You blamed fool!" snarled McGuire. "I had the drop on him—I could have held him up whilst you roped him—you goldarned fool! Sergeant Stone is in the neighbourhood, too!"

Leclerc was ghastly to look upon. Great beads of perspiration were running from his forehead and cheeks. His hands trembled, his eyes looked as though they would drop from their sockets, his legs shook as if every ounce of strength had left him.

"It had to be. He knew—the kid tol' him!" he muttered.

"But he is a Red Coat, you tarnation fool!" fumed McGuire. "Ned Stone is with him; he will find him—and you!"

Leclerc grabbed at the spirit bottle and drank deep of its contents, his twitching hands fumbling to loosen his collar, as if he already were experiencing what he knew would be the consequences of his crime.

The Frame-Up.

A GROAN from the corner of the hut brought both men round with short gasps of alarm. They had forgotten the kid in the excitement of the fight.

It was McGuire who spoke first.

"The kid—he didn't see what happened!" he muttered. "He's half-ful of spirit—and it was with his gun you shot the Red Coat! Gee, you can thank your lucky stars, Leclerc!"

"How?" panted Leclerc. "Sergeant Stone will know—the Red Coats always got their men."

McGuire did not explain in words. He moved quickly to the table, upon which Leclerc had dropped his gun, and

in a moment he had seized it by its still warm barrel.

Leclerc watched him, fascinated, his eyes gleaming hopefully.

He saw McGuire steadily but firmly open Tom's nerveless fingers. He saw the butt of the revolver placed under the fingers, and saw them as firmly forced shut again.

"That's how you get out of it, Leclerc!" said McGuire easily. "Hi, kid! Wake up, kid—wake up!"

He slapped Tom's face, shook him, roared at him, literally forcing consciousness into his motionless form. Even then it was minutes before the eyes opened, to stare dully up at the fur thief, blink and close again.

"Wake—wake up!" growled McGuire. "Come on—see what you have done now!"

The words must have penetrated to the lad's muddled brain with some message of alarm, for he suddenly opened his eyes wide and gaped afresh.

McGuire was grinning at Leclerc, who was forcing a smile between his own quivering lips.

"You—you just did it fine, kid," said Leclerc, with an effort. "One minute th' Red Coat was for taking us all—the next, and hecs business was all over—one shot and you sent hecm long ways! But we are your friends—me and Tim McGuire—we shall help you much!"

For a moment Tom did not gather any meaning in the French-Canadian's rather excited words. To McGuire only was it obvious that the fur thief was anxiously waiting to see how Tom took the situation when it at last dawned upon him.

Tom was still dazed when he rose to his feet, and it was seconds before he became aware of the fact that he held a revolver in his right hand. He stared at it, tottering upon his feet under the influence of the potent spirit he had consumed.

"I—I—I don't remember this," he muttered.

"Nor that?" said McGuire, indicating the still form of the Red Coat.

Crash! The moment Tom caught a full view of the shot officer, the pistol crashed to the wooden floor, his nerveless fingers refusing to grip it a second longer.

"I—I—I don't remember!" he stammered again. "I did hit him—he hit me—I know that. But—but—but—"

"You've got to get out of here before Ned Stone comes around," urged McGuire. "Pull yourself together, kid. Get out of here right now—and stay out! We'll help you all we can—we are your friends. And we've got to get out quickly, too—it won't do for any of us to be here when Sergeant Stone rides in. Get going, Leclerc!"

Leclerc was all for that. Without another glance at the youngster they had framed, he shot out of the hut door and disappeared in the thick undergrowth of the lakeside forest.

There was a famous tradition in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that they always got their man. This time they would get Tom—and getting him meant their losing the right man. That, however, did not trouble Leclerc nearly so much as an overwhelming anxiety to put as much ground between himself and the hut before Ned Stone got busy.

McGuire slid off in the opposite direction, and, forming the point of the triangle, as it were, Sergeant Ned Stone was standing alone, looking down upon the recumbent forms of two shot trappers.

He remembered the big man with the

black beard—it was one of the canoe party he had watched earlier on.

Something of the tremendous respect that existed amongst the somewhat wild trappers of the North-West could be found in the mask-like inscrutability with which Ned Stone carried out his examination.

His eyes never blinked, and not for a single moment was he hasty of hand or foot. He moved around the shot men as steadily as if he were inspecting a parade of his troopers.

From below came the whisper of the waters as they lapped at the edge of the lake. From around him issued a murmur of a gentle breeze threading its way through the tall, stately pines. Above him shone a steady sun, shedding a welcome warmth over what should have been one of the most peaceful parts of the wonderful North-West.

But here there was tragedy. Weeks and weeks of hard work had these men put in. Danger after danger had been faced to get these pelts. Having secured them, within a few miles of a reward for their labours, they had been mercilessly shot down for the sake of the few dollars they would bring in to a band of relentless fur thieves.

The sergeant's keen eyes surveyed the ground straight ahead—tracks of the thieves were easily discerned. Without another glance at the silent forms, he secured his horse, mounted, and rode steadily on the track.

It was only a matter of minutes before he came into view of the hut, and, observing what had already happened to the trappers, Ned thought it wise to dismount and approach the hut cautiously.

He had his hand on his gun as he walked with steady deliberation towards the hut, and his hand tightened involuntarily as there came to his ears the sound of crashing glass.

The door of the hut was opened—evidently he had been seen approaching, and the killer or killers had gone out another way. Throwing caution to the wind, Ned broke into a run, his gun ready. He meant to fire first and ask questions afterwards.

But after the crash of the glass there was not a sound to be heard above the slight noise his own running feet made. A horse, tethered on his right, shifted noiselessly a few inches, and remained still. It did not need Ned Stone's second glance to tell him that it was Trooper Jones' horse—the official saddle and accoutrements were obvious. And again, when Ned Stone had stepped steadily into the silent hut, there was not a muscle of his face moved to show the sudden jerk at his heart as he saw that the solitary occupant was Trooper Jones.

His keen eyes just scintillated with a bitterness no words could describe. No examination was necessary to tell him that Trooper Jones had shared the fate of the luckless trappers down by the lake-side.

Ned Stone stood still for a full minute, surveying the hut—noting the position of the table, the bottle and tin on the floor—and the gun with which the murder had been committed.

Bags of skins on the hut floor told their own tale. There were far too many pelts there to have been secured by any one trapping party. Trooper Jones had run down the fur thieves every officer in the police knew were at work, and he had paid for the discovery with his life.

Ned's chin jerked out aggressively, and his lips and eyes took on a steely expression that would have struck terror into even McGaire's heart had he been there to see it.

Slowly, Ned stooped down, and picked up the gun by the extreme tip of the barrel. The butt was sticky with fast drying spirit, and upon it, drying clearly, were finger-prints. It was the work of a moment to wrap the evidence in his pocket handkerchief and tuck it into his capacious pocket.

The bottle and the tin were unmarked save by sawdust with which the greater part of the floor was littered. But the broken window brought to light what was to Ned, quite the most valuable information.

The very size of the gash in the broken frame told him that the killer had recklessly thrown himself clean through, and upon one of the jagged pieces of glass that remained in the frame, was a strip of the cloth at least four inches long and nearly two inches wide.

His eyes were glistening as he gingerly removed it, carefully wrapped it up, and stowed it into his pocket. If the waistcoat from which it had been torn was ever worn again, Sergeant Ned Stone knew the most skilled worker with a needle in the whole of the West could never entirely succeed in hiding such a rent.

The last evidence of any value at all

was a piece of paper, also sticky with fast drying spirit, and upon that also were finger prints. It remained to be seen whether those prints came from the same hand that had handled the gun.

It was when that, too, had been carefully tucked away in his red tunic pocket that Sergeant Ned Stone spoke. And his words, had they been heard by the unfortunate Jones, were exactly what he would have expected.

"I guess I'll get him, Jones!"

That was all.

Two minutes later he was riding hard down the trail towards headquarters.

The Fugitive Returns.

IT was not until he had made his report to Inspector Devlin, that Sergeant Ned Stone felt himself at liberty to take a few hours off.

The news he had brought had sent a feeling of grim anger through the whole of the depot, from the inspector down to the newest recruit.

"I'm going to leave the trail to you and Trooper Martin, Ned," said the inspector. "You knew Jones pretty well, didn't you?"

"He was my friend, sir," said Ned, simply. "With your permission, we will miss every other duty until we have got the man who killed him."

"Sure," agreed the inspector. "It was bad enough to find the two trappers, but Jones—well, he was a constable, Ned."

Ned nodded grimly.

"He was more than that, sir," he said. "He was my friend. I will have a chat with Trooper Martin, and together we shall doubtless form some plan by which we can work. I said I would get the killer, sir—and I shall."

A quick salute, and he was outside Devlin's office, his usual quiet self, but with tight lips that told of the grim purpose that was in his mind.

He wanted to think. He wanted time to formulate a plan that would enable him to trap the man from whose waistcoat there had been torn that pre-



"You cannot take them, Leclerc—we have just——" began the bearded hunter fiercely.

July 25th, 1931.

cious strip of cloth. It was no light task he had been given.

Much happened in the pine forests that was never fully explained. Dozens of men moved in their depths, and practically any one of the dozens could have been responsible for the death of Trooper Jones—if they had anything they wanted to hide. They were all hard men of the North-West to whom life meant hunting and a few dollars, and death just no hunting and no need for dollars. That was all.

He was still thinking hard when he drifted into the store kept by Timothy McGuire—a store which was also the Trading Post saloon and the place where skins were bought and sold every day of the season.

He found McGuire resplendent in a new lounge suit, which he correctly guessed was bought for the sole purpose of creating an impression with Ann, the pretty cashier. In addition to the new suit, McGuire had a new hard felt hat which was at once the pride of his life, and the source of endless amusement to the rough and ready trappers.

"So you're back, McGuire?" said Ned breezily. "Had a good trip?"

"Very good—all my boys have worked wonders," said McGuire easily. "Eleven thousand dollars worth of pelts, sergeant. Not too bad for one season!"

"A very good season," agreed Ned quietly, and with a nod, passed on to the railed off desk at which sat Ann.

McGuire watched them uneasily. Despite his blasé, debonair manner, McGuire had an instinctive fear of the quiet, grim sergeant of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. And even the elevating effects of his brand new suit and his neat hard hat, had not brought him the slightest impression that Ann preferred his company to that of the red coated officer.

He watched them as they met, noted the quick handshake, and Ann's readiness to leave her work and allow him to escort her home was not lost upon him. He was still watching them from the window of his store when she opened the door of her hut, walked in, and with a single nod of her head, invited the sergeant to follow her. That was something she had never done for McGuire, in spite of his many pressing entreaties for permission so to do.

"Sergeant Stone's back," came in a quiet voice at his elbow.

McGuire merely nodded. He knew that.

"Is that all you have to say?" he demanded truculently.

"Yes—and no," was the answer. "There's a fellow called 'The Parson' knocking around. Bit of a tough. Wants to join the gang."

"Know anything about him?" asked McGuire, with interest.

"Not much."

"Huh! We'll see."

McGuire was cautious. Willing hands were none too plentiful, so far as joining his gang were concerned. But—McGuire had very much of a conscience just now.

Everybody was a subject of suspicion. It was that grim, disinterested expression of Sergeant Stone's that worried him.

What did he suspect? What was he doing? Was he on the trail with the traditional sagacity of the Force?

But the night passed off quietly enough, and the next day McGuire saw Ned Stone and Trooper Martin take the trail out of town.

Two weeks went by before anything of even passing interest took place. Neither Leclere, Tom, nor Sergeant

Stone had been seen during that time, and McGuire was beginning to hope that he had seen the last of all of them.

He had his gang in a small room in the saloon hut, firstly with the idea of getting them on to some "business," but more particularly to warn them to keep well away from the old quarters far up the lake, when there came the commencement of a series of incidents that deprived Timothy McGuire of quite a deal of his serenity.

The door of the saloon was suddenly flung wide open, and a dishevelled, panting, staring man dashed in.

"The Red Coat is after me—hide me!" he gasped.

"What's the matter?" demanded McGuire quickly.

"Just nothing—only bumped a guy off up the trail; but slip me away, can't you!" snarled the stranger. "If I get gunning, somebody besides Red Coats qualifies for a funeral! You got some hiding-place here, ain't you?"

McGuire thought quickly. Gunmen were scarce in his gang, and with Leclere and Tom still away he was two men short.

He pushed the stranger into his own private room, and closed the door before moving to the window to satisfy himself that a Red Coat was indeed on the stranger's trail.

He had just time to slip back to his chair when the door was pushed quickly open, and in walked Sergeant Stone.

Ned looked keenly at the men grouped about the room before he spoke.

"Any strangers about, McGuire?" he asked quietly.

"Not a guy!" said McGuire, with a shrug of his shoulders. "This post is getting so goldarned lonely and un-interestin', sergeant, we're thinking of moving up earlier. Sure to get a bit of excitement in the forest, at any rate."

"Sure!" agreed Ned, moving slowly towards the private room. "I was trailing a guy a few minutes ago; he made for your place, Mac. Couldn't have slipped in without your knowing it?"

"Think he's under the floor?" sneered McGuire. "That's my private room, Sergeant Stone, and the only way into it is through this saloon. There ain't been a soul in this last two weeks! You don't think I'd hide up a feller from the police, do you?"

Ned Stone laughed.

"Of course not, Mac!" he said. "Sorry I interrupted your business. I'll see you later."

And with that he went; but it was only to stand just outside the door.

He heard a subdued rumble of laughter, and McGuire's sneering voice.

"And they always get their men!"

The remark, for some reason best known to himself, made Ned Stone smile. The rumbling laughter had grown into a roar at McGuire's words, and it was ringing in Ned's ears as he made his way to the depot office to report. But he did not seem to mind.

In the saloon one of McGuire's oldest gangsters sidled up to him.

"That feller is 'The Parson,'" he mumbled. "If he's bumped a guy off up the trail, he might be glad to make up one of the number."

McGuire nodded, and it was he who opened the door of the private room.

"Come on out, you!" he snapped. "The Red Coat has gone!"

The Parson came out, his face surly, unshaven, and dripping with perspiration.

"I sure ain't foot-hoofed it so fast for years!" he grumbled. "And just

because a guy happened to get in my way on the trail. Say, here's the swag, boys. Better split it!"

McGuire saw to that. He took the little cloth bag which the thief dropped on to the table, glanced through the notes that it contained, and carelessly dropped it into his own pocket.

"That goes to the next share-out!" he said coolly, and swung round like lightning as the door was slowly pushed open a few inches.

But it was not Ned Stone returning. It was Leclere!

The French-Canadian came in when he saw the coast was clear and quickly closed the door.

"Leclere, you goldarned fool!" snarled McGuire. "What have you come back here for?"

"Why not?" asked Leclere lightly. "You have nothin' on me, my friend! I have been in the saloon, and nobody there has anythin' on me, either! Even Miss Ann was glad to see me!"

"Ann? What have you told her?" demanded McGuire.

"Joost nothing!" said Leclere, with a smile and a shrug of his broad shoulders. "She asked me about her brother, but I joost tell'er that he was on a trip and would be back shortly. But never mind then, McGuire. When do we start up the lake?"

McGuire pulled himself together. The arrival of Leclere brought back rather startling memories of what had happened the last time they met, and with those thoughts and the knowledge that Sergeant Stone was also back, McGuire felt distinctly uneasy.

He would have been more uneasy still had he been at the back of the hut in which lived Ann and her Indian servant.

But at the very moment Leclere was letting himself into the room at the post, Tom was tapping gently at the window.

Ann looked round, expecting to find the ever-pressing McGuire peering through the glass. But it was not McGuire.

"Tom!"

"Let me in—quickly!" came in Tom's thin, gasping tones. "Quickly, Ann!"

It was the work of a moment to get the window open wide enough to admit the lad, but it took the startled girl and the Indian squaw half a minute more to get Tom into a chair. He was covered with dust and dirt, and he was limping. But that was not all. He was quivering as though every nerve was crushed.

"Tom—why have you come back like this?" panted Ann.

"The police ar after me! You must hide me!" he exclaimed. "I have seen Stone on my trail day after day, night after night. He's never been more than half a mile from me! I gave him the slip—"

"But—but why?"

"It's McGuire—and Leclere—they're the fur thieves who have been working up the lake. I didn't know they were thieves when I went with them—honest, I didn't, Ann! And—and I—"

"I will tell Ned Stone—he will understand." Ann could have cried with the shame of it all. "You'll—you'll have to face your punishment; but they'll only send you away for a few weeks. Even that's better than being hunted day and night, Tom—"

"They don't send men to prison for— for shooting a constable!" gulped Tom, and with the confession out his last grip on his shattered nerves went. He flung up both hands to grasp his sister by the arms. "Ann—you must hide me!"

They're after me, I tell you! I don't know what happened exactly—I had been drinking; and—and they told me I shot him!"

"Huh!" It was a grunt from the squaw. "He tired. Me hide him. He rest, then go. Me hide him!"

Ann could only nod her thanks. Her mind was bewildered by the tragic return of her brother and his confession. All her first thoughts of getting Ned Stone to plead for a light sentence for his association with the fur thieves had gone.

Tom had to be hidden until he was well enough to take a horse and ride away until the shooting of Trooper Jones had entirely blown over. Ned Stone had to be avoided—a fact which gave Ann almost as much dismay as was the realization that it was her own brother who had shot the constable.

But it had to be faced. The squaw would not allow a single word to escape her concerning Tom's return. If, between them, they could keep Tom in hiding until he was rested, there was still a chance that he would get away.

A Shock for Ned Stone.

SERGEANT NED STONE was at the store the next evening when it was Ann's time for going home. Leclerc was also there, but to him Ned gave nothing but a casual glance and an even more casual greeting.

"Going home, Ann?" asked Ned lightly.

"Yes." Ann's voice was hesitant, but it was no good trying to put off Ned Stone. She had to allay any suspicions he might have, not arouse them.

In a few moments more they were walking across the rough trail between the huts that McGuire called a street.

"Seen anything of Tom lately?" asked Ned suddenly.

"No. Leclerc said he was on a trip and would be back shortly," said Ann uneasily. "I—I—I wish he had not gone up the lake, Ned."

"Funny I haven't seen anything of him," commented Ned, as he opened the door of her hut. "I have been on the trails around the parts he was last working, but I did not catch a single glimpse of him. But if he is making good, you've nothing to worry about, Ann. Trappers and fur hunters often get more or less lost for weeks on end, you know."

"Yes—I know."

"You're looking as though you'd seen a ghost, these last few days," went on Ned. "Guess you'd better be thinking of a trip up town, Ann. It would do you good."

Ann could only nod. She was finding all her work cut out not to shriek at him to get out. The very sight of his red tunic struck terror into her heart.

She mumbled an excuse about changing her clothes and went out of the living-room, with the squaw at her heels.

And it was then that Ned Stone got the shock of his life.

He was standing by the table, thoughtfully tapping it as he considered the advisability of urging the obviously seedy Ann to take a trip up town, when his eyes caught sight of needle-work that had evidently been receiving recent attention.

Across the top of a chair was a man's waistcoat—in itself a curious thing to find in a hut occupied only by a girl and an Indian squaw. But that was not all.

It was the fact that the waistcoat had been receiving a big patch that attracted Ned Stone.

His lips came together in their customary grim line as he picked up the garment and stared thoughtfully at it. It was of the same material as the strip he had taken from the jagged window of the hut in which Constable Jones had been shot!

Ned's brain worked quickly.

Back in the inspector's office was the strip. It would take him but a few minutes to go and get it. If it fitted the tear which had been in the course of repair, he would have something very tangible upon which to work.

He was standing by the door a second later, for from the other end of the hut there had come the sound of a closing door. Ann was returning.

She came in, trying to force a smile upon lips that would persist in quivering with nervous apprehension, and behind her came the squaw.

"If you will excuse me to-night, I won't stop for a meal," said Ned at once. "I've got a little job I want to do. You don't mind?"

Ann shook her head in almost fierce relief, and she could have cried out in her joy as the door closed upon him. But her joy was shortlived, for within seconds Tom had come into the room from the back.

His eyes were almost dropping from their sockets in excitement as he grasped her wildly by the shoulders.

"Ann, I was watching by the window—he saw my waistcoat!" he panted. "I tell you I might just as well give myself up right now—they always get their men! He's trailing me right here! I tell you—"

"Sh'sh!"

It was a warning hiss from the squaw, and to the shattered nerves of Ann and her brother it was like the hiss of escaping steam.

The warning was timely, for without any preliminaries the door was again

opened, and Sergeant Ned Stone stood in the aperture.

"I left my glove!" he said, breezy as he usually was in her company. "Hallo—a visitor, Ann!"

"Yes—no!" panted Ann. "Not a visitor exactly—it's my brother Tom!"

Ned Stone laughed as he stooped and picked up the glove he had dropped, and slowly put it on as he stood by the table.

"Why—of course!" he said. "Darned silly of me. How do, Tom?"

In a moment Tom was gripping the gloved hand of the man who had been trailing him on the north trails for days past, but there was nothing in Stone's manner to suggest that he was aware of the fact.

Men of the North-West, when they shook hands, gripped hard, and Tom's grip was hard enough to bring a smile to the grim lips of the sergeant. But the moment their hands parted, it was Tom's lips that parted.

For the tips of his fingers were covered with grease.

"Now I guess that's real downright careless of me!" said Ned Stone, with a laugh that struck at their icy hearts as no blow with a fist could have done. "I must have rubbed my glove in the butter! I'm awfully sorry, Ann—"

Ann could only nod, and she could do nothing but nod when he went to the door, bade them a breezy "good-night," and passed out into the darkness.

But the moment he had gone, Tom jerked himself into activity.

"That was a ruse!" he exclaimed feverishly. "He's got my finger-prints now! Ann—I must have money—clothes—food! I must get away! He'll be playing more tricks to-morrow—I'll never get a dog's chance if I don't move now."

Ann shook her head.

"They'll get you, Tom," she said slowly. "Look here, I'm going to tell Ned Stone about the fur thieves if

"That's how you get out of it, Leclerc!"
said McGuire.



McGuire doesn't get you out of this! You stay here, Tom—I'm going to see McGuire right now!"

With her mind made up, Ann felt better. She was at least doing something. Perhaps, in spite of the evidence Ned Stone had collected, McGuire could help her brother out of the trouble. She could make him swear that the boy was miles away from the spot at the time of the shooting.

She burst into the saloon in a manner that had the men's hands darting for their guns, and their relief was shown in a series of gasps as she flung the door to and placed her back against it.

"McGuire—Tom has come back, and he's told me of your thieving operations!" she gulped out. "You're going to get him out of this!"

"If young Tom has been mixed up with a fur gang, I'll sure do my best for him," said McGuire, his beady eyes narrowing. "He's my friend, ain't he? And yours, Leclerc? You'll help?"

"Sure ting I will," agreed Leclerc. "But joost how do we help?"

"You'll help, or I'll tell all I know to Ned Stone!" said Ann fiercely. "You led him into this trouble, and you're going to lead him out of it! And I'm through, too, at the store, McGuire. I'm not staying on with a gang of fur thieves."

"Here—not so fast, young woman!" said McGuire, and with a sudden movement he had shot his bulky person between her and the door. "You are going to squawk to nobody—you're going to stay right here until you come back to your senses—"

"Here! Reach for the skies—up with 'em—quick!"

The interruption came in the snappy, crisp tones of a man who meant business, and McGuire's hands were the first to point to the roof of the saloon. The others obeyed more slowly, but just as certainly—and the whole gang found themselves staring down the steady barrel of the Parson's gun.

"I ain't no particular hobo!" said the Parson quietly. "But I jist can't stand by and see a lady man-handled! Missy, I guess these boys are standing quite still until you git right out into better air—ain't you, boys?"

They did not answer in words, but it looks could have done the work of guns, the Parson would have been needing the services of the very man after whom he was so ridiculously nicknamed.

Ann gave the Parson one flecting, grateful glance, and ran out of the saloon. She did not wait to see the Parson follow her, his gun still covering the gang, neither did she hear the key turned in the lock from the outside.

But she heard the Parson dash out into the darkness, and her gratitude to him was increased when she realised that this one act would result in the Parson being chased out of the trading post for all time.

She dashed back to her hut, wherein the anxious Tom was walking the floor like a caged animal.

"You saw him—he's going to help me?" he exclaimed, even before she had closed the door.

"Ho wanted to keep me until he could make his own plans!" said Ann breathlessly. "Oh, Tom, what are we going to do! I want you—"

"And so do I!" came in Sergeant Ned Stone's cool voice at their backs.

They swung round upon him, startled—erushed. There was no more mercy on Ned's set face than could have been found on a graven image.

"I want you for the murder of Trooper Jones," he went on grimly. "We have a strip torn from your waistcoat when you bolted through the

window, we have a card bearing finger-prints, and we have finger-prints on the butt of the gun with which he was shot. We also have your finger-prints, which I got on my glove to-night. They all tally. You'd better come over with your story, Tom."

"He didn't shoot him! Tom, you didn't shoot the constable;" blurted out Ann.

"I—I—I don't remember anything about it!" muttered Tom, and shot one appealing glance at Ned Stone, and added viciously: "You Riders of the North ought to be called Bloodhounds of the North—"

"That's quite enough for the time being, Ann. I'm sorry, but that constable was my friend," said Ned quietly. "Get his hat."

Ann obeyed dully. The chase was over.

Once again the Mounted had got their man.

Still on the Trail.

IN the saloon there was nothing but alarm, fear, and dismay.

It was McGuire who shot the lock clean off the door within a couple of minutes of the Parson's departure.

"There'll be squawkin' in these parts in less than an hour!" he grated.

"Those who don't think they can face Sergeant Ned Stone and his goldarned questions—get out and stop out!"

Leclerc was the first to go. He shot through the door, pausing only to snatch up his rifle, and disappeared into the night. No word was passed where the gang was to meet again. They all knew that.

But for the time being the only thing that mattered was a get-away.

McGuire himself made a dive for his private room. He, for one, was not stopping to face Ned Stone's questioning—and that would be inevitable now that Ann had been freed by the Parson.

He grabbed at a bag, snatched open the door of his crude safe, and commenced to jam into the bag all the dollars he could find, and all the papers he felt it would be foolish to leave behind for future police investigation.

And he was well into the middle of his task when the door was suddenly flung open, without there being any warning footsteps on the stairs without, and Ned Stone was staring down at him.

"Not going to leave us so suddenly, Mac?" said Ned coolly.

"Just putting away a few dollar bills, that's all," growled McGuire. "What's the matter with you, sergeant, jumpin' in on a feller like this?"

"We want you for a bit, Mac," said Ned calmly. "There's a little matter of fur thieving been going on around your part of the forest, and we're investigating. You're coming along to see the inspector!"

"I sure ain't doin' nothin' of the kind!" almost howled McGuire. "You ain't got nothin' on me, sergeant!"

It took Ned Stone about three minutes with his fists to convince McGuire that his presence was really necessary at the depot, and, just to prevent any sudden effort on McGuire's part to make a break for freedom, a pair of handsome handcuffs were planted over his wrists. They gave McGuire a nasty, cold feeling down the middle of his back, and even the new suit and hard hat could not bring to him that jauntiness with which he had gone through the last few weeks.

He spent the night in a cell next to that occupied by Tom, and the experience was not a pleasant one to a man who had rather a grim notion that he was going to see nothing else but prison cells for a long time.

Ned Stone was not to be seen, for the simple reason that he had mounted and taken the north trail in search of McGuire's friend Leclerc.

Leclerc was not mounted—so much Ned had ascertained as soon as dawn had turned the skies grey.

The early sun shone upon Ned Stone's grim face as he rode out on Leclerc's trail. He was still not satisfied, although he had got the leader of the fur thieves in Tim McGuire. Leclerc had been associated with McGuire for many years past—and Leclerc had not returned until just about the same time as had Ann's brother Tom.

There might be a connection there, and the first link was getting Leclerc himself.

It did not occur to Ned Stone that Leclerc might also be looking for him, but even if he had thought of it, it was extremely unlikely that the dogged, fearless, relentless Rider of the North would have turned off the trail for a single second.

But the fact became apparent when, through the bushes some way ahead, he caught a glimpse of the many-coloured patchy trousers Leclerc invariably wore.

At the same moment the sun glinted upon the levelled barrel of a gun—but Ned did not hear the report. In a moment he was falling heavily from his horse, over the cliff edge, and down to the bottom of the high banking to the level ground below. There, crumpled into a shapeless form, he laid still.

Leclerc gave an exultant shout of joy, and his heavily-booted feet pounded over the ground to enable him to see the better how great a shot he really was.

"You joost can't win every time," he laughed. "You should have left us alone, you pig-dog fool! The day had to come when you would meet your master!"

And he aimed a vicious kick at the sprawling sergeant by way of emphasising his remarks.

Something happened—he never knew exactly how it happened or what did happen. All he realised was that his foot never reached the red tunic, but that it was seized in a grip of steel and wrenched sideways and upwards.

In a flash he was on the ground, his rifle flying from his hand as he fell. In another split second he felt as if his life was being crushed and beaten out of him, and a dazzlingly bright red tunic was whirling and twisting in front of his dazed, staring eyes.

He fought back with the instinct of the true man of the north-west. His fists went backwards and forwards like flails, but they never seemed to connect with any vital spot on that ever restless tunic.

Twice he snapped back his head as a fist crunched upon the point of his own jaw, and once he emitted a squealing gasp as a terrific something caught him full over the heart.

Fear lent him strength—fear of this dreaded sergeant who fought so unflinchingly, so noiselessly, with such relentless resolution. But all the fear in the world, and all the strength that might have conjured up, could not bring home to him the thought that he was winning the fight.

His gun was gone—out of reach. Man to man he was no match for the sergeant, and he knew it.

Sweat poured down his face, his neck, and his chest. Blow after blow came under his guard or around it, and smashed into his body and face. And only now and again did he get a fleeting glance at the white, set face above a red tunic.

Blindly he struck out in one furious effort to land at least one telling blow

that would get the sergeant out for sufficient time for him to get at the police horse. Two hands went out afterwards to secure a choking grip.

But his hands were beaten aside, and in a flash a great bunched fist had come like a streak of lightning and connected with the point of his jaw.

He knew nothing more for twenty seconds, and by the time he had gathered some of his scattered senses, it was to find a pair of steely blue handcuffs locked upon his wrists.

"You joost ain't got nothin' on me—on'y the shootin' joost now!" panted Leclerc, as he staggered to his feet.

"I've got so little on you, my friend, that you think it necessary to have a pot at me!" grunted Ned. "Lay up the jaw-wagging, and get moving!"

And that was how Leclerc came to join the others at the depot.

But still Ned was not finished. He had certain definite ideas of his own to work out yet.

It may have been because of that that Tim McGuire was taken into the inspector's office soon after Leclerc had been brought in.

The one-time jaunty saloon proprietor was urged into a chair beside the inspector, who was, at that moment, busily writing.

From the wall ticked a clock with a tick that was more like the beating of a horse's hoof upon the hard trail above the lake. From the inspector's desk came the scratching, scratching of a pen that only ceased for the split second it took the officer to dip the pen into the ink-well. Then scratch, scratch, and a ceaseless, heavy tick, tick, tick.

The noises got on McGuire's nerves, and he turned pleadingly towards the inspector.

"You wanta jaw-crack with me?" he asked.

The inspector did not even look up, and the scratching went on with what was to McGuire renewed ferocity.

Suddenly there was a different sound—it clapped like thunder in McGuire's ears. But it was merely a piece of paper

being crunched up in the inspector's hand. Then scratch, scratch, tick, tick, tick. Nerve-wracking to the man who was already panting and gasping to know how many dangerously awkward questions were going to be fired at him.

Beads of perspiration came upon McGuire's forehead, and were wiped away. Ten minutes later the performance had to be repeated—and two solid hours went by. He was getting soaked in sweat and could relieve only the face and eyes with a handkerchief. And still the wracking, splitting, deafening noise of pen and clock worked at his rapidly fraying nerves.

He almost gasped with joy when there came to his ears the steady patter of approaching feet. But they went into the distance, and again there was only the ticking of the clock and the scratching of the pen.

"You killed him!" suddenly barked out the inspector.

"I didn't!" gulped McGuire.

"Didn't kill whom?" thundered the inspector.

McGuire choked back something in his throat. He scarcely knew whether to speak or not. His head was bursting with the din of those noises, but his scattered senses were still not scattered enough to prevent him from realising that he was being subjected to a mild form of third degree.

Again there came the sound of those marching feet, and this time they came into the office.

Weakly McGuire looked up, and found himself staring at the Parson. But what a difference in the man to the last time they had met!

The Parson had then been unshaven, dirty, dishevelled—quite cheerily holding the whole gang up at the end of his gun. Now he was sporting the smart uniform of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Only one glance did the Parson give his late associate.

"Leclerc's confession, sir!" said Trooper Martin, alias the Parson.

As though he had been struck with a knife, McGuire was upon his feet.

"What's he said?" he shouted wildly. "If he's put me in it, he's double crossing! He shot the constable—I saw him! I never got a drop on the Red Coat! Leclerc is trying to save his own neck if he says I was in it—that I—"

The inspector rose grimly, the sheet of paper in his hands.

"Read it—you will then know all about it!" he said curtly.

Almost dazed beyond comprehension, weakened by the last sweating hours, crushed by the sudden appearance of the Parson, and staggered by the knowledge that not only had Leclerc been brought in, but had confessed, Tim McGuire took the paper.

It was blank!

"It's a trick!" he gulped. "You played a trick—just to get me to speak."

"And you spoke," said Inspector Devlin with a chuckle. "Sergeant Stone thought that perhaps you would, Tim McGuire. We know now all we want to know—we have got the fur thieves, and we have got the man who shot Constable Jones. You can get back to your cell—and have a good look at it, McGuire. You're sure gonna have a chance of making a study of prison cells during the next few years!"

With a groan that was complete submission, Tim McGuire moved towards the door. And, by the irony of Fate, in so moving he crushed the one remaining thing of which he could be proud—the hard felt hat he had lately worn so jauntily.

But he did not trouble—he was past all care. Trooper Martin, however, picked it up and set it at quite a new angle upon the prisoner's head.

"And that man I bumped off on the trail," said the Parson cheerfully, "that was also a trick of the sergeant's. I tell

(Continued on page 15)



"I left my glove," he said. "Hallo—a visitor, Ann?"

Train wreckers after bullion—a young railway operator blamed for their dastardly deeds—his kid brother fighting to clear his name. A thrilling railroad drama, starring Glenn Tryon and Merna Kennedy.



The MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

Bitter Disappointment.

AND you say, mother, that no invitation has come for me from Ellen? Well now, if that isn't just too bad!"

An affectionate good-bye to the grey-haired old lady at the other end of the wire, then the receiver of the wall telephone was slammed back on its hooks with unnecessary violence.

No invitation to the birthday party of the girl he adored, and which was being held that night. It really was too bad, and Gerald Boone, chief operator at the railroad station in the little western town of Burke, a pleasant-faced young man with clear grey eyes and a mass of wurlly jet-black hair, dropped dejectedly into the swivel chair at the flat-topped desk, clapped his hands to his head, and sat gazing moodily before him, all unaware that behind him stood a smiling girl, who had entered while he had been talking over the 'phone.

Ellen Harboard, the girl who possessed his thoughts, pretty of face, with bewitching hazel grey eyes and neatly bobbed brown hair—and the daughter of Silas Harboard, the wealthy oil king.

"Oh, Jerry!"

The musical voice cut in on Jerry's bitter thoughts, and, with a glad cry escaping him, he sprang to his feet, his face beaming joyously. Three or four strides across the office took him to her, and, his heart singing within him, he caught eagerly at her hands.

"So you thought it was too bad not receiving an invitation to my birthday party, Jerry?" she teased him.

"H'm, yes!" he answered somewhat lamely.

"Poor boy!" She gave a merry little laugh. "But, Jerry, I've come to deliver it in person. I thought you'd much prefer it that way."

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"Gee, you've sure said it, Ellen!" Jerry was like a dog with two tails. Surely here was proof that she bore him no little affection, and the thought sent him into the seventh heaven of delight. "And thanks very much for coming. You can bet I'll be along sharp on time. Eight o'clock, isn't it?"

She nodded her head, but her eyes were gazing about her. Never before had she been in Jerry's office, and she found herself extremely interested in the place. Half office, half signal-box; a table or two, and a long counter, upon which were numerous books and papers, such as time-sheets, bills of lading, and heavy ledgers. One or two pictures of locomotives and a large map were upon the walls, and just by the window were several levers that operated signals and catchpoints. There was also the telegraph instrument standing upon Jerry's desk, and Ellen's eyes at last came to rest on it.

"Oh, Jerry, how do you work that little gadget?" She pointed eagerly to the sending key. "There was a time when I wanted to become a telegraphist. Do please show me!"

"Sure I will."

He drew her to the desk, sat her down in the swivel chair, then quickly explained the working of the little instrument and told her the Morse code. Some twenty minutes later her fingers were on the key, while Jerry's hand was closed about her wrist, helping her to tap out various letters in Morse, heedless of who might pick them up.

"Well, that's fine, Ellen! You're sure an apt pupil! Twenty minutes, and you've got the Morse code pat. Marvellous! And now what about doing a little message on your own?"

"I'd love to!" she cried excitedly.

"Right, then let's go!" He gazed at her face adoringly, and an eager gleam came suddenly into his eyes. "Begin!"—dot, dot from the machine, "L"—dot, dash, dot, dot. "O"—dash,

dash, dash. "V"—dot, dot, dot, dash. "E"—dot. "Y"—dash, dot, dash, dash. "O"—

But Ellen did not tap out the letter O. Instead she started to her feet, blushing prettily, and shook a reproving finger at the boy.

"And I suppose the last letter's U?" she remarked. "A very pretty little message, eh, Jerry?"

"But it's true, Ellen!" Jerry cried fervently, again catching at her hands. "I love you, dear, and you know it. Won't you—"

But the rest of his words remained unsaid, for there came the sudden sound of footsteps on the gravel outside, and next second a tall, hard-faced young man with piercing brown eyes and thin, cruel lips strode into the little office. He was George Walton, the new section superintendent, and at sight of Jerry clasping Ellen's hands his eyes gleamed maliciously. So the suspicions he had had for some time that these two were very friendly were indeed well-founded. A rival for the girl he coveted! In that moment Walton resolved that at whatever cost he would sweep the young operator from his path.

"Why, Ellen, fancy seeing you here!" He came between them, turned his back on Jerry, completely ignoring him, then raised his soft felt hat to the girl: "I didn't know you were interested in such places as railroad stations."

"As a matter of fact, I came to ask Jerry to my party, George." There was a trace of annoyance in Ellen's voice, for she resented the rude way he had snubbed Jerry, and the friendly regard in which she had held him slumped considerably in consequence. "And I was just going as you came in."

"Well, now, that's splendid, Ellen." With an air of possessiveness he took her arm, an ingratiating smile upon his cruel lips. "I only blew in to see if everything was okay at the station, so I'll see you home."

Ellen knew she could not very well

object to that, so she nodded her head in acquiescence, while Jerry glowered fiercely at the broad back of his superior. In that moment the young operator felt an intense desire to punch the fellow's head, for in addition to the way he had shunned him he did not like his assured manner with Ellen.

"So long, Jerry." Ellen smiled back at the disgruntled youngster as she was marched to the office door. "See you to-night—and mind you're not late!"

But Walton's keen brain was at work, and he quickly saw a way to keep the young operator from being at the party at all—a way that might even be the means of estranging the girl and the boy if only he played his cards carefully and well. The result being that, at half-past seven, when Jerry had just changed into a hired dress-suit in readiness to go off to Ellen's place directly his relief put in an appearance, Walton returned to the railroad station and confronted the young man.

"Bad news, Boone!" The section superintendent forced a regretful note into his voice, though within him was a savage triumph. "Vanes won't be turning up to relieve you. Sicknes or something. So you'll have to hang on. And remember the midnight special runs to-night."

Jerry's jaw dropped instantly, and his heart seemed to miss a beat. It was indeed tough that this should happen just when he was eagerly looking forward to Ellen's party—of seeing the girl again.

Somehow he sensed that Walton was delighted that this should happen to him, though not for a moment did he dream that it was all a put-up job—that Vanes, quite fit and well, had been informed by the superintendent that Jerry was going to work double shift this night because he wanted time off later.

"It sure is bad news, Mr. Walton." The young operator shrugged his shoulders despairingly. "I—I was to go to Ellen's party to-night, as you know, and—and— Well, I shall now have to let her know I can't go, that's all."

"I'm more sorry than I can say that this should happen, old fellow." Walton patted Jerry's shoulder in feigned sympathy. "Still, it can't very well be helped. Duty before pleasure, you know, and I'll tell Ellen if you like about your rotten luck."

"Thanks." Jerry's face was the picture of misery. "If you'll do that it'll save me worrying her on the 'phone. She's probably very busy getting ready to receive her guests."

A nod, and then Walton was gone—walking from the railroad station as if on air, congratulating himself that the first part of his rascally scheme had been safely accomplished, while back in the company's office a downcast Jerry Boone changed slowly back into his working clothes

to spend the remainder of the night at his post of duty picturing the gay revelry at Ellen's home.

Disaster.

MANY people wondered why George Walton, when he came to Burke as section superintendent of the railroad, should take a dilapidated old house some little distance out of town. But Walton had his own reasons, and they were far from lawful ones.

Born in New York, he had upon leaving school fallen in with a gang of crooks, but a spell in the State penitentiary had somewhat sobered him, and thereafter he had decided to run straight. It was a lucky break when he managed to obtain a job in the executive offices of the railroad company. He was a good worker—and he worked hard—and promotion came his way. Then eventually came the offer of the berth he now graced. Two months as section superintendent, and once again he had embarked on a life of crime. . . .

Directly he left Jerry Boone bemoaning the fate that had befallen him, Walton sped in his car to his home, bleak and barren-looking, and built almost entirely of wood, and inside the rooms were sparsely furnished.

It was to a room at the far end of the passage that he made his way on entering the place, and as he strode into it two evil-faced ruffians, who had been seated at a small round table, instantly sprang to their feet, their hands flashing to jacket pockets where guns lay concealed.

"Go easy, boys." Walton laughed at the fierce expressions on the faces of the two. "It's only me—and I've work

for you to do this very night. Come, sit down."

They reseated themselves and Walton drew a chair to the table and sat down facing them. Then he calmly lit a cigarette the while his two confederates waited impatiently.

"Well, boss, what's on your mind?" Dan Paddon thrust his bristly face eagerly across the table as Walton at last looked up. "Spill the beans. Me and Joe's anxious."

"You—you—you've su-su-sure sa-sa-said it, boy," stammered his companion. "W-w-we—"

"Shut up, you big stiff!" Paddon broke in fiercely. "You and your rotten impediment. How many times have I told you to say nothing?"

Joe Lessing's mouth opened to make some kind of angry retort, but with an impatient wave of the hand, Walton silenced him.

"Now see here, boys, we're on something big to-night and I'm killing two birds with one stone." A pause while Walton puffed at his cigarette and blew a cloud of smoke ceilingwards. Then: "We haven't done a job since you two held up the Westbound Limited at Cheswick Cutting and hiked off with the bullion aboard, have we? But I'll say that was nothing to what we're after to-night. The midnight special's running and it's carrying a real pile. We're going to get it—understand, and incidentally I'm going to put paid to a certain young man who's in my way. Now just you listen carefully while I tell you exactly what you're to do."

He lowered his voice and his hirelings craned forward the better to catch his words. For a little over ten minutes they listened carefully, then Walton got upon his feet, his eyes gleaming sinisterly.

"You understand, huh?" They



Eyes gleaming murderously, Lessing snatched up a chair and came at Jerry like a whirlwind.

nodded their heads and he smiled in satisfaction. "Right, but just you mind you don't bungle things or, by hades, your lives won't be worth a moment's purchase—see?"

And then he was gone, leaving his confederates to carry out his fell scheme while he himself went on to Ellen Harboard's home where already her guests were beginning to assemble.

The ticking of the clock upon the wall was the only sound that broke the silence of the railroad station at Burke. Slumped in his chair, arms upon the flat-topped desk, his head cupped between his hands, Jerry Boone was rucfully picturing the gay party that he knew would still be in progress at Ellen Harboard's home. Just the kind of revelry his light-hearted nature would have loved—and then there was the fact that he was missing the bright companionship of the girl of his heart. Fate had indeed dealt him a nasty blow.

The minutes ticked on—a quarter to twelve came. Then behind Jerry the door was quietly pushed open and Dan Paddon and Joe Lessing came creeping in. On tip-toe and with the utmost stealth they stole up to the unsuspecting young man, then suddenly Paddon's grimy hands shot out and encircled Jerry's neck.

"What the blazes!" Jerry came out of his reverie with a start. "What's the game? Let me go, you—"

His words snapped off as he was dragged roughly over the back of his chair. As he crashed to the floor, he glimpsed his assailants, noticed that one was on the point of springing on top of him, and adroitly rolled to one side. Another moment and he was on his feet again.

Who these men were he did not know, for Paddon and Lessing were members of Walton's old gang in New York and since joining up with the crook section superintendent they had kept well out of sight in the daytime. And neither did Jerry know what they were doing here. But whatever it was, it was for some fell purpose and so the young man tore into them on the instant, his jaw grimly set, his fists lashing out with all the force he could put behind them.

A gasp of pain from Paddon as a hefty left thudded to the point of his unshaven chin, sending him crashing back against a table, then Jerry was round on Joe Lessing, who was on the point of launching a blow at the youngster's head.

"Ouch!" Lessing shook his head, half dazed from the right that had crashed clean between his eyes, then grinned hideously as he saw his confederate fling forward and clout Jerry behind the ear with a stinging left-hander. "G-g-good, Dan. G-g-go it—g-g-give him h-h-hell!"

But Jerry, hard as nails, recovered just as Paddon came in at him again, and, parrying a vicious right, he thudded his left to the scoundrel's jaw. Back against the table Paddon went once more, and like lightning Jerry pounced upon him, caught him by the throat and forced his head backwards.

"Now, you eur," hissed Jerry from between clenched teeth, forgetful for the moment of Joe Lessing's presence. "You're going to get all I can give you!"

Uttering savage oaths, Paddon struggled all he knew to break free. Suddenly his left hand swept upwards and clawed at Jerry's face. But the young man caught at the wrist, then

quickly releasing his left hand from the rascal's throat, he crashed it like lightning into the scrubby face.

Eyes gleaming murderously, Lessing snatched up a chair as with a low moan Paddon slithered to the floor. Up behind Jerry he came like a whirlwind, and with all his brute force he crashed the chair own on the young man's head and gave a diabolical laugh as his victim dropped as if suddenly pole-axed.

"Q-q-quick, Dan!" Lessing dropped the chair and whipped a length of cord from each of his coat pockets. "P-p-pull yourself together. We—we haven't a m-m-moment to l-l-lose now."

The words seemed to act as a tonic on Paddon, for next second he was on his feet, helping his confederate to bind and gag Jerry, who was already showing signs of returning consciousness.

Five minutes later and the two rascals had the young operator securely gagged and bound in his swivel chair.

Eyes wide with apprehension, Jerry saw them suddenly move to the levers of the catch-points and signals just as there came a distant whistle of a locomotive—the midnight special!

What was the intention of these scoundrels?

The telegraph began to tick as the operator from the next station down the line sent through his message that he had passed the special on to Jerry's section of the railroad.

A moment later and a nameless dread swept over the helpless youngster and he began to struggle fiercely with his bonds as Paddon, a diabolical grin on his unprepossessing countenance, pulled over the lever that would give the midnight special a clear line, and followed this by setting the catch-points so that the freight train would switch on to the express line just after it had passed Burke station.

And a passenger train was almost due now on that other line!

Distracted, Jerry tried to shout out, but could only utter a choking gurgle behind the gag. Heart beating as if it would burst, he flung every ounce of his strength into a desperate fight with the cords that bound him.

The morse again. The passenger train had been passed on to his section. A smash was inevitable now unless—

Hoarse gloating chuckles came from the two scoundrels and the distraught Jerry saw them dive out into the night, heard a second later a motor-car being driven rapidly away.

Again sounded the raucous whistle of the locomotive of the freighter, then fainter the whistle of the passenger train as it hurtled through the night.

"Oh, merciful heavens!" Jerry muttered despairingly behind the gag. "What can I do—what can I do?"

Frenziedly he strained at his bonds, till the veins stood out like whipcord upon his forehead, till the perspiration trickled down his ashen cheeks. Then with a sigh of thankfulness he felt the cords around his wrists and ankles loosen. But now the noise of the on-rushing train was thundering in his burning brain and even as he flung the bonds away and staggered to his feet the freighter came sweeping past the railroad station.

A hoarse cry bursting from his dry lips, Jerry hurled himself forward, but even as he grasped the lever of the catch points, the freighter turned on to the express line just as the passenger train came thundering along the railroad from the same direction at tremendous speed.

Too late! The youngster's heart almost stood still and with a terrifying cry he dropped into the chair at the flat-

topped desk, beating his hands, as if suddenly demented, on its polished surface, his body rocking to and fro in the torture that gripped him.

Bare seconds later and there came a mighty crashing, rending sound as the passenger train cleaved into the very centre of the freighter. A terrible upheaval with coaches splintering to matchwood, the debris piling up in grotesque heaps. Heartrending shrieks from those unfortunates travelling in the passenger train—the hissing of escaping steam, and then tongues of fire sprang up among the chaos to add further peril to the grim and ghastly tragedy.

And before help came to succour the injured, two sinister, shadowy figures moved among the wreckage, heedless of the pathetic groans of the victims, as they searched feverishly for the van of the freighter in which was bullion of vast wealth. They were Dan Paddon and Joe Lessing, and when they found what they sought they quickly carried it off to the waiting car and drove rapidly away.

Billy Boone on the Scent.

HEAD bowed, his spirit utterly broken, Jerry Boone came wearily up the garden path of the little cottage that was his home.

A terrible morning it had been to the young fellow. The court of inquiry, assembled at the railroad station, had refused to believe his story as to why the disaster had occurred, and he had been ignominiously dismissed from his post—told that he was lucky to escape being sent for trial for criminal negligence.

Then had come a second and even more devastating blow. Feeling that he wanted sympathy in this, his hour of sorrow, he had gone along to Ellen Harboard's home, only to hear the alarming news that her father had been on the passenger train that fearsome night and had been gravely injured.

Ellen had stormed at him, the tears coursing down her cheeks, when he had forced his way into her presence, accusing him of base neglect of duty, finishing up by telling him that she never wanted to see him again. And though he had tried to protest his innocence—to explain the real reason for the disaster—she had refused to listen to him. Like everyone else, she believed him guilty.

And so Jerry had come home—a human wreck.

Loving arms caressed him as he dragged himself wearily into the little kitchen where Mrs. Boone had dinner waiting for him, for the old lady could see by his face that the worst had befallen her boy.

"Never mind, Jerry dear," she soothed him gently. "You have nothing whatever to reproach yourself about. A shameful trick of Fate. But you will—"

"But it's not that they wouldn't believe me when I told them of the attack on me at the station that's so hard to bear, mother." Jerry shook his head pathetically, tears glistening in his eyes. "It—it's Ellen. I went along to her home, found that her poor father had been in the smash and was seriously injured. She refused to see me, believing it was my fault that he had been hurt, and when I pushed my way in and tried to explain, she only stormed at me and ordered me out of the place. Oh, mother, that's just terrible—terrible!"

"There, there, son—don't take on so!" Mrs. Boone stroked his mop of hair affectionately. "Don't despair. When

an injustice has been done it is usually set right in the end. Those scoundrels who attacked you may make a slip some time and land themselves in the hands of the law. You say you've no idea who they can be?"

"Never seen them before." Jerry shook his head glumly. "And I'm sure they don't belong to this town. But I'd know them if I saw them again; in fact, I'd recognise one if only I heard his voice, for he's got an impediment in his speech."

"You mean he stutters, Jerry?" a youthful voice eagerly inquired.

"Yes."

A strange gleam came into the eyes of Billy, Jerry's kid brother, a youngster of thirteen, with mischievous blue eyes, and a cheeky though likeable little face.

Munching an apple, he had been listening to Jerry's tale of woe, inwardly seething with indignation at the injustice that had been done his brother. Jerry was Billy's hero; the youngster would do anything for him, no matter what it might be. Such was his brotherly love—and now it came to him in a flash that he might even be able to help Jerry clear the stigma on his good name. He knew a man who stuttered, an evil-faced ruffian whom he had seen only the other day in conversation with George Walton, the section superintendent. By Jove, was Walton implicated in the attack on Jerry?

Billy felt it was more than-likely, for there was something about the man that he did not like. To his mind, Walton looked a crook—his eyes were too furtive to be those of an honest man.

Then the youngster remembered the missing bullion, which it was believed had been taken by the looters, a class of persons who take advantage of the least accident to steal. This theft and the attack on Jerry might easily be connected.

Excitement showing in every line of his features, Billy suddenly dived across the room and snatched his cap from a chair. Then, apple in hand, he came back to Jerry and his mother, who were watching him in blank amazement.

"What's got you, kid?" Jerry smiled wryly as Billy gave him a knowing wink. "You don't mean to say you know who—"

"I'm saying nothing," the youngster cut in quickly. "But I'm on a clue. Just you stay here till you hear from me, Jerry—and, whatever you do, try and look a bit cheerful, or you'll give us the willies."

And then he was gone. The railroad station was his destination, and there he came upon three small boys that he knew who were playing some kind of game with stones near a small wooden structure that he knew to be George Walton's office.

He noticed with satisfaction that a car was outside, clear evidence that his quarry was at the moment in his place of work.

Seconds later he had joined his friends in their game; but, though he was soon absorbed in it, he contrived to keep one eye constantly on the door of the section superintendent's office.

And at last Billy's vigil was rewarded. George Walton suddenly made his appearance at the door and went towards his car.

"Must be going now, kids," Billy straightened instantly, a triumphant gleam in his pale blue eyes. "Got an important job to do."

"But the game!" protested one of his little friends, with a great show of heat. "You'll muck it up if you—"

"Aw, can it, Bob!" Billy looked quickly at the half-nibbled apple in his grubby hand, then took a large bite at it. "Here, perhaps this'll put us right."

With a grin, he tossed the remainder

of the apple—little more than the core now—towards the disgruntled youngster; then, turning, he bent low and darted towards the car. He reached it just as the engine woke to life, and, unnoticed by the section superintendent, he sprawled full length on the near-side running-board. Next second the car shot away, with Billy clinging tenaciously to his precarious perch.

Out of town into lonely country, and in little over twenty minutes the car drew up at the dilapidated old house that Walton had made his home. On the instant Billy was off the running-board and round at the back of the vehicle, and from that place of security he watched the crook superintendent enter the house and close the door behind him.

Billy scratched his head as his gaze surveyed the tall building. Several windows were inaccessible, and one he noticed had boards nailed over it on the outside. Obviously the room beyond was intended to hold a captive.

But the main thing was to get into the house somehow. It was quite likely that he might overhear Walton and his confederates planning some fresh scheme, or learn something that might vindicate old Jerry.

Then of a sudden the youngster's eyes gleamed and he darted eagerly forward. A small window on the ground level, standing half-open, had caught his gaze.

Bare seconds later and he was in a kind of cellar with stairs at the farther end. Holding his breath, he stole forward on tiptoe, mounted the stairs, and, on opening the door at the top, he found himself in the passage that led to the front door.

Then a sound of muffled voices, and he quickly made towards a door near at hand and crouched with his ear very close to the keyhole. Now he could hear a tense voice quite clearly, and as he



"What the heck does this mean?" demanded Walton, and caught Billy's arm in a savage grip.

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distinguished what was being said his hear began to beat quite fast.

"Yes, there's another special running at five o'clock to-day from Roxburgh, boys, with a heavy consignment of coin and notes—and we're going to get it." It was Walton speaking, and he paused to give a sinister laugh. "Now these are my plans—nothing so drastic as before, of course. You'll get down to Roxburgh and hide yourselves in a packing-case in the bullion van, then when you're near the curve in the line at Sedge, you'll spring out, take the guards by surprise, and hop off with the dough as the train begins to slow. Is everything—"

That much Billy heard before there came a dramatic interruption. Ear glued to the keyhole, completely absorbed with the dastardly plan being hatched in the room beyond, he failed to hear the front door open, or the surprised ejaculation that escaped the thick-set, brutal-faced man who saw him stooping before the door as he came into the house.

A moment later and the man was upon the unsuspecting youngster. A heavy hand came down on Billy's shoulder and, swinging round with a gasp of alarm, he found himself gazing into a pair of fiercely glowering eyes.

"Oh! You let me go, mister!" he wailed pathetically. "I ain't done nothing, straight I—"

But he said no more, for, flinging open the door, his captor bundled him roughly into the room beyond.

A Bid for Liberty.

WALTON and his rascally confederates, Dan Peddon and Joe Lessing, were seated at the small round table as the crook superintendent unfolded his plans for the robbery of the bullion train. But they were on their feet in a flash as Billy came staggering into the room, and instinctively the hands of both Peddon and Lessing flashed to their coat-pockets, where they were wont to keep their guns.

"What the heck does this mean?" demanded Walton, and caught Billy's arm in a savage grip, then looked frowningly at the thick-set man as he advanced towards them. "Fulworth, who in hades is this brat, and what's he doing here?"

"Found him outside the door, listening, boss," growled the other.

"But I wasn't! I wasn't!" Billy knew that he was in a tight jam, but he meant to try his utmost to get out of it somehow. So much depended upon him retaining his freedom now. "My dog popped in here through the cellar window, and I came in after him."

"You did, huh?" Walton looked at him from narrowed lids, but he was far from satisfied with the explanation. "Well, where's the dog now?"

"He slipped me." Billy forced himself to smile as he strove to master his feelings. "Rushed down into the cellar again, and I bet he's away through the window by this time."

"But you were listening at the door, you little brat." Walton dug his fingers savagely into Billy's arm, and laughed brutally as the youngster winced with pain. "What did you hear? You tell the truth, or by heck I'll wring your confounded little neck for you!"

Billy felt his knees grow suddenly weak beneath him, for there was no mistaking that grim threat. For a moment or two he was silent, then with an effort he bravely squared his young shoulders and looked defiantly into Walton's blazing eyes.

"I wasn't listening, I tell you!" he

shouted vehemently. "And I didn't hear nothing."

The passionate note in Billy's voice almost convinced the crook superintendent that the youngster was speaking the truth, but, shrewd as he was, he did not intend to take any chances. He must be kept safely out of the way till the train robbery had been safely accomplished; it would then be time enough to consider what had best be done with the boy.

A word to the thick-set man, then Billy, struggling and protesting warmly, was dragged upstairs and flung into the room with the boarded window.

"You stay there, you little rat!" The thick-set man laughed brutally as Billy went staggering across the room. "And remember this: If you give any trouble I'll be up here in a jiffy, and I'll larrup you till your hide's raw. See?"

And then he was gone, slamming and locking the door behind him. Billy pulled a face at the locked door and clenched his little fists.

"Go and fry your face, ugly!" he shouted at the full pitch of his lungs.

Heavy footsteps on the stairs as Fulworth descended them, then silence. For a moment Billy stood irresolute; but, determined youngster that he was, he soon set his brain to devising some means of escape.

He had a line on Walton and his gang now—he could see that, if only he could get free, he would be able to clear Jerry of the stigma that was now on his name. Then there was the intended robbery of the bullion train due out of Roxburgh at five. That must be prevented at all costs.

The youngster gazed about the room. It was sparsely furnished as a bedroom. One or two chairs, a small table with a square of mirror resting back against the wall behind, a worn-out rug and an iron bedstead.

As Billy's eyes finally came to rest on the bed, a hopeful gleam came into them. What the time was now he could not say—somewhere in the region of three o'clock, he suspected.

He sat down upon the bed, eager to put into action the plan that had come to him, but he knew that it was useless to make his bid for liberty just yet awhile. Time passed, then after what he considered was a life-time, yet in reality was only three-quarters of an hour, he heard a door slam below, and a few seconds later caught the sound of a motor-car's engine starting up. He made a guess that that would be Walton's confederates setting out for Roxburgh on their fell mission.

He allowed another five minutes to elapse, then diving his hand into his pocket he brought out a handful of marbles, and tossed them one after another on to the floor. Nothing happened, so he gathered them up again and repeated the process.

Then footsteps sounded on the stairs, and seconds later the door was unlocked and opened.

"What in blazes you up to, you young scum?" Fulworth glared in at the doorway, an ugly scowl on his unprepossessing face. "You know what I said about that larruping, don't you?"

"You was young once, wasn't you?" Billy grinned cheekily, and fung two or three more marbles on the floor. "Then just you let a fellow that's got to kick his heels have a bit of fun."

More marbles went bouncing to the floor, and for several moments Fulworth gazed at the youngster, not quite knowing what to do. Then suddenly he spat out a vicious oath, swung from the room and relocked the door.

Billy grinned as his footsteps died in the distance, then he swung round to the bed and rapidly tore off the covers. The work of a very few moments to knot the sheets and blankets together to form an improvised rope, then he turned his attention to the boarded window. Silently he raised the sash, and with his small fist he hammered at one of the lengths of wood, hoping fervently that the scoundrel downstairs would be led to believe that the sounds he made were caused by the marbles being flung on the floor.

He worked on uninterruptedly, and some ten minutes later he had three of the boards from the window and was lowering the improvised rope to the ground. With satisfaction he saw that the knotted bedclothes reached to within half a dozen feet of the gravel path below, and with joyously beating heart he tied the end of the rope he held to the iron frame of the bedstead, then came back to the window and clambered out.

The ground reached in safety, he darted away as fast as his little legs would carry him. A telephone kiosk at last. Like a young rabbit he dived into it, and seconds later he was through to his home, heard Jerry's voice asking who it was calling.

"It's Billy, Jerry. Listen! I've got a line on those thugs who set on you and robbed the midnight special." The youngster's voice was vibrant with excitement and his eyes shone with an eager light. "And Walton was behind the whole affair. Ah, I knew that'd surprise you! I somehow suspected the brute, and I followed him some while ago to his house—and I've found out, through listening at a keyhole, that he plans to pinch the bullion from the special, running from Roxburgh at five."

"Couldn't put you wise before, because they caught me and shoved me in a room and— Yes, yes, of course I escaped, or I wouldn't be 'phoning you now, stupid. But, Jerry, there's no time to lose. What's that? It's twenty to five now! Gee, but we've time to fix 'em and clear you with the railroad people, haven't— Oh, why will you keep butting in. What's that? Sure, I'll go and get the cops. You bet they'll be after the train in a twinkling. And you'll be along right away? Good! Bye."

The receiver slammed back on its hooks, but Billy did not go off at once. He made another call, this time to Mr. Harboard's house and, Ellen answering the phone, he quickly told her all he had learned at Walton's place and of the rascal's latest fell scheme. And it afforded him immense satisfaction that he was able to convince the girl, after some few minutes, of Jerry's innocence of the railway disaster. Then again the receiver crashed back on its rest and, darting from the kiosk, Billy ran off like the wind.

Meanwhile, Jerry had got out his little two-seater runabout, and, driving at reckless speed, he soon reached the railroad station at Burke. Straight to the operator there he went, not knowing that the man was a confederate of Walton's, whom the crook superintendent had installed there as much for his own benefit as anything else. Breathlessly Jerry explained that there was to be a hold-up of the bullion train, due out of Roxburgh at five—would the fellow speak to the next station down the line and have it stopped and the officials warned?

"Bunkum; you can't kid me there's to be a hold-up in broad daylight." The operator shook his head, though his eyes

gleamed viciously at the disturbing thought that Jerry was wise to Walton's game. "You buzz off—I'm busy."

He turned away, and, seeing it was useless to argue further, Jerry reared outside and climbed back into his car. Away he sped again, this time in the direction of Colville, his throttle opened to its fullest extent. And at Colville Station he had little difficulty in convincing the operator there, an old friend of his, that there was to be an attempt to steal the bullion on board the special from Roxburgh. The train would be stopped. Jerry was assured, and it was with triumph singing in his breast that the youngster again clambered back into his car and set off along the railroad line to meet the oncoming freighter.

The Hold-Up.

THE special thundered over the iron road, whistle shrilling blantly.

Inside the bullion van the two guards sat upon packing-cases, smoking and chatting idly.

The sudden screeching of brakes, and the train began to slacken speed.

"Now what in blazes is the matter, Harry?" one of the guards remarked to his colleague.

"Darned if I know." The other got to his feet and went to the side of the coach, his intention being to peer out of the small aperture there to see what the slowing of the train meant. He thrust out his head, but could see nothing. "Don't know what it can be, George. Suppose the signal's against us. I can't see it, but—"

"Hands up, you two—and keep them up!" a grim, menacing voice cut in sharply. "And don't try to reach for those guns of yours."

The guards swung round in a flash, and their jaws dropped as they saw the heads and shoulders of two men protruding from a big packing-case on the far side of the van, Dan Paddon and Joe Lessing, and in their hands were two wicked-looking blue-black revolvers.

Quickly they clambered from their place of concealment, and while Paddon covered the guards with his gun, his rascally companion delved into a medium-sized wooden case and brought out a heavy iron box that was heavily padlocked.

"Now, you two," rasped Paddon, waving his revolver threateningly at the guards, "if you cry out or move so much as an inch till we're clear of here I'll shoot—and shoot to kill!"

As he spoke the train drew to a complete standstill. Quickly he turned to where Joe Lessing, the bullion box in his hand, was dragging at the sliding door in the side of the van.

"Quick—off you go!" he hissed in Lessing's ear. "And make the car as soon as you can. I'll keep behind in case there's trouble."

The door was open now, and they scrambled out to the ground. An imperative cry and, glancing down the train, Paddon saw three uniformed

figures racing towards them. The driver, the conductor and the brakeman of the train.

Fiercely he urged Lessing on, but under the weight of the bullion box the rascal's progress was slow. Paddon twirled around, murder blazing in his eyes, and waited for the railwaymen to come nearer.

"Hi, you! Keep where you are!" As they pulled up he levelled his gun at them through his jacket pocket. "If you move another step I'll drill you! And I mean it, see?"

He backed slowly, his gun on them the while, then started violently as there came the sudden roar of a car tearing along the road that ran parallel with the railroad. Seconds later there was a screeching of brakes, and, flinging himself from the wheel of his two-seater, Jerry Boone made straight for Joe Lessing, who was still staggering under the weight of the bullion box towards the yellow car standing by a clump of pine-trees.

Jerry came at the crook like a cyclone; but Lessing had seen him and, dropping the bullion box, he struggled to reach his gun. Too late. Jerry was into him even as his fingers touched the butt of the revolver, and a pile-driving left sent him crashing full length upon his back.

"Now, you scum, I owe you something for that time at Burke Station!" Jerry howled, and leaped on the scoundrel as he began to clamber to his feet.

But Lessing dexterously rolled to one side and, springing up, he closed quickly with the enraged young man.

Backwards and forwards the two, stamped, hitting out fiercely at each other; then, just as it seemed that Jerry had the upper hand Paddon came running up behind him and brought the butt of his gun crashing with brutal force on the back of the youngster's head. Jerry went to the ground as if pole-axed, and with savage triumph in his eyes Paddon cast his gaze quickly about him.

"Keep back! Stand where you are,

or, by Hades, I'll drill you!" The railwaymen had taken advantage of the diversion to steal down upon the crooks, but they stopped in their tracks, cursing volubly, as the gun again threatened them. A leering grin, then Paddon called urgently to Lessing over his shoulder. "Hurry up, you blamed fool, and get that there bullion into the car before we have a whole mob down on us. The train—they'll be wondering why it doesn't go on when the signal's raised and—"

His words snapped off and an expression of alarm leaped instantly into his cruel brown eyes as there came the sudden hum of many powerful engines upon the macadam road—a hum that grew rapidly louder till it merged into an ear-splitting roar. A hurried glance over his shoulder, then a vicious oath ripped from between the ruffian's lips as he glimpsed the half-dozen motorcycles, uniformed figures crouched low over the handlebars, that came sweeping along the road.

"By heck, Joe, it's the cops!" he spat out fearfully.

Thought of self-preservation sent him flying towards the yellow car standing near the clump of pine-trees. And his confederate was not a moment behind him. Avaricious though he was, the wealth the bullion box contained was nothing as compared with his liberty; and letting the box drop to the ground, Joe Lessing scudded after his colleague as fast as his legs would carry him.

A bedlam of sound—the screeching of brakes hastily applied, and the hoarse yells of the police as they flung from the saddles of their bikes, and, with Billy Boone, who had been riding behind one of them, tore after the fugitives.

But Paddon and his rascally companion had now reached the yellow car and were moving away over the rough, bumpy ground. Seconds later, and with throttle opened to its limit, they went shooting down the macadam road as if suddenly propelled from some gigantic catapult.

"Now, you cur, you're for it!" Jerry's eyes blazed down into Walton's with a cold fury.



Back came the police to where the three railway officials, who had now been joined by the guards from the bullion van, were helping a dazed Jerry to his feet. As the mists cleared from the young man's brain, memory of all that had happened came flooding in upon him with a rush. He caught the sound of the fugitives' car, saw it as it fast receded along the road, and flung out his arm wildly.

"Those skunks—they've got away with the bullion!" His voice was hoarse and his pointing finger trembled. "Quick! My car! I'm going—"
 "Now, now—take it easy, boy!" A grin on his face, the conductor of the freighter held up the bullion box that Joe Lessing had dropped in his mad flight. "See here, we've got the bullion box all right—and it strikes me it's all thanks to you and the cops for coming along when you did."

The police were crowding eagerly round now, asking quick questions; but an excited, boyish voice interrupted them, and Billy Boone thrust his way to the front and caught at Jerry's arm.

"Tricked those dirty thieves, didn't I?" he cried delightedly. "And I've told the cops all about that rotter Walton. You can bet your boots that this is the end of that smug-faced crook. To-morrow, Jerry, you'll be vindicated and—Here, where are you going?"

At mention of Walton's name, Jerry had flung off Billy's hand, and with grim, set face he was racing towards his little runabout.

"To see Walton!" he flung back over his shoulder meaningly. "I've something to say to him before the cops get him!"

Billy grinned, then he, too, broke into a run, for the cops were now moving quickly towards their bikes to take up the chase of Dan Paddon and Joe Lessing. Billy did not mean to be left out of the capture of the bullion thieves.

A Grim Fight.

THERE was murder in George Walton's heart as his feverish fingers ran through the drawers of the desk in his office at Burke railroad station.

News of the discovery of his fell plans by Jerry Boone had reached him from his operator accomplice at the station, and he knew that flight was now his only course if he was to avoid arrest and prison. A quick dash to his office to collect his few personal belongings and the spoils of his nefarious robberies, and then he would flee to New York, there to hide in the underworld, where he could safely renew his criminal activities.

At last everything was in the bag that stood upon the desk, but as his fingers went out to close it the door of the office opened and in came a neatly dressed, brown-haired girl—Ellen Harboard—and as he looked up, startled, her hazel grey eyes fastened on his with contemptuous gaze.

"So it was you who caused the smash of the midnight special—a diabolical deed for which an innocent boy has suffered. They said it was on account of Jerry's neglect, when all the time it was your doing." Her voice was biting in its scorn, and under it Walton wilted. "And you did it—caused many poor people to be killed and injured—because you are a low-down thief! Oh, yes, George Walton, I know all about it! You wrecked those trains to steal the bullion in the freighter, and to-day you planned to get hold of the money in the—"

"That's enough of that, you little July 25th, 1931.

cat!" Mastering his feelings, Walton leaped round the desk and caught her roughly by the arm. "I don't want to hurt you, but if you say another word I'll—"

"And do you think I'm scared of your wild threats?" She looked at him bravely though the fierceness of his eyes caused a little shiver to run down her spine. "No, I'm not. Curs like you think twice before adding to their misdeeds when the hand of the law is fast closing upon them. And I can see you know yourself that the police are wise to your duplicity. Why would you be packing that bag if it wasn't for flight? But you'll not get far. The—"

"I won't, huh? Well, we'll see about that, my pretty." He thrust his face close to hers, causing her to recoil. A moment's pause while he gazed fixedly into those wide hazel grey eyes—and then the old desire to win her for his own came with renewed fervour. A sudden thought flashed to his evil mind and he gave an ugly laugh. "Yes, Miss Harboard, I'll admit I am thinking of flight and what is more I now intend to take you with me."

He quickly snatched the suitcase from the desk with his free hand, then before Ellen realised what was happening, he had jerked her roughly to the door.

"Let me go, you brute!" The girl's eyes were goggling with terror now, and she began to struggle fiercely as she was dragged out of the office and towards the open tourer that stood outside. "Let me go! You hear me—let me go!"

But he made no answer—just laughed callously as he bundled her into the seat beside the steering wheel.

Wildly Ellen looked about her for some sign of someone to rescue her, but there was no one in sight. At the full pitch of her young lungs, she yelled for help in the hope that she might be heard.

But in an instant her cries were drowned in the noise of the engine as Walton, leaping in beside her, touched the self-starter and, jerking the lever into first gear, sent the car speeding away with a roar of the open exhaust.

Too late a figure came dashing round the side of the section superintendent's office. It was a platelayer, and he gazed blankly after the receding car and the girlish figure he could see struggling with the driver.

The sound of another car, and minutes later the shrieking of hastily applied brakes as the vehicle slid up to the fugitive's office.

"Say, Tompkins!" cried Jerry Boone, in the act of climbing from his runabout. "Do you happen to know if Walton's in his office?"

"He sure ain't, Jerry." The platelayer flung up his arm, pointing a finger towards Walton's car which even at the moment was turning out of the station yard on to the road. "There he goes in his car. What it's all about I don't know, but a moment ago I heard someone calling for help. It was Miss Harboard and Walton's got her in—"

But Jerry waited for no more. Away he went in pursuit, carelessly indifferent to the dangerous speed at which he drove. One thing alone possessed his thoughts now. The girl of his dreams was being abducted, carried away by an unscrupulous a scoundrel as there ever was—a man who had incidentally done him a grievous wrong.

Face grimly set, a white hot fury blazing within him, Jerry swung his little runabout out of the railroad yard and on to the wide macadam road.

Some two hundred yards ahead was his quarry and he guessed that Ellen

must have resigned herself to her fate for he could see that she was sitting quietly beside her rascally kidnapper.

Rapidly he began to overhaul them, but the noise of his car presently drew Walton's attention and after a quick glance back, the rascal crowded on speed and held Jerry easily.

Out into wild open country, with the road winding up and up till on either side was a drop of some three hundred feet to the fertile pasturelands below.

Then suddenly a wave of triumph swept over Jerry Boone as he saw that he was slowly but surely overhauling the car in front again. Two miles more and he had forced himself alongside the tourer.

"You'd better stop, Walton!" he yelled above the roar of the engines. "You won't get away with it, I'll see to that!"

Ellen called out to him some words of thankfulness, but he scarcely heard them. Walton was gazing at him with murder in his eyes and some instinct warned Jerry that the scoundrel was contemplating treachery. He watched him like a cat watches a mouse, the while he kept pace with the tourer.

"You going to stop, Walton?" he yelled again. "I tell you you'd better, for—"

He saw the evil grin that came suddenly to the rascal's face, saw his cruel hands start to swing the steering wheel of the tourer—and in a flash he guessed the man's intention. Walton was going to swing in front of his little car, force him over the edge of the precipice to crash down to the valley three hundred feet below!

As swift as light, Jerry was on his feet, clambering over the side of the runabout. He got a foothold on the running board of Walton's car, then shot out his hand to the steering wheel as the scoundrel swung it again and sent the vehicle roaring down the road.

"Stop, you damned fool!" Jerry roared threateningly. "Or I'll force the car over the edge!"

But Walton only grinned viciously, for he knew Jerry would not sacrifice Ellen's life and his own. A moment later and his left hand came out in an attempt to push Jerry from his perch.

Then began a fierce struggle for possession of the steering wheel in which Ellen bravely joined, though her face was white and strained, and her heart thudded painfully against her ribs as she thought of the great danger that threatened them all. A sudden twist one way or the other of the wheel, and they would hurtle to eternity!

"Ellen!" Jerry cried suddenly. "Try and jam on the brakes while I look after this car!"

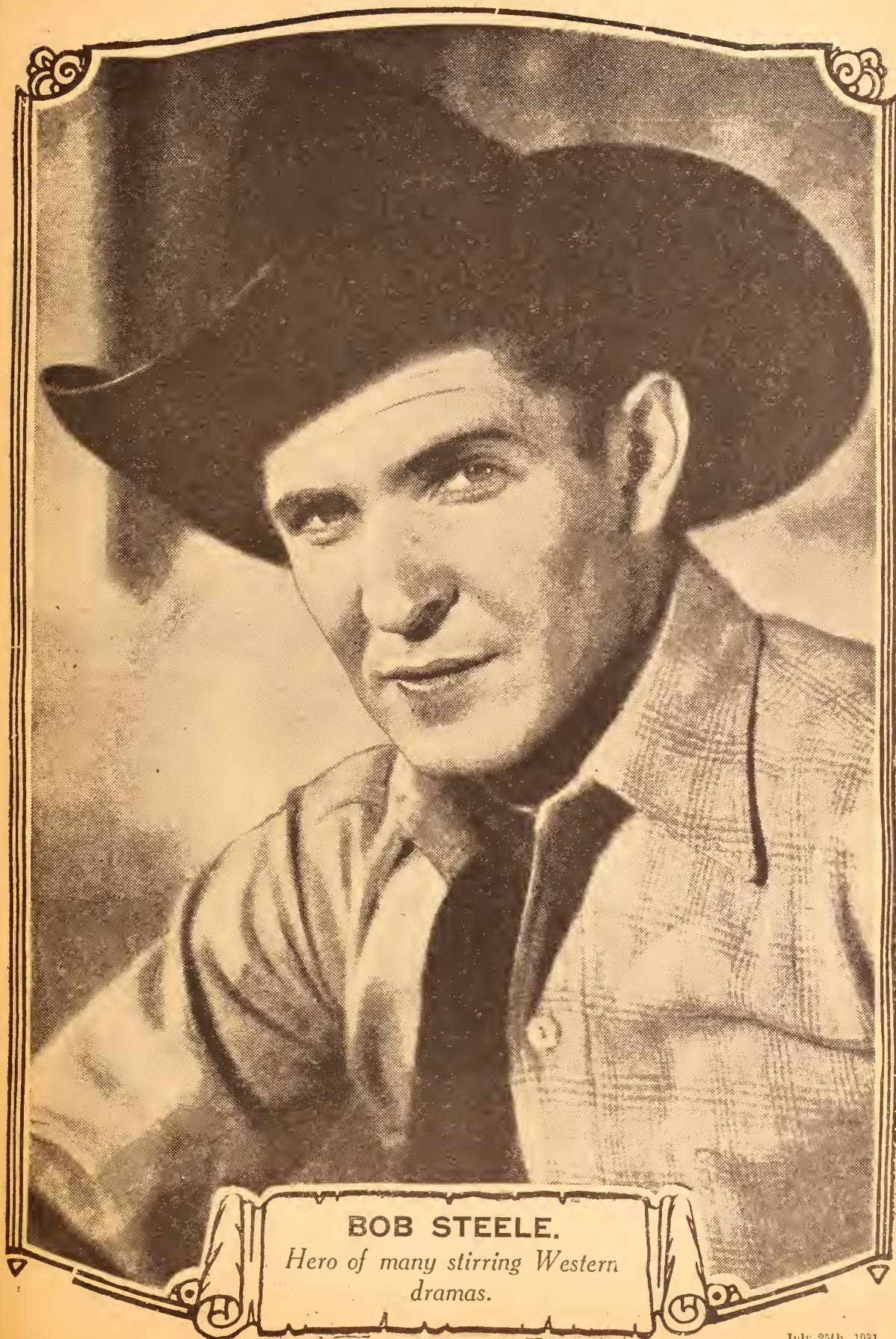
As the girl made to obey a savage oath ripped from between Walton's foam-flecked lips and he lashed out with his left at the youngster. But Jerry caught at the scoundrel's arm though the effort almost caused him to lose his precarious perch on the running board.

And then the car came to a slithering stop as Ellen drew the hand brake home.

"Now, you cur, you're for it!" Jerry's eyes blazed down into Walton's with a cold fury. "You're going to answer to me for all the harm you've done before I hand you over to the police."

A sudden powerful heave and he hauled the rascal over the side of the car to the road. He waited a moment to give Walton the chance to recover himself, then he tore into the man like a raging demon. A left to the jaw staggered the villain, but he quickly shook off the effects of the blow, and spitting out a string of savage curses, he

(Continued on page 28.)



BOB STEELE.

*Hero of many stirring Western
dramas.*

The daring exploits of a young cowboy who sets out to bring a ruthless band of rustlers to justice. Starring Bob Steele and Blanche Mehaffey.



Texas.

THE light of Border stars pierced the velvet heavens, and the music of guitars mingled with the whistle of mock-birds. On the horizon, however, there loomed a sullen bank of clouds that threatened to swell the waters of the Rio Grande with seasonal rain.

In French Sadie's cantina at Campo Santo, close to the Line, there sat two men who were ignorant alike of the musical talent of courting caballeros and chirping mock-birds, as well as the impending threat of dirty weather. Each was too involved in a game of chance to be impressed by outer influences.

One was a long, lean, unshaven worthy of the cowman breed, answering to the laconic name of Kansas. The other was of a very different stamp, somewhat flashy in his attire, with eyes that matched those of the lynx for craftiness—a typical frequenter of the card-table and the poker school, known as Fancy Joe.

They had apparently been playing some time, judging by the money lying between them, mostly on the flashy individual's side of the table, and both were now preparing to match their hands, one against the other, in a final bid.

"I'll bet fifty," Fancy Joe observed slowly, after some consideration.

Kansas of the stabbled chin opened out his five cards fanwise with secretive fingers, and squinted at them narrowly with obvious satisfaction, while Fancy Joe remained impassive, the true poker player.

"Well," drawled Kansas at length, "havin' taken a look over the scenery, I reckon I'll trail along with you, Joe. I'm puttin' you up another fifty."

Fancy Joe regarded his hand. There were three queens in it, and a two and a six.

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"It'll cost you another hundred to see me as far as the next stage, Kansas," he murmured.

Kansas took another look at his cards. There were three aces in it, and two cards of no value.

"I'll raise you a hundred more," he declared.

It was at this juncture that Fancy Joe examined his fistful again. A significant change had taken place. The two-spot no longer figured in it, and had been substituted by a fourth queen.

No one had seen the cunning movement with which he had discarded that two-spot and "palmed" the extra queen. But the eyes of a blonde girl standing by the side of Kansas detected something lying on the floor. It was the "two," and all at once she observed Fancy Joe's foot close down on it.

When he lifted his foot the two-spot was no longer on the floor. It was stuck to a wad of gum on the sole of the trickster's tan shoe.

The blonde girl said nothing, for she knew that to have denounced the sharper would have resulted in bloodshed, and she would rather have seen Kansas cheated out of his money than have him shot down. For Fancy Joe had a "fancy" reputation with a pistol as well as a pack of cards.

"Kansas," said the sharper, "if you're ridin' with me you'll have to pay heavy fare to make the whole trip. I'm stakin' another two hundred on my hand."

"What?" Kansas lurched to his feet. His voice rasped loudly, but with a kind of gruff good-humour in its tone. "Why, you ornery, ding-basted cayute, you know you ain't left me with that much dough—the way you bin winnin' all along the line to-night."

Fancy Joe shrugged.

"Two more hundred is the bet," he said stoically.

Kansas laid down his cards and plucked out a wicked-looking knife. But violence was not his intention. With an imprecation he jammed the blade clean through the highly-decorative backs of the cards he had been holding, pinning them to the table.

"I'm gonna get me some more cash to cover that bet o' yours, Joe," he stated, "for I aim ter pay two hundred bucks to see what you-all hev called on." Then, turning to address the rest of those in the saloon: "I'm a-coming' back," he announced stridently, "an' ef any hombre so much as touches that knife o' mine there's gonna be a funeral—an' he won't be among the mourners."

With that he stamped out of the cantina, against the walls of which the first big drops of rain were already beginning to patter.

The blonde girl who had been watching the card game went to the back of the bar and began to serve drinks. Fancy Joe set his cards face downward on the table and strolled to the counter to order an aguardiente. The blonde girl eyed him with ill-concealed contempt as she poured it out for him, and she seemed on the point of making some comment when the swing doors of the saloon were pushed wide and a youngster in a Stetson and an oil-skin coat crossed the threshold.

He took off his hat and swept the clinging rain from its wide brim and tall crown. About nineteen or twenty he looked, of medium height, but lithe and muscular, with a good-looking face burned to the colour of a new saddle by sun and wind, and a mass of curly hair that was as black as the Border night.

He slipped off his storm-coat and slung it across a chair. Then, with a faint

whirring of spurs, he strolled across the bar-room to come to an idle pause at the table where Kansas and Fancy Joe intended to resume their game as soon as the former returned with a fresh supply of money.

The stranger looked at the cards lying face downwards on the table, and fastened his careless glance on the five that were pinned by the knife. The men at the bar, Fancy Joe included, gaped at him in a breathless, startled silence as he casually withdrew the blade ere anyone could stop him, and as casually inspected the hand that Kansas had held.

He was standing examining it when the swing doors creaked on their hinges again. Kansas strode in, and the tension seemed to become electric as his gaze became riveted on the young stranger and the cards that he had so innocently lifted.

Kansas bore down on him with an oath. His fingers, clenching on the butt of his six-gun, snatched the weapon from its holster and rammied the barrel of it against the youngster's ribs.

"Stranger," he ground out, "I swore I'd plug any guy that shifted my knife an' gavo them cards the once-over while I wasn't on hand ter see I got a square deal. Git ready ter meet your Maker!"

The youngster eyed him steadily. "I don't aim to meet my Maker—yet," he murmured.

Kansas was scowling at him threateningly, but all at once he drew back a little.

"No?" he rasped. "Well, I'll tell you what you're gonna do. You're gonna play that hand o' mine you're so interested in—with your money! Set down!"

He repeated the command as the stranger looked at him in bewilderment, and the gun in his fist forbade argument. The youngster sank slowly into the chair Kansas had occupied some time before, and Kansas called Fancy Joe across from the bar.

"This hombre is gonna pay two hundred dollars to see your hand, Joe," he said. "And, stranger," he added to the youth whom he was covering, "see that you don't lose!"

The youngster hesitated, glanced at Fancy Joe shrewdly, and then at the

cards on which Kansas was forcing him to wager. Three aces and two rags, huh?

He pulled out a sheaf of hundred-dollar bills and pushed two of them across the table. Fancy Joe laid down his hand—four queens strong. The stranger followed his example, planting the cards one by one in front of him. One, two, three aces—and a fourth!

Exclamations arose from all round, and two faces registered blank amazement—the face of Kansas for one, the face of Fancy Joe for another. But the latter's astonishment was succeeded by chagrin, and suddenly he uttered an angry snarl. In the same instant his hand went to his hip and wrenched a .44 from a holster there.

It was fast work, but not fast enough. The youngster's fist had dropped to his thigh in a lightning gesture, and he beat Fancy Joe to the "draw" by a split second. There was a burst of flame and smoke and an ugly smash, and the .44 spun from the hand of Fancy Joe and clattered to the floor.

The gambler scrambled to his feet and clutched at his numbed fingers. His eyes were glittering with mingled fear and rage, but the latter emotion seemed likely to dominate the first till Kansas jabbed him playfully with his own six-gun.

"I wouldn't be so lady-like with my shootin' iron, Joe," he said, smirking broadly. "You know, lightning never strikes twice in the same place."

Fancy Joe slunk out of the cantina sullenly.

Flaming Guns.

KANSAS turned towards the table to see the dark-haired young stranger reaching for the money Fancy Joe had staked on his cards, and he gave vent to an exclamation.

"Hold on there, you curly-headed stray," he said. "That was my bet you covered."

The youngster smiled. "We'll divide the takings, pardner," he drawled.

"All right," was the rejoinder.

"You're on. Say, Kansas is my name. What's yours, anyway?"

"Just call me Texas," the youngster told him, and handed him a quarter share in the bet.

Kansas looked at the money sourly. "Ain't you takin' in a lot o' territory, Tex?" he growled.

"Well," the youngster retorted with a grin, "isn't Texas bigger than Kansas?" But as the other laughed genially he thrust some more of the notes into his fist.

Kansas slapped him on the shoulder, and then faced the rest of the men who were standing around.

"Boys," he announced, "I want you to meet Tex. He's takin' in a lotta territory when he calls hisself Texas, but from now on—ef you wanna get to Texas you gotta cross Kansas. See?"

French Sadie appearing at that moment, Kansas presented his new acquaintance to the picturesque proprietress of the cantina. Kansas seemed on the best of terms with her, and, after asking her to serve up a couple of plates of hot tamales in a private room off the saloon, he led Tex thither.

"Now that we're all alone," he said to the youngster, as they sat down at a small table, "would you mind edjicatin' me as to just where you got that fourth ace from?"

"Kansas," Tex informed him, "cheatin' at cards ain't exactly a hobby o' mine, but when I looked at that hombre Fancy Joe I marked him down straight away as a sharper. And Kansas, the hand is quicker than the eye."

Further discussion on the subject of the bet was interrupted by the appearance of Goldie, who arrived with the grub. The interest of Tex was immediately aroused by her, and Kansas introduced him. When Goldie had departed Tex leaned forward eagerly and fired a question at his companion.

"Who is she?" he demanded. "What's she doin' in this round-up?"

"You heard her name," Kansas answered. "An' as for the rest, people's business down here is mindin' their own. But she ain't the usual run o' gals in saloons. She's a good kid. That's



"A little bit late, alncha, Tex?" Kansas muttered slowly.

what French Sadie says—an' what Sadie says goes. What's anybody doin' down here, anyways? I might be askin' you the same thing. But, of course, I ain't," he added hastily.

There was a silence. Then Kansas spoke again:

"Howsomever," he resumed, "now that we're friends, do you mind my askin' you ef anybody might be expectin' you here in Campo Santo? You see, the sheriff was down here a while ago from the American side o' the Border—peerin' around like he might be expectin' to see somebody. But, of course—no star-packer would be lookin' for you, huh?"

There was a curious expression in Tex's eyes.

"Mc?" he echoed. "No! Of course—accidents will happen at times, Kansas—no matter how careful a fella is."

Once again their conversation was interrupted by the appearance of Goldie.

"Sadie wants a word with you, Kansas," she said. "She seems kind of upset about something."

Kansas drifted out into the bar-room, and Tex and Goldie were left in each other's company.

"You'll like Kansas when you know him better," said Goldie.

"I don't have to know him any better to like him," Tex told her. "I don't know you—but I like you."

She glanced at him challengingly.

"You make up your mind quickly, don't you?" she murmured.

"A lot quicker than I change it," he rejoined.

Meanwhile Kansas had made his way to where French Sadie was awaiting him in the saloon.

"Well," he demanded, "what's wrong?"

"Fancy Joe—when 'e went out I do not like ze way 'e look," Sadie declared, with a note of anxiety in her voice.

"Cain't say I like his looks, neither," drawled Kansas. "But it's a bit too late to improve on his Creator."

"Mon anil," said Sadie warningly. "'e is just like ze cat zat see too well in ze dark. 'E is dangerous man. You understand, hcin'?"

His upper lip curled into an ominous smile.

"Yeah," he murmured, "but don't you worry, Sadie. As my friend Tex says, 'the hand is quicker'n the eye.'"

"Oh, Kansas," pleaded Sadie, putting her arms around his neck. "I am fond of you. You must not go out yet."

Kansas scoffed at her fears, and then tweaked her chin.

"Do me a favour," he said. "Gimme a kiss."

The Frenchwoman recovered her native gaiety at once, and obliged him laughingly.

"Now I'm set fer anything," Kansas pronounced, and led her into the room where he had left Tex and Goldie.

"Pardner," he said with meaning. "you an' me had better be pullin' our freight."

Tex looked at him keenly and then rose. Goldie helped him on with his oilskin coat while French Sadie assisted Kansas with a snug, warm jacket that reached to the waist. The two new acquaintances then said 'adien' and took their leave, strolling out into the darkness of the street.

It was still raining, and the night was black as pitch. Kansas and Tex walked for about thirty paces, no word passing between them. But, with that understanding of men who have much in common, each seemed to know the other's thoughts, and Tex was acutely conscious of an air of tension.

Both peered into the gloom ahead, and July 25th, 1931.

both held their hands close to the hips. Then suddenly Kansas touched Tex on the arm, and the youngster saw that he was gazing in the direction of a fissure between two buildings on the other side of the street.

Tex detected a slight movement there, the movement of a man who came gliding from the shadows with a pistol in his grasp.

Tex whipped out his "iron." There was a double crash of gunplay in the storm-racked night, and then silence came down again—a silence broken only by the sigh of the wind and the slash of driven rain.

Twenty-four hours later, a fresh headstone decorated the graveyard south of Campo Santo.

"Here lies Fancy Joe," its inscription read.

The Trails Men Take.

KANSAS sat alone in the back room of French Sadie's cantina, where, a day or two previously, he had eaten hot tamales with young Texas.

Several rows of playing cards were laid out on the table before him. He was indulging in a quiet game of solitaire, but had been brought to a check—all because of an ace that was covered by a knave.

Kansas looked furtively over his shoulder, and then, slipping the ace from its position under the picture-card, he began to hum contentedly a favourite ballad of his cowpunching days:

"Beat the drums lowly, an' play the fies slowly,

Play me a dead march to carry 'me on,

Take me out on the prairie an' lay the turf o'er me,

For I'm a wild cowboy, an' I know I've done wrong."

A slight sound caught his attention. He glanced round and saw that a tall, cadaverous man in a dark suit and a fawn stetson had entered the room.

"One thing about solitaire, you don't have to guess who's cheatin'," the newcomer observed. "Are you gettin' so honest, Kansas, that you hafta play cards all by yourself?"

Kansas grimed sheepishly.

"Comin' from you, Rand," he stated, "I don't take nothin' personal in that flippant remark."

Rand Kennedy eyed him shrewdly. His eyes were not the most pleasing feature in his appearance—small eyes that gave an impression of cunning and sluttiness.

"Holdin' good cards these days, Kansas?" he inquired.

Kansas shrugged.

"Well, I might use an ace," he answered, "if you've got the right one up your sleeve."

"Meanin' I can count you in on a new deal?" Rand asked quietly.

"Pardner—like before?"

"I ain't so sure o' that, Rand."

Kansas mused, scratching the stubble on his chin. "You see, I got me a new partner. Name o' Tex—the fastest shoot-in' maverick you ever saw. Drifted in here across the border a day or two back. I sorta took a shine to him right off."

Rand frowned.

"What brand is he carryin'?" he inquired.

"I ain't asked him no partic'lers," Kansas replied. "an' I ain't told him none. But when he hits the trail I sorta figure I'll be travellin' along with him."

"Maybe he'd figure on travellin' along with us—Kansas—"

Kansas pursed his lips.

"Well," he muttered, "there's some men that's partic'ler what trail they take, an' there's some that figger cattle-rustlin' is about the lowest occupation there is. Of course," he added, "they don't look at it in a purely business way like you an' me."

"No harm in askin' him, is there?" Rand suggested.

"I'd rather that came from you," Kansas rejoined. "Not that he figures me for a saint, but ef he wasn't jest congenial about my occupation I'd just as leave he didn't know it. You ben't the respected foreman of the Circle H, I reckon you could feel him out on the proposition better'n me."

"Where is he?" Kennedy demanded.

Kansas smiled.

"Well, you might ask Goldie," he mentioned, and with that a tiny glitter seemed to take form in Rand's eyes.

"Yeah?" he said. "Thanks—I will."

And, passing out into the bar-room, he made his way to the counter where Goldie was serving.

"Goldie," he said to her, "I've somethin' to tell you. Ain't it about time you was changin' your mind about a certain proposition I made once? You don't want to be buried for the rest of your life in this dump, do you? Well, I had another letter from that ranch 'way up in Canada that would like to fix me up. I'd go, too, if you went with me."

There was a chilliness in Goldie's glance.

"Is that the only reason you're thinkin' over the offer?" she interrogated.

"You're foreman of an outfit just across the border in Texas, Rand. Down here on the Mexican side of the line, one hears things that might make Canada a lot healthier for you if the boss of Circle H got to know of them."

"Them as don't have clean skirts themselves shouldn't do much talkin'," said Rand dully. "I ain't so particular about a certain party I'm fond of," he added, "meanin' you. A killin' is a killin'—even if a girl done it, an' the man that had it comin' to him was a dirty rat."

Goldie blanched, and her eyes seemed to fill with tears. Had Rand's words some reference to the motive for her sojourn at French Sadie's cantina in Campo Santo, Mexico—beyond the reach of U.S. justice?

"It's too bad the law don't look at things the way I do, Goldie," Rand went on hurriedly, taking her hand.

"Now, ef I was holdin' that affair against you—to your discredit, like—do you think I'd be askin' you to be my wife? Listen, Goldie, I'd slip you over the border, and in a week we'd be in Canada. Then I could make you happy, so you'd forget all about that reason you can't go back to your home-town in Texas."

"Rand," she said, "I don't want to seem ungrateful, but I could never care for you the way you want me to. I guess you'd try to make me happy—and I'm just a little bit sorry you can't."

"Maybe there's someone else can," Rand was saying, when a young fellow came alongside the bar. He was Tex, and Goldie flashed a smile at him.

"Hallo," she greeted, and then: "Do you know Rand Kennedy, Tex?" she asked. "He's foreman of the Circle H."

Both men acknowledged the introduction, and Goldie went along the counter to attend to some customers who had drifted in.

"I've heard a lot about you," Rand said to Tex. "You know, the Circle H ain't a bad outfit to tie up with. Think you'd be interested in punchin' for it?"

Tex leaned against the bar. His

tanned face seemed reminiscent in its expression.

"I let my brandin'-iron cool off a long time ago," he mentioned. "Leastways, for twenty-five dollars a month."

"Your shootin'-iron ain't been coolin' off none from what I hear," said Rand. "Thinkin' it over, Tex, your talents might be sorta wasted punchin' for the Circle H—when I could use 'em so convenient in my own private business. Meanin' you could warm up that brandin'-iron for considerable more than twenty-five a month."

The youngster switched his glance on to Rand's face. A curious gleam lurked in his brown eyes as he spoke.

"Sounds kinda interestin'," he murmured, and, with a meaning look: "I ain't too particular where I rangle my rope—so long as I ain't danglin' on the other end of it."

"Now you're talkin'," said Rand quickly, and he at once began to enter into details, talking in a low undertone.

"Since you know the particulars, Tex," he added, when he had made all clear, "what do you say?"

"I'm mighty careful who I ride with," the youngster retorted. "Who's in your outfit?"

"Well, there's three boys who ride with the Bar Y," Rand stated, "when they ain't ridin' with me—if you get what I mean. Then there's Poncho and Dusty. You wouldn't be knowin' them, but you don't have to worry none. They've been with me before."

"Are you sure there's no one else?" Tex asked him, looking at him keenly.

"That's all," Rand answered, recalling his interview with Kansas. "Well, I guess I'll have to be travellin', Tex. Think it over. I'll see you later."

He left the cantina, and Goldie presently rejoined Tex.

"Rand a friend of yours?" the youngster asked her.

Goldie shrugged. "He says he is. What of it?"

"Oh, nothin'—"
There was a pause, and then Tex went on speaking. "I was going to tell you I'd be leavin' soon, but I guess it doesn't matter to you," he said.

She glanced at him a little wistfully.

"Comin' back—Tex?" she murmured.

"Yes," he answered, "and when I do there's gonna be something I'll want to say to you—"

Kansas appeared from the back room at that moment, and, approaching Tex as Goldie went to the other end of the bar, he clapped him on the shoulder.

"Son," he declared, "I reckon it 'ud be casier pullin' a mare's tooth than to break you away from these here congenial surroundin's."

This with a knowing glance in the direction of Goldie. "All the same," he continued, becoming

serious, "I've bin wonderin' if you was figuring on pullin' up stakes."

Tex shifted his weight from one foot to another. "I'm glad you spoke of it, Kansas," he returned. "I've been wonderin' how I was goin' to tell you."

"Oh, it don't matter to me where I go," Kansas observed, "jest so as I don't stay too long in one place. Which way are we headin', pardner?"

"We ain't," Tex answered. "We're takin' different trails for a spell, Kansas."

Kansas stared at him in bewilderment for a moment. Then his brow darkened.

"Between you an' me," he ground out, "them's fightin' words. Well, I guess we ain't friends no more."

"Why, sure we are," young Tex protested. "Kansas, d'you think it was easy for me to tell you that I'm driftin' in? Listen, Kansas, maybe I'll pick up your trail again afore very long."

Kansas was not long in recovering his good humour.

"If you mean it that way, pard," he said, "I'm sorry I took it so bad. We'll see each other again. You never can tell where two trails will cross. So-long, Tex—an' good luck!"

They gripped hands, and the youngster strode from the cantina. But as he reached the veranda he heard his name called, and looked round to see Goldie slipping out through the swing-doors.

"You were going without saying good-bye to me?" she reproached.

"But I'll be comin' back like I told you," he assured her.

She looked at him fearfully.

"I've seen them come and go from this place," she said in a low voice, "and some of them never came back. They never got this far again."

"But I'm not going very far away, Goldie," he answered. "And, say, I—I'd come back and see you every time I could if I thought you wanted me to. Only—I wouldn't want Kansas to know."

She drew a little nearer to him.

"I'm not asking you where you're going," she said. "I don't care. But if you didn't come back—"

Her underlip quivered, and suddenly he caught her in his arms.

"Would it mean that much to you, Goldie?" he asked, and, as she nodded, he kissed her swiftly.

A moment later she was watching him ride out of Campo Santo on the hot-dusty trail that led to the north.

The Hide-Out.

IN the silence of the early morning a number of men rode from various directions and mustered on a high bluff overlooking a strip of Texas prairie.

Tex and Rand Kennedy were the first to appear on the summit of the rendezvous, and, as the others showed up, the new recruit to the rustlers' gang was introduced to them—the three double-dealing punchers from the Bar Y outfit, the sleek, lank-haired Mexican, Poncho, and Dusty.

"Well, we're all here, aren't we, Rand?" said Tex, running his eye over the other members of the group.

Rand pointed to a ribbon of trail that zigzagged across the prairie below.



"Maybe now is just as good a time as any!"

A lone horseman was approaching the bluff by way of it.

"Now we are," said Rand.

The lone horseman reached the foot of the bluff and put his bronc at the steep slope. As the animal scrambled up the ascent Tex recognised its rider. Kansas was spurring towards him, a grin on his genial and unshaven countenance.

"Howdy, partner!" Kansas greeted him, with a lusty guffaw. "Picked up my trail sooner than you expected, eh?"

There was an expression of regret on Tex's face. It looked genuine, though Kansas never thought to take it seriously.

"I'm sure sorry to see you ridin' in this outfit," the youngster said.

"Yeah, I'm plumb ashamed to be found with such bad company!" Kansas replied uproariously. "Well, let's get goin'."

Thus did the trails of Tex and Kansas become one again, a trail that led to a hide-out among the sierras—where Kansas, Rand, Poncho and one or two of the others might have been seen a few days later.

They were standing outside a rude shack, whence came the sound of Tex's voice, humming a cow-camp ditty as he indulged in an early morning wash.

Presently Kansas called to the gang's new recruit.

"Tex, come here," he shouted. "Ain't you powdered your nose yet after that beauty sleep o' yours?"

Tex emerged from the cabin.

"What's the trouble, you old buzzard?" he demanded.

"These fancy hours you're keepin' is the trouble," declared Kansas. "You should go to bed on time instead o' sachayin' around the border. Anyway, the next time you go laggin' down to see Goldie, be sure you take me with you."

Rand spoke.

"That's a good idea, Kansas," he said in a curious tone. "So Tex was down seeing Goldie last night, huh? Funny I didn't see him down there."

His eyes seemed to bore into Tex, and for an instant there was something very like tension in the air. Then:

"I saw you," observed Tex. "I guess that's why you didn't see me. I always figured three was a crowd, so I just naturally waited till the crowd stampeded." And he strolled back into the cabin.

"Rand," stated Kansas, "Tex sure had the laugh on you."

Rand scowled darkly.

"It wouldn't be so funny," he mentioned, "if he had the laugh on all of us. Listen, Kansas, we ain't ridin' after no cattle until I find out just where he's ridin' the next time he goes 'visitin' Goldie.'"

It was no later than the evening of the same day that Rand had the opportunity of trailing Tex on one of his nocturnal excursions.

The double-dealing foreman of the Circle II took Kansas and Poncho along with him, but their three pairs of eyes failed to keep the fast-riding Tex in sight, and about three miles south of the hide-out they lost him.

"There's the only trail to the pass that leads over the Line," said Rand, pointing. "an' we'd see him from here if he was headed that way. Where do you suppose we missed him?"

Kansas sneered. He had scoffed at Rand's suspicions, and had only accompanied him under protest.

"Maybe he ran into a gopher hole," he suggested with a smirk. "Listen,
July 25th, 1931.

Rand, I'd be sure of what I was sayin' in future if I was you—afore I said too much."

"Yeah? Well, you and Poncho hit the trail to French Sadie's place just to satisfy yourselves. I'll go my own way. I might find that particular gopher hole."

About that same time, at the sheriff's office in a township not far from Campo Santo, but on the American side of the border, three men were engaged in conversation. One was the sheriff himself, and his chief deputy was standing by him. The third occupant of the room was Tex.

It seemed Rand's suspicions were well-founded after all, and it was on account of those suspicions that Rand was making his way to the township in question.

"Tex," the sheriff was saying, "a little while back I took a trip across the Line to Campo Santo. Of course, it bein' in Mexican territory, I've got no powers there. But I thought I might be able to pick up some information. I didn't succeed, and it's been left to you to get the low-down on these rustlers. Well, we're ready to snaffle 'em as soon as we get the word from you that they're ridin'."

"Are you sure there won't be no slips?" asked Tex.

"Don't worry about us seein' you through the minute we know when your outfit's ridin'," was the reply. "We'll get Rand and his bunch red-handed—"

He broke off as the door-handle rattled, and a swift glance passed between him and Tex. Tex acted promptly, and with a prodigious dive gained the shelter of a back room. It was as well for the sheriff's plans that he did so, for the caller was Rand Kennedy.

"Hallo, Rand," said the sheriff. "Glad to see you. What's new out at the Circle II?"

"Just what I dropped in to see you about, sheriff," Rand made answer. "I drove a thousand head of cattle into this side of Piute Range, and the old man is worryin' himself about rustlers again."

"Well, you can ease him up," the sheriff returned. "It's my idea them rustlers figure this country is too hot to hold 'em up again."

Rand looked at a letter on the sheriff's desk. It referred to a certain party introduced to the representative of the law by a Cattleman's Association anxious to check the depredations of rustlers, a young man on whose courage and shrewdness the members of the Association were prepared to stake their hopes.

"Very young, but, coupled with the fact that he is a stranger to these parts, this should be in his favour."

Rand's eyes narrowed craftily, and then, ranging about the office, fastened for a moment upon the half-open door of the back room.

"I'll tell the old man what you said," he mused, in response to the sheriff's last statement. "He'll be plumb relieved. Oh, by the way," he went on, "you remember the case of that Morgan girl—the pretty blonde who killed that man over in Laredo 'bout two years past? A fellow who knows her was askin' me about her the other day. Ever get any trace of her?"

The sheriff shook his head.

"Nope," he said. "I guess she musta got over the border like they figured at the time. Too bad she got panicky and pulled up stakes afore the law had a chance to tell her she was a free

woman. You see, it was self-defence—justifiable killin', we found out afterwards."

Rand left a few minutes later. When he had gone Tex slipped out of his hiding-place.

"Think he smelt a rat?" was his first question.

"I'm not so sure," was the rejoinder. "But I'd be plumb sorry if Rand was to suspect anything now—sorry for you, I mean. You'll have to look out for him—and Kansas—specially Kansas. You know," he added, "I'd kinda like that old prairie dog Kansas if he didn't carry so much damnation in those six-guns of his."

Tex took his leave not long afterwards. Later, during a swift ride to Campo Santo, his mind harked back to Rand's conversation with the sheriff in the latter's office. The name Bessie Morgan figured prominently in his thoughts. Could it be the real name of—Goldie?

Fast Thinking.

KANSAS and Poncho strolled into French Sadie's place. The

Mexican dropped into a chair beside a table near the stairs that led to the upper rooms. Kansas walked on to the bar, where he was greeted by Goldie.

"Tex not with you?" she asked.

"Oh, he'll be driftin' in shortly," drawled Kansas. "Takes somethin' mighty important to keep him from seein' you, I guess. Nothin' stopped him last night, anyways."

"Last night?" echoed Goldie. "Why Tex wasn't here last night?"

Kansas started, and then his face seemed to harden. He was standing there, with a curious look in his eyes that seemed to spell both danger and regret, when Tex entered the cantina.

"Hallo, Kansas—hallo, Goldie!" the youngster said.

"A little bit late, aincha, Tex," Kansas muttered slowly.

"Sure!" Tex answered smilingly. "I've been at the general store for the last half-hour, choosin' a little present for Goldie."

He handed a parcel across the bar, and Goldie opened it to discover a floral dress.

"Why, Tex," she exclaimed, "it's beautiful!"

"Aw, it isn't much," Tex said. His glance seemed to be riveted on her with a strange significance. "But it's the best I could do, seein' as you only told me about your birthday last night."

Goldie looked at him quickly. For an instant it looked as if she would fail to take Tex's meaning, then she saw the expression on his face.

"Why, Tex," she stammered, "you—you've made a liar out of me. I—I told Kansas you didn't see me last night. You see—it may seem silly to you—but I didn't want Rand to know."

Kansas was staring from one to the other, his suspicions obviously dispelled.

"Oh, Rand, huh?" he muttered, and at that moment the subject of their conversation appeared in the doorway. "Hallo, Rand!" Kansas hailed, with a broad grin. "What's been detainin' you? I was afraid you might have run into—a gopher hole."

Rand ignored the quip, and, as Goldie left the bar and went upstairs to try on her new frock, he lapsed into moody silence.

"Well," said Kansas presently, "I reckon you better be moscyin' along."

"I reckon so," agreed Tex. "Say good-night for me to Goldie, Rand—if you're stayin'."

They passed out of the cantina. Rand

meved away from the counter and joined Poncho at the table where he was sitting. He mentioned curtly that he had dropped in at the sheriff's office on the other side of the border.

"And Tex, he was there?" asked Poncho softly.

"Couldn't prove that in a court o' law," Rand growled. "But we ain't dealin' in that brand o' law."

"I feel much better ef he did not ride with us, companero," Poncho murmured.

Rand did not know that Goldie had appeared at the head of the stairs, dressed in the floral frock, and that the girl was listening.

"Maybe he won't," he said. "Tex thought he'd put something over on me when he showed up here. But the next time he goes out riding from the cabin, payin' social visits, he won't come back."

Goldie came down the stairs, looking as if she had heard nothing. As she approached the table at which Rand and Poncho were sitting, the Mexican excused himself with an elaborate bow, and swaggered out of the saloon.

"Oh, Tex asked me to tell you good-night, Goldie," Rand announced. Then, taking her hand: "I reckon, maybe he's the reason why you ain't been so friendly to me, like of old," he added.

She wanted to tell him that so far as she was concerned he was a despicable and dangerous criminal. But she knew she could serve Tex better by keeping quiet and pretending to be sociable.

"Oh, of course I'm friendly to you, Rand," she told him. "I like you a lot."

"I ain't heard you say that you was changin' your mind about my proposition," he mentioned.

A far-away look came into Goldie's eyes.

"I was just thinking about it when I put on this dress," she mused. "I haven't worn a frock like this for a long time, and it sort of made me realise what this place is doing to me. Oh, I can't stand much more of it! I've got to get away!"

"That's easy," Rand coaxed. "You could go with me in the morning. I'd hide you out for a couple of days—just until I clean up my affairs—and then we could hit the trail for Canada."

"I'm not kidding you that I'm in love with you, Rand," she said. "I'm not. But maybe I could learn to care for you."

"I'll tako that chance," Rand answered.

And early the following morning, while they were lounging outside the lair over the border, Kansas and one or two of the gang sighted Kennedy's approach with Goldie on horseback.

"What the Sam Hill!" blurted Kansas.

Rand and Goldie cantered up to the cabin and dismounted. As they stood there, with the gang gaping at them, Tex came out of the shack. He stared at Goldie in amazement, then at Rand, and finally at the arm with which Rand was encircling the girl's waist.

"Oh, hallo, Tex!" Kennedy drawled. "I was jest about to tell the boys that Goldie is goin' to partake of our Southern hospitality—just until I straighten out my affairs and take her with me to Canada. Run along inside, honey, and make yourself at home," he added to the girl by his side. "I've got to burn the wind for the Circle H, but I'll be back to night."

"Good-bye, Rand," said Goldie sweetly.

"Aw, ain't you gonna say it with a kiss?" he protested; and, much as his nearness repelled her, she surrendered her lips.

Tex turned away bitterly, and walked to a corral situated at some distance from the cabin. As Goldie entered the shack Rand glanced in the youngster's direction, and he was watching him, with a leer on his face, when Kansas confronted him.

"Rand," said Kansas vehemently, "what are you drawin' to? That gal don't love you. Why'd you bring her here?"

"It occurred to me," Rand observed. "that she might be gettin' lonesome down there in Campo Santo—hidin' out for a killin'."

"What do you mean?"

"Bess Morgan was acquitted of that killin' right after she beat it over the border to French Sadie's place an' changed her name to Goldie," Rand went on. "It's too bad the law never caught up with her to tell her she wasn't wanted."

Kansas glared at him, his brow darkening.

"You've been keepin' the fact that she's a free woman under your hat," he ground out. "Rand, if I couldn't get a girl to marry me any way but that, I'd ride single all my life."

"You can tell her the good news," said Rand easily, "if Tex don't beat you to it."

Kansas started violently. "You ain't askin' me to believe he knows what you jest told me?" he demanded.

"He does," was the crafty rejoinder, "if he was listenin' in the sheriff's office last night—hidin' behind a door. Listen, Kansas, the first time you hear him askin' Goldie if she's Bess Morgan, and he tells her what I've told you—then it'll prove even to your trustin' mind that he's workin' with the sheriff, and out to hang every one of us."

"All I gotta say is

—you'd better be right," Kansas ground out.

"And if I am, what about Tex?"

Kansas fingered the butt of one of his guns. His eyes were like cold steel, as he switched them towards the corral where the youngster was standing.

"That's the end of his trail right there," he said between his teeth.

The Gang Rides.

It was night. Kansas and Rand stood by an open window of the cabin.

From the interior of the dwelling came the sound of Goldie's voice.

"I've been waiting all day for a chance to see you alone," the eavesdroppers heard her say. "You didn't believe that I was really going with Rand, Tex, did you?"

"Aren't you?"

"Of course not," Goldie answered. "But I didn't know where you were. I took the chance that I'd find you wherever Rand brought me."

"Find me?" echoed Tex's voice.

"What for?"

"To warn you not to go riding again, Tex, because Rand said to Poncho that the next time you wouldn't come back. Oh, don't you see? I thought if I came up here you wouldn't have any excuse to go riding again, would you?"

She was sitting with Tex close to the window. Neither of them knew that Rand and Kansas were outside, but Tex suspected that they might be. That was why he answered the girl guardedly.

"Of course not, honey," he said. "Why should I?"

"Then why did you tell Kansas that you came to see me the other night?" Goldie began, but Tex cut in on her.

"It was mighty fine of you to come here and warn me about Rand," he said.

There was a little silence. During that silence Kansas took the opportunity to turn round towards

Rand and glower at him menacingly. But a moment later his attention was diverted by the sound of Goldie's voice.

"Tex, there's something that I haven't told you about. I'm—wanted by the law—for something that I can't talk of now. That's why I've been staying at Sadie's. Rand knows about it. He always kept pressing me to let him take me away to Canada—"

Tex sprang to his feet, his eyes blazing.

"So that's his game, huh?" he



"I see you got Rand," he said. "Was kinda hopin' that pleasure would be mine!"

jerked, and next moment he was striding out of the cabin.

Rand and Kansas jumped aside from the window. A moment later the former found himself face to face with the youngster who had fallen under his suspicion.

"I've got some sad news for you, Rand," drawled Tex. "When we're finished ridin' to-night Goldie is takin' that trail to Canada, but you won't be with her—'cause I'm goin' in your place."

"Yeah?" growled Rand. Goldie had followed Tex out of the shack. The youngster turned to her.

"Tell him what you told me," he said to her, and, as she gazed at him in bewilderment, "It appears Goldie's got the idea you didn't approve of my callin' on her so often," Tex went on, "and that you were gonna put a permanent stop to it. Of course"—with biting sarcasm—"I know she's got you all wrong. But I thought she'd feel better to have you say so. Hadn't you better say it, Rand?"

"He's said too much already," put in Kansas bitterly.

Rand's cold, merciless eyes were riveted on Tex's face.

"I wouldn't start nothin' I couldn't finish," he warned.

By fast thinking Tex had turned an ugly situation to his benefit, but nevertheless his anger against Rand was genuine enough.

"I'm finishin' way ahead of you!" he ground out. "Get that. And I'm thankin' you for bringin' Goldie out here, seein' it saves me the trouble of ridin' into town. Of course, I wouldn't like to deprive you of the pleasure of trying to kill me, Rand. So if you're still feelin' that ambitious—maybe now is just as good a time as any!"

With the words he plucked out his six-gun with a rapid gesture, so that Rand jerked back, his face visibly paling.

"Wait a minute." It was the voice of Kansas, and Kansas laid a hand on Tex's arm. "I want to talk to you, pardner. Go inside."

Tex thrust his iron back into its holster, and turned towards the door of the cabin.

"I sorta figured you'd be paralysed at a show-down, Rand," he said over his shoulder.

Kansas moved towards Rand as Tex went inside the shack. He drew him out of Goldie's hearing.

"It looks like the kid's got the laugh on you," he stated, baring his teeth in a grin.

Rand shrugged.

"All right, Kansas," he muttered. "Maybe he wasn't in the sheriff's office that night—and maybe he's too smart to let on. But what about the particular night we know he didn't see Goldie? Are you still believin' the explanation he gave?"

Rand was referring to a jaunt made by Tex the previous night the night immediately following Goldie's arrival and the gang's decision to raid a bunch of cattle twenty-four hours later.

"We're ridin'," said Kansas, without answering Rand.

"And Tex?"

"He'll be right close to my apron-strings," Kansas replied, "where I can keep my eye on him—jest in case something happened like you suspicion, and I wanted to be sure he didn't come back. But if you're wrong, Rand, don't aggravate me by mixin' your personal grievances with business."

Saying which Kansas made his way into the cabin, where he located Tex.

July 25th, 1931.

"I reckon Rand's been shootin' off his mouth a lot," were Tex's first words.

"What does it matter what Rand says?" Kansas argued. "He's only jealous of you. Do you suppose that if a man in his right mind told me a friend of mine was a star-packer, I'd believe him?"

Tex pursed his lips, and then glanced at Kansas solemnly.

"If you did believe him, what would you do?" he asked.

"I'd shoot him like a snake," Kansas rapped out. Then he laid a hand on Tex's shoulder. "Aw, forget it," he went on carelessly. "I came in to tell you that we're ridin'—pronto. The boys are waitin' outside."

Tex shifted in his chair. "I ain't ridin' after to-night, pardner," he murmured. "I'm takin' a different trail with Goldie. I wish you'd go along with us. I'm goin' to sorta miss you, Kansas."

Kansas clapped him on the back jovially.

"You're a great kid, Tex," he declared. "Pardner."

"What do you say?" "I'll tell you after ridin'," Kansas promised. "Let's get goin'."

They passed out of the cabin. Rand, Poncho, Dusty and the three men from the Bar Y were already in the saddle. Tex and Kansas tightened the girth-ropes around their ponies and set foot in stirrup. A moment later the gang was riding through the waning starlight, filing between the clumps of Spanish Bayonet and the acacia thickets on the trail that led northwards.

The first grey streaks of dawn located them on the mesquite prairies of the southern Texas landscape, and by sun-up they were pushing into a valley where a drove of several hundred head of bees were grazing.

Concealed in a strip of woodland, another band of horsemen watched their approach. They were the sheriff and a formidable posse, and the moment the gang was sighted the sheriff began to give orders.

"Here's where we spread out," he said. "Tex will give us the signal when he fires, boys—"

The Round-Up.

THE rustlers were likewise spreading out—to envelop the herd which they intended to drive across the border. True to his word, Kansas rode stirrup-to-stirrup with Tex, and, presently halting with him in the shadow of a lone elm, he surveyed the drove of cattle with the satisfaction of a connoisseur in stolen beef.

"A pretty nice looking bunch, Tex," he observed. "Ought to stock us up for a long time."

Tex's expression was pensive. "Surely will, Kansas," he murmured, and then he laid a hand on the pommel of his companion's saddle.

"Remember what you said back in the cabin, pardner?" he went on, changing the subject. "That you'd tell me, after we'd finished ridin', if you were takin' my trail?"

Kansas nodded.

"Yeah, but we ain't finished ridin' yet," he rejoined, and, looking round, marked Poncho and Rand bearing down on the right flank of the herd.

Tex quietly drew his six-gun and nursed the muzzle of it against Kansas' ribs.

"You're finished ridin', pardner," he said. "Don't move until I tell you. Then turn around easy and head for the creek down there."

Kansas elevated his hands. His face had become livid with chagrin.

"Remember what I said about shootin' a star-packer like a snake?" he ground out. "I wish I'd believed Rand an' done it!"

"You've got me wrong, Kansas," Tex told him huskily. "I want you to get clear. It ain't too late for our trails to cross again."

"If they ever do you better see me comin'," Kansas blurted.

It was at that precise moment that Poncho the Mexican detected a movement in the strip of woodland in which the sheriff and his posse had taken up position, and under the spreading boughs of one of the trees he saw a deputy. Drawing a pearl-handled revolver, Poncho fired, and the deputy pitched out of the saddle with a groan.

Next instant there was a great outcry, and the rest of the posse burst clear of the shelter of the woods.

"Get goin', Kansas!" jerked Tex, and, as he emphasised the command with a jab of the gun, the old rustler snatched up the reins with an angry gesture and clapped spurs to his brone.

The valley was in an uproar. Guns were blazing and hoofs drumming. The cattle, grazing so peacefully a little while before, plunged forward in a wild stampede. The dust rose in clouds to obscure the scene.

The sheriff and his posse bore down on the rustlers at full gallop, shooting as they came. Poncho tried to empty another saddle, but a bullet from a deputy's gun thudded into the middle of his breast. A scream broke from the Mexican's lips, and he plunged to the ground.

One of the Bar Y men was hit in the arm, and Dusty took a slug in the stomach that dropped him in a writhing heap. Rand blazed off a couple of shots at the charging representatives of the law, but he was not the man to stand his ground when his comrades were falling all around him, and he switched his brone to the left and made a bolt for it.

He headed for the creek in the direction of which Kansas was already riding. It marked the direct route to the border and the surest way of escape. But the posse had opened out fanwise in their rush, and three of the deputies pushed between Rand and the line of his flight.

Rand swerved, changing his course and riding over the western rim of the valley towards an outcrop of the chain of the Sierra del Sacramento, intending to detour through the hills and strike the border somewhere in the vicinity of San Juan Bautista. Tex saw him, and galloped in pursuit with the aim of baffling that design if he could. He was thinking, too, of Goldie.

The three deputies who had balked Rand's dash to the creek were diverted by the flying form of Kansas. One of them took steady aim with his six-gun and fired at the fugitive, and as the iron belched flame and lead the old rustler was seen to come up in the saddle with a jerk, then sag forward across his pony's neck. But he kept his seat and rode on over the trail that led to freedom.

Meanwhile, Tex was "burning the wind" three or four hundred yards behind Rand Kennedy. Their brones were fairly evenly matched for speed, and the sierras were reached without any appreciable change taking place in the distance that separated the two horses.

Rand pushed through the hills without permitting his pony to slacken its stride. Then he followed the border line east-

(Continued on page 26.)

"RIDERS OF THE NORTH."

(Continued from page 9.)

you, Mac, that sergeant is as full of tricks as a monkey—and he sure believes in getting his man!"

McGuire could only nod.

Not so many yards away from the depot, in a little hut that was curiously silent, Ann and the squaw sat, with their hands folded in their laps, staring into space with the stare that tells of broken hearts.

The door opened quietly, and almost listlessly Ann looked round.

It was Inspector Devlin.

"Come in, inspector," she whispered.

"Thanks—sure I will," said Devlin in his blunt, kindly way. "Say, Miss Ann, your brother seems to have caught up in a bit of bother, and I just want you to know that no blame can be laid on Ned Stone because he brought your brother in."

"He tricked him here—in this very room—under my eyes," she retorted. "He came here as my friend, and he used that friendship to get my own brother."

"Well, he's going away, and I sort of guess he wants to say so," said the inspector, and raised his voice. "Come in, Ned!"

The door opened again—but it was Tom who came in first. Ned Stone's red tunic was behind.

"You are taking him away?" she said.

"Away?" blurted out Tom. "He's brought me back. He tricked McGuire into a confession. They planted the gun on me after Leclere had shot him. Ann—I'm free!"

"Free?" echoed Ann dully.

"Sure, I'm free—sure!" exclaimed Tom ecstatically.

But the last "sure" was in answer to the inspector's nodded indication that two was company and four was not. He went out into the far room with the inspector. But it was only for a moment.

It was the inspector who opened the door again, wide enough for them both to poke their heads into the room in which were Ann and Ned. Those two, in the curiously silent way understanding lovers have, had crossed the floor and met.

"Say, Miss Ann, I forgot to say that Ned is going for two weeks leave, and they do say that the west lake is a fine place for a honeymoon!" said the inspector.

And again the door was closed, this time very firmly.

Ned took her gently by the shoulders.

"If I am forgiven for my tricks—what do you say, Ann?" he asked very softly.

"I should just love—a honeymoon trip!" she whispered.

And weeks of anxiety drifted into the dim past as quickly as he stopped further utterance in the only possible way.

(By permission of the British Lion Film Corporation, Ltd., starring Bob Custer and Blanche Mehaffey.)



(Continued from page 2.)

Thrills for the Cameramen.

There are times when the cameramen have their thrills the same as artists. Imagine what it must be like hanging downwards on the under-side of an aeroplane several hundred feet in the air and with a camera taking pictures in this inverted and perilous position. Yet this is precisely what three cameramen had to do when filming aerial and naval manoeuvres at Panama.

Among the thrills which the cameramen experienced was that of operating their machines while the naval pilots made take-offs and landings in a space where a few inches would have meant disaster. Other cameramen had to work from a "target" plane just a few feet ahead of bullets from a battle fleet. The cameras were elamped to naval planes trailing the kite-like targets which, towed in the air some distance from behind the ships, served as marks for anti-aircraft guns from below. It may be interesting to know that these scenes are among the aviation thrills filmed for the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture, "Sea Eagles," in which Wallace Beery and Marjorie Rambeau play principal parts.

Just for Luck.

Bobby Coogan, brother of the famous Jackie, does not apparently believe in (Continued on page 28.)



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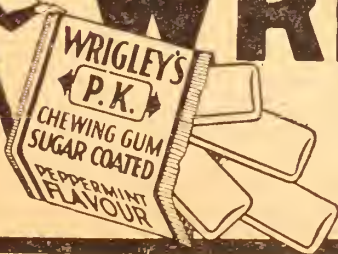
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"THE SUNRISE TRAIL."

(Continued from page 24.)

ward till he gained the canyon in which the rustlers' lair nestled. He swung himself out of the saddle at the front door of the cabin, and as he dropped to the ground Goldie came running out.

She looked strained and anxious.

"Where are the others?" she panted. "Where's—Tex?"

Rand's eyes narrowed dangerously.

"What you heard, me tell Poncho goes," he snarled. "That star-packin' friend of yours ain't never comin' back!"

Even as he spoke he heard the drumming of hoofs, and a moment later he saw Tex riding clear of a mass of brushwood that masked the mouth of the canyon. With a violent gesture Rand pushed Goldie into the shack and snatched out his shooting-iron.

Tex caught sight of him only when the gun was in his fist. He tried to grab his own forty-five, but Rand's Colt crashed deafeningly ere his fingers could close on the butt.

A grunt escaped Tex. He dived out of the saddle and hit the ground on the point of his shoulder, the shock jarring him and accentuating a searing pain high up on his left arm. He thought he was going to faint, but fought back the sensation with a sheer effort of will and reached for his hip again.

Rand jerked his gun forward viciously, and fired three bullets in quick succession. They spurted the dust over Tex's face, but did not strike him, and his hand closed on his revolver and wrenched it free.

He pulled the trigger. A shot burst with a smashing report, and Rand suddenly came up on his toes, a stupefied expression on his thin face. Then his eyes glazed, and he pitched forward with a hollow groan.

Tex struggled to his feet, and, covering Rand's prone form cautiously, he walked towards the man. A closer scrutiny of his body convinced him that he had nothing to fear from Rand, and he had returned his six-gun to its holster when Goldie stumbled out of the cabin.

"Oh, Tex," she moaned, and then, seeing the blood that stained his shirt-sleeve: "You're hurt!" she gasped.

"Just a scratch," he said with an effort.

She helped him inside and led him to a chair. He sank down and began to unbutton his cuff.

"No, no," she protested, "don't you do that. Let me take care of it for you. I'll get some water and bathe the wound, Tex."

She hurried through to a back room. Tex leaned back in the chair, dizzily. The pain in his arm was beginning to be excruciating, yet he was not thinking of himself. He was thinking of Kansas.

Different Trails.

OF his flight from the valley after the deputy's bullet had struck him in the back Kansas had no clear impression. For, about a mile from the scene of the ambush, his senses abandoned him and left him oblivious of his surroundings and the movements of his horse.

When he recovered consciousness the pony had come to a standstill and was contentedly eating leaves from a mesquite branch that hung over the trail. How long he had been there Kansas could not tell, but as he looked about him he

realised that he was in the neighbourhood of the border.

He rode on, and in about fifteen minutes he gained the canyon where the hide-out was situated. He halted at some little distance from the cabin and left his mount tethered in the brushwood, proceeding at a slow pace on foot.

As he drew nearer he saw Tex's sorrel munching grass in the vicinity of the shack, and his eyes glittered ominously. Then he discerned the figure of Rand Kennedy sprawled near the doorstep.

The wound in the old rustler's body was like a living coal, but his will challenged physical agony. Tex was here—Tex, who had talked of comradeship and then turned out to be a star-packer, hand-in-glove with the sheriff. The thought hammered through Kansas' reeling brain, and he walked on with unsteady, but determined, gait.

He had a mission to perform before he took his trail.

Kansas reached the little veranda of the cabin, crossed it silently and leaned against the jamb of the door. The door was open, and in the front room of the shack, sitting in that chair with his back to him, he saw Tex.

Kansas drew one of his guns and moved across the threshold.

"Turn around, Tex," he said slowly, "so you can see who's givin' it to you."

Tex's chair scraped. He stumbled to his feet and wheeled, gaping at Kansas. There was a look of anxiety on his clean-cut face, but it was not on his own account.

"Get going, Kansas," he blurted, "before the sheriff comes up with you!"

Kansas stared at him under beetling brows. He was swaying a little on his feet, but he held his six-gun steadily enough.

"Get goin', huh?" he ground out. "Not until I get you!"

Kansas levelled the forty-five. To him this youngster seemed a low-down double-crosser. He did not understand what Tex had tried to do for him. To him Tex seemed to have violated a trust, when actually he had held tenaciously to the bonds of partnership in the face of the law, in the face of circumstances that had made his position difficult and insecure.

Tex did not flinch. He looked at Kansas sadly, regretfully, watching him as he took aim.

The old rustler's finger curled on the trigger. At that same instant a deadly spasm of pain racked his body, searing through and through him from the wound in his back. He toppled forward uncertainly. The barrel of his six-gun dipped.

The weapon went off with a roar, but the bullet smashed harmlessly into the floor-boards. Next second Tex had caught Kansas in his arms.

Goldie came running through from the back room.

"He's been badly hit, I guess," said Tex hoarsely. "We'll get him on to that bunk."

They laid him out on a bed. Presently Kansas opened his eyes, to find Goldie stooping over him and laying wet cloths on his head. Tex crouched beside her.

"It sure is—mighty flatterin'—to see you all hot-up over me—Goldie," Kansas breathed.

Goldie pressed his hand. She was holding his gnarled fingers tightly in his grasp when the stillness of the canyon was broken by the sound of hoofs. An expression that held a touch of resignation crossed Kansas' face.

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"SCREEN STORIES."

ON SALE WEDNESDAY.
July 25th, 1931.

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Tex glanced through the window, and saw the sheriff riding through the brushwood alone. He scrambled to his feet and hurried out of the cabin even as the representative of the law dismounted near the door.

The sheriff looked down at the figure of Kennedy.

"I see you got Rand," he said. "Was kinda hopin' that pleasure would be mine."

Tex nodded.

"He tried to finish me off," he mentioned, "but his shootin' was about as straight as the way he lived. Did you get the rest of the gang?"

"All but Kansas," was the rejoinder. "And I figured on gettin' him most specially."

There was a silence, and then the sheriff pointed to the blood on Tex's shirt-sleeve.

"I see you got hit there," he said concernedly. "Come on into the cabin and I'll wash that up for you, kid."

Tex had learned to do some fast thinking in the last week or two, but here was a situation where it was necessary to bluff the law, and not a bunch of rustlers. "The mind, and not the hand, must be quicker than the eye."

The sheriff was moving towards the door of the shack. One step more and he could not fail to see the man whom Goldie was nursing.

Tex slipped between him and the threshold, barring the way.

"Aw, don't bother about this, sheriff," he protested, indicating his arm. "Kansas is gettin' farther away from you every minute. The last time I saw him he was headed for the pass."

"Yeah?"

"He sure was," Tex proceeded, "and ridin' heaven-to-split. You take the ridge and I'll take the canyon, and we'll try to head him off."

Inside the cabin, both Goldie and Kansas heard Tex's words, and a queer, whimsical light of understanding came into the wounded man's eyes. Then the sheriff's reply reached his ears.

"That's a good idea," the representative of the law declared. "Let's get goin'."

He sprang to his horse and swung himself into the saddle, riding off through the brushwood and spurring out of the canyon to make for the ridge of which Tex had spoken. Had he looked back he might have observed that Tex did not take to horse, but turned to re-enter the shack.

Crossing the threshold, Tex made his way to the bunk on which the last of the rustlers lay. Kansas conjured up a pitiful smile as he approached, and then lifted a hand. His grip had lost its strength, but his fingers closed eloquently on the youngster's fist.

Tex sank down on his knees by the bedside. He was shocked and alarmed to see that the wounded man's face was deathly pale.

Kansas gazed at him reminiscently. His mind was drifting back to their first encounter in French Sadie's saloon at Campo Santo—to the card-game in which Fancy Joe had met his match.

"Ain't you gonna show me—where you got that fourth ace—Tex?" he murmured.

Tex bent over him.

"Sure—Kansas," he said huskily. "There'll be plenty of time for showin' you—where we're going'. We'll be takin' that different trail. You, and Goldie—an' me—"

Kansas looked beyond him dreamily, and his eyes seemed to be hazy. He moved his head from side to side—a wistful, negative movement. On the other side of the bunk, Goldie had begun to cry, silently, and suddenly Tex felt a lump rise in his throat. For he knew that what he had proposed could never be.

Kansas was taking another trail, remote from the one they would follow. Kansas was dying. The bloodless pallor of his pinched face and the glassiness of his eyes was death.

"You—an' Goldie," said Kansas softly. "But me—I've finished ridin'—pardner—"

His head sank back on Tex's outstretched arm.

Gently Tex withdrew his arm from under the dead man's head and, raising Goldie up in his arms, moved with her towards the door of the shack.

"Good-bye, old pardner," he whispered back over his shoulder ere closing the door on a chapter of his career that would for ever live in his memory.

(By permission of the Gaumont-Tiffany Film Co. Ltd., starring Bob Steele and Blanche McHaffey.)

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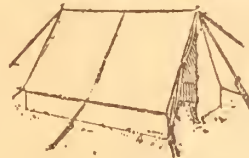
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(Continued from page 25.)

shaking hands, as is usual after a film contract has been signed.

Bobby recently accompanied his father, Jack Coogan, sen., to the office of Ben Schulberg, of Paramount, where the grown-ups were to settle all the details relating to Bobby's contract with that company. When everything had been carefully discussed and approved, Papa Coogan affixed his signature and then Mr. Schulberg signed on behalf of Paramount. Bobby, who had up till now been a silent and very bored witness of the whole proceedings, came forward from his seat.

"Is it all set now, Pop," he inquired. "Yes, all set, Bobby," replied the elder Coogan, beaming down at his little son.

With that Bobby rushed round behind Mr. Schulberg's desk. But as that gentleman turned round to shake hands with the eager-faced boy, Bobby gave him a sharp kick on the shins. For a few seconds there was dead silence, and when the grown-ups had recovered from their astonishment, Papa Coogan demanded what Bobby had meant by his action. Turning to Mr. Schulberg, Bobby explained with a grin:

"That's for luck, Mr. Schulberg!"

Animal Doubles.

You all have read much from time to time about artistes who double for others in certain stunts. But how many of you know that there are doubles among the famous horses seen in Western films?

Before Tom Mix retired from pictures, his numerous admirers were as greatly interested in Tony as in the cowboy himself. Yet Tom Mix did not have one Tony, as was generally supposed, but eight horses which could be cast in that name. And they were all so much alike that picture-goers could not tell which was which. The reason was this: One horse could not have been used year after year in daring stunts, without some mishap or illness coming to the animal. That would have meant holding up the production, always a costly affair. Again, in "long shots," it was not necessary to use the same horse as picture-goers saw more closely on the screen. For these and other reasons, more than one Tony was required.

Again, in "The Painted Desert," Bill Boyd rides a horse which has doubled for other horses. "Ghost," as he is known, has doubled for Ken Maynard's horse. "Ghost's" master, Bill Hurley,

considers his equine possession so valuable that he has refused numerous offers from purchasers. But though "Ghost" has been in pictures for years, he is never cast under that name. He is always a double for some other horse.

Perils of Alpine Talkie.

Dr. Arnold Franck, who made that splendid silent picture, "The White Hell of Pitz Palu," has followed it with another drama of the Alps called "Avalanche." This new picture, which some of you have doubtless seen already, has the distinction of being the first Alpine talkie. Also it was filmed 15,750 feet up in the rarefied atmosphere on Mont Blanc's summit.

Hardships and risks that threatened death had to be faced day after day. The daring cameramen carried their apparatus on their backs and their lives in their hands when they descended, at a rope's end, the torn glaciers to secure their pictures.

Life and property were frequently in danger from avalanches, snowstorms and Alpine thunder and lightning. Added to all this was the difficulty of breathing comfortably at such a high altitude, the suffering from glacier burns—caused by the refraction of the sun's rays on the ice—and a shortage of food and water.

There were, too, fissures in the rocky face of the mountain, lightly covered over with snow so that one could not see the sheer, bottomless drops between walls of solid ice. One day, Dr. Franck himself, experienced mountaineer though he is, fell into one of these treacherous pitfalls. He was rescued alive from a depth of seventy feet.

The rope on which all mountain climbers rely for safety is impracticable for filming, and the production company were obliged to discard its use for linking them to safety.

Dr. Franck was studying a new camera position when he suddenly disappeared from sight on what seemed to be a smooth snowy surface. Those who saw the incident were stunned into silence for a few moments. Then a rope was lowered down the crevasse, and after several minutes Franck's voice could be heard.

He was wedged between the walls of the crevasse, head downwards, but managed to secure the rope round his body and was hauled to safety. He was badly bruised, and his skin cut and grazed, but fortunately no bones were broken.

"THE MIDNIGHT SPECIAL."

(Continued from page 18.)

came in at Jerry, his fists lashing out like flails.

Jerry caught a lard blow full between the eyes, another on the side of his head, but though somewhat dazed, he flung gallantly forward and grappled desperately with his man.

Backwards and forwards they raged beside the drawn-up touter, while Ellen, standing up in the front of the vehicle, gazed fearfully down at them, a fervent prayer upon her lips that Jerry would gain the mastery.

"Jerry! Oh, Jerry, look out!" Ellen's face blanched and her hazel grey eyes goggled with a terrible fear as the two fiercely fighting men suddenly lurched to the very edge of the road. "Jerry! Oh, for heavens sake—"

Her words ended in a terrifying scream as they went over, dropping quickly from her sight.

Dead! The dread word hammered in Ellen's burning brain and she felt her knees grow suddenly weak beneath her. But with an effort, she forced herself from the car, went to the edge of the road and gazed fearfully over. To her amazed eyes, she saw two furiously fighting figures slithering down a fairly steep slope and as it was borne in upon her that at this spot the side of the road did not drop sheer to the valley, she gave a little hysterical laugh.

The fight went on, fierce and relentless, all the way down that slope. But the valley reached, it came to a sudden end. Ellen saw one of the combatants slowly get to his feet while the other lay stretched full length on his face. And she could just make out by the clothes he wore that the vanquished was George Walton.

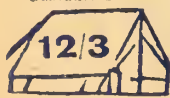
A week later no more happy youngster could be found in the whole of the little town of Burke than Jerry Boone. He still limped painfully around as a result of the cuts and bruises he had sustained in the never-to-be-forgotten fight with Walton, who was now safe behind prison bars.

Jerry's future was assured. He was back in the services of the railroad company, his name vindicated, his position now that of section superintendent—a handsome promotion he thoroughly deserved. But to him this was not the greatest joy in his young life. He and Ellen were to be married in a day or so and that was what brought him his present great feeling of happiness.

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Complete Film Stories in This Issue.

Boys' CINEMA 2^D

No. 607.

EVERY TUESDAY.

AUGUST 1st, 1931.

A thrilling
story of the
West.
Starring
**BOB
CUSTER.**





The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"Under Texas Skies."

Rankin, Bob Custer; Joan Prescott, Natalie Kingston; Captain Hartford, Tom London; Singer Martin, Lane Chandler; The Agent, Bill Cody; Deputy-marshal, William McCall; Sheriff Moody, J. S. Marba; The Dummy, Bob Roper.

"The Spy."

Anna, Kay Johnson; Ivan, Neil Hamilton; Sergei, John Halliday; Kolya, Freddie Frederick; Yaseha, Milton Holmes; Petya, Austen Jewell; President of Teheka, Henry Kolker.

"Firebrand Jordan."

Firebrand Jordan, Lane Chandler; Joan Howe, Aline Goodwin; Red Carson, Yakima Canutt; David Hampton, Sheldon Lewis; Peggy Howe, Marguerite Ainslee; Ed Burns, Tom London; Spike, Lew Meehan; Tony Perelli, Frank Yaconalli; Ah Sing, Alfred Hewston; Judd Howe, Fred Harvey; Pete, Cliff Lyons.

Old Ghost Town Walks Again.

Kernville, a deserted gold centre, once more comes into the limelight as the locale of the Western film, "Firebrand Jordan." The town was the scene of much feverish activity way back in '49, and was rapidly populated by prospectors and the usual band of outlaws who follow in the track of gold rushes.

One particular section of the town, in time, came to be known as the "whiskey flats," the district of hard-drinking, fast-shooting, bad men, who recognised none but their own law.

The old cemetery, one of the sights of the town, bears silent witness in its headstones to the hundreds of inhabitants of this section who died in their boots during the troublesome times of '49.

Tom Mix to Return.

Tom Mix's admirers, whose number is legion, will be delighted to learn that their favourite cowboy hero will again be seen in pictures.

It is a little over two years ago that the most famous of all cowboy stars was offered so much money to star in a circus that he left Hollywood flat. But that he would one day be persuaded to return was obvious to many who knew his value in filmland. Well, now the thing has been done. The Universal Film Company, through its sixty-five-years-old president, Carl Laemmle, has offered Tom Mix a salary, which, though the figure is not disclosed, is understood to be exceedingly high.

When Tom Mix left pictures he was reputed to be making about £2,000 a week. His new contract calls for six pictures, the first of which is to be begun in October. The star will be given a separate production company, a director, and all facilities so that his August 1st, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S THREE COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



A gambler, falsely accused of murder, eludes pursuit and gets a job on a ranch, where he turns the tables on a despicable rogue. Action-adventure-romance—in a grand Western thriller, starring Mahlon Hamilton and Doris Hill.

"LES AMOURS DE MINUIT."

A grand and gripping crook drama of life and adventure in the underworld.

"THE KID FROM ARIZONA."

Cattlemen at Fire Mountain are terrorised by a mysterious band of "ghost" Indians, but the "Kid From Arizona" solved the mystery, won a great horse race, and brought a crook to justice. Starring Jack Perrin and his horse, Starlight.

pictures can be produced on the big, spectacular scale beloved of Hollywood. In addition to Tom Mix, Universal has also signed a contract with Hoot Gibson to make six big Western pictures before the end of the year.

A Thrilling Fight Scene.

Few of you may know that there is in British films a Charles Farrell, who is no relation to his American namesake. Farrell, the Englishman, can boast of having had a fight in every film in which he has appeared, and they are many. He can show you proof of this in the twenty-seven scars he has received in various studios. His most recent encounter was for "The Man at Six," a British International Picture, produced at Elstree, where his opponent was Gerald Rawlinson.

The fight began with Rawlinson leaping over a refectory table in pursuit of

Farrell, who turned and felled him with a clip on the chin. After that the two went at it, "hot and strong." Rawlinson, after struggling to his feet, launched himself bodily at the departing Farrell, and brought him down in fine Rugby style. Then for several minutes the two men struggled with each other on the floor, till Farrell, as required by the story, began to throttle his opponent, and only stopped when Harry Hughes, the director, gave the O.K. signal.

Exit Farina.

Farina has said good-bye to "Our Gang" comedies. Already many of you may have noticed that his place on the screen has been taken by a new, little coloured eon known as "Stymie."

The departure of Farina is certain to be regretted by millions of picture-goers. For though the other "Our Gang" youngsters were all favourites, it was the little black boy who could roll his eyes so comically that really engaged our interest most. Some of you may remember that when Farina first appeared in films he was always dressed as a girl.

Picture-goers, in fact, used to have heated arguments over the question of his sex. Meanwhile, Farina hated the wearing of skirts and pigtails, and there was no gladder day for him at the studio than when Hal Roach, his producer, permitted him to appear as a boy. Even then, he continued to be as funny as ever. But he was growing up, and, when he reached the age of eleven, it was felt that he was too old to frolic before the camera with the rest of "Our Gang."

His name in real life is Allen Clayton Hoskins.

Answers to Questions.

No. I should not advise you to enclose a stamped and addressed envelope when you write to artistes in America. Allen (Queensland). A better way would be to put in each letter an international coupon, obtainable at almost any post-office. Clara Bow has retired from the screen, but your other favourites can be addressed as follows: Jack Oakie, care of the Paramount Public Studios, Hollywood, California, U.S.A.; Ronald Colman, care of United Artists Studios, 1041, North Formosa Avenue, Hollywood, California, and Anita Page, care of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, Culver City, California. I am glad to hear you are able to see so many fine films.

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The girl owner of a horse ranch becomes the prey of a notorious band of rustlers, but a stranger comes to her aid and by amazing escapades turns the tables on her enemies.
Starring Bob Custer and Natalie Kingston.

UNDER TEXAS SKIES



Rustlers!

"HUR-P! Hurp!"
"Round off that leader, boys!"
"Hur-p! Hur-p!"
"Git that leader sorter turning to th' right!"
"Hur-up!"

The "boys" of the Circle A Ranch were well at it, rounding up the horses, young and old, that had been roaming over the vast, picturesque plains for days past.

There had been changes at Circle A Ranch. Things had not gone right for old Abe Prescott, and not a little of this trouble had arisen through the incessant raids of horse thieves. Years, and the worry, sent Abe Prescott to his grave, and put his daughter Joan in possession not only of the ranch but of the worries.

Joan was a sensible girl. She realised that before she could hope to make the ranch a successful business she would have to get rid of the debts her somewhat careless father had accumulated.

The ranch hands, from top to bottom, were with her. They had not been paid for weeks past, but they were getting their food and had their living-quarters, and were content to work on with the "young missy."

Joan had that morning given instructions to round up the horses, and everybody knew that those horses were destined for the Remounts Department of the Government services.

Many of the horses were more or less wild, never having been broken into the saddle. But in spite of this there was no doubt but that the Circle A bunch of horses was a pretty fine lot.

And judging by the skill with which the boys rounded them up, Circle A could also apply the words "pretty fine lot" to the boys themselves. They rode with the ease and grace of men born

to the saddle, their clever mounts obeying the slightest pressure of knee or the merest sound of voices. In fact, they were obeying the direction of the boys' leader almost before the boys had fully grasped what those orders were.

"Let 'em run, boys—let 'em run!"
"Hur-p! Hurp!"

Through the valley, with the towering hills, the bush-lined trails, and the dried-up grass plains reflecting the burning rays of the midday sun, the Circle A outfit cut for home.

It was a scene of astonishing activity. The boys' horses galloped round and round with the furious speed of race-horses, but with the sure-footedness of mountain goats. Baked-up ditches were jumped with a recklessness that only the urgency of precious seconds could justify. But the leaders of the bunch had to be turned when such ditches were reached, or there would be many a broken leg and a useless horse left in the clouds of dust that the outfit left behind.

Never a horse fell. As skillfully as though every horse had its rider, or was at least guided by reins held in steel-like fingers, the bunch was driven to right or to left away from danger, and always towards the ranch.

A mile more the dusty, baked ground was to be covered when there appeared on top of a hill the figure of a man mounted upon a cayuse. In a matter of seconds he was joined by three others.

It was when they stood up in their saddles, to strain their eyes and peer down into the valley where Circle A boys were at work, that the ranch foreman saw them and let out a yell of warning.

"Head 'em off—head 'em off!" he bellowed. "There's Mustang Pete and his gang!"

"Hur-p!"

As though their very lives depended upon it, four of the Circle A boys rode to head off the horses, and in an uncannily short time the whole outfit had come to a panting, sweating stop.

"Boys, git after Pete, or they'll sure bunch together and break up the hosses!" rapped out the ranch foreman. "Sam—Jim—Jack, stay with the bunch. Come on, the rest of you!"

No further orders were issued or wanted. But spurs went into the sides of willing mounts, and in a flash the Circle A boys were riding up the trail towards the spot where Mustang Pete and his men had been seen.

But they were too late to save Joan Prescott's horses. Mustang Pete had signalled his orders, and in a matter of seconds there were so many clouds of dust rising from pounding hoofs that it was almost impossible to tell which was friend and which was enemy.

Guns began to spit their messages of lead. A saddle next to the ranch foreman was emptied.

"On y' right, boys!" he roared.

Down in the valley were more clouds of dust and more bursts of revolver-fire. The ranch foreman groaned as he saw the three cowboys he had left to guard the horses driven off by sheer force of numbers, and their running fire was of no use. Mustang Pete had ample men to fight with and get Joan's horses on the move again.

Just off the trail the wounded cowboy had the attention of two of the ranch's best boys. The three below were chased out of the valley and a final shower of bullets followed them up the home trail. The ranch foreman had four others with him, but they could do nothing against Mustang Pete's gang.

The foreman gave one glance down into the valley, saw the clouds of dust arising where the bunch had already been set moving, and gritted his teeth with rage.

"They've done us, boys!" he shouted.

"Let's git outer hyer! We'll round 'em all up agin one day!"

Bullets and derisive shouts followed them as they, too, cut for the home trail. The bullets had no effect, but the derisive shout made the cowboys boil with bitter, hopeless rage.

They rode like fiends, tucking their own guns into their holsters when they were out of range of the rustlers, and it was not until they were nearly home that the foreman jerked his mount upon its haunches, removed his Stetson, and wiped his sweat-dripping brow.

"Here's a purty nice thing! Miss Joan's best hosses rustled under our very noses—and she reckonin' on selling them to the Government! Shucks! Anybody like my job?" he groaned.

There was a general shaking of heads. Breaking the news to Miss Joan was to be a most unpleasant task—and there was nobody like the foreman for the job.

It was a very discon-olate party that continued the ride to the Circle A Ranch, and if mere expressions could have caused any damage, Mustang Pete and his gang would have troubled neither Circle A nor any other ranch. But expressions and thoughts did no damage, and Mustang Pete, doubtless heartened by his somewhat easy victory, and encouraged by cleaning up such a fine bunch of horses as Joan Prescott's, was free to carry on his nefarious work.

A Valuable Prisoner.

"HEY-UP, boys! Who's down below?"

Mustang Pete and two of his gang, riding leisurely down the trail, and still chuckling over the discomfiture of the Circle A outfit, pulled up suddenly.

From their vantage-point they could gain a good view of the bottom trail, which was mainly used by direct travellers and the mail coaches. It needed but a single glance to tell the rustlers that the cloud of dust that had first attracted Mustang Pete's keen eyes was raised by a rider who was a stranger to those parts.

He did not wear the chaps the regular cowboys invariably sported. His riding-breeches were city made, and over his shirt he had a smart-cut black coat that would have done credit to a well-paid clerk. A white collar, a black tie, and a trim Stetson completed the outfit that proclaimed its wearer a visitor to the rough-and-ready West.

"Say, that's sure a guy who might like to know the way to his destination," mused Pete. "And I reckon we're the bucks to help a stranger in these hyer parts. Come on, boys! Cut him off at the South Canyon!"

In a flash the horses were turned and driven hard back along the trail, through the bushes, along a narrow path through a more heavily wooded section, and down a steep bank to the bottom trail. They had timed their arrival to a nicety, for the stranger was loping along within twenty yards of the open plain.

"Jerk up, stranger!" said Mustang Pete loudly.

The stranger had no option about the matter. He had three big horses in front of him, and one of these was quickly slipped behind him as he pulled up.

"Reckon you're a stranger around hyer?" said Pete affably.

"Sure. I'm on my way to Circle A ranch, which I guess is pretty handy," replied the stranger briefly.

"Sure it is—sure!" drawled Mustang Pete. "You've been riding so god-darned slow down the trail, stranger,

that we thought you were breakin' a Texas rule by overburdenin' your hoss—and a right, purty pinto he is!"

The rustlers looked in admiration at the pinto the stranger rode. He was not a big horse by any means—a pony in size if not in age. He had black and white patches as neatly arranged as if by an artist and he was, all in all, just about the prettiest horse those rustlers had ever seen.

"He's sure a nice pinto," agreed the stranger, his keen eyes watching his questioners warily. "I ain't ridden him hard, you can bet your next Sunday's dinner! Waal, thank you—"

"Waiter bit!" cut in Mustang Pete easily. "We're reckonin' that perhaps it's your pocket book that's too heavy. The rest of the trail to Circle A, stranger, is too hard for you and your pocket book. Better lay it over our way!"

The stranger did not reply in words. He dug his spurs fiercely into the pinto's sides, and in a flash it had reared up, scattered the horses in front of him, and was flying down the trail.

"Git him!" grunted Mustang Pete curtly.

He thudded after the stranger, and Mustang Pete doubtless thinking that one day perhaps the speed of his mount would mean the difference between hanging on a sheriff's rope and roaming under the glorious Texas skies, had what was probably the speediest horse in all Texas.

He unwound his rope as he rode, and at the rope-throwing game, too, Mustang Pete had few rivals. The stranger could not have heard the swirl of the noose as it whistled through the air, but he flung up his arms frantically as it settled over his shoulders.

He was a fraction of a second too late. Mustang Pete jerked the noose taut before the stranger could escape, and the rustler's big horse was only jerked a few yards before the little pinto had cast its dusty rider on to the dusty trail.

The rustlers were around him in a moment, and this time they had drawn their guns.

"You'll get a rope for this," said the stranger, between his teeth.

"Sure—when they catch us!" grinned Mustang Pete, and stared curiously at the neatly dressed victim. "Say, stranger, you're in a mighty hurry to git to Circle A—what might your business be thar?"

"That's my business!" snapped the stranger.

"Guess it might be ours, too," mused Mustang Pete. "Git him along to the shack, boys! Guess we'll have a talk with him."

"Move, stranger," grunted one of the rustlers, and a gun poking into the stranger's ribs was a persuasive form of argument.

It was ten minutes later when he was driven to a shack almost hidden in the bushes, and here two other rustlers joined them.

Mustang Pete slipped from his saddle and grabbed at the stranger as he showed a momentary inclination to make a run for it.

"Not so fast, stranger—you sure is showin' rotten manners for a city guy! You ain't said how'd y'do to the boys yet!" he drawled. "They're inside—waiting for you! Git that pinto in the corral, boys, whilst I do the inter-ducin'! This way, stranger!"

There was no help for it. The stranger had no gun and against a

bunch of rustlers who not only had guns, but who were quite prepared to use them on the slightest provocation he was as helpless as a babe.

He submitted himself to be led into the hut, where his keen eyes searchingly examined the faces of another half a dozen of Mustang Pete's boys.

"Well?" he snapped. "What now?"

"Git that pocket book—anything else he's got, too!" snapped Pete.

"Hustle, boys!"

The boys hustled, and although more than one of them received information, in the shape of a hard, bunched fist, that the stranger was no city weakling, sheer weight of numbers saw him crushed to the ground, and here his pockets were rifled with the speed that only comes with practice.

The pocket book was the first thing to be examined. A wad of dollar bills went into Mustang Pete's pocket, a photograph of a girl was tossed on to the table, and Pete gave his attention to the less inviting-looking papers.

But those who watched saw his eyes narrow until they were one straight line, and they saw his lips twist into a smile that they knew meant that Mustang Pete was a highly pleased man.

"Boys—these papers sure give me the grandest idea ever!" he drawled. "I reckon that generally prisoners ain't so mighty useful, but we have got a real valuable guy this time! Git him down to the bottom shack, and tell the Dummy that if he loses this guy he's sure gonna have a rough time! Busy, now!"

Again there was no questioning Mustang Pete's commands. The stranger, half unconscious at the rough treatment meted out to him, and his wits dulled by the crashing of a revolver butt on the back of his head, was picked up and carried to a smaller shack.

Without ceremony, he was dumped down on a plank bed over which was spread a single blanket and the boys turned to the only person who lived in the hut.

Person is the only description, for nothing more hideous could have been imagined. The Dummy was far more like a gorilla without the mass of hair, and although he watched the proceedings, and his mouth moved continuously, no sound came from him. He was as dumb as he was burly and ugly.

"Pete ses this guy has gotta stop!"

That was all the rustlers told the Dummy. He looked at them, lazily took up half a leg of mutton, and chewed a great lump off. Then, with a curious, ambling gait only to be compared with the gorilla with which he was so like, he shuffled to the door and closed it behind the rustlers.

The stranger took that to be his opportunity, for with the spring of a panther he was at his guard. Twice his great fist crashed home on the Dummy's jaw, but the burly brute only continued his lazy chewing. A third time and a fourth time blows that would have knocked out a world's champion thudded home—and it was at the fourth blow that the Dummy grabbed the stranger, hit him once, picked him up as though he were a schoolboy, and tossed him contemptuously on to the plank bed, as senseless as a log of wood.

Not a sound had come from his lips—not even a gasp of anger or alarm at the crashing blows that had landed upon his chin.

A moment later the Dummy had

squatted on an upturned box, and the leg of mutton was being polished off with incredible speed and ravenous ferocity.

Enemies on Sight.

"COME in, Tom!"
Joan Prescott was smiling as she looked round at the opening door. The ranch foreman was there, and behind him, with a view to landing moral support, was one of the cowboys.
"Sure, Miss Joan—but—but we've sorter brought bad news," mumbled the foreman.

Joan started.
"You have been rounding up—"

she began.
"Sure—we'd got the hosses within a few minutes of home when Mustang Pete and his gang sorter blew in," interrupted the foreman. "They shot up one of the boys—he's alive, but only just—and they was too many for us. They—they got the hosses!"

For a moment Joan's lips quivered, and they were still set in that uncertain fashion which is neither quivering nor quite their usual formation when the door opened for the second time.

They all three turned round—and those lips broke into a genuine, happy smile.

"Mr. Rankin!"
"The same," laughed the newcomer. "What's up, boys? You look pretty downhearted?"

Joan cut in quickly.
"It's all right, boys—we've still got enough to supply the contract. In fact, I shall be able to pay off the overdue wages—"

"That's all right, Miss Joan—we're happy enough," mumbled the foreman. "But wo sure are wild at losing them hosses. We sorter feel mad about it."

Rankin stared, but he did not open his lips to speak until Joan had ushered the forlorn two from the room.

"Rustlers again, I guess," said Rankin briefly.

Joan nodded.
"The boys were rounding up my horses," she said. "You see, father left the ranch a bit upside down, and I'm selling off the horses to pay the debts, and they include the boys' wages. I'm expecting a Captain Hartford any moment now."

"And somebody stepped in and sorter helped themselves?" suggested Rankin.

"Yes. But what are you doing round these parts?"

"Well, I don't know that that matters. Miss Joan, but it seems to me that I'll stop around until your contract has been completed," said Rankin slowly. "That is, if you'd like me to."

"I'd like nothing better!" exclaimed Joan. "Mr. Rankin, if the rustlers get away with the next lot we round up, I'm going to fall through on the contract, and my only means of getting the ranch out of debt will have gone, too. Cattle prices are none too good just now."

"Then I'll stick around," said Rankin. She gave him a glance that amply rewarded him for his offer. The newcomer had been to the ranch on more

than one occasion in Abe Prescott's lifetime, and he and Joan had always been great pals.

Rankin himself was unlike the rest of the boys, although he wore chaps, shirt, scarf and Stetson of the same kind nearly every man sported out under Texas skies. He carried, too, a business-like gun in a holster at his right hip.

But he had not the light-heartedness with which Joan was so accustomed. He was stern almost to a point of grimness, and his eyes, steely-blue, piercing, steady as rocks, were like his lips. They seldom changed in their expression.

Joan was about to speak again when for yet a third time the door opened, and this time a total stranger stood in the doorway. His neat breeches, trim uniform tunic, military Stetson, khaki collar and black tie made an introduction superfluous.

"Excuse me," he said in cultured tones. "I am Captain Hartford. I have business with Miss Prescott, whom I fancy I have the honour to address."

"Yes. Come right in, Captain Hartford!" said Joan eagerly. "I guess you have come about the horses."

Hartford came into the room, smiling pleasantly.

"That's right. And doubtless you would like to see my credentials," he said, as he drew a chair to the table.

He was in the act of withdrawing his pocket-book when he looked up quickly—as if he were drawn to the cold, steely eyes that looked down at him.

"Excuse me, Miss Prescott—one of your boys?" he suggested.

"No—a friend. Excuse me—Mr. Rankin, Captain Hartford," said Joan, laughing at her fault in not performing the introductions earlier.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Rankin," said Hartford affably.

"Sure!" said Rankin briefly, and never for a moment did his eyes blink.

It seemed to take an effort on Hartford's part to take his eyes from Rankin's, and it was Joan who helped him.

"Thank you; the credentials are satisfactory," she cut in suddenly, and the spell, if there was one, was broken. "The horses were to have been here, Captain Hartford, but rustlers got them this morning."

"Too bad—too bad!" said Hartford sympathetically. "You can fill the contract, Miss Prescott?"

"Yes, but—"
"Then if you will just sign this paper, I will collect the horses and hand over an official draft for the amount," said Hartford briskly.

"Wait a bit, where are your insignia, Captain Hartford?" snapped Rankin. "You'll excuse me, but we want to make quite sure that none of our horses slip over the border."

"My insignia?" muttered Hartford, and laughed suddenly. "Why, I took them off to clean them, and forgot to put them back."

He produced them a moment later—the stars and letters of his rank and service section.

"Satisfied—Mr. Rankin?" he said with veiled sarcasm.

Rankin merely nodded.
"Then, Miss Prescott, if you'll just sign here?" suggested Hartford.

"You'd better see the horses, Captain Hartford," cut in Rankin again. "The last lot were rustled by a gang of thieves. It would be a pity if this lot were rustled, too. Miss Prescott would not have filled her contract, and you could demand her draft back again. The bunch would only have to slip across the border, you know, and we should lose them."



"Not so fast, stranger," he drawled.

"Sure, I understand. Perhaps I had better get the boys to round them up," said Hartford, and he rose to his feet.

Joan looked from one to another of the men in surprise. It was obvious, even to her in the moment of excitement the deal naturally brought, that there was some inexplicable hostility between them.

Captain Hartford laughed—a steady, reassuring sort of laugh. But Rankin did not seem reassured.

"Well, we shall meet again, Mr. Rankin," he said as he moved to the door.

"Sure we'll meet again, Captain Hartford," said Rankin steadily.

A moment later the door had closed behind the remount department's officer, and there came to the silent two within the sound of his mount's thudding hoofs as he rode off.

Rankin did not stop to see if there was anything else he could do for Joan Prescott. He plugged his hat hard upon his head, and walked out into the open yard.

Here his horse was tethered—a pinto, marked as curiously as had been another that had been upon the trail that morning. Before Joan could quite follow what was happening, Rankin had mounted the pinto and was riding after Captain Hartford.

Beyond Understanding.

CAPTAIN HARTFORD'S movements were peculiar.

He moved in the manner of a man who was not anxious that he should be seen. His horse, with a movement suggesting that it was not by any means the fastest animal in the neighbourhood, lumbered along at a hand gallop, rather clumsily obeying the touch of the reins, dodging bushes and trees, jumping heavily over ditches.

Hartford himself looked a dozen times over his shoulders, as if he expected to find himself being followed.

He was not disappointed. Rankin's swift pinto was on the trail but a very short time before Hartford spotted them.

For a man in the remounts department of the Government, Captain Hartford betrayed more than a little nervousness. He left the trail and lumbered through the bushes for some minutes before he at last struck what he considered a good hiding-place, and pulled up.

He left his horse tethered to a tree, hesitated half a minute, and then slipped into the undergrowth.

Rankin rode along the trail until hoof-marks, recently cut, warned him that the quarry had turned off, and then he, too, swung the pinto into the thick, bushy section. When it grew too thick to make riding comfortable, he slipped from the saddle, walked on a few yards, and then went on alone.

It was not long before he found Hartford's tethered horse. From that spot it was only possible to make headway in one direction, and it was in that direction that he set his face.

Rankin proceeded cautiously, his hand ready to grab his gun at the slightest alarm. He walked along the narrow pathway, pushing his way through bushes in the soundless manner that betrayed him as a skilled woodman, alert, grim.

But it was not until he had come out of the bushes into the clearer plain that anything happened to excite suspicion. And then it was something more than suspicion that excited him.

Something hard and pointed stuck into the middle of his back.

"Get your hands up, Mr. Rankin!"

It was Hartford!

Slowly, unwillingly Rankin obeyed.

August 1st, 1931.

In a flash his own gun was snatched from its holster and tossed into the bushes.

"You take a lot of interest in horses which may be slipped over the border, Mr. Rankin," said Captain Hartford, with a grim laugh. "I have my suspicions. I reckon you know more than you would like to say about other horses that have slipped over the border!"

"Yeah?" said Rankin coolly.

"Anyhow, we're going to look after you until such time as I have collected the horses from Circle A on behalf of the Government," said Hartford grimly. "I know of a little place around here where you will be well looked after. Get moving, Mr. Rankin—and keep moving!"

Rankin obeyed. There was nothing else for it. Not for a single moment had Captain Hartford appeared to be a man who could be trifled with and the steadiness with which the gun was pressed into Rankin's back was a further argument towards obedience.

They had proceed perhaps a hundred yards before Captain Hartford broke the silence.

"I guess you are in league with the rustlers, Mr. Rankin, whilst you are appearing to be Miss Prescott's friend," he said quietly. "A cunning business that. She trusts you, whilst all the time you are playing the low down on her. When I have landed these horses, I guess I'll come back and find the rest for her. I rather like the look of her. Just my sort—"

He broke off. Like a streak of lightning Rankin had swung round, and with the momentum of his swing his right fist went out and connected with the point of Hartford's jaw. The officer staggered, and with another streaking movement Rankin had whirled him round, his own right hand grasping the captain's right arm, and his left hand seizing Hartford's left wrist, the whole arm was jerked up behind his back.

Hartford could have screamed with the pain.

"You'll break my arm!" he spluttered.

"I'll break your arm all right if you don't drop that gun!" said Rankin, between his teeth.

It needed considerable pressure on that helpless arm before Hartford obeyed, but at last the gun dropped from his fingers on to the hard ground. Rankin kicked it half a dozen yards and stood between it and Hartford as the arm was released.

It was Hartford's turn to attack then. He slipped into Rankin with both fists whirling, and it was Rankin who staggered into the bushes and crashed heavily to the ground.

Hartford leapt for the gun, and his finger was in the act of pulling the trigger when Rankin got at him.

Bang!

The noise of the shot reverberated through the bushes, and, although he did not know it, Hartford's horse reared and kicked furiously in its hiding-place until the leather thong broke away from the bough and allowed it to dash madly away.

Rankin's pinto, alarmed, and doubtless seeking the company of its own kind in its moment of terror, dashed off with it.

There could never have been such a grim, silent fight as that which Hartford and Rankin fought. Quarter was neither asked for nor given, and blows were exchanged which went far to prove the hardness of both of them.

But it was Rankin's superior toughness that won that fight. He took two blows in the chest and one in the stomach that should have felled him to the ground, with with a last, gasping

effort, shot his bunched fists upwards until they were jerked to a stop by Hartford's jaw.

Back went Hartford's head. He emitted a single gasping groan, and dropped to the ground, completely knocked out.

For a moment Rankin stood looking down at him, rubbing the dust from his gloves. Then, as quietly as if he were just leaving a post office or a saloon, he sauntered back to where he had left his pinto.

The black and white horse had returned. Training had overcome fears and even instincts, and it was steady enough as Rankin slowly and stiffly mounted.

But the moment he was astride the pinto began to rear and buck as though it had never had a man on its back before. Rankin, seated as light as a feather but as firm as a rock, merely swayed under the kicking and bucking.

"What's the matter with you, boy?" he demanded angrily. "Lost your senses?"

Even his voice made no difference. He tried to drive the animal hard to his left, but the pinto swung right. Rankin allowed him to move that way round, trying to continue the movement until he was facing the way he wanted to go. But the moment he tried that, the pinto bucked and kicked again.

"Well, if you don't like that way, have it your own," said Rankin resignedly. "Go on, then, boy!"

The "boy" went on, through the narrow pathway, past the spot where Hartford still lay on the ground, and again into the bushes on the other side of the clearing.

Rankin did not mind. He knew the many instincts of horses, and how they will avoid dangers which their riders cannot sense or see.

But it was not dangers which the pinto appeared to be avoiding. He joggled along contentedly through the brushwood, across clearing after clearing, until he brought Rankin to a dingy-looking shack, hidden in a tiny valley. Here he stopped for a few seconds before trotting quickly over to what was evidently a disused corral.

There were no signs of human beings or horses, but Rankin took the opportunity to slip out of the saddle and get into the shack. It was empty.

"Waal, this is beyond understanding!" muttered Rankin. "Why the great stars has my pinto brought me along here?"

It had him beaten, and it was all the more baffling when he again mounted his pinto, and that pinto quite unconcernedly allowed himself to be driven slowly in any direction Rankin cared to take him!

But up the trail Hartford sat in the saddle and looked down upon the shack and the man who had just left it. A grim look of understanding settled upon his face, and without a word he dug in his spurs and galloped hard towards Circle A.

The Mystery Deepens.

CIRCLE A ranch was on tenterhooks. The raids of the rustlers and the cunning manner in which plans were laid made Mustang Pete and his gang something to be feared. It was in the minds of all that it would be a very good job when Miss Joan had filled her contract with the Remounts Department, and they could find time to go out and get those rustlers.

It was a warlike party that faced Joan when she gave them orders to round up what was left of her horses. Guns were loosened in holsters, and spare holes in cartridge belts were marked down for

filling as soon as Joan had completed her instructions.

Matters were just as grim down at the shack over which the Dummy guarded his prisoner. The stranger who had ridden in the valley kept to his plank bed, watching for a chance to get away, having learned full well that it was utterly useless attacking the great brute, who seemed to have nothing more interesting in life than chewing up great legs of mutton.

The chance came when, having fed well, the Dummy planted himself in front of the door and dropped off to sleep.

The stranger looked at his guard intently, feeling that it was a man's job to tackle the enemy and beat him into submission. But he showed how wise he was when he made no attempt to shift the Dummy from the door, but gave his attention to the window.

It was easily to be climbed, and it said much for the guard's sense of his own capabilities that he had made no attempt to have it locked or barred.

A heavy snore was the encouragement the stranger received when he put one leg over the window-sill, squashed his body half out, and looked cautiously around. There was no sign of life save for his own pinto down in the corral.

The sight of the pinto gave him heart and hope, and, despite his big riding-boots, there was no noise as he slipped to the ground and dodged down to the corral.

Neither was there any sound when the Dummy opened the door and lumbered out after the runaway with the amazingly swift, ambling run of his!

It was a matter of seconds—breathless, tense seconds. The stranger won the first round in reaching the corral first, and he would have won the second round too had the Dummy not been as cunning as he was silent.

For the rope tethering the pinto was not tied with the firm, but easily released, slip-knot every cowboy used. The rope was tied and knotted in a manner that made it certain that minutes must elapse if the rope was to be untied.

The stranger had no knife, and cutting was therefore out of the question. Frantically his fingers tore at the ropes—desperately he looked up and down the trail in the vain hope that someone was near to help him.

It was hopeless. Like some grim fate, the Dummy came up behind and grabbed at the runaway. Right and left the stranger crashed his fists home on the Dummy's jaw, but they had no more effect than if they had landed upon a brick wall.

The stranger groaned in his mental anguish. If only the rope had been slip-knotted—

His thoughts were interrupted—a great, empty blackness swept down upon him with a suddenness that made it impossible for him to know even that he had been hit. And, as his neatly garbed form slithered towards the ground, the lumbering Dummy grabbed him by the rim and hauled him back to the shack.

Here, just as though he had been a bundle of straw, he was gathered up and flung mercilessly back on to the plank-bed.

The Dummy, silent as a ghost, grim as Fate, was a guard from whom there was no escaping.

Way back Circle A district, Sheriff Moody was at that moment facing an urging, pleading officer of Government services with a coldness that amounted almost to indifference.

"Look here, sheriff, you have your duty to do, same as I have mine to do!" said Hartford eagerly. "I tell you that Rankin is in league with the rustlers!"

"And I tell you, mister, that I ain't actin' upon nothin' until I sees him and catches him red-handed!" said the sheriff firmly. "We're sure doggone tired of these hyer rustlers, but we can't go stringing up Rankin just because somebody suspects him! We gotta have proof!"

Hartford bit his lips in helpless rage. "Where's Rankin now?" demanded Moody suddenly.

"That's just it—where is he?" said Hartford warmly. "I know that Miss Prescott has gone out with the boys, rounding up the rest of the horses. I am to take those horses under a contract, and she is to get my draft. I tell you there is a certainty that these wild rustlers will know, too—and they'll get those horses before Miss Prescott has a dog's chance of drawing money for them. If they are rustled when I take charge, that is my fault, and my Government's responsibility!"

That tackled a weak point in the sheriff's armour. Everybody knew and loved Joan Prescott, and sympathy was with her in the losses she had sustained through the rustling.

"I'll just go up and see her—me and the boys'll see the horses are guarded until you take them," grunted Moody at last. "Then—we're finished with 'em when you get outer our district—git me?"

"Sure! But I reckon you ought to have Rankin under lock and key—in fact, I insist upon it!" said Hartford with a renewed burst. "Neither I, nor the horses, nor anybody else, is safe until you have that man!"

"Git him red-handed, and I guess we'll hev him purty quick enough!" growled Moody.

For another five minutes Hartford tried urging, pleading, even threatening. But Sheriff Moody was adamant. He listened whilst Hartford told him of the shack in the little valley, whence Rankin had been seen to leave. He grinned when Hartford burst out with the suggestion that around that shack might be found some of Miss Prescott's stolen horses, and he was still grinning when he went out to talk to the posse of matters he considered more urgent.

Hartford gave it up in the end, bitter with resentment against the sheriff's seeming indifference. Two minutes later he was riding his horse at a walk up the trail, headed for the Circle A Ranch.

Yet the affairs of Circle A Ranch were not entirely centred in the district in which the ranch was situated. Even whilst the angry Hartford was riding to complete his part of the business, other aspects were being discussed in the marshal's office, five miles away.

A tall, well-set-up man had entered the marshal's office singing a song which the marshal knew and which the marshal heralded with a howl of delight.

"Singer Martin, by all that's good!" he roared, as he leapt with both hands extended to grip those of the singer. "And what brings you down these here parts?"

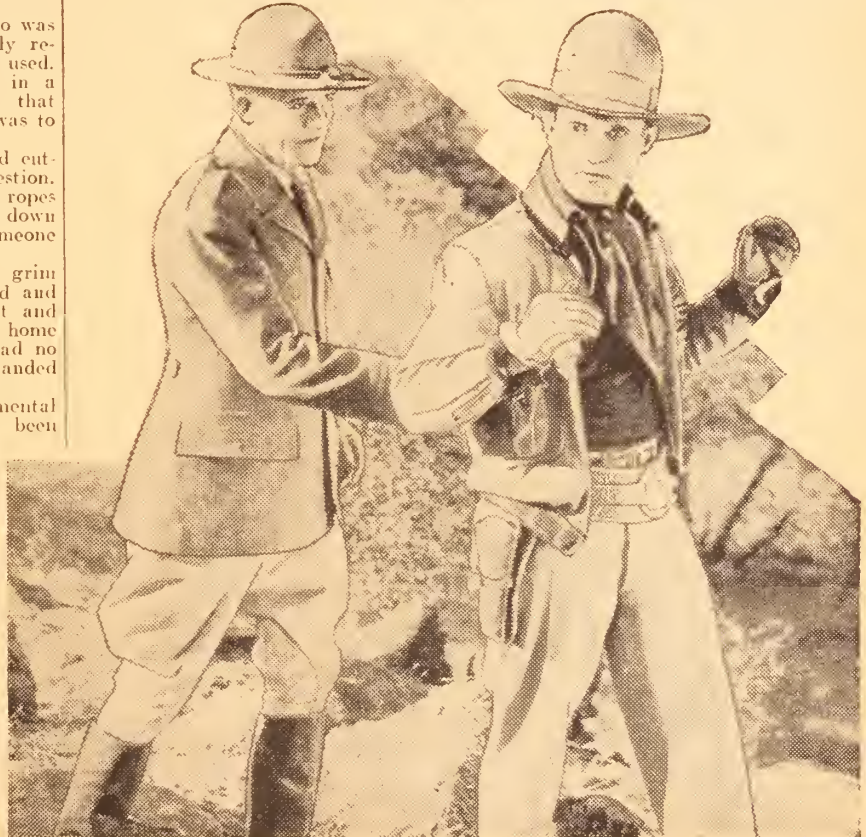
"Just a little trouble," chuckled Martin, and hummed another two bars before he went on: "Know a fellow called Bainbridge?"

"No."

"Any strangers round Circle A?"

"Not to my knowledge. Why?"

"Well, Hartford left for there some



"I know of a little place around here where you'll be well looked after. Get moving, Mr. Rankin—and keep moving!"

short time back," said Singer Martin thoughtfully. "Now we have orders to do anything that Bainbridge says without question—says or writes. Know that code number?"

He fished out a paper as he spoke and handed it to the marshal.

"Sure; that's the official number used by the boss," said the marshal thoughtfully. "I don't know this chap Bainbridge, though."

"Neither do I," said Singer Martin, pausing to hum another three or four bars. "All the same—orders are orders. I guess we'd better get moving towards Circle A, marshal. That's where the trouble lies."

And they, too, mounted and set their horses' heads toward Circle A Ranch.

The net was very widespread, and a not inconsiderable number of people appeared to be involved in its meshing. It was perhaps a little curious that it was Captain Hartford who started the movement which pulled that net tight!

The Stampede.

"WELL, here we are, Miss Prescott!"

Captain Hartford said that by way of greeting Joan—as radiant a girl of the plains as one could have found in a day's ride, as Hartford was quick to assure her. But Joan was only for completing the business.

"The horses are safely in the corral," she said. "We can complete now, I suppose?"

"I'm a little worried about that Rankin fellow," said Hartford. "He attacked me when we left here—"

"Mr. Rankin attacked you!" exclaimed Joan in surprise. "Why—he's such a—"

"Friend, eh?" Hartford laughed sarcastically. "I happen to know that he is in league with the rustlers, Miss Prescott—I have already reported it to the sheriff, and he has gone to collect Mr. Rankin."

"Why doesn't he come here and collect me?" demanded a cool voice from the doorway.

The others swung round startled.

Rankin stood in the doorway, his gun at his finger-tips, his eyes steely blue, unblinking. He came in, shutting the door, and Hartford, who had half-risen from his chair, dropped back again.

But Rankin made no further attempt to interfere with the business. It was Joan who broke the silence.

"Let's get it finished!" she said desperately. "I'll be glad to see you move off—with those horses, Captain Hartford!"

"Sure! You sign this paper, Miss Prescott," said the officer, with a quick glance at the inscrutable Rankin.

"You sign nothing of the sort!" said Rankin quietly.

"This is our business!" snapped Hartford. "I'll thank you to mind your own business! Now, Miss Prescott—does this man run your affairs—as well as your horses?"

The insinuation may have conveyed nothing to Rankin, but it was certainly understood by Joan. She took the paper and the proffered pen with a sudden gesture, and in a moment Hartford had taken it up. He was smiling now.

"And here is your draft!" he said affably. "I think this is where we say good-bye. I am sorry to leave you, Miss Prescott. I am sorry I cannot say the same for you, Mr. Rankin!"

"You needn't!" said Rankin coolly. "We shall meet again! Ah!"

His exclamation was caused by the door being suddenly flung open, to admit the somewhat rudely rushing forms of Sheriff Moody and the marshal.

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Their eyes lit up as they alighted at once upon Rankin, and the sheriff had his gun levelled in less time than it takes to wink one eye.

"So this is where you lie up for a bit, Rankin!" said Moody, reaching for Rankin's gun. "Didn't know he was a rustler, Miss Joan?"

"Captain Hartford warned me that —," stammered Joan. "I hoped that —"

"Well, Captain Hartford warned me, I guess!" said Moody, with a chuckle. "Keep well away, Rankin—I'll plug you, pronto, if you play up a trick! Guess I went and had a look at that shack, Captain Hartford—and I guess I found all your stolen horses, Miss Joan!"

Rankin stared, and so did Hartford. The marshal's chuckle was quite out of place then.

"And I sorter blew in with the sheriff, being nice and handy to take you down the trail, Rankin," he said lightly, and he sauntered swaggeringly over to the prisoner. "Guess you're a pretty good-looker to be a rustler, but they all looks just the same when they dance at the end of a rope—"

That was just as far as he got; for, with a lightning sweep of his hand, Rankin had snatched out the marshal's gun and had them all covered.

"Get your hands well up!" grated Rankin. "I'm sure not done yet! Move aside—quick—or I'll plug you! Quick!"

They moved aside as they were ordered, staring with surprise, dumb-founded at the speed with which the tables had been turned. It was then that something clattered through the window and fell in a heap upon the floor amidst fragments of broken glass.

Rankin gave it one quick look, and leapt for the door.

He was back at the table the next second, his gun still bearing upon the others.

"Guess I'll be coming back, Miss Joan—one day!" he said between his teeth, as he took up the signed contract. "You may be glad of this, you know! S'long!"

He was through the door and had locked it before anybody could make a move to stop him—if anybody had been foolish enough to risk a bullet from his gun. Hartford leapt for the window, but that was hopelessly small.

"You mustn't let him get away!" he said hoarsely.

"Watch him!" groaned the sheriff.

The marshal had picked up the missile that had come through the window—he was much too calm a man to be ruffled by the escape of Rankin.

But the others simply goggled as they saw Rankin dash to the corral and fling up the barriers. In another moment he had darted inside, and was scattering and stampeding the horses down the trail. His own pinto he grabbed and mounted, and the last those in the shack saw of him was as he rose above the swaying backs of hundreds of wildly dashing horses.

"Well—he's got 'em!" said Hartford, with a dry laugh. "I told you he would! I'll be going now, Miss Prescott—it is useless for me to stay here any longer!"

The marshal looked at him sharply, but Hartford was not talking to him. So the marshal looked down again at the paper he had unwound from the missile.

"Don't let Hartford get hurt.—BAINBRIDGE."

It was the mysterious person from whom they had to take all orders that the missile had come!

"Sure now, Captain Hartford," said the marshal, with a gentle smile. "These here parts won't be healthy for a stranger for the next few hours. Guess they're sorter likely to get shot up. You'll be much safer with us—you won't be likely to get hurt! Stand away from that door—I'm gonna blow the lock off!"

He took the sheriff's gun for the purpose, and before the startled Joan could say anything the sheriff, marshal, and Hartford were outside. The two former went willingly enough, and the latter went mainly because the marshal was rather insistent upon the point. There was sense in his remarks, and the marshal was responsible for the lives of those in his district. Hartford obeyed grudgingly.

Down the trail the stampeding horses raised clouds of dust as they thudded along. Behind them rode Rankin, urging them on with stock-whip and voice until they had reached the open plains, and there he scattered them in a dozen different directions.

There might be shooting up in the valley before many hours were over, but flying bullets could offer little more danger than a meeting with the startled, fear-maddened horses. Every trail would be full of animals ready to stampede again at the slightest sign of a human being.

Rankin laughed aloud as he rode suddenly off the trail and worked desperately to get amongst a thinner group of horses which would permit his getting out. But for minutes he was wedged in, and only the fact that he was so tightly wedged kept him from being whirled down amongst crashing hoofs which would kick the life out of his body.

It was a grim business, and Rankin realised that it was much easier to start a stampede and get amongst it than it was to get out of it. It was miraculous the way the pinto stuck to the flying herd without falling.

Once down—

Rankin shuddered at the mere thought. Scattering the herd had offered him a chance of escaping, but there was no knowing which way the startled creatures would dash. First they would turn right, and then left, some would go ahead, some would drop behind. But, somehow or other, they converged and got together again.

There was no laugh left in Rankin after five minutes' fighting. He was as close a prisoner as at the beginning. His only consolation was that no one could get at him!

But with death, or, at the best, injury staring him in the face, the consolation was a poor one.

Prisoners Galore!

MUSTANG PETE suddenly flung down the cards with which he had been playing at the shack in the little valley, and clapped his hand hard upon his gun.

"We'd better be moving, boys," he said tartly. "I guess the Circle A herd will be awaiting for us! Gee—if this wasn't the easiest bunch we ever collected!"

"Sure! But what about Dummy—and the prisoner?" asked one of his gang.

"Waal, I guess these parts ain't gonna be sorter healthy fer a time," said Mustang Pete with a chuckle. "They will be found, and I sorter reckon of we stop behind to look after them we'll be found, too! That Circle A bunch'll be kinder nasty when they lose again! Come on, boys—let Dummy look after the prisoner as long as he likes!"

There was a laugh; but the laugh

turned to dismal silence the very moment the last of the gang had stepped from the shack.

For from behind came a voice which, though bantering in its lightness, was menacing in its directness.

"Get 'em up, boys—and reach for the skies!"

The gang swung round, hands already up. They, of all people, knew the wisdom in prompt obedience to such a command.

They saw before them the tall, neatly dressed figure of Singer Martin, a gun in either hand and the most amused smile upon his lips.

"Keep reaching for them skies, boys, 'cos it's sorter dangerous to tickle holsters!" he laughed, and commenced a warble which would have sounded quite pleasant in any other circumstances.

He broke into his singing only to urge the rustlers to get closer together, and he was singing in their very ears when, with their hands reaching high above their heads, he slipped a rope round the bunch of them.

A loop round their wrists, another around their forearms, and a third round their shoulders rendered them about as helpless as canaries in a cage.

The end of the rope he shot over a rafter in an outhouse, and it was hauled tight enough to ensure that, when he had fixed it around a stanchion, they would remain "reaching for the skies" without the aid of the levelled gun-barrels.

His task completed, Singer Martin sang on merrily whilst he surveyed them. That took him quite four minutes—four minutes which he must have considered well spent.

"Well, if you ain't just the niftiest bunch of rustlers I ever set my eyes upon!" he chortled. "All brave rustlers, and one little buck like me—now up from the city—can just get the drop on you and have you set like that!"

"I'd hev you set of my hands was free!" snarled Mustang Pete. "Guns talk big, stranger! You sure got the drop on us! Let me—only me—loose, and I'll show you how men get along around here!"

"The invitation ain't accepted!" grinned Singer Martin, and commenced that maddening hum of his that set a dozen sets of teeth grating with rage.

But Singer Martin would have not been so slow in his movements, and nothing like so bright in his attitude had he known that, less than a hundred yards away, Rankin was being subjected to as terrible an ordeal as any man ever experienced.

It was scarcely an hour since Rankin had stamped the horses from Joan Prescott's corral. In that time he had spent forty minutes fighting to get free from the thundering animals. He escaped one lot of madly-rushing beasts only to get mixed up in another lot, and his pinto was all but dropping with exhaustion when a lucky slip-up on the edge of a cliff sent them both flying down to the safety of the little valley.

What would have happened had the business ended there Rankin could not have foretold. But the moment his pinto had clambered to its feet, it emitted a shrill whinny and trotted off.

Rankin stared, sat up on the ground, and blinked through the dazzling sunlight. For down in the valley, in a corral that was familiar, was a pinto of exactly the same black-and-white colouring as his own!

Rankin's face fairly beamed for just a fraction of a second—the next, and his eyes were again steady and grim.

He followed the pinto through the bushes until he came into view of the shack, and here he moved more cautiously. His gun had gone in one or another of his madly-swaying efforts to keep on the pinto's back during the stampede, but that fact did not lessen his determination.

He pushed open the door of the shack with his foot and waited. But no movement came from within. He stepped forward a pace, and waited again, his hands ready to lash out at anything that showed itself.

Another step, and he was past the covering door and could see everything within. And almost at once he saw the recumbent form upon the plank bed.

There was no obvious need for silence now. Rankin fairly leapt across the floor of the shack and flung himself down beside the prisoner.

"Jack!" he ejaculated.

The prisoner looked up, startled. "Get out of this, quick; there's a devil knocking around!" he blurted out. "He's gone to fetch some water—"

He broke off, his staring eyes telling of the fact that the dreaded guard had come in, as silent as ever.

Rankin sprang to his feet and leapt in to the attack with the speed of the trained boxer. Crash—crash—clump—clump went his fists, flush upon the hideous jaw of the gorilla-like Dummy.

But the Dummy just shook his head, gathered Rankin in his mighty arms, and crushed his massive chest against what was the comparatively puny Rankin.

Frantically Rankin hit out, using his legs in the flashing realisation that every and all weapons would have to be mustered to break down the Dummy.

The Dummy just grinned, took another couple of fists on his steel-like jaw without so much as a wince, and gave way just for a fraction of a second at a terrific, all-in effort Rankin made to escape.

The prisoner could only look on, helpless and weak as he was. Rankin dashed in furiously, and this time the table was sent crashing against the door, tin drinking cups clattered upon the floor, and they went to the boards

with a crash that shook the shack to its very foundations.

It was the Dummy who got first grip there—and mists began to shut out all else from Rankin's eyes. He was aware of two massive arms entwined around his throat—of something that was gradually squeezing the breath of life from his body, and a sudden—

Bang!

For a second the arms tightened in sickening fashion. Then they relaxed as the Dummy rose, staggered, and crashed down again to the boards.

Rankin was dazed by the fight—stunned by the terrific noise of the exploding gun—but he could not mistake the sudden chirruping that came from the doorway.

Singer Martin was there, a smoking revolver in his hand, a grin upon his lips—and a warble in his throat.

"Just sorter potted round in time, you fellers!" he said coolly.

"How—how'd y' find us?" gulped Rankin.

Singer Martin helped him to his feet before he answered.

"Those pintos—you and Jack Hartford got them hosses off'n the same outfit," he drawled. "They're twins—and they're down in the corral right now. I knew them at once. If you was both around—shucks! Guess I thought I'd better look you up! And if I ain't mistaken, here's somebody else lookin' us up!"

He hesitated as a dusty cloud heralded the arrival of Sheriff Moody, the marshal, a gang of the boys, and Captain Hartford.

"Howdy, boys?" chuckled Singer Martin, but he was thrust aside with surprising quickness as Rankin jerked his way in front of Hartford.

"Sheriff—you can have this chap," said Rankin between his teeth. "I own I took that contract, and I own I stampeded Joan's horses. But this feller isn't Captain Hartford at all—the real captain is over there!"

And he jerked his thumb towards the still dizzy form upon the plank bed.

"It was a work-up," said Rankin

(Continued on page 23.)

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A gripping drama of a young boy fighting to save his mother and father from the treachery of the secret police of his country. Starring Freddie Frederick, Kay Johnson and Neil Hamilton.



Moscow, 1921.

UNDER the shadow of the Kremlin, behind whose grey stone walls the Soviet government was slowly working out the destiny of a broken nation, stood a long queue. The front end of it trickled slowly into a ramshackle shop whose windows were filled with brown bread and flour, and the end of it wound up the street and out of sight round a corner.

Half way down the queue stood a woman, a boy by her side. Although she was barely thirty-seven, her face bore the lines of intense worry and fear. She had been standing there for more than three hours, and she was dead tired.

The bread queue moved forward a few paces, the woman and Kolya with it. Suddenly from round the corner came the tinkle of bells, and a horse galloped down the street, dragging behind it a heavy sleigh.

As the runners hissed over the blanket of snow that covered the ground, the queue shrank back against the buildings apprehensively. A tense murmur broke from it.

"Koslov! The President of the Tcheka!"

The man who was riding in the sleigh looked out at the bread queue, his face expressionless.

Kolya clenched his fists at the sight of Koslov.

A man paused by the side of the queue, and Kolya looked up to recognise Sergei, who lived in the next room in the dirty tenement building which was their home.

Sergei did not take any notice of Kolya.

"Greetings, Anna," he said in a smooth voice.

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Kolya's mother started. She had not been expecting anyone to talk to her, and Sergei's voice took her by surprise. "Not in the best of spirits, eh?" he went on. "How long have you been here?"

"Ever since early morning," Anna Pavlovna replied.

"Too bad!" Sergei thought for a moment, his handsome face alight with irony. He caressed his neatly trimmed moustache, and drew the collar of his warm leather coat more closely about his ears. "I'll tell you what," he said. "I'll get your rations for you. Give me your card."

He took the ration card that she had been holding between her fingers, and strutted to the head of the queue. He disappeared inside the shop, and came out again after a few minutes bearing in his arms two of the coarse loaves and a quarter of the brown flour that could be seen in the windows.

Murmurs of suppressed rage ran through the queue.

Sergei laughed as he beckoned to Anna. She left the queue, taking Kolya with her, and approached her benefactor.

"Thank you, Sergei," she said quietly. "You have been very good to me. I wish there was something I could do for you in return."

"There is much that you can do for me in return, Anna," he said, going closer to her and lowering his voice. "Let us return to our lodgings, and I will tell you about it."

The "Friend."

IT was about a quarter of a mile to the miserable tenement house where Kolya lived with his mother, but they did not reach it for a full ten minutes,

the freezing snow on the ground making progress difficult.

Kolya kept well to the rear, noting as he walked that his mother and Sergei did not talk much. Once or twice as they crossed the road, Sergei took Anna's arm, but she freed it again as soon as they reached the opposite pavement.

Kolya did not like Sergei. There was something sinister and menacing about the man. He seemed always to be watching and waiting for something.

When they reached the tenement, Sergei went first to his own room on the other side of the landing. He was away about five minutes, and when he returned he smelt of cheap perfume.

He gave Kolya a suspicious look; then crossed the room to where Anna was sitting at her sewing-machine, and sat down by her side.

"Aren't you tired of all this?" he said softly. "Aren't you tired of the bread queues, of the restrictions imposed upon you by the Labour bureau, and of the difficult conditions in which you live?"

"I am," said Anna wearily. "Very tired of it."

"Then why don't you qualify for a Worker's licence?" said Sergei. "It is yours for the asking."

"A Worker's licence!" she exclaimed. "But I don't understand. I have been classified for the lower grade of rations. How can I get more?"

Sergei glanced round him quickly, and a shade of annoyance passed over his features as he saw that Kolya was staring at him unwaveringly. He opened his mouth to say something, his intention being to tell Kolya to clear out; then he changed his mind and turned back to Anna.

"I have a Worker's licence," he said

lowering his voice still more, so that Kolya could hardly hear it. "You know the law here? As Anna Pavlovna, you come under the aristocrat class and get just barely enough to keep body and soul alive; but as Anna Sergei—"

He came to an abrupt halt as Anna stood up, white and trembling.

"You forget, Sergei, that I am already married," she said. "I already have a husband—alive!"

"You talk like a fool, Anna," he answered. "You know quite well that you only have to apply to the Polit-bureau and sign the necessary forms, and you are free at once. You could be my wife within the hour."

"Has it not occurred to you, Sergei," she said slowly, "that I may not want to become your wife—either within the hour, or ever?"

"You would prefer to go on starving?" said Sergei with a sneering laugh.

"Yes, I would prefer to go on starving."

"Still thinking of that husband of yours?" jeered Sergei. "He's in Paris, isn't he? He hasn't even the pluck to return here and take his place under the Soviet regime. He has been an officer in the Guard like myself, and the country needs good officers. If he came back and took the oath of allegiance, he could be classified as a Worker right away."

He paused to allow this to sink in.

"But does he return?" he resumed. "Does he come back to the wife and child who are suffering? Of course he doesn't! He prefers Paris, where he can live in comparative luxury." He snapped his fingers. "That is the man you can't forget, Anna—a man who obviously forgets you."

He leaned back, and paused again. For a whole minute there was silence while he waited for her to say something; and when she still kept her lips tightly compressed, he got up so that he could be closer to her.

"He is in Paris," he went on, softening his tone, "while I am here, I can bring you comfort and happiness now—at once. Well, what do you say?"

"My answer is—no!" she said firmly.

"Definitely and finally—no! And now please go. You have been very good to me in many ways, and I am grateful to you, but I shall always remain loyal to Ivan."

Sergei made a gesture of impatience. Throwing aside all pretence at reserve, he tried to put his arms around her.

"Anna—" he began.

Kolya ran across the room as his mother shrank back from Sergei's touch.

"You heard what she said, Sergei," he shouted. "She told you to go. If you dare to touch her, I'll—I'll kill you!"

For a moment Sergei seemed as though he would dash his angry fist into the boy's face. Then suddenly his expression changed and he turned on his heel and left the room.

Arrest!

KOLYA watched him go and slammed the door behind him. As he did so, he heard his mother sob, and hurried to her side.

"Don't let that fellow upset you, mother," he said soothingly. "Sergei can't do you any harm. I'll see to that."

"Bless you, Kolya!" She tried to smile. "If I hadn't got you to comfort me, I don't know what I should do."

Kolya saw that she would be all right now that Sergei was out of the way, and he picked up the ration cards which were lying on the table, and got himself ready to go out. Bread and flour had already been purchased, but supplies of butter, tea, and sugar were yet to come.

He left the tenement and made his way to the centre of the city again, where he tacked himself on to the end of still another queue.

It was well into the afternoon before he was able to reach the shop counter and receive his meagre supplies. He took them, put them into his shopping basket, and began his weary trudge homewards again.

At the bottom of the tenement stairs a knot of women were standing, and when they saw him coming they nudged each other and became silent.

He was so tired that he hardly noticed them.

He mounted the stairs slowly, hoping

that there would be something ready to eat when he got in. But as he climbed the last few steps which brought him in sight of the door, he stopped dead, and his heart seemed to cease beating.

Affixed to the door was a red seal! It was so fastened that the door could not be opened!

The seal of the Tcheka—the secret police!

Kolya uttered a cry and ran forward, intending to tear the seal down and force his way into the room. A kindly old man who had been standing near by stopped him.

"Careful, sonny!" he said. "If you go past that door you'll be flung into gaol."

"My mother!" cried Kolya. "Where is my mother?"

The old man shook his head sadly and resignedly.

"She has gone," he said. "An information was laid against her, and the Tcheka took her away."

"But what will they do to her?"

The old man shrugged his shoulders. Kolya turned away. The old man was right. If he broke the seals on the door of what had been his home, he would commit a treasonable act, and he would be committed to prison—perhaps even sentenced to death.

He wandered down the street, wondering what he could do, shambling along despondently, not troubling to notice where he was going. Suddenly he was awakened to watchfulness by the sudden pattering of feet and a tug at his arm; but before he could save himself he was hustled into the gutter, his shopping basket with its food gone.

He scrambled to his feet, and saw the tail end of a gang of urchins vanishing round a near-by corner. He gave chase, urging every ounce of his strength to the recapture of his basket. It was the only food he had, and it would have to last him for an indefinite period.

He swung round the corner savagely, intent upon the chase, and did not notice that the gang had ranged itself against the wall of the building he was then passing. Someone shot out a foot, and Kolya went sprawling on his face.

A dozen pairs of hands seized him, and



"Go to my home, Nikolai," the General ordered Ivan calmly.

picked him up bodily. Half-conscious, stunned by his fall, he felt himself being carried down a flight of steps into an evil-smelling basement.

Suddenly he was placed on the ground and set free.

He was surrounded by a ring of sharp, eager faces that had not been washed for months. Dozens of boys and girls, all about his own age, were in that cellar, and so far as he could see it was their home.

He looked round slowly, and picked upon a boy slightly taller than the rest who was obviously their leader. He went up to him, his fists clenched.

"Give me back my basket!" he said threateningly.

The circle of boys and girls made an almost imperceptible movement closer, but the boy to whom Kolya spoke held up his hand commandingly.

"Stop!" he said in a hoarse shout. "I'll deal with this." He looked at Kolya again. "Who are you, and where do you come from?"

Kolya paused for a fraction of a second before replying. What should he do? If he tried to fight his way out he would be half-killed.

He was no coward, but he decided that his best course was to explain matters. If they heard his story they might be inclined to help him.

"My name is Kolya Pavlovna," he said. "I live alone with my mother, and while I was out to-day she was arrested by the Teheka and the door of our home sealed."

"Arrested, eh?" said the other. "Why?"

"For no reason at all," Kolya replied. "She'd never done anything wrong. I ought to know. I used to be with her all the time."

The boy looked at the others questioningly, and they responded with a nodding of heads. Then he turned to Kolya again, and this time his attitude was friendly.

"Listen to me, Kolya," he said. "All of us down here are in the same fix. Our parents have been arrested, and we were left by the Teheka to starve. So we formed ourselves into a gang, and we get food any way we can. Also, one day we'll be strong enough to get our own back on the Teheka. Will you join us?"

Kolya did not reply immediately. He saw the explanation of these urchins now—they were a band of outcasts, victims, like himself, of the secret police.

"All right," he said, and held out his hand. "I'll join you."

The other boy gripped his fingers, and the gang crowded round vociferously, glad to give Kolya a welcome.

"My name is Petya," said the leader. "Keep close to us, Kolya, and we'll see that no harm comes to you."

Kolya nodded assent, and as he did so, he felt the handle of his basket being pushed into his hand. He looked at the contents thoughtfully, then held it out again.

"I'm one of you now," he said. "Shares, comrades!"

They cheered him to the echo, and he knew from that moment that he could count on every one of them when the time came to save his mother.

Set Free.

IN the week that followed, Kolya learnt much of the way in which the gang lived. They stole from the food dumps down by the railways, and gathered up any odds and ends that they could safely take from the more well-to-do members of the community.

Meanwhile, Anna was cooped up in August 1st, 1931.

the dungeons of one of the prisons, without washing water, and with a minimum of coarse and almost uncatable food.

At the end of the week, one of the warders came to her cell and unlocked the door. He motioned her to follow him.

He took her to a large, iron-barred room and left her sitting on a bench close to a wall. Before her were half a dozen tables, and at each table sat a man wearing the uniform of the Teheka.

She began to feel apprehensive. These men were disposing of human lives like a well-oiled machine, and with monotonous regularity. As she listened, she could hear the conversations which passed between the men at the tables and other men who came forward with sheafs of documents.

"Anton Ivanoff," the man with the papers would intone. "Guilty of treason. Tried to wreck a State tramway-car. I had him shot."

"Sentence confirmed!"

"Serge Irku, guilty of treason. Attempted to resist arrest on a charge of forgery. I had him shot."

"Sentence confirmed!"

So it went on ceaselessly. "I had him shot—Sentence confirmed!" and the quiet signing of papers. No trial, no hope of being saved—dead, in most cases, before the case ever reached the public prosecutors.

Anna shrank back against the wall, wondering if she were set down for the same fate.

Her eyes opened abruptly as she heard her name called, and she choked back a cry of terror. They were sending for her at last!

She looked round for the man who had summoned her, and saw him beckoning to her from a nearby room, the door of which was partly open. She rose to her feet, almost too weak to stand, and crossed slowly to him.

"The secretary of the president wishes to see you, Anna Pavlovna," he said. "This way."

She stumbled on blindly, and found herself in the room, standing before a desk looking down upon a man who was seated there. He had cruel eyes and a stern, hard face that never seemed to change.

"Anna Pavlovna," he said, "you were arrested a week ago, and have been a prisoner since, for your own safety. You live alone, unprotected by anyone, in a house that is noted as being dangerous for lonely women." He picked up a paper from his desk. "Peter Sergei!" he said quietly.

"I understand you wish to enter into a bond for this woman," the secretary went on. "Do you agree to see that she comes to no harm, and that you will hold yourself responsible for her safety?"

"I do," said Sergei.

"Very well." The secretary held out the paper. "Sign this, and I will set her free."

Sergei took the document and glanced over it. It bound him as being answerable to the Teheka, in the name of the Soviet, for the safety of one Anna Pavlovna, and to deliver her safely to the Teheka's custody should he ever wish to revoke his bond.

Sergei signed it and handed it back without comment. The secretary looked at the signature, witnessed it, and stamped the paper with the Soviet seal.

"You may go, Anna Pavlovna," he said without looking up. "But you will remember that you are answerable to Peter Sergei for your movements. See

to it that you do nothing which will cause you to be sent back to prison."

Anna turned away, thankful for Sergei's guiding hand as it gripped her arm and steadied her. She passed through the doorway and out into that dreaded room where they were still saying: "I had him shot—Sentence confirmed!" It was going on with monotonous regularity.

It was not until they were in the open that Sergei spoke. Then he said:

"Well, Anna, it seems that you cannot do without me, after all."

She turned to him, mixed gratitude and puzzlement in her expression.

"How did you manage it?" she asked. "How were you able to have me set free?"

"Oh, it was nothing," he replied. "I heard that you had been arrested, and decided to enter into a bond for you. You see, the law says that if any woman appears to be without protection, and an information is laid against her, she shall be kept in a State prison until someone can be found to care for her. I suppose some busybody informed about you, so the Teheka came and took you away. I shouldn't worry about it any more. You're a free woman, and that's all that matters."

"I don't know how to thank you enough, Sergei," Anna said. "When Ivan returns, he will see to it that you don't go unrewarded."

"Poor Anna!" Sergei smiled. "Still thinking of the husband who never comes! Well, he wasn't of much use to you to-day. It was I, Sergei, who had to act as your protector." He moved closer to her as they walked. "Won't you let me be always, Anna?" he pleaded. "Won't you marry me, and let me take care of you?"

Anna edged away from him.

"It's no good, Sergei," she said. "I can't. I don't love you, and never shall. Please don't speak of it any more."

"Very well," Sergei said. "It is your concern, not mine! I will give you a week in which to change your mind." He took her arm to lead her across the road. "And now, let me see you home."

Anna followed him dumbly. A net seemed to be closing in upon her from which there seemed to be no chance of escape.

Anna's Decision.

BECAUSE she had been in a State prison, Anna was entitled to an emergency ration of food at once, so that she could tide herself over until her ordinary rations were available.

She did not go home at once, therefore, but decided to join the nearest bread queue.

For the moment she was not anxious about Kolya. She expected that one of her neighbours had taken him in hand for the time being, and thought that he would be quite safe.

She left Sergei outside the Kremlin, and made her way across the street to the public markets. On the way, as she was passing the entrance to an alley, she paused.

Someone was ringing, and she thought she recognised his voice.

She turned down the alley towards a crowd of people at the end, and thrust herself to the front. There, standing in the centre of a ring of people, was Kolya!

She gazed at him in horror. He was in rags, and was covered in grime from head to foot. His feet were bare, and his hair was matted over his forehead like a lump of tow.

"Kolya!" she called.

The singing stopped suddenly as Kolya recognised her. Joy at seeing her again fought in his brain for a few seconds with the shame he felt at her finding him like this. Then he rushed towards her and flung his arms about her.

The crowd that had been listening to him drifted away, leaving only half a dozen of Petya's gang behind. They stared curiously while Kolya greeted his mother. Then Petya stepped forward. "Hi, you aren't going to leave us, are you, comrade?" he said wistfully. "We're pals, and—"

Kolya stepped back, and motioned to the gang with a sweep of his arm.

"Mother, these are my friends," he said, and he felt no shame now. "They looked after me while you were away."

Anna's expression softened. She loved Kolya, and no matter how dirty Petya and his pals might be, she felt friendly towards them now that she knew they had been kind to her son.

"I don't think I can ever thank you enough," she said simply. "But if you will help me to buy food, I will see that you all have something to eat."

Petya stepped forward and touched his forehead with his finger.

"We'll get your food for you," he said in his rough voice. "But if you're feeding us off rations, you won't have enough for yourself. We'll bring our own. Come on, lads!"

He darted away, and the rest of the gang followed, leaving Kolya behind.

Anna took Kolya home. She was terribly worried about him. While waiting for Petya and his friends to come, she made Kolya take a bath; meanwhile she wondered what was best to be done. She dare not go to prison again, otherwise Kolya would be thrown on the streets once more—perhaps disappear from her sight for ever.

Finally she went across the landing and knocked on Sergei's door. Sergei opened it, and raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"I want you to do something for me," she said worriedly. "I'm tired of this life. I must become a worker, with all the privileges a worker has."

"Very well," he said. "There's only one thing for a good-looking woman like you to do, and that is become a

hostess at one of the State casinos. I'll get you in to-morrow, if you like. You can always leave if you get tired of the job."

"I'll take it," she answered. "Thank you once more."

Sergei watched her return to her own room, his eyes narrowed to slits.

The Secret Visit.

THREE days later, on a night that was pitch black with overhanging clouds, a man plodded steadily through the fields close to the frontier that divides White Russia from the Soviet Union. The lights of Vitebsk were far below him on his left, while on his right, lying in a deep valley, were the red and green signals of the Brest-Warsaw railway.

He paused every now and then, listening for sounds, but a deep silence brooded over the hillside.

So far as he could make out, he must be very close to the frontier, and at any moment he might find himself blinded by the powerful searchlights from the sentry posts. The slightest suspicion of his presence would mean death, swift and sudden.

From somewhere in the distance came the vibrating rattle of wheels on metals, and a mile away shone the headlight of a locomotive. The man paused to watch it. It was coming from Vitebsk, and was going across the frontier to Smolensk, fifty miles inside the Soviet Union territory.

Suddenly he threw himself flat as a beam of dazzling light pierced the darkness and swept over the hillside. It hovered above him, casting grim shadows beyond the trees, and finally came to rest on the oncoming train.

Brakes began to squeal, and the train clattered to a halt. The man looked again, and saw that it was about three hundred feet below him, and not more than half a mile forward.

He watched while frontier officials boarded it, everything clearly outlined in the glare of the searchlight, and then decided that now was the time for him to get across the frontier. The sentries would be busy searching the train, and they would not pay much attention to the meadows above them.

He rose to his feet and began to run in steady, lengthy strides. He kept going like this for two minutes.

Then his foot caught something, and he fell with a crash on to his face. At the same moment a gun exploded close

at hand, and a spatter of buckshot struck the nearby trees.

The man emitted a curse. A trip wire! Connected to the trigger of a trap-gun, too! Had he not been running, he would have been dead by now. It was only the speed of his progress which had made him drop flat to the ground so quickly.

He realised that the frontier guards must have heard the report, and he got to his feet again. He started to run once more, this time with every ounce of strength in him.

There was a wood ahead, and he wanted to get under its cover without being seen. He raced along, his heart pounding heavily as the searchlight swept the ground he had just covered.

He dived into the wood just in time, and flattened himself against a tree. That powerful beam swept past him.

Dodging the searchlight, he penetrated more and more deeply into the wood, taking a direction which would bring him out as far from the frontier as possible.

Some hours later he reached a small village close to a railway junction. So far as he could judge, he was now about five or six miles inside Soviet territory—far enough away from the frontier guards not to be recognised. They might know him all along the sentry posts; but here, in this small cluster of tumble-down houses, he would be comparatively safe.

He made his way down the village street boldly in the early daybreak, seeking the railway station, depending now upon the forged identity documents that were in his pocket.

Twenty yards from the station he was called upon to halt. A policeman, armed with a rifle, came up to him.

"Who are you, comrade?" he asked curtly.

"My name is Saratov," was the quiet reply. "I have been visiting my sister, who is ill, and am on my way back to Moscow. Here are my papers."

He held them out, and the policeman glanced through them. He appeared quite satisfied, and handed them back.

"Pass, comrade," he said. "I had to stop you, because someone got in across the frontier last night—a man named Ivan Pavlovna. He is a dangerous enemy of the Soviet, and we have orders to take him dead or alive."

The man was fortunate in being able to board a train for Moscow almost at once. It was an express, and was due at the city a little before midnight.



"Why do you lie to me?" Koslov shouted.

But the man did not travel into the city on it. He dropped off from one of the coaches during a temporary halt a couple of miles outside, and walked the remainder.

He reached his final destination at about one. It was a small house almost under the shadow of the Kremlin, tucked well away in a side street.

He approached it warily, and knocked on the door. There was a pause and a shuffling of feet. Then the door opened a little way, and a shaft of yellow light streamed on to the mysterious visitor's face.

"Ivan Pavlovna!" a voice in the house exclaimed. "Come in quickly, before you are seen!"

The door opened wider; then shut with a snap. The street was empty once more.

Treachery.

IVAN PAVLOVNA, Kolya's father, stepped into the hall of the house, and found himself face to face with an aged and bent man whose voice was still a voice of steel and whose spirit still betrayed those days when he had ridden as colonel of the Imperial Horse.

At the time of the revolution, when Russia had been given over to the Bolsheviks, he had been Staff General of the Russian Forces. Now he was a "comrade," only retaining his liberty because the President of the Teheka believed him to be harmless.

The general stared at Ivan in amazement.

"What brings you here, my friend?" he asked in a low voice, as though even the very walls might be listening.

"His Imperial Highness sent me—" began Ivan.

"Hush!"

The general, at the mention of the hereditary ruler of Russia under the Czarist regime, looked about him fearfully, then led the way to a quiet room at the back of the house. The windows were barred and heavily curtained, and the door was provided with a strong lock.

"We are safe from interruption here," said the general.

"His Imperial Highness is in Paris, as you know," said Ivan. "For months he has been working on a plan to overthrow those in power in the Kremlin. Well, all is ended. His Imperial Highness sends me with a letter ordering all the loyalists here to cease operations."

He produced a heavily sealed envelope from his pocket.

The general took the letter and read it through, lines of sorrow on his forehead. It was brief but decisive—telling the loyalists that no further steps were to be taken against the Soviet Government—and it was signed in the bold hand of the man who might have been king but for the revolution of 1917.

The general folded it up, and hid it in his clothing.

"Very well," he said. "I will go to the others and tell them. We are meeting to-night at the Zimoviev Cafe."

Ivan picked up his fur cap, which he had left on the table, and turned towards the door.

"And I will go to find Anna," he said. "I expect she will be at the old place, won't she?"

"Wait!" came the reply. "She is not at home now. She is at the café—as one of the hostesses. Come with me and stand at the door. I will send her out to you if I can. But if she does not come to you within ten minutes after our arrival, go then straight to her lodging and wait there."

They went out together, walking silently side by side.

August 1st, 1931.

At the door of the café the general made a sign to Ivan.

"If anyone asks," he whispered, "you are one of my servants."

Even before he sought his fellow-conspirators, the old fellow got into touch with Anna. She was dancing with a commissariat official as he entered, and he stood on one side until the band had stopped playing. Then he beckoned her over.

"Anna," he breathed, "I have news for you. Command yourself—Ivan has come. He is waiting below for you. As soon as you can, slip away from here and, whatever you do, get him into hiding."

Her eyes lit with gladness, but she said nothing. She merely nodded.

At that moment Sergei joined them. He nodded to the general, then turned to Anna.

"You promised me the last two dances," he said. "The band is just ready to begin."

She drifted off to a slow waltz, leaving the general standing there. Ivan home! She could not conceal the sudden joy that she felt. After all this time Ivan was back again—back, she hoped, for good!

She became aware that Sergei was speaking to her.

"You seem unusually happy this evening, Anna," he was saying. "Have you had some good news?"

"I have—wonderful news!" she said eagerly. "Ivan is home. He went to the general's house first, and the general came here to tell me." She looked at him imploringly. "Let me go home now, Sergei. I will give you the dances some other time."

"Certainly," he agreed. With a little bow he smilingly left her.

While she went away to get her hat and cloak, Sergei made his way unobtrusively to the vestibule of the café, and beckoned two uniformed men who were standing just inside the doorway.

"Come with me," he ordered.

They followed him back into the café. Sergei made his way through the dancing couples until he came to where the general was standing. He tapped the general on the shoulder.

"Well, general," he said with an oily smile, "so you have received the letter you were expecting?"

"What do you mean?" came the quick question.

"I mean that you received a visit to-night from Ivan Pavlovna, and that he delivered a letter to you from Comrade the Prince Vladimir." Sergei spread out his hands ironically. "Therefore, my very excellent friend, you are under arrest for conspiring against the Soviet!"

The general gave him a glance of contempt, which Sergei utterly ignored. He ran deft fingers over the old man's clothing, and soon found the letter.

"The seals are broken, general," grinned Sergei. "Therefore I will read what Comrade Vladimir has to tell us." A glance at the letter followed, then Sergei nodded to the policeman. "Away with him!" he ordered. "I will follow you to the Bureau."

At the door of the café, waiting in the night shadows, was Ivan. He started forward on seeing the general under escort. The old man put out a restraining hand.

"Go to my home, Nikolai," said the old man calmly. "Tell them I have to visit the Teheka on a matter of business. There is no cause for alarm."

Ivan stared so fiercely that one of the men put his hand on the general's shoulder.

"Go home," repeated the general, his

eyes plainly indicating which home he meant.

Ivan turned away and left him, his mind anxious and confused.

Meantime, Sergei had waylaid Anna as she came out of her dressing-room.

"It seems that news of Ivan's return has reached the Teheka," he told her. "I am terribly sorry. The general has been arrested. He had a letter on him from the exiled self-styled king! He couldn't help the sneer. "Ivan is implicated, and I had better come with you to your lodging."

"You have betrayed Ivan!" Anna's eyes blazed. "What a fool I was to trust you!"

Sergei shrugged his shoulders. "Too late for heroics, Anna!" he triumphed. "Are you coming with me, or shall I go to Ivan alone?"

She glared at him dumbly, then turned and walked out of the café, the spy chuckling at her heels. She did not speak to him again until they had reached her lodgings. She walked into her room, the man whom she knew for a Teheka spy close behind her, and saw Ivan advance eagerly to greet her. She held up her hand to stop him.

"I've only just heard that you were back, Ivan," she said, and the words seemed to stick in her tense throat. "Sergei got to hear of it, too, and the general has been arrested for treason."

Ivan's expression, first puzzled, became terrible. He took a quick step forward, his fingers twitching.

Anna put herself in front of him quickly, her back turned to Sergei. In the fragment of time that followed, she was able to say with her eyes what she dare not say with her lips—that she loved Ivan and always would. No matter how powerful the Soviet was, it could not be stronger than that.

"Please go, Ivan," she said softly. "Wait outside until I call. I must speak with Sergei alone."

Ivan hesitated, then nodded slowly and walked to the door.

"I will be on the landing outside," he said, and as he spoke his eyes were fixed on Sergei's face.

He closed the door behind him, and the noise penetrated to Kolya, who was sleeping on his bed behind a low screen. He sat up with a start, wondering what was happening. Only a short time before he had seen his father, and had gone off to sleep with Ivan sitting by the bedside.

Now Ivan had gone, and he could hear the voices of his mother and Sergei.

"Well, Anna, what are you going to do about this letter?" said Sergei menacingly.

Kolya put his eyes to a hole in the screen and watched. He saw Sergei standing in front of Anna, holding a large envelope in his hand. Ivan was no longer there.

"What do you mean, Sergei?" asked Anna, in a strained voice.

"You know quite well what I mean," Sergei replied sharply. "If I send this letter to Koslov, Ivan will die." He shrugged his shoulders. "He is, after all, an enemy of the State, and therefore not a fit man to be your husband. I, on the other hand, am in the employ of the State, and could care for you as no other man can."

"You mean that I must divorce Ivan and marry you?" Anna asked. "If I don't, you will send Ivan to the Kremlin?"

"I mean just that," Sergei replied. "After all, my dear, you have brought it all on yourself. You tried to pit your brains against mine. When you got yourself into trouble with the Teheka, it was I who pulled you out of it."

(Continued on page 26.)

The thrilling story of a daredevil ranger who is sent into the high Sierras to assist the local sheriff in capturing a band of mysterious counterfeiters. Featuring Lane Chandler, Sheldon Lewis and Yakima Canutt.



A Warning Defied.

ON the sandy bank of Cripple River, a winding tributary of the mighty Colorado, Firebrand Jordan swung down from the broad back of his piebald mare Nell, and hailed his diminutive companion, Tony Perelli, who was perched uncomfortably on a mule some way behind.

The sun had sunk redly behind the mountains to the west, and the hot day was cooling to dusk. Both riders were tired, and so were their mounts, for they had ridden far since day-break; but Tony was more than tired—he was stiff and sore into the bargain.

With the utmost readiness he dismounted, and the mare and the mule were led down to the water.

"Well, how goes it, Tony?" inquired Firebrand, stretching his long limbs.

Tony screwed his swarthy face into a grimace.

"I never knew," he groaned, "that anything so full of hay could be so hard!"

Firebrand laughed. A mule is not by any means the most comfortable of mounts, and Blossom had her own way of showing her feelings when she was tired of travelling.

"We've come a good way from Hewson," he remarked, looking back across the waste of scrub and sand to the woods and the mountains of the region they had left behind.

"Let's stay here for the night," urged Tony.

"Stay here? Say, we've got about forty miles to go before we make Kernville!"

"Forty miles!" gasped Tony. "Oh!" And he proceeded to arrange a blanket over the mule's saddle, saying as he did so: "This may make it a bit softer."

Tony was the offspring of an Italian father and an Irish mother, and he must have been one of the shortest men in the West, for he stood no more than five feet in his socks. His companion, on the other hand, was unusually tall; six feet two at the least, and broad with it.

Tony's face was round and decorated with a black moustache, and he had a curly brown mop of hair all over his head, but Firebrand's face was clean-shaven and well-featured, and his eyes were grey-blue and keen.

His hair was a flaming red, and this may have accounted for his nickname—he was James Jordan according to his birth certificate—though it was quite as likely that he had earned the "Firebrand" by reason of his dare-devil ways.

Having permitted their steeds to slake their thirst, the two remounted and forded the river, which was shallow at this point. They rode on for another ten miles into a tract of rock-strewn sand and massive boulders.

One particular rock, with a flat side like a wall, attracted Firebrand's attention, for on it was a roughly-painted inscription. He rode up to it, followed by his henchman, and this was the ominous message that stared them both in the face:

"STRANGER, DON'T LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON YOU HERE."

Tony's brown eyes blinked. "Good job you ain't exactly a stranger round here," he said.

"They must have meant that for you, Tony," laughed Firebrand. "Looks kind of bad for you, big boy."

At that very moment a shot rang out from behind a mass of rocks some distance to the left, and Tony promptly threw up his hands and fell from the mule.

"I'm shot!" he cried. "I'm shot! Shot through the brain!"

Firebrand slid down and picked him up.

"Let's have a look at your head," he said.

"Oh, oh, oh!" moaned Tony. "It isn't my head! It—it's somewhere else!"

Firebrand squatted on a boulder beneath the warning notice, and turned his companion this way and that, examining him carefully. There was no suggestion of a bullet wound anywhere about his person, but to the seat of his trousers a number of stiff, sharp spines were still attached.

"You fell on that bunch of cactus, you fool!" quoth Firebrand, and calmly dumped the little man across his knees and extracted the spines.

Unnoticed by either of them, three men had climbed to the top of a rock and were looking down at them, and one of the three held a rifle.

"There they are!" exclaimed the man with the rifle. "Hampton had the right hunch!"

The three disappeared from sight as Firebrand set Tony on his feet and himself stood up.

"Well, you won't be able to ride any more to-night," he said, "so we'll stay here among the rocks."

"Stay here?" exclaimed Tony nervously. "Oh, come on! I can ride! I can ride!"

And to prove it he climbed on to Blossom's back, but immediately dropped off again, groaning loudly.

"You look like riding!" scoffed Firebrand. "Come on with the blankets. I want those outlaws to be right here where we're going to sleep!"

The light was fading rapidly, but Tony

had no desire to linger in the dark and make a target for more bullets.

"Sleep?" he exclaimed. "Here? You don't mean that!"

"I do mean it, and I guess you'll sleep all right."

"With my two eyes wide open!"

"Well, sleep with your eyes open if you want to, but right here is where we're going to sleep!"

Protesting loudly, Tony unfastened the blankets attached to the saddle-bows of the two animals, and arranged them on the sand under the rocks, selecting for himself a spot some distance from the painted threat. He laid his beloved guitar on a flat slab above his head, and, seeing that his companion had settled down for slumber, pulled a blanket over his head, complaining all the while.

A crescent moon came up over the distant hills, and only a corncrake interrupted the silvery silence. In less than half an hour Tony was fast asleep and snoring.

It was the morning sun that awakened him: its rays crept down over the rocks, to shine right into his eyes. He started up with an exclamation and looked round. There was no sign of Firebrand except for a big bulge in the blanket under the rocky wall. Tony threw off his own covering and stood up.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh!"

The horn handle of a knife projected from Firebrand's blanket, its blade evidently buried in the bulge!

With his eyes nearly starting from his head, Tony crept over to the knife handle, emitting little cries as he went.

"What's the matter, Tony?" inquired a familiar voice, and Firebrand himself appeared round a shoulder of rock.

"Oh, you're *not* dead!" rejoiced Tony. "I thought you were very dead!"

Firebrand stepped over to the blanket, withdrew the knife, and studied it thoughtfully.

"No, I'm not dead," he chuckled. "You know, Tony, it always pays to out-guess the other fellow. And now we've got to find him!"

He whipped up the blanket, displaying beneath it a sack in which they had carried food for the journey, but which he had filled with sand before seeking a resting-place elsewhere.

"How are you going to find him?" demanded Tony. "He must have gone after he did that to you."

"Sure," nodded Firebrand. "But horses leave tracks! Let's have a look, starting from where that rifle-shot came from."

Reluctantly Tony accompanied him to the cluster of rocks. The tracks of three horses were plainly visible in the sandy soil.

"They headed west," decided Firebrand.

"Good!" said Tony. "We go east!"

"No, we don't!" retorted Firebrand. "I want to give this knife back to its owner."

"Oh, no, no, no!" expostulated the little man. "Now, listen, please, I'm afraid!"

"And you snoring all night as though you were in your own bed! If I believed you, I'd send you straight back to Hewson! Come on! Let's have some grub and break camp."

The Sheriff Makes a Mistake.

TWENTY miles nearer Kernville, and consequently only ten miles away from that little mining town, a log cabin stood in a green hollow, surrounded by a belt of hemlock and cedar. A convenient sort of hide-away, where wrongdoers might very well resort to plan their wrongdoing.

The cabin was furnished roughly with a table, stools, a bed of sorts, and a

variety of domestic utensils. It might have been a chuck-house on the extreme confines of a range, only it happened to be nothing of the kind.

The tracks of the three horses led into the hollow, and in the cabin, at seven o'clock in the morning, the riders of the horses were sitting at the table, eating a meal.

All three were dressed as cowboys. One of them was a tall, lean young fellow, rather narrow-eyed, yet obviously superior to his companions. His name was Red Carson, and he was called "Red," not on account of his hair—which was brown—but on account of his somewhat uncertain temper.

The man opposite him at the table was a bullet-headed rascal known as Spike; a bully by nature, a coward at heart. The third had a crafty, lantern-jawed face, Hank Barker, a firm believer in the adage that he who fights and runs away lives to fight on other days.

"If you hadn't left the knife in that guy's bed-roll," quoth Red Carson, tussling with a loaf of bread, "we might have had something to cut this stuff with!"

He was addressing Spike, and that blusterer immediately responded:

"Quit your funny little jokes, will ya? You'll get enough off this job to buy a dozen knives!"

"Settled him, did you?" inquired Hank, probably for the fiftieth time.

"When I stick a knife into anybody," snapped Spike, "he's dead to stay dead!"

Surprisingly, the sound of a guitar reached their ears from somewhere out in the hollow, playing a serenade—though that they did not realise it. They looked blankly at one another.

"What is it?" gasped Hank.

They looked towards the door, and as they looked the door swung wide, and Firebrand stood on the threshold with a gun in his hand.

"Stick 'em up, all of you!" he commanded.

Red and Hank raised their hands with alacrity, but Spike, elevating one hand, reached downwards with the other.

"Drop that gun!" roared Firebrand.

The hand that sought a holster was raised; the discomfited three stood by the table, staring at the tall intruder. But almost in the same instant they saw what Firebrand could not see—his back being turned to the sunlight.

"Stick 'em up, stranger!" bellowed a voice.

Firebrand swung round, and became aware of a powerfully-built man with a little clipped moustache and fierce grey eyes standing immediately behind him, and of a gun that threatened.

Spike was quick to take advantage of this diversion. He was close to the bed, and from the bed he whipped up a big blanket, which he flung dexterously towards the doorway. It descended upon Firebrand and the man who had challenged him, enveloping their heads.

The cabin consisted of two rooms, and the three at the table made a concerted dive for the inner room, where Spike hastily raised a trap in the floor. They had scuttled down a ladder beneath the trap, and the trap itself was closed, by the time Firebrand had flung off the blanket.

"Drop that gun," roared the shirt-sleeved man on the doorstep, "or I'll shoot you!"

As both were ready to shoot, the advantage could only be with he who proved the quicker on the trigger, and Firebrand grinned.

"I'm faster than you, brother," he said.

"If you are, you'll hang," was the angry retort. "D'you know that I'm the sheriff of this here county?"

"Sheriff?" echoed Firebrand, and thrust away his six-shooter with a laugh. "Why, you're just the man I want to see!"

"About what?"

Firebrand fished in the pocket of his shirt for a crumpled sheet of paper, which he presented.

"This letter'll tell you all about it," he said. "At least, it ought to—you wrote it yourself!"

The sheriff of Carter County—Ed Burns by name—took the crumpled sheet with his left hand without any loss of vigilance.

"If you don't mind," he growled, "will you face the other way?"

Obediently Firebrand turned about, and the barrel of the sheriff's gun was jabbed into his back while the sheriff read:

"Dear Mr. Jordan,—I've heard tell about you and your knowledge of this county and your way of rounding up crooks. Will you arrange with the authorities to come over here and help bring a gang of counterfeiters to justice? I need you pretty bad.

Yours truly,
ED BURNS."

"Well," said Ed Burns, lowering his weapon, "I did write this myself—and are you Firebrand Jordan?"

"That's me, sheriff," replied Firebrand, swinging round with a broad grin. "And I guess you interrupted me when I was right on the trail!"

The sheriff picked up his big hat, which had been swept off by the blanket, and Firebrand retrieved his somewhat similar headgear from the floor.

"Well, say, I'm awfully sorry for the reception I gave you," apologised the sheriff, extending a horny hand.

"No harm done," Firebrand assured him. "But those fellows I was trailing got away just the same."

"Would you recognise 'em if you saw 'em again?"

"I don't think I would," admitted Firebrand. "I didn't get a good look at but one of them."

"Well, I got in a little late," admitted the shirt-sleeved sheriff. "I didn't even get a slant at them myself. Wonder who they were, anyway?"

"Doesn't make an awful lot of difference, sheriff. Best thing you can do is to tell me all you know about this gang."

"Well," said the sheriff, picking his words, "this thing came to my attention about a month ago, and it got me sure puzzled, so I guessed we should have a new man on the job."

"Working independently, eh? I suppose I can count on your help if I need it?"

"Absolutely! I'll be right around whenever you want."

"And you wouldn't mind showing me your star?"

The sheriff fished a star of silver from his waistcoat pocket, and he was explaining that he had been keeping his eyes on this isolated cabin, when a noise in the adjoining room sent them rushing into it.

The trapdoor in the floor was rising slowly, and a hat was visible in the dark opening. Firebrand and the sheriff stood watching, with their guns levelled ready to fire. But it was Tony's swarthy face that appeared under the hat, and Tony, blinking at the guns, cried wildly:

"It's only me! It's only me!"

Firebrand jerked the little man out from the hole in the floor.

"It's all right, sheriff," he said reassuringly. "He's a friend of mine." Then, severely to Tony: "It'd have to be you! What were you doing down there, anyway?"

"Well," Tony replied, "there was three fellows that came out of a hole across the clearing, and went away on horses. So I crawled into the hole—and got here."

"Where did they go?" demanded the sheriff eagerly.

"Come with me, and I'll show you," promised Tony, and he led the way out into the sunlit clearing.

Firebrand Returns the Knife.

FIVE miles from Kernville on its southern side stood Judd Howe's cattle-farm, in the midst of rolling grassland, two thousand feet above sea-level, flanked by mountains to the west and by desert to the east.

Round about noon that day Red Carson, Spike, and Hank were getting some steers into a commodious corral, when Red caught sight of a trim, girlish figure approaching on foot.

"How many have we got?" he inquired of Spike.

"Twenty-five—thirt'," said Spike, counting.

"Guess that's enough for this morning," decided Red. "We'll knock off for chuck—it'll be ready mighty soon."

The girl who was approaching them was Peggy Howe, younger daughter of the rancher, and she had rather a liking for Red Carson, who, whatever his other deficiencies might be, was very much in love with her.

But before he could greet her a second girl came riding up behind more cattle—Peggy's sister Joan, two years her senior and looking very businesslike in her riding kit, her brown hair fluttering in the breeze.

Joan dismounted beside Peggy and gazed with approval at her dainty frock of chequered muslin.

"Gee, you look swell, honey," she said. "That's the way I like to see you—looking the little lady."

"I'm glad you like it," Peggy replied, "but I feel so useless when I see you at work. Isn't there anything I can do of real value?"

"Don't you worry about work,"

laughed Joan. "I'll attend to it while dad's away. Got 'em all in, Red?"

Red nodded, and just then Ah Sing, the Chinese cook, emerged from the kitchen, beating a gong. Food was ready to be served to the farm-hands.

Red, deprived of the talk he had hoped to have with Peggy, marshalled his men and led the way to the chuck-house, while the two girls went on to the farmhouse, Joan leading her horse, Peggy tripping daintily beside her.

The afternoon wore peacefully away, and no stranger would have imagined that there was anything wrong with the Howe homestead, or with its outfit.

In the evening, as they were perfectly entitled to do, Red and Spike rode into town, where they made straight for the Mountain Inn, a big, wooden building with a wide veranda on which cowboys lounged.

Inside, miners and cowhands were sitting about at the tables, many of them playing cards, while others lounged at the bar or stood watching a trio of dancing girls.

Red and Spike were making for the bar when David Hampton, the proprietor of the place, descended a staircase at the back of the long room and beckoned with a jerk of his head, whereupon they followed him to a table set near one of the walls.

This David Hampton was a heavy-featured man with a mane of black hair. He wore eastern clothes and a fancy waistcoat, and he was reputed to own half the town and to hold mortgages on many of the ranches in the neighbourhood.

"Well, Red," he said in a low voice to that young man, "are you sure the girls will sell their interest in the mine?"

"Yeah—if you give them the cash," was the reply.

"Right; I'll bring the ten thousand dollars with me to-morrow. I'm going up to the mine." And he winked.

For a while he sat there talking; then his quick eyes noticed two strangers crossing the threshold, and he went over to them, never dreaming that one was Firebrand Jordan and the other his henchman, Tony.

"How do?" he greeted them pleasantly. "I'll find you some nice

seats up near the dance floor, right close to the girls."

Firebrand shrugged and followed him, and presently Tony was sitting with a glass of beer in his hand watching the dancers, while Firebrand sat beside him, looking everywhere save in their direction.

Abruptly he rose and strode over to the table at which Red and Spike were talking together.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," he said, "but you lost that in my camp last night!" And he held right under their noses the knife which had been intended for his heart.

"You're loco!" exploded Spike. "I've never seen that knife before!"

"Would you swear to that?"

"Certainly."

"What do you say?" demanded Firebrand of Red.

"I'm not saying you're off your head, but I'm saying everything else that he's said."

Firebrand looked sharply at Hampton, who had approached the table. Then he said contemptuously:

"You fellows are just like a lot of cattle I've seen—born yellow!"

He threw the knife between them so that it stuck upright in the table-top, then turned on his heel and went back to Tony. Hampton leaned down.

"Red," he growled, "I want to see you up in the office—you and Spike." He wandered away among the customers for a few minutes—during which he glanced covertly at Firebrand several times—then made for the staircase and slowly ascended to a room above, fitted as an office with a big, flat-topped desk and several chairs.

Down in the saloon Red pushed back his chair and rose. Spike, following his example, reached out his hand towards the hilt of the knife—a movement which Firebrand did not fail to notice. But Red beat the hand down.

"What's the matter with you?" he said gruffly. "Want to tell him that you own the knife? Leave it there, Spike!"

"Guess you're right," admitted Spike, and made for the stairs.

Red followed him, and together they entered the narrow room above, where



"Was that you shouting just now?" demanded Firebrand.

Hampton was sitting moodily behind the desk.

"Well," he said, looking up at them. "I suppose, as you've carried out my orders, you want me to pay you off?"

Spike tried to clear his throat, but it was in a husky voice that he replied slowly:

"Well, boss, fact is, the work didn't turn out as good as you might think. The guy got away."

"What do you mean, he got away?" snapped Hampton.

"He trailed Red and me to the shack, and almost caught us."

"Well, you're a fine pair of dumb-bells!" roared Hampton. "How did it happen?"

They gave him a fairly accurate account of what had occurred, to which he listened with growing scorn.

"Well," he said at last, "I'm through with you. You're fired, both of you!"

"But listen, Hampton," protested Spike. "We've got to live."

"Not necessarily," retorted Hampton. "Nice people starve every day! Besides, you fellows have got jobs—Red's foreman of the Howe ranch, and you're top hand. What more do you want? I won't have bunglers in my pay. Now get out, and send Hogan up to me!"

Reluctantly they went out, and down in the saloon they spoke to a broad-shouldered man with a pronounced stoop and the somewhat bandy legs of one who has lived long in the saddle. Hogan went up to Hampton's room; the discomfited pair made their way to the street.

"Well, what's on your mind?" demanded Spike, as Red leaned thoughtfully over the hitching-rail instead of unfastening his horse.

"Did you hear Hampton say he was taking ten thousand cash to the farm in the morning?"

"What of it?"

"Well, I'll bet you fifty per cent he won't get away with it," chuckled Red. "Come on, let's go!"

Hampton's conference with Hogan was of brief duration. The strains of an accordion reached his ears from the saloon, and he went out to the stairs to see what was happening.

A miner had brought the instrument into the place, and Tony had borrowed it and was playing a lively jig to which the girls were dancing with some of the men—a most unorthodox proceeding.

Hampton descended in a fury, shouting. "Stop that!"

The girls retreated in haste, the men made sheepishly for the bar, and Tony handed the accordion back to its owner. Hampton strode up to the musician and ordered him to clear out.

Tony looked inquiringly at Firebrand, who walked straight up to the proprietor and grabbed him by the lapels of his coat.

"What harm has my friend done?" he inquired.

"You butt in when you're asked!" roared Hampton.

"I'll butt in when it suits me!" said Firebrand coolly, and letting go of Hampton's coat he crashed his fist into a somewhat prominent jaw. Hampton went down with a thud, and out came Firebrand's guns.

Everybody present raised their hands in alarm, and the bar-tender ducked down out of sight as the guns spoke, shattering bottle after bottle on the shelves.

"Come on, Tony," said Firebrand, finally, as he backed towards the door. "This isn't much of a saloon, anyway!"

August 1st, 1931.

Shot!

NEXT morning, in the garden of the Howe farmhouse, Joan was talking to Red about the continued absence of her father, which was worrying her rather badly, when a car was seen approaching in the dusty roadway beyond the fence.

"I can't understand it," she said. "He rode into town a week ago, and we haven't heard a word from him since. Are you sure he told you he was going to Las Vegas that day, Red?"

"Sure," responded Red, "and I don't think you've got any cause to worry, Miss Joan. Hullo, here comes Hampton!"

The car had stopped outside the gate, and David Hampton was stepping down from it. Red moved away to a shack which was his office as the newcomer entered the garden, hat in hand.

"How do, Miss Joan," said Hampton, in the smooth voice he knew so well how to assume, "I was on my way over to Painted Rock Mine, but thought I'd call here on the way as there's a little business I have to discuss with you. How are things?"

"Not very good," replied Joan frankly. "And I'm terribly worried about my father's absence."

"Well, it is funny, and I hate to bother you while he's away, but there's this!"

He took a folded bill of exchange from his pocket and opened it out for her inspection. According to the document, Judd Howe undertook to pay, three months after date, ten thousand dollars to the order of David Hampton, for value received.

"Ten thousand dollars!" gasped Joan. "I knew dad owed you money, but I didn't realise it was so much!"

"Your dad sunk a lot of money in that worthless mine," explained Hampton. "My trouble is that this money is due on the 5th of July, which is ten days from now. But I don't want to be harsh. I'll give you this bill and another ten thousand into the bargain for the entire rights in the mine—I've got an offer for that amount."

"Oh, but, Mr. Hampton, I couldn't do anything like that in dad's absence," protested Joan.

"The mine isn't in your dad's name—it's in yours and your sister's. That's the way we arranged it."

"But I—I couldn't do anything without him."

"All right," said Hampton gruffly. "But how if he doesn't come back within ten days? I can't seize the mine, because that isn't his, the way the deeds are made out. But I'll have to foreclose on the ranch. Think it over—and I'll see you again."

He went off in none too good a temper, and as the car swept towards the hills, Red, who had been listening to the conversation at the door of his shack, strolled back to Joan, who was lifting her lip and looking troubled.

"Well, Red," she said sadly, "I guess you'd better look for another job—I've just found out that dad owes Hampton ten thousand dollars!"

"Don't you worry," said Red cheerfully, "I'll get you the money to-day." She stared at him in astonishment.

"You!" she exclaimed. "Where in the world could you get ten thousand dollars?"

"That's a little secret! But I'll tell you this much: Hampton's a crook, and he's doing some dirty business over that mine. I—I've heard things. You leave it to me."

Some little way along the road Hamp-

ton stopped his car again. Peggy was riding towards him on a pony, and even as he stopped the pony shied at the car, tumbled its rider into the roadway, and ran off across the fields towards the farm.

Hampton helped Peggy to her feet, apologising profusely. She brushed the dust from her frock and assured him that she was not hurt in the least. To prove it she smiled at him.

"Say, what about taking that job I offered you?" he inquired eagerly.

"Oh, I'd love to," she declared. "It would be wonderful to work in a town, and I'm sick of this old ranch. But Joan won't let me, Mr. Hampton."

"Well, I'm going to have a little talk with your sister—and I don't think she'll object the way I'll put it to her."

"Oh, what would be lovely," Peggy declared.

Hampton drove on, and Peggy made her way across the fields to the farmhouse. As she reached the yard she saw Red go galloping off on a horse, and wondered, because instead of turning into the road he went off across the long grass of the range.

She wondered still more when she caught sight of her sister following Red on a big brown horse, and she spoke to one of the hands named Pete. But Pete could tell her nothing save that Joan had wanted a horse in a hurry and had gone off on Poison.

"Just as dinner ought to be ready!" complained Peggy. "People are tiresome!"

Joan, however, had followed Red because of what he had said. Being a shrewd girl she had come to a conclusion concerning his sudden departure which seared her. But Poison was not nearly as speedy as the horse Red rode, and under a belt of trees she lost sight of him.

She rode on. If Red planned to do what she believed, he was making a more or less straight line for a spot where the winding road to the mine dipped down between walls of rock.

She was perfectly right! Red reached the rocks and road long before there was any sign of Hampton's car, he dismounted and with feverish haste made a barrier across the dusty highway with brushwood. Then, hiding his horse, he concealed himself behind a tree and drew his gun.

Joan reached the rocks almost immediately afterwards, slid from her mount, and crept forward. She could see no sign of Red, but the barrier of brushwood was only too visible. She tugged out a small but serviceable revolver she had brought with her.

Presently the car, with Hampton at the wheel, came swiftly down-hill, but as its driver caught sight of the barrier he braked hastily. Red cried out in an assumed voice:

"Drop that money-bag of yours, stranger! Drop it over the side, or I'll drill you!"

Hampton looked nervously round, and a shot rang out and a bullet sang past his head. Without any further hesitation, he dropped a leather bag over the side of the car.

"Now you can remove the brush and drive away!" directed the voice.

Hampton obeyed meekly; and though he drove away muttering to himself, he did not seem to be as furious as one might expect a man to be when robbed of ten thousand dollars.

While Joan crouched watchfully behind a rock above, Red crept out from his hiding-place and picked up

the fallen bag, which he opened and closed again with every sign of satisfaction.

Joan was about to clamber indignantly down to him, when from the other side of the road a tall rider on a piebald horse suddenly appeared.

Joan shrank back. It seemed to her a dreadful thing that Red should have robbed Hampton in this way; it seemed still more dreadful that he should be caught red-handed, trying to help her.

"Drop that gun, young fellow—and the bag!" shouted Firebrand, close behind Red's back.

And Red, realising that he was caught, obeyed.

"Now turn round! I want to take a look at you!"

In a panic, Joan raised her tiny weapon and fired. Her intention was simply to give Red a chance to escape, and she took no aim. But the bullet pierced the brim of Firebrand's cow-hat and ploughed its way across his forehead. He reeled in the saddle and pitched face downwards into the dust.

Red grabbed up the bag and the gun, and scurried off among the rocks, where he remounted his horse. He was galloping away as Tony came out from under a clump of trees into the roadway, and Joan reached the prone figure.

"What happened?" Tony demanded agitatedly as he flung himself from his mule.

"Get some help!" shrilled Joan, and sank down on her knees beside Firebrand, whose face had gone deathly white except where a streak of crimson trickled.

"What happened?" insisted Tony.

"He's been shot by a bandit," faltered Joan, trying to stanch the wound in Firebrand's forehead with a wholly inadequate handkerchief.

"You mean he's goin' to die?"

"No. I'll have to take him over to my ranch. Get help, please! Oh, please!"

At Bay!

THIS way and that Tony rode about on his mule till he sighted the farm and urged Blossom across to it.

He poured forth an incoherent story to Pete, who, with a number of hands, went back with him, carrying blankets and a hurdle. The unconscious Firebrand was conveyed to the farmhouse and laid on Judd Howe's bed, and a doctor was fetched from Kernville.

Fortunately it was not a very serious wound Joan had inflicted, but it was bad enough to put Firebrand out of action for several days, though on the second day he was able to get up and totter about with a bandage round his head.

Joan found the stranger a handsome and amusing young fellow, and Firebrand, not realising that she had shot him, decided that she was the most adorable girl in the world. A friendship developed between them which ripened rapidly into something deeper.

Tony, also installed at the farm, amused everybody with his quaint ways, and with his inevitable guitar provided many an accompaniment for the singing of cowboy ditties.

But Firebrand began to entertain suspicions concerning Red, as a result of hearing him shout one morning by the corrals.

Calves were being branded, and one had just been roped and laid low. Red, holding the branding-irons, had been giving instructions.

Firebrand was in the yard, talking to Joan, who had just mounted her horse for a ride, but at the sound of that voice he went running to the corrals. She followed, curious as to the reason for his sudden disappearance, and she found him standing beside the prostrate calf, with a hand on Red's sleeve.

"Was that you shouting just now?" he demanded.

"Yes. Why?" inquired Red.

"Shout again," directed Firebrand.

Tony, who had wandered up with his precious guitar under his arm, looked on expectantly, knowing his leader's ways and anticipating trouble. But Red, with a shrug of his shoulders, shouted again, at the top of his voice, but quite differently.

"My mistake," apologised Firebrand.

And Joan, on her horse, gave a little sigh of relief.

But a few evenings later, as Firebrand sat on a little seat in the garden, with Joan beside him in a silk frock that set off her beauty, Red called urgently from the bunkhouse:

"Miss Howe!"

Firebrand sprang up instantly.

"What's the matter?" inquired Joan.

"Whose voice is that?"

"It's only my foreman," she replied.

"I won't be a minute." And she ran off, full of misgiving.

"What is it, Red?" she said severely.

"You know what I told you."

"Yes," replied that young man urgently, "but to-morrow's the day Hampton's got to be paid for that note."

"I know," she said mournfully. "But what am I going to do about it?"

"You're going to do just what I told you—pay him with his own money."

"Since when am I taking orders from you?" she demanded. "Didn't I shoot Firebrand to keep him from recognising you? I can't do such a thing!"

"Don't be silly!" laughed Red. "He'll never know it's his own money, and your worries will be over—except about your dad."

Firebrand, who had been quite himself again for several days, but who had remained at the farm for his own purposes, came strolling towards them, and Red promptly dived into the bunkhouse, while Joan turned to greet the man she had grown to love.

"Well," said Firebrand calmly. "I had a good look at that fellow Red in the moonlight, and I overheard most of your conversation."

"Then—then you know—"

"Yes, I know, little girl! But I'll forgive you so long as you let me help you. I want to see that money!"

"B-but it was stolen from Mr. Hampton, and we'll have to give it back to him. I've had it ever since that dreadful day—"

"Joan," said Firebrand earnestly, "can't you trust me?"

"More than anyone in the world."

"Well, then, let me have that money."

They went into the house together, and in the sitting-room she brought him a big envelope crammed with notes. He examined them carefully against the light of a lamp, studying the details of their printing and their watermarks.

"What are you going to do, Firebrand?" she asked.

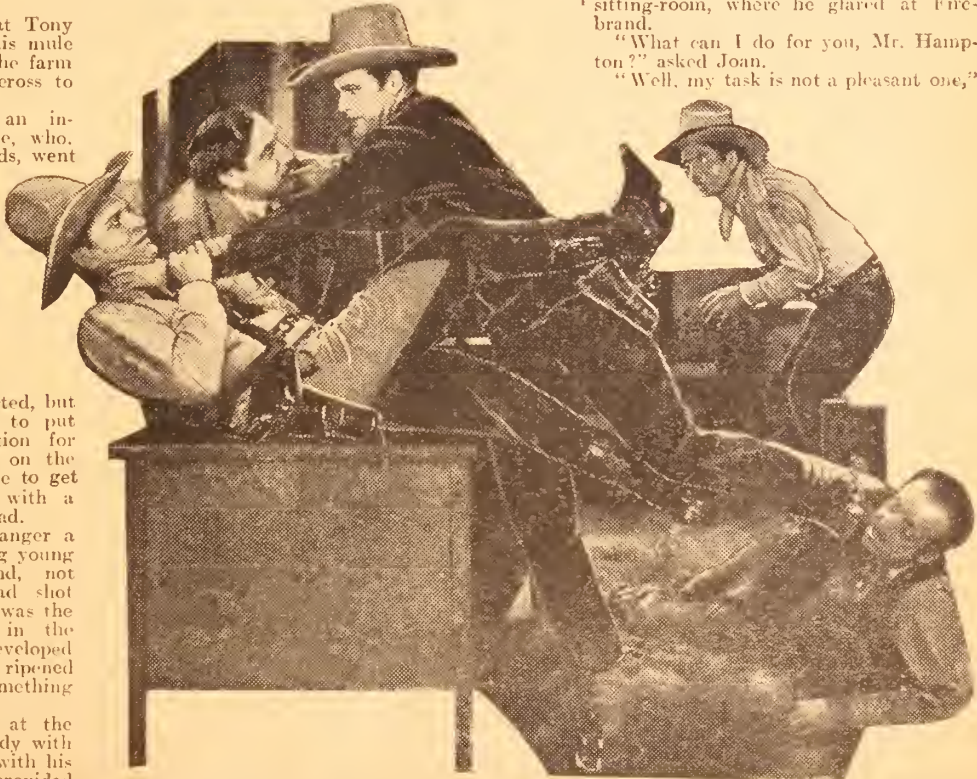
"Put everything right, I hope," he answered gravely. "But that won't be to-night."

The sound of a car in the road startled them both, and Firebrand thrust the notes into a pocket. Hampton was evidently not waiting till morning!

Joan met the unwelcome visitor at the front door, and escorted him into the sitting-room, where he glared at Firebrand.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Hampton?" asked Joan.

"Well, my task is not a pleasant one,"



Red went backwards over the top of the desk with Firebrand's left hand at his throat, while Hampton received a blow on the side of his jaw.

was the reply, "but I have to remind you about the money your father owes me. You see, it's due to-morrow."

"That will be all right, Mr. Hampton," said Firebrand cheerfully, rising up from a settee. "I'll attend to it."

"What have you got to do with it?" growled Hampton.

"Well, you see. Joan and I are going to be married, so I'm attending to all her financial affairs from now on."

"Do you realise," roared Hampton, "that her father owes me ten thousand dollars?"

"Oh, yes," drawled Firebrand, "but I'll have it ready for you."

"It's got to be in cash."

"Of course! Good-night, Mr. Hampton."

Hampton went, mentally cursing the interference of this tall and very alert young man, whom he had done his best to prevent from reaching the district.

As he went out to his car he heard the voice of Tony, somewhere in the distance, singing "Red River," to the twanging of his guitar. He drove off, cudgelling his brains for the best means of dealing with an unexpected situation.

That night he sent a message to Red and Spike by Hogan, as a result of which the two rode into town early next morning.

A negro was sweeping out the saloon as they mounted the staircase to the office and found Hank already there with Hampton.

"I've sent for you two fellows," said Hampton, "to talk to you about this guy Jordan."

"What about him?" inquired Red.

"I'm expecting trouble with him, and you're both in it up to the neck. You've got to stay here with me, and keep your eyes skinned—and your hands ready. I'm expecting him any time, and I don't want his head!"

If any one of them had looked out of the window into the street just then, Firebrand might have been seen riding towards the saloon with Joan. He also had decided upon a plan of action, in pursuance of which he said quietly to his companion as they reached the blacksmith's shop:

"You ride on to the sheriff's office, Joan, and ask him to come to the Mountain Inn right away."

Joan nodded and cantered on up the street. Firebrand waited for Tony, who was riding discreetly behind on Blossom.

"You watch the back entrance," he directed, "and keep your gun handy."

In the saloon he inquired of the black who was wielding an enormous broom whether Mr. Hampton was up in his office, and, on receiving an answer in the affirmative, he mounted the stairs.

Red, Spike and Hank were grouped round Hampton as he entered the room, but they made way for him.

"Good-morning, Hampton," said Firebrand curtly, and produced a wad of notes which he flung down on the desk. "Here's the money—ten thousand. Count it!"

Hampton took up the notes, stared; turned one or two of them over, and held them up to the light.

"So," he exploded, "you're the highwayman who held me up! This is my money!"

"It is," replied Firebrand, pointing an accusing finger at him. "You made it yourself! But I'm no highwayman. I'm a ranger—and I'm arresting you for counterfeiting this money!"

"Don't be ridiculous!" bellowed Hampton. "You can't prove a thing like that!"

"No?" questioned Firebrand, whipping up the notes and stowing them in a pocket. "Well, come along and explain it to the judge."

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He turned to Red and Spike.

"And that goes for you two birds as well," he added.

Hank had crept up behind him, and the barrel of a six-shooter was jabbed into his back. But, like lightning, Firebrand swung round, grabbed the gun and sent its owner sprawling. Then, as Hampton sprang up behind the desk, he turned again, and Red went backwards over the top of the desk with Firebrand's left hand at his throat, while Hampton received a blow on the side of his jaw that sent his head into violent contact with Red's nose.

Spike dived for Firebrand's legs, but received a kick that laid him low. But by this time Hank was on his feet again, and he flung himself upon the ranger from behind, his fingers clutching and tearing at Firebrand's neck.

So unequal a combat could not last for long. Hampton and Red wrenched themselves free, and Spike got up. Blows were rained at Firebrand by four pairs of fists, but even then he struggled gamely to the door, and sent Hank somersaulting down the staircase before he was finally overpowered and roped.

They left him, bound hand and foot, with a gag in his mouth. Hampton's evil brain had devised a plan that might even yet save him from arrest.

Pursuit!

JOAN had ridden on to the sheriff's office, only to find it deserted. She asked a man who was lounging outside whether the sheriff was in town, and received the unsatisfactory answer: "No, but he's liable to show up any minute."

"Will you find him for me, and send him over to Mr. Hampton's office right away?" begged Joan.

The man promised that he would do this, and Joan turned her horse in the direction of the saloon.

Peggy had ridden into town that morning on her pony, deciding that there was no reason why she should be left alone at the farmhouse. Hampton met her as he emerged from the saloon with Red, Spike and Hank. He told them to ride on to the mine, and, as they mounted their horses by the hitching-rail, he led Peggy to his car, which was standing in the roadway.

"I've got some good news for you," he told her. "We've found your dad!"

"Oh!" cried Peggy excitedly. "Where is he? Where has he been?"

"He's over at Painted Rock—got in last night, and decided to stay at the mine. Get in the car and I'll run you over."

Peggy complied with the utmost readiness, and Hampton was tethering her pony when Joan came riding down the street, caught sight of her sister, and went over to her.

"What are you doing here, Peggy?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, Joan," cried her sister, "Mr. Hampton says dad is back—he's at the mine! He's going to take me to him!"

Hampton looked round. Luck, he decided, was favouring him! He suggested that Joan should leave her horse and get into the car with her sister.

"But Mr. Jordan—he—"

"He's gone on," lied Hampton.

"We'll soon catch him up."

So Joan climbed into the car, and Hampton presently drove off with the two girls in the direction of the hills, passing the sheriff, with a chuckle, just outside the town.

The man to whom Joan had spoken kept his promise. He did not even give the sheriff time to dismount.

"Chief," he said, "you're wanted at Hampton's office right away!"

"Hampton's office?" echoed Ed Burns wonderingly. "But I met Hampton himself just now in a car with Judd Howe's daughters."

"Well, there it is—and Joan Howe was the girl who wanted you—and she seemed to want you purty bad."

"Funny," decided the sheriff. "Perhaps you'd better come with me, Tom."

He slid down from his horse, and together they made briskly for the saloon.

But Tony, long since tired of hanging about round the back of that building, had ventured into it in search of Firebrand. He encountered the negro, whose remarkable story sent him rushing upstairs to Hampton's office—and there he found Firebrand, gagged and trussed.

"You oughta let me come with you," he said reproachfully as he cut the bonds and removed the gag. "I've been doing nothing out there all this time, except gettin' sunstroke!"

"Where's my hat?" growled Firebrand, stretching his cramped limbs. "Don't grouse, Tony—get your mule and follow me. I guess the next act of this drama's going to be staged at that mine we looked over the other day."

He went out from the room, but, instead of descending the stairs, he climbed out through a window on to a balcony overhanging the veranda beneath. The piebald mare was standing patiently where he had left her down below. He straddled the balcony railing and dropped neatly into the saddle, while Tony looked on with undisguised admiration.

Off up the street he galloped, and Tony ran down to mount his mule. From the veranda he tried to emulate his master's feat, without quite so much risk; but Blossom moved aside as he sprang, and Tony descended on all fours in the dust.

As he rose and mounted the mule, he saw that Firebrand had stopped to talk to the sheriff, but though he urged Blossom forward, he missed the conversation. Firebrand swept on at full tilt, while the sheriff and the man with him went running in opposite directions, shouting for riders in the name of the law.

Commotion followed. Men came running out from shops and houses, seeking their horses. Tony rode on, trying to catch up with Firebrand; but from time to time he looked back, and very soon a cloud of dust told of a posse mounted at last and galloping after him.

The road to the mine dipped down under trees, rose steeply between rocks, and flanked the Cripple River at a point where the water cascaded and swirled fully fifty feet below. Firebrand, travelling like the wind, failed to see any sign of the car Hampton drove, but glimpsed the three riders whom the car had passed.

Spike, having looked back and guessed at who followed, took cover beneath a tree above the gorge in which the river ran, determined to make an end of this pursuit. A shot rang out as Firebrand approached, and a bullet whizzed past his head; but Firebrand, uninjured, rode straight at the man who held the gun.

Spike's horse stumbled, and Spike went headlong downwards into the water. Firebrand, himself, unable to stop, took a header from the saddle, and a great column of water shot up as he dived beneath the surface.

He rose to find the faithful piebald mare swimming sturdily beside him, and they reached the opposite bank in company and clambered up among the

(Continued on page 27.)

The amazing exploits of a daring band of men in pursuit of the giant "devil" fish at Santa Margarita Island.

"MONSTERS of the DEEP"



Dangerous Seas.

WHERE the waters of the mighty Pacific sweep the southern coastline of Lower California, you come upon that indentation known as Magdalena Bay, mirroring the azure vault of the sky, dotted with islands that know only the traffic of sea-birds and fishermen.

The Dispatch, a fifty-foot motor boat carrying a crew of three or four men, was cruising off the mainland. She had been placed at the disposal of Harold Austin, a sportsman keenly interested in deep-sea fishing, which was liable to be a pastime both perilous and exciting in a tract of water infested by such enemies of mankind as the shark.

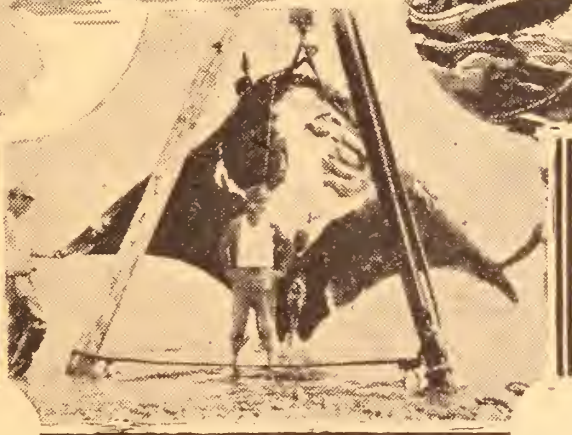
The Dispatch had been specially equipped for the trip, and the personnel included Draper, a cameraman anxious to secure some shots for a motion picture company which he represented. Neither he nor Austin were destined to be disappointed by results.

The islands scattered about the Bay were many of them uninhabited, but formed the nesting-places of veritable clouds of cormorants and pelicans that swooped over the surface of the sea and preyed upon small fish. It was to one of these islands that Austin, Draper and a member of the crew repaired for their first adventure with the denizens of the ocean, and Austin had scarcely cast his line when a violent tug told him that something had caught on to it.

The next few seconds were fraught with thrills and anxiety so far as Austin was concerned, and he had no doubt in his own mind that the same might have been said for a fish.

It was a big bass, and it gave him a hard struggle. But the bass does most of its fighting under the water, and as soon as it broke the surface it was drawn in with as much ease as its twenty-pound-bulk would permit.

Again Austin cast his line, and again he was successful. Satisfied with the catch, he decided to make a tour of the island itself, and soon discovered that it was not only inhabited by birds, but by seals as well.



"Cute little fellows, huh?" said Austin, indicating a couple of sportive pups that had strayed from their mother seal.

"They certainly are," agreed Draper. "Say, I've got a sister back home that would give ten years of her life for a coat made out of these critters' skins."

Austin laughed and shook his head. "Not these ones," he rejoined. "They're not the fur-bearing kind that you get in the Arctic. But I'll tell you what they are good for when they're caught young—circus-tricks! How about taking those two pups aboard and training them?"

It was a suggestion that met with approval, but when it was discovered that the seal-pups required to be washed every day, they were returned to their native shore without regret. After all, the crew of the Dispatch had come to Magdalena Bay for deep-sea fishing, and not for the purpose of starting a menagerie.

Fishing in those waters was not always a profitable pastime, for many times it was only the head of a fish that was hauled on board, the sharks having seized the rest. But it was a pastime packed with interest, and the interest was increased a hundred-fold when the Dispatch encountered a high-sea fleet of tuna boats.

Austin and Draper were invited aboard one of the craft, and it was an invitation that came as a surprise, for among the superstitious fisher-folk there was a legend that the fish left the vicinity when strangers visited the boats.

The legend was not borne out on this particular occasion, for the sea was thick with skip-jacks, or little tuna,

which continued to swarm around the vessel in shoals.

From the master of the craft, Austin and Draper learned that the fishermen worked on a percentage basis, and they had to work fast, as the tuna did not stay long in one place.

The men were standing on a kind of cradle rigged up along the ship's side, and the two

visitors watched them with keen appreciation, following the glinting hooks that fell into the water and lifted into view again with a silver victim attached.

There were no barbs on the hooks, and the fish flopped off as soon as they touched the deck. But each man had to watch his line, for if he slackened for an instant he lost his fish—an unpardonable sin.

Meanwhile two or three of the crew kept tossing live sardines into the sea, to feed the little skip-jacks and keep them close to the vessel, and the tuna became so excited that they snapped at anything which hit the water.

"Tuna haven't much sense anyway," Austin commented, when this mode of baiting them was explained to him. "Did you ever notice how dumb they looked in a can, Draper?"

The cameraman laughed, and then: "Say, how big a catch will these boats hold?" he inquired.

"A hundred and forty tons, I'm told," Austin replied, "and the fish fetch \$120 a ton. Can you beat that?" he added, his bronzed face breaking into a grin. "Fishing and getting paid for it."

He turned his attention to the men on the cradle again. They were taking in the heavier tuna now, which had followed the small skip-jacks. Fifty pounds apiece, these big fellows weighed, bait being required for them.

"And they're nippers compared to the ones you'll find up in Nova Scotia," observed Austin. "I've seen 'em run as high as fifteen hundred and two thousand pounds there. They catch 'em with nets, and the fishermen have a hot time of it. One slap of the tail from a giant Nova Scotia tuna and you'd finish up in hospital, if not worse. But



Again Austin cast his line and again he was successful.

say, I think I'll ask the captain if I can try my hand here."

Permission being given, Austin took up a position on the eradle, and he was not long in hooking into something that gave him a lively struggle. But it was with an exclamation of disgust that he pulled up a sinister shark, and a little later he and Draper returned to the Dispatch.

They waved farewell to the tuna boat and cruised on in search of further adventures amid those strange and populous waters.

The Whalers.

THE lure of fishing had spread to every member of the Dispatch's crew, and had become a veritable craze with Riley, the Irish cook, who even allowed it to interfere with the schedule of the meals.

Austin formed a plan intended to cure Riley of the obsession, and took into his confidence Draper and a little Japanese handyman known as Kay.

Riley had fixed up a line near the galley, and it was to be seen dangling over the rail at all times of the day. Hauling this in, Austin hooked an old sea-boot to it, tossed it into the Dispatch's foaming wake and then raced to the cook's quarters.

"Riley," he shouted, "there's something on your line."

The Irishman came blundering out of the galley and rushed to the rail. He began to haul in his line hand over hand, and his excitement reached fever-pitch as he observed a dark object leaping and bounding on the end of it, an object that was not recognisable as a boot till it was pulled out of the water.

Riley clutched at it and glared at it. Then:

"Begorra," he roared, hurling it to the deck, "somebody's goin' to pay for this!"

Kay had been swabbing down the deck, and, espying Austin's grinning face in the fore part of the ship, the Irishman seized the

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Jap's bucket of sea-water and gave chase. Draper took the opportunity of filming the game of hide-and-peek that ensued, and stuck to his post when it might have been wiser to make himself scarce.

For Austin proved too nimble for Riley, and, coming to a breathless standstill opposite the camera, the Irishman gave Draper the contents of the bucket.

Draper uttered a spluttering yell and started forward vengefully, and a lively scuffle seemed imminent when a shout from Kay, the Jap, diverted the attention of every member of the crew to a fleet of vessels on the port bow.

They were whalers, mother ships and their "killers," which were smaller craft equipped with harpoon guns; and, coming alongside one of the latter boats, Austin and Draper obtained permission to board her.

Two whales were playing around not far away, and every time they opened their jaws they took in a couple of mouthfuls of shrimp, just as an ap-

petiser. Their black, gleaming bodies could be seen disturbing the surface of the sea with their slothful movements.

The harpoon-gunner was already at his post. He had the forward deck all to himself, and was a man of supreme importance, rating as high as the captain.

The killer came within range, and the man at the gun pulled the trigger. There was a flash and a report, and away went the harpoon with its line.

It was a hit. The sea-monster's tail came up and whipped the water into foam, but it was not long before life was extinct.

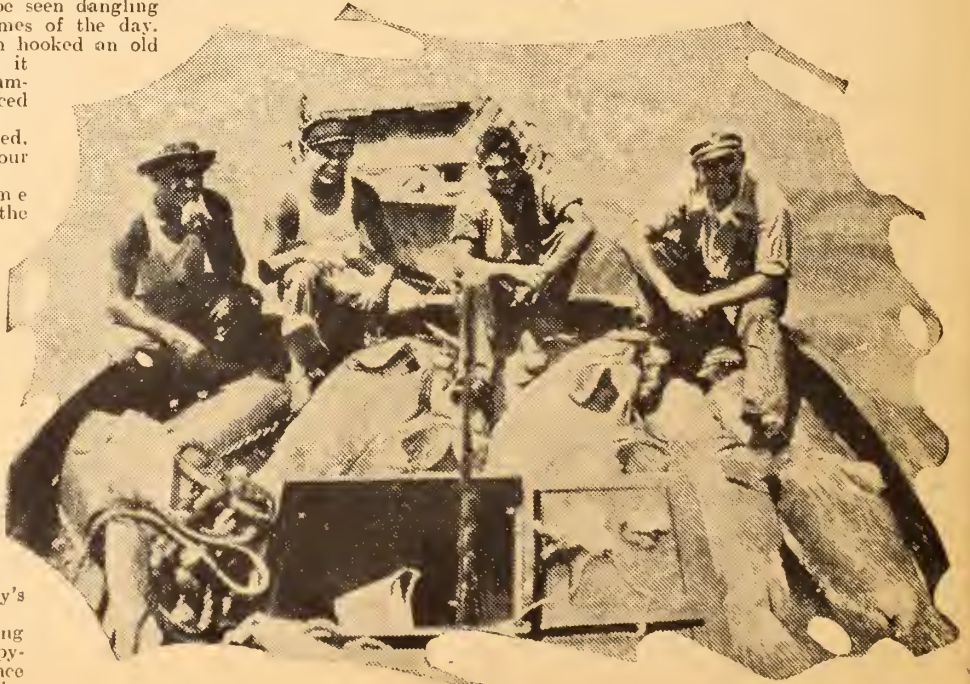
The dead whale was blown up immediately with compressed air to keep him afloat, and a flag was stuck into his carcass to show what boat he belonged to, and also to enable the crew of the "killer" to locate him again without difficulty. A second whale was harpooned some time later, and both this and the first one were towed back to the mother ship.

Here they were stripped of their blubber, which was to be tried out for oil. While the dead whales rolled heavily alongside the parent vessel, men stood poised on their carcasses and skillfully proceeded with the task of "flensing," cutting away the blubber in slices that were twelve to fourteen inches thick.

Austin and Draper watched those intrepid fellows at work. They had experienced a certain thrill in the actual hunting of the whales, but here was the nerviest business of all. For the sea was thick with hungry sharks, and one slip would have plunged a man into their midst, where iron jaws would have clamped upon his limbs and torn him to pieces.

The masses of blubber were raised to the rail and dragged aboard, then slashed into chunks and heaved into the boilers for the trying-out of the oil. The bones of the creatures were crushed for fertiliser.

"Altogether a profitable day's outing, I guess," said Austin. "Fishing and getting paid for it—and I'm down here for the fun of the thing. Oh, well, a



The crew of the Dispatch made a point of loading up with a supply of marrow.

whale would be a bit too much of a handful for the Dispatch, anyway."

Little did he dream that the Dispatch was yet to encounter a denizen of the deep far more formidable than any whale that ever sprayed water from its nostrils.

The Terror at Margarita Island.

ABOUT noon of the second day the Dispatch dropped anchor off a strip of golden beach. It was the beach of Margarita Island, which contained only about twenty-five inhabitants—men, women and children.

They were a shy, primitive set of people, living almost exclusively on clams and fish that they caught in the bay, being afraid to venture farther.

When Austin and a member of the crew went ashore, they were struck by an air of tension, which they at first mistook for hostility. A talk with the head-man of the community enlightened them as to the real cause of the islanders' strange behaviour, however.

It seemed that they were very nearly on the point of starvation, and all on account of some queer, diabolical sea-monster that had visited those waters.

"It is the Devil Fish, the Manta," the head-man said to Austin in Spanish. "He has frightened away the other fish, and we are short of food. We are afraid to go out in our small boats, too, in case we should encounter this mighty creature."

Austin had some difficulty in concealing a smile. He knew the credulous nature of these island people, and was inclined to believe that the so-called Devil Fish was more a creature of their imagination than of reality.

But at that very moment he had evidence of its presence, as a number of boys, who had been bathing, suddenly made for the shore with a panic-stricken outcry and the name "Manta" on their lips.

Somewhere out to sea Austin descried a black ugly fin, rising from a welter of foam.

The incident caused him to treat the head-man's fears more seriously, and for the first time he addressed the fellow in a tone of earnestness.

"Is there no way of catching this Devil Fish?" he asked.

The head-man gazed across the sea to a dim strip of coastline that marked a lonely islet.

"Poncho is our only hope," he said. "Poncho lives on yonder islet, and we would seek his help if we dared to row that far. A mighty man is Poncho—

Out of the bay stood the top-mast of a sunken ship.



fearless and expert with the harpoon. And he knows these waters even as he knows the palm of his hand."

"Good," Austin rejoined. "Then we will go to Poncho for you and ask his help. I am seeking adventure, my friend, and would like to meet this Devil Fish of yours, and if Poncho is all that you say—why, we will induce him to come aboard our craft."

He returned with his companion to the Dispatch, which was immediately steered towards Poncho's domain. The islet being reached, Austin landed in a small boat.

The beach was a veritable cemetery of whales, bones lying there in profusion. Through this graveyard of the sea giants Austin picked his way, and at length came upon a big, stalwart Mexican sitting over a driftwood fire.

He was Poncho, bronzed, husky and sparing of speech, though by no means taciturn, as he frequently showed his white teeth in an engaging grin. His chief occupation was supplying Chinese settlers in the islands with their favourite delicacy, shark-fins, and he was bartering with a little Oriental when Austin came up.

Austin introduced himself, and explained the plight of the Margarita Islanders and his intention of hunting the Devil Fish. He added that he had never clapped eyes on a Devil Fish, but Poncho seemed to know what manner of creature it was, and at once

appeared eager to pit his strength and wile against the brute.

A bargain was soon struck, and Poncho donned a light-grey stetson which had been made by a London hatter, and of which he was clearly very proud. Then, gathering the rest of his effects, which were not many, he followed Austin to the dinghy and was rowed out to the Dispatch.

Bait had been secured to catch fish for the natives of Margarita Island, who were in such dire distress for the want of food, and, before concerning themselves with any devil of the Deep, the crew of the Dispatch made a point of loading up with a supply of marrow.

These fish were plentiful outside the Bay, and, each weighing something like two hundred pounds, they were reckoned mighty good eating, the natives on Margarita being in the habit of drying them, so that a good stock of them would ensure their meals for months to come.

The after-deck was piled high with them when Poncho tied into something that called for everything he had. A lively tussle ensued before it was seen to be a leopard shark, spotted like the feline jungle creature from which it had obtained its name, and beautiful to behold—but one of the most savage of fish.

Poncho lost him, a fact which caused little regret, and at the very next cast he hooked a hammer-head of a species



The thrill of securing the fish was slight compared with the joy of the natives when their food supply was delivered to them.

kindred to the leopard shark, but even more deadly.

The hammer-head was perhaps the most bloodthirsty of man-eaters, and the next few seconds were packed with excitement. But that sensation of excitement was changed all in a moment to one of sheer horror. For, losing his foothold on the slippery deck, Poncho suddenly pitched clean overboard with a yell.

He struck the water with a splash, and plunged below, only a few yards from the spot where the evil hammer-head was fighting on the end of the line.

The shark ceased its struggles and glided swiftly towards Poncho, its slit mouth open to reveal its hideous array of teeth, its eyes gleaming balefully.

Austin and two of the crew had rushed to the side, and as Poncho's head and shoulders broke the surface three willing pairs of hands seized him. He was hauled clear, and not an instant too soon, for the shark's jaws snapped like a man-trap an inch beneath his heels.

The hammer-head and Poncho's fishing-line were lost. So, temporarily, was Poncho's precious hat, which could be seen tossing fifty yards away on the crests of the waves.

"*Carambo!*" spluttered Poncho, as he was dragged to safety, and then he broke into a volley of unprintable Spanish.

What he called that shark in his native language needed no translation.

"Give me a knife in my hands, señor," he said at length, turning to Austin, "and I make quick work of that shark! *Carajo!* I dive under him and rip his green belly, as I have done many times before. But without a knife, what can a man do? Ah, *Dios*, my hat—my beautiful hat!"

"Never mind your hat, Poncho," put in Draper. "You gave us the thrill of our lives, and I 'shot' the whole thing with the camera. Gee, what a picture it'll make! Man overboard in a shark-infested sea!"

"I want my hat!" wailed Poncho, and he was not to be appeased until one of the crew had entered the row-boat and rescued the Stetson.

Only then did Poncho smile again, and agree to the suggestion that the Dispatch should put back to Margarita Island and land the "catch" of marrow without further delay.

This was done, and the thrill of securing the fish was slight compared to the joy of the natives when their food supply was delivered to them.

Questing.

OUT of the Bay stood the topmast of a sunken ship, a vessel belonging to a half-forgotten age, and, according to a legend current among the superstitious natives, the resting-place of great treasure.

After leaving Margarita Island, the Dispatch cruised towards that forlorn relic of the past. Its ancient crow's-nest rose just above the surface of the water, and nothing stirred near by, the very fish seeming to avoid the vicinity. The prevailing silence and stillness—for the sea was like a mill-pond—had a strange effect of eeriness on Austin; and this sensation was one that affected Poncho a hundred times more.

For though the Mexican was less credulous than most of the fisher-folk in those parts, he was, not altogether immune to the terrors of the supernatural.

"Bad place," he said to Austin, eyeing the galleon's topmast askance as the Dispatch approached it. "Divers say giant eels drive them away when they seek for treasure."

"Giant eels?" Austin echoed. "I know—what we call morays."

"You call 'em what you like," Poncho returned. "But some believe these ones are the spirits of those who went down with ship, come to life again as fish. They make hull their breeding-place, and they guard galleon's treasure."

Austin laughed easily.

"Good!" he declared. "Then we'll try and hook into one of them."

Poncho recoiled from the idea. That ancient ship was the only thing he feared, and he did his utmost to dissuade Austin from going near it; but when he saw that the latter was determined, he fought down his own terrors and accompanied him.

Austin took up a precarious position in the crow's-nest of the sunken galleon, and Poncho joined him there tremulously, holding his breath as he saw the Anglo-Saxon cast his line.

"Señor," he panted, "you never come up if you slip into water! You know that, huh?"

Austin hooked something at that very

instant, and Poncho's anxiety increased to agitation. But the fish on the end of the line proved to be a marrow, and, though he wasted a good deal of time in the neighbourhood of the old-time wreck Austin secured no eels, giant or otherwise.

They returned to the Dispatch, much to Poncho's relief, and some time later they encountered some sting-rays. They were a flat fish, carrying a stinger just above a kind of tail—a stinger which was known to have caused death, so that the catching of the species was not without hazard.

Poncho took to the row-boat with harpoon and gaff, and had a fight with a two-hundred-pounder. It was a battle-royal, for the sting-ray struggled furiously to avoid capture.

"Poncho seems to be calling that fish's ancestors a lot of names," observed Austin, watching the duel from the Dispatch, and noting the growing impatience on the Mexican's face.

"And from the expression of the fish I guess *he's* wishing Poncho the same," Draper commented.

The sting-ray flopped into the rowing-boat at last, and, this interlude finished, it was decided that the search for the dreaded Devil Fish of the Bay, should begin in earnest. So the moment Poncho came aboard again a potato-barrel was rigged on the bowsprit and bolted to a long plank—to enable the harpooner to brace himself and steady his aim when the time for action came.

Kay, the Jap, was sent into the cross-trees to keep a look out, and the entire crew seemed "all on their toes." Even Austin began to experience a queer feeling inside him, as if he sensed that some impending crisis were near at hand.

"You know, Draper," Austin said to the cameraman, "there's a sort of creepiness in the air. I don't know if it's the unholy quiet, or what it is—but it's *got* me. I wonder if there's anything in this Devil Fish story?"

"We certainly haven't seen it," Draper murmured. "but I was talking to Poncho just before you went into the crow's nest of that old galleon, and he said that certain signs told him it was around. I asked him if it was an octopus, but he shook his head. It's some big brute of a sea beast that's worse than all your leopard sharks and hammer-heads put together."

"Well, we'll see," Austin began, and before he could utter another word there was a commotion in the cross-trees.

Kay came scrambling down towards the deck, yelling and pointing. From his frantic speech and gestures the others gathered that he had seen a queer-looking fin and a pair of devilish green eyes sticking out of the water off the port bow.

Gazing in the direction indicated, the crew of the Dispatch discerned a tremendous splashing all at once, and Poncho immediately became wildly excited.

"Devil Fish!" he cried, and began digging out his home-made and extremely heavy iron harpoons.

"Poncho," jerked Austin, clutching him by the arm, "what is your so-called devil fish?"

Poncho answered him laconically. "Manta," he said, "sometimes name Monterey. We call him Devil Fish because in water he look like he have crown on head with two big horns, just like devil."

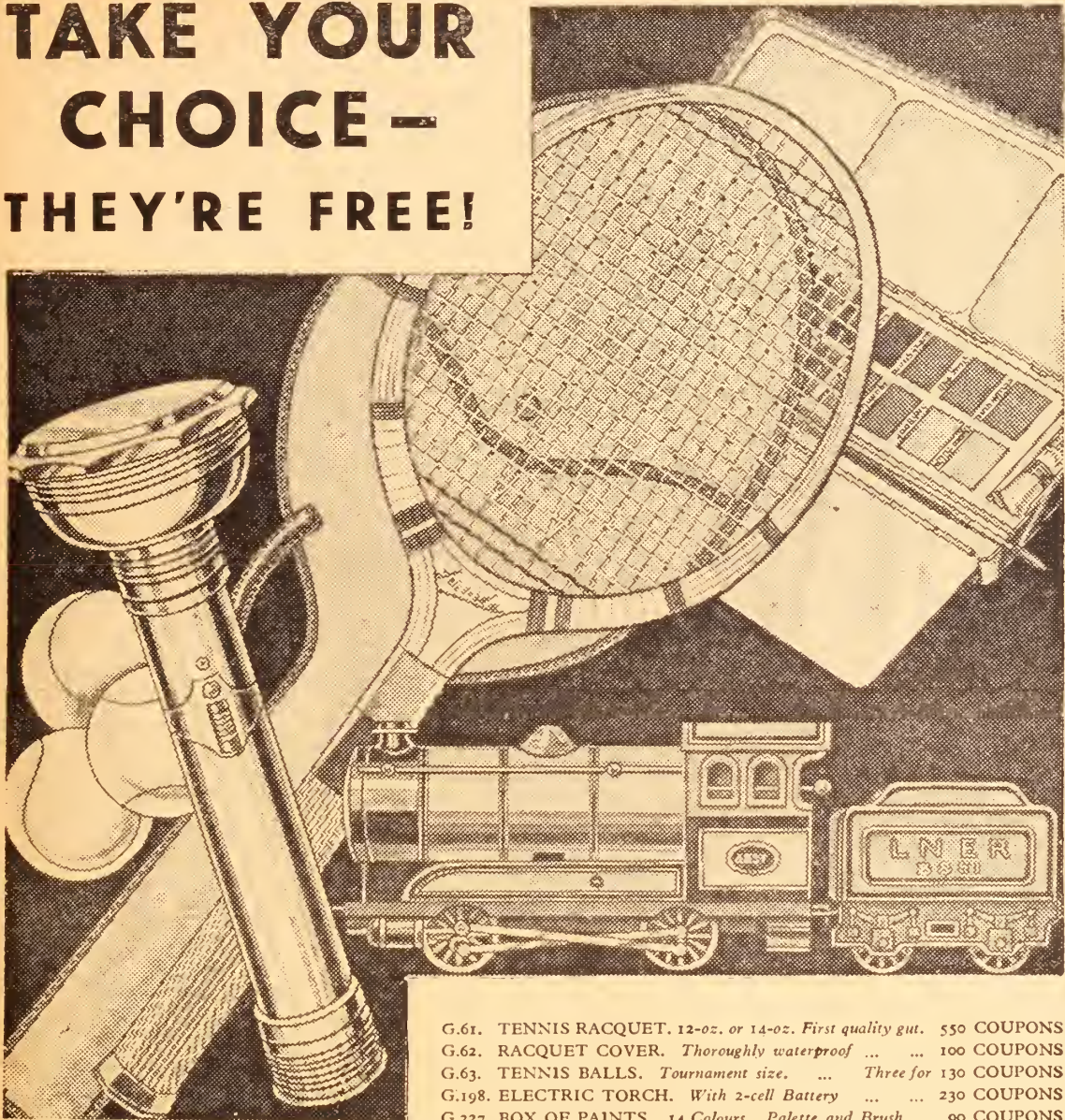
In another moment he had gained the potato barrel on the bowsprit, and was standing in readiness for the fray, harpoon in hand.

(Continued on page 28.)



Poncho took to the row-boat with harpoon and gaff, and had a fight with a two-hundred-pounder.

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"THE SPY."

(Continued from page 14.)

"It was you who got me into it, too," she retorted.

"Quite possibly," Sergei agreed. "Then you thought you could escape me by becoming a worker. Well, I've got you again, and this time shall be the last. You will either marry me, or Ivan shall go before a firing party. I will give you an hour to make up your mind."

Kolya did not wait to hear any more. Not troubling to dress, but only slipping on his overcoat over his sleeping clothes, he crept to the window and climbed out on to the fire-escape.

Quickly he made his way to the ground and hurried along the street. He ran the whole distance to where Petya and his gang were in hiding, and burst in upon them breathlessly.

"Petya! Petya!" he gasped. "Sergei is threatening to send my father to the Kremlin! He has a letter which my father has brought from Paris, and he says that unless my mother marries him he will leave my father arrested!"

Petya leapt to his feet, with an oath. "Sergei!" he said hoarsely. "Is he a Tcheka spy?"

"Yes. It was he who had my mother arrested!"

Petya turned to the rest of the gang, who were lying about on old sacking in the basement which was their home.

"Come on!" he yelled. "A Tcheka spy is threatening Kolya! Death to the Tcheka!"

The gang rose, with a shout, and charged out into the street. Their bare feet pattered over the cobbled pavements as they hurried to the tenement where Kolya lived.

Kolya was not able to keep up with them. He ran as hard as he could, but when he reached the entrance to the tenement he found his way barred by Tcheka police.

He raced round to the back of the building and clambered up the fire-escape. As he jumped over the sill into his parents' lodgings, he heard a harsh voice say:

"Who shot Sergei?"

"I did," replied Anna. "It was I who shot him."

Sounds of movement followed from the landing. Kolya rushed out to find his mother being led away, while lying on the floor in a crumpled heap lay Sergei.

On Trial.

AT the headquarters of Koslov, President of the Tcheka, preparations were made for an immediate trial. It was early the following morning, and the President himself had already taken his place in the court.

He glanced through his papers, frowning as he did so. Then he looked up at his secretary, who was standing deferentially by his side.

"Ivan Pavlovna and his wife, eh?" he said. "The woman is charged with the murder of Peter Sergei, one of our secret agents for the Moskva District, on her own confession, I see."

The secretary cleared his throat.

"Peter Sergei was found dead in a room in the tenement in which he lived," he said. "He had taken from General Kostroma a letter which had been carried from Paris by Ivan Pavlovna—"

"The letter from Comrade Prince Vladimir, saying that the anti-Soviet plot was ended?" asked Koslov.

August 1st, 1931.

"Yes."

"That simply makes Ivan Pavlovna an emissary of the Soviet," the president declared. "We need not take action about the letter. Continue."

"At the time Sergei was found dead, Anna Pavlovna was discovered standing over him, a discharged automatic pistol in her hand. She said she had killed him, so we took her into custody."

"I see," Koslov read through his papers once more, paying particular attention to a doctor's report. He uttered a sudden exclamation. "Send in Ivan and Anna Pavlovna," he ordered.

Anna and Ivan came into the room. Koslov watching them closely, although summing them up. He motioned with his hands that they should stand on either side of his desk, then leaned back in his chair, with his finger-tips pressed close together.

"Anna Pavlovna," he said, "by your own confession you are charged with the murder of one Peter Sergei by shooting at him with a pistol." He picked up a weapon which had been lying on his desk. "Is this the pistol you used?"

Anna looked at it and nodded.

"Yes," she said.

Koslov turned his head so that he could look at Ivan, and his eyes narrowed to pin-points.

"It was originally yours, I believe?" he said.

"It was," replied Ivan quickly. "It was I who shot Sergei. He tried to force my wife into divorcing me and marrying him by holding a certain document over her head, and so I killed him."

"And the document was?" queried Koslov.

"You may as well know," said Ivan at last. "It was from his Imperial Highness the Prince Vladimir, and it was addressed to General Kostroma. Its contents—"

Koslov waved him to silence, and picked up the papers that were before him.

"So you killed Sergei because he tried to force you into marriage?" he said to Anna. "By shooting him?"

"Yes," she replied, in a low voice.

Koslov drummed on the desk with his fingers for several minutes.

"Ivan Pavlovna, you are something of a fool," he said slowly. "When the revolution came you allied yourself against the forces of the Soviet, and that act resulted in your being separated from your wife. She has been exposed to all kinds of dangers in consequence. Don't you think it would be wiser to forget these imperialistic principles of yours, and place yourself in a position where you can look after her?"

"I do not understand," said Ivan.

"Then I will explain myself further," said Koslov. "The Soviet requires men like you, for you are better suited to our needs than men such as Peter Sergei. Although he was our spy, he was not to be trusted. He was a traitor! He preferred keeping a secret document for his own purposes rather than hand it over to this department."

"But the Soviet—" protested Ivan.

"The Soviet is no worse than the imperialist regime," said Koslov evenly. "If you think back, you will know that this is true. No country that is well governed could ever be overthrown like we overthrew Russia. The imperial rule was thoroughly bad."

"You, Ivan Pavlovna, have the interests of Russia at heart. I know it. So have I. Therefore I am going to suggest to you that, instead of interfering in political affairs, you help us to build up our industries. We need men with brains. Well, what do you say?"

Ivan was silent. The instincts of loyalty to the late Czar still held him.

Koslov noted the hesitation, and turned away from him.

"Anna Pavlovna," he said quietly, "you stand accused of the murder of a Tcheka agent. You say you shot him." He half rose to his feet and thumped the desk with his fist. "Why do you lie to me?" he shouted.

"She didn't kill him," Ivan broke in, rushing across the room to Anna's side. "I tell you she didn't! It was I who shot him!"

Koslov's fist crashed on to the desk once more.

"You are lying, too!" he said. "Both of you are lying. Do you think I am president of the Tcheka for nothing? I know everything, I tell you—everything!"

He stood looking at their astounded faces for a few seconds, then went on:

"Bah, I'm tired of you both!" he said.

"I offer you both every chance of happiness together, and you stand there and tell me lies! You are typical Russians. You cannot run your own private lives properly, which is why you have to have men like me in power. We have to run them for you." He sat down heavily. "The court will stand while I pronounce judgment."

There was a movement through the room as everyone present stood up. The president waited until all was quiet.

"Anna Pavlovna, you have been brought before me for sentence for a crime you did not commit," he began.

"You, Ivan Pavlovna, have also confessed to the same crime. Both of you think to shield the other. But Peter Sergei was *not* shot. He was stabbed in the back by a knife, and the pistol that Anna Pavlovna was holding was one which Sergei fired himself in his own self-defence when attacked in his room. The murderer was a young street urchin named Petya."

"Petya!" exclaimed Anna, with sudden relief.

"Sergei wounded Petya at the time of the crime, and Petya died, confessing beforehand," Koslov continued. "Thus has justice been done." He turned to Ivan sternly. "You, Ivan Pavlovna, are found guilty of conspiring against the Soviet, however, and on that charge I have decided to commit you."

Anna started forward.

"No, no!" she cried, remembering the scene outside when voices all day long had been saying: "I had him shot. Sentence confirmed." "No—not that!"

"I sentence you to Siberia for life," said Koslov. "Not to the salt mines as a political prisoner, however, but as manager of the gold mines at Sverdlovsk. There you will work out your own destinies as servants of your country, neither caring whether it is under imperialistic or Soviet rule. You will take your wife and child with you, and you will receive the classification of Worker, Grade A."

He motioned to his secretary.

"Lead them out," he ordered. "See that they are put on the train for Siberia to-morrow morning, and see also that the boy goes with them. The court is closed."

Ivan and Anna went to the door, knowing that it was no good trying to express the deep gratitude that was in their hearts. As they reached it, the voice of Koslov stopped them for the last time.

"Remember," he called warningly, "no more secret letters! The spies of the Tcheka are everywhere!"

Ivan nodded and went out, with Anna clinging to his arm. The door closed softly behind them.

(By permission of the Fox Film Co., Ltd., starring Kay Johnson, Freddie Frederick, and Neil Hamilton.)

"FIREBRAND JORDAN."

(Continued from page 20.)

rocks, where Firebrand remounted. There was nothing to be seen of Spike, and there was no time to look for him. Firebrand rode on till he came to a shallow place where the river might be forded and the road regained.

Tony, meanwhile, had encountered Hank, who lay in wait for him, his own mount having gone lame. Hank rose up from behind a rock, commanding Tony to dismount, and enforcing his command with the aid of a six-shooter.

Tony, having no alternative, descended, and Hank endeavoured to ride away on the mule. But Blossom had her own views concerning who should ride her, and speedily deposited Hank in a bush; whereupon Tony swooped down on him, struck him violently on the head with the butt of his gun, and regained his steed.

The Downfall of a Crook.

HAMPTON, in the car with the two girls, had by this time reached the region known as Painted Rock. The road had become a mere track; the track became a sandy ravine, opening out into a big hollow littered with rails and sheds and trucks. The mine was reached!

Straight up to a cabin Hampton drove, waying away a dozen men who came streaming out from the buildings. He turned to Joan.

"Well, here we are," he said. "You'll find your dad in there, and I'll be with you in a minute."

The two girls jumped down from the car and ran eagerly into the cabin. Hampton beckoned to one of the men.

"Listen," he said, "there's a guy coming up the trail I want you to get. He's a ranger!"

"All right, boss," replied the man. And then: "Here comes Red!"

Red was riding furiously towards them out from the pass.

"The sheriff and his posse are coming!" he shouted.

Hampton, in a panic, called the rest of the men together.

"The sheriff mustn't get here till we've destroyed the evidence," he said.

"You boys got your guns? Well, throw plenty of lead into them—we can always say it was a mistake. You, Red, go with Mart and Steve and Jake and drop the printing-plant down the shaft."

Red and the three men thus named ran to a row of wooden sheds near the entrance to the mine; the rest made for a corral, where they saddled and mounted their horses. Hampton went with them, urging them to hurry, and it was not till they had ridden away that he went back to the cabin.

The door was bolted from within.

"Open the door!" he cried furiously. But the command was not obeyed, and finally, in a temper, he forced it open.

A chair descended upon his head as he entered, and he staggered backwards. Joan was standing there with another chair upraised, while Peggy was clinging to an elderly, white-haired man who was shrinking back against the wall.

"Put that down!" shouted Hampton.

"Don't be foolish, Joan!"

"But you're holding my father prisoner!" stormed Joan. "He's told us so!"

"I've come here to help your father," snapped Hampton, drawing his gun. "Put that chair down and be sensible!" Reluctantly Joan set the chair on its legs, and Hampton opened the door of an inner room.

"Get in there, both of you girls!" he ordered. "I want to talk to your dad."

Peggy went obediently enough, but Joan refused point-blank to budge. The outer door swung wide and Red stepped into the room.

"Hallo, chief," he said, "I——"

"All right," interrupted Hampton. "Look after Miss Joan, here."

He took a sheet of paper and a fountain-pen from his pocket and held them out to Judd Howe, while Joan regarded Red with contemptuous astonishment.

"Sign this!" barked Hampton.

Judd Howe took the sheet of paper and read what was written on it.

"But I can't sign this," he said defiantly. "You've used my mine for your own purposes—you've kept me a prisoner here, and starved me because I won't sell it to you—and now want me to sign a confession that I've been making

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counterfeit notes! Alter the name and sign the thing yourself!" And he flung the paper at his captor.

"You'll sign that or die!" threatened Hampton. But the barrel of a Colt struck him violently in the back.

"He won't!" shouted Red fiercely. "Give me that gun of yours, or I'll burn a hole in your ribs!"

Hampton swung round in amazement, dropping his gun.

"You—you——" he gasped.

"Yes," said Red quietly. "Pick up that gun, Miss Joan, will you?"

Joan needed no second telling. She stooped and picked up the weapon.

"You fool!" howled Hampton. "This is our only chance! Why are you doing this?"

"These people have always treated me white, Hampton," replied Red. "I may be a fool, but I think a heap of Miss Joan and her sister, and you're not going to pull stuff like this."

He turned to Joan.

"Step outside, will you?" he said. "And take your dad and Miss Peggy with you. I want to talk private to this coyote!"

From beyond the ravine came the sound of firearms; Hampton's men and the sheriff and his posse were engaged in battle. Joan called to Peggy, and they went out with their father into the sunlight.

Joan cried out with joy. Firebrand had just ridden up to the cabin and was in the act of dismounting.

"You're all right, then, honey?" he greeted her.

"Hampton's a crook!" cried Joan. "He——"

"I know all about it," broke in Firebrand. "I was only afraid I wouldn't get here in time. Where is he now?"

"In there. Red's with him—he saved us."

"You stay here with your dad and your sister. I'll get him!"

He plunged into the cabin; but the cabin was empty.

Through an open window at the back Firebrand caught sight of Red, riding away towards a steep hill behind the mine, over which a fugitive might hope to escape.

The rattle of gunfire had died away, and now the sheriff and some of his followers were riding through the ravine, while others out beyond it were rounding up those who had defied the law and survived.

Firebrand climbed out through the window and looked about him. A movement by the row of sheds attracted his attention, and, gun in hand, he made for them.

Tony came riding into the hollow on his mule, while the sheriff was talking to Judd Howe and the girls. He dropped from the saddle and went up to the group.

"Have you seen my boss, Firebrand Jordan?" he inquired anxiously. "Please tell me, have you seen him?"

"He went in the—— Oh, there he is!"

It was Joan who had spoken, and the tone of her voice had changed utterly as she saw Firebrand coming towards them, driving Hampton before him—a very crestfallen Hampton, considerably the worse for wear.

"Well, sheriff," said Firebrand cheerfully, "this is the man you've been looking for. Put the cuffs on him!"

"With the greatest pleasure," responded the sheriff, and whipped out a pair of handcuffs. "Say, Hampton," he remarked grimly, as he seized the wrongdoer's wrists and manacled them, "you've given me an awful lot of trouble to-day!"

"Guess your troubles are mostly over," said Firebrand to Joan, slipping his arm round her waist and leading her away. "I want to tell you something that's on my mind."

Tony, looking anxiously for his "boss," wandered in and out of the row of the sheds, lying on a stack of paper which had been intended for conversion into counterfeit notes.

He went out with it—and there was Firebrand, standing under a tree with his arm round Joan and his lips on hers.

Delightedly Tony sat down on an empty crate to play them a serenade. But unfortunately for him he had chosen a spot directly beneath a galvanised iron pipe attached to a stove inside the shed, and as he raised the guitar to tune its strings the neck came into contact with the pipe—and a shower of soot descended upon his head!

(By permission of Filmophone Renters, Ltd., featuring Lane Chandler, Alice Goodwin and Yakima Canutt.)

August 1st, 1931.

"MONSTERS OF THE DEEP."

(Continued from page 24.)

The Dispatch was cautiously steered towards the scene of the commotion in the water, and as it drew nearer the men aboard her saw what resembled more than anything else a partly-submerged monoplane.

To have drawn too close to the monster would have been fatal, and presently Poncho gave the signal to shut off all power. He was now within striking distance, and all at once those on the deck saw him lift his arm and sway back a little.

Conflict.

THE harpoon flashed from Poncho's hand, and Austin and his companions saw it hurtle through the air, with the line trailing behind it. The Mexican's aim was unerring. With tremendous force the missile drove deep into the monstrous demon of the sea, which had terrorised the shores of Margarita Island.

The creature gave an enormous leap, and just for a moment those on the Dispatch saw the queer, crown-like head, the cavernous and toothless mouth, and the two sinister horns. Then it was off like a racehorse, running out a mile of line in no time.

The Dispatch followed it at full speed, and had almost come up with the devil fish when the brute began to dive. He was eight feet below the surface when Poncho loosed another harpoon.

Next instant the sea was lashed to foam and the Dispatch almost swamped by that maddened denizen of the deep. Then away it went once more, and the heavy inch-rope attached to the harpoon paid out like lightning.

To have made fast the harpoon lines would have been futile, for they would have snapped like threads under the strain. An empty gasoline drum was fixed to one of them, therefore, and thrown overboard, to float on the sea and act as a check.

The monster paused in its flight not long afterwards, and Austin and Poncho scrambled into the rowing-boat to pick up the line and take in slack. It was a hazardous business, for there was every likelihood that the devil fish might turn at any moment and charge the ship.

Holding on to the line, Poncho and Austin were pulled through the sea at terrific pace as the manta took it into its head to set off once more. The rowing-boat, leaping and bounding over the waves, was dragged along like a toy craft hitched to a speed launch.

The Dispatch kept fairly close alongside, and it was as well that she did, for almost without warning Poncho's fear that the manta might charge was realised.

Wheeling, the brute ploughed through the water at an incredible speed, and Poncho and Austin rowed desperately for the motor-launch. They were scarcely aboard when the manta was at the bows.

With a mighty heave it threw one of its gigantic, sail-like fins over the rail of the Dispatch, and for one breathtaking moment it seemed as if the craft would be drawn under the surface. The monster's greenish, bloodshot eyes glared evil, and its mouth, greater in girth than two full-grown men, opened cavernously. Then the brute slipped from the rail and veered away.

Yet it was only after eleven hours' fighting that the giant fish was finally conquered and towed back to Margarita Island, where special tackle had to be rigged to gauge its dimensions.

It weighed four thousand and two hundred pounds, this terror of men as well as fish.

Thus, with a mission accomplished, the crew of the Dispatch sailed away, leaving the inhabitants of Margarita Island in high spirits.

As Riley, the Irish cook, observed poetically:

"The kids can swim around the shore,
An' the settlement has fish galore.

For the monster av the deep is no more."

(By permission of the W. & F. Film Service, Ltd.)

"UNDER TEXAS SKIES."

(Continued from page 9.)

quietly. "This guy belongs to the rustlers, and this place is their hang-out. He would have slipped Miss Joan's horses over the border long before you could have discovered that his draft was a fake. That's why I sorter got moving myself! The pintos brought along Singer Martin, and, well, I guess that ends it!"

"Who the thump are you?" demanded Sheriff Moody in amazement.

"Him? His monicker is Bainbridge, and he, like Jack Hartford and yours truly, belongs to the Secret Service," put in Singer Martin cheerfully. "Say, sheriff, there's a bunch of tough guys in one of the outhouses—sort of reachin' for the skies. Guess your boys had better collect them. Sorter rustlers, I'm thinkin'!"

Back at the Circle A a decidedly less grim Rankin faced Joan Prescott. There was no steel in his eyes then; only a softness that she could understand.

"Guess I made a mistake," she murmured.

"Guess I can't have you making any more like it," he said, with mock severity. "I'm sorter willing to stay around these parts and keep an eye on your horses—if you just say the word—"

The strong man's voice went off in a feeble effort that might have been excused had he been attempting to nter them under the embraces of the late unlamented Dummy.

And if she answered him in words it could only have been by a miracle, for their lips had met as she suddenly raised her head.

Circle A was assured, then, of peaceful days under the glorious Texas skies. (By permission of the British Lion Corporation, Ltd., starring Bob Custer and Natalie Kingston.)

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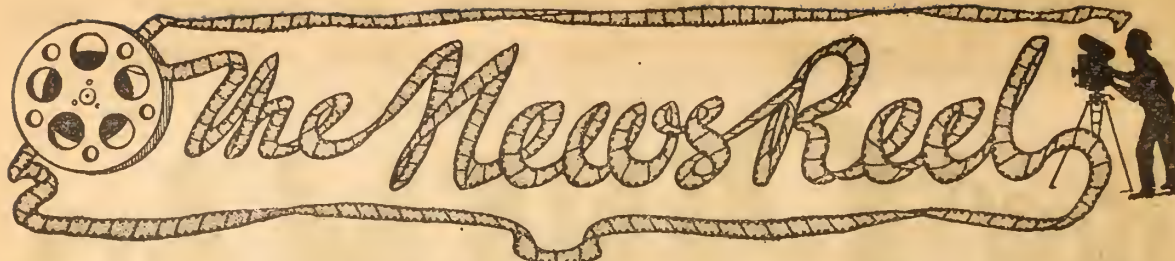
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Jack Allen, Jack Perrin; Doris Sheldon, Josephine Hill; Bruce Reed, Robert Walker; Judge Sheldon, Henry Roquemore; Red Saunders, George Chesebro; Slats, Benny Corbett; Starlight, Himself.

Making Bobby Coogan Angry.

When the fight scene in "Skippy" was being filmed, it proved an exceedingly difficult matter to get Bobby Coogan to "go for" Jackie Searle as he should have done. The two were good friends, and Bobby was reluctant to hurt his chum. The scene was taken more than once, but always the fight lacked realism.

"You've got to hit him, Bobby," ordered his father.

"I can't. I like him," answered Bobby simply.

Then Coogan, senior had an idea. He recalled that, at one time, when Jackie Coogan used to call his kid brother "chicken," it greatly angered Robert. So Father Coogan went to Jackie Searle and whispered in his ear. Then when the cameras started grinding again for another "retake," Jackie Searle put up his fists and called out: "Come on an' fight now, you little chicken!"

Bobby's face flushed angrily.

"You call me that again and I'll bust you!" he retorted.

"Yah! Chicken, chicken, chicken!" repeated Jackie teasingly.

That was enough for Bobby. He sailed in and fought his chum in real earnest. There was no need to take the scene again after this. The only thing the Paramount cutters regretted was in having to slice out the part where Jackie Searle goaded Bobby by yelling "chicken."

Hollywood's Most Famous "Extra."

The most famous dress-suit extra and bit player in Hollywood is Adolph Faylauer.

He has eaten more movie banquets, drunk more coloured water from champagne glasses, and worn out more dress-suits for picture purposes than any other man in Hollywood.

Faylauer is Hollywood's most distinguished extra. When casting directors start to work to fill the places at a big banquet, a movie wedding, an exclusive dinner, or a fashionable scene, they immediately call for Faylauer.

He is so popular that casting directors have to speak for his services long in advance—something that can't be said of most extras and bit players.

His most recent engagement was in the big scenes of Marilyn Miller's August 8th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S THREE COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



BERNARD NEDELL

in

"SHADOWS."

He fled from America because rival gangsters put him "on the spot," and in England continued his life of crime, but eventually the jealousy of his lieutenant and the pluck of a boy brought about his undoing. A stirring drama of London's underworld.

"BEYOND THE LAW."

Cowboys, horse rustlers, action, cavalry, fighting, a beautiful heroine, a shy hero—and what a story! Starring Robert Frazer and Louise Lorraine.

"JAILBIRDS."

A screaming farce of two buddies who find themselves in a prison. Are the warders pleased to have their company? Read this yarn and you will see. Oliver Hardy and Stan Laurel at their best.

starring production, "Sunny," First National's forthcoming release. He was one of the guests at the shipboard wedding. He was also one of those at the fashionable summer resort.

Faylauer has scarcely any time in between pictures, and he commands top prices for this sort of work.

In his ten years of pictures he has appeared in more than 700 films, and he has a complete record of the cast and director, and what he did in each.

His selection is no mere accident. He is German by birth, and University educated. He speaks four languages perfectly. He has travelled extensively, and is the author of a large number of short stories which he writes under a pen name.

Because of his education and travel he fits perfectly into any fashionable scene.

Faylauer estimates that he has eaten more than 400 movie banquets. Now a movie banquet, be it known, is not one of those affairs you attend for one evening. Not at all. They usually last three or four days. Scenes have to be taken a number of times, and from

different angles. Then there are many scenes necessary at each banquet table. And in each case the banquetfeers must eat.

"One eats something on the average of every half-hour," he says. "It is rather strenuous on the digestion, especially as the food, originally hot, soon gets cold."

Faylauer wears out on the average four suits of evening clothes a year—all before the camera. He wears them so much for screen purposes that he doesn't want to see one otherwise, and never goes out in real life in evening clothes. He estimates that he has discarded fifty top hats in the past ten years—where the average man rarely owns one, and never wears one out.

He is always in demand for weddings, and has witnessed the screen marriage of nearly every movie hero and heroine in Hollywood. The shipboard wedding scene of "Sunny" was the most unusual fashionable wedding, he says, and Miss Miller's gown the most gorgeous he has ever seen. He is now greatly in demand for foreign version pictures. He likes picture work, he says, because it gives him ample time to write. He does not write about Hollywood, and keeps his pen name a secret.

Leslie Fuller Proves that There's Nothing Like Fighting for Film Fame.

Here is a little incident which occurred during the production of the breezy British comedy, "What A Night," that demonstrates that life among the film people isn't all roses. By no means.

The story of "What A Night" concerns an enterprising, if rather tactless, commercial traveller who puts up for the night at a supposedly haunted inn. Various terrors, trials and tribulations assail him, which lead up to a climax in which aforesaid traveller catches a crook.

Leslie Fuller, of vaudeville fame, and Syd Courteney take the leading rôles in the picture. Fuller is a traveller, and Courteney is the crook.

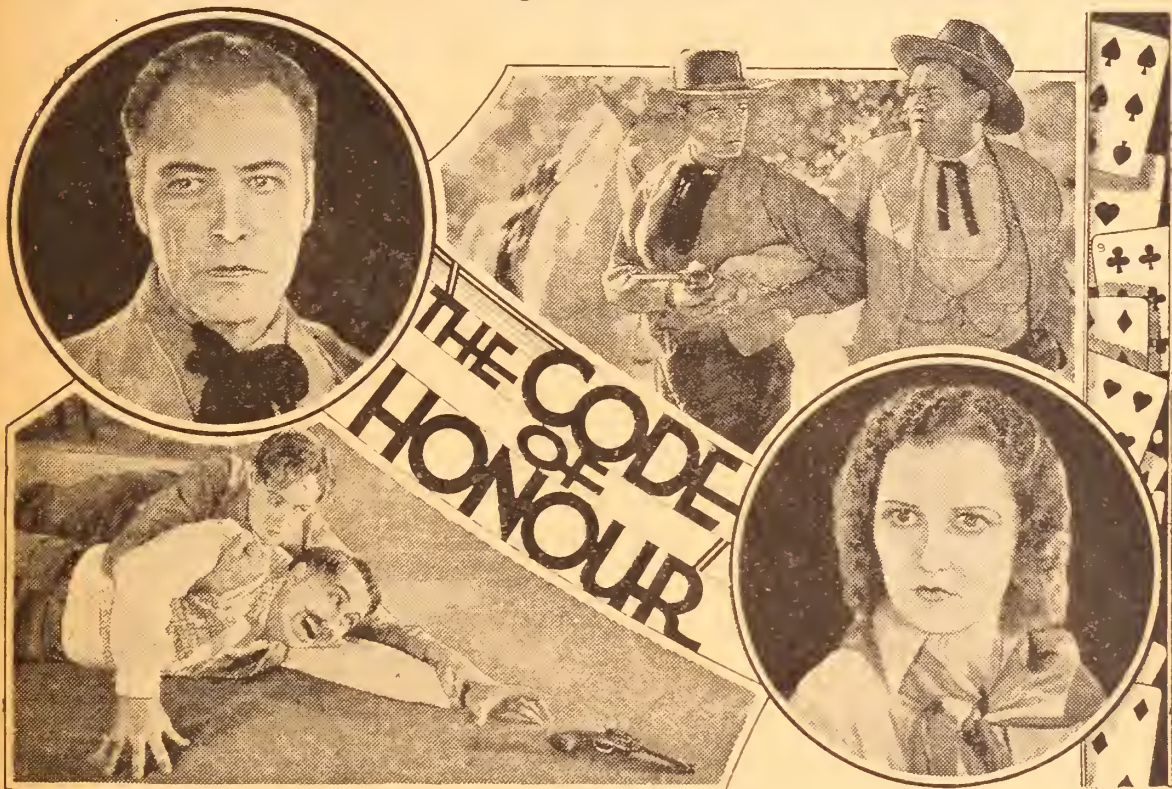
In the final stages of the picture a terrific battle is waged in the tap-room of the inn, and this is where we come to the point. Fuller and Courteney were supposed to indulge in throwing bottles, tankards, and in one case an axe at each other.

For a time all went smoothly; but on one occasion Fuller, who used to be a boxing champion, became a trifle too realistic, and the fight developed into a real "rough house." Fuller sustained a nasty cut on the head and a bruise on the temple—gore flowing easily—whilst Courteney received a dislocated finger and a bump the size of an egg!

But Monty Banks, the director of the picture, did not interfere. He simply went on calmly shooting the film, and afterwards cheerfully informed the stars that he'd taken the fight sequence perfectly!

(Continued on page 28.)

A gambler, falsely accused of murder, eludes pursuit and gets a job on a ranch, where he turns the tables on a despicable rogue. Action—adventure—romance—in a grand Western thriller. Starring Mahlon Hamilton and Doris Hill.



THE CODE OF HONOUR

Hunted!

IN the wild country of the West, where men settle their disputes by the speed and dexterity with which they use a six-gun, a cowpuncher being chased by half a score of other men was not exactly novel.

The thudding of horses, the wild cries of angry men, and the occasional burst of gunfire were more or less everyday occurrences. It was only now and again that such matters attracted attention.

But when one man was chased by the sheriff and his posse, who flogged their horses to get the last ounce from them, anybody who happened to be a witness of the chase sat up and took a lot of notice.

Yet nobody but Jack Cardigan's own particular pal saw the desperate ride he put in to escape coming to grips with Sheriff Smyth and his deputies.

Cardigan was a hunted man, and this was not the first ride he had to put in to maintain the freedom which was now so very dear to him.

He had been riding rather aimlessly along the trail south when he first spotted Sheriff Smyth and the posse. Thereafter the aimless ride became a desperate dash for life.

Bang went Cardigan's spurs into his mount's side, and once he brought his leather heavily across the horse's neck. Then, with knee and voice, he urged the horse to do its best.

The trail became one cloud of thick dust as a dozen pairs of hoofs cut the baked ground of the trail, and with Smyth and the posse only a few hundred yards behind the fleeing Cardigan, the cloud raised by the fugitive's horse was as fine a guide as could have been thought of.

None realised this better than Cardigan himself, and it was in sheer

desperation that he turned off the flat trail and galloped hard over the plain.

But the trail of dust was no less. Clouds of it rose under every pounding hoof, and the sheriff had nothing to do but ride like a man possessed and follow the dusty, tell-tale trail. His men, opening out a little in order to see the better, had nothing to worry about in whatever amount of dust they made.

Once Smyth let out a couple of bullets into the forward cloud, but he hit nothing.

Cardigan heard the bullets whizzing through the air at the moment as he felt his horse stumble for a fraction of a second, pick up, and gallop on. But the speed was diminishing—the posse was coming up hand over fist.

"Here—get—up!" he blurted out. "Come on, boy! Show 'em how you can travel! Come on!"

Bang! Another bullet whistled its way through space, to be followed a second later by another. The report this time was very much louder to Cardigan, and his heart beat fast as he realised that the chase was nearly up.

He crashed through some dried-up bushes in a frantic effort to get away from the sun-baked ground which yielded so much dust, but the posse was too near. They could see him whether or not the dust arose.

Cardigan looked round with frantic eyes. Up the plain was a cliff edge, over which he could not ride without certain fatal results to his horse, if not to himself. On his right was the much-travelled, dusty road. On his left was a small wood, and it was for this that he cut.

It was a desperately near thing, for every moment now his own horse was getting slower and slower in its stride.

That stumble had done some damage which Cardigan dared not stop to examine.

There was only one thing for it. He had to chance his luck in the wood.

But the moment he shot into the bushy fringe his horse changed its legs and nearly fell for the second time.

It was lame! Instinct more than anything else made Jack Cardigan look up desperately. Behind him thudded the posse, the crashing hoofs ever coming nearer and nearer.

Above him was a tree, with a bough that was astonishingly friendly in appearance. And Cardigan jerked himself on to the bough as his horse passed beneath it, swung himself up, and got amidst the foliage.

For one frightful second he thought his horse was going to stop directly under the bough, and announce to the whole of the posse that its late rider was somewhere but a few yards away. But, fortunately for Cardigan, his horse, relieved of the weight of its rider, and doubtless urged by the sound of the approaching horsemen, galloped on faster than ever.

It had only charged into the thickest part of the wood a few seconds before the posse came pounding upon the scene.

"Who—whoa—er!" Sheriff Smyth brought his horse upon its haunches with one pull of his reins, and the remainder of the posse followed his example.

"That was sure Jack Cardigan," said the sheriff between his teeth. "There ain't a 'puncher in the district who could lead us a tarnation caper like this. Where's he gone? That's the question!"

As if to help his brain, Smyth withdrew from his pocket one of the long

cheroots for which he was quite famous. He did not light it. He simply poked it against his set teeth, tapped his lips with it and replaced it in his pocket.

"You boys scout around and try and head him off!" he ordered. "Guess I'll ride straight through and trail that hoss of his, an' git it wise that he's Jack Cardigan!"

The posse rode off without another word, and Sheriff Smyth dug in his own spurs and cut into the thick bush, leaving Jack Cardigan, listening intently, upon the bough of the tree.

He gave them a full minute to get away before he dropped to the ground and gave a short, soft whistle. A moment later he had dodged behind a tree as there sounded the rattle of hoofs and the breaking of twigs just ahead.

It was another ten seconds before he knew that his whistle had attracted his own horse and not the posse, but it was only three seconds more before he had leapt into the saddle and dashed off in the opposite direction to that taken by Sheriff Smyth and his boys.

His hope of escape was short-lived. The moment he struck open plain he knew that, for a bullet whistled past his head a full second before he heard the report of the gun that fired it.

Again his spurs went home, and again the gallant horse answered his urgent call. But the lameness was there—Cardigan could feel it in the uneven manner in which the animal's hoofs struck the ground.

The shot brought the posse round from the other side of the wood and the sheriff from the middle. Cardigan hissed savagely through his teeth.

"It's the cliff, boy!" he muttered desperately. "We're not going to be caught yet!"

He was riding for the cliff edge as he spoke, and it was not until he was within ten yards of it that he held hard on the reins and dragged his game mount to a walk.

Bang! Bang!

Two more reports settled any hesitation he had momentarily felt as he looked down the steep sides of the cliff base. He had to take chances now, for there was definitely no escape if he turned again. The posse had spread right out and covered every possible way to freedom save that which lie directly in front.

His spurs went home, his horse flung up his head and dilated its eyes as it felt its front feet pushing space. A second later the animal was sliding unsteadily down the cliff, sending clouds of chalky dust into the air, crashing through bushes until its rigid legs simply could not keep him upright.

Down upon its side went the horse, and Cardigan was flung from the saddle to continue the slide on his own account.

Up on the cliff top the posse pulled up, to gaze with fascinated eyes and gaping mouths at what they thought must be the end of the hunted man and his gallant horse.

Nobody spoke. Even the sheriff did nothing but take out a cheroot, tap his teeth with it, and watch with unblinking eyes.

Far down the cliff the rolling horse and man put more and more space between them. Yards had still to be covered before the valley plain was reached, and there, in the opinions of the posse, the hunted man would lie until he was picked up—a mangled, broken corpse.

The clouds of dust drifted lazily away against the side of the cliff, and disappeared in the atmosphere. Far below, a black, shapeless mass, which was the horse, rolled on to the plain and lay still, to be joined a second later by

another shapeless mass, which was Jack Cardigan.

"Boys, guess we'd better go and pick him up!" said Sheriff Smyth, and shook his head. "That there Cardigan sure deserved a better fate! It was a tough ride he chose!"

The posse nodded, and turned their horses slowly back to the trail which would take them down into the valley.

A Shock for the Sheriff.

"WELL tarnation burn me!" That was Sheriff Smyth's exclamation as he led the posse round the bend into the trail and gazed into the valley.

For there was no sign of Cardigan or his horse!

"They's hooked it!" he added, and bit viciously at a cheroot he dragged from his pocket. "Tarnation burn me! They's hooked it!"

"That suro was a tough ride!" agreed one of the posse. "Seems somehow as his pal brought a bit of help. He cut off down the trail, sheriff, when we rode for Cardigan."

"Sure, we ain't got nothin' on him," said Smyth, with another vicious bite. "But, say! Clip along the trail, two of you. You others ride open and search the valley. I'm jus' kinder set on taking in that Jack Cardigan. Meet you by the narrow bush trail!"

He himself rode slowly forward, thinking hard. Jack Cardigan had a reputation for pluck, and a tinge of admiration was in the sheriff's breast for the desperate ride Cardigan had chosen, but which had served him so well.

He was down amongst the valley bushes in a few seconds, and here he dismounted from his white horse and chewed thoughtfully at another cheroot. He was angry that Cardigan had somehow or other given them the slip in the woods before risking that diving ride down the cliff face—the fugitive must have been within inches of them at one time!

His horse pricked up its ears suddenly and stared through the bushes, its whole bearing that of rapt attention. Sheriff Smyth looked at it, followed its gaze lazily, expecting to see one of his own men riding in to report.

But it was not one of his own men who came.

It was Jack Cardigan, walking his horse! And the horse was helplessly lame in its right fore foot!

In a flash Smyth had drawn his gun and had pressed close to the bushes by which Cardigan must come.

"It was sure rough that you should pick up a stone after giving them a show-down like you did," Cardigan was saying. "That was a tough ride, partner, but I just had to do it. We'll get that stone out soon as we see the posse shift home—"

"Stick 'em up—and keep 'em up!" snapped Smyth, as he suddenly poked his gun out of the bushes and followed it himself. "Right up, Jack Cardigan!"

Cardigan thrust up his hands—it was no use arguing with a sheriff's gun.

"You're Jack Cardigan O.K.?" asked Smyth bluntly.

Cardigan nodded.

"Card sharper and gambler—wanted for murder of a greenhorn!" said the sheriff, in his most official manner. "I got that on you, Cardigan."

"Listen, sheriff—I ain't no murderer!" said Cardigan hotly. "Why, I never carry a gun! I admit I got a bit off that greenhorn, 'but I didn't shoot him. I tell you, I don't carry a gun!"

Smyth looked down at the plain

leather belt around Cardigan's waist, hesitated, and then shook his head.

"They've got it good and proper on you, Cardigan, and you've gotta come with me," he said. "You sure ain't got a gun showing now, but it ain't like Sheriff Smyth to take risks. I'm gonna put the steel on you—lower your hands!"

His gun was still held forward as he reached for his handcuffs, which were hanging upon his own belt. And the gun was within an inch of Jack Cardigan's chest—for a second.

The next second it was knocked down, and a grip like a vice fastened itself upon the sheriff's gun hand.

"I don't want to break your wrist, sheriff, 'cos I ain't got nothing against you," said Cardigan grimly. "But something is going to happen if you don't drop that gun!"

"I'll sure blow you—" hooted Smyth, and gasped as that vice tightened.

His fist came round with the whole force of his body behind it, but in a flash Cardigan had changed his position until he could wrench the gun from the sheriff's hand, dodging the blow neatly as he moved.

A moment later the gun was on the ground, and sheriff and fugitive were at grips. But Cardigan was a big man— inches taller than the sheriff. The struggle was but of short duration.

With a sudden hefty push Cardigan sent the sheriff back against the bushes, and in a flash had picked up the gun. The tables were turned then.

"Sorry I'll have to hold you up, sheriff," said Cardigan calmly, "but, as you say, they're reckoning they've got something on me up north a bit. I ain't riskin' my neck by sort of arguing with them. And sorry, too, that I'll have to borrow your horse."

"You'll be a tarnation sight sorrier when my boys come round!" said Smyth, with a watchful eye on his own gun held so steadily in the fugitive's hand. "That hoss of mine just ain't no good, and the boys'll have you sure as the sun goes down to-night!"

Cardigan smiled.

"Guess I know a good hess when I see one!" he said cheerfully.

A moment later he was up in the sheriff's saddle, and the gun was tossed twenty yards away into the bushes.

"I don't need that," said Cardigan calmly. "S'long, sheriff!"

"Poooooh!" grunted Smyth, in deepest disgust.

He dragged viciously at the cheroots in his pockets and flung them to the ground with another expression of the deepest disgust as he failed to find one that was not broken. And he was staring at the spot where Cardigan had disappeared when his men rode up two minutes later.

"I get the drop on Cardigan," he explained wrathfully. "Say, he's sure a cool guy! But I reckon I'm gonna have a talk with him one day—when I git that hoss back! It's the fastest loss in the district, and there's no tarnation chance of catching him with the start he's got! Come on, Slim, I'm gonna have your saddle, and you can git up behind one of the others! And don't nobody talk to me, for I've got me mad up! Busted my cheroots, he did! Waal, I sure have got somethin' personal on him now!"

The boys forbore to grin—until the sheriff's back was turned to them as he rode ahead of them for home. The shooting of the greenhorn had taken a second place to the "busting" of the cheroots now, and the posse had an idea that they were going to be riding, riding, riding, day in and day out,

until Jack Cardigan had been brought in.

Help Needed.

JACK CARDIGAN did not stop riding hard until his horse was blown, and a glance behind had satisfied him that the sheriff had, for the time being at least, given up the chase.

Even then, in order to make best possible use of the relief thus granted him, he only gave his horse an hour's rest before again putting him to the gallop. As much distance as possible between him and the posse was his great ambition, but, at the same time, he was thinking hard about getting a job.

His horse was all right for food and water, there being plenty of both even in the plains. But Cardigan did not fancy himself eating grass and drinking out of horse pools!

It was with something like another relief, therefore, when he spotted far down the trail the peaceful rising of smoke from the chimneys of a handsome ranch-house.

"Gee, boy, see that smoke? That's where you throw your saddle for a spell!" he ejaculated. "What about putting in a real nice burst so that the owner can see what sort of horse I've got with me. We want a job, and first impressions count a high lot with ranch-owners. Get goin'!"

Whether or not the horse understood did not matter. He certainly obeyed Cardigan's urging spurs and hands, and cut down the trail at a speed Jack Cardigan found exhilarating. Sheriff Smyth had had a good horse, and fond as he had been of his own horse, the fugitive had to acknowledge that the exchange was much to his own advantage.

Ahead, down by the ranch-house entrance, Cardigan could see the figures of two men. He hoped that one of them was the owner, and that his spectacular dash down the trail was being observed and admired. Cardigan wanted a job, and, as he had said, first impressions were very important.

But the impressions those men were destined to get were not exactly as Cardigan anticipated, for with startling suddenness his horse put his foot in a hole, stumbled dizzily, and before the

fugitive knew what was happening, he had been shot clean out of the saddle.

He flew half a dozen feet through the air. He saw the earth rushing towards him, had a dazed impression that his horse had given a shrill whine of pain, and something crashed straight between his eyes.

That was all he knew for some minutes.

By the time his scattered senses were coming slowly, hazily back to him, he had been picked up by the two men and was being half walked, half dragged into the ranch-house.

"Hallo, boys, what's happened?" came in a blurry, anxious tone from the side of the house.

Cardigan tried to pull himself together and explain, but it was one of the boys who answered the question.

"This guy had a fall down the trail, Miss Doris. Guess we'll sure have to get those holes filled in."

"Take him to Tom's room, boys, and do all you can for him!"

"Sure!"

It was then that Jack Cardigan had cleared his eyes sufficiently to look at the speaker. He found her interesting.

She was dressed very much as every girl he saw out West dressed—serviceable skirt, riding-boots, blouse and scarf. But she was unquestionably the prettiest flower Cardigan had ever seen, and there was ample excuse for the admiration that shone in his own eyes.

She smiled back at him—a sad sort of smile that was quite out of place on that pretty face. That impression flew to Cardigan's brain and remained there.

"Thanks," he said slowly. "I guess I can do with a bucket of water, miss. And if one of your boys wouldn't mind having a look at my horse—nasty stumble that, and no horse, however good, could have missed that hole. Thanks, boys!"

The girl looked at the fugitive with sudden, keen interest. He did not speak with the curt twang usually found with cowpunchers. His voice was quiet, and his words were clear and distinct. His smile, too, was somehow different.

"Well, what about that bucket of water, boys?" she said, with another smile. "Are you alone, stranger?"

"I was, at the time of the fall," replied Cardigan. "But somewhere down the trail there's a partner of mine. If he calls, miss, I should like him to know I am here. His name is Nosey."

She laughed, and his smile flickered back at her, a smile which became rather wan as he tottered slightly on his feet.

"Get him away, boys," she said hurriedly. "He's about all in!"

Cardigan was a tough man of the plains, but that crash between the eyes had more than shaken him up. It took the attentions of the two boys for half an hour before he reckoned that he was fit enough to be left alone for a sleep.

It was two hours later that he awoke, with a lump on his forehead the size of a chicken's egg and a splitting ache between his eyes that was a constant reminder of his somewhat undignified entry in those comfortable quarters.

He lay on the bed for another half an hour, at which time Miss Doris peeped into the room. She gave him a smile when she saw that he was awake.

"Better?" she asked brightly.

"Sure, and I'm much obliged," said Cardigan, as he sat up.

"That's all right, stranger. My father is downstairs, if you feel up to going down to meet him; he is anxious to know that you are all right," she observed.

"Thanks. I'll come down."

It was a distinctly weak Jack Cardigan, however, who walked slowly down the wooden stairs to the large, comfortable sitting-room.

At a table sat an elderly man, with rancher stamped all over him. Upon a chair, at the side of the table, squatted, rather than sat, another elderly man.

"I'm real sorry for you, Bradfield, but my client insists that I go through with it," the latter was saying. "If you haven't got the documents to prove your claim, then we shall have to make you get out."



"Take him to Tom's room, boys, and do all you can for him!"

"You and Harden know full well that this is my property, that my claim is an honest one," said the rancher warmly.

Cardigan hesitated. He did not like to intrude, for there was something going on that was no business of his. At the same time, there was something curiously pathetic about the whole attitude of the rancher, whose name was evidently Bradfield.

"Harden and I are your friends, Bradfield," put in the visitor. "At the same time, no man can afford to ignore chances. Besides, Harden is quite keen upon marrying your daughter, you know, and he wants to see her provided for."

"Leave my daughter out of the argument, Slack," snapped Bradfield. "Marrying is her own affair, and I'm not going to suggest to her that she marries Harden just to get him to lay off pressing for the land documents."

"Sure—sure!" agreed Slack. "But that's how it is, Bradfield. If you can't provide that document, Harden's instructions are to claim it free land."

Bradfield nodded, his head drooping until his chin almost touched his breast. In that manner Slack left him, and it was then that Jack Cardigan stepped slowly forward.

"I guess you're owner here, mister," he said quietly. "I want to thank you for your hospitality—"

"That's all right, stranger," cut in Bradfield, as he swung round. "Doris told me about your fall. Glad to see you're up and about. Travelling far?"

"Just anywhere, but nowhere in particular," grinned Cardigan, and added dryly: "Much depends upon circumstances."

"Then why not stay here for a couple of days, and give yourself a chance to get completely well," suggested the genial rancher. "My house is always open to those on the trail, stranger, and there's always food and rest for man and horse."

Cardigan hesitated. "That's sure kind of you," he said slowly, and looked towards the door through which Slack had passed.

The doorway was suddenly filled again. A youngster came slowly in, followed by Doris Bradfield, upon whose face was again that wistful, sad expression Cardigan had first noticed.

But it was Bradfield who broke the sudden silence.

"You have met my daughter, stranger," he said affably. "This is my son Tom. Tom, meet Mr. Cardigan. He may be stopping here for a couple of days. I've got to go to San Francisco, stranger, but I guess Tom will look after you."

"Sure," said Tom, with a slight nod and one dismal glance at Cardigan.

He went out the next moment, and for a few seconds there was an uncomfortable silence in the room.

"Guess I'll stop, mister," said Cardigan suddenly. "I may be of some help, and able to repay you and your daughter for the kindness shown me."

"Good—now all you have to do is to make yourself at home," said Bradfield with sudden briskness. "I've got to go away, but I'll be back to have a word with you before you take the trail."

Doris helped him pack his bag then and there. The old man's face, bright enough whilst offering Cardigan the hospitality of the ranch, changed altogether as the minutes went by. He seemed to get older, his eyes less keen and more weary, his whole bearing that of a man who carries a big weight of responsibility.

August 8th, 1931.

The girl was anxious, too. Her pretty eyes were restless and constantly moving from the bag-packing to her father, as if she were anxious how he was faring.

And it was a full minute after Bradfield had gone that Jack Cardigan spoke.

"Guess I couldn't help hearing a bit of talk between your father and a man called Slack, Miss Doris," he said slowly. "Trouble?"

She nodded. "Slack is a lawyer, and he and the saloon keeper, Harden, are claiming that this property was never properly bought, and there are no deeds in existence," she explained. "Father has gone to San Francisco, to the land office. His only chance is that the deeds of the property are there. I—I hope he gets them."

It was Cardigan's turn to nod. "And your brother?" he said quietly. "Tom? Oh—Tom?" she murmured, and hesitated. "He's not long been back from the East, and—and—he sees a lot of Harden. I hope everything is all right."

Cardigan nodded again. It was not a propitious moment to ask any more questions. But he gained an idea that a word with young Tom might do more good than harm—later on.

That opportunity was not forthcoming, in spite of the fact that Cardigan was in and around the ranch for the next two days, taking matters easy until he regained his strength. And it was not because most of that time was spent with Doris.

Tom was seen but very little; whatever it was that occupied his time, occupied it completely. But, judging by his pale cheeks and ever trembling hands, his occupation was anything but the healthy one he could so easily obtain on the cattle ranges.

On the third morning after Bradfield's departure—and on the day he was expected back—Cardigan received some really good news. Doris came in from town and went straight up to him as he lounged by the corral.

"Your partner is down town," she said.

"Nosey!" exclaimed Cardigan, and grinned happily. "Well, I guess I'll go down and rouse him out, Miss Doris."

For once he did not linger in her company. He secured a horse and rode off at once.

The Documents.

NOSEY! That was Jack Cardigan's greeting—and it brought Nosey from his thoughtful stare across the plains with a jump.

"Jack! Gee! I'm right glad to see you're up!" exclaimed Nosey. "And—oh, boy!"

He chuckled as if there were no such things as sheriffs and sheriffs' posses in that part of the world. He was a jolly-looking fellow, with a pair of twinkling eyes, a slight, soft, silky black moustache, and, of course, a nasal appendage of a size to account for his nickname.

"Something good around here?" said Cardigan.

"Good!" ejaculated Nosey, and brought out a roll of notes to rustle them under Cardigan's eyes. "Gee—they're dead easy meat down here, Jack! And if I can lift these greenbacks in a few hours, what can you do?"

"Do?" echoed Cardigan, and changed the subject with a sudden burst. "Say, Nosey—seen anything of a young chap down at the saloon—fellow about twenty, not in puncher's

stuff, but in a lounge suit—sorter chap from the East?"

"Sure—he was playing cards," said Nosey instantly.

"At the saloon?"

"Sure—Harden's place. Say, Jack, those guys down there was just put there to meet you. You can clear up the whole town in a couple of days."

"Was the kid winning or losing?" asked Cardigan distantly.

"Losing—I was doing all the winning—me and Harden," replied Nosey. "But see here, Jack—what about a little game? Gee—you was born with fingers tickling a pack of cards, and I guess these hyer punchers around here have rolls that are worth your picking up. Suppose—"

"Suppose we go down and have a look at the place," cut in Cardigan. "I sorter want to get an eye drop on Harden. What's he like, Nosey?"

"Big fellow—powerful hombre!" said Nosey, as they walked slowly down the street. "Gets a good roll from the greenhorns who stick around his saloon, I guess."

"See a guy named Slack?"

"Slack? No—"

"Little old guy—a lawyer," explained Jack.

"I sure saw a little old guy talking to Harden, not so long ago," admitted Nosey. "Didn't hear his name. Why?"

"Oh—nothing!" said Cardigan listlessly.

And with that Nosey had to be content. But he was not content when he found that Jack Cardigan's visit to Harden's saloon was not to join in the gambling that went on there from dawn to midnight every day in the week.

Jack Cardigan was more than a hero to Nosey, although the fugitive was many years younger than Nosey himself. It was Cardigan's nimble fingers, when they held a pack of cards, that provided a great fascination to Nosey, and his skill and daring whilst in play was ever a source of tremendous admiration.

But Cardigan seemed far more interested in Harden than either the saloon or the cards. Harden was all that Nosey had said—a big, powerful fellow, who sported check riding-breeches, a flashy waistcoat, and a clean, neat black stetson. His moustache was parted town fashion, with the ends waxed with the care of a city dude.

Once, whilst they were there, Cardigan pointed out Tom Bradfield to Nosey.

"That kid has got the gambling fever pretty bad," said Cardigan. "I guess he worries his sister some."

"And I guess that same sister worries you some," growled Nosey. "You ain't touched a card—"

"I wonder what she would say if she knew that I was a fugitive from the law," murmured Cardigan thoughtfully. "I wonder if she would believe me if I told her that I did not shoot up that greenhorn guy?"

"Wonder what the boys would say, if they knew you was amongst a lot of guys with plenty of money, and you ain't touched a tarnation card!" grunted Nosey. "You've got me sick, Jack! Rolls of notes waiting to be picked up—and you're falling for a girl—"

"That kid brother of hers is losing again," muttered Cardigan, as if he was lost in his own thoughts. "I can always tell 'em by their eyes, Nosey. Watch!"

Nosey, because he realised there was no drawing Cardigan into a game, grunted and watched.

Tom Bradfield's eyes were glimmering and glinting with eagerness and anxiety. But the pile of chips in front of him went down and down, whilst the pile in front of the saloon man's chest grew bigger and bigger. It was Harden's idea to provide one of his own men at each table, just to ensure there was no cheating and no trouble, as he put it.

"I guess that kid's father would have a tarnation blue fit if he saw him now!" said Nosey suddenly.

"Just what I was thinking—but I'm not beating up against Harden just now. Say, that's Slack going off with Harden now. Old man Bradfield is coming back—guess I'll sorter head 'em off. See you later, Nosey!"

And with that Jack Cardigan strolled out into the open. But once in the open, he did not stroll. He leapt for his horse, sprang into the saddle, and cut down the trail at a pace that would have made Sheriff Smyth think it worth while squaring off the whole district to secure the return of his horse.

Bradfield was already there, having arrived a few minutes before. It needed only one glance to show that his quest had been successful, and only a fraction of a second before he turned to Cardigan to confirm the news.

"Say, stranger, I've sure had a successful trip!" he announced brightly. "I've got the documents, all signed and sealed. Give me that chest, Doris!"

Doris obeyed with alacrity, and before Cardigan had had time to offer his congratulations she had placed an iron-bound, wooden chest upon the table—the family box of secrets, as it flashed through Cardigan's mind.

Something made Cardigan turn his head as the papers were put away in what the rancher and his daughter believed to be a place of safety.

Tom Bradfield was in the doorway, his face white and morose. And, for some reason best known to himself, he would not meet Cardigan's eyes. He did look once at his sister before he turned on his heel and walked quickly out.

Bradfield tapped the chest.

"That proves my claim right up to the hilt," said Bradfield. "Say, stranger, you seem to have brought luck with you!"

Cardigan laughed.

"Perhaps the luck is all on my side," he said, and glanced quickly at the girl.

Doris blushed, smiled gently, paled a little, and flushed again.

"I'll get some food ready," she said hastily, and disappeared into the back room.

Harden and Slack, contrary to Cardigan's expectations, did not put in an appearance. Perhaps they had business elsewhere. Whether that was so or not, Cardigan spent the next few hours in pleasant conversation with Rancher Bradfield or in long periods of unaccountably difficult chats with Doris.

The Rising Tide of Trouble.

CARDIGAN'S code of honour, in spite of the fact that he was an admitted card-sharper and gambler, kept him from playing at the saloon. He felt that he could not betray the trust Doris put in him by carrying on in the same way as she hated her own brother doing.

Doris Bradfield had made a lot of difference to Jack Cardigan. Her presence, in a way, worried him. She was so

different from anybody else he had ever met.

That she regarded him in much the same light was only too obvious to Cardigan. And that worried him, too. She did not know that he was a sharp—a gambler—that he was hunted by the sheriff for shooting a greenhorn in another gambling saloon. And not for the life of him could he have brought himself to tell her.

There was only one thing to do—and he said so to Nosey.

"Nosey, we're hitting the trail again," he announced the morning after Bradfield's return.

"What! Are you gone stiff in the brain?" almost hooted Nosey. "All these green guys bursting their pockets with bank rolls—and you saying you is hitting the trail before you have tickled your fingers?"

"Just that!" said Cardigan quietly. "I ain't touching a card down here, Nosey."

"Waal, buy me a rabbit!" groaned Nosey. "See hyer, Jack—I can turn those guys in little sums all round my hands! Think what a wad you can lift from them—"

"I'm not playing, Nosey—not around here! We hit the trail at sundown!" said Jack, and walked away from his partner.

Nosey stared after him with a curious mixture of surprise and disgust in his

eyes. And his thoughts were not entirely centred around Jack, as his muttered words proved.

"It's that Doris Bradfield!"

He was quite right.

But the plans of mice and men, as the proverb declares, do not always go right.

At the very moment that a distinctly dismayed Cardigan had discovered that his code of honour did not permit his further staying at the ranch, Tom Bradfield was letting himself into Harden's office at the back of the saloon.

Harden looked up angrily—his office was very private. But the expression changed to one of sheer delight when he saw who his visitor was.

"It isn't Tom!" he exclaimed affably. "Come right in, Tom!"

"Say, Harden, I lost again last night," blurted out Tom. "Give me a break—give me a chance to win some of it back."

"That's what you have always said, Tom, and I sure ain't got a bottomless bank pit," said Harden, with a little less affability. "You owe me a lot now, and I ain't married your sister yet—"

"I've got something to offer as security," said Tom hastily.

Harden did not speak. He waited whilst Tom Bradfield fumbled in his pocket and pulled out a paper.

"It's—it's the deeds of our ranch," almost whispered the youngster. "If you would lend me something—I could

buy it back out of my winnings! I'm bound to win to-day—the luck is certain to break my way!"

Harden's eyes glistened, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could steady his voice to speak.

"Oh, well, that's sure a little bit safe," he agreed slowly, and with assumed reluctance. "I'm your friend, Tom—I'm dead sorry you have had such bad luck. Perhaps I might—"

"And you promise you'll let me buy it back

"Give in, you yellow rat!" hissed Cardigan.



before I go home?" interrupted the feverish gambler eagerly.

"Sure—I'm your friend!" grinned Harden.

He pulled open a drawer of his desk, took out a wad of notes, and handed it over to the trembling fingers that were so eagerly held out for them.

"Thanks, Harden—thanks!" he almost gasped. "You're a real pal!"

"Sure, I'm a real pal!" laughed Harden.

But there was no laugh on his face when he saw the door close behind the boy. His own fingers trembled with eagerness as he re-examined the title deeds of the Bradfield ranch, and his eyes glistened with greed and joy as he placed the document in his desk and locked it.

A minute later he was whispering instructions to one of his men in the saloon. A minute after that another man joined the table at which young Tom Bradfield had sat himself.

For a full hour Harden stood against a support in the saloon, watching the pile of chips dropping down before the sweating Tom Bradfield.

The deeds would never be bought back now!

Only a few chips were on the table when Harden at last went out of the saloon to find Slack, the lawyer.

As a result of that meeting, Slack presented himself at the ranch, a beaming, beneficent smile upon his lips, to find old man Bradfield reading and Jack Cardigan making the best of his few remaining hours with Doris Bradfield.

"Well, Slack, I guess you've come to finish the business," said Bradfield, returning the smile confidently. "I've got the document!"

"Have you?" said Slack, with astonishment. "Then, my dear Bradfield, you have only to let me look at it, and I can assure my client that he cannot claim the property."

Bradfield was grinning broadly as he picked up the chest and placed it upon the table. He tapped it affectionately.

"It is here!" he said, laughing without restraint. "I'm sorry to disappoint you, Slack, but I can prove my claim."

He had opened the lid as he spoke. A moment later the lid had crashed shut again, to be feverishly flung up whilst two wrinkled old hands poked agitatedly amongst the contents.

"The document—it's gone! I've been robbed!" gulped Bradfield, and stared dizzily, accusingly around.

"Doris—Mr. Cardigan—I'm—they've—it's—"

He searched again, Slack making no movement from the chair he had taken. But Doris moved as if with instinct to Cardigan, and clasped both her hands about his arm.

Old man Bradfield was in a state bordering upon collapse.

"They've—it's gone!" he muttered again.

"Then I am sorry to say you will have to leave," said Slack, with merciless calm. "We shall claim at once—everything is prepared, Bradfield. You will have to go."

Bradfield nodded dully and Cardigan, biting his lips with bitter helplessness, turned to Doris.

"Say, I'm downright real sorry about this," he muttered, but she was not looking at him.

Her eyes were turned to the doorway. Tom Bradfield stood there, white as a phantom, twisting his hat nervously in his hands, his eyes downcast, perspiration still upon his forehead.

Instinctively everybody turned and looked at him. He had the grace to flush for a second before the ghastly

pallor set over his thin cheeks again.

"Tom, come right here," said Bradfield, very quietly.

Tom obeyed slowly.

"Did you take those documents?" demanded the rancher, as he pointed to the chest.

The youngster nodded, and with that nod every muscle in Jack Cardigan's body stiffened.

"My own son—robbed me of my property—robbed his own sister of her rights!" said Bradfield, and there was more sorrow than anger in his voice. "Where are they?"

"Harden's got them. I raised some money on them. I meant to buy them back. My confounded luck was bad, but—but—"

Tom choked off into silence, avoiding every pair of eyes, and of the quartette only Slack, in the safety of the fact that nobody was looking at him, could find anything at which to smile.

"Well, if Harden has got the document against money lent, I guess that settles it, Bradfield," he said, with a shrug of his shoulders. "My instructions are that you quit—at once! I am sorry for all this, of course, but my client is a business man!"

With that he walked out, whilst Tom shuffled out of the room as his father sank wearily into his chair, one hand upon the chest from which the precious document had been stolen.

It was only natural that after one glance at Cardigan's grim face Doris should step over to do her best to offer some comfort to her father. And Cardigan took the opportunity to move thoughtfully from the room to the ranch yard.

"Say—Jack!"

It was Nosey who called.

"I've got the horses ready, Jack," he began, as he came up.

"You can take their saddles off," said Jack Cardigan grimly. "I've changed my mind."

"An'—an' you're going down to the saloon!" gasped Nosey.

"Sure, I'm going down to the saloon!" said Cardigan. "Get my horse right now, Nosey, but take off everything bar the saddle! I'm not going to leave this place for a while."

"Oh, boy!" gulped Nosey. "Say, just you watch your partner hustle some!"

Jack Cardigan did not speak, and he ventured no information and answered no questions during the gallop down to town.

At last even Nosey forbore to ask questions. He had the opinion that there was trouble brewing; he had seen before that set, grim look that had settled upon Jack Cardigan's face.

A Battle Royal.

JACK CARDIGAN strolled into the saloon with the air of a man whose time was his own, and who had but little interest in the manner in which that time was passed.

Nosey had been left to tether the horses, but he joined Jack Cardigan minutes before his partner showed any signs of joining in a game.

"Can I join in?" said Cardigan, as one of the men rose from a table.

"Sure, stranger," said the tableman.

"Sure, partner!" put in Nosey eagerly, and whispered in Jack's ear: "Skin 'em good and proper, partner!"

Jack was not listening. His eyes were upon the chips.

"Say, what's this?" he said, in tones of deepest disgust. "Boy's chips! Ain't there a man here who can play?"

The tableman stared, and stared even more when Cardigan pulled out a fat roll of notes.

"Sure, stranger! I'll ask the boss!" he said, in awe and wonder.

He dashed straight away to Harden's office, and burst into it as though the place was on fire.

"Say, boss, there's a stranger with a wad as big as a house wanting a game!" he blurted out. "Shall I—"

"You leave the cards and tell him I'll oblige!" chuckled Harden.

He was at the table almost before the news had spread that he was to play a high game with the stranger, and a crowd clustered around the table.

"Say, pleased to see there's a player in this saloon," said Jack Cardigan affably. "I just couldn't stand a boy's game, mister. What shall it be?"

"Anything you like!" said Harden promptly.

"Right! Play you for a thousand bucks!" said Jack, even more promptly.

In the amazed silence that fell, Nosey's chuckle could be distinctly heard, but nobody took any notice of him. Every eye, every scrap of concentrated attention, was upon the table.

"A—thousand—bucks!" gasped Harden.

"Sure! Thought they'd brought a man to play!" sneered Jack. "Too big?"

"No!"

The word shot out between Harden's teeth.

They played, and a thousand dollars went into Harden's corner. They should do so, seeing that he knew every card in the pack by the various marks he himself had put upon them. But Nosey's eyes showed none of the excitement that was in every other pair. He was watching—his hand was ready at his gun. He knew these saloons.

A second thousand dollars went to Harden before a third went to Cardigan. The fourth and fifth and sixth thousand dollar bills were put upon Cardigan's pile. The seventh went to Harden, but the next five went to Cardigan before Harden realised that his own cards were now known to the stranger, and they were being used against him with a skill he could never hope to match.

Great beads of perspiration rolled down his oily, fat face. He fairly tore off his collar and tie, and ripped open his shirt to allow the hot air of the saloon to get at his soaking body.

"I'm—I'm through!" he gasped at last.

"You're through!" sneered Cardigan. "Why, you're yellow—yellow as the yellowest skunk rat in the West! I asked for a man's game, and all you do is sweat over a few paltry bucks! You're yellow—"

"Another thousand bucks!" hissed Harden.

They went to Cardigan after five minutes' play, and again Harden tried to cry off. But the expressions of disgust on the faces of all those around him—all those men from whom he obtained his wealth without giving them a chance—brought him back to the game.

Every dollar bill he had got went to Cardigan, and the amount was enough to make even Nosey's eyes glitter, used as he was to seeing Cardigan play for terrifically high stakes.

"I'm broke—broke, I tell you!" gasped Harden at last, and wishing that he dared announce that he was being cheated with his own marked cards.

"No, you're not broke!" said Cardigan, between his teeth. "You've got a document that belongs to Bradfield—you've got it by the same means that

I've got all these bucks! I'll give you a break, Harden! I'll cut you once for that document!"

"I—I—I—" Harden choked himself into a terror-stricken silence. Suspicious eyes were upon him. Hands were at guns. Anger and contempt were mixing in a score of eyes.

With a sudden, vicious movement he swung his chair to one side.

"I—I'll play!" he hissed. "Slim, get a pack of cards!"

"Slim—get a new pack of cards!" put in Cardigan, with a grim smile. "I'm giving Harden a square cut here. He gave money for that document, all said and done. A new pack, Slim—opened and split before the company present!"

That was more than Harden could have reasonably expected. It was a case of luck against luck now.

Cardigan was as cool as an iceberg under the dazzled, amazed eyes of the excited lookers-on. Harden came back, panting like a puffed walrus, his hands trembling and his very knees rocking. He had to win this time!

Cardigan himself tore the wrappings off the new pack of cards. There was dead silence as his slim, nimble fingers flicked them into a lightning shuffle and placed them upon the table.

"I give you first cut, Harden," he said calmly.

That cut must have taken seconds, and it was seen that perspiration was even dropping from the tips of his fat fingers as he slowly cut the pack, took a frenzied stare at the card he had to show—and flung it down with a howl of triumph.

"King of spades! King of spades! Beat that, mister!" he roared, and laughed like a madman.

Jack Cardigan placed his hand upon the pack, grinning as though this cut was for a packet of tobacco. Slowly he shifted the cards—gripped a few tight—and turned them over.

"Ace of spades!" roared Nosey. "That's all yours, Jack!"

Harden stood for thirty seconds, staring dully as Cardigan calmly took up all his winnings and stuffed them and the precious document into his pockets.

It was not until Jack Cardigan, a happy smile upon his face, had moved away from the table that the frantic, ruined Harden burst out with a shriek that was half alarm, half a command.

"He's not getting away with that—a thousand bucks to the man who stops him! I'll play on—" he roared.

Bang! Crash!

Like a flash Nosey had his gun out and had fired at the saloon lights. Almost as quickly came half a dozen other flashes from revolvers, until shooting became too dangerous.

Jack did not wait. He burst through a crowd of men, hitting out right and left, and in a flash there was a general scramble in which every man thought he had the gambler. In the confusion Nosey took to the floor and crawled his way out of the saloon.

Harden, fighting with the fury and ferocity of a maddened tiger, got to the door and staggered for his horse.

He gave no heed to the shout that reached his ears—a shout that the sheriff should be "got on the wires." His only thought was of that document—he meant to have that if he started shooting for it.

But Cardigan's fast horse got him to Bradfield's ranch minutes in front—gave him time to get into the ranch-house and search for a gun he had an idea would be necessary. But he could find nothing like a gun, and Harden was in the house before anything more could be done.

Harden's hand might have trembled with his anxiety and the tenseness of the last few hours, but the blue tube was steady enough to make Cardigan realise that it would be almost impossible to miss at the short distance that separated them.

"Put your hands up!" said Harden between his teeth.

"You can't get away with this, Harden!" said Cardigan, his desperate eyes watching the enemy's every movement. "I gave you a fair break—it was a clean cut!"

"Sure—it was a clean cut!" said Harden, calming slightly. "But do you think I'm going to let you upset everything that I have planned for months past? That document is my warrant for marrying Doris Bradfield, you tar-nation fool! The old man will do anything to keep the property in the family line! Hand it over!"

Reluctantly Jack Cardigan moved towards the table, his hands taking notes and papers from his pockets. Harden watched him keenly, his eyes bulging with triumph.

"Bustle yourself!" he snapped, with

a quick wave of his gun. "I'm just longing for an excuse to press this trigger, stranger!"

"Yeah?" said Cardigan lazily. But he was not lazy a split second later. His boot suddenly flew upwards, caught Harden full upon the wrist, and the gun went spinning from his hand.

In another split second the two had come to grips, and there started a battle royal which was destined to all but wreck the room. Furniture crashed over as their burly bodies flew against it under the impetus of blows delivered with sickening, devastating force.

Chairs were hurled from one side of the room to the other, slight pieces of handsome old woodwork were splintered over arms and backs and shoulders until there was nothing left to splinter. Fists thudded into eyes and flashed on to noses and lips until streams of red oozed over battered chins. But the fight went on until they were both on the floor and it became a desperate wrestling match.

The revolver was on the floor, too, as Harden saw first. He slithered towards it—his hand went out—his eager fingers were ready to get around the trigger when Cardigan saw the real danger.

"No—don't!" he panted.

But even then it was a near thing. Harden almost had it. But Cardigan fought him back with every remaining ounce of his strength, and fairly dragged Harden to his knees.

"Give in, you yellow rat!" hissed Cardigan. "I'll break your yellow neck—"

With a superhuman effort Harden thrust away the gripping hands, and again they were at it with fists as hard as they could batter. The pace slowed

(Continued on page 28.)



"Jack! Jack!" she almost whimpered. "You're hurt!"

A gripping crook drama—adventure fast and furious—thrill upon thrill—romance. Starring Pierre Batcheff, Jacques Varennes and Danielle Parola.



Number Thirty-Seven.

THE express from Paris to Marseilles was flying along at sixty-five miles an hour. The first shades of evening were settling down upon the rapidly passing landscape, and the conductor switched on the lamps in the corridor preparatory to making a tour of the compartments. He did not hurry himself; many of the travellers would be still sitting in the restaurant car at their dinner.

A thick-set man, overcoat collar well pulled up about his ears, his largish slouch hat crushed down on his head, came slowly along the corridor and paused to ask the conductor for a match. He lit a cigarette, thanked the man gruffly, and passed on down towards his seat, glancing into the various compartments as he stepped past them. At one door he paused a moment, then went on—then presently came back.

Sitting alone in this carriage was a fresh-faced, unhappy-looking youngster. He sat there staring out into the gathering night, his hands restless in his lap, his face twitching a little every now and then. He had taken off his hat, as if overpowered with the warmth of the car, and whilst the other man quietly watched, the boy stood up and jerked down the window, then sank back into his place.

His features were now fully revealed to the onlooker. It was a pleasant face, not exactly handsome, but certainly attractive, despite the vague uneasiness of the eyes and down droop of the mobile mouth. The watcher slid back the door of the compartment and came in—fully aware of the sudden start that the young fellow could not prevent.

"You were asleep, monsieur?" spoke the thick-set fellow, sitting down in the opposite window corner. "I disturbed you?"

"I wasn't asleep. I was just thinking."

"Ah!" sighed the newcomer. "I understand only too well. Thinking of friends you are leaving behind? Allow me!" He stooped to pick up a crumpled newspaper from the floor. "You are sailing by the boat which leaves Marseilles to-morrow?" he added.

"I—yes. How did you guess?"

The thick-set man laughingly pointed to a little book lying on the seat beside the youth. It was the advertisement of a steamship company, with the brightly coloured picture of an Atlantic liner on the cover.

"I sail also," went on the thick-set man, regarding the other shrewdly. "Perhaps we meet on the voyage?" He spread out the crumpled newspaper and glanced over the front page. Large headlines caught his attention.

"ESCAPE FROM PRISON OF THE MURDERER GASTON LAJOIE! POLICE WATCHING ALL PORTS."

"Ah!" Again the thick-set one sighed. "Nothing. No news at all." He crushed up the paper into a ball and threw it out of the window. "Permit me to offer you a cigarette, m'sieur?"

"Thank you. I wasn't going to smoke." But the young man took the cigarette and found his matches. "You are travelling to the Argentine also?" he asked. His hands shook as he struck the match.

"Perhaps I have to go there on a secret mission," grinned the other man. "My work takes me everywhere."

"You—you are a detective?" The question seemed to be forced out of the youngster. He appeared more uneasy than ever. "I suppose not many criminals get away, no?"

"Not many." Just then the conductor entered the compartment.

"Messieurs, your tickets, if you please!"

The big man at once produced a little case with the necessary green ticket inside. The conductor examined the paper book, tore out a leaf and turned to the young fellow.

"I—I have no ticket," he stammered. "There was no time—the train was just starting."

At once the conductor's polite smile vanished.

"You not have the ticket?" he barked. "It is an offence, it is against the regulations. At the next stop I hand you over to the police!"

"Excuse me," put in the big man. "M'sieur was about to say he would pay you."

"Do you imagine it?" sneered the conductor, as both saw the shrinking fear of the youth. "I know this type! He has no money; he thinks to get a cheap ride—perhaps to escape from trouble. Where did you get on? I did not see you, you stole on to my train like a thief, yes!"

"There was no time to get a ticket." The young fellow seemed helplessly terrified. "But if I may pay to you —"

"Of a certainty you may pay me," cried the conductor ironically, "if you have the money." He winked at the other passenger. "Now, you will see—he hasn't even a sou!"

But the youth had quite a bulging pocket-book. He took it out furtively and offered the irate official a hundred-franc note.

"The fare is one hundred and seventy-five francs from Paris." The youth offered another note. "Oh, very well, all right! I give you a ticket. There will be twenty-five francs change."

"Please to keep that for yourself." The big man nodded approval of the

youngster's action, while the conductor began to smile again as he hastily wrote out the necessary form.

"Merci, m'sieur. Merci beaucoup!" He handed over the ticket and went on to the next carriage. The two men settled down to their talk.

"Were you discussing criminals, I believe?" the big fellow said, with a laugh. "I think that our friend took you for one!"

"There is a criminal escaped from prison," the young man allowed. "But"—he laughed nervously—"I trust I do not resemble him!"

"He is ugly, that one?" came the sharp question.

"But not so ugly. His picture was in the paper you threw from the window," answered his companion more easily. "He has the strong face, clean-shaven; I imagine he might pass for a very decent fellow. He is perhaps of forty years, while I am but twenty-three. But let us speak of things more agreeable. You know the Argentine, m'sieur?"

"I know the country very well."

"I go there in search of adventure. Of life. Of fulfilment! One is not living when one is a clerk in a bank," said the youngster.

The thickest-set man shrugged.

"One is already dead," he stated.

"Perhaps you can tell me something of Buenos Aires?" asked the boy.

"It is a fine city. Fine buildings and wide streets. Fine people, especially the women. One manifestly lives in Buenos Aires. Such a man as yourself; courageous, ready, maybe, to snatch a chance." The cold grey eyes watched the youth as he spoke. "For such a man there is everything in that city of opportunity."

For a while the big fellow talked, relating many stories with great point and good humour. Little by little he won the confidence of his companion.

"I am Marcel Dufour," spoke the boy. "I am an orphan. For some years I have been employed in a bank; then I save a little money, and I—I cut and run!" he ended, with a laugh.

The other nodded.

"You are right to do so," he declared as he fumbled in his vest pocket. He produced a little disc stamped with a number in bold figures. "Regard this, if you please. I am known as Thirty-seven—to speak my name is not permitted!"

"I understand, m'sieur," Marcel nodded.

The train was slowing down, the rushing grind of the brakes could be felt.

"Excuse me one moment," spoke Thirty-seven, rising and re-buttoning his overcoat. "We are arriving at Arles, where the train will rest awhile. I make a little promenade to get the air."

He was in the corridor almost as he spoke. He disappeared into the gloom at the end of it. Marcel rose hastily to his feet as if to follow, then, his nervousness returning upon him, sank back into his place. The train ran into the dimly lit station of Arles, stayed there for what seemed to be centuries, then again was moving forward for the final straight run into Marseilles. Number Thirty-seven came back to the compartment, wiping his mouth with a large new handkerchief.

"I was tempted to have a *petit verre*," he explained. "I hoped you would come out also. The night is fine; I think we shall have good weather for our journey."

Georgette.

AS the train slowed to enter the terminus at Marseilles the two travellers rose up stiffly. It appeared that both of them were travelling light; Marcel had but a small paper parcel which he stuffed into his overcoat pocket, whilst his new friend had nothing.

"It saves delay to send on one's luggage direct to the ship," he explained. "One can register it through and make the declaration at the time."

As they left the train with the crowd of other passengers, Number Thirty-Seven gave quick glances left and right.

"Please to walk in front of me," he whispered to Marcel. "I do not wish to be noticed at all."

When they neared the barrier his sharp grey eyes saw that two large men were standing a little way behind the ticket-collectors. They were muffled up, and apparently just idly interested in the arrival of the passengers. The station was noisy, as it is always; engines letting off steam, bells clanging, voices shouting, shrill whistles almost deafening the ears. Marcel, with beating heart, went forward. Now was the testing moment of his courage.

All went very well. He gave up his ticket and walked through the gateway. The two large men, noticed by him also, neither moved nor spoke. They continued to carelessly regard the flowing stream of humanity. Marcel turned to look for his new friend.

Thirty-Seven had suddenly and entirely disappeared. He had modestly doubled back to the train, one hand in his coat pocket as if feeling for something. He re-entered the train with brusque words to those already starting to clean it.

"I have forgotten something."

He was in the corridor, moving swiftly. He tried one or two of the doors on the off-side of the train, and at last found one to be unlocked. In an instant he had opened it, had slipped out and down on to the oil-reeking permanent-way. Then, still more swiftly, he had gained another platform and had crossed it. Then, by devious ways and means he contrived to get out of the station and gain one of the many dark back streets of the always mysterious port of Marseilles.

Meantime, the puzzled Marcel had entered the station restaurant. He would wait here for "Thirty-Seven," who would be able to see him easily enough through the large windows which gave on to the station. He ordered a coffee and sat down to smoke a cigarette.

Almost at once a very pretty, fair-haired girl, neatly dressed, turned away from one of the long windows and, glancing indifferently round about her, came to Marcel's table. She gave him a questioning glance before seating herself on the leather bench next to him, then calmly ordered a *petit verre* from the waiter.

She seemed also to be waiting for someone, and not very pleased to be waiting; her smooth young forehead wrinkled itself into a deep line between finely ached eyebrows, her red mouth was set in ill-humour. An itinerant vendor of odds and ends, clad in a long white gown and dirty fez, came smilingly towards her, offering some cheap little trinket-boxes.

"No," she told him definitely.

"But regard, mademoiselle!" urged the Arab. "Behold the bargains miraculous!"

He turned out of his pocket an assortment of tawdry toys, bangles and

brightly-coloured things, whereupon she shook her curls petulantly.

"M'sieur"—the Arab turned to Marcel—"please to look at these so wonderful little gifts. You will like to buy something for mademoiselle, if not for yourself?"

Marcel glanced at the girl, wondering if she had smiled at him when she had sat down. She turned her brown eyes upon him rebukingly; then suddenly changing her mood, shrugged her young shoulders and made a little mouth of derision.

"Do not be tempted, m'sieur," she said. "He shows you nothing but rubbish."

"Mademoiselle!" The Arab seemed hurt to the heart's core. "But how can you say so? Look, regard!" He produced a comical, little mechanical figure which walked jerkily across the table the moment he put it down. "Is he not really a marvel, so beautiful, so elegant—so life-like? And so cheap. Almost I give him away!"

The absurd little manikin stalked up to the girl's glass and bumped into it. Both Marcel and she put out hands to save the glass, and briefly their fingers touched. The girl was the quicker, and her *petit verre* was not spilled.

"Is he not truly a *connoisseur*?" pleaded the Arab. "You perceive, he goes to see if mademoiselle is drinking the wine of the country."

"How much?" asked Marcel.

"But fifty francs," grinned the fellow. "I give him away almost."

"Do not buy it, please," said the girl.

But Marcel had already lugged out the fat pocket-book. He paid the delighted Arab, and, with a little deprecating gesture, offered the toy to the girl.

She shrugged again, smiled, said

"No" very prettily. Then relented.

"*Merci bien, m'sieur!*" She opened her leather pochette and put the feebly kicking doll inside. The Arab passed on to other likely customers, saying to Marcel:

"He will bring you happiness, m'sieur. Me, I know it!"

Marcel could not help but stare at his companion. Her brown eyes made such a pretty contrast to her almost flaxen hair; her smile was so modest, so kindly. All her moodiness had gone, she chatted with him easily, talking about casual things whilst sipping at her glass every now and then.

"Will you not have another?" he invited her. "A small one with me?"

She shook her curls in refusal.

"I do not like it, of a truth. But I have to wait for a friend, and he is late."

"Me also. I await a friend." Marcel sipped at his coffee, wondering if he might dare ask her name. She was the sweetest girl he had ever met, so gentle, so very pretty. He was jealous that she should have an assignation.

Her brown eyes had glanced, now and then, towards the long window. She presently glimpsed a face that she knew only too well, and at once her little frown reappeared. She turned to Marcel, who was lighting another cigarette.

"Listen, my friend," she whispered, "you would do well not to show that pocket-book. One sees that you carry much money." Then, as he lifted instantly troubled eyes to hers, she rose from her place. "My friend has arrived. I see him at the door. Please to go quickly—and as if we had not met."

She was standing up, the check for the *petit verre* in her hand, when Marcel saw Number Thirty-Seven approaching

them, his strongly marked features alight with pleasure.

"Ah, mon ami, here you are!" he cried, putting out his hand to the young fellow. "I search for you everywhere." He gave a somewhat theatrical little start. "Why, Georgette, you here also! But how fortunate! Dufour, my dear fellow, meet my sister, if you please. Georgette, this is Monsieur Marcel Dufour."

The girl bowed gravely, while Marcel could scarcely believe in his good fortune. Truly the little walking doll had been a mascot!

"Let us have a drink," went on Thirty-Seven in a jovial, bantering tone. "Seeing you two at the same table, almost I suspect that you have already made friends with each other. Youth, youth!" he sighed. "How splendid to be young! Ah, it is sad to be growing old!"

"But you are not old—" began Marcel. Then he saw that the girl was still standing with her cheek crushed in her fingers, her smiles all gone. Her brown eyes flashed him a signal. They said, as if she had spoken it: "Go quickly!"

But Marcel did not want to go, and Thirty-Seven didn't intend him to go. He forced Marcel to sit again—and called for drinks. He drew Georgette aside.

"You are not to lose sight of him," he whispered. "You must get him to the Paradis, to your dressing-room. I will be there."

"But, Gaston—"

"Silence, you fool! Do not speak my name!" he hissed savagely, his grey eyes glinting. "I must have money. And now. You answered my call from Arles; you know me, I believe?" His voice, low-pitched, was fraught with deadly meaning.

The girl made no further attempt, but turned to Marcel, who had been jealously watching them. Her smiles regained, she murmured prettily: "Forgive that I make the little confidences with my brother. We have not met for quite three years—" A shudder passed over her. "His arrival to night is to me very unexpected."

"Listen, Dufour," broke in Number Thirty-Seven, "I must go to the docks about our berths. There are some details to arrange—you understand?" He gave Marcel a very confidential wink. "Will you be so kind as to chaperone Georgette until—" He glanced at the clock on the wall. "Until after midnight? I will meet you where Georgette knows."

"It will be a great pleasure. I will take great care of mademoiselle."

"A thousand thanks, my dear fellow." Thirty-Seven took Marcel's cold fingers in a warm, friendly grasp. "I must go at once—drink my cognac for me, or leave it, as you prefer. All is paid for. Excuse me. Au revoir to you both."

Two large shadows had briefly loomed across the station windows of the restaurant. Thirty-Seven, with quick strides, reached a door which opened on to the street—and vanished into the misty night.

Le Paradis.

"YOU would like to have supper?" questioned Georgette when they were by themselves.

"I am very hungry," admitted Marcel. "I have scarcely eaten since I left Paris this morning."

"Come then, my friend—I know a good place." She led the way. "Please to call a taxi," she ordered the waiter who opened the outer door for them.

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In the taxi she seemed suddenly distraught and tired. "Why did you ask me to go?" questioned Marcel hesitatingly.

"I like you," she answered him. "That is why I want you to go." She sighed as she spoke. Then suddenly she rallied. "I am so stupid, I forget my manners! You are my brother's friend—where did you meet him, pray?"

"In the train. He was very kind." Marcel smiled. "I had forgotten to buy a ticket, the conductor was inclined to think me a criminal!"

She stared at him through the gloom of the taxi.

"You are making fun of me," she said.

"No, it is quite true," he answered, then added: "I am so glad we have met."

"But you know me for only a few minutes!" she laughed. "My poor friend, I think you are either very wicked or very foolish."

They entered the dining-room of a fashionable restaurant, and were shown into corner seats by the polite hotelier. Marcel offered his menu to his companion.

"For me, I wish the plat du jour," he told her. "One always gets value."

Georgette laughed scornfully as she ordered champagne. She chose her supper with care. The room was gay with people; a small orchestra played bright fox-trots; and, as Marcel ate and drank, much of his shyness wore away.

"May I call you Georgette?" he asked her.

"You are foolish, my friend. Me, who am I? Just a passing acquaintance."

"You—you are lovely," he murmured, his eyes upon her. "You have the air of one who is true."

"Few would think of me that way," she said.

Above the pleasant noise of the supper-room came the sound of loud cheerings and applause from a room overhead. Some of the guests exchanged glances, while others went on with their meal undisturbed. Georgette called to the hotelier:

"What is it?" she asked. "Someone makes a speech?"

"It is a wedding party, mademoiselle."

"Let us creep upstairs and peep at them!" she called to Marcel. "If, I adore the wedding parties! Always the bridegroom looks so foolish!"

Georgette and Marcel left their seats and went tip-toeing up a carpeted stairway. They came to glass double-doors, one of which was partly open. By half-hiding themselves behind a large palm in the vestibule, they could see all that went on in the room.

An old fellow in shiny black coat and trousers and wearing a very large rose in his buttonhole was standing on a chair with a glass of champagne held high. He was wishing health and happiness to the young people who were sitting side by side at the end of a long table, both looking very self-conscious. The guests were sitting round the littered table in various positions of ease, all trying hard to attend to the speech-maker. They cheered him at every pause, while some of the more daring hammered their feet on the floor and clapped their hands.

Marcel watched with smiling eyes. He was feeling very much better, his nervousness was nearly gone. The bridegroom had to stand up and respond—he was nervous indeed, and stuttered and contradicted himself every moment! The guests roared with

laughter, and applauded still more loudly. Then the bride had to speak.

Georgette was standing close behind Marcel. As the little white-clad girl faltered her few words of thanks to the speech-maker and to the simple, loving friends all around her, Georgette caught suddenly at Marcel's arm.

"What is it?" he whispered. "Nothing—do not speak! Listen!" she answered tensely.

"It is so pleasant for me to say thank you, everybody," came the soft girlish voice. "I am so happy that almost I could cry. I have the love of a fine fellow, who is very dear to me; always so true and so kind that never can I thank Heaven enough. I will never forget all your kindness and sweet thoughts for me, from papa and mamma, and from you all. Thank you, please—thank you very much."

A waiter ran to the piano and struck up the wedding march; the guests rose and formed up. The bridegroom, smiling proudly, led off with the little bride on his arm. Then followed papa and a stout lady; then the rest, in their due order of relationship. Georgette shrank back with Marcel, as the smiling, joyous little company passed by them; they watched them go down the stairs into the hall, where shrill whistles were blowing for carriages and cabs.

The waiter who had played the march came tripping out of the room with two others; they hastened to the hall to help give the party a grand send-off. Georgette released her almost painful grip on Marcel's arm and walked slowly into the disordered room where the wedding had been celebrated. She gazed around her for a moment, then moved to the piano and stood staring down upon its ivory-and-black keys.

With one finger she picked out the opening notes of the wedding march, while Marcel watched her with growing anxiety. Then, as if stricken to the soul, she suddenly knelt down by the piano with her head upon the keys, weeping as if her heart must break.

"Georgette!" Marcel ran to her and lifted her up. "Oh, Georgette!"

She raised her tear-filled eyes to his—a child, once more, rather than a grown woman. She shook her head to and fro, murmuring:

"It is ended—yes, it is finished for ever!"

"Georgette, I love you!" whispered Marcel. "Let me take care of you always. Be my dear wife."

She put her arms about his neck; then, with a sobbing breath, kissed him upon his still moving lips.

"It is sweet of you—" She broke from him and blindly ran from the room, almost stumbling headlong down the stairs. Marcel ran after her, believing that she had entered the restaurant. But when he reached the corner seats where they had been supping together, he saw that she was not in the room.

He sat down to wait for her. She needed a few moments to recover—she would return presently, so he told himself. But the clock ticked onward towards midnight.

The waiter came with the bill, and, when Marcel dejectedly rose to pay it, he saw that Georgette had left her black leather pochette. An impulse came upon him to open it. On the flap of the bag, inside, he read the words:

"Georgette Lajoie. Le Paradis."

He called the waiter.

"You know it, Le Paradis? It is a hostel, perhaps?"

"But not at all," grinned the man.

"Le Paradis is a night club, very well known. Very amusing! M'sieur will go there? I whistle a taxi for m'sieur."

Fanny.

THE cab brought Marcel to a queer little place, brilliantly lit up, in one of the dark back streets of Marseilles. Tightly clutching Georgette's bag, Marcel paid the exorbitant fee demanded, and went into a long, garishly-decorated dance-hall, where many couples were fox-trotting to a small, lively orchestra. A little stage at the far end was curtained when he came in; but soon after he had seated himself at a table, these curtains were drawn aside and the orchestra stopped its jazzing—with a prolonged flourish on the drums and cymbals. An immaculate director of ceremonies stepped from the wings.

"Mesdames et messieurs, I have the honour of introducing to you the dancer equilibriste, the charming Demoiselle Fanny!"

Clapping of hands followed; the couples crowded up from the decked dancing-floor and formed themselves round about the little stage. Marcel moved his chair to get a nearer view, hoping against hope that the performer might be Georgette.

But, instead, a little slip of a girl, a mere child of fifteen or sixteen, clad in a short white silk frock, came on to the stage and bowed to her audience. The orchestra began a soft, dreamy waltz, to which she kept time by turning many complicated somersaults, hand-springs, and other tricks of the acrobatic dancer.

She was very graceful, despite the knots she made of her lissome young body, and she finished up by making a living catherine wheel of herself, hands and feet all whirling round and round and over and over, much to the delight of the applauding very mixed mob.

Fanny gave an encore, then came down from the stage to walk amongst the patrons of Le Paradis and sell them roses and violets from a wicker basket which the director had ready for her. Presently she came to Marcel, smilingly offering him a buttonhole for a rather preposterous price.

"But I kiss the flowers for m'sieur," she coaxed. "Then m'sieur will be lucky in love."

Marcel bought the rose and she pinned it in his coat.

"Tell me," he murmured. "Is there—do you know Mademoiselle Lajoie?" The child fixed her blue wide gaze upon him.

"She is my friend," came her quick answer. "You are a new patron, yes? Did you not see the bill outside Le Paradis announcing her? She is what you call the star turn."

"I have something for her. I also am her friend," spoke Marcel quickly. "Could I not see her for a moment?"

Fanny regarded him with steady eyes. She nodded her pretty head.

"Come with me," she told him. "I will take you to her room."

They went out by a side door into a long, rising passage, and came to a row of doors. At one of them Fanny stopped. "Wait here, if you please."

She knocked at the door and entered a small room in which Marcel glimpsed a screen and many looking-glasses.

The door re-opened, and Georgette stood there, staring at him.

"Why do you follow me?" she demanded.

Marcel held out the leather pochette.

"You left your bag."

She took it from him, then caught at his hand.

"Come inside, then," she said sharply.

"Do not stand out here."

Soon as Marcel entered, she closed the door and put up the latch. She made a gesture towards the little girl: "This is Fanny, my friend. Monsieur Dufour"—she sat herself in a chair by a narrow, untidy dressing-table—"excuse me if I go on with my make-up."

"Forgive me for troubling you, Georgette," said Marcel humbly. "I—I did not want to lose you."

She was combing out her flaxen hair, and those strange brown eyes reflected in the tawdry mirror were no longer unkindly. Almost they relented—then sudden fear seemed to show in them.

"It will be better if you leave me, Marcel," she muttered. "If you let me go out of your life as easily as I came into it."

Marcel rose from the chair which Fanny had placed for him.

"I go, Georgette," he said. "Forgive me."

"Wait. Let me think." The line showed briefly between her arched brows. "Presently I shall sing in the cabaret, and you can listen to me like one of the

patrons. Afterwards, if there is a chance, I will come to you. Go now, and, above all, be discreet. Do not come until I send the little Fanny."

She came to him and put up her lips for his kiss.

"I trust you, Marcel. I think Fate has brought you into my life." She unlatched the door and almost pushed him into the long dim passage.

Then the door closed upon him a second time, and, mystified but more hopeful, Marcel returned to his seat in the hall.

He bought a gay programme, and saw that "Georgette Lajoie" was billed in huge gold letters as the principal attraction at Le Paradis. As he read, it came to him vaguely that he had seen the name Lajoie somewhere before, apart from its having been on the flap of the leather pochette.

The orchestra was playing. A big-lipped, strikingly-clad girl ran confidently from the wings on to the stage, smiling widely at all and everyone. She broke into a lively song, accenting the words with great point and verve. It was Georgette.

Gaston Lajoie.

NUMBER THIRTY-SEVEN slid through the streets of Marseilles like an ill-omened shadow. His quick, furtive glances right and left when he came to a road-crossing showed him as someone vastly different from the good-humoured and entertaining traveller on the express. Always his right hand was plunged deeply into the big patch-pocket of his buttoned-up overcoat.

He didn't slacken in speed until he had reached the smaller docks on the far side of the harbour; here, without hesitation, he hurried along a deserted, lumbered-up pier where a few desolate boats were moored.

After listening beside an ugly-looking steam tug berthed in very close to the pier, Thirty-seven whistled thrice between his teeth, a thin, hissing sound that only carried the necessary distance. Almost at once a dimly-seen form rose up from behind the bulwarks of the vessel and, leaning on the rails, peered intently towards the pier.

"Casare!" called Thirty-Seven, whisperingly.



They faced each other from either end of the table, hands ready to seize and tear—

"Who is it?" came an answer. "The captain's down below."

"Tell him it is I, Gaston," called back Thirty-Seven.

The slouching lad on the boat turned away and went below. Thirty-Seven sprang aboard and crept down the stairs after him.

"There's a man called Gaston wants you," the boy was saying, when Thirty-Seven pushed past him to confront a bulky, grizzly-bearded seafaring fellow who had risen from his seat in the badly-lighted, ill-smelling hutch of a cabin.

"Gaston—you!" The bulky man stared his amazement. "What in the name of the devil brings you here? Is it you, really? Speak, man, speak!"

Thirty-Seven caught the gaping apprentice by the shoulders and ran him out of the cabin, banging the door upon him. Then with a grin he sat himself at the wooden table which separated him from the perplexed owner of the boat.

"You actually behold me, the great Gaston Lajoie!" laughed Thirty-Seven. "Is it not marvellous? Sit down, Cæsare, my friend; let us talk like the old comrades we have always been."

The bulky Cæsare sat down. His heavy face did not manifest any great signs of pleasure at this reunion. He took out a short black clay pipe from his pocket, filled it slowly from a filthy pouch, then struck a match on the table and lit up. All the while his pig-like eyes bored into the smilingly insolent regard of his visitor.

"Yes, Cæsare, I am here. I am no ghost," grinned Lajoie.

"They acquitted me. I was not implicated," the fat, unpleasant man stated, puffed out the words in a cloud of foul smoke. "It is useless, Lajoie, for you to try any of those games on me. You killed him, that gendarme—the jury were convinced of it. Even the judge also."

"My dear fellow, do I try to implicate you?" laughed Gaston. "Not at all. I am here on a little matter of convenience for both of us. If you had been in the town, and, if you had read the papers, you would have known that I have contrived to leave the excellent prison to which the judge condemned me."

"You were lucky to escape the death sentence, Gaston."

"As for that, who can say?" the convict retorted. "Let me tell you that the prison was not at all agreeable. However," He leaned confidently across the table, heedless of the smoke and smell of rank slag. "However, my charming Cæsare, all this is beside the point. I want your help, and I can pay you well for it."

"There is only the boy," Cæsare was beginning when Lajoie broke in with:

"The engine is under steam, and I can assist with the navigation. Always you keep a full head of steam. It is pleasant to be able to slip in and out of the port of Marseilles how and when you wish." He tapped his pocket. "There is money for you, Cæsare, much money. I have a job in hand which will take me perhaps two hours. Then I come back with my wife, and you will carry us out of Marseilles to the coast of Spain. Two thousand francs, Cæsare, easily earned."

"I have other fish to fry, Gaston. Two thousand, why, it is nothing!"

"Listen. Do not be a fool. You will make the Spanish coast in a few hours. You put us ashore, and"—he snapped his fingers—"finish! I will pay more, if the job is very profitable. For the moment I do not know how much money there is. The young monsieur

who is going to oblige me carries it always in his pocket-book."

Cæsare considered the proposition, suspicion heavy in his brutish features.

"I will come ashore with you, Gaston. I would like to know more of the young fellow," he decided. "Also, I would wish to meet this wife of yours. Never before have I heard you were married."

"By all means come with me," agreed Lajoie heartily. "We go to Le Paradis, a night club amusing. She sings there, my pretty wife. And there are others."

He rose up, and as Cæsare came round to him slapped the burly fellow on the back.

"Comrades once more, Cæsare. Ah, how pleasant it is to meet again one's old friends!"

They went up the few stairs to the deck. Cæsare gave the boy gruff orders, then the precious pair went along the stone pier quietly in the darkness, treading like cats, despite their size and weight. They climbed the stone wall which surrounds the docks.

Marcel Dufour.

GEORGETTE was sitting in her dressing-room with a wrap over her stage costume. It was now nearly one o'clock in the morning and Gaston had not yet appeared. A wild thought came to her. Why not run away with Marcel at once? He was a nice boy and would help her to hide until her husband was recaptured. Perhaps already the police had found him. It was just like Gaston to venture into Marseilles, but always his impudence carried him through.

Georgette knew that her husband had murdered the gendarme. He would kill anyone who stood in his way. She shuddered, hesitated, allowing precious irrecoverable moments to go by. She was his wife, sacredly promised to be loyal to him.

She could not betray him. It would be a sin against the Holy Spirit. She must suffer; it was so ordained.

Fanny came softly tapping at the door.

"Enter," called Georgette, her heart almost standing still. "Oh, Fanny, it is you! How you startled me!"

"I have heard something," whispered the girl. "I think I guess why you have fear. He has escaped from prison. Did you know it?"

"Yes."

"He will want you to hide him," said Fanny. "Why not run off with the young monsieur who tells me that he sails at dawn for the Argentine?"

"I cannot betray Gaston."

"Who asks you to betray him, Georgette? You have had unhappiness enough." She came to Georgette and put a bare slim young arm fondly around her. "Go, my dearest one, with the young monsieur. He is honest and good."

"I will speak to him, Fanny." Georgette weakened. "A farwell—"

"Farwell to me, Georgette, and all this!" Fanny made a little hopeless gesture as she went to the door and opened it.

As Marcel came into the room she whispered:

"Make her go with you. Do not listen to any refusal. Perhaps her life depends upon it!"

Marcel approached Georgette, hoping and fearing, but mainly puzzled. He sensed that he was wading in deep waters, but always he had wished for adventure.

"Will you not come with me, Georgette?" he pleaded, kneeling to

her. "I will try so hard to make you happy."

"No, Marcel, it is impossible." She laid her hand on his head, stroking his hair. "Listen, my friend; that man who calls himself my brother is a convict escaped."

"Ah!" Marcel sprang to his feet. "Now I remember. I read it in the paper. He is Gaston Lajoie."

She nodded her bowed head. Marcel, in an access of pity and love, put his arm about her shoulders, whispering strickenly:

"Me, I have no right to judge him. I also—"

Georgette raised horror-stricken eyes to his.

"What are you saying?"

"I, too, am a thief, Georgette. This morning I take money from the safe of the bank. I heard of this ship sailing for America. Always I want adventure, life, freedom. So I took the money and I will be free. Come with me, Georgette; I love you—I love you!"

She put him from her.

"You a thief?" She pointed a shaking finger at the door. "Go! Leave me!" Scorn and rage flashed in her brown eyes. "Go!"

Marcel gazed imploringly at her, his young, likeable face twitching.

Suddenly he straightened himself.

"You are right, Georgette. I will go. I will return to Paris and put back the money I have stolen. It is not good to be ashamed of oneself as I have been ashamed all this day. Better to be but a clerk in the bank, better to be in prison if they send me there, and be unashamed." He put out his hand. "Say good-bye to me, dear friend, and do not despise me for ever."

She gave him a look that seemed to read his soul; then let him take her fingers.

"Go, then, Marcel. Be proud of yourself and be patient. If it so happens—" She could not finish; she put her arms sobbing about him.

The door was thrust open and Number Thirty-seven entered.

"Ah, my little ones—" he cried.

"You have made friends, yes?" he laughed sinisterly. "But, all the same, it is not quite right that you should embrace each other, is it?"

"Georgette forgives me—" began Marcel.

"It is charming of her," sneered Gaston, shutting the door. "But I, as her husband, do not forgive!" He suddenly flung himself upon Marcel and struck him crashingly to the floor.

"Gaston!" screamed Georgette. "You make a mistake! It is nothing—"

The convict thrust her aside.

"Shut up your noise!" he growled.

Marcel was rising from the floor. The two men faced each other; then, as the boy ran in upon his formidable enemy, Gaston clutched him in a bear-like grip. They wrestled silently, Georgette watching in terror, unable to think or act. If she called for help, Gaston would be taken—she would have betrayed her husband.

Also, beyond all doubt, he would shoot Marcel.

She saw that he had loosened the boy, that he had a short, wicked little gun in his right hand, threatening the boy's breast. Then, as Marcel made a blind plunge at him, Gaston's left fist shot out and smashed against the boy's chin.

With a horrible, gurgling cry Marcel crumpled up and fell prone.

"You have killed him!" Georgette's voice was almost soundless with horror.

Gaston was dragging the unconscious Marcel into a corner. The three-fold screen which they had knocked over in their struggle was brought by him to hide the rest. The convict possessed himself of Marcel's pocket-book, then stepped forth from behind the screen. He smiled at Georgette in his hateful way.

"You managed it very well, my dear," he commended her. "Now be so good as to dress yourself. I have a friend here—" He unlocked and opened the door, calling very politely: "Come in, my dear fellow. Madame wishes to make your acquaintance."

The villainous-looking Cæsare entered, grinning sheepishly. Gaston airily waved a hand from one to the other.

"Madame Lajoie — my comrade, Cæsare Vecchetti. All is very well, Cæsare; the little job is done. As soon as Madame has dressed herself in outdoor clothes, we will go."

"I do not go with you, Gaston," came Georgette's low-spoken defiance. "After this, everything is quite finished between us. I am absolved from my vows."

"You go with me, Georgette," hissed Gaston, the pistol once more glinting in his hand.

She flung off her peignoir and stood there in her stage costume. She sat herself resolutely at the table and began to powder her face and redden her pale lips. Cæsare watched her with gloating eyes.

"Do not be a fool, Georgette," Gaston put away the gun. "Listen, our friend is master of a little vessel berthed at pier fourteen. There is a fine cabin provided for you. We sail under cover of the night to the Spanish coast—"

"I am not interested," she interrupted.

Gaston came to her and pressed the muzzle of the pistol into her bared back.

"There will be no report, Georgette," he told her. "It is quite remarkable, this little gun. When you are dead, Cæsare and I will simply walk out—"

The dressing-room door opened abruptly and Fanny came running in.

"Georgette, your turn is next after mine! Are you ready?" She stared at Cæsare in a kind of fascinated amazement, then perceived Gaston.

"Come here, my little one," he smiled at her, the pistol thrust into his pocket on the instant of her entry. He saw that she was glancing round about for Marcel. "Your cavalier has departed; he went to find you, no doubt."

His cold grey eyes narrowly watched the little girl.

"Help me, Fanny," Georgette was speaking. "I cannot fix this comb in my hair. My hand shakes—almost I believe I have caught cold."

Soon as Fanny was beside her, Georgette formed with her lips rather than spoke the words: "It is he. Tell the police!" Then, smiling in her stage manner, she went on, for Gaston to hear: "Thank you, dear child. You have the

clever fingers. Run along, they are waiting you."

The call-boy's voice was sounding in the passage.

"Mademoiselle Fanny! Your call!"

With a little laughing gesture the girl ran from the room. Gaston uttered a furious oath and struck Georgette with his open hand. He moved quickly to the silently staring Cæsare, shaking him by the arm.

"Wake up! It is time to go."

"But she—isn't she coming?"

"Let her rot!" Lajoie almost dragged the pig-eyed Cæsare from the room.

"Get to the door, I will join you in a moment." He had spied Fanny standing alone at the wings of the stage. He reached her in a stride and brutally took her small, rounded chin betwixt his thumb and finger.

"Have you squealed—have you?" he ground out, his eyes blazing on hers.

"I do—not understand, M'sieur, if you please—" Fanny freed herself and tried to smile.

Lajoie, with a furious gesture, turned away. He slid through the crowd of dancers and gained the door. There he tipped the porter in lordly fashion.

"Call me a taxi!" he ordered.

When the gorgeously uniformed fellow turned to obey, Gaston slipped into the street and rejoined his friend Cæsare, who was lurking in the gloom a few yards below the entrance of Le Paradis.

"We must hurry, my dear old friend," smiled Gaston. "Especially as we must go on our feet."

Cæsare.

GEORGETTE rushed to the screen and dragged it aside. She knelt by the side of the feebly stirring Marcel and took his head on her lap.

Her tears dropped on his upturned face.

"You weep, Georgette?" The youngster struggled to a sitting posture. "Is it for me?"

"I come with you to Paris," she whispered. "You shall give back the money—" A sudden pang of honor came upon her. Gaston had stolen the pocket-book! "I will help you to earn the money to give back—"

Marcel's hand went to his breast.

"Heavens, it is gone!" he gasped, his face white as chalk. "I must go after him. It was he who took it, your brother?"

She nodded heart-brokenly as she confessed.

"He is my husband. That is why I broke down at that wedding—my memories are so sad. But now he is nothing to me; I shut him out of my life for ever!"

Marcel scarcely heeded. His thoughts were all awlirl, his mind was blank. What was to be done now? What could he do?

Sudden whistlings shrilled from the dance-room; cries, shouts—a confusion of noise that told of panic. Fanny came running into the dressing-room.

"It is the police!" she called to them. "They make a raid on Le Paradis!"

She saw Marcel, pale and disordered. "Ah, m'sieur, you are hurt? He struck you, that canaille?"

An armed sergeant of police strode into the room.

"Hold up your hands!" he shouted.

"No one is to leave this place! A dangerous criminal has escaped from prison. He is said to be here."

Georgette and Fanny were able to prove their identity easily enough.

"Get yourselves dressed!" the



Two men sprang upon the convict out of the night.

sergeant commanded. "Now, m'sieur, who are you?"

"Marcel Dufour, rue Scribe, numero six, Paris," answered Marcel. "I am visiting Marseilles."

"Have you any papers to prove it?" came the sharp question.

"My pocket-book—but it has been stolen." The sergeant shrugged his shoulders and made a sign to two police, who had ranged themselves behind him.

"This pocket-book has all your papers?" questioned the sergeant.

"But yes, m'sieur," answered Marcel. "It was he, this criminal, who stole it from me."

"You know him, then?" The sergeant eyed Marcel fiercely. "You will please go to the bureau with my men. I shall have to ask you some questions."

Georgette stared from one to the other. Then a thought came to her—a faint hope.

"I will come for you, Marcel," she said bravely. "I will not fail."

The police took Marcel with them, and the two girls threw off their stage clothes and dressed themselves hastily in their street attire.

Georgette had remembered: "A little vessel berthed at pier fourteen." She knew it, that far-off small stone pier. In the olden days she had kept tryst with Gaston there. She had conceived a desperate plan, almost a last hope. She bade Fanny go to the bureau and comfort Marcel if the police would allow the child to speak with him. She hailed a night taxi, and told the driver to hurry to the docks. At the dock gates she ordered him to wait.

"I have to visit a friend on the Almeric," she boldly lied to the guard at the gates.

Georgette was young and pretty; the sentry grinned at her and let her pass.

Presently she was at pier fourteen; she moved quickly along it under the faint sky reflection of the city lights. She came to the little tug-boat where a youth was busy at the moorings getting ready to cast off.

"I want to speak with him," she said, pressing a ten-franc note in the boy's hand. "Your captain."

"Captain Cesare?"

"Yes. Tell him to come here alone," she whispered.

Her heart was beating wildly. She was risking much—her life, at the very least. Cesare suddenly loomed before her, bulky and suspicious.

"It is I, Georgette," she murmured. "You want him, your husband?" he asked gruffly.

"It is you that I want." She was panting a little. "Cesare, I saw that you admired me. I watched you while pretending to look in the mirror. I come to ask you to be my friend."

She pushed herself close to him, and put a hand on his arm. He stood there like a block of wood. Georgette put up her face to his bearded one, and swiftly kissed him on the cheek.

Next instant she was struggling wildly in a bear-like hug.

"Kill him, Cesare!" she whispered, as she submitted to his embrace. "Kill him! He—he struck me, yes!"

"Struck you, my little pigeon?"

"Did you not see for yourself? Go! I will wait here for you."

Cesare released her.

"I will take the money also," he muttered. "He has already tried to cheat me. It will be well to kill him. He is a murderer!"

August 8th, 1931.

Georgette watched him go lumbering down the stairs to the cabin. She jumped aboard and stood at the stair-head listening intently. She heard a low grumbling of voices in dispute, then came a sinister silence, then muffled, dreadful sounds as of a struggle to the death. Not once did she distinguish Gaston's mocking accents, but she knew he was there, fighting grimly.

She crept down the stairs like a ghost. By the light of a hanging lamp she saw two men locked together, Cesare's horrible fat fingers gripping and closing across Gaston's throat. The pocket-book had fallen from the table and lay unheeded on the floor.

Georgette saw that Gaston's eyes were glazing, that his teeth were set in a grin of hate and seeming despair. She dared all, and, swiftly entering the cabin, snatched up the pocket-book and fled.

She gained the deck, stumbled across it, leapt over on to the dock edge, nearly missing her footing. The boy stared at her a moment, then put out a hand to stop her. But she dashed a little clenched fist in his face, and he let her get away.

He began to run after her.

Gaston, with a sudden savage kick of his heavy boot on Cesare's shin, caused his enemy to briefly relax the death grip on his throat. At once Gaston recovered himself and tore Cesare's fingers from his aching neck. His fist shot upwards into Cesare's face, and the blow made the burly seaman blink and lose control for a moment. Gaston wriggled free and punched his enemy clear across the cabin. A final vicious left jab sent Cesare crashing against the door, closing it with smashing force.

Brooding stillness reigned once more. They faced each other from either end of the screwed-down table; their eyes glaring at each other, hands ready to seize and tear—hate and rage expressed in their silently snarling lips. So for a full ten seconds they stood, tensed and taut, two tigers ready to leap and kill.

Gaston had put off his overcoat, and his pistol was in the left-hand patch-pocket. He had to get it somehow. The smoky kerosene lamp hanging above their head swayed as the wash of the tide stirred the boat at its berth. Gaston was thinking grimly; he knew that Georgette had been there and had taken the pocket-book. He hadn't seen her, so much as he had sensed her.

He must finish off this bulky brute, then follow up Georgette. He would find her all right! He never failed with Georgette!

Cesare suddenly leapt on to the table and charged down at him. Gaston, cat-like, stood aside and closed with the sailor in a kind of sideways grip which gave him advantage when the other's dead weight made him fall forward somewhat. The convict got Cesare down on his face and fastened his teeth in the bulging neck of the sailor. A shriek of agony came from Cesare as those vicious teeth closed in upon the top of his spine; he writhed and fought blindly, beating his huge fists upon the greasy floorboards. Gaston suddenly released him, leapt off his back, and made a dash for the overcoat lying in a corner of the cabin where it had been slung. Even as Cesare rose from the floor, Gaston had the short, wicked little gun in his right hand.

The sailor's eyes, bleared and flaming, focused, or tried to focus, the convict. Cesare had no intention of giving up

the pocket-book which he deemed to be still in the cabin. With a beast's growl he rushed round the table at Gaston, his fingers outstretched to fasten on his throat. There came a faint click of the gun, a flash—the huge bulk of Cesare, hurled forward by its own impetus, suddenly slid down with horrible gasping breaths.

"You would have it!" grunted Gaston. "You wouldn't give me a chance to speak."

He knew that Cesare was shot through the breast, that he was out of it, anyway. If he was dead, so much the worse for him. Gaston slipped into the overcoat, thrust the smoking pistol into his pocket, opened and closed the cabin door, then staggered up the stairs.

In a moment more he was on the dock-side. He moved swiftly and rapidly towards the walls. No one was to be seen or heard.

Suddenly he came upon the ship's boy returning to the tug. Gaston seized him by the coat-collar.

"Where did she go?" he demanded. "Speak out, don't be afraid of me! I'm your skipper's friend, Gaston."

"She went out by the gate—" stammered the boy. "Let go, can't you? You're hurting my throat."

"Sorry, my friend. Here's something to make it well again"—Gaston thrust a five-franc note into the boy's hand. "Good-night—don't disturb Cesare. He's asleep in his cabin."

He hurried off into the darkness, reached the stone wall and shinned over it. Then, cautiously, he made his way to Le Paradis, where, from a street night prowler, he learned of the raid. With consummate impudence Gaston moved away in the direction of the police-station, and hid himself against a doorway near by.

Georgette Once More.

GEORGETTE almost fell into the waiting taxi. She bade the man drive to the Bureau, and then lay back, breathing in quick, short gasps until he brought her to the police office. She demanded to see the night sergeant, and told him she had recovered Dufour's pocket-book.

"Perhaps it was you who stole it?"

"Will you not release him, m'sieur?" she pleaded, ignoring the question. "He has affairs of great urgency in Paris. There is just time for him to catch the early morning train."

"He says he knows nothing of the fellow we want," said the sergeant. "I do not believe it—but, all the same, if he describes the contents of this book he need not be detained. How long have you known him?"

"But a little while, m'sieur."

He eyed her closely, and as he did so his hostile manner changed. He shrugged his shoulders and sighed profoundly as he rang for a subordinate. "Bring here Monsieur Dufour!" he ordered.

Marcel came into the little private office, and the moment he perceived Georgette, his pale face lighted up with such sudden joy that the sergeant had no more doubts.

"Lovers!" he muttered. "Such folly! What is love but childishness?"

"Monsieur, will you tell me what is in here?" He held out the pocket-book. "Mademoiselle has recovered it for you." Marcel answered him without a fault. "I release you," came the decision. "I wish you both all the luck you can expect in this unlikely world!"

(Continued on page 27.)

Cattlemen at Fire Mountain are terrorised by a mysterious band of "ghost" Indians, but the "Kid from Arizona" solved the mystery, won a great horserace, and brought a crook to justice. Starring Jack Perrin and his horse, Starlight.



THE KID from Arizona



Fire Mountain.

THE Fire Mountain raised its head from among the rocky slopes of the Humboldt Range of Nevada, in the far West. Once, in the ages long gone by, it had been an active volcano, and the evidences of ancient eruptions were still to be seen here and there in beds of lava and volcanic rocks.

The mountain was not very high and not difficult to climb, but it was rarely visited, save by an occasional scientist studying the geology of the district, for a legend had grown up about Fire Mountain, a legend that rendered the inhabitants of the rolling plains very shy of approaching its summit.

Black Eagle, the chief of the "vanishing" Yumas, was buried at the top of the mountain. His men had given the early settlers much trouble, and so swift were their raids, so difficult were they to overtake, that the nickname which became attached to them was easily explained. They had appeared, attacked the whites, and vanished as quickly as they had come, time after time.

The tribe of the "vanishing" Yumas had long ago disappeared, but the legend of their prowess still remained, and it was said that no white man could venture to approach the tomb of Black Eagle and return alive. Certainly one or two men had climbed Fire Mountain in times gone by, and had never again been seen. Whatever might be the truth about their disappearance, the in-

habitants believed in the legend, and gave the mountain a wide berth.

One night the people of the little town of Hamilton were amazed to see a flame rising steadily from the summit of Fire Mountain. Again and again at intervals the light was seen, but no one dared to climb to the top, though several bold spirits set out on the journey, only to return without going very far. There were strange stories, too, that mysterious Indians had been seen to appear for a moment or two by night, and men began to whisper that Black Eagle and his tribe had returned, in spirit form, to visit the scene of their exploits of long ago.

Near the foot of Fire Mountain one evening rode "Red" Saunders, a cattleman returning from an inspection of his herds. He was in a disturbed and angry mood, for though his cattle were well enough, he had lost twenty horses that day. The animals had been driven off by a band of Indians dressed in white garments, and Red had come up just too late to save them, though he had chased the raiders for miles.

"I'll take a drink," he muttered. "Clear my head, maybe."

Reining up his weary horse, he produced a bottle and drank. Suddenly from the summit of Fire Mountain a flame rose into the air, and in the quiet of the evening a strange sound fell upon his ears.

Still holding the bottle, Red Saunders looked round. There was not a soul in sight, but the mysterious sound—the sound as of the beating of far-distant drums—came more and more plainly

from the mountain, and the cattleman was puzzled.

"Must be dreaming," he said aloud. "Must get on and tell sheriff 'bout Indians. Real Indians this time, not ghosts. Rustling my horses. Let's have 'nother drink."

He had another, and then one or two more. Saunders had drowned his sorrow at the loss of his horses with a good many drinks that day, and the last swig at the bottle almost finished him.

Hardly able to sit his horse, the cattleman rode slowly on, swaying uncertainly in the saddle. Now and then he looked up at Fire Mountain, where flickering flames rose high in the air, while the sound of the drums—if drums they were—still continued.

"Yes, must see sheriff!" muttered Saunders again. "Tell him knew that chief's face—seen him somewhere."

Red had got near enough to the raiders to exchange ineffectual shots with their chief, and the face of their leader had seemed somehow familiar to him. He was too much soaked in whisky, however, to think clearly as he rode back home, and soon he stopped again to have yet another drink. The bottle was empty, and he threw it away in disgust.

Presently he came to a small shack, in which he kept some stores. There was a supply of liquor in the hut, and clumsily Saunders dismounted to get another bottle. He tried to hitch his horse to the rail, but the animal seemed to sense that something was wrong with his master, and with a sudden jerk he tore the reins from Red's hands and trotted off.

Saunders staggered and measured his length on the ground. He struggled to his knees, and then his eyes widened and the hair rose stiffly on his head with terror. Coming towards him stealthily, and only a few yards off, were two Indians, clad in ghost-like white robes, their heads adorned with huge plumes of white feathers.

Foot by foot they approached, and Saunders, gazing stupidly at them, lifted his hands to beg for mercy. The shock of the fall and the sight of the Indians had partially sobered him, though his mind was still in a very bewildered condition.

The ghost-like figures came up, one on each side of the cattleman, and then to his bemused senses they seemed suddenly to disappear, though in reality they had only passed behind him. Then Red Saunders fell forward on his face and lay still.

Five minutes later a tall powerfully-built young man, with a pleasant open face, came riding slowly along towards the shack. He looked up at Fire Mountain once or twice, wondering what the flame and the drumming could mean, for he was from the State of Arizona, and he knew nothing of the legend of Black Eagle and his braves.

The stranger soon came in sight of the hut, and he saw near by a man lying prone on the ground.

"Hey, pal," he cried, reining up, "what's the matter? You ill?"

There was no answer, and as Jack Allen dismounted to see what was wrong a party of cattlemen appeared riding towards him from the shelter of some trees a little way off. Jack did not see them as he stooped by the body of Saunders.

"Good heavens!" cried Jack. "The man's dead."

The cattlemen rode up and gathered round.

"Say, boys," said one, "it's Red Saunders. Someone's plugged him, sure."

"He's been knifed, and from behind," said Jack quietly. "Look here!"

The boys looked, and a clamour of voices arose. There was no question of suspecting Jack Allen, for the cattlemen had seen him slowly approaching in the distance, and knew that he could have had no hand in the death of the unfortunate rancher.

"Say, stranger," asked a cattleman. "You came up the other way. You see anyone down there?"

"I reckoned to see two Indians a little way back," said Jack slowly. "I thought I saw two men with plumes on their heads going up there."

He pointed to the slopes of the mountain, and the cattlemen looked at each other with grave faces.

"You sure of that, stranger?" asked one.

"No, I ain't what you might say sure," replied Jack doubtfully. "I thought I saw 'em for a minute, but it's getting rather dark, and they seemed to vanish all of a sudden. That's all-I can say, boys."

"The ghost Indians again," said a voice solemnly. "I'll say I don't like it, boys."

"It's a mystery to me," said another cattleman. "An' I've heard that this is the very spot where Black Eagle and his braves massacred two families in the year '51."

"Sure, Pete, this is the place," said the first man. "And now the ghost Indians have outed poor Red."

"Ghost Indians!" exclaimed Jack

Allen. "What's this you're saying, boys?"

"You'll sure hear enough of 'em if you stay in this country," said Pete. "I'll tell you there's Indians in white round this Fire Mountain, and we reckon they're rustling our cattle. The ghost Indians, we call 'em, but we ain't caught 'em yet—hardly set eyes on 'em."

Jack Allen was puzzled. He did not believe that the Indians were really the "ghosts" of Black Eagle and his tribe, and yet these tough, virile cowboys certainly seemed to be in a state of panic that no merely human foes could have inspired in them.

The cattlemen lifted the body of Saunders to carry it away, and as they did so a shiver of alarm ran through the crowd. A gust of wind blew down from the mountain, and with it, clear and loud, came the sound of the tom-toms, while high overhead the mysterious flames shone brightly in the gathering darkness.

"The drums of Black Eagle!" muttered Pete. "Say, boys, we'd better leave these parts right now. It ain't healthy here for white men no more!"

Bruce Reed.

DORIS, the daughter of Judge Sheldon, was not enjoying her evening stroll at all. She had walked out from Hamilton alone, but before she had gone far she was joined by Bruce Reed, her father's friend, and a leading rancher in the district. He was driving along in a buggy, but he stopped when he saw the girl.

"Come for a ride, Doris, my dear?" said Bruce, smiling at her pleasantly.

"No, thank you, Bruce," replied Doris coolly. "I'd sooner walk."

Bruce Reed got down to walk at the girl's side. He was a tall, well-set-up fellow, with some pretensions to good looks, but selfishness and brutality were written on his face for those who had eyes to see. Yet he imposed on most people by a well-assumed air of cordiality and good nature, and he was generally popular in the neighbourhood. Judge Sheldon had not yet found him out, but Doris instinctively disliked him, and some inner consciousness warned her that evening to be on her guard.

They walked on together for some distance, Bruce leading his horse and talking gaily. Doris had little to say, and presently declared that she was tired and must go home.

"Don't go just yet," begged Bruce. "Sit down here and rest for a while."

He indicated a wooden seat, and they sat down. They had reached the outskirts of a plantation a mile or more from the town, and a hasty glance around assured the rancher that they were alone.

"Listen to me, Doris," said Bruce Reed eagerly. "You've known me a good time now, and I reckon you ought to be able to guess what I want to say. Only it's so darned difficult to get it out!" he concluded ruefully.

Doris knew what was coming, and she half-rose from the seat to get away, but Bruce pulled her down again at once.

"Say, you must listen, honey—" he began.

"I'm not going to listen," cried Doris firmly. "And you're not to call me 'honey' ever again. I'll tell you right now that I don't want to go out with you any more."

Bruce looked at the girl as though he did not believe his ears. He had felt so sure of her that her decided words amazed him beyond measure.

"Are you—giving me the air?" he muttered, scowling.

"Well, you see, I don't think it's right for a girl to go out walking with a fellow when she doesn't care for him," replied Doris in quiet but decisive tones.

"Oh, indeed!" cried Bruce, his face darkening. "And what may you mean by that? Is there someone else?"

"No, not yet," murmured Doris faintly, for she was becoming alarmed at the vicious expression on the rancher's face.

"Well, whether that's true or not, you're going to belong to me, and you're coming with me right now!" shouted Bruce, seizing the girl fiercely in his arms and trying to lift her up to the seat of the buggy. Doris struggled so frantically that the brutal rancher had great difficulty in holding her.

"Hands off, you cowardly hound—hands off!" she screamed, fighting with the utmost desperation to free herself from his grip.

At that moment Jack Allen rode up, but neither Bruce nor Doris at first observed him. He took one glance at the scene before him, and then threw himself off his horse and ran to the help of the girl. Reed loosed his hold on Doris at the sound of hasty footsteps, and turned to confront a young man who was a complete stranger to him.

"What d'you want here?" howled Bruce angrily. "Get away!"

"The lady said 'Hands off,' I believe," remarked Jack very quietly. "Don't you understand English?"

"Yes, I understand English, and here it is!" shouted the rancher.

A fierce fight to the jaw sent Jack reeling backward. He slipped and fell on the turf, but in an instant he was on his feet again, prepared for a tough fight. The two men were apparently fairly equal in size and strength, and they circled round each other cautiously for a moment or two, each eyeing the other warily.

Then Jack saw the rancher coming at him with a fury that made his face more brutal in appearance than ever. He feinted with his left, and as Reed's arm went up to guard the blow, Jack sent out his right in a powerful drive that took his opponent straight between the eyes and jerked his head back. Swiftly Jack followed with a left to the chin, and Reed went down.

The eyes of Doris Sheldon gleamed as she saw the stranger send the brutal rancher to the earth; but her face lengthened a moment later. Reed did not appear to be much hurt, for he came to his feet again, and with the swiftness of a tiger hurled himself at Jack Allen. For ten seconds the two men swapped heavy blows, and then the young stranger took a tremendous right over the ear.

He staggered back, and fiercely Reed came on to follow up his advantage. He broke through Jack's weakened guard with a shattering blow to the side of the head, and this time it was Jack who went down.

He was up again only just in time to stop Reed's rush with a drive into which he put all he knew. Then for a few minutes the fight was even. Twice Jack put the rancher down, and twice Reed sent his opponent to the grass with hefty blows to the chin.

Both men were breathing heavily, and their faces were badly marked, but neither stopped for a second. Up and down across the turf they raged, each giving and taking heavy punishment, while Doris watched anxiously in alternate hope and fear.

Up to now Bruce Reed had taken all that Jack could give him, and had handed back as good as he got. But at length condition began to tell. The strange youngster from Arizona was fighting fit. Long days in the saddle, strenuous work on many ranches he had visited on his journey from the South, open air and clean living—all these were on his side. Bruce Reed was in fairly good shape, too, but not so tough as his opponent, and a tendency the rancher had for unlimited alcoholic refreshment now began to tell its tale.

Reed's guard weakened, and Jack's right smashed through and found his jaw. He swayed for a second, and then came again with a rush, sweat on his brow, his eyes still gleaming with the light of battle. Two steps forward he took, to run right into another fierce left that cracked home like the blow of a hammer between his eyes.

Jack brought his right over in a tremendous upper-cut that had all the weight of his fourteen stone behind it, and Reed went down, and stayed where he fell. The victor looked at him for a moment as he lay in a crumpled heap on the grass, and then walked across to Doris Sheldon.

"Oh, I'm so glad you came along!" she cried impulsively.

"I thought you needed some help," said Jack in a level voice. "Would you care to have me drive you home, miss?"

"Will you?" replied Doris, looking shyly at the young man.

"Well, I will. I guess, though I reckon I don't look very well for a lady's escort at the moment."

Jack was right, for Reed's fists had left sundry marks upon his face, and one of his eyes was nearly closed.

"Never mind!" cried Doris consolingly. "You saved me from that rotter, and you'll soon be as—as handsome as ever!"

Jack laughed, and hitched his horse to the back of the buggy. He helped the girl to a seat, mounted himself, and drove off just as Bruce Reed staggered to his feet and looked about him in a dazed way. But Doris Sheldon and Jack Allen had no eyes for him.

"You are a stranger here, aren't you?" asked Doris.

"I'm from Arizona," said the young man. "Down there they call me the 'Riding Kid,' but my name's Jack Allen, and you can call me Jack!"

Lightning.
DORIS SHELDON stole a glance at the stalwart youngster who sat by her side. He was good-looking, he could certainly use his fists—had he not just laid out the most redoubtable fighter in Hamilton?—and he had a very good horse. That much was obvious enough. Why he had come from Arizona, and what he meant to do in Nevada, she did not know, but she was sufficiently interested in him to ask for information on these points.

"Are you staying here long?" she asked presently.

"Don't suppose so," replied Jack. "I'm just wandering around seeing the world, you know, miss."

"I'm Doris Sheldon," said the girl. "I thought perhaps you had some special business this way."

"Well, I have, a little," came the reply. "And I reckon I might have a bit more to do here than I expected—now, Doris."

Jack looked so expressively at the girl that she blushed, and hastened to introduce a fresh subject.

"If you're called the Riding Kid, you're fond of horses, sure," she said, "and I guessed perhaps you'd come here for the Endurance Race. It's next Saturday, about two o'clock."

"No, I hadn't heard of it," answered Jack.

"My father is Judge Sheldon, and he hopes to win the race. He's got a very good horse. He's sure crazy about horses," said Doris as they drew up before a large house in the town of Hamilton.

A big, jolly-looking man, with a cigar in his mouth, came out of the door as Jack assisted Doris to get down from the buggy. It was by this time nearly dark, and Judge Sheldon thought for the moment that his daughter was accompanied by his friend, Bruce Reed.

"That you, Bruce?" he said, coming forward. "Why, Doris, my girl, who is this you've brought home? I thought you were with Bruce."

"So I was, dad," replied the girl. "But he—he was very rude to me, and Mr. Allen—Jack, I mean, helped me and brought me home."

"Bruce Reed rude to you?" exclaimed the judge, staring at Doris in bewilderment. "I would never have believed such a thing of him. You can tell me about that presently."

The judge turned to Jack Allen and held out his hand.

"Shake, boy," he said heartily. "Anyone who helps my girl is my friend, sure. I'm certainly obliged to you, Mr.—"

"Jack Allen," the youngster cut in. "But down in Arizona folk call me the Riding Kid, as I've been telling Miss Sheldon."

"The Riding Kid, eh? Fond of horses, ain't you?" asked the judge eagerly, scenting a discussion on his favourite topic.

"You bet I am, judge. Your daughter was beginning to tell me about the Endurance Race just now, and I'd like to hear all about it."

Judge Sheldon signed to the girl to go away, and she tripped into the house with a smile to Jack.

"Now she's gone we can talk," cried the old man. "I reckon you're straight. I can tell by the look of you, and I'll tell you what I haven't told her, though I reckon everybody else in this town knows it. I've staked a lot—too much—on this race, and I've gotta win it, somehow."

"Well, judge, why shouldn't you?" asked Jack. "Dor—Miss Sheldon told me you have a good horse."

"I'll show you the horse," said the judge. "There's just light enough left to see him, I guess."

Judge Sheldon led the way to his stables, and came to the box in which stood the animal which he hoped would save him on the day of the race.

"You're going to see the finest piece of horseflesh you ever saw in your life," said the old man with immense pride. "I'll swear there ain't any such horse in Arizona, or any other place, either. There he is! I call him Lightning, and there ain't a horse to beat him in Hamilton."

Jack looked over the animal with a critical eye, and it showed its teeth and snarled at him as he came near.

"Looks good to me," remarked Jack



"You're no Indian!" cried Doris, raising her hand to strike as the man approached her. "Let me go! I'm going home!"

at length, "but I should say he ain't quite broken in, judge."

"That's the trouble," said the judge regretfully, "but I've got a man who can ride him. In the morning I'll have him out, and you can see how he goes." "Thanks, judge," said Jack. "I must be leaving now, but I'll be around in the morning."

The youngster got his horse and rode away, while Judge Sheldon went in to ask his daughter for the truth about Bruce Reed. To the girl's great indignation, her father would not believe that the rancher had really tried to carry her off, for he wanted her to marry Bruce, and could see no reason why his friend should act in the way that Doris described. So the girl retired that night, far from content, and a little anxious as to what Reed might do the next day.

In the morning Judge Sheldon had the horse, Lightning, brought out to a field behind the house. Bruce Reed came up, as cordial as ever in manner. The cattlemen lounging about looked in surprise at his face, which was adorned with two black eyes and various strips of plaster, but nobody ventured to ask any questions. He greeted the judge with great warmth, but the old man was too much occupied in watching his horse to pay much attention to the rancher.

"Good-morning, Doris," said Bruce to the girl, who was leaning over the rail next to her father. "Has the judge got anyone to ride Lightning yet?"

"I don't want to talk to you!" retorted Doris sharply, and Reed edged away and remained silent, glaring angrily as Jack Allen came up, to be greeted with cordiality by the girl and her father.

Meanwhile, the horse Lightning was plunging and rearing violently in the middle of the field, with two of the judge's men clinging desperately to the reins. One of the men, an individual named Slat, had several times tried to mount him, but so far the horse had had the best of it.

"Anyone ever ridden that horse?" asked Jack of Doris, as he stood by her side.

"Two have tried, Jack," replied the girl. "Slat rode him a little way, and father had hopes that he would manage him."

"How can he expect to win the race on Saturday, if nobody can ride the horse properly?" muttered Jack, as Lightning threw Slat, who had at last managed to mount.

"That fellow Slat!" howled Judge Sheldon in a rage. "He swore he'd break him in and ride him in the race, and he's my best rider. Yesterday I thought he was making it, and now look at him!"

"I'd like to look at Lightning, if I may," said Jack quietly.

"Mean you think you could ride him?" cried the judge.

"I reckon so," replied Jack. "There ain't any horse in Arizona that I can't ride, and we've got some down there worse than Lightning to manage. I guess."

"Well, Jack, I hope you'll make it," said the judge, rather dubiously, calling his men to bring the animal up.

With the greatest difficulty they persuaded Lightning towards the rail. Still snorting with rage and plunging dangerously, he came forward, but it suddenly seemed to occur to him that he was going back to his stable, and for the moment he quietened down.

Jack seized his opportunity, and with a quick leap he bestrode the fiery-tom-

pered animal and seated himself firmly in the saddle. Lightning leaped high in the air with indignation, and went off down the field, rearing and bucking furiously to rid himself of the insolent human who had dared to get on his back, and to stay on.

Jack sat tight, and Lightning reared and bucked in vain, for the finest horse-man in Arizona was on his back, and there was no trick of an unbroken animal which he did not know. All down the field went Lightning, but still the Arizona Kid kept the saddle, while Judge Sheldon and his men shouted and cheered frantically as they leaned watching over the rail.

"I hope he breaks his neck," muttered Reed viciously as he watched the successful rider. He noticed Doris cheering and clapping, her face radiant with joy, and jealous rage flamed higher still in his heart.

Meanwhile, the Riding Kid had at last convinced Lightning that he had met his match, and presently he rode the horse back in triumph to the judge. "You'll ride him in the race on Saturday, Jack?" asked the old man.

Jack Allen looked down thoughtfully at the eager faces of the judge and his daughter.

"I sure will, judge!" he said. Bruce Reed heard the answer, and smiled to himself.

"You sure won't," he murmured to himself. "I'll see to that!"

The White Horse.

JACK ALLEN, astride his own horse, rode slowly through the town that evening, and presently he saw Doris Sheldon walking down the street. The girl's face lighted up at the sight of him, and he stopped at once to speak to her.

"Where are you going, Jack?" she asked, when the first greetings were over.

"I thought I'd just take a ride round Fire Mountain this evening."

"Oh," cried Doris in dismay, her face falling at once. "Please don't go there, Jack! Those ghost Indians might get you, like they got Red Saunders."

"Has the sheriff done anything about that yet?" asked Jack.

"I don't know. He's up at dad's place now, I believe, but what can he do? No one in the town dares go near the mountain. And nearly every day someone's stock is rustled."

"I don't believe in this yarn about ghosts," said Jack. "How long has this rustling been going on?"

"Only two or three weeks," replied Doris, "but there certainly are some Indians about, Jack. They've been seen in several places. But it isn't your affair. Your job is to win that race for father."

"Okay, Doris!" cried the Riding Kid heartily. "I'll be around 'bout nine o'clock to-morrow and try out Lightning again. All the same, if I see any of those ghosts this evening, I'll sure find out if they're made of flesh and blood. Good-bye, kid!"

"Do be careful, Jack!" said the girl, with great anxiety in her voice.

"Don't you worry about me," cried Jack, with a laugh. "I'll be okay, dear."

He rode away at that, leaving Doris gazing after him with mingled feelings of anxiety and happiness, for she was already indulging in a delightful vision of herself as Mrs. Jack Allen. Suddenly she saw Bruce Reed some way off along the road, and though he did not see

her, the vision faded, and she ran home like a frightened hare.

For an hour or more Jack trotted slowly on towards Fire Mountain, thinking not of the Indians or of the race, but of the pretty face of the judge's daughter. He came presently to a stretch of forest, and as he rode along a grassy glade between the trees he heard in the distance the beat of hoofs.

Instantly Jack pulled into the shelter of a clump of trees and watched for the rider. Nearer and nearer came the sound of swift galloping hoofs, and soon he saw a splendid white horse racing along at full speed. There was no rider on its back, nor had it any saddle, bridle or reins.

"Queer!" muttered Jack. "Reckon I'll see into this."

He shook up his horse and galloped after, but though he bestrode one of the speediest animals he had ever ridden and rode his best, he could not catch the swift white horse. On and on it flew, out of the woods and across the plain, and Jack fell farther and farther behind.

Presently, a mile away, Jack saw a corral in which were a number of horses. The white steed ran up to it and whinnied loudly, nosing at the gate, and the animals inside began to move restlessly. Jack urged on his horse, but he was still a quarter of a mile away when the horses inside the corral, furious with excitement, burst open the gate, and, led by the white horse, raced over the plain towards Fire Mountain.

"Reckon I'll surprise the cattlemen when I tell 'em this," said Jack. "I'll see where he leads 'em if I can, though."

He followed the runaway horses across the plain until the trail led him into the broken slopes at the foot of the mountain. Here and there were clumps of trees, and though Jack little suspected it, he was soon almost within range of a party of men who were ensconced behind some rocks, eagerly watching.

"Here he comes!" cried the leader of the gang, as the white horse galloped into view. "And he's done it again!"

Two figures in Indian costume rose silently as a stream of horses passed the rocks, and followed to secure the animals in the secret hide-out farther on.

Bruce Reed, for the man who had spoken was no other, had ridden straight for Fire Mountain that evening, and so had arrived long before Jack. He now rose to follow the Indians, but another of the gang touched his arm, and he instantly sank down again behind the rock.

Jack came into view a couple of hundred yards away between some trees. He reined up and looked ahead at a gully up which he guessed the horses had gone, and as he did so Reed raised his gun.

"It's that blamed fellow from Arizona," he growled. "I'll plug him, or he'll spill the beans."

Jack moved on slowly just as the rancher fired. He felt the wind of a bullet which passed an inch beside his face, and instantly pulled the head of his horse round and rode off as a second bullet grazed his ear. In another moment he was out of sight, and Bruce turned disgustedly to his companion.

"I pulled a bead dead on him!" he cried angrily.

"You thought you did, boss," sneered the man. "What you going to do now?"

"We'll frame him. The fellow's a stranger here—nobody knows him. I'll frame him right, you'll see."

Jack Allen unconsciously aided the

unscrupulous rustler's plans. He lay in hiding a long time, waiting in vain for a sight of the rustlers, and returned to the town very late, too late to see the judge that night.

Bruce Reed was before him in the morning. Very early an angry party of cattlemen assembled at Judge Sheldon's house. The owner of the runaway horses had discovered his loss, and he came to the judge with his friends, raging with anger.

"Guess it's time we took the law in our own hands," he cried.

"Yeah. It's time for the rope and the nearest tree!" shouted another.

The judge himself was furious with rage and despair, for he had just found Lightning lame in his box.

"Something happened to my horse in the night," he stormed. "Some skunk got at him."

"Say, judge, if that ain't too bad," said Bruce, coming up. "Now, boys, listen. I've got a hunch I know who's rustling the stock."

"Who?" yelled a dozen voices.

"I caught that young fellow who says he comes from Arizona driving those horses away last night," stated Bruce impressively.

"Why didn't you plug the skunk, Bruce?" shouted a voice.

"I took a shot, boys, but I'm ashamed to say I missed."

"Just as well, perhaps," said a rancher. "We'll go and bring him in, and the judge can try him proper 'ording to law, and then we'll string him up."

"Where's the fellow now?" asked a cattleman.

"He put up at Granny Wilson's," said Reed. "Get your horses and we'll go fetch him."

Doris Sheldon had stood by while the angry men talked. She knew that Bruce Reed was lying, but she saw that it would be useless to appeal to the enraged cattlemen whom the brutal

rancher had so easily convinced. She slipped silently away while the talk was still going on, and ran at top speed over the open ground behind the house towards the road which led to Granny Wilson's.

"I'll save him!" she gasped as she ran. "I'll save him yet!"

In Hiding.

THE little inn where Jack Allen had put up was a couple of miles from the town, and Doris Sheldon's only hope was to meet the Riding Kid on the road before the horsemen came along, for she remembered that he had promised to call at the judge's house about nine o'clock.

She ran swiftly along the road beneath some trees, and in a minute or two a solitary rider came in sight. It was Jack Allen, and the girl rushed up to him in eager haste.

"Quick, Jack, get in amongst the trees!" she gasped. "They're after you!"

"Who's after me, Doris?" asked Jack in amazement, as he drew his horse out of sight of the road into the wood.

"They mean to use the rope!" exclaimed Doris. "You must go away at once!"

"To use the rope?" said Jack slowly. "What do they think I've done?"

"They think you rustled the cattle and those horses last night!"

"Who says so?" demanded Jack angrily. "You don't believe that, Doris, do you?"

"Of course not!" exclaimed the girl indignantly. "But Bruce Reed has convinced them you did it. Save yourself, Jack, quick!"

"Bruce Reed, eh? I'm going back to face that skunk and make him prove it."

"That will never do," cried Doris anxiously. "They'll string you up before you've time to speak. They're mad with rage."

"Well, I'll go, Doris, if you say so,"

said Jack quietly. "But I'll come back to-night to see you—and thank you!"

"Okay!" cried Doris. "Only be very careful. I'll meet you down by the river crossing if I can. I'll whistle, and you wait for my signal. Now go at once."

Jack rode off hurriedly through the wood just in time. A moment later Doris, cowering behind a fallen tree, saw a crowd of ranchers go at full gallop down the road towards the inn, where their search, of course, was in vain. All that day they hunted the district for Jack, but failed to find any trace of him, and Reed went off to his hide-out on Fire Mountain that evening in a very angry mood.

Meanwhile Jack had ridden rapidly away across the plain, and on nearing the mountain he happened to pass the spot where he had first seen the white horse. To his astonishment the animal was there again, but this time standing quietly under a tree. Jack dismounted as soon as he saw it, tethered his own horse to a branch, and crept up quietly, taking a spare bridle with him.

Jack knew that if he scared the white horse it would be off and away in a second. It eyed him uneasily as he came up, but he talked to it gently and caressed it, and soon he was on its back, trotting down the glade. Presently he urged it to a gallop at full speed, and as he turned and sped back to the wood he knew that under him was the swiftest horse he had ever ridden in his long experience of all sorts of steeds.

"Now for a real good hide-out," muttered Jack. "Reckon I'll try the river bank amongst the willows."

After some searching he found a thick clump of willows beyond some marshy ground by the river's edge, and there he took the two horses and lay hidden all day.

Doris Sheldon passed the day in alternate hope and fear, afraid at times that



"Here we are!" cried the rancher with the ear-phones. "They've done twelve miles! Only two left in the race! Bruce Reed and Jack Allen. All the others are out of it."

Jack would be brought back a captive, hopeful as the hours passed that he had got clear away. When evening came she mounted her pony and rode off towards the river. Fire gleamed at times on the summit of Fire Mountain, and the girl shuddered with fear whenever she glanced that way. But she went on, all the same.

She rode cautiously along the bank of the stream for some miles until she came to the crossing, a shallow place where the river was usually fordable. Here she stopped and surveyed the ground very carefully. She did not think that anyone suspected her of having arranged a meeting with Jack, but it was as well to make sure. No one was in sight, so the girl whistled softly.

There was a movement among some trees nearby, and she caught sight of Jack, who signed to her to come forward. She followed him for some distance, and dismounted when at length they had reached Jack's hiding-place amongst the willows.

"I'm sure glad you're here, Doris," exclaimed Jack.

"I'm glad to be here to see you, Jack," said the girl softly, "but I'm always frightened when I get near that horrid mountain."

"Nothing there to be frightened about," replied Jack, laughing. "Forget that yarn of the ghosts, kid. Tell me where that dirty skunk Reed is now."

"Still looking for you, I think," came the reply. "He went off this morning and he hasn't been back in the town all day. Don't let him catch you, Jack!"

"Not I," laughed Jack. "I reckon to take him to the gaol to-morrow. You see, I've found out one or two things about him, and I guess I'm finding more!"

"Oh, Jack," cried Doris, "what do you mean?"

"You'll see—to-morrow," said Jack. "I told you I had a little business this way. Show your father that, and he'll understand."

He handed the girl a small metal disc, at which she gazed in surprise.

"You needn't have hidden at all, then, Jack," she cried. "But I wanted to tell you something. That race to-morrow. It's awful for dad. Someone got at Lightning during the night, and he can't run. He's lame!"

"That's too bad," said Jack. "But I've a surprise for you, dear. Your dad may win the race, after all. Come and see what I've got."

He led the girl a little farther among the trees, and she saw Jack's own horse and also a splendid white stallion she had never seen before. Doris Sheldon was a good judge of horseflesh, and her eyes brightened as she looked over the strange horse.

"He's sure the real goods," she exclaimed. "Is he yours, Jack?"

"Well, I found him," said Jack slowly, "and if you reckon findings are keepings, he's sure enough mine. And I'll tell you, kid, that horse is not lightning—he's faster than anything I know—he's greased lightning. I'll ride him in the race to-morrow, and he'll win and save your dad. So that's okay."

As Jack spoke a drumming sound, far off and faint, but yet distinct, came to their ears, and Doris shuddered in alarm.

"Those dreadful tom-toms!" she whispered. "Jack, I'm afraid!"

"Don't be afraid, Doris," cried Jack confidently. "In a few hours you'll have no reason to fear anything. I'm on the track of that drumming, too, and I reckon to find what it is to-morrow."

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"Looks like your having a busy day," smiled Doris. "I'd better get back now before dad misses me."

"You'll see me to-morrow," cried Jack, as the girl rode away. "You'll see me down at the starting-post—an' the white horse, too!"

Judge Sheldon Disappears.

BRUCE REED called at the judge's house late that evening to report his lack of success in the hunt for Jack Allen, and to find out whether there was any chance of the horse Lightning running in the race. Reed had been fuming with rage all day, for not only had Jack given him the slip, but the white stallion was nowhere to be found, and the wily rancher had reckoned on winning the Endurance Race very easily with him.

Still, reflected Bruce as he walked up to the judge's house, he had another horse which could beat anything in the race except Lightning, and Lightning was probably out of it. One of his gang had seen to that.

"I'll win in spite of all," muttered Reed, "and then I'll make my own terms with Sheldon—and I'll have Doris!"

Judge Sheldon was in no good humour when Bruce came in. Lightning had failed him, Jack Allen, whom he really liked, was accused of rustling and had vanished, while Doris had gone out and had not yet returned.

"You ought to call that bet off," he growled. "My horse can't run."

"I'm real sorry, judge," said Bruce; "but—a bet's a bet. It's just your bad luck, that's all one can say."

Doris came in just then, and the rancher soon went away, for it was not his intention to approach the girl again until after the race.

"We'll see what she says when the old man has lost everything to me to-morrow," he chuckled as he turned the corner of the building. Then a thought struck him. He went no farther, but crept quietly back to the door of the house and listened.

Doris and her father were talking in the front room, and Bruce Reed could hear something of the conversation.

"Yes, dad, and he gave me this to show you," the cunning rancher heard the girl say. He could not see what it was that Doris showed her father, and he listened, eagerly for the old man's reply.

"A deputy-marshal's badge, eh?" said Judge Sheldon. "He knows more about this cattle rustling than he calculates to tell us, I reckon."

"Yes, dad. And he's got a wonderful white horse. It's better than Lightning, he says."

"That I can't believe," averred the judge. "Where is Allen now? We must get him back. That tale of Bruce's about him can't be true."

Doris did not know that Bruce was straining his ears to catch every word, but some instinct of caution made her whisper her reply into her father's ear. "He's down in the willows by the river."

Bruce Reed could not hear the words, and he ground his teeth with rage. He listened a moment longer, but in vain, for Doris began to talk of other things. The rancher stole away disappointed. He had heard something, but not enough.

"I've sure gotta be careful," he muttered as he went off to find his gang. Presently he was talking angrily to his right-hand man, a certain Bill Haines, who was outwardly a respectable citizen, and yet, in secret, one of the rustlers.

"That guy Allen has got my white horse," snarled Bruce.

"Your horse!" sneered Bill. "The horse you rustled out of Montana, you mean."

"Well, Allen's got him now, the girl said, and she told the old man where he is, only I couldn't hear the words, darn it! We've gotta get hold of the judge and make him talk. I must have Starlight back—may need him to make a get-away."

"Make a get-away to-night if you're turning yellow," said Bill. "I thought you were riding to-morrow."

"Sure I am, but I want Starlight for the race. Fetch up a couple of the boys, and wait your chance to get the judge in the morning. It's too late to-night."

Bill Haines nodded in comprehension, and the rustlers parted for the night.

The morning of the endurance race dawned clear and fine, but Judge Sheldon got up in the lowest possible spirits. Though Doris had told him that Jack meant to ride the white horse, he did not feel that there was any hope of victory, and he was afraid that this day would see his ruin.

"Cheer up, dad!" cried Doris happily. "Jack's going to win."

"Not on my horse, though," growled the judge.

"You go out in the garden and sit down while I get the breakfast, dad," said Doris, and the old man went out, sat down in a chair and gave himself up to bitter regrets for his foolish bet with Bruce Reed.

Two faces peered cautiously out from the shelter of some bushes behind the judge. Two men garbed in Indian costume, seeing that the coast was clear, crept stealthily across to Judge Sheldon inch by inch. They were within a yard of the chair before the judge seemed suddenly to sense their presence, and he turned quickly to see their fierce faces close to his.

With the speed of light one of the men deftly slipped a sack over the old man's head, while the other secured his arms with a rope. In a couple of minutes Judge Sheldon was helpless in the hands of the intruders, who carried him away to their horses hidden amongst the trees behind the house, and made off with him at a gallop.

"Dad! Dad!" called Doris, a couple of minutes later. "Breakfast is ready."

There was no reply, and the girl came out, thinking that her father might have dozed off to sleep. To her great surprise he was not to be seen.

She looked round the garden in vain, and then went to the stables. He was not there, and though she knew that he could not have re-entered the house without her knowledge, she searched there, too. Her father was not to be found. He seemed to have disappeared without leaving a trace.

Threatened with Torture.

DORIS SHELDON was distracted with grief, at the unaccountable disappearance of her father. Her first thought was to rush for help to Jack Allen, but he was miles away, and it was almost with relief that she saw Bruce Reed walk up. Even he was better than no one at all.

"Bruce, have you seen my father?" she cried anxiously.

"No, Doris, I ain't seen him this morning," said the rancher, assuming a look of surprise.

"He's missing. I can't find him anywhere," exclaimed the girl.

"You don't say!" remarked Bruce, rejoicing inwardly that his scheme to kid-

nap the judge had apparently succeeded. "I'll keep round here and search the grounds."

Reed went off ostensibly to look for Judge Sheldon, and as he went he chuckled to himself. He had hardly expected Bill Haines to manage the affair so early, and he hoped that the gang would soon report to him that the judge had revealed the hiding-place of the white horse. Suddenly another scheme came into his mind. If the father could be kidnapped, why not the daughter? If the old man would not tell, the girl might.

He came back to tell Doris that he could not find the judge, and then he made his way into the town to see one of his men, in order to devise some means of entrapping the girl.

An hour later Doris Sheldon stood despondently in front of the house, looking anxiously down the road. All search for her father had so far been in vain, though the judge's men had scoured the town and its neighbourhood with the greatest eagerness.

Soft footsteps sounded behind the girl, and she turned, hoping that someone had come with good news. An Indian, with a huge plume of feathers on his head and his face decorated with bars of paint, stood behind her, holding out a note. Doris shrieked with alarm at the unexpected sight, but after a moment she took the note from the man's hand and opened it.

"Your father is in danger. Come at once. Follow the guide," she read.

"Oh, where is he?" she cried frantically to the Indian, who stood stolidly watching her.

"Come," he said slowly. "He's up there," pointing to Fire Mountain as he spoke. "You come; you save him."

"I'll go and get my horse," cried Doris, too frantic with anxiety to suspect that possibly the note might be merely a ruse to entrap her, too.

"Horse round here, you follow," said the man, turning.

Doris followed him round the side of the house, where she saw two horses. The Indian mounted one and Doris the other, and as they rode off at full speed Bruce Reed stepped out from the shelter of a wall and watched them go. An evil smile curled his cruel lips, but Doris did not look back, for in her eager anxiety to find her father she had forgotten Reed's very existence.

Straight towards Fire Mountain rode the Indian with Doris at his side. A few miles out of the town two more men dressed in Indian attire joined them, and Doris gazed at the newcomers suspiciously. They were dressed as Indians certainly, but their faces were white, and the girl suddenly drew rein.

"I'm not going any farther with you!" she cried. "I believe you're the men who have been masquerading as ghost Indians. I'm going back!"

The men pulled up and looked stolidly at Doris. One of them dismounted and came to her side,

"You no afraid?" he asked. "We no hurt paleface girl."

"You're no Indian!" exclaimed Doris, raising her hand to strike as the man approached her. "Let me go. I'm going home."

"You come with us to mountain," said the man earnestly. "Your father there. He want you."

"Is that true?" asked the girl, hesitating as she looked from one to the other and reflecting that she was quite helpless. All three of the men were armed, and their horses were better than the animal she was riding. Escape seemed to be impossible.

"That quite true," came the reply. "He up there. Want you."

Doris Sheldon looked helplessly around. They were halfway to Fire Mountain, and the plain seemed to be deserted. No human being was in sight, and in the end the girl shrugged her shoulders and went on, with fear growing in her heart as they neared the slopes of the ominous peak where Black Eagle lay buried.

If Jack had looked back as they crossed an open glade she would have taken heart. For a couple of miles away, on the top of a hill, a horseman had appeared at the edge of a wood. He was mounted on a big white horse, and when he observed the little party of riders in the distance he went back again at once among the trees.

Jack Allen had left his hiding-place in the willows that morning, and had ridden around the country for some miles in order to give the white horse some exercise. He rode with great caution, surveying the ground carefully, and keeping as much as might he under cover. By the merest chance he happened to catch a glimpse of the

horsemen in the distance, and as he watched them from the shelter of the trees he felt sure that there was a girl among them.

"That may be Doris," he muttered to himself. "I'm going to see, anyway."

He rode on cautiously after the party, taking advantage of every clump of trees and every bit of rising ground. The Indians looked back once or twice, but they did not see Jack, and as they approached the gully which led to their hide-out they had no idea that the Riding Kid was little more than half a mile behind.

"Where's my father? Are you taking me to him?" demanded Doris as they came in sight of the rocky entrance to the gully.

"He up there," said one of her companions, pointing towards the summit of the mountain. "Not far now."

Doris Sheldon thought that the man was very probably lying, but in reality he had spoken the exact truth. The judge was "up there." He had been taken by his captors towards the mountain, and though they had removed the sack from his head before going very far, they had bandaged his eyes before they came to the gully, so that the old man had no idea of the secret trail up Fire Mountain.

Presently he was lifted off the horse and tied securely to a pinnacle of rock. The bandage was removed from his eyes, and the judge saw that he was in a circular depression high on the mountain, probably an old crater of the extinct volcano. Round him stood several men dressed as Indians, their heads crowned with plumes of feathers, and their faces decorated with war-paint.



The fight that followed was short and sharp . . .

"You tell chief where is white horse that runs fast," said the leader, thrusting his evil-looking face close to the judge.

"I don't know where he is," replied Judge Sheldon calmly. He had had a spasm of fear at the sight of the Indians, but as soon as their chief spoke the old man's courage returned. These were no ghosts. They were living men, and of them at least he had no fear.

"You lie," said the chief. "You know where white horse is."

"I tell you I don't know," came the reply firmly.

"You tell chief, or—"

"You rat, you!" burst out the judge furiously. "Let me go at once! Every one of you will be strung up for this!"

"Tell chief where horse is," said the Indian in a monotonous, whining voice. "No!" roared the judge furiously.

The chief stepped back, glaring furiously at the old man. Then he turned to his followers, who stood silently behind him, watching the scene with impassive eyes.

"Bring fire!" he said.

Two of the men turned and went away quietly to a small shack not far off. The chief looked again at Judge Sheldon.

"I go for little while," he snarled. "When I come back, you tell chief—or you die!"

Jack to the Rescue.

JACK ALLEN rode on after the horse-men, and at length he neared the spot where he had so nearly been "plugged" by Bruce Reed. So far he was sure that he had not been observed by the men he had followed, but he had now come to the last patch of woodland which could shelter him, and he reined up there to survey the ground before he went on.

The Indians had stopped just before reaching the gully, and Jack, peering out through the branches, saw to his indignation that they were bandaging the eyes of a white girl who accompanied them.

"The skunks!" he muttered. "I reckon it is Doris they've got!"

He raised his gun to fire, but lowered it again slowly as a thought crossed his mind.

"I could plug those guys easy," he growled to himself, "but I reckon I'd do better to follow 'em up to their hide-out."

The Indians were very busy about their horses, and as Jack watched he saw that they were tying-sacking to the feet of the animals.

"Hi!" muttered Jack. "That's the big idea, is it? They don't aim to leave a trail!"

The party moved on, and Jack noticed that one man did not mount, but led his horse to the gully, up which he and the others were soon out of sight.

"Leaving one on guard, maybe," thought Jack, still lying low. Sure enough, a few minutes later a solitary figure appeared high on a rock above the gully, and stood there, evidently watching the country around. Except for the trees among which Jack lay, the slopes of the mountain were clear for a long distance, and anyone approaching across the plain could be seen long before he reached the gully.

"Too late!" laughed Jack to himself. "You ought to have looked back before I got here!"

He tethered the white horse securely, and began to crawl cautiously towards the man on guard, keeping well down among the scattered rocks as he went. The Indian was surveying the plain with

a careless eye, little suspecting that an enemy was so near. Still, whenever he turned Jack's way, the Riding Kid lay flat without a movement.

Little by little Jack drew near to the sentry, and at last he began to worm his way up the steep rock. Near the top his foot displaced a stone, which rolled noisily down the slope, and the Indian turned quickly at the sound.

"Put 'em up!" he yelled, reaching for his gun.

Jack Allen did not put 'em up. He sprang with a tiger-like leap upon the Indian and brought him to the ground. In a few seconds the man was bound, and then Jack hoisted him on his shoulder. With some difficulty he carried his captive back to the trees where Starlight stood.

"Now," remarked Jack coolly, "you show me the way to your hide-out, see?"

The man shook his head, but did not speak. Jack ripped the feathers from his head with a sudden movement, and then laughed heartily.

"Some Indian!" he cried. "Now, you yellow rat, you'll show me the way up, or you'll stop 'ere, filled with lead. Get that! I mean business!"

The rustler felt the barrel of a gun prodding suggestively in his back, and he found his voice.

"Take that gun away," he whined, "an' I'll show you."

"Okay," said Jack; "but I'm watching out, and if you try to double-cross me—" The Riding Kid did not finish the sentence, save for another significant prod with his gun, and the rustler, trembling with abject fear, pointed up the gully.

"Up there," he muttered. "I'll show you right. I hate that skunk Bruce Reed, anyhow."

Through the gully he led Jack, and along a rocky path beyond, always towards the summit of the mountain. At length they reached a narrow passage on the right, between steep rocks, a passage that Jack might have missed had he been alone, for it appeared at a casual glance to have no outlet. Turning up this, the rustler showed Jack that the passage took a sharp right-angled twist a little way up, and that the track then led on over steep slopes towards the top.

"How far now?" whispered Jack. "Just beyond that big rock," replied the rustler in the same tone.

"Okay!" said Jack. "I'll leave you here, then."

He tied the fellow up again, and gagged him tightly. Then, leading the white horse up the slope, he made his way cautiously to the big rock. Here he hitched Starlight to a projecting point of the rock, and peered round. A man stood there, his back turned to Jack. He was evidently intent on watching something that was going on in the depression just beneath.

The Riding Kid wasted no time. With one swift leap he bore the unsuspecting rustler to the ground, and so heavily did the man go down that there was no need to tie him up. His head had struck the stones, and he lay unconscious. Jack left him there and went on. He caught a glimpse of a group of men some distance below, and guessed that the judge and Doris were among them as prisoners.

A little while before Jack reached the crest, the chief had returned to try once more to make the judge speak.

"You tell chief where white horse is, or I bring fire," he whined.

"Do what you like, you dirty Indian rat!" shouted Judge Sheldon fiercely.

The chief turned and signed to one of his men, who came up bringing a steel-pointed arrow—and the steel was glowing with heat.

"I give you one more chance. Now you tell."

The judge turned pale, but kept his lips obstinately closed. The chief took the arrow and drew near.

Suddenly there came the sound of hurried footsteps, and Doris Sheldon came running up, followed by the three men who had brought her up Fire Mountain. They had taken the bandage off her eyes on reaching the hide-out, and to her horror she saw that her father was indeed in great danger.

"Oh, dad!" she gasped. "What are these wretches doing to you?"

Every trace of colour drained from the judge's face as he saw his daughter in the power of the fierce and cruel men who had seized him.

"Good heavens, girl!" he exclaimed in despair. "How did you get here?"

"Judge won't tell where is white horse," said the chief to Doris. "So —"

He stepped forward with the glowing arrow, but the girl threw herself in front of her father with a shriek of terror.

"Oh, no, no, no!" she screamed in anguish, "I'll tell!"

The chief lowered the arrow, looking at the girl; but Judge Sheldon's indomitable spirit rose again at her words.

"No, Doris," he cried, "you'll tell these skunks nothing!"

Doris Sheldon opened her lips to speak in spite of her father's words, but at that same moment a dark, lithe figure dropped from the rocks above right on to the chief's head, bearing him to the ground.

A series of fearsome howls arose from the would-be torturer.

"That's the hot arrow, I guess," remarked Jack Allen calmly, covering the chief's followers with his gun. "He's sitting on it."

He was, but the onlookers did not pity him.

Doris cut her father's bonds with a knife which Jack tossed to her, and the Riding Kid slipped another gun to the judge, who held up the rustlers, while Jack yanked the chief to his feet.

"Reckon I came just in time, judge," he said. "Say, d'you know who this is?"

With a swift movement Jack pulled the feathers from the chief's head.

"This is your foreman, Bill Haines," he added, as Judge Sheldon gazed in astonishment at the man.

"You rat! You rotten skunk!" howled the judge. "I'll see you pay for this!"

"Say, judge," drawled Jack. "I reckon I've cleaned out the whole bunch of these rustlers bar one, and I'm going to get him presently."

"Who?" asked the judge.

"Bruce Reed," came the sharp reply. "But I'll tie up this crowd first. Keep 'em covered, judge, and I'll get some rope. There's two or three more lying about somewhere. I outed 'em, but we'd better make sure."

Jack found ropes in the shack, and in a few minutes all the rustlers were securely tied up and helpless to move.

"There ain't an Indian among 'em," said Jack. "They're all whites. This was some scheme, I will say. Fire on mountain—there's the remains of the last bonfire over there—tom-toms at night—vanishing Indians. Our friend Bruce Reed has some slick ideas, sure!"

(Continued on page 26.)



HOOT GIBSON.
*The popular Universal Western
star.*

"THE KID FROM ARIZONA."

(Continued from page 24.)

"Well," said the judge. "I owe you more than I can ever repay, Jack—marshal, I should say."

"I wouldn't say that, judge," replied Jack slowly, glancing at Doris, who blushed and began to take a great interest in the scenery.

"How did you get on the track of this gang?" asked Judge Sheldon.

"Well, I was on a jaunt from Arizona, just looking around," said the Riding Kid. "and I happen to know the marshal of this county. He told me some rustlers were hanging around here, and he made me his deputy to round 'em up if I could."

"You've sure rounded 'em up okay!" remarked the judge, surveying the prostrate rustlers with a grin. "We'll go back and send a posse to gather 'em in."

"I'm sorry to interrupt a judge and a deputy-marshal," cried Doris suddenly, "but have you forgotten that the Endurance Race starts in an hour's time?"

Greased Lightning!

ON a little wooden platform just outside the town a group of excited ranchers stood that afternoon, waiting for the Endurance Race to start. The horsemen had assembled, and the starter, a cattleman named Pete Collins, began to call over the names. One by one the riders answered.

"Judge Sheldon's Lightning, rider, Jack Allen," cried Pete.

There was no reply, and Bruce Reed, hiding a grin, turned to Collins with a question.

"How long before we start?"

"About five minutes," said Pete. "Get into line now."

Bruce Reed had waited all the morning, hoping that his gang would discover from Judge Sheldon or from Doris where the white horse was. No news came, and Reed did not dare to leave the town himself to find out what had happened. At last he came down to the starting-point on a big black horse, a very good animal, though not the equal of the white stallion.

"Two minutes!" cried Pete Collins.

"Here's the judge!" yelled a score of voices as Judge Sheldon and Doris came riding up.

"I'm a little late, boys," said the judge coolly, as he mounted the platform, "but don't scratch my entry. I'd like to make a slight change in my horse's name."

He stooped, picked up a bit of chalk, and wrote the word "Greased" in front of "Lightning" on the board where the entries were written up.

"Where's the horse?" said Pete. "It's time, judge. I can't wait."

"Horse will be here in time," replied Judge Sheldon calmly. "Go ahead, Pete."

"Get ready there!" shouted the starter. "Don't crowd. Take your time!"

Bruce Reed could hardly believe his eyes as the judge and his daughter came up. Something had obviously gone wrong with his scheme, but he had no time to think about it. The starter's gun barked, and they were off, just as Jack Allen on a great white horse swept in at August 8th, 1931.

the rear of the field and took up the race with the others.

"That's okay," said the judge to Doris. "Reed ain't seen him yet."

"That sure was a cute idea of Jack's to come up at the last second so that Reed couldn't challenge him about the horse!" cried Doris jubilantly.

Bruce Reed had got away first, and Jack lay well back, saving Starlight's speed for a later period of the race. The Endurance Race was a stern test, over fifteen miles of country, much of the course being very rough ground indeed, and the white horse had already travelled many miles that day.

Over a level stretch of plain they flew, and then up a short, steep hill. The field had begun to string out, but still Jack made no effort to force his way forward, though Reed was gaining slowly all the time.

Arrangements had been made for a broadcast of the race, and observers, stationed at intervals on the course, reported the progress of the riders from time to time. One of the ranchers put on ear-phones and called out the news to the eager crowd.

"They're crossing the swamp now," he said after a while. "Reed is still leading. Two horses stuck in the mud."

"Which?" gasped Doris eagerly. "Says he can't quite make out. Allen's through, lying 'bout sixth. They going up Stony Hill now. He can't see any more. Must wait for the next to take up."

There was a pause for some minutes, and then the rancher went on again.

"Coming down the other side of Stony Hill. What's that? One of 'em down? Hideaway's down, he says. Put his foot in a hole. Your horse is okay, judge. Allen swerved away just in time, or he'd have gone over, too. That's all from him."

Doris held her breath with anxiety as the news came through, but the judge took out a note-book and began to take bets, to his daughter's horror.

"Here we are!" cried the rancher. "They've done twelve miles. Great Jupiter! Only two left in the race! Bruce Reed and Jack Allen. All the others are out of it!"

Bruce Reed had ridden a very good race. He had kept the lead throughout, and as he had never once looked back, he was still unaware that the horse Starlight was behind him. As they entered the straight run for the last mile, Reed observed that apparently only one of his rivals remained in the race, for he could hear but one horse galloping behind. He turned at last to look.

The wily rancher nearly lost his seat as he saw the great white horse thundering on his track, some thirty yards away, with Jack Allen, his face grim and set, in the saddle. Reed recovered himself with a great effort, and spurred desperately on. The black horse, exhausted as it was, responded nobly, and for another half-mile held its own.

"Here they come!" yelled the crowd, as in the distance the two riders appeared. Bruce Reed's mount was "all out," and the rancher was riding for all he was worth. A length behind came Greased Lightning, with Jack sitting calmly in the saddle, quirt and spurs unused. There were four hundred yards to go when the Riding Kid shook up the reins, and the white stallion replied with a burst of speed that took him to the front in a few strides.

Amidst frantic cheering Jack swept past the winning-post ten lengths ahead, instantly reined up, to dismount and toss the reins to the judge. Then he turned to wait for his rival.

"That ain't your horse!" cried Reed, as he dismounted. "It's mine. You stole it!"

"Ever hear of the Coyote Ranch in Montana?" Jack cut in. "You rustled him from there, you skunk, and he's going back to his owner soon."

"Who do you think you are?" howled Reed. "Seize him, boys! He's been rustling our cattle, as I told you!"

The boys looked stonily at Reed, for they had heard enough from the judge to know that the rancher was lying.

"I'm the deputy-marshal," said Jack coolly, "and I'm taking you to the county gaol right now for rustling cattle and horses and kidnapping Judge Sheldon and daughter. Got that?"

"You liar!" shouted Reed, springing fiercely at Jack.

The fight that followed was short and sharp, for though Reed, in his fury, tried foul means, once endeavouring to kick his opponent in the face, in three minutes Jack had knocked him out.

"And here's your precious gang," cried the Riding Kid, as a posse of armed men led by the sheriff came up with the "ghost Indians," feathers and all complete. "The vanishing Yumas, boys! Look at 'em!"

"What d'you mean?" gasped Reed, staggering to his feet. "They ain't my men."

"He's lying, marshal!" exclaimed Bill Haines, as a rancher, none too gently, pushed him in front of Jack. The rascally foreman, who had posed as an Indian chief, stumbled and went down on one knee as he glared at Reed. Then he spoke again.

"He put us up to this, and he got me to take you off, judge."

"That guy plugged a man the other day!" yelled Reed. "He's lying!"

"You dirty double-crosser!" cried Haines. "I saw you knife Red Saunders in the back, and you don't put that on me!"

"Nice little bunch, ain't they?" said the judge disgustedly.

"That's enough!" cried Jack. "Take 'em off, boys!"

The boys obeyed with immense alacrity, and that night the county gaol housed the whole gang of the rustlers who had troubled Hamilton so long.

"An' now," said the judge, as he turned to Doris and Jack, who stood talking by Starlight's side, "I'm going home. I reckon—you'll come presently; eh, girl?"

The old man smiled knowingly, but Doris was too happy to mind, and in another moment she and Jack were alone.

"As I'm the Riding Kid, Doris, I s'pose I must ride—back to Arizona!" said Jack slowly.

"Oh, Jack!" cried Doris reproachfully. "You mustn't go yet."

"Yes, I must, honey," replied Jack. "But I reckon to take someone with me back there—a lady called Mrs. Jack Allen—and that's you! Will you come, kid?"

"Sure I will—marshal!" laughed Doris happily, as Jack swept her eagerly into his arms. "Sure! I'll go anywhere, so long as I'm with you!"

(By permission of the W. & F. Film Service, Ltd., starring Jack Perrin and Josephine Hill.)

"LES AMOURS DE MINUIT."

(Continued from page 16.)

They went out, too happy to speak. They reached the street and were moving away towards the railway when a shadowy form emerged from under a dark entrance. It was Gaston Lajoie. He thrust his pistol against Marcel's face.

"Not so fast," he sneered. "Give me that money, or—"

Two large men sprang upon the convict from out of the night. One seized him from behind; the other fondly believed he had fixed handcuffs about Gaston's wrists. A frightful struggle ensued in which all three fought like madmen.

"Run, Marcel, run!" screamed Georgette, seeing that Gaston had briefly torn himself out of the clutches of the police. "For the love of heaven, run!"

Marcel caught at her arm and together they raced down the street. Shouts followed them. Marcel heard a kind of whirring noise and Georgette uttered a little groaning cry.

"You are hurt?" he asked, his heart almost stopping.

"No—!" She clung to him as they went on. "I— Do not stop to talk!"

They came to a corner and Georgette stumbled, only to recover herself on the instant. The huge, ugly shape of the terminus loomed vaguely through the coming dawn.

"Go first," murmured Georgette. "Get the tickets—no time to lose!"

"But you, beloved?"

"I—follow. Go, go!" She dropped his arm. "Listen, the clock is going to strike the hour. The train leaves—at a minute past—"

They were almost in the station. Marcel ran to the ticket office, seeing that the booking clerk was about to shut down the little window.

"Two singles, second class—Paris!" he gasped.

"Be very quick, m'sieur." The clerk took the notes and thrust forth the tickets and change.

Marcel glanced round for Georgette, but could not see her. "She has gone on to the platform," he told himself as he raced through the booking hall. The ticket inspector was just closing the iron gates as Marcel ran to him.

"There is a lady with me—" He waved the tickets. "She has gone through?"

The man shrugged. "Many ladies have gone through," he answered. "You have two tickets, m'sieur? Go forward and see if she is on board. The whistle has gone."

Marcel ran alongside the train. Panic was seizing him. He had lost her; he should not have left her for a moment. Then came swift hope; she must be in the train. He stared up frantically at the high windows, trying to find Georgette's amongst the faces that he glimpsed in a kind of blur.

The train began to move. He ran back to the gates. No sign of her. He rushed to the train and leapt on to the footboard of the last carriage. A guard dragged him aboard, swearing and scolding.

As the train loudly panted its way

out from Marseilles, gathering momentum, she appeared—the Georgette he had left behind him. Her feet faltered, her eyes were hopeless; the hand she had briefly put to her breast was stained with blood as she gripped the bars of the closed gate.

Slowly, with sobbing breaths, she sank down upon her knees.

Marcel was at his desk. He had been able to return the stolen notes to the safe; no one had missed them. He sat there working mechanically at his dull daily round of duty.

"Why do you return so soon. Du-four?" asked his chief, coming upon him after his late lunch. "We did not expect you until to-morrow."

"I wanted to get back."

"It is agreeable to find one so diligent," smiled the chief. "I hope you enjoyed the little holiday? It must still count as two days, although you have returned." He had an early copy of "Le Soir" in his hand. "Where did you go?"

"To Marseilles."

"You must have been travelling nearly all the time," cried the chief clerk, smiling still more widely. "What a fellow you are! Did you encounter Gaston, by any chance? Gaston Lajoie, the murderer?"

Marcel felt his heart drain dry. He made no answer as the chief slapped the paper down on his desk.

"Do not stare, my boy! It is all right; Gaston is finished—he killed himself dead at the arrest, having first shot his wife—"

The solid floor of the bank seemed to rock beneath Marcel. He got up from his seat, trembling as with an ague.

"Excuse me, sir—I am not well. I—" He stumbled to the counter, pushed open the swing door and blindly ran out of the building.

"It is train sickness," murmured his chief. "He will recover in the fresh air."

Almost blindly Marcel ran to the southern terminus, bareheaded, distraught, talking to himself as he ran. There was a train leaving almost at once for Marseilles, and with his last few notes—the poor savings which he had added to his theft, he bought a ticket and staggered into the train. There he sat, hunched up in a third-class compartment, faint with misery and remorse.

If only he had not left her! He found Georgette at the city hospital. Fanny was with her, and he was allowed to tiptoe into the ward. He saw, with a sob of relief, that there was no screen as yet about the bed on which Georgette was lying, still and white as the sheets, her brown eyes closed in a kind of peace.

"Not closed for ever—" Marcel heard himself praying. "Dear Lord, grant that she may open them for me—I love her so very much!"

Fanny made signs for him to kneel by the bed.

"I am glad you have come," she whispered. "Perhaps, now, she will live."

Marcel took one of Georgette's cold hands in his, caressing it with his lips. As she felt the touch, slowly her eyes opened. She met his ardent, beseeching gaze with the ghost of a smile.

"It is you, Marcel?" she breathed. "Hold me tight; keep me from leaving you."

"Never will I let you go, Georgette. Never, never!"

She moved herself a little nearer to him. "Then I am safe—" she told him gently. "Happy once more—As when I first see you, Marcel."

"Now she will live," spoke the little Fanny, kneeling also by the bed. "Me, I know it. It makes me cry for joy!"

(By special permission of Les Etablissements Braunberger Richebe, featuring Pierre Batcheff as Marcel, Jacques Varennes as Gaston, and Danielle Parola as Georgette.)

FILM NOVELS YOU SHOULD NOT MISS!

"WHAT WIVES DON'T WANT."

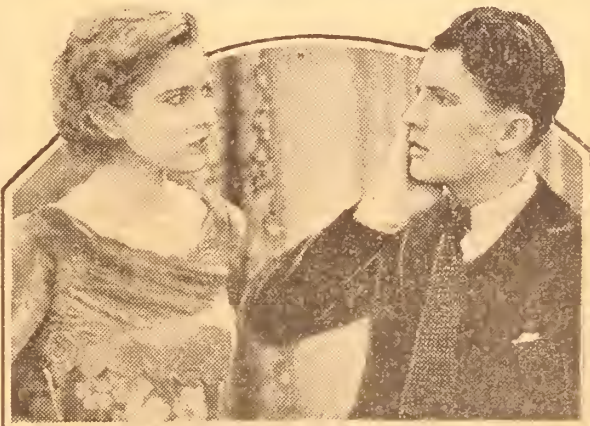
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PRICE 2d.
August 8th, 1931.

"THE CODE OF HONOUR."

(Continued from page 8.)

down, for, strong men as they both were, the terrific battle told its tale.

But Cardigan still had enough left to get in a well-timed, straight right which put finish to the business—and Harden pitched full length on the carpeted floor.

And at the moment Harden, with a last effort of consciousness, flung out his arms, the door was burst open and Nosey crashed in.

"Jack—beat the trail!" he said urgently. "The sheriff is coming up! Old Man Bradfield and Doris are at the gates—"

"Doris?" panted Cardigan. "Partner—'m all in—we've had a fight. 'm just gonna stop here—"

He broke off as Doris, her face flushed with anxiety, burst into the room and flew to his side.

"Jack! Jack!" she almost whimpered. "You're—you're hurt!"

"Sure 'm hurt!" he grinned back at her through his twisted, battered lips. "But 've got that document, and that's all that matters. Maybe, though, 'll be getting a long enough rest to get over it!"

He added that last sentence with a smiling, meaning glance at Sheriff Smyth, who came into the room with a gun in one hand, and a gleam in his eye that spelt further trouble. He stopped dead in his tracks as he saw Cardigan.

"Waal, if this ain't tarnation lucky!" he ejaculated. "Ef you ain't Jack Cardigan!"

"Yes, 'm Jack Cardigan all right, sheriff," said the gambler quietly, and Nosey groaned in his dismay. "I'll thank you to do your job as quietly as possible—"

"Say, Cardigan, where's the hoss o' mine?" growled Smyth.

"In the corral!" said Jack, and added parenthetically: "Is that all you want of me, sheriff?"

"Sure! But I hev got my mad up fer you busting my cheroots!" said Smyth, whilst Nosey and Cardigan began to stare in wonder at him. "I want this guy, though."

"But—but that greenhorn—" stammered Cardigan.

"Oh, him!" Smyth shrugged his shoulders. "When you told me down in the plain that you never carried a gun, Cardigan, I sorter believed you and started on another trail. I sure got my man, and I ain't got nothin' on you! That is—only a few cheroots!"

"Then my partner ain't gonna be hooked up?" said Nosey joyfully.

The sheriff looked at him patiently, almost pathetically, before he nodded slowly to the still anxious Doris.

"Don't be such a tarnation fool!" he growled. "Don't it look as ef there's some hookin' up coming along?"

Doris blushed to the roots of her hair, and her discomfiture was not relieved when the arm around her suddenly tightened in an ecstasy of joy.

"Doris—I'm free!" whispered Jack joyfully.

"Another tarnation fool!" growled Smyth. "That's just what you ain't! Hallo—here's my guy coming back to have a nice little peep at me gun!"

Guns were not necessary to get Harden away. He was whacked to the world, and he had to be half-carried out of the room to his horse.

Old Man Bradfield gave Jack and Doris one look—and smiled as he remembered very clearly an occasion when he and Doris' mother had looked at each other like that.

"I'll go and find Tom—he'll be glad to know that the document has been recovered," he said quietly. "Perhaps you'd help me, friend Nosey."

Nosey groaned—he was past speaking. His partner had dished him for a much better partner—a partner who seemed to take a very great joy in attempting to soothe a pair of battered lips by just gently touching them with her own.

(By permission of the British Lion Film Co., Ltd., starring Mahlon Hamilton and Doris Hill.)



(Continued from page 2.)

Answers to Questions.

Among the films in which Grant Withers has appeared are the following, Kenneth (Sheffield): "Tiger Rose," "So Long Letty," "The Other Tomorrow," "The Second Floor," "Back Pay," "Dancing Sweeties," "Winner's Holiday," and "Scarlet Pages." Yes, he is an American, without doubt, for he was born in Pueblo, Colorado, and his parents were also born in the States. Grant was at one time a police-court reporter, and some years later began in films as an extra. Sue Carol's real name is Evelyn Jemmy Lederer, and she is the daughter of S. M. Lederer, the Chicago millionaire, who died in Switzerland in 1925. About a year later, Sue made her debut on the screen in a small part in "Is Zat So?" She was born in Chicago, Illinois, on October 30th, 1907, and is 5 ft. 2 in. in height, with brown hair and eyes.

I would not be surprised if a Landler wrote to me, H. M. (Amballa), for we receive letters from all parts of the world. I am pleased to know that the "B.C." is popular with you and your chums in the regiment. Why not write to Joan Crawford for her autographed photo? Address her care of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, Culver City, California, U.S.A. Her real name before marriage was Lueille le Seuer, and she was born on May 23rd, 1904, in San Antonio, Texas. She married Douglas Fairbanks, junr., in 1929. No, she is not related to Kathryn Crawford, whose real name is Kathryn Moran.

If you write to Gary Cooper, care of the Paramount Publix Studios, Hollywood, California, U.S.A., he will be certain to get your letter, J.Y. (Inverness). Among Wallace Beery's many successes are the following: "The Sea Hawk," "We're in the Navy Now," "Sons of the Sea," "Now We're in the Air," "Beggars of Life," "Chinatown," "River of Romance," "The Big House," and "Billy the Kid."

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Mitchell

Boys' Cinema

**"SWANEE RIVER" and
"PHANTOM OF THE DESERT."**

Complete Film Stories in This Issue.

Boy's **CINEMA** 2^D

No. 610.

EVERY TUESDAY.

AUGUST 22nd, 1931.



**BUCK
JONES** IN

Men Without Law

*A Fighting
Western Drama*



The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"Men Without Law."

Buck Healy, Buck Jones; Tom Healy, Tommy Carr; Murdoch, Harry Woods; Sheriff Jim, Fred Burns; Deputy Sheriff Clyde, Fred Kelsey; Senor del Rey, Victor Sarno; Juanita, Carmelita Geraghty; Mrs. Healy, Lydia Knott.

"Swanee River."

Garry Sommers, Grant Withers; Caroline Bradford, Thelma Todd; Jack Bradford, Philo McCullough; Colonel Bradford, Palmer Morrison; Morton, Walter Miller; Esau, Robert Frazier.

"Phantom of the Desert."

The Phantom, Starlight; Jack Saunders, Jack Perrin; Mary van Horn, Eva Novak; Colonel van Horn, Josef Swickard; Dan Denton, Edward Earl; Benny, Benny Corbett; Steve, Robert Walker.

New Serial Queen.

Maybe some of you remember, maybe some of you do not, those three daring artistes of the old silent serials, Pearl White, Grace Cunard, and Ruth Roland. In spite of all the dangers they went through they are still alive, and with not a broken limb among them. Pearl White has made Paris her home; Grace Cunard is reputed to be the wealthiest woman in California; and Ruth Roland is still working at Universal City. And now Hollywood has a new serial queen in petite, blonde Lucille Brown.

Her coming is timely, for now the serial is surging back to popularity. Lucille Brown has the feminine lead in "Danger Island" with Kenneth Harlan. Her first day's work for this picture brought her a thrill, for she was swept off the rigging of the Lottie Carson into the waters of the Pacific.

The Lottie Carson is a schooner-rigged vessel which was used almost all through the twelve-chapter serial, "Danger Island," and the spot where Lucille fell was ten miles out in the ocean. Fortunately, Lucille can swim as well as a fish, and the unexpected incident did not unnerve her a bit. A few minutes after getting back on board she was ready to continue her acting.

"Danger Island" is full of thrills, but this new Universal star declines to have a double for any of them.

A Microscopic Wonder.

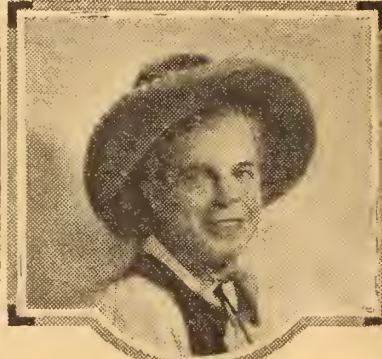
John Hix, discoverer of oddities and originator of the "Strange As It Seems" newspaper series, which Universal show on the screen in colours, has been beaten at one of his own discoveries.

Recently, Hix found a woman who reproduced with a pen the Lord's Prayer three times in a circle the exact size of an American ten-cent piece. This struck Hix as fine material for his "Strange As It Seems" series. But when the picture came to be made, a Universal studio title artist, John Connelly, did three times better than the Hix discovery.

He reproduced the Lord's Prayer six times, and added his name within the tiny circle. He worked without the aid of a magnifying glass or a special pen.

August 22nd, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S THREE COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



HOOT GIBSON

IN

"CLEARING THE RANGE."

Tracking down his brother's slayer, he made out he was yellow and a coward, but as "El Capitan" he blazed his way through a Western crime ring to victory. A thrilling yarn of the Lone Star State.

"QUICK MILLIONS."

By unscrupulous methods a truck-driver makes himself a power against whom the forces of law and order were helpless. But like all criminals he goes a step too far and— A grand and thrilling crook drama. Starring Spencer Tracy.

"WESTWARD BOUND."

A stirring story of the West, showing how a man, trying to get amusement for a girl, started a senator's son on the road to romance. Starring Buffalo Bill Junr.

used only capital letters throughout, and his reproduction is in forty lines of perfect letters. A magnifying glass is used to reproduce Connelly's remarkable accomplishment on the screen.

Fighting for the Films.

Sometimes film fights are faked. Most often, however, they are as real and as exciting as seen on the screen. The picturegoer, it is true, cannot tell the difference. Every action is carefully timed and rehearsed. Fake blows are so arranged with the camera angles carefully calculated that the hits seem realistic enough. But this, as stated, is not a usual practice, and even a fake blow sometimes finds its mark.

Fred Kohler, two hundred and forty-five pounds of bone and muscle, has perfected a blow which, if it caught its victim, would certainly kill him. His control is so good that, though he may strike with all his tremendous strength, his fist actually stops within an inch of his target. On the screen this cannot be detected. On one occasion, however, when Kohler and the late William Russell were staging a shipboard fight, it was intended that Kohler's k.o. punch should pass over Russell's shoulder. But as Kohler let drive, full force, a

wave threw Russell off his balance and he caught Kohler's big fist plump on his nose. Further production had to be held over for a week. Kohler himself has had a rough time in film and carries thirty-one scars as mementoes of his screen fights.

One of the most terrific fights yet staged for the screen was the one which took place several years ago for the first version of "The Spoilers." The combatants were the late Tom Santschi and William Desmond. Realism was wanted, and neither man showed nor asked for mercy. Santschi, being the villain, got the worst of it. He suffered a broken arm and the loss of several teeth. Desmond, too, received a terrible beating, and both men afterwards spent weeks in recovering. Sometimes doubles provide the more strenuous touches for these film fights. For the third and sound version of "The Spoilers," in which the principals were Gary Cooper and William Boyd, the fiercest part of the fight was fought by two doubles, Collins and Holbrook. They took a terrible beating "for art's sake." But in the close-ups even the actors, Boyd and Cooper, had a really tough time.

Chief of Studio Police.

A chief of police and a force of twenty-five special officers—enough to patrol a good-sized town—are maintained at the First National Studios in the law-abiding community of Burbank, California.

Lou Holtendorf has a really unique job. There is said to be no other police job just like it.

The work consists not so much in maintaining order, as in protecting property not only against theft and vandalism, but against being tampered with or touched in any way by people who mean no real harm.

In the first place the studio entrances must be guarded against the countless gate-crashers who work every kind of racket, from mere curiosity to see a studio to soliciting actors and actresses for one favour or another. It is quite a problem, for the officers must recognise and admit without delay all the thousand or more artists, directors, writers, carpenters and technicians, and must be courteous to all visitors, and see that those with legitimate business are directed to the proper places. And at the same time they must be firm but courteous in refusing admittance to visitors who have no real business on the lot.

One of the great problems is to prevent the sets from being tampered with. The loss or misplacing of an article that is being used as a prop in a picture may cause hours of delay, running into thousands of dollars, and cause a large number of scenes to be re-shot. Six men were assigned to policing the sets used in making "Adios," Richard Barthelme's forthcoming release.

Each piece of furniture is left at

(Continued on page 23.)

The dare-devil adventures of a rancher returned from the War, who sets out to rescue his brother from a gang of outlaws, only to fall into their clutches himself and to be impersonated by their leader.



MEN WITHOUT LAW



Starring
BUCK JONES and
CARMELITA GERAGHTY

Back From No-Man's Land.

IT was during the war that Buck Healy and Ramon del Rey made one another's acquaintances and became firm friends; and it was strange that they should have had to travel so many thousands of miles to meet, for Buck was a rancher from Gunsight, in Arizona, while Ramon came from his father's rancho in Naco, just over the Mexican border, and only fifty miles or so from Buck's home.

Buck was a sturdy fellow who hardly realised the meaning of the word fear, whereas Ramon was a slender and highly-strung young Mexican who did daring things not because he was by nature daring, but because he was afraid of being afraid.

On a pitch-black night in September, 1918, Buck proved his friendship at the imminent risk of his life. Ramon had taken part in a raid on the enemy trenches, and his companions had come back with two prisoners, but without him. One of the men, it appeared, had seen him fall headlong into a shell-hole while the raiders were crawling across No-Man's Land in the face of fierce machine-gun fire, and it was decided that he was dead.

Buck was standing on the fire-step of the trench after the din that followed the raid had died away, when faintly from somewhere beyond the barbed wire he heard a voice calling: "Buck! Buck! Buck!"

"That's Ramon!" exclaimed Buck, and immediately made to climb the parapet.

"You can't go out there—it's suicide!" growled the man on his right, tugging at his legs. But Buck kicked the detaining hand away and hauled himself up over the sand-bags.

A sniper saw the crawling figure near the wire, and bullets whizzed past Buck's head. Machine-gun fire broke loose again, and for a while the would-be

rescuer hugged the ground. A bomb exploded near him and he gave vent to a queer little gasping sigh.

But as soon as things had quietened down he crept doggedly forward again, and in the sudden blaze of a Very light he saw Ramon, almost unrecognisable in mud and blood. The Mexican had dragged himself out of the shell-hole only to become caught in the wire.

"Buck!" The voice was very faint, but it reached Buck's ears.

"Stay with it, kid," he called, and made for the bruised and wounded figure of his chum

He reached the wire, and the wire was cut; he managed, somehow, to get Ramon on his back, pulled his arms round his own neck, and began the perilous return journey.

The Germans in their trenches refrained from firing, appreciating this act of bravery, but from behind their lines big guns suddenly set up a barrage, preliminary to a projected advance.

Shells shrieked and whistled overhead; it seemed as though hell itself had been let loose. But Buck, with his burden, crawled doggedly back to his own trench. He had been wounded in the right arm on the outward journey; he was

wounded in the left leg just before he reached the sand-bags and rolled over them with the man he had rescued into the arms of his comrades.

Buck and Ramon were bundled off to a field hospital with as little delay as possible; the projected advance of the Germans failed, and a few days later the two friends were conveyed to the comfort and comparative security of a base hospital.

There they remained for a full month; but towards the end of October Buck hobbled about the ward with the aid of a stick, carrying his arm in a sling, and regained his usual cheerfulness. He was, however, deeply concerned about Ramon, for Ramon still remained in bed, a mass of bandages, and suffering from an internal wound that refused to heal.

Proceeding down the long ward one morning with less effort than usual, Buck greeted various convalescents in his own characteristic way, and approached the bed at the far end, near a window.

"Hallo, Ramon," he said cheerfully, "how's tricks to-day, kid?"

"Not so good, Buck," came the faltering reply.

"Aw, what d'you mean, not so good?" said Buck encouragingly. "You're looking great to-day."

It was a lie, for Ramon was looking particularly bad that morning, but it was a justifiable lie, intended to help. Buck sat down on a chair beside the bed and noticed a sheet of paper in his chum's transparent hand.

"What have you got?" he inquired. "A letter from home?"

Ramon nodded. "Read it," he said.

HELP THE NEWSAGENT.

Have you ever thought how difficult it is for a newsagent to order just the right number of copies of any particular paper each week? You can make his task much easier if you place a regular order with him. You will not only help him to order correctly and avoid waste, but will make sure of getting your copy regularly each week.

Buck took the letter and read it. Much to his astonishment he found that it was addressed to himself; it had been enclosed with a letter to Ramon. It ran:

Rancho del Rey,
Naco, Mexico.
10th October, 1918.

Dear Mr. Healy,—Words cannot express my gratitude to you for your heroic action in saving my son as you did. It was wonderful of you, and I shall never forget it. Ramon's sister feels as I do. We are greatly in your debt, and anything we can do to show our gratitude at any time we shall count it an honour to do.

We shall hope to see you when you return home and to thank you in person.
—Yours to command,

FRANCISCO DEL REY.

Having mastered the contents of this letter, written in a thin, spidery hand, Buck looked reproachfully from it to the pallid young man propped up upon the pillows.

"Say," he exclaimed gruffly, "what have you been doing? Writing a lot of boloney about me back home? You shouldn't!" He looked at the address on the sheet of paper, and went on: "You know, it's funny, Ramon, we living so close together back in the States, and never knew each other. I'd like to meet your folks."

"You will, Buck, when you go home," said Ramon.

"You mean when we go home," corrected Buck. And then, as the sick man shook his head, he endeavoured to cheer him up by talking of what they would do when the war was over.

"Say, listen," he said, "you ought to meet my Ma—she bakes the greatest apple-pies you ever stuck your teeth in. And my kid brother—gee, you'll like him, he's a great kid! And I've got one of the greatest little broncos you ever seen in your life. I call him Silver—he's just like a flash—and when you come down to my ranch I want you to ride him. Gee, but it'll be great when you and me get back home! And listen, boy, I'll tell you something else—"

He broke off short as Ramon's head fell back and his smoken eyes closed. In a panic he banged on the floor with his stick, and with its aid rose up and bent over the bed.

A trim nurse deserted a patient at the far end of the room and came over. But Ramon was beyond mortal aid; Buck's act of heroism had been in vain.

The Girl on the Train.

BUCK went back to the trenches only a few days before the Armistice was declared, and, by some stroke of good fortune, he was among the first of the American troops to go back across the Atlantic.

There was a parade in New York City, and when Buck found himself on a train bound for the long journey home to Arizona—a troop train, full of returned soldiers.

An exciting journey, crowded with incidents, for at every town where the train stopped there were crowds to welcome the returning warriors, banners waving, bands playing.

At several important junctions, Buck had to change from one line to another, and as he progressed farther and farther west and south his companions dwindled in number and ordinary citizens became more numerous.

At Ogden, in Utah, he changed out of a Union Pacific train into one on the St. Paul & Pacific line, bound at last August 22nd, 1918.

direct for southern towns in Arizona. The returning soldiers were reduced by this time to a hundred or so, scattered about the various cars.

Buck sat beside the centre gangway of a car in which a dozen men were sitting lustily as the train drew near to Gunsight. He looked up with interest at a beautiful black-haired girl who came tripping along from the direction of the dining-car. But a practical joker on the other side of the gangway thrust out a foot and she nearly fell on to Buck's knees.

She recovered her balance with an effort, and her dark brown eyes flashed down at Buck.

"Excuse me, sir," she cried indignantly in Spanish, "but I seem to be in your way!"

Buck, who hadn't a ghost of a notion what she was saying, blinked at her.

"Er—er—" he began awkwardly; but she swept past him with her chin in the air.

Buck gazed appreciatively after her, and the offender from the other side of the gangway said to him facetiously:

"I don't know what she said, partner, but if it's what I think it was, you ain't no gentleman."

"Maybe I'd better go and apologise to the lady, eh?" said Buck.

"Sure! And ask her if she's got a girl friend."

"As you were, doughboy!" scoffed Buck.

He rose, passed down the swaying car, and stepped into the next one. The black-haired girl was seating herself beside a white-haired woman, obviously Spanish, who looked as though she might be a housekeeper or a nurse.

"A man tried to trip me up," said the girl angrily in her own language. "The train's full of soldiers returning from the war, and they're singing and fooling."

"They go happy to their homes," said the white-haired woman soothingly. "The war has been so dreadful, and now, naturally, they are high-spirited."

The black-haired girl nodded, and might have recovered her temper, but at this moment Buck, who had reached her side, said eagerly:

"Oh, mademoiselle—senorita—parlez vous French? I mean, sprechen sie Deutsch? Oh, gee, I wish I could speak your language!"

"If you are trying to apologise for your clumsiness," she said coldly and in perfect English, "I forgive you."

"Gee, that's great!" cried Buck delightedly. "Now you're talking my own lingo. I'm awfully sorry for what happened a minute ago, but it wasn't my foot." He perched himself on the arm of a seat on the other side of the gangway and grinned at her. "Great day for travelling, isn't it?"

She gave him a disdainful glance, but in secret decided that he was quite an attractive young man, with his strong, clean-shaven face and his clear grey eyes. Her companion, glaring at Buck, began in Spanish:

"This man is annoying you, Juanita. Shall I call—"

"No, Maria," interrupted the girl in the same language. "It's all right." But she paid no further attention to Buck.

An attendant passed down the car calling out:

"Gunsight! Next stop Gunsight!"

The train was slowing down.

"How happy your father will be to see you again!" said Maria, in Spanish.

"A little," smiled Juanita.

There was a grinding of brakes, and a very small station loomed up. All along its low platform a steamer waved

in the breeze, inscribed: "Gunsight Welcomes its Heroes"; and near the shed-like booking-office stood a little band of eight musicians playing on brass instruments for all they were worth.

"Gunsight!" shouted the conductor. "Will you please take my bags?" called Juanita.

"Ah, senorita, do you live in Gunsight, too?" cried Buck, jumping to his feet. "I'll help you."

Juanita did not reply, and though Buck reached up to the rack over the ladies' heads, the attendant took the cases from him as he removed them. So Buck, disappointed but quite unabashed, went back to the other car to get his own belongings. And with him, unnoticed by the others, he carried a small case belonging to the black-haired girl.

The platform was alive with cowboys and men, women and children, welcoming back old friends and relatives as he swung down from the train and looked about him. The soldier who had tripped up Juanita—Hank Davis—descended beside him.

"Oh, boy—some girl friend!" he exclaimed, and pointed to the elderly Mexican woman called Maria, who had just followed her young mistress down from the steps of the adjoining car.

A fat woman with two children clinging to her skirts and a baby in her arms darted up to the speaker, crying rapturously: "Hank! Hank!" Buck chuckled, and moved from the open platform to the tree-lined road beyond it, looking back at the girl with whom he had tried to scrape acquaintance.

A typical Mexican had stepped up to her and seized upon the two suitcases which the conductor had deposited on the platform. He greeted Juanita deferentially and announced, in Spanish, that he had brought the wagonette to take her home.

"But, Pancho!" cried the elderly woman blankly. "The other bag—where is the other bag? There were three!"

"Three?" echoed the Mexican, looking at the two cases he was holding. "But how three? Here are two only!" "One has been lost! We must find it!"

Buck had lingered within earshot. The only word of the conversation he could understand was "maleta," Spanish for "portmanteau," but he knew well enough what it was all about. He sauntered back to the girl.

"Is this your grip, senorita?" he inquired, indicating the small case he had wilfully appropriated.

"Yes, thank you very much," she said, and looked at him suspiciously.

"Let me help you," he begged.

"Where did you get it?" she challenged.

"Oh, I—er—I found it. That's right—I found it."

He walked beside her to the wagonette, and Pancho and Maria followed. He would have helped her up into a seat, but she looked at him contemptuously and climbed up unaided, spurning his hand.

Maria sprang at him in a fury, raving at him in Spanish, and in much alarm Buck stepped backwards, stumbled over the case he had placed on the ground, and went sprawling. Immediately the two horses in the wagonette bolted.

Maria flung up her hands in horror, and the manservant, Pancho, ran shouting after the swaying vehicle. Buck was on his feet in a moment, saw what had happened, and acted.

Several horses, belonging to the celebrating cowboys, were hitched to a rail. He rushed over and released one, and almost in the same moment swung himself into the saddle.

Like the wind he shot off along the

dusty road in pursuit of the runaways, caught up with them, sprang from the horse he had borrowed on to the back of one of the horses attached to the vehicle, and in a masterly fashion brought it and its companion to a standstill. Then he slid down into the roadway and looked at the girl.

"Are you all right, miss?" he inquired. "I'm sorry that happened."

Juanita had been watching his efforts with admiration, but now she frowned.

"Are you sure you didn't do it on purpose, just so you could be a hero?" she said scathingly.

"Who—me?" cried Buck. "Why, lady, I wouldn't have had that happen for worlds!"

Pancho and Maria arrived, panting, and Maria was too breathless and too scared to do anything more than climb mutely up beside her mistress. Pancho mounted to the driving-board and picked up the reins.

"It's a great day for travelling, isn't it?" said Buck cheerfully.

"Well, why don't you travel?" demanded Juanita.

Pancho set the horses in motion, and Buck caught at the bridle of his borrowed steed, and stood grinning. Evidently Juanita relented, for as she was being swept away in the wagonette she looked back at him—and smiled.

A Fine Home-coming.

AN hour or so later, Buck walked briskly up a shady lane on his own property, five miles from the town of Gunsight, and came to the white gato of the ranch-house garden. It seemed to him that the pepper trees, the oaks, and the flowering eucalyptus had grown considerably during his absence, and the flower-beds were ablaze with early spring blossom.

His mother, a little silver-headed woman, was watching for him at the living-room window of the two-storey adobe building, and she darted out into the porch and down the steps to meet and greet and hug him.

"Oh, my boy! My big, big boy!" she cried tremulously.

"You know I've been thinking about this for two whole years," declared Buck. "Dreaming about it! I've even talked about it in my sleep!" He held her face in his hands and looked fondly into her tired eyes. "Gee!" he cried. "You don't know what it is to be back home!" "I know what it is to have you home, son," she told him.

They went into the house, arm-in-arm, and they sat and talked for a long while. Then Buck said suddenly:

"Where's Tom?"
"I'd give anything in the world if I knew," said his mother unexpectedly. "He hasn't been home for a month. I hadn't said anything before, but I'm worried almost crazy. Buck. He may be sick, or even—"

Tears were trickling down her cheeks, and she hadn't the courage to voice all her fears.

"Ah, now don't, mum," urged Buck. "He's all right."

"He's been into the house, arm-in-arm, and they sat and talked for a long while. Then Buck said suddenly: 'Where's Tom?' 'I'd give anything in the world if I knew,' said his mother unexpectedly. 'He hasn't been home for a month. I hadn't said anything before, but I'm worried almost crazy. Buck. He may be sick, or even—'"

"This was disturbing news, but Buck did his best not to show that he was disturbed.

"Don't worry about him, honey," he said. "I'll round up the beggar in no time. What he needs is a good spanking."

"He isn't a baby any more, Buck. He's grown so you'd hardly know him." She pointed to a framed photograph on the sideboard. "He had that taken the last time he was in Phoenix."

Buck went over to the sideboard, picked up the photograph, and studied the pictured face of his young brother. It was quite a nice face; the mouth was a trifle weak, but the eyes looked frank and clear.

"What d'you know about that?" exclaimed Buck. "Getting to be a great big fellow, ain't he? But I'll still say he needs a darned good spanking—and I'm just the fellow that can give it to him, too!"

The whinnying of a horse floated in at the open window.

"Guess Silver knows you're home, too," said Mrs. Healy.

"I'm going outside to say hallo 'to him," decided Buck, and he set down the photograph and went out into the farmyard.

A big white horse, broad of back, unharnessed, came running delightedly up to him—a noble creature, who carried his head proudly, as became one who had an Arabian strain in him.

"Hallo, son!" welcomed Buck. "How are you? Did you miss me, eh?" Silver sagely nodded his head. "Missed me a lot, did you? Well, give me a big kiss!"

Silver raised his head, and his moist tongue caressed his master's cheek. Buck patted him affectionately.

"Gee whiz!" he cried. "It's a long time since I haven't seen you. Listen, you old son-of-a-gun. We're going to start to town pretty soon. You want to go with me, eh? Okay! Just wait around till I come and saddle you."

In less than half an hour he was in the saddle, and it felt good to him to be on his devoted horse's back again. He set off for Gunsight at a brisk canter, though Silver really wanted to gallop, in order to work off some of his excitement at this reunion.

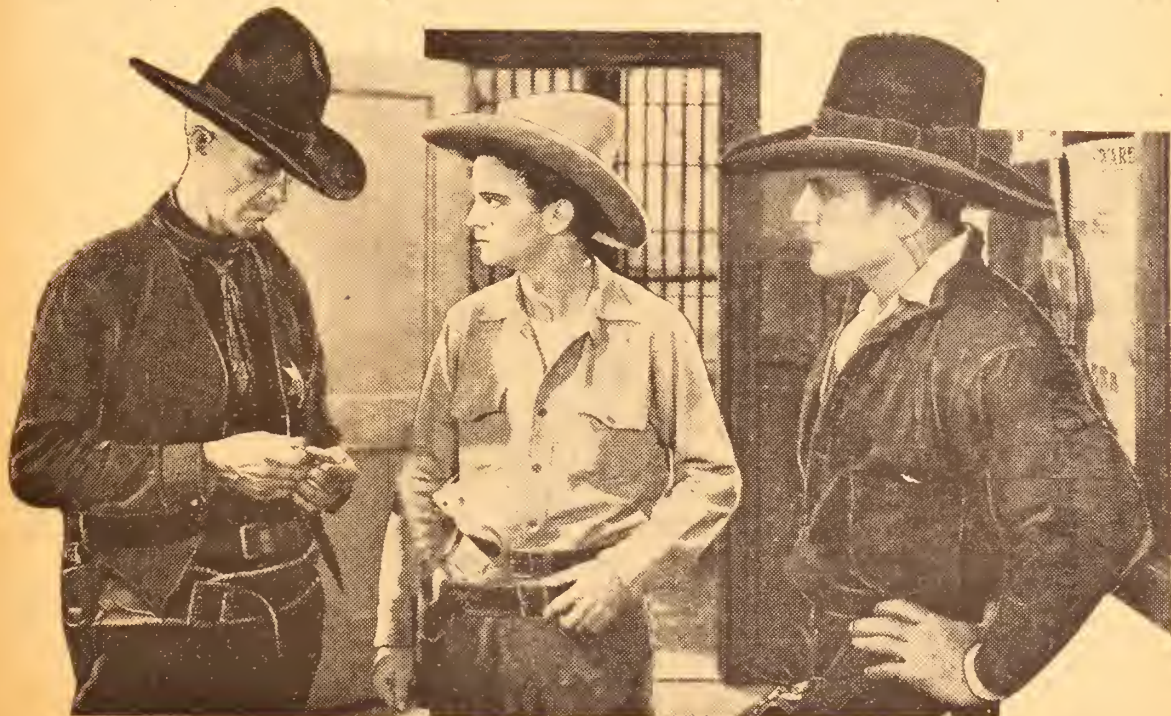
Outside the Mission House, at the beginning of Main Street, a group of men were talking together as a little cloud of dust betokened Buck's approach.

"More excitement in one day than I've seen in twenty years!" declared one, a grey-bearded rancher.

"Yep," nodded a younger man. "Goin' some for Gunsight! Boys coming home from the war, and the bank being robbed, all in one afternoon!"

"Well, darn my breeches!" exclaimed a little man in cowboy rig, whose big hat was perched on the back of his head. "If it ain't Buck Healy!"

Buck rode up to them, looking bronzed and splendidly fit, but no longer a soldier. He had shed his khaki and put on Western clothes; and round his waist was a heavy belt with holsters,



The sheriff took out his watch and consulted it. "I'll give you just an hour, Tom," he said.

and in the holsters were the formidable six-shooters he had used before he had learned to carry a service rifle.

"Hallo, Buck! How are you? Glad to see you!" chorused the three.

Buck dismounted beside them. The street was crowded with people, but that, of course, might very well be due to the return of the warriors.

"Where were you during all the excitement?" inquired the little man. "Say, you're lookin' great! Soldiering must agree with you."

"Oh, yeah?" drawled Buck. "What was the excitement?"

A red-headed cowboy joined the group.

"Say, Buck," he boomed, "I got a lotta questions I want to ask you. Now, do them Frenchies really eat frogs?"

"Get out!" laughed Buck. "What do you mean, eat frogs? Ha, ha, ha! I didn't see a frog in France!"

"Buck, have you heard about the bank robbery?" demanded the bearded rancher.

"No, what was it?" asked Buck curiously.

But before the speaker could answer Red butted in again.

"How about them madamoiselles?" he asked. "Were they peaches? Got any pieters of 'em on you?"

"Wait a minute," said Buck. "It's my turn—I want to ask you fellows a few questions. Most importantly—have you seen my young brother lately?"

"No," said one, "I haven't seen Tom for a couple o' weeks. Have you, Red?"

"No," said Red, rubbing his chin, "can't say I have. Now it seems to me the last time I seen him—"

Buck had the impression that they were keeping something back from him; but a sudden commotion up by the Blue Star Saloon drew his attention, and the attention of the others.

"Looks as if the sheriff's got one o' them bandits with him," remarked the little man. "Let's go and see who it is."

Sheriff Jim Matthews, a tall, lean, white-haired representative of law and order, was marching a prisoner across the roadway to the town gaol, followed by a crowd of cowboys and other habitués of the Blue Star. Buck and his companion moved forward, Buck holding Silver's bridle.

"Tom!" he exclaimed. For the prisoner was undoubtedly his brother, though he would hardly have recognised him if he hadn't seen the comparatively recent photograph.

Tom looked round, but was bundled over the doorstep of the sheriff's office, beyond which were the cells. Bill Clyde, the bulky and slow-witted deputy-sheriff, took charge of the prisoner and put him behind bars, while the sheriff moved over to his desk to make an entry in the record-book.

He looked up as a shadow fell across the book, and blinked at Buck, who had forced his way into the building.

"Hallo, Buck!" he exclaimed. "Sure great to see you, boy! How do?"

But Buck was not in the mood for formalities.

"What's this all about, Jim?" he inquired gruffly. "What have you got Tom for?"

"Well," said the sheriff slowly, swinging round in his chair, "the boy's been travelling in some pretty fast company, and it's naturally got him into trouble."

"What's he been doing?"

"Got mixed up with that Murdoch bunch. You remember Murdoch? Robbed the bank this afternoon while everybody was down at the station celebrating, and got away. Tom's the only one we've picked up."

Buck's dark brows came down and his August 22nd, 1931.

mouth closed like a steel trap. A fine home-coming!

The Sheriff Relents.

CLYDE, having locked the barred door of a cell on Tom Healy, lumbered into the sheriff's office and stared blankly at Buck.

"Hallo!" he greeted. "Got home from the war, then?"

"Hallo, Clyde!" said Buck briefly, and strode past him out across a passage to the barred door of the cell. Tom was clinging to the bars, and his weak mouth was working.

"Hallo, kid," growled Buck. "So you turned bad man, eh? I ought to beat the tar out of you!"

Tom looked pitcously at his sturdy brother.

"I didn't want to do it, Buck," he whimpered. "But I couldn't help it. They made me do it!"

"Bah!" cried Buck contemptuously. But the sheriff had followed him, and the sheriff said, compassionately:

"He's right, Buck. They double-crossed the kid, and left him holding the sack while they made their getaway."

"Serves you right!" snapped Buck at his brother. "What did you make up with them for in the first place?"

"Oh, I don't know," replied Tom wretchedly. "It was all so quiet around here. I thought I'd get a kick out of it."

"Yeah—you'll probably get a kick out of doing a couple of years in gaol!" retorted Buck.

"Have you seen mum?"

"I have."

"Don't let her know, Buck. You won't—will you?"

"Fine time to be thinking about her now!" rasped Buck. "She's been doing a tidy lot o' thinking herself, the past month, and grieving her heart out over you. When I left for France, you promised to take care of her. Nice job you made of it!"

Tom bowed his head in shame.

"I know," he admitted. "I'm just no good, I guess."

Buck pushed back his big hat and stood thinking for a moment or two, then turned impulsively to the sheriff.

"Jim," he said earnestly, "I want you to do me a favour."

"What is it, Buck?"

"I promised mum I'd bring Tom home to supper to-night—you know, she hasn't seen him for a long time, and she rather banked on my word. Let me take him home for an hour, will you?"

"I can't do it."

"I'll bring him right back. Besides, it'll give me a chance to cook up a story about him going away."

The sheriff wavered. He had always liked Buck, and he fully understood the situation.

"Well," he said doubtfully, "it ain't regular."

"Oh, I know it ain't regular, Jim! But think what it will mean to my mother. Why, if she ever found out anything about this it would kill her."

"All right," decided the sheriff, fishing a big key from his pocket. "I'll let the boy go home—but I'm going to keep you here till he gets back."

"That's okay with me, Jim—and I'm grateful."

The door of the cell was unlocked and opened and Tom stepped forth. The three passed across the passage into the sheriff's office, and Buck looked his brother up and down with critical eyes. The youngster had certainly grown, but he was still little more than a boy.

"Tom," said Buck, "I want you to

run on home to mother, and tell her you've been prospecting down across the border, and that you're going back, and that you'll probably be gone for a good long time. If she thinks you're safe she'll be satisfied. Do that?"

"Sure, Buck, if the sheriff—"

The sheriff took out his watch and consulted it.

"I'll give you just an hour, Tom," he said. "Till seven o'clock. If you're not back by then, Buck goes to gaol."

"Oh, I'll be back!" promised Tom eagerly. "I'm through with this business from now on."

"Well, I hope so."

Buck reached out a hand and removed his brother's belt in the holster of which gleamed a formidable Colt.

"Better leave this here," he said, "it might get you into a little more trouble, Tom. Now, run along—and get back on time!"

"So long, Buck," said Tom gratefully. "So long, sheriff! I won't let either of you down."

"You'll find your horse in the stable round the back," the sheriff informed him.

There were many in the street who stared as Tom stepped out from the building and passed down a yard beside it to the stable; but Sheriff Jim Matthews administered the law according to his own methods, and everybody respected him. Tom rode out of town leaving behind him a free topic for conversation.

He set off in the direction of the ranch, but he did not reach it. Four miles south of Gunsight, three men on horseback rode out at him from behind a clump of bushes, and their leader, a swarthy fellow with a tiny moustache and what seemed to be almost a permanent grin, chuckled as the youngster held up his hands.

"Hallo, Tom!" he cried. "Good work, kid! How did you get away?"

Tom bit his lip. The very worst had happened—he had been captured, virtually, by Jake Murdoch and two of his followers; the evil companions he had cultivated to his cost.

"Well," he said nervously, "Buck's come home again, and he squared it with the sheriff so I could go back and see my mother, and put things right with her. Then I'm going back and take what's coming to me."

"You're not turnin' yellow, are you?" demanded Murdoch harshly.

"Listen, Murdoch," replied Tom. "I'm through."

"Oh no you're not," laughed the outlaw. "You know too much! Bring him along, boys!"

The two other riders closed in on either side of the boy.

"Oh, but listen, Murdoch!" pleaded Tom desperately. "I've got to get back there—"

"You're coming with us," broke in Murdoch grimly, "so shut your head and ride!"

From six o'clock till seven, Buck and the sheriff sat side by side in the latter's office, chatting and smoking. At seven the clock in the wooden tower of the Mission House proclaimed the hour, and the sheriff crossed his long legs and took out his watch.

At seven-five he looked at Buck, who glanced across at the open watch, but went on talking of his war experiences and chipping a piece of wood with his clasp-knife. Ten minutes later the sheriff said:

"Stop whittling that stick, Buck—it's a quarter-past seven. Think the kid's put something over on us?"

"Course not," answered Buck. "Prob-

aback up at the house there, and lost track of time. You know how it is, Jim."

"I'm afraid we can't wait any longer."

"Well," suggested Buck, "what say we go up to the house? He'll be there."

"All right—we'll see." And pocketing his watch the sheriff rose to his feet. "I'm hoping you're right," he said; "but I'm fearing you're wrong. Come on!"

A Way of Escape.

MRS. HEALY was looking anxiously out of the living-room window into the gathering dusk when Buck and the sheriff came riding towards the ranch-house. She could not see their figures distinctly, but she saw the white form of Silver, and that was enough for her. She made for the kitchen, where the middle-aged help was busy at the stove.

"They're coming, Martha," she said. "I saw Silver."

"Oh, good," responded Martha. "I'll get the things on the table right away."

The sheriff had looked about him in the lane; and he looked over the garden fence as he and Buck hitched their horses there.

"Well, I don't see Tom's mount anywhere," he growled.

"He's here all right," said Buck confidently. "How long since you've been to our place, Jim?"

"Guess it's six weeks at least, Buck."

"You'll be welcome."

Martha was laying the table when they stepped into the living-room. Mrs. Healy hurried towards them.

"Oh, I knew you'd bring him!" she cried. "Good-evening, Jim."

"Howdy, Mrs. Healy?" said the sheriff, and closed the door.

"B—but where's Tom?" she faltered.

"He isn't coming," blurted Buck.

"At least, not to-night, mother. You see—er—Tom went down across the border, prospecting with some fellows. He left in quite a hurry—that's the reason he didn't tell you anything about it. Isn't that right, Jim?"

"Yes'm, that's right," lied the sheriff, rather red about the ears.

"But he shouldn't have gone away like that!" cried Mrs. Healy in dismay.

"He's such a boy—something might happen to him."

"There you go worrying again!" exclaimed Buck. "Tommy's all right, mother—he can take care of himself. Besides, Jim and I are going down to-night to see how he's getting along. And all this fuss for nothing!"

Martha finished laying the table and brought in some dishes.

"Sapper's all ready, Mrs. Healy," she announced.

"That's fine," nodded her mistress.

"Sit down and make yourself at home, Jim."

The sheriff shook his head regretfully, declaring that he couldn't stay.

"There's plenty," Mrs. Healy assured him. "You take Tom's place."

Buck, who was ravenous, also tried to coax; but it was Martha who proved the deciding factor. She came in with a dish whence arose a distinctly appetising odour.

"What's that?" asked the sheriff.

"My chicken with dressing!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Healy. "And cream gravy and apple-pie to follow."

"Well," yielded the sheriff, "if you insist—"

"Gimne your hat, Jim!" cried Buck triumphantly. And presently the sheriff was sitting at table on one side

of Mrs. Healy, with Buck facing him. He was given a generous helping of chicken, and did full justice to it. The pie was cut and served.

"Oh, boy!" cried Buck, with his mouth full. "Is this pie, or not?"

"Best I ever ate," declared the sheriff, and demolished his share with gusto.

"Another piece, Jim?" urged Mrs. Healy.

"No, thanks, Mrs. Healy," he said. "I couldn't hold another crumb! And besides, I gotta be going. I'm sorry to run off like this, but it has to be done."

He rose and looked significantly at Buck.

"Coming?"

"Right with you, Jim," was the response.

"Oh, Buck, do you have to go right away?" protested Mrs. Healy.

"I'm afraid I do, ma. We got to look after Tom, you know. But I'll be back with him before you know it—and don't worry about one little thing."

He and the sheriff put on their hats, and Buck took his mother in his arms and kissed her. Said the sheriff, opening the door:

"I certainly did enjoy that meal, Mrs. Healy!"

The two went out together and down the garden path to the gate. But as they unhitched their horses, the sheriff said in a low voice to Buck:

"There's only one thing I can do—I've gotta hold you!"

That didn't suit Buck at all. In gaol he could do nothing, whereas out of gaol he might do quite a lot.

"Look here, Jim," he pleaded, "give me two or three days, and I'll guarantee to bring him back."

"Can't be done! I took a chance on Tom, and he double-crossed me. I'll have to hold you till he's found."

"Somehow," said Buck earnestly, "I don't think it's Tom's fault. Let me go and get him for you, will you?"

But the sheriff, in spite of all the chicken and apple-pie he had devoured, was adamant.

"No, Buck," he said doggedly. "I'll get him myself, and in the meantime you're under arrest."

So the two rode back to town in the moonlight, and Buck was locked in the cell his brother so briefly had occupied. Bill Clyde, the slow-witted deputy, was left in charge, and the sheriff went off to scour the country for the escaped prisoner.

The cell was quite a small one, fitted with a bunk—suspended on chains from the wall—and a footstool. Buck, having acquired in the army the ability to sleep under almost any circumstances at any given opportunity, stretched himself on the bunk with a hard pillow under his head and a blanket over him, and was very soon in dreamland.

But he was awake with the dawn and cudgelling his brains to devise a way of escape. He had been made a prisoner, but he had given no parole.

He could always think best when his hands were occupied, so out came his clasp-knife, and he picked up the stool and began to chip away at one of its round legs.

Soon after seven o'clock in the morning Bill Clyde, having slept and breakfasted, came and looked through the bars to make sure his prisoner was still there. He stared in astonishment. Buck was sitting on the edge of his bunk with

Buck, instead of sweeping the floor, was sitting on the bunk chipping away at the handle of the broom.



the stool upside down on his knees, and the floor was covered with chips and shavings of wood.

"Hi, what's that you're doing?" he cried.

"Who—me?" inquired Buck innocently. "Nothin'!"

"Gimme that knife! It looks like a sawmill!"

"No—yes, sir. Sorry!" And Buck put away the knife and grinned at his gaoler. Clyde did not insist upon receiving the knife, but refused to be placated. Damaging Government property was an offence! He whipped up a bass broom and thrust it between the bars.

"See how you like cleaning up!" he snorted.

"Yes, sir," said Buck respectfully, and accepted the broom. Then he plunged a hand into one of his pockets and brought out a curious little metal puzzle. "Oh, dep!"

The deputy-sheriff, who had turned away, turned back again.

"Come here a minute," said Buck. "Take a look at that! Those rings can be parted from one another without force—see if you can unravel it, will you?"

Bill Clyde looked at the puzzle and then at its owner's smiling face.

"What are you tryin' to do—put something over on me?" he growled.

"No, sir," said Buck. "You're too clever for that."

"You bet I am!" responded Clyde, who was blessed with plenty of self-conceit. And he took the puzzle and went off with it into the office.

He tried to part the rings, but without success. Time passed, and he began to lose patience, but he hated to be baffled.

"Stop that whistling!" he bellowed.

Buck ceased to whistle. It was a hot morning, and perspiration came out on the deputy-sheriff's brow, born more of mental than of physical effort.

He went back to the barred door of the cell to complain that the puzzle was not a puzzle at all, but what he saw caused him to unlock the door and enter in a rage. For Buck, instead of sweeping the floor, was sitting on the bunk, chipping away at the handle of the broom!

The deputy-sheriff snatched away the broom and demanded the knife.

"You wait till Jim comes back!" he cried.

"Looks like I'll have to," remarked Buck.

The steel door clanged and was locked. Another broom was thrust between the bars.

"Now clean up that cell!" snapped Clyde.

He went back to the office and picked up the puzzle, twisting the rings this way and that, but without mastering their secret.

Buck began to sweep the cell in a leisurely manner, but stopped short and listened intently as he heard footsteps in the yard outside the little barred window. He emitted a whistle well known to the men with whom he had fought in the trenches, for the footsteps sounded to him very much like that of Hank Davis, the man who had tripped up Juanita on the train the day before, and who had been welcomed home on the platform by his wife and children.

He was not mistaken. There came a scraping sound as of a box being pushed against the wall outside, and then Hank's somewhat expansive face appeared at the window.

"Hullo, Buck!" said Hank in a hoarse whisper. "When I heard you was in here I remembered the time I

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was in the cooler in Verdun, and you sprung me." And he thrust between the bars a small parcel.

"Good for you!" whispered Hank. "Gimme your hat!"

Hank's big hat was squeezed through to him.

"Now gimme your boots!"

The boots wouldn't pass the bars till the parcel had been opened and the two files inside it had been brought into play.

"Now your shirt," whispered Buck.

"Say," protested Hank, "this ain't no strip poker game!"

"Gimme your shirt!" insisted Buck. And Hank got down from the packing-case, pulled his coloured shirt over his head, and bundled it into the cell.

Half an hour later Bill Clyde threw the puzzle from him with an imprecation. It fell on the floor of the office—and the two rings rolled apart. The deputy stared down at them, then picked up the pieces.

For a few minutes he toyed with them, then strode heavily across the passage to the cell door.

"Well, I've done it!" he cried victoriously. "It's a cinch! I'd be a pretty dumb guy if I couldn't figure that one out! Hi—I'm talking to you!"

He looked in through the bars at what appeared to be a recumbent figure under the blanket on the bunk.

"Didn't I tell you to clean that cell up?" he shouted. "I'm talking to you!"

There was no answer, so he opened the door and advanced to the bunk. He whipped off the blanket—and stared aghast at a perfectly good cow-hat, a pair of excellent riding-boots, and a coloured shirt into which the hard pillow had been thrust.

"Well, if I ain't a cross-eyed monkey-wrench!" gasped the disgusted deputy, staring at the window, the bars of which were broken. On the floor beneath the window lay two small but business-like files!

The Use of a Rope.

JAKE MURDOCH'S headquarters consisted of a sizeable log-cabin and outbuildings, conveniently situated in a cup in the hills within a few hundred yards of the Mexican border. Thither Tom had been taken, and he spent a restless night, treated almost as an enemy by Murdoch and the six members of his gang.

After breakfast, four of the men were playing cards at the misshapen table in the living-room, while one played on a guitar with some measure of skill, and Tom haunted a tiny window which commanded a view of the rocky pass that cleft a way to the hollow.

Suddenly he caught sight of a rider on a white horse climbing the steep slope, and involuntarily he exclaimed:

"Buck!"

"What's that?" cried Murdoch instantly. "What did you say?"

"Nothing," responded Tom sullenly. But Murdoch went over to him, peered out through the window, and saw what he had seen.

"Oh, your brother!" he said grimly. "Seems to be looking for you. That's fine! We'll invite him to call. Go down and get some water so he'll see you, and then come back."

"You're not going to trap him!" stormed Tom.

"No tricks, kid!" snarled Murdoch. "We'll have you covered." He turned to two of the men, known as George and Fred. "You two go round the cabin and watch him from there," he directed.

"I won't do it!" cried Tom. But a

pail was thrust into his hand and he was pushed out over the front doorstep, menaced by guns; and he went slowly to a wooden pipe through which the water of a mountain spring was conducted into the hollow.

Buck saw him there, and rode up before the pail was quite full.

"Great way you have of keeping your promise, kid!" he shouted. "I ought to thrash you within an inch of your life!"

Tom, knowing that both their lives were in danger, turned without a word and scurried back to the cabin. Buck slid from the saddle, and with a gun in each hand followed him.

"Come on," he commanded, "we're starting back right now!"

Tom vanished into the cabin, and Buck dived wrathfully after him. But Murdoch was standing just inside the door.

"Up with them!" he drawled. "How are you, Mr. Healy?"

Buck swung round, and perceived that he had walked into a trap. Four other men were grouped about the cabin, their six-shooters ready to fire, and behind him came the two who had been watching outside. Tom had set down the pail and was standing in the middle of the cabin, clenching and unclenching his fists.

"Why, you double-crossing little pup!" roared Buck as he raised his hands and was relieved of his weapons.

"I didn't double-cross you, Buck—honest I didn't!" protested Tom. "They made me do it!"

Buck stepped forward, glared at the grinning face of Murdoch, and with a sudden and entirely unexpected movement flung himself upon his captor. His fist came into violent contact with the outlaw's jaw. George fired his gun at random, and Murdoch went crashing backwards against one of the walls.

He recovered his balance and rushed at Buck, seizing him by the neck of his shirt, but Buck's right fist smashed into his face, and he went down, flat on his back.

It had all happened in a few seconds, and only George had pulled a trigger. Murdoch's gun had gone spinning across the room. But before Buck could take any advantage of the blow he had dealt half a dozen hands were gripping him, and blows were being rained at him from all sides.

"You can't do that to him!" yelled Tom. But Tom was dragged back, and Buck fell senseless to the floor.

Murdoch rose painfully to his feet.

"Search him and see what he's got on him," he ordered.

One of the men went down on his knees and turned out the contents of Buck's pockets.

"An Army discharge, twenty dollar bills, and a letter," he announced.

"Let's have 'em!"

The articles were handed over.

"A letter from his girl, I reckon," said the searcher. "There ain't another thing."

Murdoch opened out the letter and read it. It was the one Ramon had given him in hospital.

"Rancho del Rey!" he remarked.

"Why, that's the joint we've had spotted for a year! Listen to this, boys: 'We are greatly in your debt, and anything we can do to show our gratitude at any time we shall count it an honour to do.'" He opened out the Army discharge, and read aloud: "'Buck Healy, Sergeant, 23rd Infantry.' Ha, ha, this sounds good to me!"

Buck, flat on the floor on his back, opened his eyes with an effort, but closed them again. Murdoch tugged reflectively at his little moustache.

"Guess Buck Healy's goin' to pay the Del Ray family a visit!" he chuckled.

The men stared; but George, the most quick-witted of them, exclaimed:

"You mean—"

"Certainly. With this discharge and letter it'll be a cinch!"

"It's a great idea, chief," said George.

"Won't take me long to locate where the dough is, either," declared Murdoch.

"Put those two in the loft where they won't bother you any. I've got to slick up a bit for my trip."

They made Tom climb a ladder to the cramped loft above, and between them they hoisted the inert form of Buck through the trap, and dumped him on some straw; then they bound the two with ropes and left them.

Some little time later, Murdoch, having washed and shaved and paid particular attention to his hair, had his horse saddled and prepared to start for the border.

"Fred," he said, "and you, George, come with me. The rest of you fellows look after our guests. Don't starve 'em—and don't let 'em get away."

He rode off down the pass with the two men he had chosen, and the rest went back to their cards.

Up in the loft Buck said in a low voice to his brother:

"We've got to get out of here."

"How?" said Tom dubiously.

"I don't know, but we've got to drift. Keep as quiet as you can, but try to wriggle a rope loose."

The day dragged on. There was very little light in the loft, but the two struggled persistently with their bonds. Through the trap came the odour of tobacco smoke and the talk of the card-players.

Outside the daylight faded, and downstairs an oil-lamp was lit. Buck, by this time, had managed to get one hand free.

"How's it coming?" inquired Tom, who had achieved nothing but lacerated wrists.

"Pretty good," replied Buck

guardedly. "I don't like that fellow singing down there, but it comes in pretty handy." He freed the other hand, groped in Tom's pockets, and discovered that his clasp-knife had been ignored. It took but a few minutes after that to remove the rest of his bonds and the rope that bound his brother.

There was an argument among the men below as to who should get water, and then a hoarse voice called up from the foot of the ladder:

"Anything special you gents want for supper? Which'll you have—strawberry shortcake, or pickled pig's feet?"

"Both!" called back Buck. "And you might bring us up a little apple-pie."

"Keep your shirt on, cowboy!" retorted the voice.

There was a small and windowless opening in the roof on the far side of the loft, and Buck had looked at it thoughtfully many times before dark. Now a star was gleaming down at them through it, and he decided that the moment had come to put into action the plan he had thought out.

He joined together the pieces of rope that had bound him, and united it with the rope that had bound his brother, then crept noiselessly to the opening. Outside it a stout hook of iron projected from a beam. He draped the rope over the hook, crawled out through the opening, and swarmed down, hand-under-hand.

The man who had fetched the water was returning to the cabin. Buck had timed things well, for he needed the fellow's guns. He descended upon an unprepared head, bearing its owner to the ground. The pail fell with a crash, and the water splashed, but no one seemed to notice the noise, and Buck's right hand was clapped over his captive's mouth.

"Come on!" he said in a hoarse

whisper, and Tom descended the double rope to his side. Immediately Buck tied one end of the rope round the water-carrier's chest, beneath his arm-pits, and hauling vigorously at the other end, hoisted the unfortunate up to the hook.

"Help, help!" yelled the dangling man. "Get me down from here!"

Buck knotted the slack of the rope round a hitching-rail, while Tom fetched his own horse and Silver. The two rode off at top speed down through the pass to a trail at the foot of a hill.

"Ride for the sheriff, and make it pronto," directed Buck. "I'm heading across the border."

The door of the cabin had been opened before the fugitive reached the pass, and Murdoch's men came streaming out.

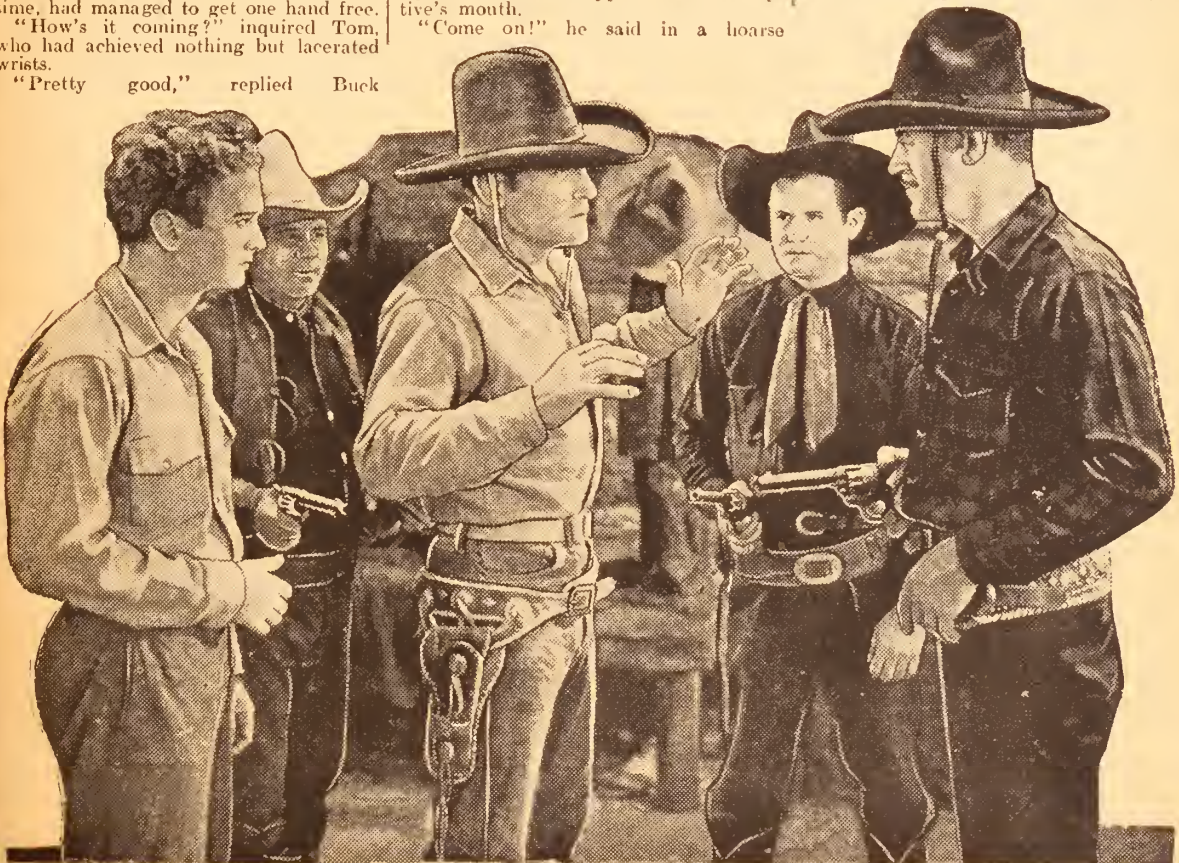
"Alf! Mike!" howled the suspended crook. "Help! They got away! I'm hung! Get me down!"

"I'll get you down!" roared one of the men, and he took out his knife and cut the rope. The water-bearer fell with a thud that knocked all the breath out of his lungs, and the others ran for their horses.

Murdoch Plays a Part.

SEÑOR DEL REY'S ranch covered a good many square miles south of the Mexican town of Naco. He was a very wealthy man, and his casa was more like the residence of a Spanish grandee than of a farmer. It was a galleried structure of adobe, built round a large patio, or courtyard, in the centre of which was a walled well.

In the evening of the day on which Jake Murdoch rode over the border with two of his men, the patio was ablaze with light and colour. Tables and chairs had been set round the white walls; men in gala attire and girls in beautiful costumes, wearing mantillas, and carrying



Buck stepped forward, and glared at the grinning face of Murdoch.

fans, thronged the flagstones, the galleries, and the rooms of the building. A little band of minstrels played haunting Spanish melodies upon violins and guitars, and Senor del Rey moved about among his guests, a fine figure of a man with a flowing white moustache and an air of breeding.

It was Juanita's birthday, but Juanita sat sadly in her own room, disinclined to take any active part in the festivities. Maria found her there.

"Won't you come down to the guests?" she said.

"I want to be alone," replied Juanita. "I've no heart for all this gaiety."

Maria departed, but soon afterwards Senor del Rey knocked at the door and entered.

"Aren't you happy to-night?" he asked gently, leaning down over the drooping figure of his beautiful daughter. "On your birthday, too!"

"It would have been Ramon's birthday," said Juanita. "How can I be happy on such a day as this? Oh, I know a lot of rubbish is talked about the affinity of twins, but to-day his death haunts me."

A man-servant rapped on the open door.

"Senor del Rey," he announced in Spanish, "there is an American gentleman who wishes to see you."

Del Rey gave instructions that the visitor should be shown into the drawing-room, and he prevailed upon Juanita to descend with him. It was Murdoch who stood smiling with easy confidence at them as they entered.

"Senor del Rey?" he inquired with a bow. "I'm Buck Healy."

"Senor Buck Healy?" cried Del Rey in delighted surprise. "Welcome! Welcome! I am very happy to meet the friend of my son."

"Thank you, sir," said Murdoch. "It was nice of you to write me this letter." And he produced the letter which had been found on Buck.

"Words cannot express what is in a heart filled with gratitude," declared Del Rey. "My daughter, Juanita."

"Senorita," murmured Murdoch, feasting his eyes on the girl's beauty.

"To-night," explained the Mexican, "we are celebrating my daughter's birthday. Perhaps you will find it interesting—but first, no doubt, you would like to refresh yourself after such a long ride."

He clapped his hands, and to a servant who entered he said:

"Jose, show Senor Healy to our best room."

Juanita had not uttered a word, but she had studied Murdoch critically, and after he had gone off with the servant she said, disappointedly:

"Senor Buck Healy is not at all like I thought he would be."

"Oh, Juanita," protested her father, "he may not please your feminine fancy, but you must be very gracious to him—he was the best friend of our Ramon."

"Of course," she nodded gravely. "And how strange that of all days he should arrive on this one!"

Murdoch, in an elaborate bed-room, washed away the dust of travel, gazed with approval at a huge bed set on a dais, looked out of a casement window at the mountains and lights in the distance, and descended to his host.

Food was pressed upon him, and he ate an excellent meal in a perfectly appointed dining-room. Senor del Rey made a great fuss of him; but, after the meal, Juanita asked him some awkward questions.

"Tell us more about my brother, August 22nd, 1931.

Senor Buck," she said. "You were with him when he passed away."

"Oh, yes!" lied Murdoch. "Out there in No-Man's Land your brother begged me to leave him and go back, but I stayed with him until the very last."

Juanita stared. "I don't understand!" she exclaimed. "Ramon was in hospital many weeks after he was wounded."

"Oh, yes, of course he was! I was in hospital, too," said Murdoch hastily. "Thoughts of those last moments make me very sad."

"It was a great sorrow to me—my only son," said Del Rey brokenly. "It was a great loss to all of us," said Murdoch, rising to his feet and putting a hand on his host's shoulder. "But you still have your charming daughter."

"My little Juanita," nodded the Mexican. "But one of these days she will be getting married."

"If you will excuse me," said Juanita stiffly; and she rose and went out into the patio.

After the birthday celebrations were over and the guests had gone, Murdoch was standing thoughtfully near the well, alone, when Buck climbed up from the broad back of Silver on to the high white wall that screened one side of the patio from the road.

He gazed with grim satisfaction at the solitary figure, then crouched down and removed his lariat from the pommel of Silver's saddle. Quickly he made a noose, and then, with the unerring skill of an expert, he sent the rope whirling through the air.

The noose descended about Murdoch's broad shoulders and was drawn tight. Then Buck ran along the wall, gave a tremendous jerk—and sent Murdoch head-first into the watery depths of the well.

"Help! Help!" howled Murdoch as he rose to the surface. But Buck jumped down from the wall and went over to taunt him.

"How are you, Senor Buck Healy?" he called down mockingly.

Juanita came running out from the house, but stopped short as Buck swung round and grinned at her.

"What's the meaning of this?" she cried wrathfully. And then: "Oh—it's you!"

"Help, Senorita del Rey! Help!" spluttered Murdoch, splashing about in the water.

"How dare you come here and do a thing like this!" flamed Juanita. "Get him out of there immediately! Quick, I tell you!"

But Buck, staring at her in the light that streamed from the surrounding windows, exclaimed:

"So you're Miss del Rey, eh?"

Maria came out to them, shouting in Spanish. Juanita clapped her hands and cried:

"Juan! Pedro! Come, help!"

Buck, with one foot against the coping of the basin, tugged at the rope; but almost immediately he was dragged back by some men-servants who came running to the scene. Senor del Rey appeared, considerably alarmed, and the soaked and dripping Murdoch was hauled to safety.

"This man," cried Juanita angrily, "tried to drown Senor Buck!"

The servants seized Buck, jabbering in Spanish that they were convinced he was mad.

"Just a minute!" growled Buck, struggling to free himself. "You are making a little mistake."

"Who are you?" demanded Del Rey. "Buck Healy."

"He's crazy!" shouted Murdoch. "Crazy, eh?" scoffed Buck. "Listen, he stole my discharge papers and a letter that your son gave me in France. He's an outlaw—the sheriff wants him!"

"Don't mind him," urged Murdoch, soaking wet and shivering. "He's not responsible, senor. He—he's shell-shocked—insane. He was in our Division—I knew him in France. His mind's absolutely gone, and he—he's dangerous. You'd better lock him up."

"Say, you've got to listen to me!" cried Buck. But Senor del Rey gave instructions in Spanish, and his servants forced the indignant captive to a stone-built outhouse with a heavy door. He was bundled into pitch darkness, and a key grated in a lock.

"He'll be safe, Senor Buck, where I have had him put," said Del Rey to Murdoch, "but you need to change quickly, or you will catch your death of cold. Come with me."

On the Roof of the Cabin.

THREE people slept indifferently that night: Buck, who found himself in a tiny cell-like structure with only a little straw on which to lie; Juanita, in her luxurious bed, who thought quite a lot about the young man she had met on the train and his claim to be her dead brother's friend; and Murdoch, who could not understand how Buck had escaped from his men, and felt none too safe.

Early in the morning, Juanita went out to the door of the little stone-walled building. It had no windows, but in the door was a barred grille.

"Senor!" she called. Buck's face appeared at the opening, and she liked the look of his face. This man, she was convinced, was not by any means mad; she was not even sure that he was an impostor.

"Are you going to let me out of here?" asked Buck eagerly.

"I'm sorry, but I can't," she told him.

"Well, listen," he said, "you've got to believe me. That man I half-drowned is an outlaw. He came here to rob your father. I'm Buck Healy. I can prove it to you. Your brother Ramon was in my Company—the 23rd Infantry. He was wounded at St. Mihiel, and died a month later in hospital."

"That is true," nodded Juanita.

"He used to talk about you all the time, and he told me to say to you, when I met you: 'Buenos noches, Juanita, don't get lost in your sleep.'"

"Oh!" "He said that when you were a little girl you wandered out of the house one night in your sleep and were lost for days."

"That's true!" "And every night, after that, he used to say to you, 'Buenos noches, Juanita, don't get lost in your sleep.'"

"I believe you—I believe in you," declared Juanita. "I think I nearly believed you all the time. I'm sorry I ever doubted you."

"Get me out of here before Murdoch does anything," urged Buck.

"Jose has the keys," she said. "But I'll go and tell my father at once."

She scurried back to the house, and in the arched drawing-room she found her father with Murdoch, who was wearing the Mexican clothes which had been lent him the night before. The door of a small safe stood open, and Senor del Rey had a casket in his hand.

(Continued on page 26.)

In order to gain his own ends an unscrupulous lawyer fastened his own crime on another's shoulders. A gripping tale of a great dam-burst.

"SWANEE RIVER"



A Fiery Old Southerner.

THE powerful Lincoln touring car purred gently over the hard-baked uneven track, and the black chauffeur smiled as he thought of the fine meal he would soon be eating. In the back of the open car sat three people.

The white-haired, square-shouldered old man with the trim moustache and small white Napoleon beard was Colonel Bradford. He was a Southerner of the old school, forthright, inclined to irascibility, especially where modern novelties and notions were concerned, but all his workers loved him.

The colonel owned many hundreds of acres of valuable forest and pasture land—many of the latter he had converted into cotton fields. The timber could have been sold for a vast sum, but the colonel would not hear of nature's beauty being sold for money. The colonel smiled happily and proudly as he saw in the distance a band of black employees working vigorously to a quick chant.

"My men never get out of time," he said aloud. "And it's a fast one."

The girl sitting in the middle smiled a little secret smile to herself. She knew the black boys better than her guardian. They had seen the sun glinting on the windscreen of the car a mile off, and she was pretty certain that until then the tune they had been singing would have been almost a dirge.

Caroline Bradford was a blonde of surprising beauty. Her round cheeks needed no make-up, long lashes veiled deep blue eyes, her body was gracefully moulded on athletic lines and the dimples that appeared in her cheeks showed that she had a sense of humour. Her sports outfit of white serge was well cut, and her blue beret set off her fair hair. Caroline loved the great outdoors and the guardian who had been so good to her.

"One day these lands will be yours, Jack." The colonel waved his hand lovingly towards hill and dale. "A Bradford has ruled here for many years and the same traditions have been kept up—shall continue to be kept up." His eyes sparkled with the intensity of his desire. "Never has a Bradford sold any of the timber on this land, never have the fields been anything else but cotton, never have there been less than three hundred niggers—"

**Starring
GRANT
WITHERS
and
THELMA
TODD.**

Jack Bradford frowned and turned his head. He was a sallow faced handsome man, whose dark hair, eyebrows and moustache gave him a somewhat saturnine appearance. Besides being nephew to Colonel Bradford, he also was his attorney. Caroline was twenty-one and he was seven years older—it was the wish of the colonel that they should carry on the line.

"And when I have joined my ancestors—" The colonel was on his favourite theme. "I hope that two people that I love very dearly will carry on the good work; it is my dearest wish that their friendship ripen to—"

The happy dimples vanished from the girl's cheeks and she moved restlessly.

"You will pardon an old man for touching on so delicate a subject," soothed the colonel, smiling at the girl. "But I am not good at keeping my thoughts and hopes to myself."

A smile flitted across the lips of Jack Bradford. Not often did he see eye to eye with the colonel, but marriage with Caroline was certainly a sound proposition. They were not engaged yet, but soon Caroline would name the day. The girl would come to care for him much more when they were married.

The car slowed down at a gate, and a black boy, who had been carrying a yoke with two pails, ran forward.

"You come along in de car with me," the chauffeur showed all his teeth in a gleam. "And open de gate to de house."

But at the next gate the colonel ordered the chauffeur to wait before the car moved forward.

"Look at that eyesore." The old martinet pointed towards a great brick dam some miles away. It blocked the valley and one could

glimpse behind it a shimmering sheet of water. "Isn't there enough water without building that hideous structure? Jack, it makes me mad when I think that Ephraim Dutton offered me that territory ten years ago and I refused to buy. I could have stopped all that if I had bought it."

Over the grass came a brown horse with a tall, wavy haired young man in the saddle. Dusty riding boots, weather-beaten breeches and a shirt open at the throat—but for all his shabby dress, Garry Sommers looked every inch a man. The big face had an air of strength and determination, whilst the shoulders denoted power and perfect health, and when he smiled one liked this youngster at once. Garry was two years older than Caroline and he was an assistant engineer on the Great Dam.

Garry rode up from the rear so that the colonel and Jack Bradford did not hear or see him—Garry rode quietly as he neared the car. Yet Caroline heard him and turned her pretty head.

A happy smile appeared again and her cheeks blushed a delightful shade of pink.

Garry made strange movements with his mouth and pointed with his hand in the direction of the valley. A lip-reader could have told at once that one word was "To-night"—the girl understood because she nodded. She grinned rather foolishly as Jack Bradford glared at her and then scowled back at Sommers.

Confound the fellow. Caroline had been actually smiling at him! This would need watching. But the dam was almost complete and then Sommers would go away.

The colonel fairly bristled with wrath.

"Pah!—a blot on the horizon," he growled. "Rastus, drive on at once. Pah!"

Garry Sommers chuckled quietly as the powerful car disappeared in a cloud of dust. The colonel was old fashioned and yet he allowed himself the luxury of a powerful car.

"He's a kind-hearted old jossler, but I wish he weren't so stubborn," Garry said to his horse. "As stubborn as you can be, old hoss, though you ain't a mule."

Garry went at a gallop towards the dam. He whistled as he rode, because to-night he was meeting Caroline.

The Fight.

THE summer sun was sinking in the west and the rays cut strange patterns amongst the pine trees. Lounging against a tree, smoking a pipe and wearing the same clothes, was Garry Sommers.

The call of a whip-poor-will made him start. He placed fingers to his lips and the same call went floating back on the still air. But it was not Caroline that Garry saw hurrying towards him, but the colonel's old butler, Esau.

"Miss Caroline will be a little late, sah." The old butler liked young Garry Sommers, because the servant knew that here was a strong man who truly loved his young mistress.

Caroline had met Garry when looking over the dam—needless to say she had chosen a time when Colonel Bradford was away on business. The young engineer had been very attracted by the pretty girl and they had arranged to meet again, but so antagonistic was the colonel to anyone connected with the dam, that the two had only managed to fix up occasional meetings with the aid of the butler.

"I would wait for her for ever, Esau," Garry puffed at his pipe. "I can't think why she likes me."

"Oh, de reason ain't so hard to find, sah," grinned the old nigger. "She take one look at yuh—same as ah done—and she knowed yuh was a straight young fellow. Looks don't count wid me and Miss Caroline."

"Don't say any more, Esau—or you'll be telling me I'm how-legged," chuckled Garry. Suddenly he clutched the butler's arm. "Look, here she comes! See how the sun shines on her hair. What a picture she looks in that white muslin dress."

"Ah guess dis ain't no place for me, sah," chuckled Esau. "Massa Garry, ah'll go stand by dem trees and see dat nobody don't come dis way."

"Good for you, Esau," Garry patted the servant's shoulder and then strode through the pines to meet Caroline. She gave him her two soft hands and he raised both in turn to his lips.

"Stupid boy." Yet Caroline was pleased. "Suppose someone could see?"

"Let's walk towards the old pond," he hinted. "Esau is keeping watch. I'm glad I was able to fix up to see you to-night, because I've got some good news."

"Good news, Garry?" asked the girl, when they were seated on a fallen tree trunk.

"You know my boss, Morton?" He pointed vaguely in the direction of the dam. "Apparently he is not quite satisfied with the dam, and wants me to stay on for at least another fortnight, probably because he has at last heeded my report. That dam will give, and then a wall of water will crash down Cotton Valley, causing havoc and destruction—that is, unless further re-

August 22nd, 1931.

inforcement is put in hand. Morton is also interested in the timber round here. Believe he wanted the colonel to sell the Western Section."

"Yes, and he got shown the door," Caroline sighed. "I'm sorry you're staying on, Garry, because I was going to make this our farewell meeting."

"What are you talking about?" Garry gazed at the girl in amazement. "What makes you talk in this abrupt and startling fashion? You were bright and cheerful, and then you say this is our last meeting." He gave a shaky laugh. "You're having a joke with me."

"I wouldn't play a joke like that." Miserable blue eyes stared into his brown ones. "I've got to say something that will hurt you—something that I wouldn't have had to say if you had been going away. I was a coward, but now I must pluck up my courage. I planned a final farewell meeting, because you told me only the other day that this week would see you through."

"Yes, but I didn't know about Morton. But why, Caroline—"

"Listen, Garry, and don't be too hard on me." Caroline could not face the agony of suspense that she saw in his eyes. "Colonel Bradford is only a distant relation, but I've always called him father. He has dragged me from poverty and squalor and given me a beautiful home—I owe everything to him. It is his wish that the Bradfords never die out, and he wants me to—"

"Marry Jack." Garry spat out the words. "How can he expect you to marry a man you don't love?"

"I mustn't think about love, Garry," was her pitiful answer. "It's the one favour the colonel has asked, and I've tried every way to get out of marrying Jack, but with no success. It is to be announced at my birthday party next Tuesday."

"Oh, Caroline, you can't do this thing!" Garry held her close. "You love me."

"I do love you, Garry, but it would break father's heart if I didn't marry Jack. You'll soon forget me, Garry; they're plenty of other girls much nicer than me."

"Don't be absurd, Caroline!" He tilted her chin. "You know I love only you. I won't give you up!" Suddenly he kissed her, and she clung to him—tears trickled slowly down her cheeks.

"Please let me go—you make it all the harder," sobbed the girl. "I must be getting back or father will miss me. Kiss me once more, Garry, for the last time."

Old Esau, who was much too decent a nigger to watch young lovers, suddenly felt himself brushed aside. Jack Bradford flung away his cigar.

"So this is why Caroline slunk out of the house?" he sneered. "You're a bad watch-dog."

"Ah don't know nothing, sah," quavered Esau. "Ah just came out here to take de air."

But Jack Bradford was not listening. He strode towards the small pond and the crackling of the dried grasses under his feet made the two lovers jump apart. There was an unpleasant sneer on the attorney's face.

"Sorry to interrupt," he said. "But Colonel Bradford wants his daughter in the house. Caroline, do you mind running along—I would like a few words with your friend."

"I was saying good-bye," said Sommers, uncertain how to act.

"So I noticed," scoffed Jack Bradford. "I think you had better hurry, Caroline, as your father wants to know where you've been."

"Can't I go anywhere without you

spying on me?" she flamed at him. "Aren't you forgetting Colonel Bradford's wishes?" The attorney played the right card.

Without a word Caroline walked away along the path. Her brain seemed to be whirling. She longed to defy her adoptive father and Jack, but she must remember all that had been done for her. She must get away before love made her act contrary to what was her duty. Perhaps she might write a farewell to Garry.

The two men, left alone, stared at each other—Garry was solemn and unhappy; Jack fierce, unpleasant and mocking. It was Jack who spoke first.

"Are you aware that Caroline is engaged to me?"

"I have just learnt the news," was the quiet reply. "I was saying my last good-bye."

"And in future keep out of my way," threatened the lawyer. "Caroline's my property and I'll have no interlopers around."

"You're a cad to talk like that!" Garry was roused. "She's only marrying you because it is the colonel's wish."

"The colonel's a wise man," laughed Jack in boasting triumph. "And Caroline will soon learn that she has a master in me. She won't try flirting with any cheap engineer—"

Bradford got no further, because Garry hit him on the point of the chin.

"You cheap skate!" Garry shouted. "How dare you talk that way! I'd like to give you a hiding!"

"Then here's your chance!" raged Bradford, and callously kicked his enemy in mid-regions.

Garry doubled up and crashed among the grasses near the pond. At once the lawyer tried to seize his chance to pummel the youngster into insensibility, but the agonising pain passed and the lawyer was flung away.

The two men got to their feet and slugged wildly at each other, but soon superior strength and fitness began to tell, and always Jack Bradford had to retreat. Both his eyes were red and swollen and his nose was bleeding, but he refused to be beaten. Suddenly he grabbed up an old tree branch that lay among the rushes, and with a scything blow at Garry's knees brought his rival down. Once more they were locked in each other's arms.

Caroline heard the scuffling and then saw them fighting on the very edge of the pond, which was muddy and treacherous.

"Father! Father!" Through the trees she had seen the figure of the colonel. "Father, here, quick!"

Colonel Bradford had come out to find where Jack and Caroline had gone. At the sound of the girl's cries he hurried to her side.

"What's going on?"

"They're fighting! They'll be drowned! Oh, stop them!"

"Leave this to me!" The martinet hunched up his coat and, with a stick clenched in his hand, ran down the path.

He arrived on the scene at the precise moment that Garry broke free from Jack, lugged the lawyer to his feet and planted a blow on the chin that toppled his enemy amongst the rushes.

Next moment Colonel Bradford had thrust himself in front of the panting victor.

"How dare you! How dare you! You villainous rascal!" shouted the colonel. "What's the meaning of this blackguardly attack on my nephew? You hulking bully! You blackguard! Unless you're off my estates within two minutes I'll call my servants and have you thrown off!"

Garry looked beyond the colonel to where Jack Bradford squatted, rubbing an aching jaw. Should he tell the colonel that his prize nephew was a cad? Useless, as it would not be believed, and Jack Bradford might counter some lying tale about himself. Best to go and say nothing.

Already a plan was forming in the young engineer's head.

"I'll go, colonel." The words seemed to satisfy the colonel, for the old man stood back. "One day you may find out that you've got me all wrong. I don't care what your nephew tells you about this row, but he asked for trouble."

"He was telling a lot of lies to Caroline," Jack Bradford was on his feet. "And—"

"Unless you want to go into that pond you'd better still your tongue!" cried Garry.

"Leave at once, sir!" The colonel pointed. "In another minute I'll summon my servants."

"Don't worry, colonel. I'm going." Garry turned on his heel and strode off to the thicket, where he had hidden his horse.

The Murder.

OLD Esau showed the last of the guests into the big house of wood and brick that had been built and altered by generations of Bradfords. The call of the whip-poor-will made him peer round in a nervous fashion. A hand beckoned from behind a bush, and on tip-toe Esau walked over the lawn.

"Massa Garry, yuh sure ought not to be here," Esau nodded his head solemnly. "Why, if de colonel knew—"

"He would have me shot on the spot," laughed Garry. "I've just seen Miss Caroline."

"You've seen Miss Caroline?" The nigger gazed upwards to the first floor. "Why, she be in her bed-room and ah don't see—"

"I whistled like I did to you and she came out on to her veranda," Garry sighed. "She looked beautiful in that new dress of hers. I told her I was going to have one shot at stopping the announcement of her engagement to Jack Bradford."

"It won't do no good, sah. De colonel have sure set his mind on Massa Jack marrying Miss Caroline." The butler shook his head. "You would only make de colonel fighting mad—he have de bad heart."

"I know something that will open the colonel's eyes to the mistake he is making," Garry answered. "Now, don't argue any more, Esau, but run along and find the colonel; tell him a gentleman wants to see him in the library. Leave the rest to me."

"Ah'll sure do as yuh say, sah," Esau answered. "Any port in de storm to stop dis wedding."

The colonel frowned when Esau at last got him to one side and stated there was a guest in the library.

"What is his name, Esau?"

"The gentleman never give me no name, sah," Esau answered. "But he say dat it were mighty important dat he speak to yuh dis minute."

"All right, I'll go and see who it is," Colonel Bradford nodded to his servant.

The colonel nearly burst a blood vessel when he found the visitor was Garry Sommers.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" The colonel's moustache bristled with anger. "What impertinence is this? How dare you force your way into my house. I'll see that Esau is fired in the morning—he told me a gentleman—"

"With important and urgent business wanted to see you," Garry interrupted.

"I've come to talk about Caroline. Your chief objection to me is that I'm spoiling the face of nature with machinery and bricks, cutting down forests and destroying the peace of this beautiful land. Are you aware that you have an interest in that dam?"

"You're talking nonsense. Leave my house!"

"You've an interest in that dam, because owing to a recent purchase of land we can raise the water level another four feet. That land is in the Eastern Section."

"The Eastern Section?" Now the colonel was startled. "Where that road you've made goes along by the pine wood? I never sanctioned such a sale, and"—he stared hard at Garry—"you're hinting that you've got this land through Jack."

"Morton bought it yesterday, and starts cutting timber in the morning," was the calm answer. "And I reckon a guy that would sell behind your back doesn't deserve to marry a girl who is as honest as she is pretty. Now you

know why I've had the impertinence to come here to-night."

"I'm going to give you a chance to prove this," the colonel decided. "Go into my private study and wait there."

Jack Bradford, coming to find the colonel as the guests were eager for the announcement, stopped dead when he heard voices in the library. He cautiously edged forward and heard all that Garry was saying, but he darted behind a curtain when the colonel ordered the engineer to go into the study.

"What's your plan, colonel?" asked Garry.

"I shall ask him point blank if he sold my land," was the answer. "You will know what to expect if he says 'no.'"

"If I know Jack Bradford, 'no' will be his answer!" Garry gave a scornful laugh. "I suggest you chek up on me in the morning by riding over to the eastern section."

"You hide in that study." The colonel was brisk and decided. "We'll settle this matter at once."

Jack Bradford heard a loud click and guessed that Garry had been locked in the study. Should he slink away himself or face the music? What tale could he tell the old fool? Say he had been offered a marvellous price and that he had thought that, as the dam could not be stopped, there was no harm in selling the small section? The colonel could easily be smoothed down with a little tact—Jack Bradford did not know the hot temper of the old soldier quite as well as he imagined.

Jack Bradford strolled into the library just as the colonel was coming to look for him.

"Just the person I want to talk to." The colonel faced his lawyer. "I want



"You murdering thug!" Garry braced his shoulders. "You haven't got me yet!"

to ask you a question and I want the truth."

"Certainly, colonel, but the guests—"

"They can wait—dog-gast 'em!" The colonel was fuming. "We'll have the question first. Have you, or have you not, sold a section of the eastern property to Morton?"

"Well—er—I—" Bradford did not find it so easy to answer before those accusing eyes. "You see, it was a sort of surprise—how did you find out?"

"So you have sold the land?" The colonel became suddenly like a madman. "You've betrayed the power of attorney I gave you to sell my lands. My beautiful trees will be dragged down and sold because my nephew is a thief and a Judas!"

"No, colonel, it isn't that way," Jack Bradford argued. "I was offered a huge price and I sold because the dam could not be stopped. I did not think a few extra feet of water—"

"That grove of young white pines will be destroyed!" The colonel's eyes blazed in a strange manner. "The old forest destroyed and these new trees buried under water to supply you with money. A week ago you tried to borrow a thousand dollars from me, and when I refused you sold my lands. You double-crossing trickster! That I should live to see one of my own blood sink so low!"

"I was going to tell you about it, after the announcement," Jack Bradford also possessed a fiery temper. "I sell useless land for five thousand and this is all the thanks I get!"

"There will not be any announcement!" The colonel was vicious and vengeful. "You cease to remain my attorney and I shall cut you out of my will. The engagement between you and Caroline is finished. Only a few days ago you agreed that my land should never be sold and yet, behind my back, you begin to sell before I'm dead. Now I can see through you. Why, you would sell everything, make Caroline unhappy, and squander it all on fast living! I've been a blind old fool."

"Because a sneaking engineer comes crawling here," Bradford pointed to the locked study. "You believe all he says and turn against me. What have I done—just sold a bit of land!"

"And kept the money," sneered the colonel. "Like a lot of other goods of mine. A year ago you sold a thousand copper shares just before there was a big rise, you made me invest money on ranch stock that turned out valueless—I can think now of a lot of things. You're a Judas. A liar! A thief!"

"Don't you talk like that to me," snarled Bradford. "I've sold a few old pines and you act like a madman. Your old-fashioned ideas have affected your brain—you're going crazy! I'm your attorney and you're not rid of me yet. Unless you change your tune, I'll sell up half your stock this night—I could put a long-distance call through from here and you wouldn't stop me."

"You get out of my house!" The colonel lost control of his temper and suddenly gripped his nephew by the throat. "Get out, or I'll chuck you out."

"Take your hands off me or I'll smash you," raved the younger man. "Let go, you old fool!"

Bradford forced the colonel back on to his desk and endeavoured to pin the old man down. Groping fingers found a dagger paper-knife, and weakly the colonel tried to stab at the fingers that held him so relentlessly.

The knife was grabbed from the old August 22nd, 1931.

fingers, and in a frenzy of rage Jack Bradford drove the knife into his uncle's chest.

"Take that, you interfering old fool!" came his mad cry, and then he realised what he had done. "By heaven, I've killed him!"

The colonel gave a groan and rolled off the desk on to the floor.

Jack Bradford bent over his victim. His face was ghastly white, not from remorse, but horror of the consequences. With a shudder he flung away the knife and started to his feet.

He became aware that someone was hammering and banging on the locked study door. In the heated quarrel they had paid no attention. Garry Summers knew that something was wrong and was trying to break into the room.

A look of fiendish joy crossed Bradford's face. Taking out his handkerchief, he picked up and wiped the handle of the knife before placing it near the still figure. Then he wiped his hands and sped from the library. A quick clean-up and a new handkerchief; then out into the garden and round to the veranda of the drawing-room. Calmly and unconcernedly he mingled with the guests.

The Escape.

GARRY had mooned about the study. He had no desire to listen to the conversation, though there would have been every excuse for him to eavesdrop. Yet he edged towards the door when the voices were raised. He wished Colonel Bradford had not locked him in the study.

It was difficult to hear all that was being said, but he knew that both men were getting more and more angry. When they began to fight Garry wished he had acted before. He banged on the door.

"Let me out! Don't be a fool, Jack!" he shouted, but the doors were very thick.

At last, in desperation, he flung himself against the door.

No sound came now from the library, and that worried Garry considerably. What had happened in the next room? Summoning all his strength, he flung himself again and again against the door! At last a crash, and he stumbled into the room.

The desk was swept clean of everything. Garry noted the disorder first, next that the study seemed deserted. Then he perceived the still figure on the carpet.

Swiftly he bent over Colonel Bradford, and one glance was enough to show him that the Southerner was dead.

"Knifed!" Garry picked up the weapon, then threw it down. "I wonder where that skunk is hiding?"

Next moment Caroline appeared in the doorway. Why was Garry so long with the colonel? She had to find out. What a sight met her eyes as she entered the library—Garry bending over the body of Colonel Bradford!

Her scream of terror meant much to Jack Bradford.

"Something's wrong," cried the lawyer to the guests. "I'll go and find out."

Naturally everyone piled after him, and a throng of inquisitive faces gathered at the open door of the library. They saw Garry Summers kneeling beside the prone figure of the colonel, Caroline gazing at the scene with horror-stricken, accusing eyes, and Jack Bradford pointing an accusing finger.

"Colonel Bradford's been stabbed!"

he cried. "And you haven't got far to look to see who did it."

Garry had been so intent on examining the colonel for any chance of life that he had taken little account of the crowd that had collected. Being a person who could never kill anybody, the possibility that he might be accused of the crime never entered his head. Naturally Caroline had screamed, but she would never think him capable of such a deed. The engineer looked up and saw the horror and dread in her eyes. So she did think he had done this foul deed!

"I was locked in that room"—Garry pointed to the study. "All I could hear was the colonel and someone quarrelling; then there was a fight, and I tried to break in. When I did break in, the colonel was lying on the floor—dead!"

"Then why are your hands covered with blood?" sneered Jack Bradford. "What are you doing inside this house, which has been forbidden to you? We all know you hated the colonel, and this is your revenge!"

"You lying skunk!" Garry was on his feet. "The colonel was quarrelling with you, and—"

"But Jack was in with us," cried one of Jack's special friends. "Why should Jack want to kill his best friend?"

"The row was over land that had been sold without the colonel's consent," shouted Garry, and was aware of the hostility of the guests, most of whom were friends of Jack Bradford. The lawyer had a persuasive manner that went down well with most people.

"That's a lie!" blustered Bradford. "Seize him, boys, don't let him escape. We've got the murderer here. I know he had it in for the colonel." Several of the guests ranged up beside Garry. "I loved every hair of uncle's grey head," added Bradford, making his voice choke as if with emotion. "This skunk has killed him in cold blood!"

Caroline had said nothing all this while—she seemed paralysed by this sudden tragedy. All she could do was to stare with horror at the still figure, and then gaze at Garry with wondering, incredulous eyes. It was all so confusing: Garry had told her that he could persuade the colonel to change his mind—had he meant by using force?

"Caroline," Garry appealed to the girl, "you don't think I did it?"

"I—I can't say," she managed to stammer out. The girl rubbed her hands together in a distraught manner. She did not know what to say or do.

"Caroline knows he did it," Jack Bradford was not going to miss this chance of saving his own skin. "Hold him, boys, and don't let the skunk have a chance of escape!"

Perhaps Garry acted foolishly, but who can blame him? All round were people who thought him guilty, and if he were taken off to gaol, what chance would he have of proving his innocence? He must escape, and then get proof of the real murderer.

"This means the chair for you," Bradford laughed in his rival's face. "I'm going to hold you until we can get the sheriff."

"You murdering thug!" Garry braced his shoulders. "You haven't got me yet. Take that!"

With a mighty effort Garry had wriggled free from detaining hands and planted his fist in the sallow features. Bradford sank back into his friends' arms.

At once there was a rush, but with rights and lefts Garry swept a clear space. One man he picked up and flung in the faces of the others, and this gave him time to make the window: a crash of glass and he was through.

Down the drive raced Garry, and after him ran a dozen men. Soon Bradford caught them up, and he held in his hand a gun.

"Don't let him get away!" His voice was hoarse with rage. "We've got to get him."

Along the side of a lake panted the young engineer, and always Bradford kept to his trail. Once Garry tricked the pursuit by hiding behind a tree and doubling back, but they soon heard him crashing through the undergrowth. Twice Bradford fired, but the bullets went wide.

Garry came at last to that part of the lake where a river flowed in, and though the current was strong and treacherous, he did not hesitate. They heard the splash as he hit the water, and Bradford raced down to the bank.

"There he is!" Bradford fired. "Ah, ne's sunk—I've got him!"

But Garry had only dived. Under water he swam, coming up now and again for a quick breath. At last he cautiously crawled out on the opposite bank.

Bradford cursed, as none of them dared to swim the river, and there was no boat.

"We'll get the sheriff and his bloodhounds." He waved the pursuit back. "Back to the house and ring for the sheriff!"

Blackmail.

ESAU and Caroline were whispering together in the hall.

"When old Esau make up his mind dat a person is a crook, den he is sure right." He shook his head solemnly. "Ah knows, and mah darkie friends knows dat Massa Garry ain't no killer—dat's why Ah tells yuh where we've hidden him."

"I was crazy ever to think otherwise, Esau," answered Caroline. "But it all looked so suspicious. Oh, Esau, they've got bloodhounds taking up the trail!"

"Maybe we can bluff dem dawgs," grunted the old butler. "Shush—here come de new master!"

Esau slithered away to the servants' quarters, whilst Caroline, after a moment's hesitation, hurried up the stairs.

Bradford came in and walked towards the study and frowned as he saw a man sitting there smoking. Caroline came down the stairs and edged close to the door so that she could hear; she was taking any chance to help Garry find evidence.

"Hallo, Morton!" spoke Bradford. "And what can I do for you? You have heard all about what happened yesterday?"

"You mean the colonel?" Morton was a clean-shaven, big-faced man of middle age—his eyes were crafty, his smile was hard and cruel. "Oh, yeah, I heard all about that. What I came about was the Eastern

Section. I want to buy all that bit of forest land—the timber is fine. The sale of that timber would fetch a good price, and I could also do a good deal with the directors of the dam."

"It's quite impossible," Bradford answered. "The colonel was all against selling—"

"I'm offering five thousand dollars," Morton calmly puffed at his cigar. "And you're accepting that offer."

"You're crazy, man! Why the wood is worth that price, and the land about three times as much."

"Yet I'm offering five thousand," was the cool rejoinder. "I should not refuse, if I were you."

"What do you mean?" There was an edge of fear in Bradford's words.

"The document dealing with the first sale might put a different light on who murdered Colonel Bradford." Morton carelessly flicked the ash on the carpet. "And there is another letter of yours, suggesting a further sale. Very foolish to put things in writing. Now what do you say to my offer of five thousand?"

"Curse you!" Bradford was cornered. "You can't prove anything, but I don't want trouble now, so I'll sell for five thousand."

"Then let's shake on it!" Morton mocked.

Caroline ran for the stairs lest she should be seen. Here was the evidence Garry needed.

Soon after, Morton and Jack went off in the car and Caroline at once sought out Esau.

"I've got a clue, Esau," she cried excitedly. "Can you take me at once to where you have hidden Garry?"

"Now Massa Bradford am gone, it is safe." The butler examined a huge watch. "We won't be gone long."

Esau led the way to a sandpit about two miles from the dam. Sand had been dug out to mix with the cement. After a while the quality of the sand had become poor and the working had been abandoned. A number of caves

had been made in the sandstone cliffs by the workmen, and in some of these wandering-blacks had made a home.

They all knew and loved Uncle Esau, so that what the old man said was almost a law to them. He told them to hide Garry Sommers, and they hid him in one of the caves.

The sheriff and his posse were led by the bloodhounds to the caves, but the men thought the dogs must have got a wrong scent when they saw the grinning faces. No, sah, dey hadn't seen no white mans!

Esau led her into a cave which had a smaller cave beyond it, and in there she found a young man, who clasped her close in his strong arms.

"Oh, Garry, I should never have doubted you!" she cried with a sob. "But father was so stubborn, and you were so mad about it all, that I feared you had lost your temper."

"And knifed him, Caroline?"

"I know you could never do anything like that, but I didn't know what I was doing." She clung to him. "Then Esau came to me, and what a comfort he was! Directly he said that he was certain you hadn't killed the colonel, I knew at once he was right."

"You precious darling!"

"Esau said that he had trailed you, and then hidden you in these caves." Caroline spoke in whispers, as if she feared the sheriff might be listening.

"He promised to bring me to you directly it was safe, and whilst I was waiting something happened." She pushed a parcel into his hands. "Here is something to eat. Stop kissing me, Garry, and eat, because every moment is of value. Listen, and I'll tell you what has happened."

"No one else has been killed?"

"No, no. It concerns Morton." Caroline saw how alert Garry became at that name. "Twenty minutes to half an hour ago he talked to Jack in the study, and I heard every word. Morton offered five thousand for the rest of the Eastern Section."



"I'm offering five thousand!" was the cool rejoinder. "I should not refuse if I were you."

"Five thousand!"

"Jack sold!" Caroline interrupted fiercely. "Sold because Morton forced his hand. There is a document that Morton possesses, concerning some other sale in the Eastern Section, and also a letter which Jack must have talked about selling other parts of the property—all done while father was alive."

"I know about that sale in the Eastern Section." Garry was eating his sandwiches in haste. "And I know where Morton keeps all his documents. Listen, I've got to get that document at once, because Morton, realising its value, may send it to a bank. Will you wait here, Caroline, until I return?"

"I'll wait for you here, Garry, but don't be too long, as I shall be anxious."

Esau and the darkies had to leave Caroline. They had work to do in the cotton fields, but the girl did not mind being left alone. How worried she would have been if she had known that someone else was after that document. Jack Bradford, after leaving Morton, who was on his way to a nearby township, had decided that this was a fine chance to steal the incriminating letter.

A rogue will never trust another rogue, and Morton had not gone far when he realised that Bradford was not behind him. Bradford had talked about going to the town—why hadn't he done as he said? Morton suddenly thought of the letter, and turned his car.

Morton knew a short cut, and he drove his car full out for the Dam Construction Camp.

A Fiendish Plot.

MORTON arrived at the Construction Camp, and found no one about, as it was a half-holiday. He opened his office, saw that everything was intact, slid a revolver into his pocket and went outside. Perhaps he had made a mistake, still it was as well to take no chances. It was a big surprise when he heard the sound of a galloping horse, and not a car.

Morton's lips became a sneer when a hot and perspiring Garry Sommers slid from the back of the horse.

"You don't expect help from me?"

"I don't expect anything where I'm not likely to get it." Garry stared coldly into the other's eyes.

"I shall hand you over to the sheriff."

"Not so fast, Morton. You don't think I came here for the pleasure of giving myself into your keeping? In the two months I've worked under you, I've had a pretty fair idea of your methods. So far, we have had no row, but it's been a mighty near thing. I've come here after a certain letter."

"Letter?" Morton was suspicious. "You've come here to steal money."

"I don't suppose I should find much if I tried." Garry gave a harsh laugh. "No, I want a document that deals with the sale of timber land that belonged to Colonel Bradford. Sold by Jack Bradford and bought by you, and I also want a letter from Bradford, concerning the possibilities of further sales. I want that document and the letter, Morton."

"You won't get them," sneered the crook, and drew his pistol. "I've got you where I want you. Move and I shoot."

"Good heavens, the dam!" Garry tried an old trick. His eyes were staring at something behind Morton.

Morton fell for the trick and turned August 22nd, 1931.

his head; in a second the gun was wrenched from his hand and flung far away. A great fist caught Morton between the eyes and the man crashed to the ground.

As Garry made to step into the office, Morton grabbed his legs, but the engineer kicked himself free.

The crook got to his feet and flung himself after Sommers, who was compelled to push his late employer out into the open and stretch him flat with two hefty punches.

"Stay there, you cheap crook!" he panted, before charging back into the shack.

Jack Bradford parked his car some distance from the offices of the Dam Construction camp, and went forward cautiously on foot. He was in time to witness Garry stretch Morton flat, and to see Morton stagger to his feet and follow Sommers.

Bradford rubbed his chin and stared at the wooden shack as if trying to make up his mind. He guessed why Garry was fighting with Morton. If only he could get rid of these two men. That would settle everything—Caroline would be his, the land would be his, and the two men who could prove him a murderer would be dead. If only there was some way!

A gleam came to his crafty eyes as he glanced at the great dam that overshadowed the wooden shack. Next moment, bent double, he was racing towards a small shed, on which was written: "Dynamite." "Dangerous Explosives." "No Smoking."

Garry Somers burst into the office of the Dam Construction Company and at once made for the centre drawer in the big table. Naturally it was locked and, as Garry was considering how best he should burst it open, Morton rushed into the room.

The lighting of the room was only one small window, and as dusk was not far away it was difficult for the two fighters to see what they were doing. They slammed wildly at each other, and many a blow hit only the air. At last they got to grips, and the tables and chairs went crashing in all directions.

Both were powerfully built and in training, though Garry was perhaps the better boxer, but Morton made up for that by a knowledge of all the foul methods of fighting. Once he almost won the fight by a kick that paralysed Garry's left leg, and on another occasion a vicious upward blow to the stomach with his knee nearly met with success.

Garry knew what failure meant, and he struggled on until the agonising pains had passed. He beat a tattoo on Morton's ribs and broke free from the other's clinging arms. They got to their feet, and in the exchange of punches it was undoubtedly the boy who came off best—twice he landed an upper-cut to the chin that shook his man.

Morton tried another method of attack. He picked up chairs and any heavy object he could find and hurled them at Garry, who spent his time dodging the missiles and trying to get at grips with his enemy.

Eventually he ripped away a broken chair and landed a straight left that dropped Morton to the floor; but the man was far from beaten.

"I'll smash you for that, you whelp!"

he growled through bleeding lips, and, getting to his feet, rushed wildly.

Garry tripped, in the semi-darkness, over a chair and crashed backwards. Like a madman Morton flung himself on the boy and fastened steel-like fingers on his throat. Garry struggled to free the grip; but Morton hung on, and soon everything seemed to the young engineer to be going round and round. He was forced to use one of Morton's methods—a blow to the mid-regions with his fist.

Once more he was free, but his throat was making strange wheezing noises as he tried to regain his breath. Garry had to stagger round the smashed office, with Morton after him, until his breath and strength returned, then he turned like a tiger to fight back.

That was the end. A hard right to Morton's bleeding nose, and a right and left upper-cut to the jaw—the dam boss rocked on his feet and then fell in a heap.

For a moment or two Garry rested with his hand against the wall. Now the fight was over he felt absolutely played out. He steeled himself to look for the document, and dragged the desk forward. Luck favoured him, because the drawer was easily forced, and it contained about half a dozen papers and documents. These Garry carried to the light, and gave a cry of joy after scanning two of them. These should prove valuable evidence in clearing his name.

The youngster stuffed them in his pocket and turned to Morton. The crook showed signs of recovery, and was trying to stand up.

"No need to waste time over you!" growled Garry. "I've got all proof I need, you skunk!"

Out of the office he ran and jumped to the saddle of his horse. With heart aglow with expectant hope he rode back towards the cave.

He had gone a quarter of a mile when the whole ground rocked, and then there followed an appalling explosion. A glance back showed the whole of the dam collapsing like a pack of cards.

"Morton's blown the dam!" gasped Garry.

As he stood there, paralysed by the magnificence of this terrifying spectacle, a wall of water engulfed the company's offices. His own plight made him dig his heels into his horse's flanks, and then he thought of Caroline in the cave—it would be right in the path of the water!

Furiously he urged his mount to greater speed.

Already the water had claimed two victims—Morton and Bradford. A piece of jagged concrete had come flying through the air and had struck the fiendishly-laughing lawyer full in the face. He had toppled over and over into the swirling, rushing waters.

Where Was the Cave?

GARRY had no time to spare wondering how Morton was faring. If the crook were drowned in the flood, then it was a just retribution. His worry concerned Caroline. Would she remain in the cave? He feared she would, because, being inside the quarry, she might have no idea of what went on outside, and she would remain in the quarry, because she did not wish to give away the hiding-place, as the sheriff was a man who hated to abandon a trail.

His next thought was the course the water would take. It must follow the bed of the old river, which had be-

come but a trickle since the erection of the dam, and the quarry was only a few yards from the banks. How far was it now to the quarry, and was the water gaining?

The water was coming down the valley like an express train, and Garry glanced back to see a great brown wall crashing through the trees straight for him. His only chance was to gain higher ground.

This was managed in the nick of time, and as he rode along a plateau he saw the great wave rush past below him. Trees and rocks were swept out of the way like so much chaff, whilst the roar of the water was appalling.

The water was bound to reach the quarry before he could, but the huge wave was getting lower and should soon lose some of its first swiftness. That meant that though the water would rush into the quarry, it would not become a maelstrom, but rather like a huge lake. How long would it be before the water got up to the cave, which was but a few feet above the floor of the quarry?

Garry planned to ride along the plateau and then slide down into the quarry. His heart almost stood still as he stared down. Already the quarry was filling. Caroline must have drowned—unless she had crawled up the slippery sides.

Down the bank slithered Garry, and once or twice he paused to yell "Caroline! Caroline!" But his only answer was the boiling, squelching gurgle of water pouring into the quarry.

At last he was on the edge of the slowly rising water. No sign of Caroline. Then, to his horror, he realised he could not see the cave. He edged nearer to the place where it had been, and a wild hope thrilled him as he heard a faint:

"Garry! Garry!"

Caroline was inside the cave, but where was it? Garry hugged the slippery, crumbling sides of the quarry, and then he saw the cave. The arch was just showing, and in a few moments it would be completely covered.

No time to tear off his boots or shirt! Without a thought of the risk, he dived into the dirty brown water and was carried through the opening into the cave. At last his head came above water, and the first thing he heard was his name.

A chimney had been cut in the centre of the cave and this enabled a faint light to disperse the gloom. Caroline was lying on a sandstone ledge, and already the water was over her legs.

"Oh, Garry, Garry!" Caroline was nearly delirious with joy at seeing his head appear above the water.

"Help me out!" he yelled at her, and she assisted him to clamber to the ledge beside her.

"Is there no hope, dearest? I'm not afraid," she called to him.

"Must get my wind!" he panted out. "We've got about five minutes to make that opening." He pointed to the entrance of the cave, which still showed a small gap. "Got to fight against the current, and we must not fail."

"I was hiding when the water came," Caroline clung close to him. "Only a little while before, the sheriff and his deputy came exploring the quarry, then they gave a yell and ran."

"They saw the water—good!" cried Garry. "They will warn all the people along the valley and they should be able to escape to higher ground. Are you ready, Caroline—as the entrance has nearly gone? Cling to my right shoulder with your left hand, and kick out with your feet! Ready?"

"Yes, Garry."

Gently he drew the girl down into the swirling water and placed her hand on his shoulder.

"I'm going to work along the side for a few yards," he shouted in her ear. "Then I'm going to swim under water. Hold your breath and hold tightly."

Bravely the girl nodded her head.

"I won't get panicky," was her answer.

Garry worked his way for a few yards and then gave Caroline the signal; next moment he was under water. It was a hard fight getting through the opening of the cave, but Caroline did her best, and at last they were out in the quarry.

The water seemed to beat in their faces and try to drag them under, but with all their strength they battled to the side of the quarry. Caroline let go her hold of Garry to clutch at an old tree stump, and soon drew herself to safety. Garry was almost done after his fight with Morton and now this struggle against the elements.

It was Caroline's strong arms that helped him up the bank. They sat there gasping and panting, whilst the water still slowly rose towards them.

"Better now," Garry managed to shout to Caroline. "We must climb!"

Soon they were beyond the cruel grip of the water, but they pushed on as best they could, because they were

anxious to know how the people of the valley had fared. Many of the darkies that had worked for Colonel Bradford had bamboo and reed huts on the old banks of the river.

Garry helped Caroline to the saddle of his horse when the top of the quarry had at last been reached. It was pitch dark now, and Garry staggered along, leading the horse under the murky night.

They came to a well-worn trail, and Garry climbed up into the saddle behind Caroline. At a trot they made for the Bradford mansion.

What joy to find Esau and all the darkies safe and well! Esau was nearly delirious when Garry and Caroline, looking like drowned rats, staggered into the house.

Garry had not lost his precious evidence in his race to save Caroline. It was soaked and dirty, but still readable. There were plenty to prove that the breaking of the dam had been caused by explosive, and when the water went down they found Jack Bradford's car, and later on they found the two men. The case against Garry Summers was withdrawn, and a verdict against Jack Bradford, deceased, decided upon after brief proceedings.

Soon the work of rebuilding the dam was started, but on the special day everyone ceased work.

The special day being the occasion of the marriage of Garry Summers to Caroline Bradford.

(By permission of the Gaumont Company, starring Grant Withers and Thelma Todd.)



"I'll smash you for that, you whelp!" he growled through bleeding lips.

August 22nd, 1931,

A Western thriller of a horse that was swifter than lightning and became the terror of the plains. Starring Jack Perrin and his horse, Starlight.



The Phantom.

"MORNIN', Colonel!"

Colonel van Horn gave his neighbouring rancher a nod, and continued to stare out over the distant hills.

The colonel had once been known as the most genial rancher out West. Certain it was that he was looked upon with friendly eyes by all those around him, in spite of the fact that he had managed to build up his great business at the expense of many others.

Van Horn's thoroughbred horses were famed throughout the States, and their fame brought to the retired officer a not inconsiderable fortune. It was only in the natural course of things that in consequence the demand for horses of lesser calibre was nothing like so good as it had once been.

Many neighbours might have felt resentment at that fact. But none of them showed resentment to Colonel van Horn. He was so genial, so welcoming, so very ready to help with advice, food, water, or anything else that might be required by his rivals in business.

It was with something of a shock, therefore, that the self-same neighbours gradually became less and less welcome at the Diamond Cross Ranch. The old rancher had little or no time for the long chats in which he had once been so willing to indulge. He seemed just as if he wanted to be quite alone.

Even Mary, his daughter, found a great change in him. He was morose even with her, and she found herself less and less in his company.

But it was for the good of everybody that they knew the reason for the change.

The colonel was losing heavily through the visit of the most daring and at the same time the most elusive raider that August 22nd, 1931.

part of the West had ever known. Dozens of his best brood mares had simply disappeared off the great open plains as if they had been spirited away.

No one knew of their going or where they went. They just disappeared. No footsteps were ever seen to tell them the slightest thing about the raider. He came and he went without leaving a trace, and with his every visit to the ranch and the plain thereabouts Colonel van Horn lost a batch of his best mares.

Dan Denton, the colonel's nearest neighbour, had lost a few horses, but their value was puny compared with that sustained by the colonel.

"You know, colonel," said Dan Denton now, diving his hands deep into the pockets of his riding-breeches and touching upon the one subject which was certain to draw the colonel. "I reckon there won't be the slightest hope of putting a stop to these losses until that Phantom is caught."

"The Phantom?" repeated the colonel. "H'm! You can't tell me, Denton, that a great white horse can spirit away my mares, or anybody else's horses! Why, he is scarcely ever seen around here!"

"No; but the fact remains that the raids have been real heavy since he was first spotted," said Denton thoughtfully. "There was that dozen—the first lot you lost. The Phantom was seen but a couple of hours before they were missed. It's weird."

Van Horn nodded. "It's sure that," he agreed. "That white horse is a grand-looker, and it's a mighty funny thing where he goes when he dashes off. He's got such speed, too, that no one can follow him."

"He ain't got the speed of a bullet, colonel," said Denton slyly.

Colonel van Horn started, opened his mouth as if about to speak, and closed it again, a worried frown upon his brow.

"Why not offer a reward for his capture?" put in Denton.

"I'd willingly give a thousand dollars for that," said Van Horn. "It would at least confirm or remove some suspicions. I admit, Denton, that I'm thinking everybody around here is a rustler, and that I am the chief victim! But—well, it ain't done to shoot wild horses. He might not be the rustler."

"Oh, shucks!" said Denton impatiently. "What's the good of him, anyway? Nobody can catch him—Hallo, here's Steve, and, by the way he's riding, he's got news!"

He broke off then to watch, with the colonel, the cloud of dust that had appeared down the trail. It heralded the arrival of the colonel's foreman, Steve, and the nearer the pounding hoofs of Steve's mount came, the more puckered became the colonel's brows.

He did not speak until Steve had flung himself from his steaming mount.

"Well, Steve?" he said quietly.

"That bunch we had in the far corral have gone, boss," said Steve. "There ain't a hoss left."

"But—but they were in a corral around which was barbed wire!" exclaimed Van Horn incredulously.

"All busfed down, sir," said Steve. For a moment the colonel did not speak—a moment which was utilised by the ranch foreman and Dan Denton for an exchange of glances.

"Did you see that white horse—the Phantom?" asked Van Horn suddenly.

Steve nodded. "I sure saw him an hour before I missed the bunch, boss," he said. "He was way down the plain—right amongst

the bushes. He just looked my way for a moment, then he flung up his head and dashed away. I lost him in the undergrowth."

"Well, look here, Steve," said Van Horn between his teeth, "get the news around that I'll give a thousand dollars reward for the trapping of that white horse. Have some notices printed and put up all around the ranch, so that even passers-by can see it. It might tempt some good hunters to come in and join."

"A thousand dollars, boss!" ejaculated Steve. "Sure, I reckon I'll trap that feller all O.K.!"

And he ran for his horse, leapt up into the saddle and dashed away to spread the news. Van Horn watched him go, thoughtfully biting at the ends of his white moustache.

"That was my best bunch, up in the north corral," he mused, and suddenly shrugged his shoulders. "Well, I guess if the boys catch the Phantom, Denton, we shall soon see if he is responsible for the raids, for they'll stop with his capture if he's the guilty party."

"Sure they will!" agreed Denton, but without much enthusiasm.

And they left it at that, the colonel going into the ranch-house, leaving Denton to thrust his hands deeper into the pockets of his neat breeches and walk slowly off.

Trapped!

"**S**AY, how much more have we got to travel to get to that there Diamond Cross ranch, Jack?"

Benny Mack sounded just as fed up as he looked. He and his partner, Jack Saunders, had been riding the trail for days with the fixed intention of applying to Colonel van Horn for a job on the ranch.

"It ain't so mighty far, Benny," said Jack cheerfully. "Say, why can't you get some patience into you? Supposing, too, we don't get a job on the ranch?"

Benny glared, and tapped his gun. "This'll do the talking then!" he growled. "You allowed that hosses from the Diamond Cross was the finest in the West, and that we'd be right in our element if we worked among 'em. Now you suggest that there won't be no job! Gee, if you've made me hit the trail all this time on a bunk job—Say, what's that, Jack?"

He broke off with a sudden exclamation, and in a moment they had pulled up their horses.

It was not a difficult matter to pick out that which had attracted Benny's attention.

Jack stood up in his stirrups and stared across the plain. A matter of fifty yards away something white wriggled on the ground, turned half over, then wriggled back again. It took them but twenty seconds to give that something a name.

"That's a hoss!" said Jack.

"Trapped or something." "If it's fell and busted something, we'd better help it out," said Benny. "Poor brute!"

Jack nodded, and in a flash he was riding to the white horse.

The moment they leapt from their saddles, a couple of yards from the fallen horse, they could see the cause of the trouble, and a grim light came into Jack's keen eyes.

"Say, if that's how they catch their hosses around these parts, we ain't joining in, Benny," he said contemptuously. "That's a darned great wolf trap he's hooped into!"

Benny nodded, his expression as angry as that of his partner. The white horse—a magnificent specimen, unmarked save for patches of dust and dirt obtained in its struggles and kicks whilst in captivity—was caught by the off fore-hoof in the grip of about as ugly a trap as the cowpunchers had ever seen.

"Guess we'll soon get him outer

that!" grunted Jack. "Keep his head flat down, Benny, and I'll lever the trap open with my gun. Hold him!"

Benny found it difficult. The massive white head was upon a neck of immense strength. He had to use his knees to keep the horse down whilst Jack got busy.

Before he levered the trap open, however, Jack took the precaution of examining the trapped hoof. It was cut, but not very badly, and there were no signs of broken bones.

"The goldarned rotten tripes!" growled Jack, as he dug the barrel of his gun down between the steel jaws of the trap. "I'd drop a man I saw setting this, Benny!"

"You would—if I didn't happen to get a drop on him first!" grunted Benny. "Hey—steady, old boy—gee! He's a tough customer, this, Jack!"

"Hold him a moment—that's done it—look out!"

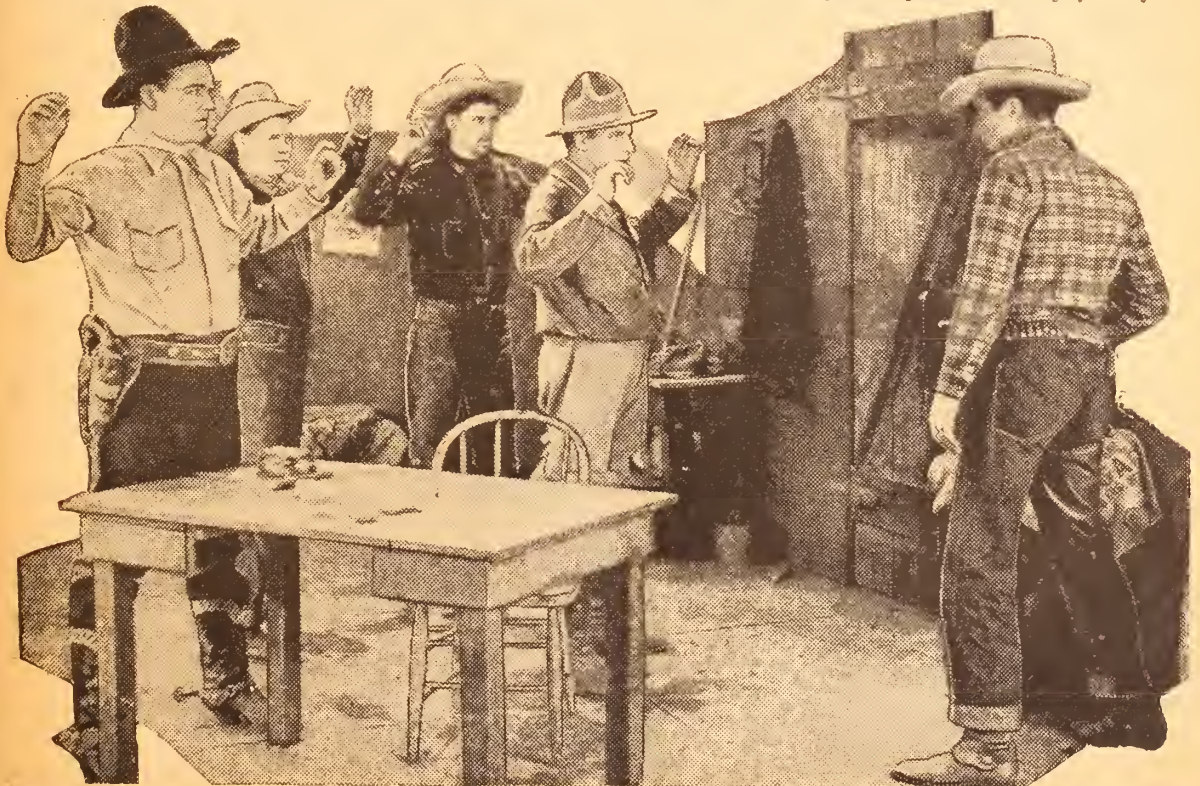
The warning was only just in time. The great white horse, the moment its leg was released from the trap, struggled upon its four legs, rose upon its haunches, and cut viciously down with its fore-legs. It was only by inches that the partners missed being kicked upon their heads.

Down came the hoofs, and up went the hind legs in another terrible kick, before they, too, came crashing to the hard, sun-baked turf. A moment later Jack and Benny were watching it travel like the wind towards the thicker undergrowth into which it disappeared.

"That's a sure good tough customer," said Benny, rubbing the dust from his hands.

"He's all that," chuckled Jack, his eyes looking beyond the undergrowth to the hill above. "There he goes, Benny! Gee! If I'm stopping on around these parts, I reckon to ride that fellow one day!"

"Huh! I guess I'll be around to pick up the pieces the day you try it!"



"You—you double-crossing yellow rat!" grated Steve. "I thought you had sold all them horses, Denton?"

granted Benny. "Now, what about this Diamond Cross ranch?"

Jack nodded, and kicked heavily at the steel trap before he walked slowly towards his horse.

"No wonder they gets good hosses around here, Benny, if the old white fellow is any sample," he mused. "Look at him up there on the hill! Ain't he a sight for a sore cowpuncher! Looking down at us as if he don't know whether to come back and say 'Thank you.' As pretty as a picture!"

A second later his hand had dropped to his gun, and Benny nearly dropped out of his skin as it exploded only a couple of inches from his ear.

"What are you at, you blamed—" he yelled.

But Jack was not listening. With his still smoking gun in his hand he was rushing down towards the undergrowth, from which two men emerged in a towering rage, one of them waving a rifle the barrel of which had been smashed by Jack's bullet.

It took Benny a second to realise what had happened. Jack had seen the glint of the rifle levelled at the wonder white horse, and he had shot that barrel out of business with a single pull of his finger.

Benny leapt after his partner, shooting just one glance up at the hill where the white horse had been. He was not there.

"You done me out a thousand dollars!" snarled the man with the rifle. "You've got a thousand dollars-worth of learnin' coming your way!" said Jack. "We don't allow for shootin' hosses, mister!"

He emphasised that remark by lashing out with his fist, and it caught the man clean under the jaw. There was no time for further argument. Guns were put back into holsters, and the fists came into full use.

Jack was angry, and so was Benny. The other two were probably angry from quite a different reason. Consequently the fight was fast and furious whilst it lasted.

Jack took a crack on his chin that put him on his back just as Benny crashed down under the weight of another blow from the man at whom he leapt. Both were up in less than two seconds, and it was then the stranger's turn to feel how hard was the sun-baked turf.

They came back willingly enough to the fight, and for a few seconds blows were exchanged at sufficient rate and with sufficient force to change the expressions on all four faces. But it was the strangers who stopped, at last, on their backs.

"All right, lay up, stranger!" growled one. "Steve—"

"Keep your hands off your guns, mister," said Jack, with a warning glance at the fallen Steve. "I'm just longing for a chance to give you what you wanted to give that boss."

"You don't know that boss, stranger," growled Steve, as he slowly and painfully picked himself up and rubbed his aching jaws. "There's a thousand dollars reward out for him!"

"That don't allow for shooting!" snapped Jack. "Beat it, mister, and take your partner with you before I start lammin' into you again."

Steve must have reckoned that his unluckiest day. He had trapped the Phantom, and had afterwards had as good a drop on it with his rifle as he ever hoped to get. In addition, he had the feeling of what it must be like to be passed between two huge rollers.

He gave one venomous look at the grim Jack, another at the smiling Benny, and with a nod towards his

partner, walked savagely into the undergrowth.

And as they disappeared, from the top of the hill came a shrill neighing. Instantly the cowpunchers turned in its direction. He was standing up there, as regal as a king, his ears pricked, his fine, silky neck steady as a rock as he stared towards them.

Jack laughed. "All right, mister!" he called out, as he waved his hand. "We accept your thanks with gratitude!"

"Shucks!" snapped Benny. "I ain't wavin' no hand to him. He tried to kick me under the chin, and I've sure got a fat ear through him. I've seen enough of him for a day or two! Let's be going!"

Jack laughed again, and even when they had mounted and hit the trail once more for the Diamond Cross ranch, he found himself watching the white horse until it disappeared with a sudden, lightning-like swerve.

The Rescue and a Job.

A QUARTER of an hour must have elapsed in silence, save for the gentle tap-tap of their horses' hoofs, before Jack gave a sudden cry.

"Say, that's the lower trail, Benny—and it's along there that the Diamond Cross ranch lies! Riding down, or riding round?"

Benny looked down the stiff face of the hill to the lower trail, and then to the trail ahead of them. This latter disappeared round a hill, and it might be miles farther on that it worked down to the bottom track.

He did not have to solve the question, however. It was solved for them.

A thundering of hoofs from below broke upon their ears just as a shrill neigh came to them from the far side of the valley into which they were looking.

"There's your pal again!" said Benny, with a nod.

Jack nodded, too. The white horse was coming down the far side of a hill at a terrific rate. Its feet scarcely seemed to touch the ground, despite its size, and for a moment Jack forgot all about the hoofs that had thundered upon the trail.

"I'm sure gonna ride that fellow one day!" he said ecstatically. "I'd win every cowpuncher's race in the States on that boss, Benny! What a hoss!"

He watched it come down the hill, stretch it out at even greater pace across the flat of the valley, heading for the trail and that hill upon which Benny and Jack were sitting their own horses.

Jack was dimly conscious of the fact that another rider had appeared, but he paid little or no heed to that. He was intent upon the wonderful action of the wonder white horse.

But he certainly took notice when the white horse flashed across the trail but a dozer yards in front of the rider—and from that rider came a piercing shriek that could only have been emitted by a woman.

Instinctively Jack gripped the reins hard, and his keen eyes left the wonder horse for a moment and stared at the rider.

Her horse was tearing at the reins, bucking like any horse new to a saddle, and fighting fiercely to follow the white horse!

It had got complete control—there was no doubt about that. And under the strength of that strong neck the girl's arms were utterly useless. She had no more control over her mount than had Jack himself.

"The white hoss has scared t'other!" growled Jack. "Come on, Benny!"

He went down the face of that cliff at a rate that was calculated to test the nerve of the finest horseman in the West. Benny could only see the huge cloud of white dust that Jack's horse created as it stuck all four legs straight out in a frantic effort to steady itself down the cliff. Benny followed the cloud.

Twice Jack had to jerk up his mount's head in order to keep it upon its feet, and whilst looking after that he had no chance to see what was happening to the scared girl.

That came only when he had struck the trail through the valley, and his first impression was that the horse would just run itself dead out to a standstill.

But the moment the white horse, ahead of all, turned up towards the cliff, the girl's horse turned, too. It was making frantic efforts to get up to the wild white horse.

Jack dug in his spurs and rode like a madman, for the girl was beginning to sway ominously in the saddle. Once she only saved herself from being thrown by snatching blindly at the runaway's mane.

The yards between girl and cowpuncher grew less and less under Jack's frantic riding, and still the great white horse pounded ahead. Jack had a glimpse of the girl's horse, with its white, staring eyes and foaming mouth—and then she swayed again.

A desperate dig with both heels sent Jack's horse leaping forward, but even then it was only by leaning far forward in his saddle that Jack was able to grab at the girl as she fell.

Her feet did not touch the ground. Jack swerved his horse the moment he felt his fingers get a grip on her clothes, and his horse, trained to the very last inch of its intelligence, obeyed like a flash.

It was just as well, for that swerve undoubtedly saved the girl. It also gave Jack the added impetus he needed, and the girl was flung, rather than dragged, straight across his saddle.

A moment later Jack had pulled in his mount and was staring down into the white face of just about as pretty a girl as he had ever seen in his life.

"You all right, missy?" he panted.

"Say, there's sure some excitement around these parts, Jack!" came in a shout from Benny as he dashed up. "Is she O.K.?"

Jack nodded as he lowered the girl gently to the trail and dropped down beside her. She opened her eyes when she felt herself upon her feet and stared dully up at him.

"That was the Phantom!" she whispered. "He's—he's a terror!"

"Is that why men were out trying to shoot him?" asked Jack, with a frown.

"I suppose so—the Phantom steals my father's horses, anyway!" she explained, recovering herself quickly. "My father is Colonel van Horn, stranger, and I'm sure he would like to thank you for saving me from being thrown."

"Colonel van Horn! That's the gent I'm making for," said Jack, with a laugh. "I've got a letter from my old boss, who is a pal of the colonel's. I and my partner are after a job."

"Then you'd better start trying to rope in the Phantom!" said the girl, with a laugh. "Give me a lift, stranger, and I'll take you home."

"Sure; but there's no need to say anything about—er—how I came along."

said Jack uncomfortably. "You see, we don't want to get a job as a— as a sorter reward."

Mary just smiled—a smile which Jack found distinctly fascinating. So he kept her smiling on the short ride down the valley trail to Diamond Cross ranch, with the result that Benny was, for once, completely cut out of Jack's picture.

Once at the ranch, however, Jack Saunders settled down to the business for which he and his partner had travelled many long miles, and for which many hours had been spent in the saddle.

Mary introduced him to her father, to whom Jack gave his letter with an idea that even that would not help them get a job. There had been so few signs of activity in the ranch that it appeared more than likely the rather elderly rancher was not now doing half the business for which he was famous amongst all horse dealers.

Colonel van Horn read the letter, it being impossible for him to frown over it for the simple reason his brows had been meeting at the time he was introduced to the cowpunchers.

"This is sure a good recommendation from an old friend, stranger," were the colonel's first words. "All the same, I haven't got so much work as I used to have—or as much as I should like. You see, mister, there's a white horse out yonder who is interfering with my mares—he's collarin' them by the dozen, and I don't need half the boys I have now got on my pay-roll."

"There's a thousand dollars reward out for its capture," put in Mary, with a smile.

"Dead or alive!" said the colonel angrily. "I'm going to let the boys shoot him. I'll give you a thousand dollars for the Phantom's head, stranger!"

Jack waved his hand disparagingly. "There sure ain't no need to start shooting wild horses, colonel," he said shortly. "I'll go after him—but call off those shooting orders."

It was at this point that Mary drew her father's head down and whispered into his ear, Jack being quite unable to learn what was said by her smiling lips. But her twinkling eyes, and the manner in which they looked round at him, suggested enough to make him realise that she was pleading on his behalf.

"All right, Jack Saunders," said Van Horn suddenly, "I'll call off the shooting orders, and give you a few days in which to catch that Phantom. You and your partner are on my pay-roll, so you'd better go down and meet Steve, my foreman."

"And sure, he'll be right down mighty glad to see us!" chuckled Benny. "Tell us where the buckets of water are kept, boss, and we'll find Steve O.K."

The colonel did not understand that. But then he did not know that Steve's jaw would, most likely, at that moment be feeling very much the better for a plentiful supply of cold water.

The fact that they had secured a job was sufficient to put Benny into a good temper with the world in general, and he was just as lighthearted as Jack was solemn and serious as they walked towards the quarters indicated by the colonel.

"You've fallen already for that purty girl," chuckled Benny,

"Sure!" agreed Jack indifferently, and flushed. "I mean, I've sure fallen for this white horse they call the Phantom, Benny. I'm gonna get that horse, and when I get him, I'm gonna ride him."

"Think of the girl—think of the girl," murmured Benny. "A pity—widow afore she's married—here, what're you at?"

"I've got a grip on your ear, partner, and that grip is staying put until I can get that tongue of yours into a pail of water!" growled Jack.

But, at the same time, there was a merry glint in his eye. Mary van Horn was certainly a very fine specimen of Western womanhood, and, of course, Benny was entitled to his fun.

Jack made up his mind that his next meeting with Mary would be when Benny was elsewhere.

Two on the Trail.

JACK SAUNDERS and Benny spent the next two days in riding around searching for signs of the Phantom, but they searched in vain. He had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened up and swallowed him.

Jack was disappointed. He had quite made up his mind to break in the wild horse and keep him for himself. He rather fancied that the Phantom would make a champion at any of the numerous cowpuncher shows and contests held in that State.

It was not until Steve rode in one morning to report the loss of another bunch of brood mares that Jack paid more attention to the ranch work than the hunt for the Phantom. He and Benny rode out to the north corral, from which the mares had been rustled, and dismounted when they came to the spot where the wire fence had been broken down.

At first glance the fence suggested that it had been smashed down. The supporting posts were broken off at the stumps, and the wire was one tangled mass, as if a dozen sets of hoofs had twisted it.

But this suggestion was

negated a few seconds after Jack had given a closer examination to the wire.

"Say, Benny," he said as he waggled two ends of wire thoughtfully in his hands. "That Phantom is sure the wonder hoss of the States! He carries a pair of pliers, or wire-cutters!"

"Gee! You don't say!" exclaimed Benny, peering keenly at the wire. "You're right, Jack! That wire has been cut clean enough. What are you goin' to do about that?"

"Plenty!" said Jack grimly. "Come on—let's go and have a word with the colonel."

They remounted their horses, and rode round the corral to the ranch, without further conversation or delay. Colonel van Horn, a little more pale than before, looked round at their approach, just as Dan Denton stepped noiselessly to his side.

"Another lot gone, Denton!" he said between his teeth.

"Sure—and here comes the strangers, colonel," said Denton. "I've a notion we might not have to look very far beyond them, if there are rustlers about. I don't like 'em!"

"Sh!sh! Let's hear what they have to say," muttered the colonel.

They had not to wait long. Jack came up to them quietly as soon as he had dismounted, leaving Benny to look after the horses.

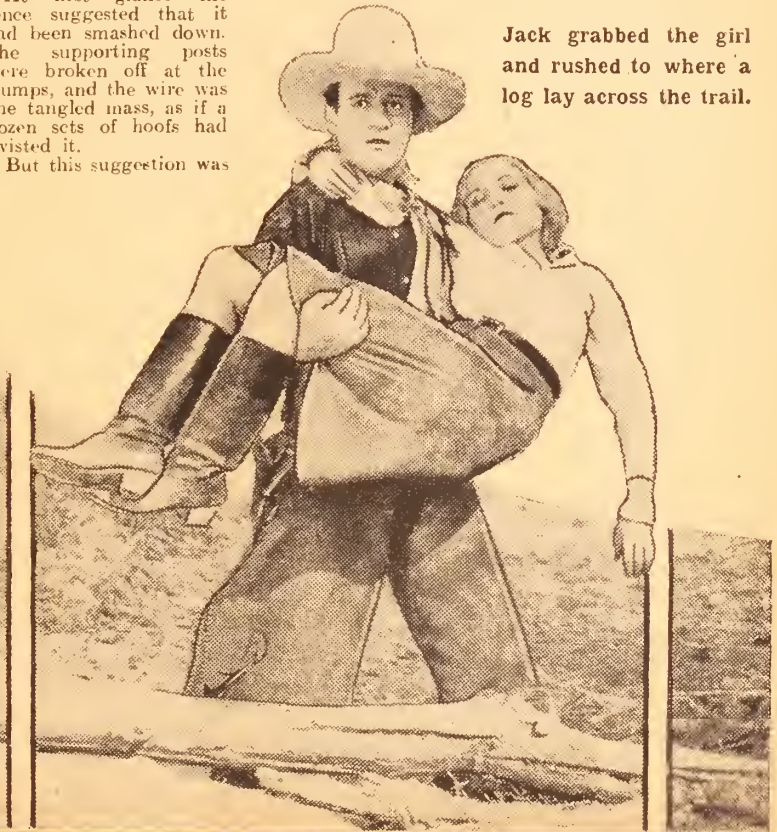
"Well, Saunders—find anything up at the corral?" asked Van Horn.

"Plenty!" replied Jack in his quiet, unruffled tones. "Say, boss, that Phantom is a wonder hoss all O.K. He carries wire-cutters, and I just don't know how I came to miss them when me and Benny had our hands on him a few days back!"

"Wire-cutters! Do you mean to say—"

"The wire around the north corral

Jack grabbed the girl and rushed to where a log lay across the trail.



was cut, not broken down by stamped-ing hosses," cut in Jack. "The thief is boasting two legs, colonel, not four! And I'm gonna get that rustler!"

"How?" asked Denton coolly. "I reckon you're talking through your hat, Saunders."

"You would," said Jack, just as calmly. "I think the Phantom is being used as a cover to hide the work of the real rustler, mister, and just to prove that is right, I'm gonna trap that Phantom right away."

"How?" asked Denton again, but this time it was with a sneer.

"I'll tell you how I caught him—when I've got him," said Jack with a short laugh. "I might have to use the same sort of trap for the two-legged rustler, mister, and I sure ain't tellin' anybody what sort of trap I'm gonna put out. Excuse me now, boss, 'cos I'm reckonin' to have the Phantom between my knees short of three hours!"

And with that he walked off, leaving the colonel with a curious feeling of relief, and Denton with a sneer on his face that was as annoying as it was unpleasant.

"He'll get his neck broken, but that's all he will get," said Denton suddenly. "Funny that he should be the only one to discover that the wires have been cut—suggests he knew all about it!"

Van Horn did not answer. He was watching Jack Saunders as he walked slowly down to the corral where Mary and he kept their own riding-horses, and he was still watching when he saw his smiling daughter come running towards the cow puncher.

But he was too far away to hear what was said.

"Miss Mary—if you will help me, I reckon to capture that Phantom mighty quick," was Jack's greeting.

"Without shooting him?" asked Mary quickly.

"Sure—listen! That white hoss and your mare seem sort of friendly. I remember how she went after him when he crossed your trail the morning I first met you," said Jack. "My plan is to tether your mare out on the plain, somewhere among the undergrowth he appears to haunt, and have a rope trap all set for him. If he comes towards her he'll get snaffled. Game?"

"He—he won't hurt her, will he?" she asked dubiously.

"I and Benny will look after her!" said Jack confidently. "I ain't agreein' that the Phantom is sort o' enticin' the mares away from the corral, Miss Mary. It's a two-legged rustler I'm gonna look for, but first of all I want that Phantom."

"All right," she said, after only a moment's more hesitation. "I wish you luck, Jack! Nobody else has ever got near enough to do more than look at him."

Jack's movements thereafter were quick. He led Benny down to the spot where they had seen the Phantom disappear after they had released him from Steve's steel wolf-trap, and here they got busy.

A place was selected where a narrow trail led between two medium-sized bushes, and down which any horse would have to travel if it wished to get from one side of the bushes to the other. There was no way round, the undergrowth being too thick.

At one side Jack tethered Mary's mare, and yards behind the mare they hid their own horses. Finally, they hid themselves amidst the bushy undergrowth, and waited patiently for results.

They had not to wait very long. August 22nd, 1931.

Within a quarter of an hour of hiding themselves, they heard the white horse's unmistakable neigh, and in a flash an answering neigh had gone out from Mary's mare.

Simultaneously, from a long distance, came the thudding of a second set of hoofs, and the cowpunchers looked at one another quickly.

"Somebody is trailing the Phantom!" said Jack, between his teeth. "If they start shootin' up, I'm going to put a lump of lead in some wrists by way of reminding their owners that the colonel's orders is no shootin'!"

"Stow the cackle, Jack—here comes the Phantom!" hissed Benny.

He was right. With almost startling suddenness the Phantom appeared beyond the bushes, his great white head held proudly as he stared towards Mary's mare. For a moment he stood on the narrow trail, hesitating. Then he trotted slowly towards the trap.

It was all over in a second. The hunters had set a simple rope snare, and straight as if he had been guided by reins, the Phantom trotted into the rope loop, neighing softly as he got nearer to the mare.

The loop settled over his neck, and became smaller as the white horse advanced until it had him securely just above the massive shoulders. It was then that Jack and Benny saw the savage nature of the wild horse.

It got up on its haunches and lashed out at the bushes to which the rope was fixed. His great eyes dilated with anger, and what with his lashing hoofs and his shrill, angry neighing, he presented a grand, if terrible sight.

"Well, he's there, Jack!" said Benny, with a grunt. "Feel like patting his neck?"

Jack took that in far more grim a fashion than Benny had expected.

"I'm gonna ride him!" he said, between his set teeth. "Benny, get your knife ready, and the instant you see me on his back, cut the rope!"

"Why don't you shoot yourself—it would be much quicker an' more pleasant than getting pounded to dust by them hoofs!" growled Benny.

"Oh, mush! You do as I ask you!" grunted Jack.

And he advanced towards those flying hoofs with a fearlessness that sent a shiver of admiration down Benny's spine.

Mounting the wild horse was much more difficult than it seemed. The Phantom never seemed to tire, despite its fearful, frantic bucking and kicking.

Jack took one side, waiting a chance to leap forward and upwards, whilst Benny, with open knife, took the other side. The great horse kept them on the move, too, for it attacked them with head and heels in a manner that suggested he was raving mad.

Foam collected and dropped from the corners of his mouth—a mouth which had never yet felt a steel bit. Bush after bush was smashed down to splinters by the terrible, pounding hoofs, and the gnashing of its great teeth was like the snapping of thick boughs.

It was Mary's mare that gave Jack the chance for which he was looking.

She gave a sudden, frightened whimpy, and down came the Phantom on all fours for the first time since he had felt the rope trap. And, in the fleeting second the Phantom stood to stare at the mare, Jack took his leap.

"Benny!" he called excitedly.

He had a grip on the white horse's mane in a flash, and up went his long legs in one great leap. In another split second, he was astride, and Benny, with

a daring sweep of his sharp knife, had cut the rope.

For another dazed second the Phantom stood still. Then up he went, with Jack clinging on with hands and knees, and the fact that there was now no rope was instantly conveyed to the horse's senses.

He shot forward under the kick of his two mighty hind legs, and in a flash Benny was looking at rider and Phantom crashing through the smaller bushes down the narrow trail.

Jack hung on grimly—it was easier now that the Phantom was bolting. The speed of the beast was amazing. Its sure-footed striding was more like that of a mountain goat. He never faltered or made a mistake, but went down the winding trail, through surprisingly easy bushes on to other trails, as if he had one way to go and one way only.

Jack did not know where they were going. He had lost all sense of direction within a couple of minutes of striking the first trail. All Jack was conscious of was the fact that his mount was utterly tireless.

The thrill of that ride was something that Jack would never forget. Never had he sat a horse that cut so much ground so quickly under its flying hoofs, and yet the beast's broad back scarcely jolted him an inch.

One thing was quite certain. Benny, if he had dashed for his horse and at once leapt into the saddle, would never catch up with them. He might be able to trail them, but that was the best that could be expected.

And so Jack was a lone rider when he at last found himself staring into what was to him a completely strange canyon. Here the Phantom calmed down and dropped into a lazy, loping trot until he had taken Jack to where dozens of magnificent horses were browsing.

For a moment, Jack was bewildered. The horses at which he was looking were blood horses—there was none of the un-accared-for look about them that was the unmistakable mark of the wild horse.

"Shucks—these must be the colonel's horses!" muttered Jack, as he slipped from the Phantom's white back. "You wicked white old scoundrel! So you have been doing the rustlin'!"

The Phantom simply trotted calmly off to the other horses, and left Jack to do what he liked about the matter. Jack, as a matter of fact, was smiling.

It was the strangest position in which he had ever found himself. He could not very well suggest hanging the Phantom, which was the fate of all cattle rustlers. Certainly, he was not going to suggest shooting the animal. Colonel van Horn would have to be content with the fact that his mares had been recovered.

It was with something of a shock that Jack suddenly remembered the cut wire, and a puzzled frown corrugated his brows.

"He sure couldn't have bit through them wires so clean!" he muttered to himself. "This is darned funny, Jack Saunders! Wonder if the Phantom belongs to anybody?"

That suggestion put fresh life and activity into him. If that was correct, there would assuredly be some sign of habitation somewhere in the bush screens of the canyon.

He began a search, picking his way carefully so as not to make more noise than was necessary—and that search lasted precisely five minutes.

At the end of that time Jack found himself looking towards a hut that was completely hidden from view at one side of the canyon—the side at which he had entered on the Phantom's back. The

door of the hut was open, and from the chimney there rose a tiny, thin spiral of smoke.

Jack shut his teeth hard. Surprises were the order of the day, but he was going to be very much surprised if he discovered that the Phantom, besides being the leading rustler, occupied a hut and kept a fire going!

He drew his gun as he approached the hut, and his steps became much slower and far more cautious as there remained only a dozen feet to go. If there was a man in the hut, Jack meant to surprise him, get the drop on him, and then start asking questions.

But the hut was empty—no one sat at the table which stood in the centre of the floor, and the chairs and boxes were not in use.

Convinced that the rustler was away from home, Jack stepped into the hut.

When Thieves Fall Out!

WELL, there's a gang of them, anyway!"

Jack said that aloud as he stood in the centre of the hut and looked around. Cards and glasses, numerous cigarette ends and the butts of many cheroots told him that much.

He spent only two or three minutes in the hut before he once more made his way to the door. It would be necessary to get the colonel and his men down here if they were to catch the gang with their rustled horses.

But he only got as far as the door.

There he felt a sudden plug in his back that brought him to a dead stop in his tracks.

"Drop that gun, mister!" came in snappy tones from behind. "We sorter want a chat with you—drop that gun!"

Jack obeyed—it was useless to argue with a man who had got a gun-barrel stuck right into the middle of his back.

It was only then that he could turn round, and he gave no start of surprise when he saw Dan Denton, his hands deep in the pockets of his riding breeches, looking straight at him.

"So you are the two-legged rustler, Denton," he said calmly.

"And you're the one man who knows too much!" said Denton coolly. "You've sort o' pushed matters a bit, stranger. I was getting ready to drive those brood horses over the border, but there is one more bunch we want. Guess you're going to stay here until we get away with the lot. Rope him up, you fellers."

Jack took that as his signal to start fighting. In spite of the gun menace, he went straight out for the man nearest the door, and clipped him hard and sure under the chin. In a second the others had piled on to him, Denton taking care that he was not near enough to get hit in mistake by one of his own men, or anywhere near Jack's flying fists.

The fight, as could only be expected, was of very short duration. Five to one was a little too big odds, and Jack soon found himself on the floor with four of the enemy piling on top of him. He was helpless whilst the fifth man roped him with the skill of the born cow-puncher, and he was just a little more helpless when they picked him up and flung him on to a bed in another room.

"Now we'll have to get busy, boys," Denton said, the moment they were together again. "That feller's pal Benny is sure to start a search-party, and I guess we don't want no one to trail us here just now."

"Reach for the skies—you're just too late!" came in a rasping voice from the doorway.

Denton swung round, his hands going up with the promptness such a command, in such a tone, demanded.

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"Steve! What's brought you here?" exclaimed Denton, lightly enough, but with a gleam in his eyes that was a curious mixture of banter and alarm.

"You—you double-crossing, yellow-spined rat!" grated Steve. "I thought you had sold all them horses, Denton?"

"Well, they are sold—only I'm keeping them until I've got the whole bunch!" said Denton. "You can put the gun down, Steve, and collect your dollars—but I ain't arguing with you whilst you've got your gun like that. I ain't double-crossed you—you are thinking that just because you ain't got any patience."

Steve was not satisfied, and looked it. But Denton lowered his hands and sat down at the table with an indifference that certainly did not suggest fear.

"I suppose you know that Jack Saunders trapped the Phantom, and rode him here—I trailed them!" he said. "His partner was with him, and the last I heard of him was when he was riding towards Diamond Cross, leading Miss Mary's mare. You'll have to get those mares over the border, Denton, and leave the others."

"Oh, shucks! You're letting a couple of mangy cowpunchers scare you stiff!" sneered Denton. "If you think I'm double-crossing you, here's a cheque for your share! Want it?"

"Sure I want it—and I'm getting outer here right now!" said Steve bluntly.

He was wrong. The instant the gun was lowered and pointing towards the floor, one of the others shot a fist out and crashed it home against the side of his head. In a flash he was being treated in a manner similar to that which Jack had already experienced, and which, in the excitement brought about by the conversation in the other room, Jack had completely forgotten.

But Steve suffered more than Jack. He was knocked senseless and kicked into the corner of the room with a merciless disregard as to where the boots landed.

Denton surveyed him as he lay unconscious, a bitter expression on his face.

"The poor boob!" he growled. "Thought he would get away with a half-share, and you boys and me to share the other half! But look here, boys, I reckon it's time we cleared outer here! Round up the mares, and get 'em going towards the border. I ain't taking no risks now. Get going!"

Half a minute later the hut was empty save for Jack and Steve, and it was then that Jack started a frantic fight to get rid of his bonds. That took him fifteen minutes, and as many seconds sufficed for him to break down the door.

Steve was lying on the floor where he had been left, groaning now as he began to come round to his senses. Jack got a can of water and helped the coming round business with considerable more speed than care.

"Wake up!" he said shortly. "I heard all the yarn! Which way is the border from here?"

"Groooo!" grunted Steve. "The double-crossing rat! I'll squawk on him and take what's coming to me! It'll take them some time to round up, all they've taken from the colonel, Saunders. You can ride and head 'em off. I'll go for help at the Diamond Cross."

"Well, you may as well do your best now, Steve," said Jack grimly. "Your game is sort o' known to me, and you can't get away. In any case, I'm gonna get Denton!"

That was easier said than done, for he had no horse. And already the mares had been set moving by Denton's men, whose shouts could be heard coming from the depths of the canyon.

Wildly Jack looked round, hoping against hope that he would be able to spot a loose horse which he could secure and use.

He saw the horse all right—it was the Phantom! The great white beast stood on the crest of a hump, his ears pricked, his massive head held high, and his nostrils quivering as he stared towards the collection of mares which Denton and his men were rapidly rounding up.

"Boy—boy! Steady, boy!" called out Jack, as he walked towards the Phantom with a slowness that irritated him enormously in view of his keen desire for swift action.

The Phantom turned towards him, and bared his huge teeth in what was curiously like the snarl of a dog. But he did not move away from the crest of the hump.

It had been said to Jack on many occasions that he had a spell over horses. Certainly he seemed to have cast a spell over the Phantom, for, beyond moving nervously round in a half-circle as Jack came up to him, he made no sign of getting ready to dash away.

Jack talked to him, crooning like a nurse croons to a baby, until he got a grip on that silky mane. Then it was business—grin business!

"Get goin', boy!" almost hissed Jack, as he swung himself swiftly on to the broad white back. "We're gonna stam-pede that lot of mares!"

Lovers.

BENNY had not remained inactive after losing sight of Jack and the Phantom. He set off for the Diamond Cross to gather all the men he could find in and around the ranch, convinced that there would be a long and anxious search for Jack when the Phantom had thrown him off into the thick undergrowth.

The crashing of the undergrowth as the great white horse had smashed a way through told Benny that a fairly easy trail would be found, but just where they would find Jack was a different matter. They might trail the Phantom, but spotting Jack as he lay in the undergrowth would be a difficult task.

Mary received her mare back with a little cry of joy, and she was the first to mount when Benny had blurted out his story.

"We must go and search for Jack!" she said anxiously. "I'll go to the house first, pick up some bandages, in case he is hurt, and ride after you! My father is up in the north corral, Benny!"

"Right!" said Benny, and swung his mount round fiercely.

Spur and knees and leather were used relentlessly to get speed. Benny yelled as he passed each cowpuncher, drawing them towards the north corral, where Benny expected to find the colonel with Steve. But Steve was not there, although Van Horn was riding at a walking pace just where the wires had been cut.

"Boss—Jack trapped the Phantom, and the last I saw of him was on the white galoot's back!" shouted Benny, before he had even jerked his horse to a panting halt. "He'll sure be half-dead by now! I'm getting the boys and goun' searchin'!"

"That's O.K.!" snapped Van Horn. "I'll ride with you. Get going, boys!"

In a moment more the whole available outfit was riding madly towards the spot where the Phantom had been trapped.

August 22nd, 1931.

Long before they reached it, Jack Saunders was getting the thrill of his life out of the amazing speed shown by the Phantom. The excitement of the chase was intensified by that reason, and it was a laughing, eager Jack that urged the great white horse to do its best.

He came up to and passed round the mares which were being driven by Denton's men. Jack wanted to spot the neatly-garbed Denton, for he could stam-pede the mares just when he liked now. But he knew that the moment he started the stampede, Denton would order his boys to commence gunning, and that was just what Jack wanted to avoid for purely personal reasons!

He spotted Denton at last, and as Denton happened to spot him at the same moment, the rustler knew that the game was up. He started off across the canyon at breakneck speed, thinking only of getting on the other side of the border in order to save his own neck.

Jack laughed aloud. "See 'em, boy!" he shouted ecstatically. "Show 'em what you can do! They called you a rustler, you grand old hoss! Show 'em you can move some! Shift those legs, boy!"

The Phantom, urged by knee and voice, put on his very best—and that was much too good for Dan Denton's comparatively puny mount.

Jack was sweeping up behind him at an incredible rate, and fear was tugging at Denton's heart minutes before he felt a strong arm swing around his shoulders, steely fingers grip his shirt, and felt himself whirled out of his saddle.

But Jack did not fall with him. The cowpuncher was scarcely himself at the moment—he was drunk with the excitement of that glorious race and the pride of his mastery over the Phantom.

Neither Denton nor Jack will ever forget the next few minutes. Doubly weighted though he was, the Phantom never faltered or lessened his great speed. Jack headed him for the mares, which were approaching from his right hand, and it was not until only twenty yards separated them that he suddenly swung himself clean off the Phantom's back and crashed to the ground on top of the unfortunate Denton.

Jack did not see what happened. He only heard the scared neighing of dozens of mares, and the shriller, keener neighing of the Phantom. He was amongst them, and certain it was that no cowboy would get control of them until the great stallion had chosen to leave the bunch!

Denton tried to put up a fight, but he was scared stiff. He took clip after clip under the jaw, and struck out blindly in the hope of getting in one lucky blow which would enable him to get away.

But there was no luck for him that day. Jack was in his element, capable of anything. And before many minutes had elapsed, Denton was grovelling on the sun-baked ground.

"You're a rotten sort of neighbour, Denton!" panted Jack. "A poisonous sort that rustles an old man's cattle! You ain't gonna rustle no more—here's the colonel and his boys eager to tell you so!"

"Hey-ho, Jack!" came in a yell from Benny.

The Diamond Cross boys had not so far to search after all, for the dust raised by the driven mares, and the noise made by the thundering hoofs were guides none could fail to follow.

Benny was at the head of the Diamond Cross outfit as they rode up, and it was he who yelled orders.

"Round up the gang, boys—round 'em

all up! They're making fer the border!" he shouted. "I'll see to Jack!" "I'm all right—say, colonel!" Jack raised his voice as the old man showed signs of leading the dashing round-up of Denton's gang. "Colonel—I guess I've stam-peded your mares—the whole bunch of them. The Phantom helped—and we've sure got the real rustler! Get up, Denton!"

Denton got up, sulky and battered, and avoided the contemptuous eyes that stared at him from under the greying brows.

"I'm done!" he growled. "Steve was in it, colonel, and here he comes, I guess, to spill the beans!" put in Jack lightly.

He was right. Steve, true to his word, but doubtless wishing also to get a little of his own back on the double-crossing Denton, rode up, shamefaced but not sulky.

"Well?" said Van Horn curtly. "I'm all in, boss—I'll take what's coming to me," said Steve, almost as bluntly. "We were in it—we used the Phantom to cover our tracks. Guess we knew that if the Phantom was trapped we'd have to lay off for a bit, and this double-crossing rat was out to get over the border with the whole bunch without my knowing it. I'll spill all I know—holy smoke, look at that!"

He broke off with a cry of alarm, and instantly those around him followed the direction of his staring eyes.

The stampeding mares, way down the canyon, were on the narrow trail, the massive white Phantom leading them back to the secret corral as unerringly as a master cowboy!

The rate at which the Phantom travelled was little more than that put out by the frantic mares—but that was not the cause of alarm. It was the fact that Mary van Horn was coming along the trail in the opposite direction—and she could not turn her mare!

They saw the Phantom lift his great head higher than ever, they heard his shrill neigh as he charged down upon the helpless girl—and they saw her mare suddenly swing round and dash along the trail just ahead of the stampeding bunch!

Like lightning Jack leapt for the nearest horse, and his spurs cut deep into the animal's side. Knees and leather urged his mount into as mad a gallop as any of his keenest watchers had ever seen.

Jack's eyes were glazed with the terror he felt at the girl's helplessness. If she fell, she would be battered into a shapeless mass by those thundering hoofs—and the ghastly thought of that beautiful face having an ugly hoof planted upon it stirred Jack as even riding the Phantom had failed to do.

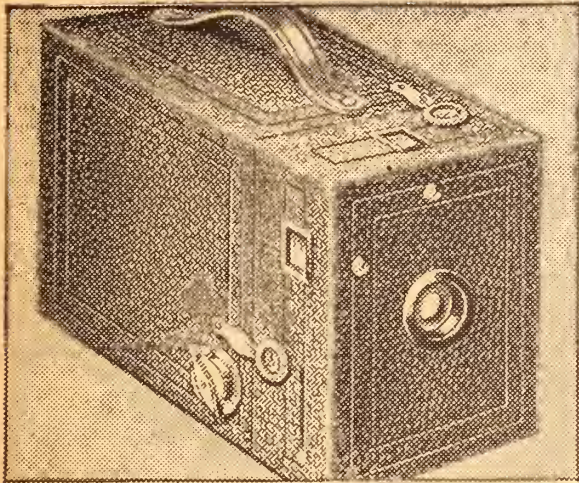
It flashed across his mind now how useful would have been the Phantom—he would have made this mount of his look like a Blackpool donkey. But the Phantom was heading the stampeding mares straight towards the hapless girl!

There was only one way to do anything—that was down the face of the cliff, and down the face of the cliff Jack drove his horse, with a frantic recklessness that asked for death but deserved the reward of success.

He got it—got to the head of the stampeding mares, cut past the loose leaders, even past the Phantom himself, and dashed up to the girl just as her horse stumbled and pitched her headlong to the trail.

It needed a mind capable of forked-lightning thinking to get her out of the grasp of death then. Jack did not stop to think—he flung himself off his

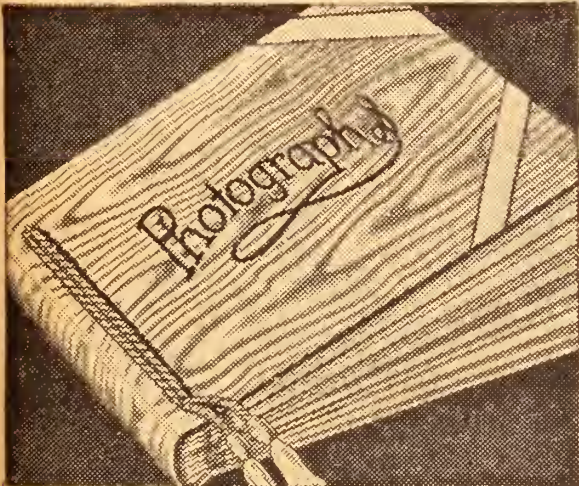
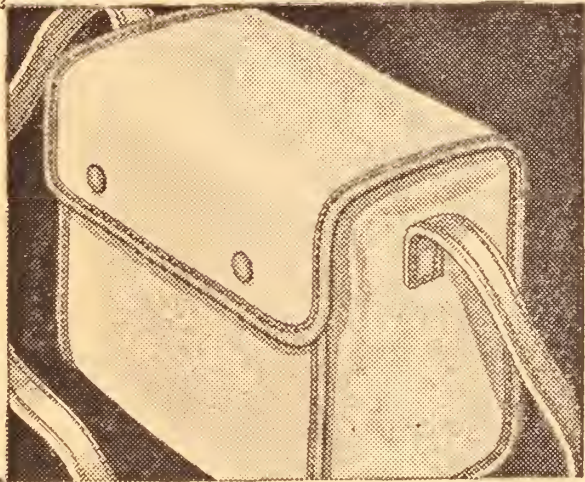
(Continued on page 28.)



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"MEN WITHOUT LAW."

(Continued from page 10.)

He was showing the outlaw the family jewels.

"Three hundred years old," he said proudly. "Beautiful, aren't they? They are to be Juanita's when she marries."

"Father!" cried Juanita in Spanish. "We have made a terrible mistake!"

"What?" cried her father, starting to his feet.

"The man you locked up," she said in English, "is Buck Healy. He's told me things that positively prove his identity. That man is an impostor!"

Murdoch, realising the game was up, stopped back and whipped out his gun. "Get over there!" he cried. "Get away from that safe! Go on!"

Senor del Rey, instead of obeying, made to thrust the casket into the safe. Murdoch fired, and the Mexican collapsed with a groan to the floor.

"Juan! Pedro! Help!" screamed Juanita. But Murdoch snatched up the fallen casket, gripped her so fiercely by the arm that his fingers dug into her flesh, and pulled her out into the patio. In the road beyond the gates the two men who had accompanied him across the border were waiting with three horses.

He mounted his own horse and swept the screaming Juanita up on to his knees. The others sprang into their saddles, and all three went galloping off towards the border.

Jose, Juan, Pedro, and two other servants rushed out from the house a few minutes too late. Three of them ran to the stables, passing the building in which Buck had been imprisoned. He cried out to them, and eventually Jose stepped up to the grille.

Hurriedly he explained matters, and in less than five minutes he was on Silver's back, riding for all he was worth.

Near the border, soon after noon, Murdoch and his companions fell in with the rest of the gang, still searching for the prisoners who had escaped them. They told their story, staring at the agitated girl on their leader's knees and noticing the scratches on his face which told of a struggle abandoned out of sheer weariness.

"I ought to skin you bozos alive!" roared Murdoch savagely.

A burly ruffian pointed suddenly to the hilly trail behind them, down which was galloping a rider on a white horse.

"Here he comes now, chief!" he exclaimed.

Murdoch looked—and was more or less appeased.

"Fred, you and George stop him," he directed. "The rest of you lug-heads come with me."

He swept onward with four of his men, while the specified pair took cover behind fallen rocks and got their lariats ready for action.

As Buck came riding past the rocks the ropes whizzed out simultaneously, descended over his head, and tightened about his arms and chest. Silver pulled up instantly, but Buck was jerked to the ground, and on the ground his captors bound him, hand and foot. They dumped him in the sand behind a rock and rode on.

The fall had nearly stunned him, and it had considerably bruised him. He lay perfectly still for quite a while, then whistled shrilly.

Silver, who had galloped away—in August 22nd, 1934.

telligently enough—so that he should not be captured, heard that whistle and cantered back to his master.

"Come here, son! Come on!" commanded Buck. "Atta, boy—down here! Put your head down and undo this rope. Take a hold—that's it! Take a hold again! Bite it! Pull it up! That's the one!"

With his teeth Silver tugged at the knots that bound Buck's wrists behind his back; tugged and bit till they were loosened—and the rest was easy. Buck, freed of his fetters, rose and stretched his limbs, then climbed into the saddle and rode cautiously in the direction of the enemy's cabin.

To approach it by the pass was to court disaster. He mounted a hill at the back of the hollow and descended a wooded slope. The last part of the journey he accomplished on foot, leaving Silver under the trees; and he crept to the back of the cabin.

The sound of voices informed him that Murdoch and his men were inside with their captive. He climbed to the roof of a lean-to shed, and from the shed to the roof of the cabin itself.

He was convinced that with the aid of the hook over which he had slung the twin rope the evening before, he could clamber from the roof into the loft, but while creeping over the thatch he reached the brick chimney-stack, and there another idea occurred to him.

A fire was burning down below, in the living-room—a fire of logs. He removed a number of cartridges from his belt, and clung to the stack, listening.

Murdoch and three of his men were grouped round the table, while Juanita was shrinking back from the unwelcome attentions of the others.

"You'll get used to us in a few days," the scrubby-faced Fred informed her. "How about a dance?"

"I'll play for you, senorita," chuckled the man who played the guitar.

"You must release me at once!" Juanita cried out to Murdoch. "You can't keep me here like this!"

"I'm sorry," said Murdoch, with a mock bow, "but if these coyotes annoy

you, you can retire to your private boudoir."

He got to his feet and opened a door leading into an inner room—a very small room, crudely furnished, and lit by a window too small to provide even a slim girl with a means of escape.

"You'll be perfectly safe in here," he told her, and, without the slightest ceremony, pushed her in and closed the door.

"Goin' to hold her to ransom, eh?" suggested a bearded ruffian. "She ought to be worth twenty-five thousand dollars, at least."

It was at this moment that Buck dropped a handful of cartridges down the chimney.

There followed a dozen startling explosions, and bullets flew in all directions. The men who were sprawling about the living-room sprang up in alarm, and there was a general rush for the door.

"Must be two or three of 'em!" cried George. "One of 'em took a shot at me."

Murdoch, who had been standing near the fireplace when the explosions occurred, cried out angrily:

"Come back, you fools!" But no notice was taken of his words—everyone of his followers went out, drawing their guns as they went, to do battle with imaginary fees.

Buck Rides Away.

CURSING their folly, Murdoch went over to the little window that commanded a view of the pass. The ladder was beside him, the opening into the loft immediately above him. Clean on to his head and shoulders dropped Buck from above, bearing him to the floor with a crash. His gun went flying, and the back of his head struck the bottom rung of the ladder, but he struck out with his fists and fought his way to his feet.

The door of the inner room opened and Juanita looked out, saw the two struggling figures, and caught sight of a gun on the boards. She darted for-

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ward, snatched up the weapon, and cried:

"Put up your hands!"

Buck, instead of obeying, drove a left hook to Murdoch's jaw that sent him down on his back senseless. Then he turned and grinned.

"Buck Healy!" gasped Juanita. "Why, how in the world—"

"S-s-s-h!" hissed Buck. "That gang is liable to start something any minute!" He ran across the room and bolted the front door. "You watch that window for a while," he directed. "Just for a couple of minutes."

Obediently she went over to the little window and stood there with Murdoch's gun in her hand. There came a rattling at the latch of the door as the cheated crooks tried to re-enter. Voices cried out to Murdoch to open the door; but Murdoch was not only unconscious but by this time had been deprived of most of his clothes!

A head bobbed up outside the window at which Juanita was watching, and she fired through the pane. A shower of glass fell inside the room and out; the head disappeared.

Buck, shedding his own garments in haste, donned those he had stripped from Murdoch's inert body. Then he trussed the outlaw with a rope and dropped a blanket over him. He pulled the brim of Murdoch's big hat well down over his own eyes.

"I sure hope this is going to work," he said. "Come on, senorita! Believe I'm Murdoch, and that I'm going to

take you off. Come on, now—and don't forget to fight and to fight hard! Ready?"

Juanita had turned from the window and was regarding him with astonishment. He had put on Murdoch's chequered shirt and hat, and, sideways, she might very well have mistaken him for that bandit. But she was a quick-witted girl, and she grasped his intention at once.

"Ready," she said in a low voice, and began to scream. "Help!" she cried. "Help!"

Buck dragged her towards the door, tugged back the bolts, raised the latch, and, holding her with apparent fierceness while she beat at him with her little hands and kicked and struggled, he hauled her over the threshold.

The half-dozen men outside fell back, but one of them, more courageous than the rest, demanded gruffly:

"What's up, boss?"

"Get on your horses, men," commanded Buck, doing his best to imitate Murdoch's voice. "We're leaving!"

The men scattered to seek and mount their horses. Murdoch's brown pinto was standing near the water-pipe, and Buck half-carried the struggling Juanita to it. He bundled her on to the saddle, sprang up behind her, and, holding her with violence, swept off towards the pass. Murdoch's men came riding wondering after him.

Through the pass Buck galloped with the girl he adored held close in his arms.

"All right, now," he whispered.

"Needn't scratch my face any more!"

The end of the pass was reached, and Buck shot downwards to the rough roadway below. But in the roadway, on their horses, sat a score or more riders, headed by the sheriff, blocking the way.

"Pnt 'em up!" yelled the sheriff. "Hold 'em in the air, and keep 'em there!"

Raising his hands, Buck rode straight to the sheriff, who gaped at him.

"What's the idea?" he exclaimed blankly.

Tom was sitting on a horse beside the sheriff, and Buck greeted him.

"Hallo, Buck!" said Tom joyfully. "Saw you coming, but didn't know it was you. When we got across the border and saw what had happened we made tracks back here."

"Good work, boy!" cried Buck. "Sheriff, here's Murdoch's gang coming—they think I'm him."

The sheriff barked instructions, and the men who formed his posse set their horses at the hill half-way down which Murdoch's men had now stopped short. A chase followed, up into the hollow, and shots were exchanged. But the outlaws, outnumbered and three of them wounded, were finally rounded up and made prisoners.

Meanwhile, Juanita, sliding down from Buck's knees, had gone anxiously up to Tom.

"My father," she said tremulously. "Is he all right?"

"Yes, ma'am," reassured Tom. "He

"Fine Score that!"



HE was well past the century before he was caught out. A fine score by a good player.

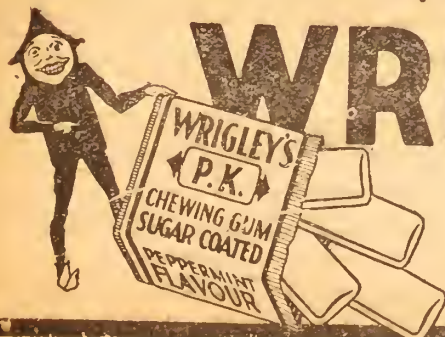
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got a little shoulder wound, that's all."
"Oh, thank goodness it was no worse than that!" faltered Juanita.

"You know," remarked the sheriff. "I came pretty near shooting you, Buck, for a bandit, instead of a gaol-breaker."

"Oh, yeah!" drawled Buck. "Well, it's a good thing you came along when you did, or you might have taken me for 'most anything. That gang was about to wise up that I wasn't Murdoch."

"You've got me going," confessed the sheriff. "I can't figure this thing out at all."

"Don't try—don't try, Jim!" laughed Buck. "I'll figure it all out for you—after I've taken the senorita home."

"Goin' to do that, are you?" said the sheriff. "Don't you think you'll need another horse?"

"No," said Buck, and he dismounted and gave vent to a series of shrill whistles. The members of the posse came riding down with their prisoners, and behind them cantered a big white horse—Silver.

The sheriff looked the prisoners over, but Silver trotted straight up to his master and rubbed his nose against his face. Buck glanced inquiringly at Juanita, and immediately she sped to him, her eyes shining, her face flushed. He vaulted into the saddle and reached down and lifted her up on to his knees. She put her arms round his neck.

"Oh, I see!" growled the sheriff.

"Yeah," nodded Buck. "Say, Jim—Murdoch's up in the cabin there. I think he wants to play you a game of pinocle!"

"Oh, yeah!" said the sheriff. "Well, your brother, here, is a dandy player, and this lets him out, I guess." He proffered a formidable Colt by its barrel. "Take this, and go and get him, Tom," he directed.

"And when you're through," added Buck, "go straight home and tell mum I'll be back to-morrow."

He turned Silver about and went riding off towards the border with Juanita on his knees and in his arms.

"Now I believe everything my brother told me about you!" she said.

"He didn't tell me half enough about you!" retorted Buck.

(By permission of Columbia Pictures and United Artists Corporation, Ltd., featuring Buck Jones and Carmelita Geraghty.)

"PHANTOM OF THE DESERT."

(Continued from page 24.)

own horse, grabbed at the girl, and rushed her to where a log lay across the trail.

In an instant, ruthless as to how he did it, he crushed Mary flat against the log, and listened breathlessly to the pounding hoofs as they roared along the trail.

The thunder came nearer and nearer and louder and louder at a speed which was uncanny. Shadows went over them, dust flicked at his mouth and eyes as he bent right over the girl in an effort to shield her from the flying hoofs.

He succeeded as he deserved to succeed. Only one crashing hoof struck human flesh that day—and that was but a glancing blow upon Jack's own leg.

It seemed an eternity before the last of the shadows passed over them, and the thundering clatter of the hoofs grew less and less—and before realisation came that the danger was over.

It was only then that Jack moved away so that Mary could sit up.

She was as white as the trail dust, but her lips were smiling bravely, and her eyes shining with a light that Jack had dreamed about but had never seen.

"Well, that seems to be the end!" he said, with an effort at gaiety. "Guess I didn't calculate on your coming up the trail, Miss Mary, or I would not have used the Phantom to stampede those mares!"

She wasn't listening to him. She was looking up the side of the canyon, where the Phantom and her own mare, away from the bunch of horses, were walking side by side up the hill.

"Jack!"

"Yes?"

"That's—that's love, isn't it?"

He nodded, smiling.

"I guess that's what makes the world go round!" he commented softly.

He felt a thrill run through him as she gently placed her little white hand into his own strong palm.

"I guess it's making my world go round!" she murmured. "Shall we go home, Jack?"

"Oh, sure—sure!" he almost gulped. "I'm sort o' longing for that home—Mary!"

(By permission of the British Lion Film Corporation, Ltd., starring Jack Perrin and his horse, Starlight.)



(Continued from page 2.)

night in a certain position. It must be kept in exactly that position until the following morning, as perhaps the director knocked off work in the middle of a scene. The person who was sitting in that chair will resume his position there the next morning. If the chair is inadvertently moved, and the fact is not noted, the two scenes will not match. The sitter will suddenly appear to have jumped to another position across the room.

Often articles used as props, cannot be replaced at all if they are taken away. Most extras understand this, but some are careless. Also there are often new extras. Holtzendorf was up against a specially difficult problem recently through the employment of several hundred Mexican extras, some of them notoriously "taking" in their ways. It is said to his credit that the sets were protected, and only minor losses sustained, which in no way held up production.

Curiously enough, flowers must be guarded with special care. If there are a lot of flowers being used on scenes, for instance, each bloom must be watched. When the filming is ended the flowers are rushed to a refrigerator for the night, and the bouquets arranged in exactly the same position as a background in the morning.

People for some reason do not seem to think of flowers as props. They will casually stop up to a bouquet on the set and break off a flower, and women extras will often gather half a dozen roses to take home. Once or twice it has been necessary to check every extra through the gate just to get back an armful of roses that was taken from a set.

Complete harmony is maintained by Chief Holtzendorf with Chief Berg, of the Burbank City Police Force, and both work together in the orderly handling of crowds. Frequently several thousand people are needed for mob scenes, and many more than required apply. Fights sometimes develop among such extras, but they have always been quelled without serious disturbance. It's no easy job guarding a \$3,000,000 plant, really a miniature city, and one inhabited by many temperamental people.

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Boy's CINEMA 2^d

No. 611.

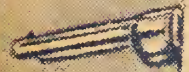
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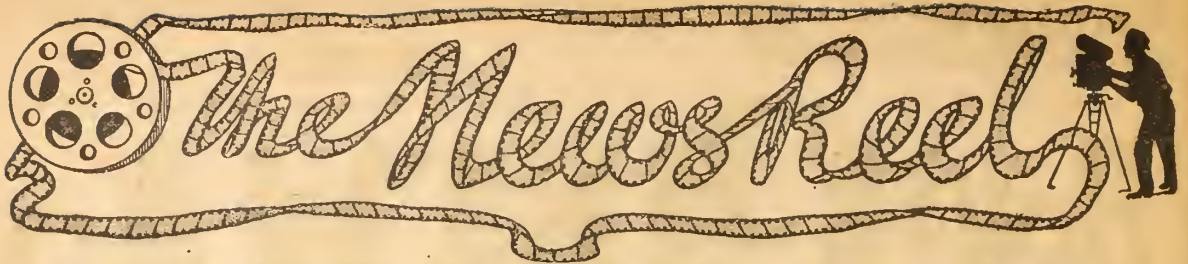
Howard Gibson

With two guns loaded for Action and Thrills.

A STIRRING WESTERN DRAMA.



CLEARING *the* RANGE!



The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"Clearing the Range."

Curt Fremont, Hoot Gibson; Mary Moran, Sally Eilers; Lafe Kildare, Hooper Atchley; Juan Consares, George Mendoza; "Dad" Moran, Robert Homans; Burton, Edward Peil.

"Quick Millions."

"Bugs" Raymond, Spencer Tracy; Dorothy Stone, Marguerite Churchill; Daisy de Lisle, Sally Eilers; Arkansas Smith, Robert Burns; Kenneth Stone, John Wray; Nails Markey, Warner Richmond; Jimmy Kirk, George Raft.

"Westward Bound."

Bob Lansing, Buffalo Bill, jun.; Marge Holt, Allene Ray; Frank, Buddy Roosevelt; Ben Coleman, Ben Corbett; Emma, Fern Emmett; Jim Stone, Yakima Canutt; Steve, Robert Walker; Dick, Tom London; Al, Pete Morrison.

Bitten by a Crocodile.

Charles Bickford had a painful experience recently when a crocodile nearly snapped off his foot. He is appearing in a new picture called "East of Borneo," the scenes of which are laid in the Malay Straits. Everything was faithfully reconstructed on the Californian location even to the shallow river, which Bickford had to wade through, and which was infested with crocodiles.

He had been warned to be careful, but had failed to notice one of the reptiles, which suddenly snapped viciously at one of his feet. If the star had not been wearing extra heavy boots at the time an accident would certainly have happened. As it was he felt the big reptile's jaw close on the leather, and only just managed to wrench his foot away before the grip on it became too vice-like.

The pain necessitated his going to hospital, but he was all right again in a few hours.

Red Haired and Freckled.

From the Hal Roach studios I learn that Sherwood Bailey, jun., a seven-year-old Long Beach youngster, has been signed to a term contract by Hal Roach as a member of the famous "Our Gang" comedies. Sherwood is a typical American boy with an abundance of red hair and freckles.

He will play the rôle of a "tough guy," and he known on the screen as "Spud." As Junior Potter, he may be remembered for his work in "The Potters," a series of short subjects. He was also in "Bad Girl," with Sally Eilers, and will be seen in Gary August 29th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND ISSUE.



TIM McCOY and MARION SHOCKLEY

"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

A fearless young fireman invents a fire-fighting machine, but a fiendish enemy does everything to steal the plans and rob the hero of the girl he worships. Don't miss the opening episode of this grand new serial of breathless suspense and thrilling drama.

"SWEEPSTAKES."

By a trick a jockey is lured away from a kindly master, but at the price of his own honour he plays the game. Disgraced, he swore he would never ride again, but— A thrilling story of the race-course, starring Eddie Quillan.

"WEST OF CHEYENNE."

To save his father from a life-sentence a young cowpuncher penetrates into an outlaw stronghold in search of the real criminal. Starring Tom Tyler.

"THE SEA GOD."

A tale of outlaws of the sea, priceless pearls, a cannibal island, and of a girl who fought for her hero. Starring Richard Arlen and Fay Wray.

Cooper's new picture, "I Take This Woman."

Quick Work.

Some of you have doubtless seen by this time, at the special showing in London, the film record of the world's heavyweight championship fight between Max Schmeling and "Young" Stribling at Cleveland, Ohio. A few minutes after the fight was stopped in the fifteenth round a fast aeroplane left for Canadian territory with the precious film in its round tin. Then a fast launch took it to the liner, and later another aeroplane brought the film to London.

Filming a Bull-Fight.

Though the romantic stuff in "Carmen," the new British International picture, may not have much interest for you fellows, there is one sequence in the story which is bound to have its thrill. This relates to the Spanish bull-fight.

The company, with Mr. Cecil Lewis, the director, went to Spain specially for this purpose, because the securing of the scenes of a real bull-fight was necessary to the success of the production. But the idea was easier planned than carried out. Mr. Lewis was anxious to film the famous Roman Ring at Ronda, but when the vast audience who had assembled to see the bull-fight saw that it was going to be used for picture purposes they set up a vociferous opposition.

For some little time it looked as if the filming would have to be abandoned. Then, through the friendly help of Mariano Rodriguez, the twenty-five-year-old matador hero of the moment, Mr. Lewis was able to stand his camera at the arena barrier. Rodriguez further placed his exceptional talent at the director's disposal by executing the kill on a spot marked within the range of the camera.

Due to the skill of the matador the bull died instantaneously with its forefeet on the small piece of wood which Mr. Lewis had placed on the marked spot. Thus the camera was able to record the most interesting close-up ever secured of a Spanish bull-fight.

Within three hours of filming it Mr. Lewis and his artistes were aboard an express and homeward bound.

Gave Him a Start.

A Western drama was being filmed, and the director was staging a big thrill. After the completion of the scene he turned away from the brink of a high cliff; he noticed a straw dummy lying on the ground.

"Good heavens," he screamed, "who was it we just threw over the cliff?"

Great Pals.

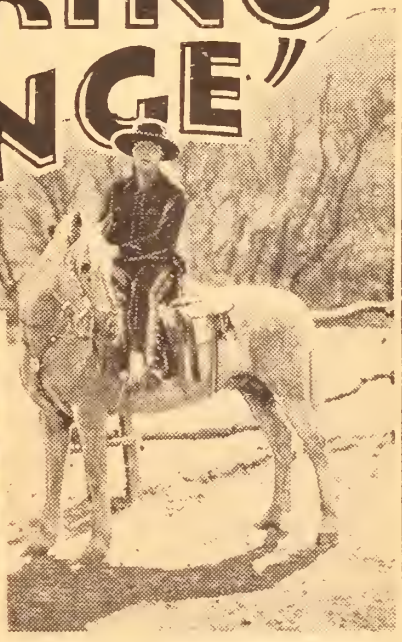
The two Jacks of Paramount's kid picture, "Skippy," are pals although they are as different as possible. Jackie Cooper, who plays the title rôle, is a cocksure young scamp who will soon be eight years of age. Jack Searl, who plays the "heavy," is aged nine, and is always aware of his responsibilities. When tow-headed Jackie Cooper gets in difficulties, which is pretty often, it is the other Jackie who always gets him out and who feels upset when his chum is punished.

Jackie Cooper, for example, fell into dire trouble for eating peanuts against orders and scattering the shells on the floor during "time-off" when "Skippy" was being produced. But

(Continued on page 25.)

Tracking down his brother's slayer, he made out he was yellow and a coward, but as "El Capitan" he blazed his way through a Western crime ring to victory. A thrilling yarn of the Lone Star State.

"CLEARING THE RANGE"



Starring
HOOT GIBSON
and
SALLY EILERS.

The Assassin's Bullet.

RIDING over the southern corner of the Llano Estacado, Texas, you may strike the little cattle town of Comanche, and not so long ago, had you drifted down the main street, you might have seen through the dust of your pony's hoofs a notice-board nailed against the frontage of the local bank.

It read as follows:

"COMANCHE STATE BANK.
President - James Fremont.
Cashier - - Lafe Kildare."

One night, about the hour of eleven, a sallow individual in shirt-sleeves and stetson pushed his way into the bank through the door and looked into the president's office to see Jim Fremont poring over three or four heavy ledgers. "Why, hallo, Jim," the newcomer greeted the man at the desk. "Workin' late, aren't you? I saw the light from outside and thought the bank was bein' robbed or something."

Jim Fremont regarded the man who had just entered with a cold and steely eye.

"The bank has been robbed," he observed deliberately. "And you know it, Kildare!"

"Huh?" The cashier looked at him vacantly. "What's on your mind, Jim?"

"You know what's on my mind as well as I do," Jim Fremont answered vehemently. "You've been borrowing a lot of money you had no right to touch, Kildare—the bank's money. And these books here show exactly how much you've appropriated."

Kildare bit his lip. "I didn't mean to steal it, Jim," he said. "I only wanted it to speculate, and I meant to pay it back. But the

bottom dropped outa the market and I lost every dime."

"Listen, Kildare," Jim Fremont ground out, "most men would throw you into gaol the minute they discovered what you'd been doin', but I'm being lenient. I'll give you time to make up the deficit, and I'll keep quiet about the damning evidence these ledgers reveal. But that money has got to be paid up to the last cent before the end of the month, or I turn the books over to the sheriff. Understand?"

Kildare spread out his hands appealingly. "But how am I gonna raise the dough by then?" he argued desperately. "I'm in a jam, and I've gotta have more time than a month."

Jim Fremont drummed his fingers on his desk. He was a man still in the early thirties, a man whose talents promised a distinguished career in the banking profession.

"I'm sorry, Kildare," he said, "but you'll have to find that cash, or I'll be forced to prosecute."

Lafe Kildare drew back. "All right," he said huskily. "All right—I'll do my best."

Fremont turned his attention to the ledgers again. Kildare, retreating to-

wards the door, paused all at once and shutted his hand hesitantly to the region of his hip. There was something in his mien that gave him the appearance of a hunted thing at bay.

Suddenly his fingers closed on the butt of a six-gun. The touch of cold steel seemed to steady him, and he drew the weapon from its holster—levelled it at the figure of the man at the desk.

There was a deafening smash, and a whiff of acrid gun-smoke enveloped Jim Fremont. A sharp cry sprang to his lips, a cry that ended in a low groan as he tumbled from his chair with a bullet in his heart.

Kildare thrust the six-shooter back into its holster. For an instant panic seized him, and his impulse was to fly the premises. But it was an impulse that he fought down, and, stumbling past Fremont's prone body, he gathered up the ledgers with trembling hands, stowed them in a safe and locked it. Then he slipped out of the bank through a back door, dived into a side street and made for a two-story apartment house where he shared a room with a crony known as Tom Burton.

By the time Kildare gained that haven the town seemed in an uproar. He found Burton at home, and the latter glanced at him inquiringly as he entered.

"What's the rucus down there, Lafe?" he demanded.

Kildare moistened his lips. "How should I know?" he blurted almost savagely.

"Well, you were out, weren't you?" said Burton. "And somebody loosed off a gun, didn't they? I thought you might've heard what the trouble was."

There was a clatter of hoofs outside the house at that moment, and presently footsteps were heard ascending to the room in which Kildare sat.

HELP THE NEWSAGENT.

Have you ever thought how difficult it is for a newsagent to order just the right number of copies of any particular paper each week? You can make his task much easier if you place a regular order with him. You will not only help him to order correctly and avoid waste, but will make sure of getting your copy regularly each week.

Burton lodged. Kildare looked at his associate haggardly.

"Listen," he jerked, "I've been indoors all night. See? I haven't been outside this room."

Burton eyed him shrewdly.

"I get you, Lafe," he drawled.

There was a knock on the door. Burton answered it, and found himself confronted by a deputy. The deputy looked past him.

"Oh, Kildare!" he called. "The sheriff's down below. He'd like to talk to you a minute."

Kildare's hand travelled to his collar nervously. He joined the deputy on a small landing at the top of a flight of stairs which were built against the side of the house and led to the street level. Beneath him he saw the sheriff and a posse of half a dozen men.

"Kildare," the sheriff called to him, "somebody just broke into the bank an' shot Jim Fremont dead!"

"Shot Jim Fremont?" Kildare echoed in feigned horror. "Shot Jim Fremont dead? Good heavens, sheriff! Did you get the killer?"

"No," was the answer, "but me and the boys are spradin' out in the hope of sightin' him. I wondered if you would go to the bank and take over there. You know—see that nothing's disturbed."

Kildare had regained his composure.

"I'll do that, sheriff," he said eagerly, "right away."

The deputy who had summoned him was already descending the stairs. He followed the sheriff as the latter galloped off with the posse, and Kildare leaned weakly against the rail of the landing on which he stood.

A voice spoke behind him. It was the voice of Burton.

"Indoors all night, huh?" he mused. "So it was you that killed Fremont, Lafe."

"I had to do it," Kildare breathed. "I was in a corner. I—had to do it."

Two days later the name of James Fremont no longer figured on the plate outside the Comanche State Bank. For by that time the notice-board displayed the legend:

"President - Lafe Kildare."

Curt Fremont.

A YOUNGSTER in a broad-brimmed stetson and Texas star-boots cantered into Comanche, and looked around him with the air of one to whom the little township recalled memories. He was a blond young man with a cheerful face that did not seem to imply an over-abundance of manly qualities at the first glance, though there was a glint in his eyes reminiscent of tried steel.

In a shady corner near a saloon a couple of old-timers were exhibiting to each other their skill with the six-shooter.

The young horseman, whom many in the town might have recognised as Curt Fremont, brother of the slain bank president, caught sight of them and paused to watch them. He saw one of the aged fellows spin his forty-five deftly in the air and catch it by the butt, then challenge the other to emulate the trick.

The challenge was accepted, but in the attempt the second veteran's finger fouled the trigger and a shot smashed out startlingly.

Thirty yards down the street a couple of spirited horses harnessed to a buckboard dashed forward in a panic, and an elderly Spanish woman in a man-

August 29th, 1931.

tilla lost her hold of the reins and screamed for help. That scream did not go unanswered, for Curt Fremont clapped his heels to his bronco's flanks and galloped after the buckboard in full pursuit.

He overtook the runaways ere they had gone fifty paces, and dragged them to a standstill, and he was waving aside the gratitude of the senora when a Mexican youth sped from a nearby store and ran to the spot.

"Madre mio," he panted, seizing the senora's hands, "you are not hurt?"

"Thanks to this young cahallero, no," the elderly woman in the mantilla answered, indicating Curt.

The Mexican youth turned his head, and next moment he uttered a cry of recognition.

"Why, Curt Fremont," he exclaimed. "We haven't seen you for years. Madre mio," he added to his mother, "do not tell me you did not know Curt."

"I would never have recognised him, Juan," the senora replied. "What are you doing in Comanche, Curt?"

Curt smiled.

"Well, I'm tired of ridin' herd for other folks," he said. "I thought I'd settle in Comanche and start ranchin' on my own."

Juan looked at him seriously.

"You have heard—about your brother, Curt?" he murmured, and all at once Curt Fremont's eyes seemed to harden.

"Yes," he said, "I've heard—"

The buckboard had been pulled up outside the Comanche State Bank, and at that moment Lafe Kildare emerged from it. As he saw Juan's mother he came over and touched his hat.

"Good morning, Senora Consares," he said. "I'm glad you're in town. I wanted to see you about that mortgage the bank holds on your rancho. I'm afraid I'll have to foreclose on it."

The old lady gazed at him in consternation.

"But, Senor Kildare," she protested, "I cannot pay the bank that money. In three-four months, yes. But just now it is impossible."

"You have cattle, senora," Kildare observed. "If you can't pay on the nail, I'll have to take your herd in lieu of cash."

"Senor, that would ruin me," Juan's mother cried. "Of what use is my land without cattle? How am I to exist?"

Kildare shrugged.

"Sorry, senora," he said, "but the bank needs the money that was loaned to you, and if you can't settle I'll have to have that stock."

Curt leaned down from the saddle.

"Are you Mr. Kildare?" he asked in the friendliest of tones, and, as his brother's slayer nodded: "I'm Curt Fremont," he went on. "Jim used to mention you often in his letters to me. He had a lotta respect for you, Mr. Kildare, and I'm glad to meet you."

Kildare made some gruff rejoinder. He had given a start on learning Curt's identity, and for a moment a flicker of fear had darted through his eyes. He was not the whining creature who had gone in terror for his skin the night he had shot the elder Fremont, however. Since then he had walked with a confident step, a kind of a swagger, knowing full well the powerful position in which circumstances and his own villainy had placed him.

"You know, Mr. Kildare," Curt continued. "I was thinking of settlin' down in Comanche. Did my brother leave me any property, aside from the little rancho he owned?"

"Not a cent's worth," was the blunt answer. "Not even that little rancho. You know, there was a big deficit at the bank when your brother died, and his estate had to be attached to help meet the obligations."

He turned away, and Curt was left with Juan and his mother. He saw Kildare join a crowd of men near a hitch-rail, and, all having mounted, ride with them out of the town.

"Kildare, he travel with a bad bunch of hombres now," said Juan, "and the whole town seems plenty 'fraid of him."

"Oh, I don't know," mused Curt. "I'd kind of like to see more of him. Say, Juan, I'm going over to stay for a while at the Morans. If you aim to get in touch with me any time you'll find me there."

He parted from Juan and his mother a few minutes afterwards, and took the trail that led through the rocky country south of Comanche to the Moran outfit, one of the largest ranches in the county.

It was owned by 'Dad' Moran, who had been a close friend of Curt's father when the latter had been alive, and Curt met the grizzled old cattleman as he was coming off the range with some of his hands.

"Why, Curt," declared the rancher, offering him a big, bronzed fist, "I'm powerful glad to see you. Was just wonderin' when Mary Lou an' I could be expectin' you. Go on into the house and meet her. I'll join you there as soon as I've finished some business I've got to attend to."

Curt dismounted at the door of the trim ranch-house and walked into the living-room, where he was looking around him as on a scene that conjured up memories when a light footstep on a staircase caught his attention.

Mary Moran appeared a moment later, a winsome brunette who had been the sweetheart of Curt's boyhood. As she caught sight of him she hurried towards him with outstretched hands.

"Curt!" she exclaimed. "Gee, it's good to see you again. But my, you've changed some—you're taller, and more grown-up."

Curt grinned.

"You've changed too," he declared. "Why, the last time I saw you you were only so high." He indicated her former stature, and then: "No, maybe taller than that," he added, drawing her closer and pressing her head against his chest. "About so high, I should say—or maybe—"

"Now you're fooling, Curt," she interrupted laughingly, breaking away from him.

Dad Moran came into the house, and, lighting a pipe, blew out a cloud of smoke ere he spoke:

"Well, Curt," he said, in sober tones. "I suppose you've come back to Comanche to get the man that shot your brother Jim."

It was as if a cloud passed across Curt's face, a fleeting cloud that vanished to leave his habitual, ingenuous expression unimpaired.

"Well, of course, I'd like to see the snake that killed Jim brought to justice," he claimed, "but I figured on settlin' down hereabouts, too—maybe buyin' some little property and startin' on my own. I'd kind of hoped to take over that land Jim worked as a sideline to his banking career, but Kildare tells me he had to take it over to settle some of the bank's liabilities."

Dad Moran took the pipe from his mouth and looked at Curt grimly.

"Do you mean to tell me that you

were talkin' to Kildare?" he demanded. "Why not?" Curt asked. Moran's glance hardened. "Son," he stated, "there's a lotta folk in and around Comanche that have the idea it was Kildare himself who was responsible for your brother's death, and they might say so if they dared."

"Oh, I've heard that, too," Curt murmured, "but I don't aim to take no notice of idle gossip. Besides, I didn't come here to start any trouble and get in wrong with anybody. I want to settle down peaceable-like, and not get my hide plugged with lead. By the way, Daddy Moran, where's my room?" "The one above the porch," said Moran, and the words seemed to come almost harshly from his lips.

Curt went up to the apartment that had been set aside for him, and when he had gone Dad Moran exchanged a queer glance with Mary.

"To settle down peaceable-like," he muttered darkly. "Not get his hide plugged with lead. Say, that's no Fremont talk. That boy's not the man his father was—no, nor the man that his brother Jim was!"

"He seems to have changed," she said, "changed terribly."

The Spoilers.

THERE was a commotion outside the ranch-house, which brought forth Dad Moran and Mary. Curt appearing on their heels at a leisurely pace.

A troop of horsemen had clattered past the corral to the front door of the dwelling, riding from the rolling mesquite valleys towards the border. Lafe Kildare was at the head of the band, which comprised his hirelings, and in the midst of the party was a youngster who had obviously received rough handling.

His wrists were bound behind his back. His forehead was flecked with blood, and his features were bruised, and he seemed in so sorry a plight that he could scarce keep the saddle. Many were the marks of cowardly treatment that he bore, cowardly because Kildare's followers were fully a score in number. The youth was a

Juan—

Old Dad Moran glared up at Kildare as the latter spoke a greeting to him.

"What have you been doing to that boy?" the rancher demanded harshly. "What's he tied up for?"

"For resistin' the course o' the law," Kildare answered briefly. "He tried to pull a gun on one o' my men when we called to impound his mother's cattle in lieu of the mortgage money she owes."

Dad Moran's face grew red with anger.

"Kildare," he blazed, "you're makin' yourself mighty unpopular in these parts, and I aim to have you know that I'm not your friend. As for the Comanche State Bank, I'm severin'

all connection with it while you're president."

Kildare smiled crookedly. "I reckon it was on that score I dropped in here while headin' north with the senora's cattle," he stated. "Moran, you'll recall that a heavy deficit was discovered at the bank after Jim Fremont's death, and I'd like to remind you that you and certain others stood guarantee for all money deposited when that bank was founded."

"Well?" Dad Moran ground out. "Well," Kildare continued, "you're legally liable for part of the cash that's missin', and your share is twenty thousand dollars, which must be paid afore the end of the month."

Moran was speechless for a moment. When he did find his voice it was husky with indignation.

"Where do you think I can raise twenty thousand dollars in a month?" he blurted.

Kildare shrugged. "That's a question that concerns yourself, not me," he answered.

Curt Fremont had drawn close, a vacuous expression on his face, and, standing close to Juan's horse, he suddenly caught the Mexican youth's eye. In the glance that Juan bestowed on him there was an appeal that should have been irresistible.

"Curt," he said, audibly enough for Kildare to hear. "I could not stand by and let them r-rob my mother of her all. Take care of her for me, I beg you."

Curt looked away. "Say, I've got nothin' to do with this!" he protested. "I like you, Juan, but I ain't aimin' to champion other folks in their troubles. I got plenty of my own—seem' about raisin' enough dough to buy a ranch, an' everything. An' I aim to live peaceable, without ruinin' foul of nobody."

If ever anyone registered bewilderment it was Juan in the moment of hearing that speech, so unlike what the Curt of former days might have been expected

to deliver. As for Kildare, who had caught every word, he looked down with amused contempt at the brother of the man he had slain, and then sent his pony forward with a pressure of the knees, his hirelings and their captive following him.

Curt walked back into the living-room of the ranch-house, where he was presently joined by Mary and her father, and it was with a bitterly scornful expression on her pretty face that Mary approached him.

"Curt Fremont," she said, "aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

Curt looked at her in an injured fashion.

"For not takin' Juan's part?" he inquired. "Why should I be? I didn't come here lookin' for a rakes. I laid off my guns long ago, for there ain't no sense in settlin' arguments with 'em, and maybe gettin' plugged full o' holes."

"Oh, you're impossible!" Mary snapped.

Curt shrugged his shoulders and wandered upstairs, where he was heard to close and lock his door.

Once the key was turned his manner underwent a change—a change that might have startled the Morans more than his apparent chicken-heartedness had done. Like a cloak his pose of leisurely self-indulgence fell away from him, and, a glint as of iron in his eye, he rummaged through his personal belongings and drew forth those two six-guns which he had claimed to have laid aside, and also a Winchester rifle.

Armed with these, he quietly raised the sash of his window, lowered himself to the porch, and then dropped lightly to the ground. His brone was hard by, and, leading it by the bridle till he figured it was out of earshot, he swung himself into the saddle and dashed into a belt of chaparral that screened him from view.

Following a track through the thickets, a short cut that picked up the Comanche road some miles to the north,

"Hey," he complained in drowsy accents. "Whatsa idea? Can't a feller get any sleep around here?"



he gained a mass of craggy rocks that suited his purpose. Here he chose a vantage-point overlooking the trail along which Kildare and his gang must pass, and here he set about making certain preparations for their coming.

Kildare and his band hove in taken fifteen minutes after Curt had taken up position, and they were riding between the tumbled masses of rock when a voice hailed them startlingly—a voice shouting out an order in the accents of a Mexican, and unrecognisable as Curt Fremont's.

"Ho, there—halt, amigos! Make not a movement, or we fire!"

Kildare drew rein abruptly and turned his head with a scared look, his hirelings doing the same. They scanned the rocks, but saw no one.

"Pedro, Lopez, Esteban," Curt shouted to three imaginary companions, "hold their leader covered, and shoot to kill if he tries any tricks! The rest of you watch his men."

Having given these instructions, he sped to various points in the rocks with all speed, calling out a word here and there, and changing the tone of his voice to raise the impression that the commands were being answered by numerous followers.

"Si, capitan." "Si, capitan." "Ho, there, Miguél, you heard El Capitan? *Carambo!* We'll riddle any of them who so much as twitches a finger!"

And so back to his original station, where he again assumed the tones of El Capitan, but spoke in broken English.

"Mebbe you hombres no' understand Spanish too well, eh? So! I tell my men to shoot to keel if you try any trecks. You understand that verce well, yes?"

A sullen silence was maintained by Kildare and his associates. They kept glancing about them furtively for some sign of the Mexicans whom they believed to be lying in ambush.

Once more Curt spoke.

"Let the youth who rides a prisoner with you come forward alone to the rocks," he said. "R-remember—alone!"

Kildare glanced over his shoulder at one of his ruffians, who was holding the bridle of Juan's horse. He signed to the man to release it, and Juan pressed his heels into the bronco's flanks, urging the creature towards the mighty boulders from behind which the imperious voice of El Capitan had sounded.

He had not reached those rocks when a member of Kildare's gang made a suspicious movement. Curt detected it, and snatched the end of a rope lying at his feet. The rope was connected to the trigger of his rifle, wedged in a crevice some distance away, and the weapon spat flame and lead with a smashing report.

The bullet soared above the heads of the rogues on the trail harmlessly enough, but it convinced them that the mysterious El Capitan's words had been no idle piece of bluff, and every hand went higher, particularly those of the gangster whose movement had inspired the shot.

Juan reached the rocks and allowed his horse to push through them. As he caught sight of Curt he made as if to utter a cry, but Curt silenced him with a gesture, severed the cords that bound the Mexican youth's wrists, and then pointed to a narrow defile which led on to a strip of prairie.

Juan nodded and cantered towards the pass. Curt, vaulting into the saddle of his own bronc, paused only to call a final command to his imaginary band of followers.

"We go, companeros," he said, audibly August 29th, 1931.

enough for Kildare and his men to hear. "Keep these carrion-birds covered till we are well clear, and if they try to follow—shoot to kill!"

Kildare and his hirelings remained motionless for many seconds, listening to the retreating hoofs of the horses ridden by Juan and El Capitan. But as the silence of the immediate vicinity remained unbroken either by voice or movement, vague doubts began to take shape in their minds, and presently Kildare plucked up enough courage to signal an advance on the rocks.

They obeyed him hesitantly, and Kildare brought up the rear. As progress was made without a shot being fired, the rogues grew bolder and forced their horses to quicken pace. Next moment they were in the very midst of the empty rocks, and staring in mingled rage and chagrin at the rifle with the rope attached to its trigger.

"Tricked, by thunder!" snarled Kildare, and then suddenly one of his men pointed through the defile to the strip of prairie beyond, where a swirl of dust was rising towards a sky that had darkened with the approach of nightfall.

"There they go!"

Kildare lashed at his horse, and with his gang in full career behind him, he gave chase—a chase that led southward again through the chaparral.

It was impossible on account of the gloom to recognise the identity of Juan's rescuer, and, failing to make up on the fugitives, Kildare could hazard no guess at it. But the trail led direct to the Moran rancho, where, a minute or two before, the scoundrelly bank president and his hirelings burst clear of the thickets, Curt and Juan disposed of their horses and climbed noiselessly to the room above the porch.

Once in that room Curt told Juan to conceal himself under the bed, and, having undressed and unlocked the door, slipped between the sheets. Hardly was his head on the pillow when Kildare and his men drew rein at the ranch-house.

Kildare hammered on the front door with the butt of a six-gun, and the summons brought old Dad Moran and Mary to the threshold.

"What's the idea in settin' up this confounded rucus, Kildare?" Dad Moran demanded as he faced his visitor.

"I'm lookin' for two men that rode this way," Kildare blazed. "One was Juan, and the other was some ornery fox that tricked us into surrenderin' him. Where are they?"

"How should I know?" Moran retorted angrily. "Nobody's stopped here since you looked in an hour ago yourself."

Kildare's eyes narrowed.

"I ain't believin' that," he rapped out. "We trailed 'em to this ranch-house, an' I aim to search it. Understand?"

"You can come in alone," was the stern rejoinder, "but keep your men outside. I ain't havin' them a-troopin' through my home."

Kildare agreed to this, and, after a tour of the ground floor, moved towards the staircase.

"There's no one up there but that peace-lovin' jack-rabbit Curt Fremont," Dad Moran observed testily.

Kildare paused thoughtfully. Curt Fremont, eh? Supposing Curt Fremont had been pulling wool over his eyes, supposing he was not the timid individual he appeared to be?

"I'd like to see Curt Fremont," Kildare growled.

Dad Moran took a lamp and led the

way up to Curt's room. He made as if to knock on the door; but Kildare restrained him, and, drawing his six-gun again, flung open the door without preliminary.

The sound of deep snoring came from the far side of the room, and the lamplight played on Curt's innocent face. He seemed to be in the land of dreams; but Kildare was not satisfied, and he jammed his six-gun into Curt's ribs.

Curt sat up sleepily and blinked at the bank president.

"Hey," he complained in drowsy accents, "whatsa idea? Can't a feller get any sleep around here?"

Ho struggled out of bed with an effort and yawned capaciously, a comical figure clad in a striped night-shirt.

"Whatsa matter, anyway?" he demanded.

"Aw, nothin'," growled Kildare, and strode out of the room again with Dad Moran on his heels.

Curt listened for a moment to their retreating footfalls, and then, glancing over his shoulder, saw the heel of a riding-boot protruding from under the bed. It was only by the greatest good fortune that Lufe Kildare had not discerned it and dragged Juan Consares from his place of concealment.

Curt kicked at the boot lustily.

"You can come out now, but next time anybody looks in here keep out of sight for the love o' Mike."

Juan crawled forth and stood beside Curt, his hand on the cowboy's shoulder.

"How can I ever thank you, amigo?" he murmured.

"Aw, forget it," Curt told him. "Say, I suppose you got a pretty big surprise when you came through those rocks and saw me, huh?"

Juan smiled.

"Not so verce big surprise, Curt," he answered. "You fooled Kildare and those other hombres, but I knew by the voice that it was an Americano who had saved me, and not a Mexican."

"How come?" Curt inquired.

"Well," said Juan laughingly, "your Spanish is terrible."

Curt dressed himself, and two or three minutes later made his way downstairs to find some grub. He entered the living-room as Kildare was on the point of taking his leave, having explained to the Morans in detail the reason for his call.

"I suppose you're satisfied now, at any rate," Dad Moran observed contemptuously.

"I suppose so," Kildare rejoined in a disgruntled tone, and was making his way towards the front door when Curt hurried after him.

"Oh, Mister Kildare," he said innocently, "could you lend me a hundred dollars?"

"No, you blockhead," the bank president snapped, and slammed out of the house.

Curt pretended to look hurt, and stood near the door for a spell with his hands in his pocket. He was aroused by the voice of Mary Lou.

"What a man!" she breathed.

Curt turned his head.

"Who?" he asked.

"El Capitan," Mary answered, "the Mexican who just held up Kildare and all his gang single-handed and rescued Juan Consares."

"El Capitan?" Curt repeated.

"What's his real name?"

"I don't know," Mary Lou retorted.

"But I do know that it isn't Curt Fremont," she added sarcastically.

Curt looked at her unabashed.

"O' course it isn't," he declared. "In the first place, I've got a respect for my hide. In the second place, I wouldn't do anything that might make trouble for you and Dad."

He walked in the direction of the kitchen, but looked round as he reached the threshold of it.

"An' in the third place, I don't look like a Mexican," he stated, "an' my Spanish is terrible."

He passed out of sight, to reappear presently with a plate laden with food.

"Oh, say, Mary Lou," he inquired, pausing on his way to the staircase, "if you're goin' into town with the buckboard to-morrow maybe you'd giunne a lift."

"You're got a horse, haven't you?" the girl said icily.

"Yeah," Curt replied, "but you sorta convinced me I ain't man enough to ride him."

One Thousand Dollars Reward.

W HILE Mary Lou made some purchases at the general store, Curt Fremont remained in the buckboard with a thoughtful expression on his face, and he was only aroused from his reverie when a passer-by hailed him.

"Why, hallo, Slim!" Curt greeted, recognising an old acquaintance. "How's tricks? Still raisin' stock on that ranch o' yours down by the border?"

The other man gave a bitter, mirthless laugh.

"I don't own that ranch any more, Curt," he said. "The bank held a note of mine, and Kildare foreclosed on it and attached my entire outfit. I'm workin' down at the stockyard now. There's a lot more of your old friends there. Their ranches were taken over by Kildare as well."

Curt leaned closer to him. "Would you boys like to get back at Kildare?" he asked in an undertone.

"Show us how!" was the eager rejoinder.

"Maybe I will," Curt told him. "You know, Slim, all Texas ain't big enough for me an' Lufe Kildare—an' it's plenty big. But just now I'm lyin' low."

His companion looked around him guardedly.

"Listen, Curt," he said, "it wouldn't be a bad thing if we could get El Capitan to work with us."

"Who?" Curt inquired innocently.

"El Capitan, the Mexican daredevil that held up Kildare and his gang yesterday. Take a stroll over to the bank there, and read what it says on the notice-board."

Curt nodded.

"I will, Slim," he agreed. "An' don't forget what I said. I'll be seein' yuh."

He descended from the buckboard and crossed the street, making his way to the bank's premises. On the notice-board that his acquaintance had mentioned he discovered a bill referring to the incident of the previous day:

"One Thousand Dollars Reward For Information Leading to the Arrest of The Bandit known as El Capitan."

It was while Curt was considering this notice that he suddenly became aware that a Mexican senorita had driven up in a buggy and was making urgent

signals to him. Only when the cowboy approached to within a few feet of the equipage did he recognise Juan.

"Buenos dias, senor," Juan said, coyly drawing the veil of a mantilla over his face.

"Hully gee," breathed Curt, "what are you masquerootin' around town for?"

Juan became earnest.

"I stole away to my mother's and got these clothes," he explained. "Curt, my mother is penniless, and she is hungry. What am I to do?"

Curt crammed a few notes into the Mexican youth's fist. "Buy some grub with these," he said. "Get it at the Mexican store. They won't betray you there. An' listen, Juan, I know a way we can get some ready cash for your mother. See you later."

Juan drove on, and had scarcely left Curt when the latter was joined by a sturdily-built man of fifty.

"Well, if it ain't Jim Bellamy," Curt exclaimed. "Say, don't tell me they've made you sheriff since I left these parts," he added, observing a star that was pinned to Bellamy's waistcoat.

"They sure have, Curt," Bellamy informed him.

"That must be a pretty good job," Curt murmured, "with the bank offerin' thousand dollar rewards."

The sheriff addressed him in a confidential tone.

"Aw, I ain't worryin' much about El Capitan," he said. "Of course, under the circumstances, it would be my duty to arrest him. But it's my private opinion he deserves a medal."

"I'm glad you feel that way, sheriff," Curt announced with a grin.

"By the way," observed Bellamy, "who was the lady I saw you with just now?"

Curt's grin broadened. "Her name begins with 'Juan,'" he answered, "and I'm not tellin' you any

more. If you knew that girl you might take her away from me."

The sheriff laughed heartily and passed on, and Curt had turned his attention to the reward notice again when Mary Lou appeared at his side.

"Hallo," she said mockingly, as she realised the object of his interest, "are you thinking of earning that thousand dollars?"

"Why not?" Curt asked her. "If I could capture that outlaw an' get the reward I'd be able to start buyin' a ranch."

Mary Lou made no attempt to restrain her mirth as she pushed past him and entered a drug-store farther along the street. But she might have gained a very different impression of Curt Fremont had she been able to follow the trend of his thoughts and activities in the next few minutes.

For the instant the coast was clear Curt unpinned the reward notice, scribbled a few lines on the back of it and then, slipping into Kildare's empty office by a side-door, laid the paper on the scoundrelly bank president's desk.

Approaching footfalls warned Curt to make himself scarce, and he slipped out of the room a moment before Kildare entered it. The crook discovered the message almost at once.

"If you want El Capitan, go to the Consares Rancho at midnight to-night," it ran. "He will be there. Bring the thousand dollars with you.—A FRIEND."

That evening, behind the locked door of his bed-room at the Moran outfit, Curt Fremont decked himself out in the gay costume of a caballero from Spanish America, a costume comprising velvet calzoneros with seams unbuttoned at the ankles, a dark silk shirt, a black kerchief



"Hello," she said mockingly, as she realised the object of his interest, "are you thinking of earning that thousand dollars?"

ted tightly around the head and a flat-brimmed hat with a chin-strap.

"You know," he said to Juan, who was still dressed as a senorita, "I never would've thought of this rig-out if Kildare hadn't put the idea into my head with that reward notice o' his. C'mon, Juan, let's beat it. But don't make any noise. So long as the Morans don't know you're here, nor what I'm up to, then I reckon they can't be blamed by Kildare for anything that happens."

"I understand," Juan answered, and, going to the window, he clambered over the sill, lowered himself silently to the porch and dropped to the ground.

Curt followed him, and together they hurried through the gloom to the stables. Curt took his own horse and Juan one of Dad Moran's. They walked the animals until they felt certain they were beyond earshot, then they pushed on into the darkness at the gallop, heading south for the Consares rancho.

A strong body of men were riding towards the same destination from Comanche. They were Kildare and the coterie of rascality that he had gathered around him since he had come into power, and they reached the Consares hacienda shortly before midnight.

Kildare confronted the Senora Consares alone, leaving his men in a cordon around the house.

The bank president wasted no words.

"I'm here in answer to a message I got to-day, senora," he said, "telling me I could lay hands on El Capitan if I showed up at midnight. But that's not the only reason I came. You've got your son Juan hidden in this house, and I want him. I'm gonna make an example o' that pup and show everybody in this section that I'm not the man to cross. You'd better turn him over afore I order my men to search the outfit."

"Senor," Juan's mother protested, "I give you my word I do not know where my son is hiding!"

"Don't lie!" Kildare rapped out, but before he could say more a door swung open behind him and the barrel of a six-gun was thrust into the small of his back.

The hand that held the gun was Curt's, but Kildare did not turn around to ascertain his identity. With a scared expression on his face he reached for the air.

"I am glad the Senor Keeldare is on time," said Curt, imitating the accents of a Mexican, and with the words he wrapped his arm around the crook's throat and dragged him forcibly into the black darkness of the room from which he had stepped.

The door was slammed and locked, and Senora Consares was left staring at it in bewilderment. For Curt had not taken her into his confidence, and the whole affair was as much a surprise to her as it must have been to Kildare.

She was only aroused from her stupor by the appearance of Tom Burton, who had become Kildare's right-hand man since the latter had stepped into Jim Fremont's shoes.

"Where's Kildare?" Burton demanded.

The senora made some evasive, faltering rejoinder which was interrupted by the hammering of Kildare's heels against the locked door of the other room. With a yell that brought a crowd of his associates into the house Burton hurled himself at that door.

The rest of the gangsters hastened to his assistance, and their combined efforts smashed down the door. In the gloom of the other room they descried the bound form of Kildare.

"Gimme a gun," the bank president

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snarled, as soon as he had been released.

At that precise moment a dark-eyed senorita emerged from the house by a side-door at which one of Kildare's men had been posted.

"Hey, where are you goin', senorita?" the ruffian demanded.

The senorita had drawn the veil of her mantilla over her face, so that the gangster failed to observe that the "damsel's" complexion was of a decidedly masculine texture. He merely grinned a self-satisfied smirk as the senorita made eyes at him.

The masquerading Juan having thus diverted the rogie's attention, Curt moved from the doorway and planted himself behind the gangster. Smirking, the man received the full force of Curt's gun-butt on the back of his skull, and collapsed without a sound.

By the time Kildare and the rest of the gang blundered out of the house, Curt and Juan had hit the saddle and were putting distance between themselves and the scene of their escapade.

They had risked their lives to provide the senora, Juan's mother, with a little ready cash—and they had not failed in their project. For, going through to the room where Kildare had been so neatly trussed the senora caught sight of a bundle of notes pinned to the door-post with a knife, the blade of which gleamed in the light from the hall.

Surrounded!

CURT and Juan reached the Moran outfit and swung themselves out of the saddle. Juan chased the horses into the barn, fastened the big door on them and then dived into a monstrous pile of hay. Curt sprang to the porch and climbed to the window of his room, only to find that the shutters had been drawn over it in his absence.

He was compelled to drop to the ground again and slip into the ranch-house by the front door. The place was in darkness, but he felt his way to the staircase and was making for his room when he heard Kildare and his gang come up at the gallop.

Next instant the hammering of Kildare's gun-butt on the front-door was echoing through the house.

The sound brought Mary Lou from her room, and she stepped out on to the landing with a lighted candle in her hand. Curt ducked into a niche close to the head of the stairs, and as she was passing him he jumped out on her and snuffed the flame.

She uttered a little cry, sharp and querulous, but in spite of the darkness realised that she was confronted by a man in Mexican attire, though his face she could not discern.

"Hush, senorita," he whispered. "I no hurt you."

"El Capitan?" she breathed, in a thrilled tone.

"At your service, senorita," was the answer, and then Curt drew her back into the niche as a splash of lantern-light filled the end of the corridor.

Dad Moran put in an appearance. He was armed, and with an ominous expression on his face he made his way downstairs. He gained the living-room even as the front door burst open under a combined attack by Kildare and his ruffians, and next moment Mary Lou and her companion on the landing heard the old man's enraged tones.

"Kildare, this is my house! What the blazes do you mean by breakin' into it this way—"

"We want El Capitan, Moran," came the grim rejoinder. "We trailed him here!"

"I don't know what you're talkin' about—"

Dad Moran did not complete the sentence, for two of Kildare's gangsters worked round to the rear of him and then pounced on him to wrest his gun from his grasp.

"Moran," said Kildare venomously, "I'm gonna search the house, an' I'm gonna search it from top to bottom!"

With the words he crossed to a little table that stood near the foot of the stairs, a table on which Moran had set the lantern when he had descended a minute before.

From the landing Curt saw Kildare reach for the lantern, and with an unexpectedness that took the girl completely by surprise he caught Mary Lou in his arms and kissed her.

Then he turned towards the head of the staircase again, plucked out his six-gun, and fed that lantern with a blast of lead that plunged the living-room into darkness and sent Kildare leaping back in alarm.

Scarce had the forty-five belched flame than Curt dived down the stairs at the top of his speed.

Kildare let out a yell and blundered to meet him, but was immediately mistaken for El Capitan by one of his own men. Meanwhile, Curt paused in his rapid descent and vaulted the banisters to land with a thud on a table in the middle of the room.

A gangster scrambled up to tackle him. Curt slammed his fist to the ruffian's jaw, and at the same time drove his heel into the face of another man hovering behind him. Then he sprang to the floor, only to be surrounded immediately.

Blows were exchanged, and the mêlée waxed fast and furious. It involved half a dozen men, and the rest of the gang hung about the fringe of the struggle, ready to leap upon El Capitan if he managed to break free.

They did not know that El Capitan, alias Curt Fremont, was no longer engaged in the scuffle. With the advantage of being more accustomed to the gloom than his adversaries, he had slid under the table and was waiting the first opportunity of making a dash for liberty.

Near by, two of Kildare's gang were fighting tooth and nail, each convinced that the other was the mysterious Mexican dare-devil. Presently one of them was knocked to the floor, and finished up close to where Curt was crouching. The cowboy immediately dragged the cover off the table and flung it over the unfortunate ruffian's figure.

Someone pounced on the prostrate gangster, claiming that he had secured El Capitan. Three other men followed suit, and he who had been wrapped in the table-cloth received the drubbing of his life, his cries of protest being too muffled and indistinct to enlighten his assailants.

Meanwhile Curt slid from under the table and darted across the room, only to be seen by another of Kildare's gang.

"There he goes!" the crook bellowed, chasing after Curt, but a moment later the pursuer collided with Kildare, who let out a triumphant yell and seized him.

"I've got him, boys!"

Curt made for the window, but as he gained it a burly rogie caught sight of him, and laid hold of a chair, swinging it on high and dashing it at the fugitive's head.

Curt ducked, and the chair swept through the window, carrying glass and framework with it. Then he closed with the gangster, clutched him around the legs, and tossed him over his back. The man fell with a thud that knocked the breath out of his body, and before he had recovered himself Curt was over the sill.

There came the scrape of a match, as, standing near the fireplace, old Dad Moran lit a candle that he had found on the mantel-shelf. The glimmer of flame revealed scattered groups of men fighting lustily in the belief that they had secured El Capitan.

"We got him here!" roared one of those who was belabouring the luckless individual enfolded in the table-cloth.

There was an eager rush from all points, Kildare figuring prominently in the stampede. But the bank president's face registered fury and chagrin as the table-cloth was wrenched aside to disclose a half-senseless member of his own gang.

"He's given us the slip," Kildare barked, and led the way from the house.

He emerged into the open to see the back view of El Capitan as the latter galloped swiftly into the gloom, headed for a range of hills that loomed against the velvet Border sky.

From the window of her room Mary Lou saw El Capitan too, and with never a suspicion of his real identity, prayed fervently for his safety.

Her prayers were answered, for although they "snoked" him with their six-guns, and gored their horses in a determined pursuit of him, Kildare and his men lost his trail within an hour.

The Rustlers.

JUST before sun-up Curt Fremont returned to the Moran ranch to discover, near the barn, a limping figure in the dress of a senorita. It was the figure of Juan, and, overtaking the Mexican youth, Curt asked him what was wrong.

"One of Keeldare's men, he searches for me while the rest break into the ranch-house," Juan explained. "I am hiding in the hay, and thees man picks up a pitchfork to see if I am there. Oh, but it hurt, amigo. I do not know how I was able to keep silent." And he rubbed his hip mournfully.

"That was no way to treat a lady, was it?" Curt observed with a grin, and then, walking round to the front door, the two of them quietly entered the Moran ranch-house.

Mary Lou and her father had retired again, and, taking

every precaution to avoid waking them, Curt and Juan made their way to the room which they were secretly sharing.

Behind a locked door, Curt and Juan slept soundly till Mary Lou aroused them by knocking. Bidding Juan to remain quiet, Curt hurriedly disposed of the clothes he wore as El Capitan and confronted Mary Lou on the landing in the less spectacular attire of an ordinary cow-hand.

"I was wondering if I could get in to clean your room," she said coldly.

"Don't bother, Mary Lou," Curt told her, stooping to lock the door behind him as he spoke. "I'll tidy it myself."

"Oh, then, you *are* capable of doing something," she observed, "besides sleeping and eating."

Curt looked at her with a hurt expression.

"Sleepin' and eatin'?" he echoed. "Well, what's wrong with that? A feller's gotta look after his health, ain't he?"

"And your health is the most important thing in the world," Mary Lou said with a curl of her lip.

"O' course it is," Curt answered emphatically, following her down the stairs.

He walked through to the kitchen in quest of food, and returning with a heaped plate, saw that Mary Lou was near one of the living-room windows. She was gazing at those hills towards which she had seen El Capitan riding the night before, and with a sweetly-reminiscent expression on her face she was touching her mouth with the tips of her fingers.

Curt grinned behind his hand, then affected a look of innocence.

"What's the matter?" he inquired. "Anything wrong with your lips?"

Mary Lou started guiltily, but

quickly recovered herself and answered him in a sharp tone.

"Not as far as I know," she said. "I'm perfectly satisfied with them, anyhow."

Curt moved towards the staircase, but paused at the foot of it.

"By the way," he mentioned, "I kinda figure that guy El Capitan had better watch his step from now on."

Interest quickened in Mary's eyes, but she tried not to betray it.

"Really?" she murmured.

"I ain't had a close look at him yet," Curt continued, "but I managed to trail him away last night after I was woke up by that shindy down here."

"Which way did he ride?" Mary Lou asked eagerly, on the spur of the moment.

Curt smirked.

"That would be tellin'," he drawled, "but I reckon I know where I might find him. Say, did you happen to get a close-up of him last night?"

Mary Lou thought it was her turn to smile.

"That," she observed, "would also be telling."

"Oh," Curt murmured, and then, after a moment's silence: "This El Capitan appears to be a kind of a Romeo," he went on. "He's been seen ridin' with a Mexican dame."

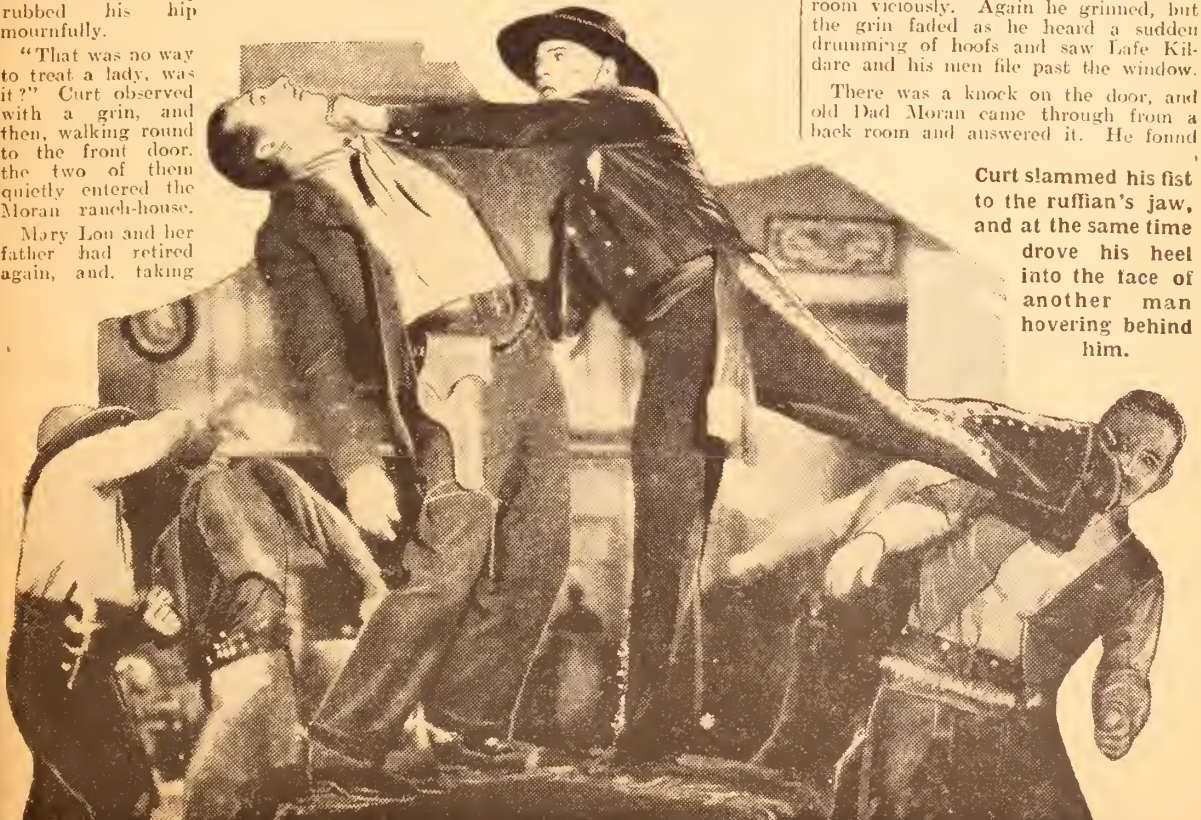
"A girl?" said Mary Lou, biting her lip.

"That's what I said," Curt told her. "She's mighty good-lookin', I'm told. Gee, I wish I had that guy's way with women!"

He began to climb the stairs, and, looking over his shoulder, saw that Mary Lou had picked up a duster and was flaking the furniture in the living-room viciously. Again he grinned, but the grin faded as he heard a sudden drumming of hoofs and saw Lafe Kildare and his men file past the window.

There was a knock on the door, and old Dad Moran came through from a back room and answered it. He found

Curt slammed his fist to the ruffian's jaw, and at the same time drove his heel into the face of another man hovering behind him.



himself confronted by the scoundrelly bank president.

"I've called to remind you about that twenty thousand dollars, Moran," said Kildare, "the guarantee you're liable for as a director of the Comanche Savings Bank."

"Kildare," the old man retorted huskily, "I've already told you I can't obtain that much money."

Kildare shrugged.

"I'm sorry, Moran," he stated, "but in that case I'll have to take your cattle. And I'd advise you to make no trouble, for the law is on my side."

"Go ahead," Moran told him heavily. "You've got me hog-tied, I reckon." He glanced at the other man from under his grizzled brows. "Where are you takin' 'em, anyway?"

"South by Amarillo Creek," was the answer. "What's it to you, Moran?"

"To Slim Brennon's outfit on the Border?" the old man demanded, without answering Kildare's question.

"Slim Brennon's outfit belongs to the bank now," Kildare pointed out, and then turned to the doorway to rejoin his men.

"Oh, Kildare," Moran called after him with grim sarcasm, "you might leave me my corral, will you?"

Kildare climbed into the saddle of his horse and cantered away, his men trooping after him to round up the Moran herds and drive them south. As the sound of hoof-beats died into the stillness of the mesquite plains, Mary Lou walked towards the staircase on which her father's unwelcome guest was standing.

"Curt Fremont," she said icily, "I don't know how you can look on and see us robbed without—doing anything."

"What can I do?" Curt protested. "Besides, I told you I came here to settle down an' live peaceable. I ain't the kind of fellow to go around lookin' for trouble."

"No!" she snapped. "But if you asked me, I'd say you'd turned yellow!"

Old Dad Moran had walked out of the ranch-house moodily. Presently he saw his hands coming off the range in a body. They numbered a mere half-dozen, and, drawing rein before their employer, they informed him that Kildare and his party, from fifteen to twenty strong, had taken over the herds.

"I know," said Moran. "They're drivin' them south by way of Amarillo Creek to what used to be Slim Brennon's ranch. Listen, boys, I've made up my mind on what I'm gonna do."

He paused for a moment, and then continued speaking in a determined tone.

"Any of you that ain't partial to my hunch can drop out here and now," he stated. "You see, I intend to turn rustler an' recover my own cattle."

Two of the hands demurred, refusing to take the risk of finishing up with their necks in a noose. But the other four were loyal.

"We're with yuh, boss," said one of them, appointing himself spokesman. "It may be rustlin', but I guess this is one time it's justifiable."

The Raid on the Bank.

BACK in his room above the porch, Curt Fremont laid the plate of food before Juan and then proceeded to gather up the attire of El Capitan.

August 29th, 1931.

"Where are you going, amigo?" Juan demanded, between mouthfuls of the delicacies that Curt had laid in front of him. "You no' hungry, eh?"

"I've got no time for breakfast," Curt answered. "I'm goin' into town, Juan. You'd better stay here, but remember what I told you. Keep out of sight and don't make a sound. Until we're on safe ground, we don't want to make trouble for the Morans."

As he spoke he strapped on his leather chaps and jammed a gun into his holster. Then, cramming the outfit of El Capitan into a pair of sheepskin saddlebags, he left the house unobserved and made for Comanche as fast as his bronc could carry him.

It was about noon when he gained the town, and he at once headed for the stockyards, where he located a group of those former friends of his who had been tricked out of their ranches.

"Do you boys still want to get even with Kildare?" he demanded.

A chorus of eager voices answered him in the affirmative, and without a word Curt led the way into a barn hard by. Ten minutes later he reappeared in the doorway on horseback, clad in the calzoneros and black hat of El Capitan, and followed by the stockmen.

"All set?" Curt inquired of the troop behind him.

"Broke to leadin', pardner!" "On your way!" "We're back of you, Fremont!"

"Let's go!" Curt jerked, and next moment he was riding forward at the gallop.

Through a side-cut he dashed, and his bronc turned into Main Street at full stride, the dust rising in clouds behind its flying hoofs. Thirty paces in his rear, the stockmen affected to open fire on him, Curt twisting in the saddle to return the compliment.

Citizens in the street sprinted for cover, never suspecting for an instant that the guns of El Capitan and his fake pursuers were loaded with harmless "blanks." For thirty seconds pandemonium raged in Comanche's principal thoroughfare, and then Curt reached the northern limit of the township, dived from the saddle and took shelter in a tool-shed.

The stockmen drew rein and dismounted, to rush for various vantage-points and direct sham volleys against the hut where El Capitan had apparently been cornered.

Sheriff Jim Bellamy appeared on the scene, buckling on his gun-belt as he came. A party of citizens trailed after him, their courage restored now that El Capitan seemed at bay.

"Keep down, sheriff," yelled one of the stockmen dramatically. "He's dangerous!"

Bellamy crouched behind the fencing of a corral and opened up with his artillery. Soon a regular shower of real lead was blistering the hut, the amused stockmen grinning surreptitiously the while.

Five minutes of one-sided gunplay convinced the sheriff that the desperado in the shed must either be dead or sorely stricken. Yet it was with the utmost precaution that he proceeded to crawl on all-fours through the dust, a six-shooter grasped tightly in his right fist.

A citizen attempted to follow him, but one of the stockmen restrained the fellow.

"Don't risk your life, pardner," he said, trying hard to keep from laughing. "Let that hero take all the glory." And he motioned to the sheriff.

Bellamy continued to crawl towards the hut, and when he was three paces from it he rose to his feet and strode forward boldly. With the toe of his boot he kicked open the door, and lifted his forty-five in readiness.

A kitten that had been trapped in the shed scuttled out past his feet. The sheriff blinked at it, and then glared into the interior of the hut. He was still glaring when a man in shirt-sleeves came running from the other end of Main Street.

"The bank!" he squealed. "El Capitan just robbed the bank, sheriff!"

An oath escaped the representative of the law. This was one escapade for which El Capitan did not deserve a medal, he thought, as he dashed off to enlist the services of a couple of his deputies and give chase.

Left in the vicinity of the tool-shed, the stockmen laughed uproariously.

"I hope Curt got what he was lookin' for," one of them said, when the merriment had died down somewhat. "Sufferin' snakes, the way he had us stage that gun fight and draw half the town to that thar shed while he doubled back to the bank was one of the neatest things I ever see! He's a smart hombre, an' no mistake!"

"Slicker'n axle-grease!" declared a whiskered veteran of the party.

Meanwhile, Curt was riding like the wind over the trail that led to the Moran outfit and the south, those sheepskin saddlebags of his now appearing somewhat more bulky than they had been on his arrival in Comanche.

Bellamy and his deputies were half-a-mile behind him, and Curt kept them at that distance till he burst clear of the chaparral that screened the Moran ranch-house from the north.

He dropped from his horse and slapped the animal's flank to keep it on the move. Then, the saddlebags slung over his arm, he climbed to his bed-room window by way of the porch. The shutters were not fastened this time, and he scrambled over the sill.

A few minutes later the sheriff and his deputies reined up outside the front door, against which Bellamy struck his fist. Mary Lou answered the summons, and the sheriff swung himself to the ground and walked across the threshold.

"Where's your father, Miss Mary?" he demanded.

"He—he isn't at home," Mary Lou faltered. "He's—out on the range with some of the boys."

"I see," Bellamy murmured. "Well, where's the man who just rode in here?"

Mary stared at him in astonishment. "Why, what are you talking about, sheriff?" she exclaimed.

"It ain't any use stalling, Miss Mary," Bellamy told her. "I know our man is here, and I'll have to take the liberty of searching the house. He just raided the bank in Comanche, and we tracked him right to your front door."

"A bank robber!" Mary breathed. "But—but why should he be here? He couldn't possibly have come in without me seeing him. I've been in the living-room practically all morning. There's only one other person in the house—Curt Fremont—"

The sheriff eyed her shrewdly, feel-

ing convinced that she was sincere in her protests, and was not merely trying to hide a fugitive from the law.

"I'd like to have a talk with Curt Fremont," he stated.

Mary laughed.

"Oh, sheriff, you surely don't think that he's the man you want!" she scoffed. "Why, he wouldn't have the nerve to raid a bank."

"Well, I'll give you a clue," said Bellamy. "The man that stuck up the bank is the only blond Mexican that was ever seen in these parts. Now take me to Curt."

"He'll be up in his room," Mary Lou opined, turning to lead the way to the stairs; "asleep, probably."

She guided Bellamy to the door of Curt's apartment. The sheriff drew his gun.

"Oh, don't be silly!" Mary laughed. But Bellamy pushed past her and rapped on the door with his knuckles.

The door was opened. A figure stood in the doorway, a figure in kerchief, black hat, silk shirt, and fancy calzoneros—the blond "Mexican" of the bank raid.

"Curt!" gasped Mary Lou. "You, El Capitan?"

"But my Spanish is still terrible," Curt told her, with a grin.

The sheriff covered him with his six-shooter.

"Come on, son," he began, but Curt interrupted him. He was still carrying the sheepskin saddlebags on his arm, and from the deep pockets of them he drew forth two or three heavy ledgers.

"Jim," he said, "these are the only things I took from the bank. You see, ever since the night my brother was killed Lufe Kildare has been keepin' two sets of books. If you look at these the same as I did just now, you'll see that the first set proves Kildare had appropriated a big sum from the bank a few weeks before the shooting. And maybe you'd like to see this, too," he

added, producing a letter addressed to him in his brother's handwriting.

The sheriff glanced at the missive. It bore the date on which Jim Fremont had been slain, and must have been penned a little while before the murder had been committed.

"Dear Curt,—I'm going over the books at the bank to-night, as I have reason to believe Kildare has been getting away with the funds.

"If my suspicions are correct, I may need your help in this matter. Be ready to come at once.—Your brother, "Jim."

The sheriff reached for the ledgers under Curt's arm.

"If what you say is correct," he muttered, "Kildare will finish up with a noose around his neck." He smiled a grim smile, and: "Reckon the sheriff is entitled to examine stolen property, eh?" he went on.

Bellamy went downstairs and laid the books on a table, Curt and Mary Lou following him. While the representative of the law was scrutinizing the entries in the ledgers, Curt suddenly observed that Mary was making signals that obviously conveyed a desire to speak with him in private.

"Curt," she said, in an anxious whisper, "dad left for the border with four of the boys. He plans to rustle back the cattle that Kildare impounded. Kildare has twenty men riding with him, and—and I'm afraid. You see, dad's theoretically going against the law."

Curt's mouth tightened into a firm, determined line.

"Juan's upstairs, Mary Lou," he told her, "so don't be scared if you suddenly run across him. I'm headin' for Amarillo Creek—pronto."

He slipped out of the house while Bellamy was still bending over the books, and, locating his brone at the back of the outfit, he climbed into the saddle and rode south. His course lay through the brush-tracks that skirted the open prairie, and thirty minutes after leaving the Moran rancho his

horse was picking its way through the shallows of the Amarillo Creek bottom.

Burton.

A HARD ride had brought Dad Moran and his four loyal punchers to the rim of a fertile valley south of the creek, and there, on the range that Kildare had seized on behalf of the bank, but in reality for his own profit, Moran and his hands saw the impounded cattle.

Kildare and his men were not in sight, having herded the steers in the valley some time before. Everything seemed in favour of Moran's project.

"Go to it, boys!" he said to his men, "Round 'em up, and take 'em through the pass."

The punchers galloped down into the valley, and Moran brought up the rear at a more leisurely pace. He dismounted when he was fairly in the middle of the valley, and looked to his guns, for he suspected that Kildare had not left the cattle entirely unattended.

Moran was not far wrong. From a vantage-point that commanded a view of the valley a sentinel left by Kildare saw the old rancher's cow-hands riding towards the herd, and immediately turned his horse and galloped northward in the direction of Comanche.

Half a mile from the valley the crook came up with Kildare and the rest of the gang.

"Moran an' four o' his men are drivin' off them steers," he panted.

Kildare's eyes narrowed. There was a glint of satisfaction in them.

"Good," he said, "then I've got Moran where I want him—and I want him out of the way. Back, boys, and when we hit the valley shoot to kill."

Meanwhile, by the route that led direct from the Moran ranch, Curt Fremont was spurring southward at the top of his bronco's speed, and he had gained the slope of the valley in which a fatal gun-duel seemed imminent when he caught sight of Kildare's bunch riding from the north west.

Curt's horse carried him down the slope at the foot of which Mary Lou's father was standing.

"Beat it, Dad," Curt jerked. "Kil-



"Kildare," he said, "the next time you feel a rope around you it won't be mine—and it won't be under your armpits!"

dare and his whole gang are headed this way."

Dad Moran was in too desperate a frame of mind to wonder at Curt's Mexican attire.

"You get to blazes outa here," he thundered, "you yellow-livered molly-coddle. If Kildare rides this way I'm introduc' him to lead."

"You haven't got a chance, Dad," Curt insisted. "Kildare has twenty men against your four—"

"This is no place for you, Curt Fremont," the old man cut in on him harshly. "I tell you there's gonna be shootin'."

Curt stiffened in the saddle.

"Yeah?" he said quickly. "Well, you won't be in it." And with the words he bore down on Moran's horse, grazing near by, and put the animal to flight with a blow from the flat of his hand.

An angry shout escaped Dad Moran, but already Curt was wheeling to set his bronco at the slope again. He reached the summit and galloped along the crest till he saw Kildare and his ruffians enter the valley from the northwest.

Curt guided his horse towards them, and, halfway down the declivity, pulled his gun from its holster and fired into the air. Kildare and his men drew rein as they heard the shot, and turned their heads, to discern the figure of the dare-devil who had so far eluded their clutches.

Curt's aim was to draw Kildare's gang from Dad Moran's party and save the old man from certain death, and his ruse was eminently successful.

"There's the man I'm after!" yelled Kildare, and, Moran forgotten, the crooks changed their course.

Curt's identity had not been recognised. At the distance, Kildare and his men had only been able to mark him out as a Mexican, undoubtedly El Capitan, and in a body they urged their ponies up the ascent.

Curt showed them his heels. The crooks smoked him with their guns, but it was long-range shooting and the fugitive remained unscathed. He led them across the Amarillo Creek and through a belt of chaparral to a tract of country made barren by tumbled boulders and towering pinnacles of rock.

His bronc was beginning to show signs of fatigue by then, and the pursuers gained appreciably. A bullet ripped through Curt's sleeve, and, glancing over his shoulder, he saw Kildare and his men strung out about a couple of hundred yards behind him.

The fact that they were strung out, and that one of their number was lagging well to the rear, suggested an idea to Curt. He made for a stretch of ground where the boulders provided him with shelter, so that for the moment he was out of sight of Kildare and his men. Then he pulled aside and halted his bronc behind a buttress of black cliff.

Concealed there, he watched the gangsters dash by one after another, and he allowed all to pass except the hindmost, who was a full seventy-five paces behind the main body. Curt spurred out to hold up this man at the point of the gun, and as the fellow raised his hands the young cowboy ordered him to ride back with him to the angle of cliff.

The prisoner was Tom Burton, Kildare's henchman, and, pale to the lips,

Burton sat motionless in the saddle while Curt relieved him of his shooting-iron.

"I'm gonna kill you, Burton," Curt said grimly.

Burton's lip quivered.

"You can't shoot me!" he gasped. "I ain't done nothing."

"You've done plenty," Curt rapped out. "Turn around so I can give it to you in the back—the same way as you killed my brother."

"I didn't kill your brother," the rogue babbled. "I didn't do it! I ain't the man you want. I wasn't the one that got your brother that night!"

"No?" Curt drawled. "Well, I ain't believin' you."

"It was Kildare!" Burton moaned. "Kildare, I tell you! I vouched for his alibi at the inquest, but I was lyin'. I'm tellin' you the truth now! You've gotta believe it! I was alone in Kildare's room the night of the killin'. Kildare came in just after it happened. He told me to say he'd been at home the whole evenin'. Then later he let up on the whole affair. He shot your brother because he'd grabbed a lotta the bank's money. He said he had to do it—"

Curt's eyes bored into him. From the rôle Burton had played at the inquest—a rôle of which Curt had not been ignorant—he had guessed that the man might be bluffed into telling the real story when the opportunity occurred.

"Thanks, Burton," he said now, "that's all I wanted to hear, and you're gonna repeat it to the sheriff. Come on—get goin'."

He jabbed his six-gun into Burton's ribs and rode with him towards the Moran ranch—not taking the direct route, however, but making a detour to avoid an encounter with Kildare and the rest of the gang.

Kildare's Last Bid.

COMPLETELY baffled by Curt's disappearance among the rocks, Kildare presently called a halt.

"We'd better break up," he announced. "You boys scatter an' search for him. I'll keep a-headin' for the Moran ranch. If I wait long enough I may pick up his trail there, for it's my opinion him an' Moran are hand-in-glove."

He left his men and pushed on alone. A quarter of a mile farther on his horse scrambled up a gravelly slope and carried him to the brow of a low ridge.

The Moran ranch-buildings sprawled below him, and he saw the sheriff and his two deputies standing near the barn. He steered his pony towards them and saluted Bellamy.

"Howdy, sheriff," he said. "I'm lookin' for that bandit El Capitan. Don't suppose you've seen anything of him around here?"

"I was after him myself a while back," the sheriff murmured, a curious expression on his bronzed face. "But I lost sight of him 'bout an hour since."

Kildare's eyes glittered angrily. "Well," he snapped, "he was down by Amarillo Creek half an hour ago, helpin' Moran to rustle the cattle I had to impound. We chased him back in this direction."

"Is that so?" the sheriff drawled interestedly. "By the way, Kildare, did you hear what happened at the bank?"

"At the bank?" Kildare echoed, in a startled tone. "No! What happened there?"

"While you and your men were impoundin' Moran's cattle the bank was raided," Bellamy informed him.

"Raided?"

"Yep," the sheriff declared. "And by El Capitan."

Kildare glared down at him.

"And you sat around in your office and let him do it," he ground out. "Great snakes, can't the law afford any protection to honest citizens?"

"That's just what the law aims to do, Kildare," Bellamy answered. "Afford protection to honest citizens against robbery an' violence—an' punish them as are guilty of crime."

Kildare shot a sidelong glance at him. "Well, did he get away with much?" he growled.

"Not so far as I can understand," the sheriff replied. "But he took these books. I got 'em back from him."

Kildare had not noticed the heavy ledgers Bellamy was carrying under his arm, but his eyes flashed to them now, and an expression of guilt and panic appeared on his face.

"How long have you had those?" he blurted.

"Aw, 'bout an hour," the sheriff told him. "Maybe more. But say, here comes Curt Fremont."

He motioned to the ridge which Kildare had crossed a moment before, and, turning his head, the scoundrelly bank president saw Curt descending the slope—Curt in the attire of El Capitan.

There was someone else with Curt, someone whom the puncher was covering with a six-gun, and Kildare's pulse quickened alarmingly as he recognised Tom Burton.

For an instant Kildare was paralysed with fear. Then he realised to the full the magnitude of his plight—realised that nothing could save him from the gallows unless he acted immediately.

He whipped round. Bellamy and his deputies were closing in on him. Kildare clapped spurs to his bronco's flanks and charged them.

His horse scattered them, and Kildare dashed on in full flight. Bellamy and his deputies reached for their guns, but before they could draw them Kildare was swinging past a corner of the barn.

Three shots clipped splinters from the building as he turned the angle of it and disappeared.

From the direction of the ridge came a shout in Curt Fremont's voice. Snatching at Burton's bridle, he urged his own horse and his captive into a gallop, and in a smother of dust reached the spot where the representatives of the law were standing.

"Hang on to this hombre, Jim!" he called to Bellamy, throwing Burton's reins to the sheriff, and then he raced on in pursuit of Kildare.

He caught sight of him a hundred and fifty yards beyond the barn, and leaned forward in the saddle. Kildare plunged into a mass of thickets and was lost to view for a spell, but, driving through the brush, Curt picked up his trail again.

The crook's pony was struggling up a long slope, and Curt set his horse at the ascent. Nearing the summit, Kildare turned in the saddle and pulled a gun. He blazed at his pursuer, but his hand was unsteady and his aim uncertain.

Three shots zipped past Curt, missing him by yards. Then Kildare gained the hill-top and swung sharp to the left. Silhouetted against the skyline, he rode along the brink of the declivity. His

(Continued on page 26.)

By unscrupulous methods a truck-driver makes himself a power against whom the forces of law and order are helpless. But, like all criminals, he goes a step too far and— A grand and thrilling crook drama. Starring Spencer Tracy.



Quick Millions

The Truck Driver.

THE story of "Bugs" Raymond's rise and fall was an episode in the history of a big American city. It began on a certain day when Bugs fell foul of a chauffeur and a cop.

Daniel J. Raymond, commonly known as Bugs, was one of the city's obscure millions, driver of a three-ton lorry that drew up alongside a gleaming limousine in a traffic block.

Stationed at one of the city's busiest crossings, the imposing form of Police-officer Murphy held all south and north-bound vehicles at bay for a space of several minutes, and then blew a whistle to signal the "all clear."

Bugs Raymond slipped the gear-lever into position and eased off the hand-brake. Bugs was in a hurry, and attempted to cut in between the limousine on his off-side and a van immediately in front.

"Hey, there!" called the immaculate chauffeur of the expensive auto. "Where the blazes do you think you're going?"

His tone was harsh, and Bugs took exception to it, and among his associates Bugs was notorious for a temper that fired the blood in his veins but left his head cool-clear. He was equally notorious for a habit of riding down those who stood in his way.

With deliberate malice and aforethought he turned the steering-wheel of the truck he was driving and permitted the three-ton monster to wrangle with the polished wing of the magnificent limousine. In the metallic argument which ensued the car's wing came off worst, and ere the scrape and clangour had subsided and Bugs had brought his truck to a standstill again, that shining auto-wing was a buckled caricature of its former self.

Officer Murphy forged a pathway towards the scene of the commotion, and planted himself before the radiator of the lorry.

"It takes brains to drive a truck," he observed to Bugs with tolling sarcasm.

"An' it takes a lotta brains to blow



a whistle," Bugs rejoined with unmistakable scorn.

Officer Murphy made several impolite observations, and the light of battle kindled in the eyes of Bugs Raymond.

"If you'll take off that tin badge on your tunic I'll sock you," he invited.

Murphy's face purpled, and on an angry impulse he roared his acceptance of the challenge. With a yelp reminiscent of a terrier going into a dog fight, Bugs scrambled from the driving-seat.

Eager for the fray, regardless of the consequences, he climbed to the bonnet and hurled himself on the representative of the law.

Some time later a police-court judge pronounced the solemn sentence: "Fifty dollars or sixty days." And, later still, bruised, penniless, and out of a job, Bugs Raymond made his way to the apartment he rented in a humble quarter of the city.

He was met by Daisy de Lisle, who provided the romantic element in his wayward life. But just now Daisy was not in the mood for romance. Her pretty face was set in an expression of impatient resentment, and her eyes flashed fire.

"I'm sick and tired of the way you carry on," she told him. "Sacked on the spot from your job, the few dollars you have saved gone in a fine—and all because you had to strike a cop."

"A guy can't sit around and be insulted by a flat-foot," Bugs protested.

"Who do you think you are that you

can't take an insult?" Daisy cried bitterly. "Oh, I'm through with you, Bugs—through with you."

Bugs dabbed a discoloured eye. He hardly seemed to be listening to her.

"Where's the sense of a man like me drivin' a truck, anyway?" he mused, half-soliloquising. "I'm a guy that has ideas—smart ideas for makin' money quick—and now is the time to unlimber 'em on this town. Baby, you're right, it ain't policy to haul a cop a pain in the jaw, but it's policy to haul him a five-dollar bill. And maybe that's what I'm gonna be in a position to do one of these days."

"Oh, you and your ideas," scoffed Daisy. "I've heard them all before."

Bugs smiled.

"You're gonna see 'em in operation pretty soon," he said confidently. "But go ahead if you're through. You know the way out by now."

Daisy hesitated. She had no faith in the wild schemes that Bugs had mentioned to her in his more confidential moments, and to-day was not the first time she had threatened to give him up on account of his recklessness, his irresponsibility. Yet some undefinable spell had always kept her loyal to him, and once again her head yielded to the instinct of her heart.

"Bugs," she faltered, "did that cop hurt you much?"

He grinned a wry grin.

"Plenty," he told her. "But you ought to see him."

A Corner in Crime.

A FEW days after he had lost his job Bugs Raymond called at a super-garage in theatre-land and asked to see the proprietor.

"I notice you have a lotta space here that don't get taken up by automobiles like it should," Bugs observed. "That's because seventy-five per cent. of the motorists leave their cars in authorised street parks when they go to a show or a night club. Now I've got a hunch that would bring 'em in off them parking-places thick and fast."

"How?" the garage proprietor demanded.

"Leave it to me," Bugs said. "Just now we'll discuss how much I get out of it."

That night an unseen hand created August 29th, 1931.

have with the cars parked in the quiet side-streets. Windows and wind-screens were smashed, wings buckled and coach-work ripped to ribbons, whilst the very engines did not escape attention; and when the theatres and night clubs emptied, the garage at which Bugs had called became filled with casualties for the repair shop.

The outrage received publicity in the newspapers, and from that time onward motorists were chary of leaving their autos in street parks. So the super-garage in theatreland prospered mightily, and Bugs drew his pre-arranged portion of the profits.

But Bugs did not rest on his obscure laurels. The filip to the garage business was a mere beginning, child's play in comparison to the network of plans he was laying for the foundation of supreme power.

About him he collected a coterie of daring and notorious men, seum of the underworld who recognised his genius for organisation, and banded themselves under his leadership—men such as Nails Markey, who had been through the whole category of crime; Jimmy Kirk, the sleek, shining gunman with the cold grey eyes; Arkansas Smith, whose talents had been envied in Chicago.

The truck business provided Bugs Raymond with his next venture in the city's commercial life. He offered the Premier Carriage Company what he was pleased to call "protection," and an unchallenged field for its activities—at his own price. The offer was accepted, and Bugs and his hirelings set to work.

The Premier Company's rivals went to the wall, or else went sky-high. Their equipment was taken over, or demolished overnight in the event of any refusal to sell out. A certain small contractor with an oil-tanker, insisting on maintaining his independence, was blown to smithereens when the fuel he was carrying mysteriously exploded.

In the space of a few weeks, the authorities saw gang-rule rearing its ugly head to dominate the city's industries, and were powerless to hold it in check. The forces of disorder were hard to locate, and harder to break, and Bugs Raymond was clever. Where he could not blindfold, he bribed.

Bugs waxed rich on the spoils. He spoke in terms of "ten grand," "twenty grand," and even "hundred grand," which meant tens, twenties, and hundreds of thousands. He himself, the former truck driver, could see no limit to the wealth that he might coin, the power that he might yet wield.

Moreover, he took his place in Society. Corruption, bribery, these factors compelled men who were prominent in the city's affairs to hail him as an equal. Once he attended a mayoral dinner, at which judges, politicians and commercial magnates were present. He learned enough to incriminate a good many of them; and halfway through the function the smiling Jimmy Kirk and several others of his ilk held up the assembly at the point of the gun, taking private papers as well as everything of value.

The affair was hushed up, for by that coup the reputations of public men were laid at the mercy of Bugs Raymond.

The following night, the hotel where he and his underlings congregated, Bugs supervised the examination of the articles which had been appropriated.

"Say, Bugs," declared Nails Markey, producing a letter from the pile of loot, "here's a little love-note to one of our most prominent judges, written by a girl in the chorus of the 'Follies.' That oughta be good for a few thousand dollars."

"Nix, Nails—nix!" answered Bugs, August 29th, 1931.

glancing at the missive. "We ain't blackmailers," he added with a twisted grin. "We make our money by protection. Send that letter back—or, better still, tear it up. His wife might see it."

Nails obeyed reluctantly. He was a flat-faced thug with a certain low cunning, but he had never been able to fathom Bugs Raymond's outlook on the racketeering game.

Daisy de Lisle entered at that moment. She was expensively dressed, and looked singularly attractive, but Bugs glanced at her with impatience as she perched herself on his desk. In his rocket-like rise to doubtful fame he had acquired something that was yet to prove his downfall—a desire to ape Society and be of Society, instead of a parasite batten- ing on its flaws. That ambition had become the keynote of his career, and to him the racket was a stepping-stone to a higher plane.

"Daisy, why don't you try an' get some class?" he protested. "You know—polish. Now, a lady don't sit around on the edge of a desk."

"I never noticed any class about you," Daisy retorted spiritedly.

"Well, I'm makin' a show at acquiring it," Bugs observed, and it was no later than the following day that he received an added incentive for the acquiring of what he called "class."

The city wore a slightly altered look that morning, for, in place of shrill-voiced newsboys, smartly-dressed business men were to be seen on the street corners selling papers. A stranger tendered a dollar bill to one of these men, and, receiving no change, commented upon the fact.

"Oh, it's a custom of the city," he was told. "Once a year prominent citizens volunteer to hawk papers and collect money for the newsboys' annual outing. Your change will go to the fund, sir."

Bugs Raymond had once been a news-boy, and had not forgotten it. Consequently, he was one of those who offered his services, and it was while he was occupying a stand in a busy shopping centre that he saw a radiantly beautiful girl emerge from a modiste's and cross the sidewalk to a waiting car.

She was simply but exquisitely dressed, and she carried herself with that unconsciously regal air of a girl reared in an atmosphere of luxury and good breeding. Bugs, with his class complex, recognised her as a true example of High Society, and, struck with her loveliness, he hurried after her.

"For the newsboys' fund, miss," he invited, overtaking her and offering her a paper before she could reach her car.

She smiled sweetly, and dipped into her handbag.

"Thank you," he said, as she gave him a ten-dollar bill, and then he opened the car-door for her.

Before the auto had vanished into the stream of traffic he had made a note of its registration number, and later that day, when he returned to his rooms to find Jimmy and Nails awaiting him, he ordered the former to ring up the City Hall.

From the City Hall licensing department he obtained the information he desired. The car concerned had been registered in the name of Kenneth Stone, he learned.

"Nails," he said, indicating a fat volume on his desk, "look up that 'Who's Who,' and find out all you can about Kenneth Stone."

Nails picked up the book and located the name.

"Here's the Stone family's pedigree,"

he recited off. "John Stone, died 1916. Founder Stone Construction Company, built new City Hall, State Library, Madison Trust Offices on Forty-Third Street, etc., etc. Succeeded by his son, Kenneth Stone, who now controls Stone Construction Company."

"But there's a girl," Bugs put in. "Yeah, she's mentioned, too. 'Dorothy Stone, born 1907, educated Cornell University and Sorbonne, Paris. Member of Lakeside Country Club—'"

Bugs stood up. He did not seem to be listening.

"Boys," he said, "we've been playin' around on the small-time racket long enough!"

"Whaddya mean—small-time?" Nails demanded. "I'd like to know just how much we've raked in. What's happened in the last year or two, Bugs? We don't only protect the Truck business in this town—we own it now! An' there ain't a garage in the city that don't—"

"Wait a minute, Nails!" Bugs interrupted. "Didn't it ever occur to you that there are other fields of opportunity aside from the Truck business? Listen, I'm goin' to have this town at my feet before I'm through. We've got the Truck business—good enough! We're in a position to lay a strangle-hold on every industry in the city, and the construction companies are next in line."

That night Bugs Raymond assembled his gang in a down-town club of shady repute.

The Waging of the War.

THE first act of a reign of terror was the wrecking of a skyscraper building that was under construction on one of the city's busiest thoroughfares.

A closed-in car pulled up outside the hoardings behind which work on the building was in progress. Jimmy Kirk stepped out of it, entered a gateway in the tall fence and looked about him swiftly. High into the blue sky rose the skeleton of the skyscraper, a network of steel that was a memorial to the skill of an army of labourers and the ability of a staff of engineers, a structure representing thousands of dollars in capital. Near by, a motorman was in control of a crane that was lifting a massive girder to the very peak of the building's immense frame.

Jimmy watched the girder jerk higher and higher as the strong links which grasped it rattled over the pulley at the summit of the giant crane. Then the crane swung round on its base, poising the girder above the framework in which it was to be riveted.

The motorman in his cab suddenly became aware that something was pressing against the small of his back. It was the muzzle of Jimmy Kirk's gun, and as the motorman looked round, Jimmy indicated the control-lever.

"Pull her over!" he commanded. "Come on, let her go! And I don't mean maybe."

White to the lips, the motorman obeyed. The chain paid out like lightning. Down came the girder with a running crash, battering its way through those steel spars that had already been bolted into place. A thunderous clangour filled the air as it tore through the framework, rending other girders from their rivets and carrying with it an avalanche of twisted metal.

Jimmy Kirk dashed back to the waiting car, his mission accomplished.

Outrage followed outrage. A newly completed block of offices in another part of the city was blasted by a charge of explosive that demolished an entire wing of it. Work on a big dam up in the hills was stopped by a band of armed men, who left after a hundred

thousand dollars' worth of damage had been committed. The newspapers published leading articles on the scandal, and called for action, but the police department seemed powerless.

The sinister campaign terminated in a truck-drivers' strike. It was arranged according to instructions from Bugs Raymond, and it affected every commercial enterprise in town. It was a gesture that implied the far-reaching influence he was in a position to wield over the city's trade and prosperity.

The strike came as a vital blow to Kenneth Stone, and put an end to operations that were in progress for the construction of a gigantic flat-iron building, which had to be completed, according to contract, by a certain date.

Kenneth Stone had already received representations from Bugs, and had ignored them, raging meanwhile at the power and audacity of this man who was clever enough to make war on society, yet leave the authorities without sufficient evidence for his arrest.

But the strike forced Stone's hand, and he was compelled to phone Bugs Raymond's apartment and seek an interview.

He need not have troubled. Bugs was already on his way to pay him the doubtful compliment of a call, and, on his arrival with Jimmy Kirk, was shown straightway into Stone's sanctum. "What do you want?" Stone demanded in a voice that was shaken by ill-concealed wrath.

Jimmy Kirk stood by, and smiled. Bugs was cool politeness personified. He laid some papers on Stone's desk.

"These will explain my terms," he drawled. "All they need is your signature. I happen to know that the Stone Construction Company is working on a sixteen million dollar contract, and I've got more than a sneaking fancy that every cent you own will be involved if you don't complete it by schedule."

"You seem to know a good deal," Stone said with an effort.

"The information cost me a lotta money," Bugs answered cheerfully. "I

had to pay for it. But let's get down to business, Stone. If you'll take a look at those papers you'll see that I've drawn up in detail the amounts payable by you to sub-contractors. You'll see also how those amounts can be cut considerably if you count me in on the deal and accept the proposals I've set down in black-and-white."

Stone glanced through the documents that had been laid on his desk, and his face darkened.

"This is plain crooked," he ground out.

"But it will save the Stone Company from bankruptcy," Bugs observed. "Remember, I've only to say the word and you can resume operations at a moment's notice."

Stone moved over to a cabinet, and, producing a decanter and a glass, poured himself out a stiff drink.

"You've got me tied, Raymond," he said between his teeth. "How can I give you any answer but the one you want?"

Five minutes later Bugs and Jimmy emerged from Stone's office, and it was as Bugs was closing the door behind him that he came face to face with the girl to whom he had sold that newspaper a week or two previously.

"Good-afternoon," he said to her. She returned the greeting with a puzzled little frown, and Bugs smiled.

"You don't remember me, Miss Stone," he remarked; "but you paid me ten dollars for a copy of the 'Herald' not so very long ago."

"Oh, yes, I do remember you now," she murmured.

"Your brother and I have just been talking over a deal," Bugs mentioned. "We'll be running in harness from now on, so I'll probably be seeing you again."

He was right, and in the week or two that followed he saw more of Dorothy Stone than a mere business connection with her brother necessitated.

Forced to tolerate him at the office, Stone resented the intrusion in his home life, resented the attentions that were being paid to Dorothy. Nor did Dorothy herself seem to care for them;

but her brother put the situation to her, and explained that they must at least pretend to accept Bugs Raymond socially.

Bugs began to see less of his associates of the underworld, and still more of Dorothy Stone. The girl dominated his thoughts, and that subtle charm which had impressed him on the occasion of their first meeting gained a hold on him that blinded him to everything else.

"You know," he said to Dorothy one evening in the sitting-room of the Stones' palatial home, "there are times when I think you haven't much use for me. And then again, there are times when I think you kind of like me. What's your honest opinion of me?"

Dorothy looked at him frankly. He had asked for the truth, and she was prepared to give it to him. Yet for her brother's sake she had to be guarded, and make her criticism with a smile.

"If you must know," she told him, "I think you're a parasite. Wealth and power are your be all and end all, and you haven't any scruples about how you come by them."

"Aw, you've got me wrong," he said good-naturedly. "I'm just a man who makes opportunities for other fellows who haven't the nerve to make 'em themselves, and I feather my nest in the process."

Nevertheless it was in a thoughtful mood that he returned to his own sumptuous apartments, to find that some of the boys had drifted in, and there and then he made the first move in the severing of his association with them.

"Listen, you fellers," he said. "We've reached the peak, and there's no sense in carryin' on, for we'll only take a dive. This is where we turn honest and live clean, and keep away from the cops."

"Keep away from the cops?" someone growled. "Say, they've never



Eager for the fray, regardless of the consequences, he climbed to the bonnet and hurled himself at the representative of the law.

looked like makin' a pinch so far as we're concerned."

"But some day there might be a slip-up," Bugs answered, "and I don't aim to have that happen. I'm thinking of inviting Kenneth Stone to look on me as a partner. I'm thinking of going into straight business."

"And what do we get out of it?" Nails Markey demanded.

"The Truck business," Bugs rejoined, and strolled through to another room.

Daisy de Lisle was there, trying on a new fur coat that she had bought with the generous allowance that Bugs made her. She stood before a full-length mirror and studied her reflection appraisingly.

Bugs eyed her for a moment. She wore clothes as expensive as Dorothy Stone's, and her features were as pleasing. Yet the two girls seemed worlds apart. It was personality that Daisy lacked—and "class." She would never possess either, she would never hold for him the appeal of that daughter of Society to whom he was being drawn irresistibly.

"Daisy," Bugs mused, "you're pretty smart. But you need finish. You know what I've been thinkin'? I've been thinking you ought to travel—go away for a year or so. To Europe. See Paris, London, Berlin, Rome. I'm told there's nothing like travel for giving you poise."

Daisy remained motionless, but there was a curious expression in her eyes.

"I'd stake you up to twenty-five thousand dollars," Bugs continued. "You could have a swell time—live at the best hotels—see life. What do you say, huh?"

She turned and looked at him. "Who's the other dame, Bugs?" she asked quietly.

Straight Business.

KENNETH STONE had had no choice in regard to the partnership Bugs Raymond had proposed, and had reluctantly placed at his disposal a room adjoining his own office.

To that room came Nails Markey and the boys. They had been in none too happy a frame of mind ever since Bugs had announced his intention of quitting the racket, and they seemed loath to let him relinquish the leadership of the gang.

It had all the appearance of a raw deal to them. Bugs had used them and made quick millions, and now he was for dropping out, leaving them the monopoly of the Truck business as a consolation prize.

Nails Markey appointed himself spokesman, and announced the gang's dissatisfaction, whereupon Bugs stood up and addressed the group collectively and curtly.

"What are you whining at?" he demanded. "You've got control of the Truck combine, and the dough you draw from that will keep you all on Easy Street. Now listen, boys, I'm busy, and I can't talk to you about this thing at the moment."

The gang rose sourly and filed towards the door.

"Oh, Nails," Bugs called, as they were on the point of leaving, "don't bring the boys up here any more. I'll drop in on you now and then."

The gangsters exchanged meaning glances with one another as they retired, but Bugs had already turned his back on them. He was not left alone for long, however, for shortly after the departure of Nails and the boys Daisy de Lisle was shown in.

"Bugs," she said, as soon as the door

had closed behind her, "I'm here for a show-down. I'm *not* going to Europe, and I'm *not* going to let you give me the run-around for any other dame."

Bugs made an impatient pass with his hand.

"I tell you there's no other dame," he snapped, and even as he spoke the words the door opened and Dorothy Stone appeared on the threshold.

"Oh, I'm sorry," she apologised, as she saw that Bugs had company, "I thought you were alone. I just looked in to see if you were ready for the races."

"The races?" Bugs echoed. "Oh, yeah, we'd made up a party, hadn't we? I'll be right with you in a moment, Miss Stone."

Dorothy went out again, and Daisy glared at Bugs.

"Was that the girl you're sweet on?" she demanded.

"Supposing it was," Bugs drawled, and with that Daisy lost her temper and struck him across the face.

She had cause to regret it, for Bugs took that treatment neither from man nor woman, and after a fierce scuffle Daisy finished up on the floor, cowering in alarm as the infuriated ex-truck driver stood over her threateningly.

The sounds of the struggle did not reach the ears of Stone, Dorothy and a girl-friend who was to accompany them to the race-course, but they chafed at the delay which it caused.

"He invited himself," said Dorothy herself, "and personally I don't see why we can't go on without him."

"Dorothy, we daren't," her brother told her. "We can't take the risk of offending him."

So they waited for Bugs, and drove with him to the course, where Bugs, for one, spent a profitable afternoon. He showed just how profitable it had been when he pulled out a thick wad of notes during the return journey.

"And you won all that on the last race," Dorothy commented. "You certainly were in luck's way."

"Half of it's yours," he informed her.

"Mine?" she exclaimed. "Oh, no—I backed the loser."

Bugs shook his head.

"You thought you did," he said. "But I took the liberty of putting your money on the horse I fancied myself. Here's your share."

"I couldn't possibly take it," Dorothy assured him, emphatically.

"But why not?" he protested.

Her lips almost curled.

"You wouldn't understand," she murmured.

Bugs certainly did not understand what she inferred by that last remark, and he dropped the subject. He had something else on his mind, anyway—something which he was able to broach when he found himself alone with her in the lounge of her home.

She was sitting at the piano, her tapering fingers running idly over the ivory keys, when he drew a ring from his pocket. It was a platinum ring with a massive, square-cut solitaire diamond that had cost twelve thousand dollars.

"What do you think of this?" he asked her.

She stopped playing the piano and examined it.

"It's beautiful," she had to admit.

"Dorothy," he said, "would you consider it—as an engagement ring?"

She looked at him whimsically.

"I could hardly do that," she answered, "since I'm engaged already."

"Engaged already!" His face clouded.

"But—you don't wear a ring."

"No," she said, "I met him at college

—a year ago. He gave me his fraternity pin." And she pointed to a miniature badge that was fixed in her frock.

"How is it I've never seen him around the house?" Bugs wanted to know.

"He got a position in South America after he left college," Dorothy told him. "I expect him back next month."

Bugs glanced at the fraternity pin again, and laughed cynically. The thing had probably cost twenty dollars at the most.

"And you mean to tell me that's all he could give you?" he scoffed, thinking of his twelve-thousand dollar ring.

"I never thought of its material value," Dorothy said simply. "You see, I'm in love with him, Mr. Raymond."

Bugs was not in the best of moods when he returned to his apartment that evening. Jimmy Kirk and Arkansas Smith were there, for, though he had cut adrift from the rest of the gang, Bugs had retained the services of these two, realising that he might find a body-guard essential to his safety.

Jimmy and Arkansas noticed that their employer was short-tempered that evening.

The New Leader.

IN the down-town club that had formerly been one of Bugs Raymond's haunts, Nails Markey discussed the situation with several other members of the disgruntled gang.

"Bugs is playin' solo," he stated grimly, "but we ain't the kind o' mugs to sit back an' let him call the hands, I reckon. Now, listen, you guys. Nobody ever said I was dumb—and maybe I've got ideas for runnin' this town as smart as any hunch that Bugs ever had. Maybe I can take control of this outfit and run it better'n he ever thought of runnin' it."

There was a chorus of approval, and consequently the city once again found itself in the throes of gang administration, rapacious thugs laying their clutches on every conceivable enterprise, blackmailing, bribing, threatening.

But a long-suffering public had reached the limits of endurance. The Press announced its vehement disapproval in black and white. The question was debated over the radio by an influential reformer who organised a city-wide campaign. There were mass meetings at which the District Attorney, the judges, the politicians and the police were all accused of chicanery and corruption.

And in the Press and over the radio, the name of the man deemed to be responsible was but thinly veiled—the name Bugs Raymond. For who was ready to believe that the notorious racketeer had in reality turned his back on his old associates?

The outcry had the inevitable effect of spurring the authorities to action. A conference was held in the City Hall, was attended by professional men and business men, and was presided over by the District Attorney.

The District Attorney made a spirited attack not only on the hoodlums who threatened to dominate the city, but on those prominent members of the community who had countenanced the gangsters and even withheld evidence that might have convicted some of them.

Nor was the D.A.'s oratory in vain. Men came forward from the audience and admitted his charges. They were commercial magnates who had been brow-beaten or blackmailed during the months that Bugs Raymond had held undisputed sway. They confessed that they had accepted thugdom out of the fear of their hearts, but announced their determination of making a solid stand against it in the future.

Meanwhile, Bugs Raymond watched and waited, though his interest in the outcry was spasmodic, and only apparent when his thoughts did not hinge upon Dorothy Stone. He had set his mind on one course, at any rate, and it was a course that kept strictly to the strait and narrow path of law-abiding citizenship.

But Nails Markey was not idle. He realised that he had stirred up a hornet's nest, and further action was necessary. With Bugs Raymond's desertion of the gang still rankling, he saw a move whereby the latter might become a scapegoat.

Nails sent secretly for Jimmy Kirk. "Hallo, Jimmy," he greeted, when the gunman called on him. "How'd you like to make a little extra money?"

"How little?" drawled Jimmy with his thin-lipped smile.

"There's a loud-speaker on the radio that's shootin' off his mouth plenty," said Nails. "I wondered if you might attend to him, if I made it worth your while."

Jimmy's eyes took on a glint of greed. That night he made his way to the radio operator's hotel and let himself into the man's room by a duplicate key.

The reformer was sitting at a typewriter, tapping out notes for a speech that he intended to deliver the following day. He did not hear Jimmy enter. He was not aware of the slayer's presence till the smash of a gunshot broke the trend of his thoughts.

Jimmy Kirk plugged him three times in the back, then drilled him with a fourth bullet as he lay on the floor.

Next day the papers blazened the news of the killing and demanded justice. Men in the street pronounced the name of Bugs Raymond in wrathful tones. He had been at the back of it. He was the one the police should lay hands on. But the police had no proof.

Bugs received a call from Arkansas Smith at his apartment that night.

"You know the latest?" Arkansas announced. "They've pinned the killing on Jimmy Kirk. Yeah, he was seen leavin' that loud-speaker's hotel just after the shootin'!"

"Bunk!" was the rejoinder. "Jimmy didn't do it. He knows I don't want to get in any jam. He knows I'm out of the racket."

"I'm tellin' you," Arkansas persisted. "You ain't seen Jimmy since last night, anyway, have you?"

Bugs shook his head. "But that don't mean a thing," he argued. "I guess Jimmy got the tip he was suspected, and he's lyin' low for a spell."

He was interrupted by the ringing of the 'phone-bell, and picked up the receiver.

"Hallo?" he called. "Raymond this end. Yeah. Oh, hallo, Jimmy; it's you, is it? What's all this about that reformer?" A pause, and then: "You what?"

Watching Bugs, Arkansas Smith saw his face change colour.

"You've gotta get out of town, huh?" Bugs went on, a metallic note in his voice. "You want me to—" His tone grew suave all at once. "Oh, sure, Jimmy! You know I wouldn't stand by and see you in any fix without doin' something. Yeah, I'll have a car for you. You can pick it up at the gas-house at ten-thirty to-night."

He hung up the receiver and stood thinking for a moment. So Jimmy had been guilty, after all. Jimmy had gone against instructions, and now came whining for aid, a hunted slayer with the law at his heels.

It was not pleasant for Bugs to reflect that, by force of circumstantial evidence, he might now share his erring lieutenant's fear of the electric chair.

He glanced at Arkansas Smith.

"You were right," he said curtly. "Jimmy did it, but I don't want the cops to get him—if you understand what I mean. Ark, I want Jimmy put on the spot."

"I get you, Bugs."

"Take a car down to the gas-house, and meet him there," Bugs ordered.

Arkansas left the apartment, picked up a touring car and drove to the gas-house, over which Bugs had assumed control shortly after he had launched forth as a racketeer. He entered a small office there, switched on the light and waited.

Fifteen minutes after his arrival he heard a stealthy footfall, and, glancing through the window, saw Jimmy Kirk step into the shaft of light that streamed through the panes.

Arkansas opened a shutter. He observed that Jimmy looked haggard and nervous.

"The cops are on my trail, Ark," said Jimmy hoarsely. "Where's the car?"

"Right behind you," was the answer. "You'd better beat it, quick!"

Jimmy Kirk turned and darted towards the auto. Arkansas let him take

the wheel and then drew a gun. He levelled it deliberately, and blazed at Jimmy's white face. Three shots he pumped into the gunman in the car, and watched him sag forward over the steering-column. Then he turned to a telephone, to dial police headquarters.

"I'm speakin' from the gas-house," he said, as he heard the voice of the desk-sergeant. "A motor bandit just tried to stick me up here. No, he didn't get away. I shot him, an' he's dead—"

Arkansas stopped speaking. A hand had closed on his wrist, and, turning quickly, he saw a man in a slouch hat. The man was not alone. There were three or four uniformed police-officers with him.

The cops had been closer on the trail than even Jimmy Kirk had realised. They would never take Kirk into custody, but they had seen and heard enough to arrest Arkansas Smith.

The manacles were snapped home on Smith's wrists.

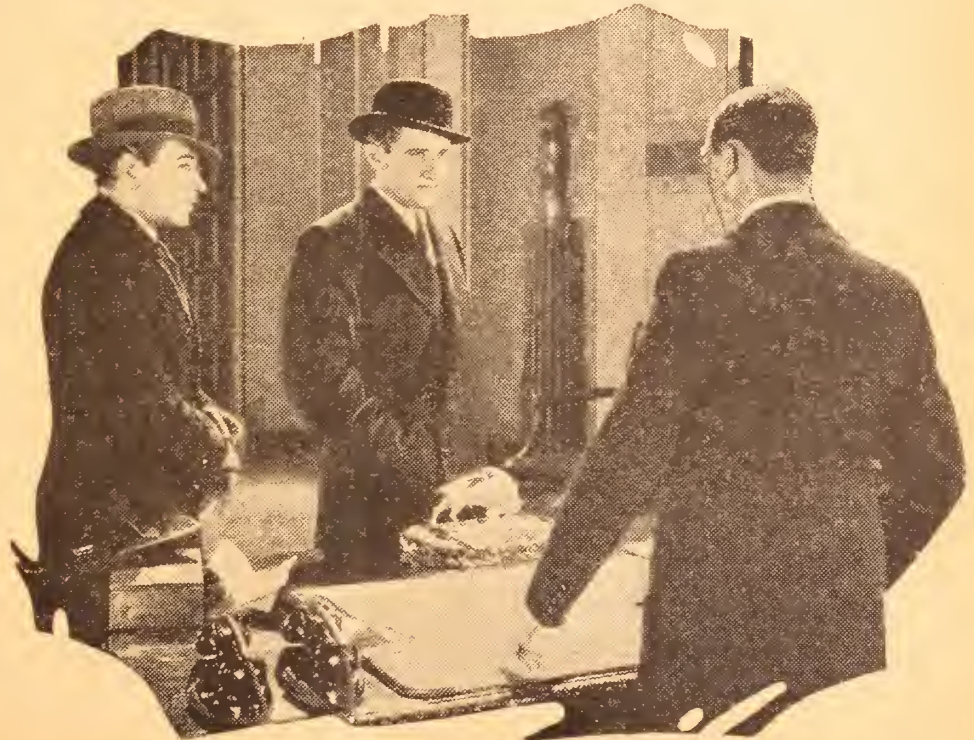
Back to the Racket.

EVEN under third-degree methods, Arkansas Smith maintained the habitual reticence peculiar to a gangster in the haunts of the police. So Bugs Raymond continued in his rôle of business man, and was a prominent figure at a civic function which took place a day or two after Kirk's killing.

The occasion marked the completion of the sixteen-million-dollar skyscraper that had been erected by the Stone Construction Company, and the function was carried out on the roof.

At a height of over a thousand feet above street level, speeches were made and applauded, a news-reel recording them. Bugs mingled with the elite, and, when the oratory was over, managed to edge his way to where Dorothy Stone was standing.

A good-looking young man was with her. She was holding on to his arm



"What do you want?" Stone demanded in a voice that was shaken by ill-concealed wrath.

affectionately, and as Bugs came up she smiled an aloof smile and presented her companion.

"Oh, Mr. Raymond," she said, "I'd like you to meet my fiancé. Billy, this is Mr. Raymond. Mr. Raymond—Mr. Matheson."

The young man held out his hand, and Bugs gripped it. He smiled an odd smile that was of the lips only, and not the eyes.

"Glad to know you, Matheson," he murmured. "Let me see, I believe Miss Stone told me you'd been in South America."

"Correct." Billy Matheson answered genially. "I'm going back there—but not before Dorothy marries me. We've fixed the date for the fifteenth of next month. Of course, you'll come along."

Bugs inclined his head. "Delighted," he said, "and I wish you every happiness."

"Thanks, Mr. Raymond," young Matheson rejoined, and then his attention was diverted by a Press photographer who came forward and spoke to Dorothy.

"Miss Stone," the photographer said, "would you and your fiancé care to pose while I take a picture? I'm a representative from the Union News Agency."

Dorothy agreed smilingly, and Bugs stood aside and leaned against the parapet of the roof, watching the young couple as they stood arm-in-arm. The Press photographer went back to his camera, focused it on Dorothy and Matheson and then approached Bugs.

"Would you mind moving?" he said. "You're just in the picture."

Bugs started. For a moment his brow darkened, and then, nodding abruptly, he walked to the rear of the camera.

The incident rankled in a mind that was already poisoned by jealousy, and at noon, when the reception was over, Bugs took a taxi to the new address of Nails Markey.

Nails had prospered, as his sumptuously-appointed apartment testified, and Bugs found him there with four or five of the boys—and Daisy de Lisle.

"Well, well," Nails greeted him in sarcastic tones, "if it ain't Bugs Raymond in person."

"Yep," Bugs said curtly, and then, fixing him with his eyes: "Been steppin' kind of high lately, haven't you, Nails? Seems to have slipped your mind that I might put you back where you once belonged—among the alleys."

Nails jerked to his feet and reached for his hip with an angry exclamation, but in a moment Daisy had stepped between the two men. Nails slugged, and, sinking into a chair again, pushed back his hat, which rarely left his head even when he was indoors.

"Say, listen, Nails," Bugs told him. "I'm not here to have trouble. Maybe that's why I sort of mentioned that I'm still in a position to control this outfit."

Nails mastered the resentment that was kindling in him. A cunning expression appeared in his eyes, and then gave place to a shifty and affable glint.

"Well, we ain't seen you in a long time, Bugs," he observed. "We'd almost forgotten what you looked like. Hadn't we, boys?" And he looked at the other members of the gang.

They nodded, but were plainly non-plussed by Nails Markey's change of front.

"Nails," Bugs said, "I thought I'd look you up and talk over something important."

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"You're welcome, Bugs," Nails told him, with a grin. "Specially so far as Daisy is concerned, I guess. She's always talkin' about you."

"You shut your trap, Nails!" Daisy flung at him vehemently, and then, turning on her heel, she moved to another part of the room.

Nails laughed. "You know, Bugs," he began, "there's one thing about Daisy—"

Bugs interrupted him with an impatient gesture. He had not called to discuss Daisy.

"Listen," he said, "I'm back in the racket. See?"

"Oh?" Nails murmured, leaning forward in his chair.

Bugs took a pace or two across the room, almost feverishly. It was clear that there was something on his mind.

"Nobody ever stopped me getting what I wanted," he jerked, coming to a halt before his former henchman. "You know that, Nails. I got what I went after every time. That applied to big business, and it's goin' to apply to this girl."

"What girl?" Nails inquired.

"Dorothy Stone," Bugs rapped out. "She turned me down for a cheapskate college Romeo, but I'm not the man to stand for it. Did you ever hear of the bride bein' carried off and the groom bein' left at the altar, Nails? Well, that's the kind of racket I'm gonna be in."

"Aw, kidnap the bride, huh?"

"Yep," Bugs answered, "and listen low. The morning of the wedding I'll meet you boys here. We'll make up our own party for the ceremony. Morning dress, high hats, flowers in our button-holes—and gats on our hips. We'll stick up that wedding the same as we've stuck up this town at one time or another."

"And the Stone girl will fall right in your arms," said Nails, with a smirk. "Boy, what a racket this is gonna be."

"It's the kind of racket that might make her think a whole lot more o' me," Bugs ground out, "for havin' the nerve to pull it off."

Nails stood up. "All right, Bugs," he said. "When is the ceremony fixed for?"

"The fifteenth," was the answer. "I'll be seein' you and the boys, Nails."

"Sure you will," Nails told him heartily, and saw him to the door.

When Nails Markey returned it was to encounter doubtful glances from the rest of the gang. They saw, however, that his ugly face had undergone a change of expression.

"So Mister Bugs Raymond thinks he can look us up again," he sneered, "and find us sittin' pretty—all ready to take bird-seed outa his hand and whistle a tune for him. He cuts adrift when it suits him, and he makes a come-back when it suits him. But this ain't no come-back for him. He dropped us once, and we ain't takin' a chance on him again."

"Then the wedding racket is off, Nails?" one of the gang asked.

"No, that racket goes—up to a point," Nails rejoined. "We'll be waitin' to go to church just like Bugs said—with mornin' clothes, high hats, flowers in our button-holes—and gats on our hips. But Bugs Raymond won't ever see church."

A girl's voice spoke. It was the voice of Daisy, standing in the background, and her face was paper-white.

"What do you mean, Nails?" she said breathlessly.

"I mean, baby," Nails answered, "that friend, Bugs is takin' that well-known ride."

Daisy was silent. She wanted to see

Bugs pay for the callous manner in which he had treated her. Yet she cared for him still, and knew that she always would, whatever happened.

The Ceremony.

ON the morning of the wedding Bugs Raymond donned a pair of light trousers, a fancy vest, a black coat and a topper. Spotless linen, a wing collar, with a neat, striped tie, and a pair of glace kid shoes encased in white spats completed the effect.

Bugs had never acquired the true social manner, but he at least possessed presence, and he cut an elegant and immaculate figure as he left his apartment.

He knew that Nails would have a limousine waiting to take the racketeering party to the church, so he did not order his own car, but hailed a taxi.

Half-way to Nails Markey's place he stopped the taxi outside a florist's shop and bought a carnation to decorate the button-hole of his morning-coat, and ten minutes later he dismissed the cab and entered the block of furnished apartments in which Nails had taken up residence.

He was treated to an amusing spectacle when he entered. There stood the boys, all rigged out in morning dress and high hats, and a more uncomfortable-looking group of humanity Bugs had never clapped eyes on.

One or two seemed almost presentable, but the others were like so many tailor's dummies who had been fitted with the wrong sizes in suits. Nails, in particular, was an incongruous figure, his thick-set form being totally out of keeping with the style of dress that it had been necessary to affect.

The clothes had cost a lot of money. Yet Nails did not even faintly resemble a man-about-town. His blue chin and coarse features betrayed him, and he looked precisely what he was—a thug masquerading as a dude.

Bugs surveyed him and the rest of the gang with candid mirth.

"Sufferin' snakes," he said uproariously, "do I look like you plugs?"

Nails stood before a mirror, adjusting the ends of a black silk bow tie.

"Why, what's wrong with us?" he demanded. "I thought we looked pretty hot."

"You look like a lot of half-boiled undertakers," Bugs observed. "But you'll pass. Are you all set?"

"Yeah, we're all set," Nails answered. "I'll have Chuck call round with the car."

He crossed to a telephone and put through a call, ordering the aforementioned "Chuck" to appear straightway with the limousine.

"Now let's get the whole thing clear," said Bugs, as Nails wandered back to the middle of the room. "We drive up to the church and all get out, excepting Chuck, who will stay at the wheel and be ready to start up at a moment's notice. We'll take our places in one of the pews near the altar, and before the minister can pronounce the words 'man and wife' we'll step up and bust in on the ceremony with our gats. Understand?"

"I get you," Nails rejoined. "I'll grab the girl," Bugs continued. "You and the boys will cover my get-away and join me in the car."

"Oh, we cover your getaway," Nails murmured. "And then hustle out and join you in the car, huh?"

Bugs nodded. "Right, Nails," he was saying when Daisy de Lisle entered the room.

Daisy looked pale, and there were dark shadows under her eyes. Glancing

(Continued on page 26.)

A stirring story of the West, in which a senator's son is sent to a ranch to keep him out of trouble, but trouble seems to follow him, until he wades in with blazing guns and smashing fists.



Westward Bound



Starring
BUFFALO BILL, JUN.,
and
ALLENE RAY.

["A Slight Mix-Up!"]

THE girl who sat at one of the corner tables in the slum restaurant covered her mouth with her dainty fingers for the fiftieth time that night. She looked bored, and she was bored. The restaurant, far from providing the rough and tumble amusement she had fondly expected, was just the quietest place in the city.

She turned to her escort as though he were to blame for it. "Fred Baine," she said severely, "I thought you said there was always something like real life in this sort of eating show?"

"Well, 'pon my soul, I thought there was!" Baine said. "Seems very quiet, I must admit."

"So quiet that I am going West to-morrow—back to my ranch in Montana," said Marge Holt very firmly. "The ranch does at least give one some little excitement. This city life is simply awful—no riding, no cattle stampedes, all the men looking as if they have nothing else to do but make themselves spruce and tidy. Gee, it's me for the West to-morrow all right!"

"Don't say that, Marge," pleaded Baine, and pushed back his chair. "Perhaps they are fearing a police raid, or something, and everybody is on their best behaviour. I'll have a word with Tony."

Fred Baine had his own reasons why he did not want Marge Holt to go back to the ranch. He had an idea that he would like to go back with her—as her husband. That would ensure his not being called upon to work. Later he might be able to persuade her to sell the cattle, the ranch and everything else that she had, and he would help her spend the money in the only way he knew how.

He left the table, with Marge still yawning, and made his way to where Tony, the proprietor of the so-called

slum restaurant amused himself by polishing a glass that was already as bright as it ever had been or ever would be.

"Tony, my friends want a little excitement," said Baine, keeping his voice low, and dipping his hands into his pocket for his notes. "Got somebody who could sort of make things—well, not too lively, if you understand, with that pretty girl? Then I would sort o' drop in on the scene, and a little scrap would give her all the excitement she wanted."

"And the gallant hero of the evening would receive such a charming vote of thanks from the be-yew-tiful princess, eh?" grinned Tony, pocketing the proffered note. "Well, it ees not the first time, my friend, that I have obliged you!"

And he beckoned to a hooligan of just the type stage villains are invariably depicted. He was a huge fellow with a coarse, unshaven face, thin, sneering lips, beady eyes and crooked nose—altogether one who looked quite interesting in a picture, but mightily uninteresting to meet on a dark and stormy night.

The fellow came across to Tony just as the door opened and another of the boring type came into Marge Holt's view. He was spruce, curly-headed, undeniably handsome, with a pair of mischievous eyes. Behind him walked a chauffeur.

Marge had quite the biggest thrill of the evening as the two newcomers sat down and called for drinks. For a young man about town to sit down with his chauffeur was new to her, and, tame though that fact was, it was a thrill after the dull and dismal evening she had so far spent.

She was watching the newcomers so intently that she did not observe the

unwieldy form of the tough until his voice made her look up.

"We're going to dance," he growled. "Ready?"

"No, thank you—not to-night!" said Marge, a little unsteadily as her heart began to beat more quickly under the leering eyes.

"I said we were going to dance!" retorted the tough, with a very effective snort.

And his hands went out—which was just the moment the gallant Fred Baine should have come upon the scene. But there was somebody else about besides Fred Baine.

The curly-headed newcomer sprang from his table, stepped away quickly to the girl's table, and lashed out twice with his right and left.

A very surprised tough met the first with his chin and the second with his nose—then rapidly going out of the newcomer's reach.

In a flash the excitement Marge had craved for was forthcoming. The tough steadied himself and hit back, and with the chauffeur running up to take his young master's side, and Tony rushing up to beg his man not to make too much mess of the really gallant stranger, there was more confusion than space.

The curly-headed young man could use his fists. Marge noticed that just as quickly as did the tough. But it was the latter who suffered the most convincing proof of that fact—two crashing rights under the jaw which sent him sprawling to the floor.

"Meester Baine—you stop this feller—there'll be smashes up!" hissed the thoroughly alarmed Tony.

Baine started to do his best, but the young man flung him aside as though he had been a sack of straw, grabbed

at Marge, lifted her clean out of her chair, and carried her through the little restaurant. His chauffeur stopped to look after the tough as that worthy staggered groggily to his feet.

"Put—put—put me down!" gasped Marge Holt, her voice vibrant with anger.

The young man merely grinned, worked his way skillfully to the door, pushed it open by the simple expedient of banging it with her daintily shod feet, and dumped her gently at the very door of the taxi that was waiting outside.

"You've—how dare you!" she positively hissed.

The next moment two stinging open-handers upon the sides of his face staggered the rescuer so much with the surprise of the attack that he was stunned for three complete seconds.

The fourth saw him catch the girl gently by the shoulders, pull her towards him, and a not too gentle kiss fairly implanted upon her lips.

"Now you'll go straight home—if you're a lady!" said the young man, with a grim laugh. "Here are your friends—beat it!"

Baine and the rest of the party arrived just as Marge, under the pressure of her rescuer's arms, was being pushed into the taxi. Baine himself ushered in another girl, and slipped in after them without a word.

"Say, Mr. Bob, I reckon that was a frame-up job!" said the chauffeur thoughtfully, and stared as the other remained standing at the kerb staring after the departing taxi.

"I reckon that was a stunning girl, if ever there was one!" muttered Bob, and gently rubbed his still smarting face with the tips of his fingers. "I'm sorry I suggested she might not be a lady, Ben—but glad I kissed her! What's the tough doing?"

"Doing?" Ben grunted as he repeated that word. "That's what I say—it was a put-up job. He never moved after you had picked up the lady, although I dare say he could have made mincemeat of me. All the same, now they've gone we'd better be moving ourselves, Mr. Bob. Might be a real rough house!"

Bob Lansing nodded, and clambered into the smart two-seater beside his driver in the manner of one whose mind is very, very far from being set upon the delights of a run back to the city.

Troubles Never Come Singly!

BOB LANSING was his usual cheery self when he greeted his father the next morning, although quite a deal of the night just gone by had been spent in studying again and again a mental vision of a pretty girl he had held in his arms for all too short a time.

Senator Lansing, however, was far from being cheery. He had a newspaper in his hands, and the top lines, printed in big black letters, proclaimed to the world that Senator Lansing's son had been mixed up in a cheap sort of brawl the previous night.

"Bob, I suppose you know all about this?" he said sternly. "And with the elections just coming round—why, this will cost me thousands of votes!"

"Sorry, dad!" said Bob quietly. "But I just couldn't let a burly brute of a fellow pull a girl about, could I?"

"I don't know—I don't want to know anything about it. All I know is that you are causing me to lose a mighty lot of votes!" said Senator Lansing restlessly. "I don't even understand why on earth you want to go down to that part of the city and get—"

August 29th, 1934.

"Just a little change—a little excitement!" put in Bob, with a gentle smile.

"At my expense!" snapped his father. "Bob, you're going west for two months to my ranch in Montana—until after the elections, at any rate! Understand? And you'd better take Coleman with you—he seems to have a propensity for trouble just as much as you!"

"O.K. with me, dad!" said Bob cheerfully. "Sorry if I have messed up any votes for you, but—why, dad, you should have seen her! She was just the loveliest—"

"Brrrrr!" growled Senator Lansing, in deepest disgust.

Bob grinned, bade his father adieu, and hurried away to inform Ben Coleman of their good luck.

"Westward bound, my boy!" chirped Bob the moment he found the chauffeur. "Get a few bits together, and we're starting right away!"

"What—me, too?" gasped Ben. "I mean, I haven't just got to take you to the station?"

"Not you, my son!" said Bob, and struck a dramatic attitude that was completely spoiled by his merry, twinkling eyes. "The open plains—the rolling cattle—I mean, ranges—horses, pistols, bandits, rustlers, gangsters, racketeers—"

"A couple of hundred cows to groom every day—I know!" growled Ben.

"Well, what of it? It'll be a change! Go on—slip away and get a few things packed!"

It took them less than an hour to get all they wanted, and at the end of that time the smart two-seater was heading westward with two care-free young men aboard. Ben had, at Bob's command, discarded his uniform, and wore an ordinary lounge suit which would be less distinctive and more useful where they were going.

"Well, this is where we leave our troubles behind!" chuckled Bob, as they struck open country.

"Well, I dunno, Mr. Bob," mused Ben. "'Tain't such a bad ol' place!"

"Not so much of the Mister Bob—plain Bob does me now!" grunted Lansing. "Got that, Ben?"

"Sure, I've got that, Mr. Bob!"

"Bob, you gumph!"

"All right—Bob!" grinned Ben.

"Then step on the gas and let her rip!"

Ben obeyed, and the car simply flew over the miles until the city was left far behind. They pulled up only to feed and drink and secure the necessary petrol for the car, so that when nightfall came they were ready enough to call halt for the day.

Dawn saw them on the move again, and by the time noon came round such things as trouble seemed utterly out of place amidst the wild, open country, the rising hills, the smell of the prairies and the woods, the almost cloudless blue skies and the heat of the sun.

But even in such heavenly surroundings the most earthly things can happen. A loud bang from one of the back tyres brought them out of their idle roaming with a start.

"That's work!" grunted Bob, as he jumped out. "I'll give you a hand to change the wheel, Ben."

"Thank you, Mr. Bob, but—"

"I'll 'but' you if you call me Mr. Bob again!" growled Lansing. "Let's get at it!"

They got at it, as cheerfully as though the world belonged to them, neither of them giving a thought as to what would be the position if they suffered another puncture before they got into a town and had the damaged tyre repaired.

As it happened, they were destined to be relieved of any such worries.

They had just finished their job when two horsemen came from the neighbouring woods—two strangers who wore the costume of men of the plains, and the revolver-belts that always had such a picturesquely serious impression about them.

"Keep out of that car, mister!" said one of them grimly, his hand on his gun. "Slip off, partner!"

His partner obeyed, and in a moment they were out of the saddle.

"We happen to be in a hurry, mister—so 'scuse us if we sort o' insist upon a trade; we take your car, and you take our horses!" said he who had spoken first. "They're sure just about all in. But—they'll go for you. Get in, partner!"

"Sure, this is real swell!" grinned his companion.

With their hands reaching for the skies and neither of them with his coat fully on, Bob and Ben watched angrily but helplessly whilst the rougher-dressed men of the plains shipped into their car.

"Look here, you can't get away with this!" said Bob desperately.

"Can't?" growled the spokesman, and dropped his hand to his gun. "Say, mister, think yourself lucky we don't fill you with lead just to make sure you can't talk! And ain't we trading you our hosses?"

"Our hosses is sure right!" chuckled the other. And that was the last Bob Lansing saw or heard of them, although the car was raising the dust under its speeding wheels for some minutes for their enjoyment.

"That's the last trouble we could have expected, Ben," growled Bob, and took a look at the horses.

They were obviously tired out, but were not too bad. They at least provided them with a means of transport and, at Bob's suggestion, they mounted the animals and rode at walking pace until they came to a trail.

Here they headed west again, knowing full well that they would be lucky if they reached Montana that night and could secure food.

But even their slight anxiety in that direction could not restrain Bob from giving a whoop of sudden delight.

"Water!" he exclaimed joyfully. "Come on, Ben—this is where we get off our thoroughbreds and really enjoy ourselves!"

"I could do with something more'n water to drink!" growled Ben. "If I never see those hosses again, I'll—"

"Drink?" sniffed Bob, as he slipped from his horse. "This is going to be a real, swell swim! Come on—slip off your clothes and get a splash!"

The pool of water was inviting after the dusty ride, and it took them only a few seconds to whip off their clothes and slip into the welcome shallows. There for a while they splashed about like a couple of light-hearted schoolboys, shouting to one another if they were many feet apart, and ducking each other if they were near enough to do it.

Even Ben lost a good deal of his anger against the car rustlers as the refreshing waters brought new life into his limbs, and he was as cheerful as ever as he came out of the water a foot ahead of Bob.

But a puzzled expression took the place of his smiles as he moved to where they had left their clothes.

"Say, Mr. Bob—I mean, Bob—somebody's took our clothes! And I can't see the horses!" he exclaimed.

"What! Jumping rattlesnakes, you're right!" ejaculated Bob.

They rushed to the bushes in search of their clothes, and then to the shelter under which they had left their horses. There was nothing to be seen.

For a moment they stared at one another in dismay, and it was Ben who broke the startled silence with a grunt of deep disgust.

"Well, this is about the most thievin' district a galoot ever walked into!" he growled. "First they pinch our car, and now they've taken our clothes and horses! What d'y'know about that?"

"I don't know so much about that as I should like to!" said Bob grimly, and smiled suddenly as he looked down at his companion's dripping shorts. "But I do know that you're looking some guy to walk into a respectable town, Ben!"

"Well, seeing that you are dressed in just the same as myself, you ain't gonna look so mighty attractive!" growled Ben. "And your curls has sure been left in the pool, Bob!"

"Take cover—I hear something!" interjected Bob suddenly.

They darted behind the cover of tall bushes at the side of the trail, and waited hopefully. The creaking of wooden wheels drew nearer and nearer, and suddenly swept into sight—and two hopeful expressions turned to dismay.

A middle-aged woman was driving towards them, seated in an old fashioned, but quite serviceable, buckboard. She saw them at the same moment as they spotted her, and in a flash the horses were whipped into a gallop, and the buckboard flew past them in a cloud of dust.

"That's that!" grunted Bob. "There's nothing for it hut a hike, Ben—and a hope that our luck will change!"

"Let's he going!" sniffed Ben. "The sooner we find a decent hombre in these parts the better I'll be feelin'!"

And they struck the trail in rather tender fashion. Their feet were not hardened to walking on a hot, dusty trail, and to them it seemed that every loose stone in Montana was laid out before them.

It was only just in time to prevent their utter collapse that they stumbled up to a wooden shack that had every appearance of being deserted. By that

time they would both have risked imprisonment for life to obtain a pair of hefty boots to protect their feet against the hot trail.

"We're going in there, and if nobody is at home, we'll help ourselves to whatever there is," said Bob, setting his teeth desperately. "I'm sure stuck right up with this trail paddlin', Ben!"

Ben could only grunt. He felt that if he opened his mouth very much he would groan.

Cautiously they crept up to the door of the shack and knocked upon the door. There was no answer, which gave them both a greater hope. Just as cautiously, Bob opened the door. It gave way to his touch at once, and a single glance told them that there was nobody at home.

"Inside!" said Bob briefly.

Ben went in willingly enough, and Bob followed him and shut the door. Inside they found all that they could want—clothes for both of them, including boots that more or less fitted them.

Thus it was with a little more cheerfulness that they walked once more on that troublesome trail, their borrowed clothes lending them protection against the hot sun and making them feel rather more inclined to meet up with anybody who happened to come along.

As it happened, they came up to somebody they least of all expected to meet.

"Look—there's our horses!" said Bob suddenly, pointing to a little clearing just off the trail. "And, gee! What's that? Men and cattle! Say, this is where we step in, Ben!"

Ben nodded and pushed back his shirt cuffs in businesslike fashion. In a moment more they were moving cautiously to the clearing.

Two men were busy in that clearing—too busy to take any notice of the newcomers. They were obviously branding a calf, and behind them were the two horses the car rustlers had left with Bob and Ben.

But the men turned quickly enough when Bob spoke.

"Say, guess this is where we collect our horses!" said Bob calmly.

"Your horses?" growled one of them.

"You mean our hosses! Somebody rustled them from us!"

"Somebody rustled our car, and left us the horses—I guess we'll make for the sheriff and have our argument out with him!" said Bob grimly. "Suit you?"

The second man let go the calf, and in a moment it was dashing into the open country, taking with it the slight and not unpleasant smell of singeing brought about by the branding. The next moment the two men flung themselves on Ben and Bob, and a wild fight started.

There was no time for the city men to wonder why the men of the plains should object to settling the disputed ownership of the horses before the local sheriff. They had to protect themselves as best they could against as savage an attack as they had ever encountered.

But the troubles that had come their way had roused Bob and Ben just sufficiently to fight with more ferocity than skill. They lashed out right and left, and there were no rounds. They took blows as hard as they gave, but neither party showed the least inclination to stop the fight until there sounded, from the distance, the rattle of hoofs.

That changed the whole outlook.

In a flash, guns appeared in the strangers' hands, and two anxious sets of eyes glared ferociously at Bob and Ben.

"Keep away, stranger! We'll blow holes in you if you put your fists this way again—and stand back!"

Unarmed as they were, neither Bob nor Ben could do anything but obey. They looked on in dismay as the men hurriedly mounted the horses and kept their guns pointing steadily until the rapidly approaching rattle of galloping horses urged them to dig in their spurs and dash madly for cover of the woods.

"Well, here's another go!" grunted Ben, rubbing his jaw. "I was just going to sock my man in the jaw, too!"

There was no time for more. Horsemen were all around them, and again guns came into play. And of all the men that had been met, these were the grimmest bunch ever.

"Say, ain't there a guy in this dis-



"Look here—you can't get away with this!" said Bob desperately.

trict without a gun?" demanded Bob contemptuously.

"We want guns when dealing with rustlers like you!" snapped one of the newcomers—a foreman, by the look of him, and by the way the others waited for him to speak.

"Rustlers?" hooted Ben. "Why, we've been rustled—"

"What's that you've got in your hand?" demanded the foreman, as he slipped from his horse. "If that ain't a branding-iron I will say I've slipped up some!"

Bob looked down at the iron which, almost instinctively, he had snatched up at the approach of the horsemen.

"I tell you, we came up to two men who had stolen our horses, and—" began Bob hotly.

"Rope 'em, men!" cut in the foreman briefly.

He waited until his orders had been obeyed, and once more the unarmed Bob and Ben could do nothing but submit. Ropes were set round their arms and legs and pulled tight.

"Now you're going up to the Bar O, and meet up with the owner," said the foreman grimly. "I'll say rustlers have never been caught with more evidence of guilt than you—and we sure have had some rustlers in these parts. Move, strangers!"

Ben gave vent to a dismal grunt, and his expression was almost pathetic as he looked up at Bob.

"And Senator Lausing thought he was sending us out of trouble when he gave orders for us to be Westward bound!" he muttered.

"Oh, we'll get out of this plenty quick enough!" declared Bob, as they started the march along the trail.

But he sounded a lot more confident than he felt. He had been caught with a branding iron in his hands, with the necessary fire at his toes, and that was a whole heap of evidence. He knew that—none better!

Everything depended upon the ranch owner now, and if that owner was anything like those with whom they had already made contact, Bob had a notion that a good many more months than two would pass before Senator Lausing saw them again!

A Serious Business!

"YOU wait here!"

That was what Frank, the ranch foreman, briefly commanded when the foot-sore and weary suspects were marched into Bar O. They were glad enough to halt, but inwardly, just a little uncertain as to whether or not they were keen to learn their fate.

A glance round at the grim faces of the captors told Bob that a dash for freedom would be hopeless. These men showed such an aptitude for handling their guns, and bullets went quicker than any man or any horse. There was nothing for it but to wait and see what happened.

The foreman slipped round the ranch-house, followed by the man whom Bob had heard addressed as Dick—a burly, rather shifty-looking customer. At the back, just filling a washing pan, was Emma, the housekeeper-cook.

"Where's Miss Marge, Emma?" demanded Frank in his brief way.

"I'm here—what's the matter?" came an unexpected reply from the doorway.

Marge Holt stood there, less magnificently dressed than she had been in the slim restaurant, but none the less attractive and pretty.

"We caught a couple of rustlers with a running iron in their hands!" explained

Frank. "I thought you might like to have a word with them, Miss Marge, before I took them down to the sheriff. They might spill a bit if you ask them a few questions."

Marge Holt nodded.

"I'll come along with you, Frank—I'd sure like to know a bit more about these rustlers," she said, with a frown. "We've lost so much cattle lately that the sooner the rustlers are all in prison the better it will be for all of us. Where are they?"

"Round the corner."

They moved in a body towards the ranch-gates, Marge with a grimly pert expression upon her pretty face, and Emma with a distinctly curious, but nervous, twinkle in her eyes. It was Emma who pulled up the party the moment they reached the corner of the house.

"Why, if it isn't the two men I saw half-naked on the trail!" she exclaimed. "They ought to be hanged!"

Marge did not reply—she did not even smile. She was looking at the curly head, from which Bob had removed his hat. And only for half a minute did the puzzled frown remain upon her brows.

Then she smiled—a gentle, whimsical smile of amusement.

"I don't think I'll question them yet," she said suddenly, and very quietly. "Let us make them work. Give them forks and set them to work in the stables, Frank. After that they can do the washing-up."

A moment later she had darted towards the house, stopping only to order the amazed Frank to wait a minute. She came back in a very short time, and it was with a pair of dark glass spectacles over her eyes.

The others looked at her in amazement.

"Lawks alive, Miss Marge—and what's the business?" gasped Emma.

"Leave this to me!" said Marge, with a chuckle of girlish delight.

And it was she who led the way up to the suspects and stood before them in an attitude of lofty contempt.

"So you are two of the rustlers who have been raiding my cattle!" she said cuttingly. "I've always thought rustlers were real men!"

"Look here, ma'am—we're not rustlers—" began Bob warmly.

"Take them round the stables, Frank!" interjected Marge.

"But—"

"Move!" snapped Frank, and fingered his gun by way of persuasion.

Ben and Bob moved, helpless and utterly forlorn. There simply was no use in argument at that time.

The cattle-sheds were chosen as the spot upon which they were first to work, and it was Marge who handed them forks.

"Clean up the sheds," she said briefly, and Bob stared suspiciously at the black glasses as there appeared to him to be a chuckle behind the command.

But the eyes remained hidden—and Frank, standing with his hand upon his gun, moved it slightly as a sign that he was getting impatient.

If they felt humiliated in raking out the smelly cattle-sheds, that was nothing to what they felt when they were set to work, half an hour later, at a huge basin of water in which reposed various kitchen utensils. It was the first time in their lives that they had "done the washing-up," and they did not like it.

They were tired in mind and body when nightfall came, and disgusted enough to wish that the sheriff would come along with the toughest length of rope and string them up to the nearest tree. Matters were not improved when

they were parted for the night, Bob being locked in a side-room by the horse stables, and Ben taken and put under lock and key by the fodder-room.

But things certainly appeared to be turning their way when Ben's door was suddenly unlocked, well into the night, and the man Dick appeared.

"Not a whisper!" muttered Dick, before he had closed the door again.

"If you reckon I'm gonna start doin' more woman's work, you can get your gun out and start shootin' right now!" growled Ben. "I'm through!"

"Sh'ish!" Dick's warning was impatient. "I'm sort o' sorry for you fellers—you don't seem much like old-time rustlers to me."

"We ain't rustlers at all!"

"There's a couple of horses saddled down by the corral—here's a key that will release your partner—beat it!"

"Shucks! Now you're talking hoss sense!" gloated Ben, and in a moment he had snatched at the key and was at the door. "One of these days we'll meet up again, mister, and then I'll tell you what I think of you."

He could not have seen the grin that crept across Dick's shifty face or he might have been a little less exuberant. As it was he slipped across the yard to the stables, and in a few seconds he had released Bob and they were making for the corral as hard as their legs would take them.

The horses were there, saddled and ready for the trail and, with Dick looking on from the cover of a stable, they mounted and dug in their spurs. In half a minute they were careering wildly down the trail.

Two minutes later Dick was also mounted, but he cut off in a different direction to that taken by the runaway suspects. His was not an aimless ride.

Dawn was coming up when he rode straight up to a shack that was practically hidden in the thick undergrowth.

Inside were a number of men who appeared to find something disconcerting in the thunder of his approach, for their hands were upon their guns when Dick opened the door and walked in.

"They're gone!" he announced at once. "Took it like a dog takes a bone, Jim!"

"Good! Let's be going!" snapped the man addressed as Jim Stone.

The result of that escape and Dick's ride were manifest not so very much after.

Dick burst into the kitchen of the ranch.

"The prisoners have escaped—and they've taken a hundred head of cattle with them!" he said breathlessly. "Two horses have gone, too!"

"A hundred head of cattle—gone!" gasped Marge, and a spoon dropped with a clatter from her nerveless fingers to the floor.

For a moment they watched her—noticing the expression of dismay that flitted across her face. They put it down to the loss of her cattle—and a hundred head of cattle being lost was certainly something to cause her concern.

But it was not that. Marge was thinking only very dimly of the cattle. They formed, as it were, only a background to a rather handsome, smiling face—a head of curly hair—and a pair of merry eyes that had looked so extraordinarily nice when filled with an expression of dismay and resignation.

"Get—get the boys all out, and we'll hunt them over the range!" she whispered. "They can't beat us if they've a hundred head of cattle to look after."

"They'll be making for the border,

I expect. We'll have to hurry!" said Dick earnestly.

"Never mind—go and get them!" said Marge, and for the first time for many a year there was real anger in her voice.

Marge Holt was a very, very disappointed young woman. Bob Lansing was, after all, a rustler.

The Accusation!

AT the very moment that Marge Holt led out her cowboys Bob and Ben were sitting beside a camp-fire, resting after a meal. It should have been a cheerful meal, seeing that it was had in freedom they had not expected when they had turned in the previous night.

But it was not a cheery meal at all. Bob was preoccupied all the time, and the clatter he made when he suddenly flung a stone with vicious force at their water-can brought Ben to earth with a startled cry.

"Shucks! You'll rouse the whole district with that row!" he exclaimed. "What's the matter with you? Want a rope round your neck?"

"I've just remembered where I met that girl—it was at the slum restaurant!" exclaimed Bob, and rose quickly to his feet. "I'm going back!"

"Going back? What for?" ejaculated the startled Ben.

"She'll be thinking we really are rustlers—running away like we did," said Bob. "I'm not standin' for that—and it's no good your talking, either! We're going back!"

"More washing-up — and perhaps they'll set us to wash the socks and shirts—woman's work!" growled the disgusted Ben.

"We'll risk that! I'm not letting that girl think I'm a rustler," said Bob firmly, and with that he made for his horse.

Ben followed reluctantly, but dutifully. If Mr. Boh could risk his neck by going back, it was up to him to make it easier by keeping Bob company.

They rode the trail in silence, Ben despairing more and more as they got nearer to Marge Holt's range, and Bob showing more and more eagerness to meet up with the girl.

But they were destined not to meet up with her in the circumstances they planned.

Bob pulled up his horse with a sudden jerk as, riding the crest of a hill, he saw below him a herd of cattle in charge of a number of men.

"Halt! Can you see what cattle they are?" he demanded tensely.

"Bar O!" announced Ben a moment later. "You can see the brand on their haunches!"

"What's a herd doing out here at this time of day—making for the border-line?" said Bob. "Say, Ben, maybe they've been rustled! If we drove them back, and picked up a rustler or two we'd sure clear ourselves! Snakes! They've been driven into a corral!"

"Then there's no hope of clearing yourself—expect it's one of

the dame's own corrals!" grunted Ben.

Bob did not answer. He never took his eyes off the scene before him. Instead, he dug his heels and set his horse at a trot towards the wooded range, and Ben followed as a matter of course.

There was no need to ask any questions when they dismounted from their horses a few yards from the shack into which they had watched the cowpunchers go. Voices came to them from within.

"Well, that's about the easiest lift we have ever had!"

"A good hundred head. Jim—and the joke of it is that Marge Holt will be out for them city goomphs, and her boys'll shoot 'em up on sight, so they can't spill the beans!"

It was a joke—it must have been, judging by the laughter that followed.

But to Bob it was anything but a joke. He had heard her name now—Marge Holt. And this was her cattle.

Untrained to the range though he was, Bob needed no telling that the herd was well hidden, and that it would be quite an easy matter for the cowpunchers to ride around the wooded corral and miss all that it hid.

"You follow my lead. Ben. We're going to do some business!" muttered Bob grimly, and with a calmness that staggered Ben, he stepped towards the shack door.

Rifles and guns greeted him, but he looked at them with a contempt that might have suggested he lived in such an atmosphere of constant threat and danger.

For one tense moment the men in the hut and the newcomers surveyed one another—and there was not a flicker of surprise in Bob's face when his eyes rested, for one brief second, upon those of the man Dick, from Bar O ranch.

"Well, mister?" queried Jim Stone, very quietly, his right hand moving ever so slightly to those behind him as a warning not to start shooting.

"Seeing that Bar O cattle coming into your corral, I sort o' reckoned you do

business in a pretty small way," said Bob easily. "I'm interested—but with a place like this, stranger, why don't you wipe up the district?"

There were gasps all round at the calm announcement, and eyes that had been full of suspicion changed immediately to wonder.

"I don't reckon on rustling a hundred head or so. I've got a pretty good gang of my own, mister, and I'm sure startin' on clearing the district. Seein' as you're also interested, perhaps we'd better have a sort o' understanding," went on Bob; and even Ben nearly gasped at that.

Bob was as calm and convincing as if he had discussed such matters as rustling whole herds all his life. To make matters even more plain, he calmly ignored the guns and sat down at the table.

He was up the next moment, however, for with startling suddenness there burst into the room the very person for whom he was planning so cunning a fight.

It was Marge Holt!

For a moment they stared at her, she returning their stare with eager wonder. "So you've got them—and my cattle!" she said breathlessly. "Dick, the boys are out on the range! Get them along and have the cattle driven back—"

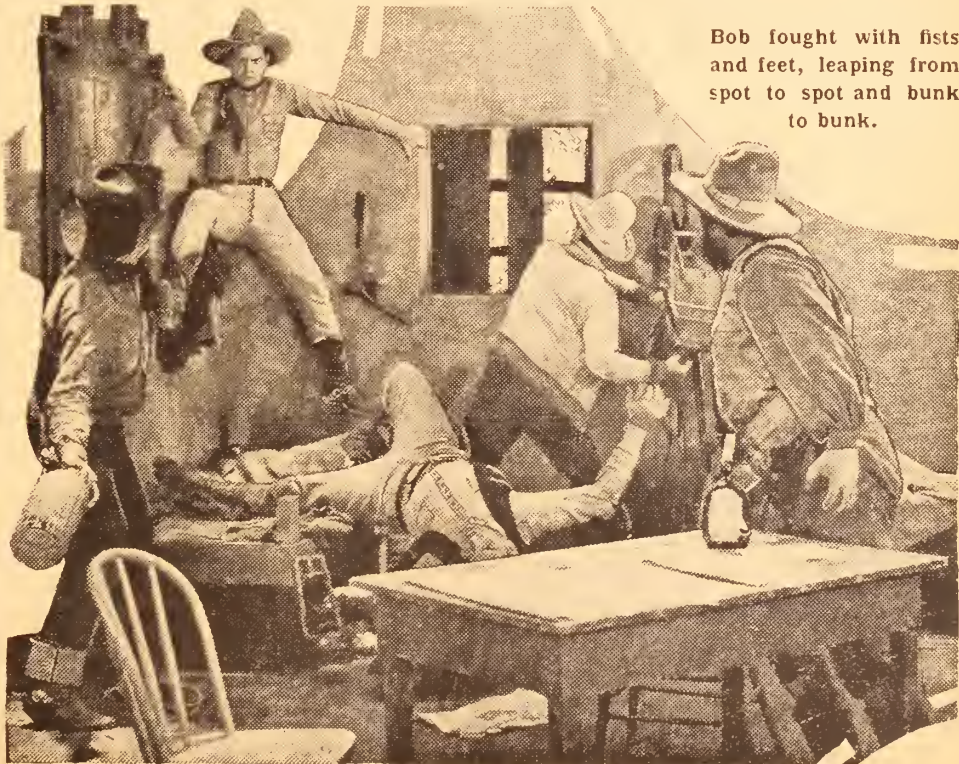
"Wait a minute—wait a minute!" said Jim Stone slowly. "Not so fast! Those cattle ain't goin' back!"

"What do you mean?" gasped Marge. "Dick, I saw you cut off from the boys, and followed you— Oh!"

She broke off with another little gasp, and stared round at Ben and then up at Bob. But the latter's face was impassive.

"So—you are—a rustler!" she muttered, as the truth dawned upon her. "And you—Dick?"

Dick turned his head, and it was Jim Stone who cut down the surprises and got to business.



Bob fought with fists and feet, leaping from spot to spot and bunk to bunk.

"Those cattle are going over the border, ma'am, and you're going with them!" he said bluntly. "We'll let you go when the cattle is out of jurisdiction, so to speak, and your blabbing won't hurt nobody."

"Wait a minute; I'm on a better plan than that!" said Bob excitedly. "Why not have the money from the ranch as well, boys? Hold Miss Holt for ransom, I mean. My partner can take a note to the ranch, and bless your little hearts, the lady can write the note herself!"

"I'll do nothing of the sort!" snapped Marge fiercely.

"You will!" said Bob coolly, and, sitting himself down at the table, took up pencil and paper. "At least, you will sign it! That will be good enough for your boys, I reckon. They'll sure have plenty of thought for you, ma'am!"

He wrote rapidly for a few minutes, Jim Stone looking on carefully whilst it was being done. In the end Bob rose from the table and gently but firmly pushed the girl into his vacant chair.

"Sign up—unless you want to go across the border with our bunch for good!" he said tersely.

She looked up at him, indignant and rebellious. But his calm, stern expression told her at once that she could expect nothing from him but orders.

A glance round at the merciless faces about her, and with a little sob at her throat, she signed her name to the demand for all the money at the ranch to be handed to the man who brought the note.

"Thanks!" said Bob coolly, as he took the note up and folded it. "Here, Ben, take this back to the ranch and bring back the money—"

"And you go with him, Dick," cut in Jim Stone, just as calmly. "Two of 'em is so much safer, mister—especially as your partner ain't got a gun!"

Bob never turned a hair, although he realised that those words just about spelled the utter ruin of his plan. Ben would have brought back plenty from the ranch—but armed men, not money. With Dick and a gun as partners on the ride, however, that plan seemed to be scotched for good and all.

But he could not show any mistrust of Jim Stone or Dick in the circumstances, neither could he show the slightest hesitation in accepting Jim Stone's suggestion as a really fine precaution.

"That's a great idea, partner," said Bob instantly. "Get off, you guys, and don't be too long about it. In the meantime I reckon we'll keep a good lookout, mister, whilst they're gone. This dame's pouches are on the range somewhere, and we don't want any surprise."

So, as Ben and Dick went out on their errand, Jim Stone agreed to split up the remaining members of the party into two sections. One lot went into the back room—and with them went Marge Holt. The others remained in the other room, ready for any emergencies.

Jim Stone was chuckling gleefully. His new partner was showing enterprise. He had thought of the ransom idea so quickly that for once in a way Jim Stone reckoned he had met up with somebody who had as much brains as he himself. It was pleasing, and likely to be profitable.

What Jim Stone would have thought had he been on the range trail could only be imagined. But things were certainly happening out there which would tend to upset his calculations of much loot from his rustling game.

Dick and Ben were riding down the

trail, and were within a mile of the Bar O ranch when Ben, with a skill that was surprising considering he was more used to motor-cars than to horses, suddenly flung himself sideways at his companion, and the two of them lurched off their horses and crashed to the ground.

Ben had the advantage of the surprise, and he crashed home his right and left before the bewildered Dick had had time to realise that Ben meant quite a different business to that upon which they had set out.

He fought back, sick and dizzy from the blows he had already received, but his spirit was greater than his strength. A third and a fourth blow landed upon his chin, and a terrific thud under his heart toppled him to the ground.

In a moment Ben was on top of him, tugging at the rope which he had carefully and thoughtfully placed around his belt. Thereafter there was no fight—only a feeble sort of struggle which Dick put up to try and avoid being tied up.

He had no chance. Ben was grimly determined to get both the girl and Bob Lansing out of that mess, for a right bad mess they would all be in if they once were compelled to join in the ride over the border with Jim Stone's gang.

Ben finished his job neatly and completely, and got at his horse again. Dick he had left upon the trail whilst he galloped madly back to the ranch.

His greeting was not exactly a cordial one.

"Here's that rustler—drop him!" shouted one-puncher.

"Wait a bit—wait a bit—I want you!" yelled Ben, as he slid from his horse and dashed up to the foreman. "Say, read this note!"

He was fumbling in his pockets as he spoke and ran. But he had not the note in his fingers when he reached Frank, and he was still without it after a breathless search through all his pockets.

"I had a note—Miss Holt and my partner are up with the rustlers!" he gasped. "The note was for money—but I guess I tumbled that I was meant to get you—"

"Instead we've got you!" said Frank calmly. "Hike him off to the sheriff, boys—I know that Dick and Miss Marge are still on the range—I saw them go off together—"

"Well, I'll be hanged!" almost shrieked Ben, and with a vicious swing of his hand, he grabbed his own hat and flung it to the ground in the deepest disgust imaginable. "I tell you—why—sure—there's the note!"

He laughed aloud as he saw the note was just exactly where he had put it—in his hat. It had been revealed when his hat struck the ground.

That settled it. Frank considered it sufficient evidence to order out all his cowpunchers and start upon the rescue ride, and in a very short time the range was resounding to the thudding hoofs of thirty armed men. Ben led them on the ride.

Alarm in the Camp.

BEN COLEMAN had made two mistakes.

The first was when, after having won the fight, he did not fix the ropes so that any struggling on Dick's part would choke him. The second was leaving Dick's horse.

For Dick struggled hard enough to loosen the ropes that bound him, and almost at the time that Ben was making a mad search for the note, he had freed himself and was riding desperately to the shack where he had left his rustler companions.

He was white and agitated when he burst into the shack—apprehensive because at last it was known that he had played a dual rôle of ranch under foreman and rustler.

"What's up?" demanded Jim Stone. "They're double-crossers—he lugged me off my horse and tied me up before he set out for the Bar O!" gasped Dick, and pointed urgently out of the door. "We'll have to beat it—they're on their way!"

Jim Stone muttered something under his breath, and swung round viciously towards the other room. But Bob had already heard the news, and he quickly brought further alarm into the camp.

In a split second he had grabbed at and secured a gun from Jim Stone's holster.

"Reach for the skies!" he said tensely. "I'm blowing holes in the first man who pulls his hands down! Get 'em up!"

He waited until the gang had obeyed before he turned peremptorily to Marge Holt.

"Get out of that door, and be ready to shut it when I come out after you!" he said briskly.

"You ain't gonna get away with this, stranger," said Jim Stone between his teeth.

"No?" grated Bob. "Get out, Miss Holt!"

Marge, with one fleeting glance that was curiously a mixture of relief and admiration, obeyed. Bob, keeping his gun handy and his eyes on the gangsters' faces, moved slowly after her.

He was at the door when a sudden, well-aimed bottle sent the gun flying from his grip—and in a flash the men were at him.

The rough, strong men of the plains might have expected an easy victory then. Gun-play was out of the question—there were too many of them, in much too confined a space. Bullets meant for the solitary enemy might easily find a billet in one of the many friends.

Bob fought with fists and feet, leaping from spot to spot, and from bunk to bunk. Once he used the wall as a lever to hurl himself at the whole gang, in the successful effort to send them sprawling on top of one another.

Only one remained steadily upon his feet, and that one collapsed under a terrific uppercut that must have rattled every tooth in his head.

In a flash Bob was at the door, and there a terrific struggle started. Bob wanted the door closed and locked—the others wanted it open.

At last, with a superhuman effort, Bob got the door crashed home, and in a second it was locked.

Bullets were crashing into the lock the moment they darted away.

"Quick—the horses!" gasped Bob. "You ride ahead—towards the ranch! Ben will be bringing the boys O.K.!"

They moved with desperate speed—Bob had the natural feeling that had he been alone he could have got clean away in half the time. But the pace was set by Marge Holt, and he had to keep to that pace.

He used his tongue and leather to urge her horse on the faster the moment they struck the trail for the Bar O ranch.

A glance behind told how the gang had freed themselves and were hot on the trail. And it was not long before shouting voices came to his ears.

"Can you stand all this?" he asked the girl anxiously.

"Sure—all this—and more!" she

panted, and dug in her heels fiercely to get speed out of her horse.

But there was no more speed there, and with more than a little alarm, Bob began to realise that they were being caught up.

"You get on and tell the boys to hurry!" he shouted. "I'll stop and give them something to think about!"

"Don't—let them—shoot you!" she shouted, as he swung his horse off the trail and started back the way they had come.

If he could only split the rustlers up a bit, cause them to jerk their mounts to avoid colliding with him, the girl would get a fresh start.

It was an excellent plan, and doubtless it would have worked.

But there came another diversion.

Even as a dozen guns were jerked out of the holsters, there came a terrific fusillade of shots from the right and the left, and the terrified rustlers found themselves between two fires.

Ben had arrived with the Bar O boys!

"Reach—or it's a massacre!" came in Ben's delighted shriek.

The groans of dismay that arose from the rustlers could almost be heard above the thudding hoofs. They were so dismayed they forgot to shoot, and in the split seconds of their hesitation, the Bar O boys had ridden ahead and behind until there was nothing left to do but jerk up and reach for the skies.

Grinning all over his face, Bob looked on and took in the whole situation. Unless he was very much mistaken, Jim Stone and his gang were rustlers no longer.

But there was something else to which he had to attend.

He gave a little whoop of joy, and set his horse galloping madly up the trail, to see Marge Holt coming slowly back. She had heard the fusillade, turned to find the chase ended, and was coming cautiously to see how the fight fared.

She found instead a solitary rider on the trail—and this time her greeting was a smile.

He jerked his horse to a halt, returned her smile, and looked at her with that fascinating glint of mischief in his eyes.

"I was coming back to tell you I wasn't a rustler—and that we'd met before," he explained, a little breathlessly.

"And I was coming back to—to see

"If I was hurt?"

"N-n-no. To say that I am sorry, I slapped your face that night, and that—that if you liked to take one more risk to-day—that I—"

"Marge—I'm sure taking that risk!" he whispered.

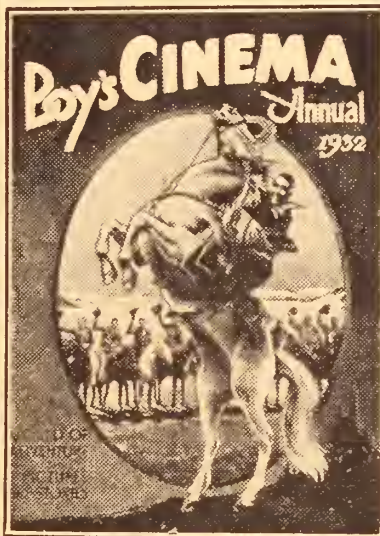
She did not slap his face—Ben noticed that as, coming round the bend in the trail, he was just in time to catch the first and the last part of the "risky" act.

He pulled his hat off gently and rubbed his hand through his ruffled hair in the manner of one who finds himself suddenly out of all that's good.

"And now I'll reckon Senator Lansing will agree that Mr. Bob has found the right sort of trouble!" he murmured, watching the pair go slowly along the trail, side by side and hand in hand. "And me with two bosses all because we came Westward Bound!"

(By permission of the British Lion Corporation, Ltd., starring Buffalo Bill, jun., and Allene Ray.)

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(Continued from page 2.)

when stern maternal justice was meted out to him it was the other Jackie who shed the tears.

Another pal of these two is Donald Haines. He is a ten-year-old freckled youngster who plays the dog-catcher's son in "Skippy." The two Jackies and Donald have been together in a number of pictures, and they hail one another with delight when they meet in a new one.

The real veteran of "Skippy," though, is Payne Johnson. He is the youngest of seven Johnsons, all of whom are film artistes. Payne is only seven months of age, but is a screen "veteran" in the sense that he has been in pictures since he was seventeen days old. Most of his life has been spent in prop. baskets, so that he has not had to exert himself much. But he can talk. So much so, in fact, that he is expected to be one day a second Will Rogers!

Getting His Own Back.

Al Christie tells the following story against himself. He was travelling through the Mojave Desert at a high rate of speed, late one evening, when a siren sounded and a motor-cycle cop stopped him. He asked for his driver's licence, read it, and handed it back.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Christie," beamed the cop, "I know who you are! A lot of us used to work in your comedies in the old days, when you needed cops in the picture."

Al saw his fine disappearing and beamed back. "Yes, indeed," he said, "I have given many a cop a five-dollar bill for an afternoon's work."

The motor-cycle cop drew out his notebook.

"My friends all got jobs with you, Mr. Christie," he said grimly, "but you never would give me a job, though I hung round your studio for days."

And he wrote, "Give this guy the limit" on the ticket, handed it over, and disappeared with a loud bray of his siren.

A Monkey School.

It is reported from Hollywood that Tiffany Film Productions are establishing a school for monkeys! Young chimps who may have aspirations to appear on the screen are compelled to attend, whether they like it or not.

School hours are sandwiched in wherever there are intervals between production scenes, when the monkeys will be taught how to act before the camera. They haven't the chance to play truant, either. A wardrobe department has also been opened, from which they will be given human suits to fit them. Cowboy outfits have just been made for them to appear in "Cinnamon," which will burlesque "Cimarron," you can look out for some roaring fun when these monkeys come on the screen.

"Cloud Lookout"—New Job in Movie Studios.

A new job, created by California's recent "unusual" weather, is that of the cloud look-out.

He is an expert at gauging their direction and speed, and the time the sun will shine between the scurrying clouds.

Paramount sent the company making "The Secret Call" with Richard Arlen

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"CLEARING THE RANGE."

(Continued from page 12.)

spurs drove into his pony's flanks relentlessly, till the rowels were smeared in gore, and the creature bounded forward in a terror that vied with his own.

Curt made the crest of the hill and let his horse fall into a long, loping stride. He saw Kildare turn in the saddle once more, and once more the crook's gun began to spit flame and lead.

The slope of the hill had dropped away into a sheer cliff four hundred feet in depth. Along this section of precipice pursuer and pursued were now careering at break-neck pace, Kildare with the horror of the noose goading him to desperation. All the supreme insolence and bravado that had characterised the man while he had been in power had fallen from him like a cloak, leaving him like a hunted animal—though dangerous at that, and with leaden slugs for fangs.

Conversely, Curt Fremont was no longer the despised figure of scorn who had seemed so anxious to avoid danger. He was the stern avenger now, resolved on bringing his brother's slayer to justice.

Kildare emptied his six-shooter and then drew fresh cartridges from his belt. He fumbled with them tremulously and loaded the chambers of his forty-five. This time he made an effort to steady his wrist for accuracy.

He might have effected his murderous purpose, but in the instant that his finger curled around the trigger his horse tripped in a jack-rabbit's scrape.

The brone went down by the head, and Kildare plunged from the saddle with a hoarse cry. The six-gun went off with a crash as it flew from his grasp, but its barrel was levelled at the clouds and the shot sang skyward.

The revolver dropped over the edge of the cliff and tumbled through space towards a muddle of ugly rocks far down. Kildare followed it headlong, but his clutching hands fastened on a clump of scrub growing out from the brink. There was a jerk that almost wrenched his arms from their sockets, and then his heels were dangling in mid-air.

Curt rode up to the spot where the crook had been unhorsed even as Kildare's pony struggled to its feet. The puncher drew rein, and looked down at his brother's slayer with grim, casual disinterest.

Kildare's breath was coming in husky gasps. He knew that if he regained the brink it would only be to face a judge and jury and finish up on the end of a noose. Yet he was sick with fear at the thought of a plunge to those rocks four hundred feet below him.

His hands clenched at the scrub, but he saw it coming away by the roots as the strain dragged it from the surround-

ing earth. Still Curt Fremont made no move, and the terrified wretch hanging from the cliff-edge squirmed and scrambled frantically, seeking in vain a foothold with his toes.

The roots of the scrub creaked ominously. A sob broke from Kildare's lips, and his upturned, haggard face registered an expression of mute appeal.

Curt leaned forward slowly and took a lariat from the peg on his saddle. Kildare's eyes, watching his every action, lit up with hope, but panic seized him again as he saw Curt juggle with the rawhide carelessly and unhurriedly.

"Fremont!" Kildare groaned. "Fremont—For pity's sake—"

Curt's fingers toyed with the lariat. The roots of the scrub were threatening to give at any moment. Kildare looked down, and his brain reeled as he saw the drop beneath him. In those few seconds of waiting and torture, he seemed to live through an eternity.

The roots of the scrub came asunder. A scream burst from Kildare as he dropped. But in that same moment Curt tossed the lariat deftly, and the noose looped itself around the crook's falling body.

It was wrenched taut, and Kildare was left dangling again, but not for long. Wheeling his brone, Curt cantered a little distance from the cliff's rim, and his captive was dragged to a doubtful safety.

Kildare lay for a spell in a fainting condition. When at length he struggled up his face was a greenish-grey, and his limbs seemed scarcely capable of supporting him. There was not a spark of resistance in the man, and he was whimpering.

"Come on!" said Curt. "The sheriff wants you."

He urged his brone along the cliff-edge at a slow pace, Kildare stumbling after him on the end of a lariat. So they reached the Moran outfit, where Curt cast his prisoner loose and backed him to where Tom Burton was standing.

"Kildare," he said, "the next time you feel a rope around you it won't be mine—and it won't be under your armpits. All right, sheriff," he added to Bellamy, who stood near by with his deputies, "take 'em away!"

South of Amarillo Creek, in the valley where they had come upon the impounded herd of cattle, Dad Moran's four ranch-hands were congratulating themselves on being alive.

"We wouldn't have stood a chance against Kildare's bunch," one of them declared. "If it hadn't been for Curt Fremont we'd be lookin' like a lotta kitchen-colanders by now."

Dad Moran was not with them. He had managed to secure his horse after some difficulty, and was at the moment riding back to his ranch, where he hoped to locate Curt and receive an explanation of several circumstances that puzzled him.

When he reached it Bellamy had gone, together with his deputies, the tell-tale bank ledgers and the two prisoners Kildare and Burton. There was not a human being in sight as Dad Moran stabled his horse and made his way round to the front door of the ranch-house.

But as he entered the dwelling he heard the strains of music. A guitar was responsible for the melody, and, glancing across the living-room, Moran saw Juan Consares standing at the foot of the staircase, strumming a languorous Spanish love-song.

"Hallo, Juan!" said Dad Moran. "Buenos dias, senior!" Juan answered politely. "I hope I find you well."

"Yeah!" the old man told him. "Yeah—I'm all right. Have you seen—Curt Fremont, Juan?"

Juan shook his head. "No, senior," he murmured, his fingers still caressing the strings of the guitar, "I no' see him."

"Have you seen Mary Lou, then?" the old rancher asked.

Again Juan shook his head. "No, I no' see her, either, senior," he said, "but I theeink if you find the one then maybe you will find the other."

"Thanks, Juan!" Dad muttered, and went out of the ranch-house again.

If he had looked behind the tall back of a settee he might have seen the two for whom he had inquired. But Juan had not divulged their presence, for he believed that at the moment two was company, whereas three might have been a crowd.

True, he himself made a third. But then he had his back turned to the fireplace before which the settee had been drawn up—and, after all, how could Romeo woo Juliet without the music of a troubadour?

"But, Curt," Mary Lou was saying softly, "why didn't you tell dad and I what you were doing? Why did you let us go on thinking you were a—coward—when all the time you were risking your life as El Capitan?"

"I told you I didn't want to do anything that would make trouble for you and old dad," Curt reminded her.

Mary stared into the fireplace. "That was thoughtful of you, Curt," she murmured, "but I feel ashamed of myself for believing you were yellow."

Curt slipped his arm around her.

"Mary Lou," he said, "I sorta recollect that this hombre El Capitan once sampled them pretty lips o' yours without seemin' to raise any objections."

"But El Capitan had a way with women," she laughed. And then: "By the way, who was that Mexican girl who rode with him?"

"Her name began with 'Juan,' Curt told her with a grin, "an' it finished with 'Consares.'"

(By permission of the Universal Films, Ltd., starring Hoot Gibson and Sally Eilers.)

"QUICK MILLIONS."

(Continued from page 18.)

at her, Bugs could not help noticing that she seemed out of sorts.

"Not feelin' so good these days, baby?" he inquired.

"What's it to you?" she snappy resentfully.

Bugs regarded her with a calm expression,

August 29th, 1931.

"You know," he mentioned, "you ought to have taken that offer I once made you. A trip to Europe would have done your health a lot of good, too."

His ill-chosen reminder of that first attempt to rid himself of her only served to heap fuel on her anger.

"You don't have to worry about my health!" she said viciously. "I'm not worrying about yours!"

As she spoke she flashed a glance at Nails Markey, who frowned threateningly behind Bugs Raymond's back, and signed to her to keep silent.

But Bugs detected no special significance in her words. He merely reflected that it was natural Daisy should flare up at him. After all, she had been pretty loyal to him, and he had not treated her any too well. Of course, he had been generous to her financially, but she was not the kind of girl who wanted money lavished on her. She was the kind of girl who lost her heart to a man, and was ready to follow him through fire and water. And he, Bugs Raymond, happened to be the man to whom she had been willing to dedicate her whole life.

Bugs drew a little nearer to her, and, taking her hands, spoke to her quietly.

"Don't get all het-up, Daisy," he said. "Maybe I haven't been square with you, but that's just on account of the way things have turned out, and I'm sorry if I've hurt you!"

"You couldn't hurt me!" she retorted fiercely; but there was a catch in her voice that belied the words.

She wanted to hate Bugs Raymond, but she found that she could not. In spite of his treatment towards her he meant everything to her, and suddenly the realisation that he was going to his doom chilled the blood in her veins. As he was about to turn away from her with a shrug of the shoulders, she caught him by the arm.

"Don't go, Bugs!" she pleaded, all the resentment quite gone from her now. "Don't go to that church—"

And again, even more urgently, a world of appeal in her eyes:

"Don't go, Bugs—"

Bugs pursed his lips. He did not know the real reason for this outburst. He believed that she was asking him to abandon his project because she could not bear the idea of him marrying Dorothy Stone.

"Listen, Daisy," he said; "you and I have been good friends, and I was pretty fond of you. I guess I always will be. But we weren't cut out for each other. It was class I wanted, and you didn't have that, Daisy. And then Dorothy— Well, you know how it is when a guy meets a girl that puts him off his grub—a girl he's ready to fight for, and do murder for."

He drew back, and Daisy turned away bitterly. Then one of the boys, standing by the window, gave vent to an exclamation.

"Here's Chuck with the car," he said.

Bugs squared his shoulders. Keen of face, steely of eye, he spoke to the gang with that gaiety of tone which had been characteristic of him in former days, when launching some big coup calculated to extend his power.

"Come on!" he drawled, making for the hall. "We haven't too much time."

Nails and the rest of the gang donned their silk hats, and, en route to the doorway, paraded past the mirror.

They regarded themselves with satisfaction, one or two of them giving their toppers an extra tilt before moving on.

Thus they filed out into the hall, Nails Markey being the last to go, and Daisy de Lisle was left alone in the lounge. Standing there, she heard the front door being opened, and knew that Bugs Raymond was walking forth on his way to eternity. In another moment he would be beyond recall.

She started towards the hall on a sudden frantic impulse.

"Bugs!" she sobbed. "Bugs—"

He heard her as he was stepping out into the corridor, and he glanced at Nails Markey impatiently.

"Aw, you go back and talk to her," he said. "We'll wait for you at the elevator."

Nails turned and retraced his steps across the hall. He met Daisy in the doorway of the lounge, confronting her with an unexpectedness that made her start.

"Oh, Nails!" she whispered.

"Don't worry, baby," he told her with a twisted grin, "we'll take good care of him."

He strode out of the apartment and hurried along the corridor to rejoin Bugs

and the other members of the gang at the lift. They entered, and were carried swiftly to the ground floor, where they created some interest as they trooped into the street and entered the limousine that was drawn up at the kerb.

Two of the gang took their positions beside Chuck, the driver. The others packed into the interior, Bugs and Nails occupying the back seat and sinking into the luxurious comfort of its pale grey upholstery.

The car moved forward, and, changing into top gear, Chuck followed a swift-travelling stream of traffic towards the city centre. He was a magnificent driver, for on many an occasion he had had to depend on his skill with the wheel to ensure his liberty, and the limousine made good speed, fairly forging its way between the other vehicles.

The gangsters looked out upon the busy side-walks with casual interest. All seemed perfectly at their ease except Bugs, though it was from no sense of personal danger that he felt uncomfortable. He was more concerned over the success of his intended kidnapping than he had ever been over any racket he had engineered, and now that the moment for action was drawing near he appeared fidgety, chafing at the brief delays which occurred when the red stop-lights on the street-crossings were against Chuck.

Often, too, he glanced at his watch, and he had looked at it six or seven times when the car turned into the street for which Chuck had been told to make.

Peering through the glass partition that separated the interior of the limousine from the chauffeur's seat, Bugs caught sight of the entrance to the church where the marriage was to take place, a church famous for its association with Society weddings.

He saw crowds of smartly-dressed people stepping out of expensive cars and walking along the strip of rich carpet that crossed the sidewalk and passed into the great arched doorway of the chapel.

Nails Markey, sitting close to him with

folded arms, slid one hand into an inside pocket and pressed a fistful of blue-black steel against Bugs Raymond's body.

Bugs turned his head and saw that Nails was regarding him with a curious expression.

"Take your elbow out of my ribs," said Bugs.

Nails Markey did not move.

"You fool," he told Bugs deliberately, "that isn't my elbow."

Bugs lowered his eyes. He saw the gun that had been quietly pushed into him, and he knew that he was approaching the end of his career. Somehow he experienced no great shock of surprise. This was what he might have anticipated, and guarded against, if his brain had not been thrown out of gear by a girl who had refused to marry him.

And he certainly experienced no fear. His only sentiment was one of cynical resignation, as he seemed to see the successive incidents of his life pass before him. Newsboy, truck-driver, racketeer, commercial magnate—then back to dust.

With his free hand Nails Markey made a sign to the other gangsters in the interior of the limousine. They reached for the blinds, and drew them down over the windows. A screen was even lowered behind the partition separating the chauffeur's seat.

Three muffled reports rang out as the car was passing the church, and just beyond the building a silk hat was tossed to the sidewalk from the curtained vehicle. It was the silk hat which had belonged to Bugs Raymond, and which would no longer be required.

"Expensive weddings these Society dames have," one of Nails Markey's companions was heard to observe before the limousine door was shut again.

The bride was just arriving, with a bevy of attendants.

"Yeah," came the voice of Nails Markey, "but we hoodlums have swell funerals!"

(By permission of the Fox Film Co., Ltd., starring Spencer Tracy.)

FOUR FINE FILM NOVELS.

"TOO MANY WOMEN."

He was the Don Juan of Paris, and the spell-binder of feminine hearts, but when the one woman came into his life he found the path of true love far from smooth.

"ANNABELLE'S AFFAIRS."

A beautiful, wayward girl married a bearded giant under strange circumstances, and ran away after the ceremony. Several years later they met again, and she did not know him. A farcical tale of a girl who falls in love with her own husband, starring Victor McLaglen and Jeanette MacDonald.

"LA DOUCEUR D'AIMER."

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"GLAMOUR."

The love-story of a famous actor who sacrificed happiness and played a false rôle to save a woman's good name. Starring Seymour Hicks, Margot Graham, and Ellaline Terriss.



LAURA LA PLANTE and FRANK FAY

"TOO MANY WOMEN."

Don't miss this grand issue of our companion paper,

"SCREEN STORIES."

On Sale Wednesday.

Price 2d.
August 29th, 1931.

The News Reel

(Continued from page 25.)

and Peggy Shannon to Cataline Island for several days of location work. The first day the weather was clear; but the next day was hazy, and scenes had to be made "between clouds."

While the sun was obscured the company rehearsed, and a minute before the sun was expected the cloud look-out gave his warning, and announced: "Three minutes of light this time."

The instant the first ray of sun hit the players the cameras started turning, and the players enacted their scene. The company was forced to work two days in this nerve-racking manner, but the required scenes were secured.

Egypt in Elstree.

To be able to plump down some distant part of the world outside one's door would, if practicable, certainly abolish all the expense and fatigue of travel. But so far only producers are able to achieve this magic result.

British International Pictures recently found that Egypt, for example, would do nicely for a location. But why take the company there when all that was needed could be produced at Elstree? So prop men and others set to work, and very soon Port Said appeared on the B. I. P. lot. Then it had to be peopled, not, however, by white artistes made up to look their parts, but by the real racial specimens to be found in that cosmopolitan part of the world.

The telephone wires buzzed with messages to the casting agencies, and within a few hours out of London's teeming millions there were discovered about two hundred men, women and children of the types required. These included Arabs, Turks, Nubians, Greeks, Persians and others.

Amid a babel of tongues that must have been both "Rich and Strange" for the microphone, these people jostled each other in a typically Egyptian street, and sold beads, shawls, baskets and other things in a native bazaar. I have said "Rich and Strange," for this, I may add, is also the name of the picture in

which Joan Barry and Percy Marmont have the leads.

World Search for Strange Facts.

It is certain that not all the museums nor all the books of facts there are have yet been able to tell us fully about the many strange things to be found in the world. So John Hix, the cartoonist and originator of the Universal series, "Strange As It Seems," has just started on a voyage of discovery.

He is taking with him a mass of material which he intends to verify, and which has already been insured for over £3,000. He will also gather all the new material he can. There is no doubt that Mr. Hix's job will prove a tremendous one, but the results should prove intensely interesting.

Screening a Menagerie.

Animals, as we know, were much in evidence in silent films, and many a zoo in California was kept busy supplying different specimens of the jungle variety to producers. Then the talkies came and the animals vanished for a time. Since then, however, we have had the Dogville comedies and those depicting trained monkeys, and quite popular, too, have these pictures proved.

Now we are to have something else in the way of these animal comedies. Columbia are producing them, and they will be one-reelers consisting of really laughable pictures in which trained animals will take the place of human actors. There will be a menagerie of these animals on the screen, including lions, tigers, giraffes and the more domestic types, such as dogs and cats.

Buffalo Bill Serial.

Serials, as already mentioned on this page, are coming back into popular favour, and more than one company is at work on them.

Universal is busy with one called

"Fighting With Buffalo Bill," and those of you who have read of his exploits in fiction will be able to follow some of his adventures on the screen. This serial will feature two present favourites. One of these is Johnny Mack Brown, once a prominent footballer in the States, and the other is John Wayne, who made such a hit in "The Big Trail."

Another producing company is giving picturegoers "The Phantom of the West," in which Tom Tyler will appear in ten thrilling episodes.

A Queer Collection.

One of the strangest assortments in America is kept under lock and key in a special compartment of the property warehouse belonging to the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer company.

The assortment consists of several thousands of dollars worth of gambling equipment, firearms and other lethal instruments that are legal for film purposes only, but are otherwise barred by the State of California. For this latter reason the compartment containing these things is always kept locked.

Among the gambling equipment are roulette wheels, loaded dice and several games of chance. In the ordnance line may be found machine-guns, rifles, tear bombs, pistols, swords, rapiers, cutlasses and other weapons banned by the law.

All of them are stored "broken." That is, certain parts from all the weapons are kept elsewhere so that the incomplete weapons would be useless if they were stolen. Then there are also in the collection brass knuckles, burglars' tools, daggers and much else that it would not be wise to leave lying about for anyone to pick up.

Another Air Film.

In the old days of pictures many a thrill was staged on the roof of a train, then the motor-car was put into the chase, and now it is the aeroplane.

"Wings" showed us the daring that men can achieve thousands of feet in the air, and among similar pictures we have had "Hell's Angels" and "The Dawn Patrol." This last-named film was produced by First National, and proved such a big success that the same company are now making another air picture called "Men of the Sky." It deals with spies belonging to the nations engaged in war, and is certain to be packed with thrills. The story has been specially written for the screen.

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Boy's Cinema

"SWEEPSTAKES," "WEST OF CHEYENNE"
and "THE SEA GOD."


Complete Film Stories in This Issue.

Boy's **CINEMA** 2^D

No. 612.

EVERY TUESDAY.

SEPTEMBER 5th, 1931.



Heroes of the Flames

Starring
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The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleeway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"Heroes of the Flames."

Bob Darrow, Tim McCoy; June Madison, Marion Shockley; Mrs. Madison, Grace Cunard; Jackie Madison, Bobby Nelson; Dan Mitchell, Gayne Whitman; Trixie Farrell, Beulah Hutton; Pat Heeley, Monte Montague.

"Sweepstakes."

Bud Doyle, Eddie Quillan; Sleepy Jones, James Gleason; Babe Ellis, Marion Nixon; Wally Weber, Lew Cody; Jake, Paul Hurst; Pop Blake, Fred Burton; Baggott, King Baggott; Speed Martin, Billy Sullivan; Al Clancy, Lillian Leighton; The Dude, Mike Donlin.

"West of Cheyenne."

Tom Langdon, Tom Tyler; Bess, Josephine Hill; Kurt Raymer, Harry Woods; Nevada, Robert Walker; Banty, Ben Corbett; Rose, Fern Emmett.

"The Sea God."

Phillip Barker (Pink) Richard Arlen, Daisy, Fay Wray; "Square Deal" McCarthy, Eugene Pallette; Schulz, Robert Gleckler; Pearly Nick, Ivan Simpson; Abe, Bob Perry; Rudy, Maurice Black; Bill, Fred Wallace.

"Too Good to be True!"

The production chief of any motion picture studio has plenty to cope with; but William Le Baron, vice-president in charge of production at Radio Pictures, reports a new one.

Recently Paul Sloane, who is to direct "Consolation Marriage" for Radio Pictures, came to him bearing a worried frown and the scenario of "Consolation Marriage."

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Le Baron.

"I'm worried," said Sloane.

"Why?"

"Well," said the director, "this assignment is too good to be true. The story is great, the script is perfect, the cast is superb. The cameraman is the best I can have, my assistant is a jewel and the sets are gorgeous.

"Anything as perfect as this must have a catch in it somewhere. That's why I'm worried."

No Laughing Required.

A leading lady with no sense of humour is Buster Keaton's ideal, paradoxical as it may seem.

Motion picture stars are often quizzed as to their preferences in regards to the women who play opposite them. Some like them blonde, some

September 5th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S TWO COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



BERT WHEELER and ROBERT WOOLSEY

IN

"CRACKED NUTS."

Wendell bought a revolution, Zap gambled for a crown, and so they both became King of El Dorania—with comic complications. A joyous farce, in which these two quaint comedians are aided and abetted by Dorothy Lee and Edna May Oliver.

"GUN SMOKE."

Eastera gunmen, in the guise of capitalists, come to a western ranch. Within a few weeks the finding of gold starts a war between the gunmen and a band of fearless men of the plains. Starring Richard Arlen and Mary Brian.

ALSO

The second episode of our thrilling new serial of the Fire Brigade, starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.

"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

like them dark, some are not content with any but outstanding beauties, others prefer them less dazzling, but Keaton is the first to have expressed a wish for humourless leading ladies.

In explaining the oddity Keaton said:

"Women can't control their laughs if they have a pronounced sense of humour. Consequently you get into a comedy scene, playing it straight, and just at the high point you're liable to hear a giggle. The 'mike' picks it up. You can make a comedy twice as fast if the people with whom you act have no sense of humour at all."

Information is that in choosing the featured feminine players for his latest Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer comedy, "Romco in Pyjamas," Keaton put applicants through a "straight face" test in which only those passed who refrained from laughing at his funniest antics.

Taking a Camera Up and Down Stairs.

"Walking" a sound camera up and down a flight of stairs is the difficult task achieved by Edgar Selwyn and his technical crew when "Men Call It Love" was filmed at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studio.

In the most dramatic scenes of the

picture Leila Hyams is shown walking upstairs, opening a door and then retracing her steps when she discovers her husband in the arms of another woman.

Securing a hydraulic camera elevator-perambulator, Selwyn devised the filming so that the camera kept Miss Hyams in continuous focus, following her step by step upstairs to the door and reversing the process as she walked down the flight again to the hallway where the action started.

With the rise and fall of the camera, as well as its forward and backward progress, Selwyn arranged to have the microphone placed on a travelling boom that kept just out of camera range, but caught every footfall as the actress went through the dramatic scene.

A Scotch Terrier Joins the Dramatic Critics.

Although few people are aware of the fact, Joe E. Brown, the "Clown Prince" of the screen, often holds a private rehearsal of his funny business before it is recorded upon the celluloid. And his audience consists of one solitary admirer—his dog Sandy.

Sandy is a Scotch terrier, and within the privacy of the Brown household Sandy witnesses his master doing a variety of queer things. As Joe declares:

"It is really remarkable how sensitive Sandy is. When I read lines to him I instantly know how good or how bad I am. If he sits up and cocks an ear I know he is mildly interested. If he barks he is amused. If he yelps and scampers round the room I know I am going over big.

"If I am doing a love scene, and he licks my hand, I am sure I am well on the way to becoming the world's worst lover, while if it's a fight, and he goes to his corner and lies down, I throw out my chest and feel like a second Dempsey!"

Joe E. Brown's latest picture is "Going Wild." In this important comedy the star is seen as a pseudo aviator, and many of the scenes present him doing the whole gamut of flying stunts.

He is supported by Ona Munson, Lawrence Gray, Laura Lee and other popular players.

Runaway Horse in Film Studio.

A film star's knowledge and understanding of horses averted what might have been a serious accident during the production of "Carwen," which is being directed by Cecil Lewis for

(Continued on page 29.)

A fearless young fireman invents a fire-fighting machine, but a fiendish enemy does everything to steal the plans and rob the hero of the girl he worships. Don't miss the opening episode of this grand new serial of breathless suspense and thrilling drama. Starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.

"HEROES of the FLAMES"



Fire Bell!

EPISODE 1.

"THE RED PERIL."

A CROWD was gathering in Stockton Street, San Francisco. Passers-by swelled its numbers, their upturned faces registering interest and concern as they gazed at the top-story windows of a skyscraper building.

From the main entrance of the block of offices men and girls were hurrying fearfully, and the reason for their haste was patent. An enemy of mankind had reared its sinister head—the enemy fire! It flickered luridly at the summit of the building, and obscured the blue skyline with lowering masses of smoke.

A police officer was hastening to the nearest alarm-box, and soon the watching crowds would thrill to the brazen clangour of fire-bells, to the spectacle of scarlet monsters hurtling imperiously through the street, to the flash of helmets plunging into a deadly chaos of flame as stalwarts in blue risked life and limb at the call of duty.

As yet, however, no call had reached the station of District Number Five, San Francisco Fire-fighting Force.

Bob Darrow was on the staff there, a tall, well-built young fellow in the early twenties, with a pair of level grey eyes that had many times met danger unflinchingly.

Son of British parents who had emigrated to the Pacific Coast in his childhood, Bob was not an ex-sailor, like most of his comrades in the brigade, and during his first six months of ladder drill had had to conquer a normal aversion to heights. Grit and determination had triumphed over the handicap, and now none was more agile than he on the lofty escapes, and none more eager to lead the way into the heart of a raging inferno.

But Bob Darrow's resolve to enlist in the fire brigade was not merely the outcome of a desire for excitement. Of an

inventive turn of mind, he had for some time been working on a flame-fighting process calculated to extinguish a fire almost instantaneously, and it was primarily for the purpose of perfecting his invention that he had embarked on his perilous career.

Bob was in the dormitory reading a book on science when the startling peal of the alarm bell interrupted his studies. In a moment he was on his feet, and simultaneously the whole station became a hive of activity as men rushed to their posts.

Bob sprang to one of the polished pillars that led to the engine-room, and slid to the ground-level with the burly form of another fireman piled up on his shoulders—a worthy by the name of Pat Heeley.

Three minutes was the time allowed for the men of the brigade to take their positions and drive out on to the street, and delays were penalised by fines. There was no record of any fine ever having been levied on a single member of the staff at Number Five Station, for

within two and a half minutes of the first call the fire-wagons were invariably on their way.

"Stockton Street!" rose the cry, and a few seconds later the engines were roaring through the city in full career, heading south towards the district where the fire had broken out.

Not far from Stockton Street, in a fashionable shopping quarter, a well-dressed woman emerged from a large store and crossed the sidewalk to where a limousine was standing. A chauffeur was in the driving-seat, while the back of the car was occupied by a boy six or seven years of age.

"Oh, Watkins," the woman said to her chauffeur, "I've made some rather cumbersome purchases in the store. I wonder if you'd mind helping to carry some of them out."

"Certainly, madam," the chauffeur answered, descending from the car, and the woman turned to the small boy in the back of the vehicle.

"Jackie," she told him, "you stay right here. Remember, don't go away."

"All right, mother," the boy promised, and, accompanied by her chauffeur, the woman went back into the store.

She had not long been gone when, above the noise of traffic, the boy in the car heard the clamour of fire-bells. He immediately started to his feet and opened the auto's door to jump down into the street, his eyes kindling with excitement.

He didn't intend to move far from the limousine, but he began to edge his way through a throng of pedestrians crossing the road. The sound of the fire-bells drew nearer, changing abruptly in a thoroughfare that ran at right-angles to the one in which the

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boy's mother was shopping. He wriggled between the steady stream of people in the hope of catching a glimpse of the engines as they dashed across the junction of the two streets, about fifty yards away.

But the fire-wagons did not cross the junction. Instead, they skidded round the corner into the thoroughfare where the boy had been left by his mother.

There was a sudden rush on the part of the crowd with which the little fellow had mingled.

"Look out!" someone yelled. "The wagons are headed this way!"

The mob stampeded for the sidewalks blindly. The boy was caught up in that helter-skelter charge, and screamed out in fear as he was swept off his feet and hustled fairly into the middle of the road.

He tripped and fell. Men and women stumbled over him, trampled him in their dash to the pavements, and only when the crowds had gained the kerb was he seen, a small, still form lying half-insensible in the street.

It was at that same moment that his mother reappeared from the store with the chauffeur. She caught sight of the boy, and, with a stab of terror, saw Number One engine of the district fire-fighting force bearing down on him at full speed. A shriek escaped her, and she started forward involuntarily, but her chauffeur dropped the parcels he was carrying and seized her by the arm.

"It would be suicide, ma'am!" he panted. "Nothing can save him!"

Cries of horror were rising from those who stood near by, and women were turning away their faces. But the mother of the boy who lay in the middle of the road did not hide her eyes. For seconds that seemed drawn out into an eternity she stared at her child with agony written on her countenance.

The boy seemed doomed. Private cars and commercial vehicles, the normal traffic of the street, had drawn in towards the gutters. A narrow lane was left for the fire-engines, a lane from which it was impossible to swerve and avoid the child. Nor was there any hope of being able to pull up in time.

The driver of Number One engine saw the boy the moment the crowd broke and scattered, and hand and foot travelled to the brakes. He crammed them on with all his force, and the wheels locked, the massive tyres squealing on the smooth surface of the road. But with its speed only slightly checked the big red juggernaut swept on, bearing down relentlessly on that small figure in its track.

The driver's face had turned an ashen colour when a figure scrambled past him and clambered on to the fire-engine's bonnet. It was the figure of Poh Darrow.

"Keep those brakes on!" Bob yelled, and, pulling himself forward feverishly, he gained the radiator and slid his legs over the front of it to plant his feet on the heavy bumper-rod protecting the wings.

The engine was hurtling onward, and the boy sprawled in its path was almost under its mighty wheels now. Held spellbound, with mingled horror and suspense in their gaze, the civilians on the sidewalks watched with bated breath.

Bob Darrow stooped, his arms reaching downward, his hands almost grazing the surface of the road. All at once they clenched—clenched upon the small hurdle of humanity lying in the track of the engine, and snatched him from what had seemed certain doom.

With the boy in his arms Bob struggled back to the driving-seat of the fire-wagon, and, the colour stealing into

his face again, the motorman released the brakes and drove on. There was no question of stopping to ascertain who was in charge of the little fellow. The blaze in Stockton Street was once again the circumstance of paramount importance.

The rescued boy did not take long to recover from his terrifying experience, and, with Bob's strong arm around him, he was enjoying himself hugely by the time that the scene of the fire was reached. For this ride with the men of the Brigade in a dash to a burning building was something that he had never visualised even in dreams.

The farthest end of Stockton Street was obliterated in a haze of smoke that was pouring in dense volumes from a block of offices, and the moment the engines and tenders reached that point Bob sprang from Number One fire-wagon and lifted down the boy he had rescued.

He handed him over to one of a cordon of policemen who were holding back a large crowd.

"Take charge of this boy, officer, will you?" he said. "He nearly got run over by us on our way here."

The cop nodded, and Bob wheeled towards the blazing building. Already the hoses were being run out and the fire-escapes raised to the upper windows, and soon men were scaling the rungs while immense jets of water played upon the flames.

"Good work, Darrow," Bob's captain complimented, as the young fireman was passing him. "That boy's parents are certainly indebted to you, whoever they are."

"Not at all, sir," Bob answered cheerfully. "I guess it's all in the day's work, sir."

The Day's Work.

THE crowds which had witnessed the boy's rescue by Bob Darrow had heaved a sigh of relief as they had seen the young fireman carrying the child back to the driving-seat. But their relief was nothing compared to the joy of the mother as she realised her youngster had been plucked out of danger.

She was too overwhelmed with emotion to stir at first, and then she began to run blindly along the street in the direction which the fire-wagons had taken.

By the time she reached the scene of the blaze the firemen were already at work, and above the heads of a mob of people she could see the hose-jets playing on the building, and dark figures climbing the escapes into swirls of smoke that were shot with tongues of flame.

She pushed her way through the throng and gained the front rank of the onlookers to stumble against a burly officer.

"Keep back, lady!" the policeman jerked, but at that moment she saw her son standing beside the officer into whose care Bob Darrow had delivered him, and she pushed past and ran to the boy.

"Jackie!" she sobbed. "Oh, Jackie, thank Heaven you're safe!"

The boy turned round. His face was flushed with excitement.

"Gee, mother!" he cried. "I had a ride on one of the engines!"

The officer who was holding his hand spoke grimly:

"I understand he was almost under that engine, lady," he declared, "and the kid just told me he'd have been

run over but for the young fireman who asked me to take care of him."

"That's right, mother," the boy put in. "He pulled me right from under the fire-engine's wheels! There he goes!" he added shrilly. "Look, up on that escape. Gee, he's a great guy!"

The mother followed the direction of his pointing finger, and saw an indistinct figure in the haze of smoke, a lithe, stalwart figure in the blue uniform and massive helmet of the brigade.

"Officer," the woman said to the policeman, "do you know that young man's name?"

"No, ma'am," was the answer. "But I dare say you could find out if you made inquiries at the station."

"I will," the woman told him fervently. "I'll ask my husband to get in touch with him as soon as possible."

She took her youngster by the hand and edged her way through the crowd again, to find that her chauffeur had driven the car to Stockton Street and was waiting for her on the outskirts of the mob. A minute or two later she was on her way home.

Meanwhile Bob Darrow had smashed his way through one of the windows of the burning building and was hoisting the senseless form of a girl over his shoulder. He carried his inert burden back to the fire-escape, and, descending rung by rung, regained the street, where the girl was placed with other casualties in a hospital ambulance.

She was the last of a number of people who had been trapped on the top floor, but with the building vacated, the work of the firemen was by no means at an end, for their duty was to see that the blaze did not spread, and that the least possible damage was done to the property imperilled.

The powerful jets of water hurled into the block of offices soon overcame the flames, though not before the top story was a dripping ruin, and at length the firemen returned to their quarters.

Bob washed and changed, and then, having disposed of his fire-fighting equipment, made his way to the battalion chief's office.

"Hallo, Darrow!" the captain said genially, as the young fireman appeared before his desk. "You did some fine work to-day, and I'd like you to know that I feel proud to be in command of fellows like you."

"Thank you, sir," Bob returned. "I can only say I'm glad you find me a satisfactory member of the Force."

"You're all that," the captain told him with a smile. "But did you want to see me about anything in particular, Darrow?"

Bob nodded.

"Yes, sir," he said. "I wanted to see you about that fire-extinguisher I'm working on in my spare time. You were good enough to offer me an introduction to Mr. Madison, of the Madison Chemical Company, sir, and I wondered if you had done anything further in the matter. I'm very anxious to interest someone like him in my invention, sir," he added.

"Quite," the captain agreed. "And Madison is as useful a man as you could possibly get hold of. His laboratories turn out an equipment that's employed as a precautionary safeguard in seventy-five per cent of the offices in this city. As a matter of fact, I mentioned your name to him last night, when I was at his home."

"Did he say he'd see me, sir?" Bob asked eagerly.

"Yes," the captain rejoined, "any

time you cared to call at his office in Fifth Street. Mind you, Darrow, I wouldn't bank too much on that interview. He seemed rather sceptical about the whole thing, and I think he agreed to give you some of his time mainly as a personal favour to me. Of course, not being a chemist, I couldn't tell him very much about your invention."

Bob fumbled with his cap. "I guess I could interest him if I could see him, sir," he said confidently. "Would it be possible for me to take some time off this afternoon?"

"Certainly," the station chief told him, and, hurrying back to his quarters, Bob changed into "civvies" and took a street-car to Fifth Street.

He had provided himself with the address of the Madison Chemical Company, which occupied an entire floor in a skyscraper building not far from the Plaza, and within half an hour of leaving the station a lift was carrying him towards James Madison's office.

The Interview.

SHORTLY before Bob Darrow's departure from the station, James Madison had received a visitor in the shape of Dan Mitchell, a friend of the family.

Dan Mitchell was a tall man of about thirty years of age, dark, sallow of complexion and handsome, though a keen judge of character might have taken exception to the shiftiness of his eyes and the slightly sardonic expression that too often played around his thin-lipped mouth.

He was supposedly of independent means, though where those means had come from no one was very certain. James Madison liked him, and had a great deal of faith in his friendship, yet there were times when he reflected—unsuspectingly enough—that he knew very little of his private affairs. It would have undoubtedly come as a shock to him to learn that one of Dan Mitchell's sources of income was a notorious night club in the city, and that this was perhaps the least shady of the enterprises in which he was involved.

"Of course," Mitchell was saying. "I want you to understand that I have no particular interest in this extinguisher I've mentioned to you. But this acquaintance of mine asked me to put it up to you."

James Madison leaned back in his swivel chair. He was a well-preserved man in the fifties, with iron-grey hair and a strong, shrewd face.

"He's not a young fellow by the name of Darrow, is he?" he inquired. "Because, if so, Captain Wilson mentioned him to me last night. I agreed to see him as a personal favour to Wilson, but I'm not anticipating that the interview will come to anything. If I were to show you the pile of correspondence I receive every week from amateur inventors, Dan, you'd feel sorry for me. There has never yet been a perfect fire-extinguisher, and at some time or other every scientist or pseudo-scientist tries to establish one."

Mitchell pursed his lips. He had not admitted that he was intensely interested in the particular extinguisher that he had mentioned. It had not suited his purpose to do so. But he had high hopes of effecting a deal with Madison and selling him the invention at a considerable profit to himself.

"No," he drawled, "Darrow isn't the name, Madison. This extinguisher I've been telling you about isn't the fool notion of some ignorant fireman. How does it strike you, anyhow, from the little I've said about it?"

"To be frank," Madison answered, "it doesn't sound practicable to me." And

he proceeded to enter into a number of technical details that were actually beyond Mitchell's grasp.

"At least, it wouldn't do any harm to follow up the matter," Mitchell urged. "Supposing you try it out—"

"My dear Dan," Madison interrupted. "I'm a busy man, and I haven't the time to waste in trying out other people's theories unless they sound pretty good."

Mitchell shrugged. "Well, I thought I'd suggest it to you," he observed, "and I feel you may be letting a good thing slip through your fingers. As I say, I've no interest in the idea, except that it's been evolved by an acquaintance of mine—"

He was interrupted by the appearance of Madison's secretary, and lapsed into silence as the older man glanced at his employee inquiringly.

"A Mr. Robert Darrow to see you, sir," the girl announced.

"Oh, yes," said Madison. "show him in." Then, to Mitchell: "Our friend the fireman," he added with a smile.

Bob entered the room a moment later. "I believe the captain mentioned me to you, Mr. Madison," he began, as he shook hands.

"He did," Madison rejoined, "and he also mentioned that you had an idea for a fire-extinguisher. Oh, by the way, let me present Mr. Mitchell. You can talk in front of him. He's a very close friend of mine."

Bob held out his fist, but Mitchell somewhat pointedly ignored it, merely inclining his head in a way that struck Bob as supercilious. He resented, too, the air of condescension that the man implied by the movement, and, letting his hand fall to his side, he turned to Madison again.

"On the face of it, sir," he said, "this invention of mine might sound sort of startling—almost wild. It's an explosive, Mr. Madison—"

"An explosive?" Madison exclaimed, and exchanged a glance with Dan Mitchell.

"Yes," Bob continued, "but it is quite harmless as regards human life or property. It is a chemical contained in a glass bulb, very much like a bomb, and in the moment of impact the bulb bursts and allows the air to combine with the liquid it contains. The effect is an instantaneous evaporation followed by an explosion which extinguishes flame as quickly as your fingers can snuff a candle."

Madison pursed his lips. Had Bob, but known it, that pursing of the lips was a sign that he was by no means impressed.

In fact, Madison was inclined to be amused at the moment.

"I see," he murmured, and, only because he wished to deal gently with this subordinate of his friend Wilson, he began to ask one or two scientific questions concerning the process of Bob's invention.

While Mitchell stood in the background superciliously, Bob produced a rough formula of his fire-fighting process and attempted to explain it.

"Of course," he said, "I haven't much scope for carrying out experiments, and I don't claim that my idea has reached perfection. But I believe that it would, sir, if it could go through a series of tests in your laboratories."

Madison stood up. "Young man," he declared, "I hate to disappoint you, but I'm afraid I haven't much faith in it."

Bob's face fell. "Perhaps I haven't made it quite clear, Mr. Madison—"

"Oh, I think I understand it perfectly," Madison interrupted. "But I doubt if it would be of practical use."



"That's right, mother," the boy put in. "He pulled me right from under the fire-engine's wheels. There he goes," he added shrilly. "Look, up on that escape!"

and I am afraid the staff in my laboratories is too busy with other research work to devote time to it. I'm sorry, Darrow."

Bob drew back, and made a brave show of concealing his disappointment.

"That's all right, Mr. Madison," he said. "I'm sorry to have wasted some of your time."

He made his way from the office and took the lift to the ground floor. As he stepped out on to the pavement a car drew up outside the entrance to the building, and a fashionably dressed girl climbed out of it.

Bob touched her on the arm as she was passing, and lifted his hat politely.

"Excuse me, miss," he told her, "but you can't leave that car there."

The girl looked at him, in amazement at first, and then in indignation.

"Who says I can't?" she demanded.

"I do," Bob answered. "You see, there happens to be a fire-hydrant just where you've parked it, and if there were an outbreak here the brigade would have to have your car shifted, which would mean a certain amount of delay."

The girl's expression was chilling.

"I'll leave my car where I please," she said defiantly. "And you can't make me shift it."

"Perhaps I can't, miss," Bob admitted, "but I can call the attention of that cop over there, and get him to make you shift it."

The girl bit her lip, realising that she must sooner or later acquiesce. With an angry glance at Bob she turned on her heel, marched back to her car and drove it a few yards along the street to an authorised parking-place. Then she returned to the spot where the young fireman was standing.

"Now I hope you're satisfied," she said bitterly.

"Perfectly," Bob told her, and grinned as she brushed past him in a passion.

The Madison Laboratory.

THE wilful young miss who had been involved in the altercation with Bob on the sidewalk took the lift to the floor occupied by the Madison Chemical Company.

"Is my father in?" she asked of James Madison's secretary.

"Yes, Miss Madison," was the reply. "Mr. Mitchell is with him just now."

Not for a moment had Bob Darrow dreamed that the girl he had met outside the building was June Madison, daughter of the man on whom he had just called. Nor would it have made the slightest difference to him had he been aware of the relationship. As it was, Bob had already half-forgotten the incident, his mind drifting back to the disappointing result of his interview with the well-known scientist.

June Madison had not forgotten the incident, however, and as she entered her father's office her pretty face still held traces of annoyance.

"Hallo, my dear," Madison exclaimed as his daughter came into the room, and the greeting was echoed in suave tones by Dan Mitchell. For apart from more material ambitions, Mitchell had long nursed the hope that June would come to regard him in the light of a suitor.

"Hallo, daddy; hallo, Dan," June returned. "I happened to be calling in at the building to keep an appointment with Monsieur Henri, the beauty specialist on the top floor, and I thought I'd just step out of the lift and see you for a moment."

"Speaking for myself," drawled Mitchell, "I can assure you, June, that it is a most unlooked-for pleasure."

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"Thanks, Dan," the girl answered, and, still dwelling on her encounter with Bob Darrow: "It's a pity everybody couldn't be so charming as you."

"Who could be anything else but charming to you, June?" Mitchell said. June pursed her lips.

"Well, I've just been insulted by one of your sex," she declared. "He told me to move my car clear of a fire-hydrant outside the main entrance, and threatened to call a policeman when I showed resentment."

Her father looked at her doubtfully. "Clear of a fire-hydrant, eh?" he mused. "Well, you know, June, that wasn't quite the place to leave your car, and I dare say the fellow was acting with the best of intentions."

"Right or wrong," put in Mitchell, with a great show of loyalty, "he must have been pretty insolent about the affair. I can quite understand you feeling upset, June."

June could not really admit that the young fireman's manner had been insolent, so changed the subject.

"What I really came in for, daddy," she said, "was a little money. I've just been doing a lot of shopping, and I've spent every cent I had."

Her father laughed good-naturedly and, taking a wad of notes from his wallet, peeled off several of them and handed them to her.

"Thanks, daddy," she said, kissing him, and then left the office to resume her journey to the top floor.

She had not long been gone when the telephone bell rang, and James Madison picked up the receiver and heard the voice of his wife. It sounded peculiarly agitated, and he soon learned the reason why.

"What's that you say?" Mitchell heard him ejaculate. "Jackie—A fire-engine—Jackie nearly run over! Good heavens! Is he hurt?"

"No," came the reply, "thanks to a fireman who climbed down to the front of the engine, he's safe and sound. I brought him home at once, and he doesn't even seem to be shaken up. But listen, Jim, I want you to get in touch with Captain Wilson and find out the name of the man who rescued Jackie. We owe him a debt we can never repay."

"We certainly do," Madison agreed fervently. "But so far as it's possible we will repay it, my dear. I'll make a special point of getting in touch with Wilson this evening."

He hung up, and repeated to Mitchell his wife's conversation over the phone, Mitchell expressing concern as it was related to him.

"I'll see Wilson personally," Madison added. "Yes, as soon as I'm through at the office here I'll see him personally. Dan, will you excuse me? There's rather an important experiment being carried out in the laboratory this afternoon, and I asked them to hold it up so that I could be present at it."

"I guess I'll have to be running along, anyhow," Mitchell told him. "Got some business to attend to down-town."

He took up his hat and cane and said "good-bye," and almost immediately after his departure Madison's secretary appeared again.

"The head chemist just rang through from the laboratory to say he is ready to begin with the experiment, sir," she informed her employer.

"I'll be right along," Madison answered, and, passing through the offices of the clerical staff, he walked the length of an intervening corridor and entered the laboratory, where the atmo-

sphere was heavy-laden with the smell of chemicals.

The head chemist and one or two assistants were gathered at a bench on which some scientific apparatus had been arranged. Madison entered into some technical conversation with the analysts, and then stood by while a bunsen-burner was placed under a retort containing a yellowish liquid.

The flame from the gas-jet had been playing on the glass only for a few seconds when, with an unexpectedness that took the onlookers completely by surprise, the contents of the retort exploded with a deafening report and a blinding flash of flame.

The apparatus was shattered to a thousand fragments, and Madison and his employees sprang back, several of them burned about the face and hands, and one or two of them cut by the flying particles of glass. But these were the least disastrous effects of the explosion, for certain inflammable chemicals close by immediately took fire, and almost instantaneously the entire bench was blazing furiously.

Madison and the chief chemist rushed forward in a vain attempt to quench the flames, but in the space of a few seconds they realised the futility of their efforts, and the personal risk they ran in persisting with them. For with alarming rapidity the fire gained a hold on the floor, and on the neighbouring benches.

Amongst the innumerable bottles on the shelves above the benches there were many deadly ingredients that were fuel for the fire, and, in an eventuality like this, weapons of death and destruction.

Two of them burst not far from Madison's head, and, with a hoarse cry, the chief chemist dragged his employer in the direction of the door, for which the assistants were already making.

"We've got to get out of here, sir!" he shouted. "In another ten seconds we'll be trapped, with the whole lab. ablaze around us."

He was right, for the flames were working round in a dual column towards the only way of escape, threatening to imprison Madison and his chief chemist within a raging, lurid wall extending from floor to ceiling.

The two men blundered after the fleeing assistants, darting between the benches that filled the long room. They reached the door as evil tongues of flame were coiling out to blister them and singe their clothes, and their last impression was of a fierce inferno at their heels.

Once clear of immediate peril, however, Madison's thoughts were not concerned with his own safety, but with the safety of the clerical staff, as yet unaware of the outbreak.

The clerks were warned, and abandoned their desks to throng corridors and stairs. By the time they had evacuated the eighth floor the alarm had spread, and occupants from the other stories began to march out of the building.

There was no panic, and, though there were white faces in plenty, there was not a single case of hysteria, even among the girls.

The personnel of the various companies occupying the block trooped into the street and mingled with the crowds of passers-by, who had seen the flames raging first of all in the laboratory windows, and now, watched them spreading to those on the other floors.

"This is goin' to be one o' the worst fires you ever saw," someone in the crowd was heard to say. "The chemicals in the Madison laboratory have given it a roaring start, and the

whole buildin' will be a mass o' flame before it's many minutes older."

"Sure, the brigade's gonna have a tough time gettin' this blaze under. Look at them ugly red an' yellow tongues climbin' up the windows. They'll eat their way through floor after floor."

"It's lucky everybody's out."

The Snare of the Flames.

THE beauty parlour of "Monsieur Henri" was an isolated establishment on the top floor, where many of the suites had not been rented. Consequently, during the precious minutes in which the other stories were being evacuated, Monsieur Henri and his fair client remained ignorant of their peril.

In that lofty room no suspicion of the fire reached them for some time, nor did the clamour of the crowds in the street far below attract their attention, for it was merged in the distant rumble of the city's traffic.

June had called by appointment to have her hair trimmed, and, his skillful hands busy with the clippers, Monsieur Henri kept up the usual trivial conversation that he employed while attending to his wealthy customers.

He was a dapper man who had been born in Brooklyn, and his knowledge of France was confined to the perfumes imported from that country. But he had thought it good business to assume a foreign name and affect a slight accent.

"I think my hair could do with a wave, too," June said presently, breaking in on him as he was discussing the weather.

"Certainly, madame," the beauty specialist rejoined, and, heating a pair of curling-tongs, he set to work.

He was putting the finishing touches to her hair, when June raised her head and sniffed at the air concernedly.

"There's a smell of burning," she murmured. "You're not singeing my hair, are you?"

"But no, madame," Monsieur Henri protested. "I am certainly not singeing your hair."

June continued to sniff at the air doubtfully. She was not satisfied with the beauty specialist's assurance. She was quite positive, at any rate, that something was burning.

"Are you sure you haven't overheated those tongs?" she persisted.

Monsieur Henri exchanged a glance with her in the mirror before which she was sitting. His expression was mildly indignant and somewhat reproachful.

"Madame," he said, "you do me an injustice. You have surely forgotten that I am an artist in my profession—one of the most highly patronised in all San Francisco. The best people in Society come to me."

"I'm sorry, M'sieur Henri!" June apologised, slightly amused by his tone. "But I really did think that something was burning."

Monsieur Henri accepted that apology and was about to resume work with the tongs when he, too, detected what June's more sensitive nostrils had already traced. He paused and looked round dubiously.

"Madame," he declared, "there is a smell of fire, but there is nothing here that could be burning."

He laid aside the tongs and went to the door. June saw him open it and step out into the corridor.

Monsieur Henri walked towards the lift-shaft and the staircase-well. As he approached it he was startled to see formidable volumes of smoke rising, and he moved on at a more hesitant pace. Then, as he reached the top of the stairs, he felt a blast of heat, and, to his horror, he found himself looking down into a writhing mass of flame.

He was dumbfounded for the instant, but a sudden instinct of panic sent him running back to his beauty salon.

"The whole building's ablaze!" he squealed. "Run for it! There's not a second to lose!"

He wheeled again to dash along the corridor, and with that June sprang to her feet. Her lovely face had paled, and her eyes were filled with terror.

"Don't leave me!" she cried. "I—"

But Monsieur Henri was thinking of his own skin now.

"It's everyone for himself," he

shrilled, and, pulling his coat over his head, he sped to the staircase and plunged through the inferno.

June ran after him, gained the head of the stairs, and stumbled down towards the next floor. But as the cruel tongues of fire wrapped about her slender form she recoiled with a sob of mingled pain and despair. Her flimsier clothes could not protect her from the flames even for an instant, and she knew that she could never fight her way clear.

A wave of smoke rolled over her. It tortured her throat and lungs, and she was racked with a fit of coughing. She retreated step by step, till all at once she found herself back on the threshold of the beauty parlour. With a piteous little moan she stumbled into the room and slammed the door.

A whiff of smoke lingered about the salon. She seemed to hear the roar of the blaze that had been climbing relentlessly up the stairs to envelop the top floor as it had enveloped the others.

June tottered to the window and flung up the sash. As she looked down she saw the masses of people in the street, and she screamed frantically for help. Whether her cries reached them she could not tell, but suddenly someone caught sight of her, and next moment hundreds of faces were uplifted towards her.

"Look, up at the top floor window," rose the cry. "There's a girl there."

It was a cry that caused James Malison to raise his glance. Standing among those who had escaped from the premises he saw the head and shoulders of the girl who had been trapped by the flames, and a hoarse shout broke from his lips.

"It's my daughter!" he jerked, and with an impetuous rush he made for the entrance to the building, whence the smoke was pouring in dense, suffocating volumes.

Before he could reach the entrance three or four members of his own staff seized him.



Bob produced a rough formula of his fire-fighting process and attempted to explain it.

"You can't go in here, Mr. Madison! It's certain death!"

Madison struggled like a man bereft of his senses. To his ears there came a faint echo of June's voice, appealing frenziedly for help, and at the sound he fought more furiously to escape those who held him. But he could not break free.

[The Death Plunge.]

FOLLOWING his encounter with June Madison Bob Darrow returned without delay to the station, and as he was passing Captain Wilson's desk the battalion chief hailed him.

"Hallo, there, Darrow!" he said. "Did you see Madison?"

Bob nodded gloomily.

"Yes, sir," he answered; "but I'm afraid he wasn't interested. I guess I'm not much good at talking, and he didn't seem impressed."

"That's too bad, Darrow," the captain murmured, with genuine sympathy. "I'm mighty sorry to hear it."

"Oh, I haven't given up hope, sir," Bob declared. "It was a pretty big disappointment to me; but I've got faith in my invention, sir, and there are plenty of other firms besides the Madison Chemical—"

The phone bell on the chief's desk rang before he could complete the sentence, and Wilson picked up the receiver. Next moment his face registered an expression of consternation, and, as he hung up, Bob looked at him inquiringly.

"Fire call," the captain said. "It's the Madison Chemical Company!"

In the space of a few seconds the alarm-bell was tolling out through the station, and the firemen were sliding down the polished pillars to the engine-room. Bob dashed to his quarters for his equipment, and within the regulation three minutes he was at his post on No. 1 wagon, his helmet on his head, his respirator handy and his axe in the leather bucket that he wore on his hip.

The big engines and the escapes storied out of the station and swung to the right, crowds on the sidewalks pausing to watch them as they surged past clamorously.

On this, the second call of a fateful day, no circumstance delayed the firemen in their rush to the scene of conflagration, and without event the fire-wagons hurtled into Fifth Street and skidded to a standstill outside the doomed building.

A strong force of police had been drafted to the thoroughfare, and had packed the crowd towards the far end of it. But Madison still remained near the entrance, striving to break the hold of those who had grasped him.

The fire-hoses were already being trained on the block of offices when Captain Wilson reached the spot where Madison was fighting to free himself, and as he approached he heard the scientist's voice raised in a fierce protest.

"Let me go! I've got to get to her! My little girl!"

Then he saw the captain, and:

"Wilson," he groaned, "make them let me go! Look—up at that window on the top floor! It's June who's there! She's calling for help! I'm going back for her!"

"You can't do that, Madison," Wilson answered. "You'd be overcome by that smoke long before you could reach her. September 5th, 1931.

It's the brigade's job to save human life—if it's possible."

"If it's possible!" Madison cried. "I'll take that chance if they'll let me go—"

He began to struggle again, and in the midst of his struggles he saw June make a last piteous gesture of appeal and then sink down view in a dead faint. Even as she disappeared a cloud of smoke rolled through the window where she had been standing, and a grim coil of fire snaked out with it.

Madison uttered a low moan, and suddenly becoming limp and submissive in the hands of those who gripped him, he sank to his knees.

Captain Wilson was on the point of turning away to give instructions to the men under his command when Bob Darrow came running from the vicinity of engine No. 1.

"There seems to be someone trapped up on the top floor, captain," he panted. "I just got a glimpse of her a moment ago, and then she fainted."

"Yes, Darrow," Wilson answered briefly. "a young girl. Does there seem to be any chance of reaching her?"

"A slim one," was the rejoinder. "The fire's got a strong hold, and it appears to have broken through the roof. Guess the very stonework won't be intact much longer, but with your permission I'm willing to risk it."

Wilson's lips tightened into a firm line. He had the feeling that, by giving his permission, he was sentencing Bob Darrow to death. But he could not blind himself to the spectacle of his distracted friend Madison, whom Bob, in the excitement of the moment, had not as yet recognised.

"Go to it, Darrow," said Captain Wilson briefly, "and good luck to you."

Bob sprang to one of the fire-escapes. Already the collapsible ladder was being run up the frontage of the building towards the top floor. Its uttermost reach was still a few feet from the sill of the window at which June Madison had last been seen, but Bob snatched up a hook ladder—a kind of rod with foot-rests and a strong grappling-iron attached to it.

He began to climb the escape, swiftly as ever seafaring man swarmed up the rigging. Hundreds of pairs of eyes watched him anxiously from a mass of upturned faces, now losing him in a swirl of smoke that surged through the splintering windows, now picking him out again as he rose clear of the smothering fumes and fought his way upward to the very peak of the ladder.

The escape had been rigged up in the most advantageous position; but the climb was fraught with hazard, and time and again Bob found himself gasping for air as the clouds of smoke rolled over him. But determination and the thought of a helpless girl's danger spurred him on, and at last he gained the topmost rung.

He grasped the hook ladder that he had brought with him and lifted his glance to the roof. A low parapet surrounded it, and he decided upon this as the likeliest means of securing the grappling-iron.

He raised the hand-ladder and clamped the hook on the coping stone.

From his position on the escape he could not tell that immediately behind the parapet, and close to the point where he had fixed the grappling-iron, the roof was a red-hot mass. Nor did he guess, though he knew that his situation was

perilous, that the coping-stone had been undermined by the fierceness of the blaze and needed no great strain to sunder it completely.

Ignorant of the real and imminent danger, he set his foot on the lowest cross-step, tested the security of the hook ladder and then pulled himself up to the window-ledge behind which June Madison had last been sighted.

He reached the sill. A mass of smoke enclosed and blinded him for an instant, and a sheet of flame swept about him, scorching hands and face. He was able to see nothing inside the room immediately, and thought he might have come too late. But as the smoke and flame temporarily cleared he caught a glimpse of a crumpled figure on the floor, lying in a spot where the fire had not yet gained a thorough grip.

Bob swung himself lithely through the window, and dropped beside the girl. She was insensible, and lay on her face. He did not recognise her as his acquaintance of the afternoon, or he might have marvelled at the coincidence of meeting her again in such different circumstances.

Stooping, he gathered her in his powerful arms and swung her over his shoulder. She remained inert as he carried her to the window and poised her against the sill while he himself climbed through and set his feet firmly on the cross-steps of the hook ladder.

He let her fall forward on to his shoulder again and held her tightly. So far so good, he thought. He knew that she was alive, and the state of her clothes told him that she had not even been seriously burned, but had merely fainted with the strain of her terrible ordeal.

The rungs of the main escape were seven or eight feet beneath him. He began to descend towards them, but had taken no more than a single downward step when he felt the hook ladder jerk precariously.

He tightened his grasp involuntarily, and saved himself from being thrown there and then into the street far below. Then, as the possible reason for the ladder's spasmodic movement occurred to him, a chill seemed to strike through his veins.

He looked up towards the roof, half-knowing what to expect. The sight that met his eyes confirmed his suspicion—a sight calculated to send a thrill of horror through the bravest man.

A long rent had appeared in the section of parapet to which the grappling-iron had been clamped. Before his tortured gaze the coping-stone rocked outward.

He was paralysed for an instant. Then the girl on his shoulder seemed to revive a little, the keener air of the out of doors bringing her round to a semi-conscious state. A little moan came from between her lips.

The sound roused Bob. He made a desperate bid to descend the last cross-steps of the hook ladder and reach the main escape, and safety.

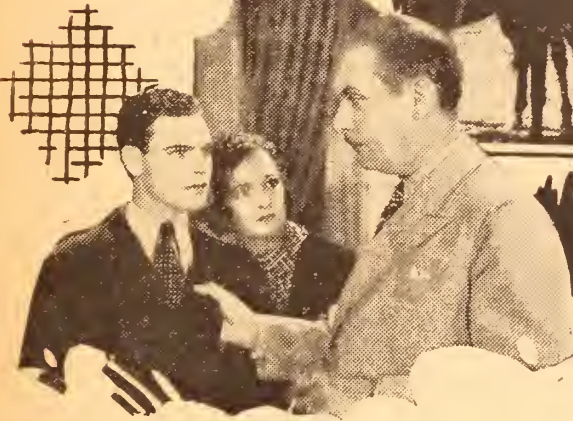
But he was fated not to succeed. The strain of Bob's weight, combined with the girl's, wrenched the coping-stone entirely from its position.

It toppled forward. From those in the street there arose a shout of horror, a shout that carried to Bob's ears even as he and June Madison were plunged towards the far-distant sidewalk—

(To be continued in another breath-taking episode next week. By permission of Universal Pictures, Ltd., starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.)

By a trick a jockey is lured away from a kindly owner, but at the price of his own honour he plays the game. Disgraced, he swore he would never ride again, but ———. A stirring story of the race-course.

"SWEEPSTAKES"



Starring
**EDDIE
QUILLAN.**

"Whoop-te-do!"

FIVE to four, Yellow Hornet! Five to four, Yellow Hornet!" There came a sudden rush of bets on the favourite. "Evens, Yellow Hornet! Three to one, Baby Girl!"

A bell clanged—the race had started. A mile and a quarter, and eight of the best two-year-olds going all out for the Victoria Gold Vase.

At the bend Baby Girl was leading by three clear lengths; next came Ruby and a bunch of others, with Yellow Hornet two lengths behind the last of them.

Several of the bookmakers got busy with their glasses, and one voiced a common opinion.

"Buddy ain't gonna ride no winner to-day. Yellow Hornet's out of the race. Gosh, wish I'd taken more! It's Baby Girl's race for a cinch!"

There are always several of the betting fraternity or late backers who get last-minute information or like an outside gamble.

"Anybody like to lay a price about Ruby or Yellow Hornet?" asked one such gambler.

"Ruby's creeping up—she started at threes. Nope, I couldn't offer you more than twos." The bookie winked at his clerk. They knew that Ruby was a bad stayer. "Maybe I might make it five to two. How's Yellow Hornet doing?" He peered through his glasses. "Might have picked up half a length, but no more. I'll give four to one, Yellow Hornet. I'm a sport, I am."

At once the backer produced some dollar bills.

"I like an outside chance. Put this twenty-five bucks on Yellow Hornet at fours."

The bookmaker called out the bet to his clerk, and then passed over a card. "Put me twenty dollars on Yellow Hornet at fours," piped another voice.

The bookmaker found that a small crowd had gathered round his stand, and at once got cold feet.

"I'll take that bet—now the book's closed," he shouted. He clapped his glasses to his eyes. "Hades!"

Well might the bookmaker kick himself for trying to make easy money. Yellow Hornet was not out of the race. In the few moments that had passed, the horse had crept up to the bunch, and, even as the bookie watched, seemed to glide through them. A blur of horses coming towards the straight, and Baby Girl still leading; gold with elaret sleeves showed Ruby to be lying close behind, second; and what was that splash of primrose with blue cap? The bookmaker gnashed his teeth, for now Yellow Hornet lay third.

On the back of Yellow Hornet was a grim-faced young jockey, who had his mouth close to the ears of his two-year-old colt, and as the boy rode he chanted a rhythmic refrain:

"Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do!"

The sound of a drum and fife band stirs the heart of a soldier and makes him dream of old battles or of new to

come. The refrain stirred the equine mind to thoughts of victory and desperate endeavour. The horse knew that his rider had called him to do his best, and the chant seemed to give his limbs added strength.

Bud Doyle was one of the foremost jockeys of the day, and he never believed in setting a gruelling pace—rather to nurse the horse until there came a suitable opening. Sometimes Bud would maintain the lead from start to finish, but there was generally some strong reason. Horses are queer creatures, and some prefer to set the pace, and become fractious if kept back.

Bud had talked it over with his trainer, Sleepy Jones, and they had decided just how this race could be won, and there were no mistakes or hitches—everything went according to plan. Yellow Hornet glided into third place at the right moment, and, to the chant of "Whoop-te-do!" overhauled and passed Ruby a furlong from the winning-post. Baby Girl was three lengths ahead.

That three lengths was a trifle more than Bud Doyle had expected, and he put an extra charge into his chant of "Whoop-te-do!"

The crowd fairly yelled themselves hoarse as they saw the favourite slowly creeping up towards the leader. Could the most popular jockey of the hour bring off another spectacular victory? A bare length, and the winning-post but a hundred yards away. The rider of Baby

Girl was using his whip, but all Doyle did was to bend even lower in the saddle and yell out the familiar:

"Whoop-te-do!"

A gasp from the crowd. The two horses were running neck and neck—the winning post a dozen lengths ahead.

Shouts of "Baby Girl!" "Yellow Hornet!" rang out, but only those near the finish and the judge could tell the actual winner, yet Yellow Hornet had won by a clear head.

What the bookmaker who had given fairs had to say can best be left to the imagination.

As the owner was not present, Sleepy Jones led in the winner. The trainer was a dour, suspicious little man, with a short-cut, sandy moustache and bristly hair. His eyes would dart this way and that, the lids would droop almost to closing, and the chin was aggressive. Sleepy Jones was the exact opposite of his name; in fact, he was so alert for trickery that his friends had given him the nickname.

Yet his broad grin at the jockey was full of fun and affection. Sleepy had his heart in the right place, though he was always growling.

"You were mighty slow starting things," he said out of the corner of his mouth. "I reckoned ye'd gone to sleep."

"I nearly got shut out." Bud Doyle answered the grin with a broader one. "I will say Yellow Hornet's a buzzer when he gets moving."

"Maybe we'll get a better price next time out with the Hornet," mumbled Sleepy, and became alert. "Hullo, here comes Wally Weber and a swell dame!"

Bud Doyle was twenty-one that day, and full of the joy of life. The life of a jockey was a hard one, but there was seldom a smile far from his face. Most of his friends came from the racing stables, and he knew hardly any girls, but right from the start he liked the girl walking by the side of Wally Weber, racehorse-owner and proprietor of the big road-house known as Weber's Inn.

The girl was slight of build, young and very pretty; dark curls framed an oval face, the brightest of eyes, the reddest of lips, and cheeks that had alluring dimples.

"That was a good ride of yours, Buddy," greeted Wally Weber. He was a big man and rather flashily dressed. Wally seemed to ooze affability and good-nature; he often looked bored and slightly fuddled, but there was nothing the matter with his brain. Wally often cloaked his thoughts behind a grin or a yawn.

"Thank you, Mr. Weber," responded the jockey. "I'll say that Yellow Hornet is a game youngster."

"This is Miss Ellis." In a casual way Weber introduced them. "You gave her the thrill of her young life. She speculated a whole dollar on you, and she'd never done such a rash deed before. Babe, I'd like you to be friends with Buddy Doyle—best rider South of Kentucky."

"I think you rode a wonderful race." The girl's voice was rather shy, and the blue eyes, with their long lashes, were expressive of great admiration. "You certainly made whoopee with Yellow Hornet."

"Don't praise me, praise my horse." Buddy Doyle slid down from the saddle and held out his hand. "You aren't the Babe Ellis that often sings over the wireless, are you?"

"The midget, nightingale." Wally Weber laughed. "Why don't you come September 5th, 1931.

round one night and hear her sing—she's gracing my humble house for a few weeks?"

"I do wish you would come." Her voice was very sincere.

The conversation had lasted quite long enough for Sleepy Jones.

"Jockeys ain't got time for such places, thanking you all the same. Early to bed and early to rise—that's our motto, miss. If you'll excuse us we'll be getting along to the unsaddling rooms. Come on, Buddy."

"Don't you let him come near my den of vice," Wally Weber mocked the trainer. "Babe, he's scared we'll make his protégé go gay. Never mind, Buddy, we'll be glad to see you if you can escape from your warden."

"You might come for a little while," pleaded the girl.

"Come on, Lightning!" Sleepy Jones nudged Buddy in the ribs. "We'll have all the officials after us if we hang around here, talking. Good-day to you, Mister Weber!"

"Good-bye, Miss Ellis; I'd like to come, but you see how it is with this martinet." Bud smiled at the girl. "I'll have to content myself with listening in."

"You're a spoil-sport," grumbled Buddy after the weighing-in. "What harm would there be in—"

"Now, now, now!" Sleepy became quite aggressive. "Your orders are bed at ten, so them dives is outa your beat. What's more, for all his smiles and smirks, I wouldn't trust Mr. Wally Weber as far as I could see him. What's more, I don't want no arguments from you—you're a jockey, not a gigolo."

The Seeds of Discontent.

THAT evening there was a birthday party at Ma Clancy's house, where the trainer and his dozen jockeys and apprentices resided. Buddy was liked by all, and his voice was quite hoarse when he had got through his speech of thanks. Ma Clancy, a motherly old soul, had laid out a marvellous spread, and the boys did the good food justice.

"Gosh, I'll have to get some of that weight down in the morning!" Sleepy was inclined at times to be morbid. "You must have all put on several pounds. Heck, but it's gone ten—off to bed, the lot of yer!"

Laughing and talking they went, but Buddy Doyle remained, staring down at his pile of presents.

"Didn't yer hear me say 'bed'?" growled the trainer.

"Yeah, I heard you!" grinned Bud Doyle; but he frowned as he asked his question. "Have you forgotten I'm twenty-one?"

"So you're a man, and can stay up all night!" Sleepy winked an eye and shook his head. "You don't swing that stuff on me. When you're thirty-one—if you're still riding for Pop Blake and I'm still his trainer—you'll still be going to bed at ten. And now no more arguments, my lad!"

"I call it a lot of punk!" grumbled Buddy. "Why, it's still light!"

"If the sun was to say 'good-morning,' it wouldn't make no difference. Are you going, or am I going to get annoyed?"

"Oh, all right, misery!" Bud gathered his presents. "I hope I don't sleep a wink all night, just to spite you. Gosh, you oughta been a warden at Sing-Sing!"

Bud Doyle felt in no mood for sleep, and when he got to his room he stood for some time by the open window gazing out over the distant race-course. Almost

he could see the spot where he had met Babe Ellis.

A grunt, a wheeze, and a shrill scream—that was old Sleepy turning on the wireless. From the open window the news bulletin came floating up from the room below, and the boy was about to turn away with a yawn when the last announcement made him pause.

"We are now going over to Weber's Inn, where Miss Babe Ellis will entertain us with some of her latest New York successes. Her first will be 'A Sweet Kentucky Maiden.'"

What a sweet voice Babe had, and how her voice seemed to thrill him. Gosh, wouldn't he like to be at Weber's Inn and listening to her. She had wanted him to go along, and stupid old Sleepy had queered everything. His eyes studied the sloping roof below him—pretty easy to get down into the garden. Gosh, how he would like to go down to Weber's Inn! Why shouldn't he? Wasn't he twenty-one, and a man?

A clean-shaven, well-dressed man stared thoughtfully down the track; by his side stood Sleepy Jones, and the latter rubbed his chin and watched the other from narrowed lids.

Pop Blake had just returned from a sea voyage, and his sharp eyes had soon spotted trouble.

"I tear back for the big race and expect to find Buddy hard at work on Six-Shooter. Only three days before the big race, and I don't mind telling you, Sleepy, I've laid out more than I can afford on winning the Gold Cup. I come straight to the course, and what's going on—you chewing a straw and Buddy talking to a girl. You also look as if you'd eaten something that didn't agree with you, Sleepy, so you'd best tell me here and now what's wrong."

"That dame's the trouble—women are a pesky nuisance!" Sleepy kicked viciously at a tuft of grass. "He met the girl the day he won on Yellow Hornet, and since that day you could see him change. That was three weeks ago, and for ten nights he slid down the rainpipe to go and hear her sing round at Weber's dive—she dances and sings there. I gave him a rousing, and he just looked sulky, the only girl in the world stuff, and I had no heart. I stopped him going to Weber's, but I can't stop him meeting her during the day. It ain't done his riding any harm, though he ain't the fresh, care-free Buddy we like, boss. He's just infatuated with this dame, and he won't listen to nowt."

"She's working for Weber—bad!" Pop Blake lit a cigarette. "Suppose you sent him off on a try-out and he stopped to talk to her."

"See the car by those rails," Sleepy pointed. "Who's that sitting at the wheel?—Mr. Pesky Wally Weber. If he thinks that mare of his, Rosedawn, has a chance he must be crazy."

"How about giving Buddy a shake up?" Pop Blake gave his trainer a knowing look. "Let Maloney take over the horse—Maloney is exercising near us, or my eyes are mistaken. Tell Buddy that he seems a bit off colour, and I reckon another lad ought to give the mare a try-out in case of accidents."

"That sounds good to me!" Sleepy rubbed his hands. "I'll detail Maloney at once."

The trainer hurried off. "Wally brought me down to watch you do your stuff!" Babe gave the youngster a dazzling smile. "Let me see how fast you can go."

"I'd rather talk to you!" Buddy smiled down into the bright eyes, then

glanced up the course. "Guess, I'll have to get moving, for here, comes old Sleepy. He doesn't understand girls, Babe; all he thinks about are his horses."

Wally Weber, who had been lounging back in his car with half-closed eyes, suddenly decided that the two young people had long enough alone together. There was something of importance that he wanted to say, and he had better make it snappy as Sleepy was stalking down the rails.

"Morning, Buddy!" he greeted the jockey. "Did you enjoy yourself last night—did Sleepy catch you?"

"Not last night, but he was mighty suspicious because I was so sleepy this morning," Buddy answered. "Sleepy's been a real pest these last few weeks, shadowing me all over the place and giving me long lectures."

"Buddy, if you ever get fed up riding for Blake let me know," Wally Weber said with great seriousness. "I'm the last one to lure a jockey away from a good owner, but sometimes an employer can overstep the mark. If you want a job as leading jockey in the Weber stables, with as much liberty as you like, then let me know."

"Mighty nice of you, Mr. Weber."
"Not at all!" Weber chuckled. "Guess one young lady would be tickled if you joined up with us."

"I'd stay on for the rest of the season," came the inviting answer from the girl. "I might even buy a horse myself and you could ride it for me. It would be fun!"

"Shush, children!" cautioned Weber. "Here comes Sleepy, and he looks like murdering someone."

Sleepy Jones was in a bad temper. He never showed any signs of affection for a person, but Buddy was his special protégé. He had taught the boy all he knew for the last five years, and it made him mad to see Buddy going off the rails for a girl.

"Maloney," snarled Sleepy to the jockey by his side, "give Six-Shooter a canter—twice round the course, and I'll time you over the last mile."

Buddy gave over the horse to Maloney, and stared at Sleepy in a puzzled fashion. What was the idea in Maloney exercising Six-Shooter?

"What's the idea, Sleepy?" Buddy demanded as Maloney cantered away. "I was just going to—"

"Yeah, you was just going to do something," sneered the trainer. "You came here to do a timed mile, but you changed yer mind. And why?"

"Because Miss Ellis hailed me," Buddy cried angrily. "I had to stop and speak to her."

"Oh, yeah? I suppose if someone called yer in the middle of a race you'd stop and say a few words," Sleepy guffawed at his own wit. "You ain't here to do a lot of talking, but to ride horses. Pop Blake ain't satisfied with your riding, so he's giving Maloney a try-out."

"What, Maloney ride Six-Shooter in the big race?" gasped Buddy. Wally Weber smiled quietly at the girl, who looked anxious and disturbed.

"Yeah, maybe. We gotta have a jockey what keeps regular hours and don't stay out jazzing around in road-houses." Sleepy was so worked up he went a shade too far with his bluff. "Fooling around with stage dames and drinking cheap liquor. They don't care two hoots about you, and you're so dumb you can't see it."

"How dare you!" flared the girl. "Yes, how dare you!" shouted Buddy, clenching his fists.

"You put them pin-cushions away." Sleepy showed his teeth. "One swipe from me, and you'd go to sleep for a week."

"You're crazy, acting this way," Buddy shouted. "Do you know that Mr. Weber has offered me a contract as his leading jockey, but I turned it down."

"Take it, I shan't cry," scoffed the trainer. "If Mister Weber likes to have a jockey what goes to bed at two in the morning and don't do any training, then that's his funeral. Ah, here comes Maloney." He took out a watch. "And he ain't half making the crittur move."

"If you like to join up you can come and sign a contract right now," whispered Wally Weber. "Buddy, it's your chance to make big money."

"Don't miss the chance," Sleepy spoke over his shoulder. "Don't expect us to spill any tears over you. What you want is a darned good licking. Pah, you make me sick!"

"I'll sign right now!" Buddy flamed up. "Let's go across to your office, Mister Weber."

"Oh, Buddy, I'm so glad!" Babe clutched at the youngster's arm. "I'm sure you're being wise. Uncle Wally will let us have a whoopee night to celebrate."

Sleepy Jones scratched his head and

stared after the big car as it purred away.

"Reckon I piled it on too strong. Guess I've put the boss in a jam. Cuss all girls and toads like Weber. Maybe Buddy will think better of it and not sign."

But when a beautiful girl plays the part of a magnet then may a man make a mistake. Buddy Doyle signed after naming one condition—that he should not ride till after the Gold Cup.

Wally Weber patted his new recruit assuringly on the shoulder.

"That's okay. Haven't I got Speed Martin riding? So I couldn't possibly want you. Off you two young people go and enjoy yourselves."

And when they had gone Wally Weber picked up the phone and got through to his stables:

"Send Speed Martin to me at once. Tell him it's urgent."

Trickery.

BUDDY DOYLE was not happy, even though Babe Ellis told him that she loved him and no one else in the world. Most of the jockeys in Weber's stables were not bad sort of chaps, and though they were friendly enough Buddy felt they despised him. Wouldn't they have quit on a trainer who called them nasty names? But even that reasoning did not quite appease Buddy's conscience. Pop Blake had been a good master, and just because of a girl Buddy had left. He missed Sleepy and his wise-cracks. The next day he ran into the trainer and the latter's sneering laugh made his blood boil, but Babe was with him, so he let the taunt pass.

Another thing that worried Buddy was Six-Shooter. The jockey had a real affection for the horse, and he knew that the horse would answer to his jockeyship better than to that of Maloney. Six-Shooter was just like a bullet when Buddy chanted his "Whoop-te-do!" Could Maloney ride the horse well enough to beat Weber's



"I've just got a message—I'm to ride Rosedawn!" Buddy thrust aside the men. "I can't ride the horse, Mr Weber!"

Rosedawn? Yes, he reckoned Maloney could just about do it, because Speed Martin was only tenth in the list of winning jockeys for the season. Buddy had expected that Six-Shooter would go out from evens to five to two when the racing world heard he had quit riding for the Blake stables, but it was a shock when the horse went out to fours, and Rosedawn shortened down to two to one. Someone must be putting money on Rosedawn.

Buddy tried to forget by being constantly in the presence of Babe Ellis. One morning Weber persuaded him to give Rosedawn a gallop as he didn't want to work Martin too hard. With no suspicion of ulterior motive Buddy was only too pleased to oblige.

Then came the day of the great race, and Buddy got a big surprise when Baggott, Weber's trainer, sent him a message. He was wanted to ride Rosedawn as Speed Martin had been hurt in a car accident and taken to hospital. "I can't race against Six-Shooter," Buddy told Babe. "It's out of the question. I must go and see Weber at once."

"If you rode Rosedawn the horse would win," Babe spoke hesitatingly. "Weber would give you a thousand bucks if you won the Gold Cup."

"I don't want his money!" Buddy was almost rude in his perturbation. "I won't ride! I won't ride! I'm going to his office to tell him so right now."

Wally Weber's office was seething with excitement and bustle. Besides being an owner Weber was a gambler. He had backed his own horse heavily, but he had also given out that Rosedawn would win, and that he would not mind taking any bets on other challengers. That was why his phones were fairly buzzing, because Weber was offering five against Six-Shooter.

"Get in as much as you can before it gets abroad that Martin has had an accident." He smiled at his trainer. "Good joke that. Won't the fools laugh when they learn Doyle is riding instead of Martin."

"Will Doyle make any trouble?" asked Baggott.

"Buddy can do nothing because there's a clause in the contract that he can't break." He raised one eyebrow as the sound of an angry voice came to them. "If I'm a good guesser, that will be Master Buddy. Leave this to me, Fellows"—Weber raised his voice to attract the attention of several men busy at phones—"better shut down. Tell the operator to say engaged till I'm through with Buddy. Want your collaboration with the young fool." His voice became a whisper. "You know your stuff. Take your cue—here comes Buddy."

Buddy fairly hurled himself into the office. All the men were grouped round Wally's desk.

"Darned tough about Speed Martin," Weber was saying. "Still, young Buddy should pull off the race."

"I've just got a message I'm to ride Rosedawn." Buddy thrust aside the men. "I can't ride the horse, Mister Weber."

"I'm sorry, Buddy; but how was I to know Martin would get crooked?" Weber shrugged his shoulders. "It's very tough luck on me, but I've backed my horse, and I must get my next best jockey to ride."

"But we arranged that I shouldn't ride till after the Gold Cup," was the argument.

"I'm awfully sorry, but this is an eventuality I didn't bargain for." Wally Weber shook his head. "You'll

find in the contract that in a case like this I can call upon you to ride. You see, Buddy, I've got to study my own interests."

"Of course you have, boss." A lean man with a hat on the back of his head—it was Baggott. "There's no question about it. You'd better not hang around here because time is flying."

"Of course Buddy takes out Rosedawn," spoke another man.

"But I won't ride against my old stable," shouted Buddy. "It isn't playing the game."

"Do you want to be suspended?" snapped Weber. "Now, don't talk like a child, Buddy. It is bad luck, but what can I do?"

Arguments availed nothing, and at last Buddy went reluctantly to the stables. He saw Wally Weber's argument, but it was darned rough. He tried to ease his conscience by calling it "Fate."

But after "weighing-out" Buddy overheard two stable lads talking.

"I guess I'm investing a buck on Rosedawn. That was a mighty bright idea getting Speed into an accident and making Buddy ride."

"Yeah—some accident. I bet Speed ain't in any hospital."

Of course, it was a lot of lies, still it sowed the seed of suspicion. Somebody had been backing Rosedawn heavily—who? Speed Martin had a bad name on racebooks—was this a frame-up? If Rosedawn had Buddy on its back, would the horse have a better chance? The jockey knew it would have a better chance. And just when he was trying to solve all these problems, a familiar growl made him start.

"You double-crossing little rat," sneered Sleepy Jones. "So you're going to ride Rosedawn. After all the years I've known you and yer go crooked for a skunk like Weber."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You knows as well as I do that Martin ain't had any accident." The hitter contempt made Buddy wince. "I should wave yer hand to him when you enter up to the starting-post."

"Martin's not here?"

"Oh, childlike innocence—I seed him with my own eyes." Sleepy spat in disgust. "He'll be arm-in-arm with yer two crook friends, Mr. Slinny Weber and Miss Baby-face."

"You're lying to me." Buddy's face was tense.

"I ain't that sort, and you knows it." Sleepy turned away. "I hope you're satisfied, you dirty little trickster. I suppose you know Pop Blake has a packet on Six-Shooter and that it'll smash him. You'll tell me in a minute that you don't know that Weber has been backing his nag like blazes and laying all bets on Six-Shooter."

Buddy Doyle knew then that he had been tricked. A girl's false smile and the cunning of a plausible roguo had easily been too much for him. They had tricked him through his vanity and he'd got to stand by them or— He stared after Sleepy as an idea slowly formed.

Was his own name worth sacrificing in order to outwit a bunch of crooks and help Pop Blake, who had always shown him every kindness? But before he decided anything he would ride close enough to scan the crowd in the grandstand—Wally Weber always had front row seats.

Buddy centered up the course, and one glance was sufficient. Babe Ellis, Wally Weber, and the leering face of Speed Martin.

Buddy's Strange Ride.

Buddy could hear the yells of the bookmakers, and above them all came the price of two horses: "Rosedawn at five to four on, and Six-Shooter at sixes."

His next interest was Six-Shooter, and he noticed that the horse was lathered with sweat and obviously in a bad condition. Maloney was hanging on like grim death and looking obviously scared. The man had no control over the creature, and probably Six-Shooter had gone from bad to worse since the old jockey had gone.

A line-up for the start, and then up went the tapes.

Buddy had orders to make the pace, as Baggott was scared with twelve runners that the horse might be shut in—the distance was a mile and two furlongs.

At the first bend Buddy, two lengths in front, looked back—Six-Shooter had tailed off last.

Buddy set his teeth and slowly began to pull Rosedawn.

Wally Weber's smiles of anticipation changed to frowns, and then to rage. The Wasp and Black Knight were level with Rosedawn. The crowd gasped as Rosedawn slithered back into fourth place and seemed to disappear in a bunch of horses. Round the bend and a gasp went up. The Wasp leading by two lengths, a cluster of horses, and three lengths behind were Six-Shooter and Rosedawn.

"My gar, he's framed me!" snarled Weber. "I'll ring his neck, the little skunk!"

"You deserve all you get." It was the Babe who spoke. "I'd have never come in on this game if I'd known how low it was. I don't know what Buddy's doing, but I reckon it's grand."

Only Buddy and a horse knew what was happening.

Buddy dropped to the tail, and then Maloney heard a rhythmic chant:

"Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do!"

Maloney was dull-witted and did not understand, but Six-Shooter knew. It was his beloved master spurring him on. The flagging limbs tautened and Six-Shooter became again a champion.

In a few strides Six-Shooter had caught up and passed London Wall.

"Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do!" Like a streak Six-Shooter went past two more stragglers.

Mercilessly Buddy whipped Rosedawn into maintaining the tremendous pace.

"Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do!" Nearing the last bend and Six-Shooter and Rosedawn were through, with only The Wasp and Lincoln in front. The latter four lengths and The Wasp six lengths ahead.

The straight with a quarter of a mile to the finishing-post, and now Six-Shooter was level with Lincoln.

The judge craned his neck from his box, the whole crowd craned theirs, and now Wally Weber knew the secret. Buddy was breaking all rules to drive Six-Shooter to victory.

"Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do!" panted Buddy, and lashed at Rosedawn, because Six-Shooter was tearing over the ground like a mad thing. Past Lincoln and a furlong to go—The Wasp was a length and a half in the lead.

"Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do!" Buddy felt his lungs burst, but he must not fail.

The judge and the crowd saw two horses racing towards the finish with a third horse close behind. They could hear now the refrain: "Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do!"

Six-Shooter flashed by the almost run-out Wasp and passed the finishing-post an easy winner by two lengths.

Yells and shouts broke out—pande monium was let loose. Those who had backed Six-Shooter were almost hysterical at the mirage, whilst those who had backed Rosedawn and The Wasp were wild with rage.

And Buddy when he stood before the stewards was smiling. He had eased his own conscience, saved Pop Blake and Sleepy Jones, and smashed Wally Weber.

"What explanation have you to offer of your extraordinary riding, Doyle?" demanded the judge. "You pulled Rosedawn to last place and then acted like a madman. Why were you shouting 'Whoop-te-do!'?"

Buddy Doyle made only one answer to every question: "I have nothing to say about my riding."

"You're suspended for a year, Doyle," the judge rapped out his verdict.

Disgraced but with head held high, Buddy Doyle passed through a crowd who wanted, in most cases, to lynch him. A girl tried to get through, but the press was too much. Buddy Doyle left Kentucky on the brake rods of a southern express.

The Price of Dishonour.

THERE are many towns known by the name of Wellington in the States, but this was a small cow-town in Southern California. Its chief claim to any importance was the race-course, where cowpunchers and others came from miles around to enjoy the sport.

Favourites had a strange habit of failing at these meetings, and it was not always the fault of the horses. The riding of many of the jockeys was very questionable.

One morning in late summer, two months after the sensational Gold Cup, a thin man in flash clothes and straw hat lounded against the rails. His weather-tanned, lined face gave his age at fifty; the eyes behind the bushy eyebrows were very much alive. Clarence Hardwick was known on many race-courses as the Dude, and he earned his living by giving tips. One could learn tips from strange quarters out in the West, and the Dude found he could make more money than on the bigger courses.

Thoughtfully he chewed at a straw and wondered whether the information he had got for three dollars from a darkie stable hand was going to prove good. Unless one could find at least one winner it was better to hit the trail before some of the mob started getting fresh.

Out of the corner of his eyes he saw a figure come round a building. Racing would not start for another two hours, and he wondered who the stranger might be. Was it a rival snooping round after information?

The stranger was a young man, but the features looked pale and wan, whilst the grey serge suit was dusty and almost threadbare in parts, the open white shirt was not too clean, and there was no hat to the mop of curly hair.

Suddenly the Dude stiffened because his

keen memory for faces told him who the stranger might be—a jockey who had once given him sound information.

"Morning," drawled the Dude, keeping his hat over his eyes. "You looking for a job?"

"Morning," was the reply. "I'm riding Aircraft in the second race."

"Know my face?" The Dude took off his hat. "Remember the tip-ster you helped at Boston, Doyle?"

The tattered figure started and glared at the Dude.

"Shush! Not that name here!" he cried. "My name is O'Burn."

"That's okay with me—O'Burn." The Dude gripped the jockey's hand. "So you're riding Aircraft—Hagan's nag! Hum! How have things been going, had?"

"Reckon you can guess how bad, Dude." Buddy looked as if he needed a square meal. "You get put up for a trial, and they want to hire you on the spot, but when you say your name that's the end. My face seems to be kinda familiar, and there's always some skate ready to recognise me even when I use another name. Reckon no one will know me down here."

"You're O'Burn to me." The Dude smiled, then frowned. "Charles Hagan ain't a sport-man that I kinda want to kiss. Watch! Pipe down, son, here comes Hagan."

A big, burly fellow in a tweed sports coat and wearing a black trilby hat strolled towards them. His thumbs were in the armholes of his waistcoat, and a big cigar was stuck aggressively from the corner of his mouth, whilst a heavy gold chain across the waistcoat did nothing to impress a person in Hagan's favour.

He nodded to both men, stroked his heavy, clean-shaven jaw, and half closed one eyelid.

"A word with you, O'Burn." He took the jockey's arm and led him just out of earshot. "Wanta talk about that horse of mine, Aircraft. I was hoping that the nag would start at sixes, but some mutt has tipped my horse, and the colt's at evens. Danged annoying when the stable ain't got their money

on! The second favourite is Water Wings, and if Aircraft don't win that's a cert, and the price is fives. I'm backing Water Wings."

"I don't quite get the idea." Buddy looked at the big man in perplexity.

"If Aircraft don't win to-day, it may win somewhere else," was the reply, accompanied by a heavy wink. "And it will win at long odds. That suits me. Now do you get the idea?"

"You don't want Aircraft to win?"

"That's the scheme." The man lowered his voice. "See that my horse don't win, and you're on a hundred bucks and the chance to ride Aircraft next time out. Is it a bet?"

"You want me to pull Aircraft?" Buddy spoke through gritted teeth.

The Dude edged closer, as he was good at smelling trouble.

"Yeah. But not so loud."

"I'm not doing any pulling for anybody," raged the jockey. "If I ride Aircraft, I ride it to win."

"Oh, is that so?" Hagan removed his cigar. "I should have thought that you were pretty good at pulling horses—Doyle!"

So he had been recognised again, and the price of silence was dirty riding. Rather would Buddy starve.

"You dirty trickster!" The youngster lost his temper. "You can't blackmail me into pulling your horse. Skunks like you oughtn't to be allowed on a race-course!"

"You impertinent young rogue!" roared the big man. "You dare to call me names, and all the world knows how you pulled Rosedawn in the Gold Cup, got a thousand bucks for doing it, and —"

"You're a liar!" screamed Buddy, clenching his fists.

The raised voices had attracted attention, and curious folk slowly approached. Stable lads, trainers, hangers-on, and, by bad luck, one of the officials.

"I'll knock you still!" raged Hagan, who was a notorious bully.

"Then take that as a start!" Buddy hit the big man slap on the point of the jaw.

The blow did not hurt very much, but



Hagan drew back his right hand to strike Buddy. The Dude pushed in between them.

September 5th, 1931.

it made Hagan livid with fury. His left hand gripped Buddy's coat, whilst his right hand was drawn back to strike Buddy a heavy punch.

The Dude pushed in between the two men.

"That will do, Hagan!" His lined face was aggressive. "Choose someone a bit bigger if you want to hit anyone."

"Don't you meddle in my affairs!" Hagan glared at the Dude. "I'll settle this young pup!"

"What's going on here?" cried a harsh voice, and a thin man with a green eyeshade over his forehead pushed his way through. "What's all the trouble about?"

It was one of the committee.

"Ever heard of Buddy Doyle?" Hagan shouted. "If you haven't, then you're looking at him now."

"The Doyle who was suspended for riding Rosedawn?" The official eyed Buddy, who bowed his head. "Is your name Doyle?"

"Yes, I am Buddy Doyle." The jockey faced his accuser. "Hagan wanted me to pull his horse, and when I refused he threatened to expose me."

"That's a darned lie!" Hagan tried to strike out at Buddy, but again the Dude got in the way.

"I heard part of the conversation," he said to the official. "Hagan certainly wanted his horse not to win as the price was too short, and he used his knowledge to try and force Doyle to ride crooked."

"Then you are Buddy Doyle?" demanded the official.

"Yes, I'm Buddy Doyle."

"I'm sorry, but you can't ride here. You were suspended for a year. The other matter shall be inquired into." The official waved the gathering crowd away before turning to Hagan. "You'll oblige me by coming along to my office."

Slowly the crowd melted away, leaving only the Dude and a dispirited Doyle. He was hungry, starving, and beaten—not a cent in his pocket.

"Cheer up, Buddy!" The Dude patted him heartily on the back. "Take my tip and quit horses for a spell, and get a land job. It'll be forgotten in time. Well, kid, I must be getting along! See you some time! Keep your chin up!"

"You are a great pal, Dude!" Buddy held out his hand. "Guess I'll take your tip and try a different line. Good-bye, Dude."

The Dude held out his hand.

"Best of luck, my lad!" he cried. "Don't forget about keeping your chin up! I saw you ride Rosedawn, and I know you were framed on some dirty stuff by Wally Weber. Good-bye again, and luck go with you!"

The Dude was a hundred yards away before Buddy Doyle realised that something had been thrust into his hand.

His eyes almost jumped out of his head. Four five-dollar bills! But he couldn't take them! Maybe the Dude knew how Buddy would feel, because he had taken to his heels and run.

The End of a Long Trail.

AGUA CALIENTE is one of the most famous race tracks of the West. Situated in a beautiful valley, and surrounded by forest land. Someone decided that there was no finer turf and grass for miles around, and brought horses to the valley; then a small track was built, and later on a town was built up round a super race-course.

Naturally one must eat, and so restaurants and hotels had sprung up round the course, and in one of the cheap eating-house saloons a waiter in a September 5th, 1931.

white coat ran here and there, fetching and carrying. There were other waiters, but one was only interested in this special one. He was Buddy Doyle.

In a way the ex-jockey had made good. He had got work, was well fed and fairly content. Seldom did he ever talk of racing, and none there knew that the waiter by the name of Doyle had been famous in racing circles. He was popular and earning more money than most because he could sing a comic song. A natural gift to pick up all the latest dance numbers and their choruses, and often customers would call on Buddy for a song.

Nine months had gone by since the never-to-be-forgotten day of the Gold Cup. Often Buddy thought of Sleepy Jones, Pop Blake and others, but he tried never to think of Babe Ellis. If ever she sang over the wireless he would try to get as far away as possible.

Doyle hurried to the bar.

"Two highballs, one lemon fizzer, a thunder and lightning, and—" He ceased as it was obvious the two soda fountain experts were not listening.

"I tell you Nimrod won by two lengths, and the objection was overruled. Nimrod started at thirty-three to one, because I remember a chap who had five bucks on it."

"That hoss's name was Nero."

"Hoy, how about my drinks?" They studied him with displeasure as he gave his order. "And let me tell you bozzos something you don't know. The horse was Penrod. Nero was down the course, and the price was something about eights. And I want a little less of the lemon in that fizzer. You sodajerkers can't tell me anything."

"Dang me, but I believe he's right!" gasped the big, jovial-looking bannan. "Now who would have thought a little runt like that would know anything about a man's sport. Know anything good for to-day?"

Buddy had just handed over the drinks, collected some money and found another order when someone touched his shoulder.

"In a moment, sir." The touch became more persistent and Buddy swung round. "Gosh, it's Sleepy!"

All the old differences were forgotten. In Sleepy's gleaming eyes was the joy of reunion. The two clasped hands and stood staring at each other as if they could scarce believe their eyes.

"I guess I've trailed you a thousand miles." Sleepy spoke first. "Gee, you look queer in that garb!"

"Suits me, old hoss," laughed Buddy, and scowled as someone called him. "Have a drink, Sleepy; I'll be free in half an hour."

Arm in arm they strolled through the streets of the town some half-hour later, and Buddy longed to ask questions.

"Guess you'd like to know what's been going on." Sleepy gave the youngster's arm a reassuring squeeze. "Pop Blake has given up the game. That business—" Sleepy knew he was touching on a delicate subject.

"Go on, Sleepy; I'd like to know what's been happening."

"They wanted you badly." Sleepy shook his head. "Reckon you could have got that suspension washed out if you'd been at the inquiry. There was the blazes of a row. Nothing very definite could be proved, and as Wally Weber was completely bust, the matter dropped. Pop got kinda fed-up with all the paper talk, and as he had made a packet of money he quit, but he was mighty sorry for you. Buddy, we got

sorta fed-up with you, and we thought a pretence of Maloney riding would bring you to your senses, but it didn't work. After the race I minded our talk, and I knew you had thrown the race and made Six-Shooter win."

"Whoop-te-do!" Buddy spoke almost to himself.

"I reckon the stewards knew there was something fishy about the whole affair, but they could not condone what you had done. It all leaked out in time, and three months ago they annulled your suspension."

"Kind of them." Buddy did not seem very interested. "And what have you been doing all this while, Sleepy?"

"Mostly trailing around after you," was the answer. "Doing a bit of training here and there, but I missed you, boy, and we felt we couldn't rest until—"

"Did you say 'we'? Who's 'we'?"

Sleepy shuffled his feet and seemed to find difficulty in answering.

"Babe Ellis," he said at last, but dared not look at his friend's face.

"I don't want to hear anything of her!" Buddy's voice was hoarse.

"We got that gal all wrong, buddy," Sleepy cried. "Listen and hear all about it. Babe was a singer, and wanted to make good, and Weber offered her big money and a contract if she could get a good crowd at his dive. Then he told her that lew of the racing fraternity came to his place, and if she could persuade the most popular jockey of the moment to grace his place, then other racing folk would come along. There'd be many anxious to see such a notability as yerself. She knew nothing about crook stuff, and Weber had spoon-fed the girl that Pop Blake and me were a couple of crooks and that she was sorta saving you by doing this. Gee, you should have seen how she carried on when you couldn't be found."

Buddy Doyle's eyes were glistening. He had mistrusted Babe, and she'd been framed like himself.

"That gal came to me and we put notices in the papers, but you had vanished off the earth. A month ago the Dude came to see me, heard I was looking for you, and he started me on the trail. Money comes and money goes, Buddy, and I guess you oughta know that Babe has been doing most of the paying."

"Gosh, how I would like to see her again!" Buddy was flushed with excitement.

"Maybe she'll get a job down these parts."

It was on his way back to another spell of waiting that Buddy gave Sleepy a half-frightened, questioning glance.

"What you aim to do now you've found me, Sleepy?"

"Just hang around and see what's doing." Sleepy rubbed his hands together. "I thought I might do a bit of training, with you as chief jockey."

"I'm through with the turf!" Buddy spoke viciously. "I ain't got any interest left in horses."

"Don't you believe it," scoffed Sleepy. "It's in yer blood. I'll give this burg the once-over until you finish for the day."

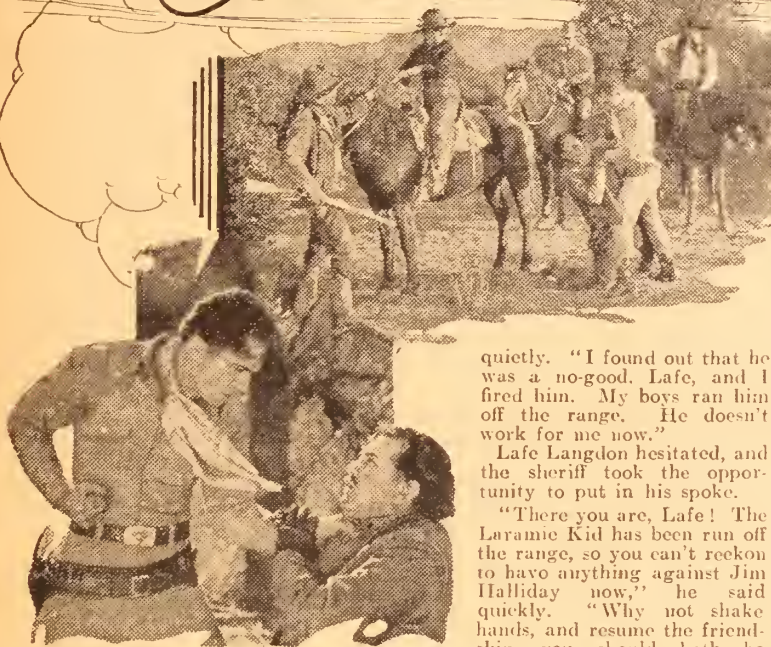
"See you in about a couple of hours." Buddy gripped Sleepy's hands. "But lay off talking about racing."

"He'll soon forget all that nonsense," decided Sleepy, as he stared after the ex-jockey. "There'll be no holding him once I get him mounted."

(Continued on page 26.)

To save his father from a life-sentence, a young cowpuncher penetrates into an outlaw stronghold in search of the real criminal. Starring Tom Tyler.

"West of Cheyenne"



The End of a Feud.

THE sheriff of the county, the greater part of which was the Circle B and Triangle Ranches, was just packing up for dinner when the door opened and Lafe Langdon, the elderly rancher who owned Circle B, walked in.

"You asked me to give you a look up, sheriff," he said agreeably.

The sheriff nodded, dropped his last papers into a drawer, and closed it thoughtfully before he spoke.

"I did, Lafe," he agreed in his quiet, genial way. "Fact is, Lafe, I'm reckonin' this feud business between you and Jim Halliday has gone far enough—too far for old-timers and old-time friends. What do you say?"

Lafe Langdon gave vent to a noise that was very much like a grunt of disgust.

"Say?" he repeated thickly. "I say you should have run that neighbour of mine off the range long ago. I say—"

"Well, suppose you say it to me!" came in a snappy tone from the other side of the room.

A door had opened, and from another room Jim Halliday—a big, bluff, and hearty fellow of about Langdon's own age—came into the office.

But it was the sheriff who stepped in between them to make the peace.

"Quit it, you two!" he said, with a faint smile. "What exactly is the row between you?"

"Jim Halliday has been stealing my cattle for months, with the aid of the Laramie Kid!" affirmed Langdon hotly. "That guy is a notorious gunman and cattle thief—and you know it, Jim Halliday!"

"I know it now," corrected Halliday

quietly. "I found out that he was a no-good. Lafe, and I fired him. My boys ran him off the range. He doesn't work for me now."

Lafe Langdon hesitated, and the sheriff took the opportunity to put in his spoke.

"There you are, Lafe! The Laramie Kid has been run off the range, so you can't reckon to have anything against Jim Halliday now," he said quickly. "Why not shake hands, and resume the friendship you should both be proud of?"

Langdon grinned a little feebly, and thrust out his hand with a sudden gesture.

"Okay with me, Jim," he said shakily. "I sure did find it hard to believe it of my old chum. But if you say the Laramie Kid has been run off the range, it's good enough for me."

"That's real fine," put in the sheriff, and patted them both on the shoulders as they shook hands. "There's a drink on me to celebrate this, boys, if you'll come down to the saloon."

The enmity that had been between the two ranchers had naturally enough spread to the men who worked upon the ranches, and there was consequently considerable surprise when the sheriff was seen leading the rivals down the street. There was still greater surprise when it was seen that Lafe Langdon and Jim Halliday were laughing and joking with one another, evidently on the very best of terms.

The celebration drink was consumed in the saloon to the satisfaction of everybody concerned, particularly the sheriff, who felt that he had done a good day's work.

But it was destined that the peace should not reign for long, for there happened that which was to end the feud for ever.

Within two hours of the time when Jim Halliday and Lafe Langdon had made up their quarrel the latter rode in from his cattle range to the horse corral, to become immediately aware of the fact that one of his men was riding in at a speed that spelt trouble about some thing.

The cowpuncher's horse was sweating, and it was obvious from its heavy stride

that it had been ridden all out for some distance.

"What's the trouble?" demanded Langdon as the 'puncher dragged his horse to a halt.

"The Laramie Kid has got away with another bunch of cattle, boss," panted the 'puncher. "He's got 'em all mixed in with some of Jim Halliday's, from the Triangle."

Langdon drew in his breath sharply. "The Laramie Kid again, huh!" he muttered. "All right, Slim! I'll go over and see Halliday, and get this account settled."

It might have been with a quite unconscious movement that he loosened the gun in his holster, but the cowpuncher noticed it and set his lips into a doubtful twist.

"Thought you'd made it up, boss?" he said quietly.

Langdon did not answer. He clambered again into his saddle and galloped hard for the Triangle ranch.

Following the remaking of their friendship, Langdon found it hard to believe that Halliday had spoofered him by telling him that the Laramie Kid had been fired. But it was very obvious that the Kid was still in the neighbourhood, and that he, Langdon, had lost some more cattle as a result.

There was something wrong somewhere. It was just as well he and Halliday had it out right here and now, and decided what was to be done.

He galloped up to the ranch corral and jumped from his horse with an agility surprising in one of his age. And before he had covered the ground between the corral and the house he was made aware of the fact that Jim Halliday was not alone.

In a few seconds more another fact was apparent. Jim Halliday's visitor was none other than the Laramie Kid. Langdon recognised the voice instantly.

"Get off my range, Laramie Kid, before I set the boys on you—and I guess they would like a chance to rope you!" came in Jim Halliday's heavy tones.

"You'll hand over the contents of that safe, or you won't live to give your boys any such orders," was the Kid's calm reply.

Langdon set his teeth grimly. All thought of enmity and all doubts and ideas disappeared from his mind. All he thought about now was helping his old friend.

He fairly dashed across the remaining space to the house, and had got his foot on the bottom step when there sounded one loud, short explosion.

In a flash Langdon had drawn his gun, and was up the steps to the house door in three anxious strides. The moment he put his hand to the handle of the door there came from within the sound of a heavy, thudding crash that could only mean one thing.

He had the door open in another split second, and darted inside, ready to shoot the instant he saw the Laramie Kid.

But he only saw a big riding-boot disappearing through the open window. Down on the floor lay Jim Halliday, whilst in the corner of the room an open safe told its own tale.

Langdon fairly leapt for the window, peered out, spotted a running form, and took steady aim.

The instant he pressed the trigger of his gun he knew he had missed. The shadowy form was now between trees, and only gave him a fraction of a second's view, too little to give him any chance of registering a hit.

His gun was still in his hand as he turned, white-faced with horror, to see what chance there was of saving Jim Halliday. His hands were trembling as they reached out for the fallen man's heart. He was too late—once more. Jim Halliday had been shot with the dreadful skill for which the Laramie Kid was notorious.

"Jim—old Jim Halliday—we'll get that guy now, sure as my name is Lafe Langdon!" he muttered thickly. "Poor old Jim! I—"

He broke off as the door opened and three of Jim Halliday's men came in.

"What's the matter, boss? We heard a shot—Lafe Langdon!"

The 'puncher broke off with a gasp of surprise and wonder.

"It was the Laramie Kid. I came in and fired a shot at him, but I missed," explained Langdon sorrowfully. "He's done for, boys."

"Sure, he's done for!" growled the 'puncher, and, with a flashing sweep of his hand, he had snatched away Langdon's gun. A moment sufficed to show that one shot had been fired. "And I reckon we ain't got far to look for the man who shot him, Lafe Langdon!"

"What! Me? Shoot Jim Halliday? Why, he and I are the oldest friends out West!" gulped Langdon. "I tell you, boys, I saw the Laramie Kid. I heard him demanding money! I heard a shot—"

"Guess we only heard one shot, and that shot came from this gun!" cut in the 'puncher grimly. "You'd better save your explanation for the sheriff, Lafe Langdon!"

"Sheriff?" panted Langdon, and stared about him in the manner of a man dazed. For seconds there could be heard the gulping of his breath, and he could only see the accusing, bitter eyes of Jim Halliday's men. Then his voice rose wildly in protestation. "It's darned silly to say I shot him—I tell you we were old chums! I—"

"Oh, cut it out," snapped the 'puncher. "Let's take him to the sheriff, boys. I've been expecting that 'his would happen!"

Lafe Langdon gave it up at that. It was useless to plead or argue with the cowpunchers. It would be better, easier and quite different when he saw the sheriff.

But it was not. The sheriff accepted the custody of Lafe Langdon with a grimness that clearly showed his view of the matter. He listened quietly to the story of how the cowpunchers had heard the one shot, and of Lafe Langdon's story of the two shots and the Laramie Kid's escape.

"We'll have to leave it to the jury, Lafe Langdon," was his verdict in the matter. "Looks mighty like as if the

boys is right. All right, boys—I'll take him in."

Lafe Langdon did not protest further. The evidence was overwhelming against him.

The veteran who had been so agile but a few minutes before rode beside the sheriff towards the county gaol looking every one of his years and a good many more—aged, bent, white, dazed by the tragedy that had overtaken Jim Halliday and himself.

And, miles across the prairie, a man rode with the desperation of a madman, putting more and more miles between himself and the rancher he had left dead upon the floor.

It was the Laramie Kid, quite unaware of the fact that a man had been arrested for the crime, and that there would be little chance of a hue and cry for him in the face of the terrifically strong evidence against Lafe Langdon.

A Desperate Chance!

LETTER day at the ranch over which Tom Langdon ruled as foreman was always an exciting occasion. In addition to the letters which meant so much to the more or less exiled cowpunchers, the mail brought in the newspapers that kept them in late but constant touch with the world represented by cities and industrial towns.

Banty was a cheery postman. He gave letters to those for whom there were any, and to those for whom there was not a letter he had a cheery, kindly word that, after all, there was another mail to come in one day.

The disappointed 'punchers settled down again to wait for that day, softening their disappointment by playing appropriate music upon their instruments and singing at the top of their lusty voices.

But the singing stopped immediately when Banty held up his hand and nodded towards the bed upon which sat Tom Langdon.

Tom held an open letter in his hand, but his staring eyes were not looking at it. They conveyed the impression that they were looking right through the letter to the floor beneath.

"Not bad news, Tom?" asked Banty sympathetically.

"Fraid it is," said Tom, and forced a smile to his lips. "Fact is, I'm hitting the trail for home right here and now."

"Bad as that?"

"Bad as it can possibly be," muttered Tom, and read the letter again. "My old father has been taken in for shootin' a guy, but he says he can't prove he did not. I'm gonna see what it's all about."

"Sounds mighty bad, Tom," murmured Banty, and added thoughtfully: "Reckon we can't let you hit that trail alone, I guess I'm going with you."

"Good for you, Banty!" chorused the others. "Come on, boys! Let's get 'em packed. Sooner they're off, sooner they're back!"

Tom laughed then—it was good to feel that the boys were with him. Indeed, so anxious were they to help him he hardly knew what was packed. They threw everything they could find into saddle-bags, and kept up a running banter that was designed to keep Tom's drooping spirits into something like normal shape.

Within an hour of the mail's arrival Banty led the way on to the trail—but it was Tom who stopped to show that the grimness of their journey was already upon him. He held up his hand to still the tongues of the jolly 'punchers.

"Boys, I sure don't know what may be in this; but we may want some help," said Tom. "If we do, stand by to answer the call instanter."

"Make it soon, Tom—and good luck!"

Tom nodded, waved his hand, and in a moment more he was hitting the trail for home, with the eager, grim Banty riding hard at his side.

It took them a couple of days to get to Circle B, and about as many minutes to find their way to the sheriff's gaol.

Here Tom found his father, a forlorn figure weighed down by the terrible crime with which he had been charged. Their meeting was one which made even the hardened gaoler turn his head for a few moments.

"Boy, I didn't shoot Jim Halliday," said Lafe Langdon, very earnestly. "We had been bad friends, but we had made it up. I don't know how they can think I did it."

But his explanation as to the manner in which he was found gave Tom all the good reasons why the suspicion should have been fastened so closely upon him, and to Tom it was now really a matter of how they were to get the old fellow free.

"Tell me—who is this Laramie Kid you mentioned?" he asked suddenly.

"His name is not known," was the reply. "He's a gunman of the worst type, Tom. If only he could be caught and made to confess I'm mighty sure I shouldn't be here very long. But —"

He shook his head sadly.

"Well, what about that?" demanded Tom warmly. "Does that waggle mean that he can't be caught?"

"Sure. No one ever got where he is and came back alive," said Lafe Langdon grimly. "West of Cheyenne, Tom, lies a small town called Ghost City. That's where the Laramie Kid hangs out if rumour is right for once."

Tom's eyes glinted.

"So you reckon that if I get in Ghost City I'll find the Laramie Kid?" he said, between his teeth.

"I reckon so; but you'll never make it, my boy," replied Lafe Langdon.

"No man ever went in alive and came out alive—except, of course, the gang that runs the place."

Tom rose to his feet and pulled his belt in just one more hole.

"Well, here's one who is going to get the Laramie Kid," he said, with grim determination. "If he's in Ghost City I'll find him just the same."

"You'll never make it, Tom. He's quick on the draw, and shoots straight. He's never been known to want two shots for anything he wanted to hit!" warned Lafe Langdon. "No, better give it up. I'll take what's coming to me."

"Sure, so will I," said Tom coolly. "So-long, father—and keep your head up."

A moment later, to avoid any further pleading from his father, he had slipped out of the cell and was outside the sheriff's gaol, where Banty awaited him.

"It's us for Ghost City, Banty," said Tom, as he took his horse and mounted. "That's west of Cheyenne, and by all accounts it's a place where a feller goes in as a man and stops as a ghost. Well, I fancy myself as a ghost, Banty."

"Not so much me," growled Banty. "But what you says goes, Tom. How's the old feller takin' the bad stuff?"

"Plenty tough," grunted Tom. "Say, how do you reckon I'm going into Ghost City?"

"How are we going in?" suggested Banty naively, and shook his head. "I'll

find it easier running cows in, Tom.

It certainly was a poser, and much of the time spent in riding to the Ghost City was spent in thoughtful silence. The city, being west of Cheyenne, was nearer Tom's old ranch than Circle B, as they very soon discovered—a fact which was very encouraging, for it meant that such help as might be wanted would be theirs the quicker when it was called for.

Another fact impressed upon them was that they were taking a pretty desperate chance. No man had ever gone into Ghost City and come out alive unless he were a member of the gang that ran the place, old man Langdon had said.

All the same, that statement gave Tom an idea—an idea which was chewed over and over when they were at last within a mile or so of Ghost City, and finally left them with their plans cut and dried. It only remained for them to be carried out successfully—a different proposition to having the mere idea.

Meeting the Gang.

SHOTS ringing out over the plains brought two men who were on top of the rocky entrance to Ghost City full up to scratch. It also brought to light a couple of rifles which they kept handy at the side of the rock.

Down on the plain a horseman was galloping madly for the city, and he was firing back at another horseman who was riding furiously along the same trail.

The guards watched them anxiously. At the distance it was impossible to see which was friend or enemy—whether it was one of their men who was chased or chaser. They kept their rifles ready to use upon which ever was necessary when the disclosure was made.

But the rider in front settled one question for them, for with a sudden fusillade of shots he dropped the pursuer out of the saddle.

"He's got him," said one of the guards drily, and shrugged his shoulders. "Who's the stranger?"

"Don't know, but I reckon we soon shall, for he's riding pretty straight this way. Get down, Pete," said the other.

They slid off the lofty rock through the bushes to the trail, and as the narrow entrance to the city forced Tom Langdon to draw his horse to a walk, he suddenly found himself staring down at two useful-looking rifles.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" demanded he who had been addressed as Pete.

"Just a stranger, I guess, who beat Old Man Law on the draw," said Tom calmly, and laughed as he looked back along the trail.

"Well, I guess you'll just wait here a bit, mister, until one of the boys comes along," said the guard. "Then I reckons you'll be seeing Kurt Raymer."

Tom nodded, although that name conveyed absolutely nothing to him. He judged it to be the name of the gang leader, seeing that it was a guard with a rifle who mentioned it.

It was at that time that three other incidents of some considerable importance were taking place. In the first instance, the man who had been dropped from his saddle was rolling towards the un-

dergrowth in quite unorthodox fashion for a dead man. Once under cover of the bushes, he stared disgustedly down at his gun.

"That was a plucky good idea of Tom's, but sure as my name's Banty blank cartridges do dirt up a guy's gun," he growled, and he took a piece of rag from his pocket and set about making that very useful gun something else than a mass of sooted steel.

Secondly, in the city itself a not unhandsome man was listening to the story blurted out by one of his men.

"Bess has slipped down the trail, wearing men's clothes, boss," he heard.

"Right. We'll go and get her. She was only asking me this morning to be allowed to go," said Raymer, and laughed curly. "Fancy letting a woman go out here to spill the beans to all the sheriffs in the west! I'd say so—and how! Let's be going!"

And the remaining incident was the one which brought Tom Langdon face to face with the first woman he had seen since he had left Circle B.

Waiting, with the watchful guards still keeping a grip on their rifles, Tom found it possible to make a keen and careful survey of the trail out of the city and the immediate country surrounding.

To his left was a dropping trail to the valley of Cheyenne and to his right was a level plain, thickly spiked with bushes and trees. Ahead of him was the trail along which he had come, and behind him was the narrow entrance to Ghost City—the object of his visit.

But it was to the wooded and bushed plain that his attention was drawn first, for he suddenly heard the deep voice of a man and the higher pitch of a girl's.

"Let go that rein, or I'll lay about you with this strap!"

The girl's voice came out clearly, but not more so than the man's reply.

"You'll get a sock in the jaw if you start any monkey tricks," he said brutally. "You're going back to Raymer!"

That was all Tom waited to hear. A second later he spurred his horse into a hard gallop, reached the scene

of the hold-up in a matter of ten more seconds, and threw himself off his saddle and at the man who held the girl's horse so quickly that the guards could do nothing more than look on.

The girl, the moment her horse was freed, should have made good her efforts to escape. But she was fascinated by the ferocity of the fight which ensued between the two men, and that proved her undoing.

Tom was a hefty fellow of something like six foot one in his socks, and what his opponent lacked in height he had in girth and weight. The result was a rough and tumble, no-rounds fight that would have done justice to a couple of bear cats.

Tom took two thwacks straight under his jaw in the first second, and went down to the dusty ground with a thud that jarred every bone in his body. But he was up and back for more so quickly that his rival, panting under Tom's first surprising onslaught, found his own jaw unprotected, and, crash! The meeting of fist and jaw made Bess shudder.

In a flash Tom was hurling himself down at his man, and here a struggle for mastery went on for fully a minute before Tom, in order to escape a stranglehold, had to kick out with his right leg to beat back his man.

It was then that the half-sickened girl decided she would go—and found it too late. One of the guards had run forward and caught up her reins.

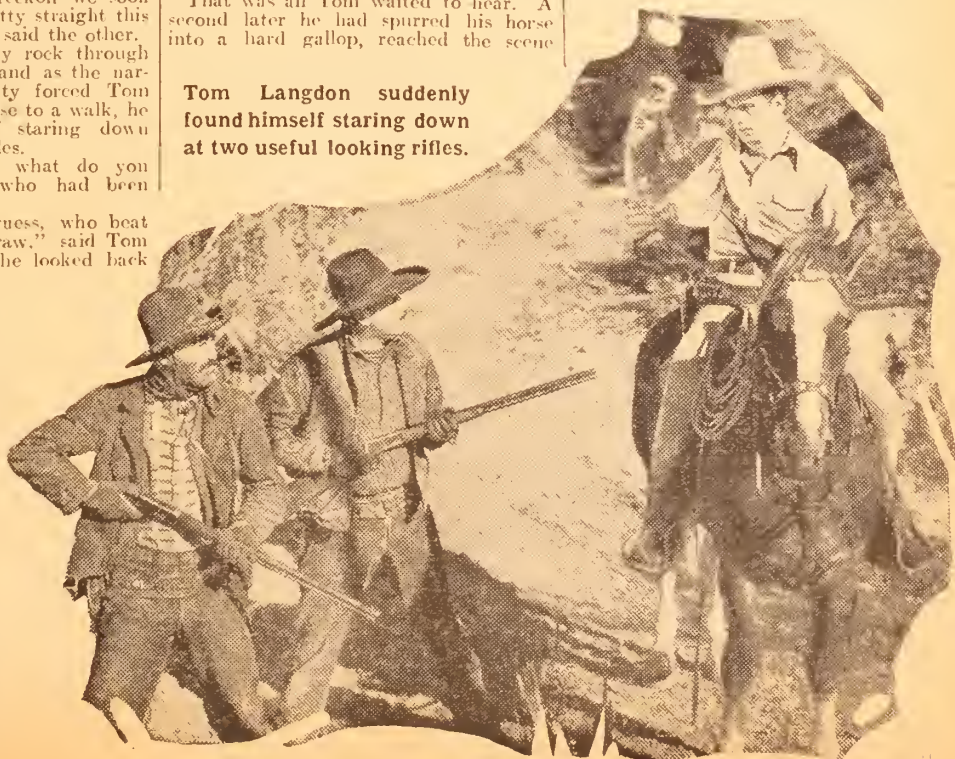
She tried to shriek, but the ferocity of the stranger choked every utterance. He had his man on the knee now, two hands round his throat, and behind them, looking on with gleaming eyes, were Kurt Raymer and Nevada.

A sudden heave, and Tom's knees sagged, and up came a right flush into the pit of his stomach. He was down then, and like a flash his opponent had drawn a gun.

But Kurt Raymer put in his spoke, with a quick, snappy command.

"Put up that gun!" he rapped out.

Tom Langdon suddenly found himself staring down at two useful looking rifles.



"I wanta talk with the stranger. Take the girl back, boys."

Bess, tears in her eyes, suffered herself to be led away without more than a fleeting glance at the man who had tried so hard to help her escape. But the utter helplessness, the hopelessness of the business simply smothered her.

"What are you doin' around here, mister?" demanded Raymer, his glinting eyes staring unblinkingly at Tom.

Tom shrugged his shoulders.

"I just don't know, mister," he said, and added truculently: "I beat Old Man Law to the draw down the trail, and then I saw your whiskered guard. Thought they'd got the drop on me at first, but they saw me shoot up Old Man Law, and that seemed to satisfy them. Said I should have to meet up with Raymer."

"I'm Raymer," said the other quietly, and looked keenly at the neat stranger for a full half-minute before he went on: "Guess you are a dandy fighter, stranger—and I can always do with fighters in my line of business. You'd better come up and have a word with me."

"Sure!" said Tom, and went slowly back to where his own gun had dropped from its holster during the fight and picked it up. From there he went to his horse, mounted it, and waited further orders with a nonchalance and calmness that made Raymer a lot less suspicious and a lot more satisfied.

"Let's be going, then," said Raymer, and he led the way back to the rock over which the guards were once more pacing, through the archlike entrance to the city, and along the narrow trail to the wider streets of the town.

To attack that town would be madness was Tom's instant conclusion. Raymer and his gang could hold up an army for just so long as food and water held out. The narrow entrance, the towering mountains, and the narrow valley which all comers would have to travel were more use to Raymer than a barbed wire entanglement a hundred yards deep would have been.

Raymer did not speak during the ride, which occupied more time on account of the slowness of the walking horses than by the distance that had been covered.

Nevada met them when they dismounted and went into what Tom was to discover was the gang's headquarters—Raymer's own office.

"Say, we're a pretty tough lot up here, stranger," said Raymer, after a brief pause. "We share and share alike—everything. Loot, cattle and anything else that any of us picks up—and we share any trouble. Get me?"

"Sure, I get you!" said Tom lazily. "I'm in on this racket if you'll have me, Raymer."

"Right, we'll try you out," said Raymer. "Get off and find a billet. Make yourself acquainted with the boys. Any man who walks free around this district, stranger, carries my authority, and there won't be any trouble right inside Ghost City unless you start it. I might say I end all troubles."

The careless threat made Tom smile gently, but he made no comment. He went out.

"Say, Raymer, we don't know much about that guy," said Nevada doubtfully.

"No, but I reckon to sum up a man plenty," grunted Raymer. "All the same, keep an eye on him for a bit until he's sort o' proved himself out, Nevada."

September 5th, 1931.

Nevada touched his gun and walked out of the wooden house with all the careless stride of a man who has nothing to do and no more to think about.

But there was no sign of the stranger.

Raiding the Bullion Wagon!

THERE was invariably an air of oppression in Ghost City. Raymer ruled the place with his guns, and when they were not handy there were plenty to be found in possession of his men.

The womenfolk consisted of the men's wives and a few luckless people who had strayed into the city and had never been allowed to leave. Their belongings became the property of Raymer and his gang, and there was nothing any of them could call their own.

Bess lived with a gentle little woman whom everybody knew as Rose. To mark a perfect truth, Rose was the one woman in the city whom Raymer wished he could release, for she was the one who treated him with the utmost contempt.

Rose was returning with a pail of water at the moment Tom Langdon had spotted Bess through the window of their house, and she alone saw him clamber in through the window. But she saw Nevada coming her way, and waited expectantly for his questioning.

"Seen anything of a strange guy round here, Rose?" asked Nevada truculently.

"Sure, over by the horse corral," said Rose, in just the same blunt fashion.

Nevada nodded and strolled off, with his hands idly around the butts of his guns.

In the meantime, Tom had found that Bess had changed into clothes designed for her sex, and for the first time he had the opportunity of seeing how pretty she was. She had an oval face, hair like ripening corn, and a set of perfect pearly white teeth. Only her eyes—sad, wistful, almost resentful—spoiled what would have been a wonderful picture.

"I am glad to have the chance of thanking you, stranger," she said the moment Tom entered. "But—it was no good."

"Guess you're a prisoner," said Tom, as a statement of fact rather than as a question. "But I did not come here to be thanked. I—"

"You must be very careful. Raymer doesn't like the men even to speak to me," put in the girl, watching the window anxiously. "Sh'ish! Here's Rose."

"Rose?"

"She lives with me—looks after the house. She's wonderful—she is always trying to help me to escape. But the guards always see me, and then Raymer comes out after me."

Tom was nodding when the door opened and Rose entered. She looked sharply at him for half a minute before she spoke.

"You'd better look out, mister," she said, in her blunt way. "Raymer's men are watching you."

Tom nodded again with an indifference that made both Bess and Rose look keenly at him.

"I am here for a purpose," he said calmly. "I'm not going until I have done what I want to do. I want to find a fellow called the Laramie Kid. Know him?"

Bess snook her head instantly, and Rose allowed the question to pass without answering. The tragedy that was

so plainly written on Bess' pretty face drove away any other thought from Tom at that moment, and he prepared to go.

"When I get out of here with this Laramie Kid guy I guess I'll take you with me," he said. "This sure isn't the place for two good women. I'll see you later."

"You won't see us again if you don't take care, young man," was Rose's blunt reminder. "Kurt Raymer is a tough guy, and there's plenty of room around here for burying strangers who have business in which there is no profit for Raymer!"

"Rose!" pleaded Bess.

"That's my way of warning him," growled Rose. "Clear off, young man, whilst the going is good."

Tom, with a faint smile, opened the window, looked carefully to right and to left, and slipped out. In a moment more he was lounging idly round the front of the house into the street, his hands deep in his pockets, a straw being chewed lazily at the corner of his mouth.

It was Raymer himself who spoke to him first, and that was not until Tom had obeyed a curt nod of the gang leader's head signalling him to enter the office.

There were a number of men there, all obviously awaiting Raymer's orders. And they had not to wait long.

"The bullion wagon is going by in the morning, boys," began Raymer, and even then there was a veiled threat in his tone that was unpleasant to listen to. "We gonna pick up that bullion. If the driver and the guards put up any resistance just remember we don't want any prisoners. Get that, stranger?"

"Sure," said Tom. "Mighty nuisance—prisoners."

"You're going along with us, stranger, as a sort of trial," went on Raymer. "If you come through this raid okay, guess we'll count you in on the share-out. I shall be watching you!"

"Okay with me," said Tom breezily.

"What time do we start?"

"You'll know when to start," growled Raymer.

That was all that Raymer had to say just then, but it was quite enough to set Tom Langdon thinking. He would have to take part in that raid on the bullion wagon, or betray himself right away as not being the fugitive from the law that he proclaimed himself to be.

The risk that he would run of getting shot by the driver or the wagon guards did not trouble him one iota. It was the possibility of the driver and the guards being shot that worried him.

Everything would apparently be all right for them if they did not offer the gang any resistance. But that "no prisoners" order was grimly impressed upon Tom's mind. It meant only one thing—death.

Tom waited until night fell, and friendly darkness came to assist him in moving without being seen. He knew that the rocky entrance to Ghost City would be guarded just as well at night as by day, and there was absolutely no chance whatever of getting through the valley that way.

He spent a couple of hours looking around. At the end of that time he discovered the real truth of the matter—that Kurt Raymer was as safe in Ghost City as he would have been in a fortress. There was absolutely no possibility of attack from any quarter other than by the valley, and it would only need half

a dozen gunmen to keep that rocky entrance clear of any live enemy.

The truth was a grim reminder of the difficulties of his task. Outside there was Banty, who could get the boys from the ranch just when they were wanted. But what could they do? There was not the remotest chance of their coming into Ghost City—they would be blown off the face of the earth long before they could reach the rocky entrance.

Whatever had to be done would have to be done inside the Ghost City, and just what was possible there Tom Langdon had not the faintest notion. It all seemed so utterly hopeless, and Tom remembered that expression in Bess' eyes. It was justified.

But Tom would not give up hope. There was Bess to think about, and his promise to take her away when he went. That promise was going to be kept, so long as Tom Langdon had life to work.

He went to bed that night thinking only of Bess and the fact that he was just as much a prisoner as was she. He would never get away now, unless the whole gang went with him. And one against Raymer's bunch of desperadoes were pretty tough odds against success.

The morning came at last, and within a couple of hours of sunrise Raymer summoned the gang and headed the way out to the plain.

No one spoke during the short ride to the main trail, and it was only when they had pulled up that Raymer gave out the plan of campaign.

He split the gang up into groups, and sent them to vantage points along the trail, so that when the bullock wagon came to a given spot, Raymer's men would be able to ride on to the trail and entirely surround both wagon and escort.

"Keep well down under cover of the bushes along the trail, boys," said Raymer. "I'll be out first, right at the driver's head, and see that the escort is knowing you're all round, boys. Get out—and watch for me! Stranger, guess you can take that bush there to my right."

"Okay," said Tom, and rode off to the bush Raymer indicated.

Here he dismounted and tied up his horse. But he did not slip down behind the bush as Raymer expected that he would. He ran cautiously into the thicker undergrowth, waited a few seconds to make sure he was neither seen nor heard, and then placed his fingers to his lips and gave vent to a low whistle.

"I'm here, Tom!" came in an almost instantaneous whisper from just ahead, and the bushes parted to reveal Banty.

"Banty, they're holding up a bullock wagon," said Tom quickly. "When it comes along, Raymer is going to ride out as a signal. Soon as you see him, take a shot at somebody's hat and scare 'em!

Then slip back and warn the boys. Tell 'em to come right handy to Ghost City, and be ready for a shoot up!"

"Right. What's the signal to be?" asked Banty eagerly.

"Tell 'em not to take notice of firing—there's going to be plenty of that soon, I guess, and there may be no need for the boys to come in at all," whispered Tom, and started suddenly. "There's the wagon rumblin' along the trail, Banty. Listen. I'll send my horse out on the valley. He'll pick up the boys, and if they turn him he'll come right back to me. I must get off!"

He went without another word, back to the bush where he had left his horse, and drew his gun.

His heart beat fast as he saw the wagon coming along the trail, with its unsuspecting escort idly rising and falling in their saddles to the motion of their horses. For the first time in his life he knew what it was to take part in a hold-up.

It would have been a thrilling sensation were it not for the fact that he had fears for the lives of the wagon-driver and his escort. Raymer was ruthless, relentless—there would be no prisoners.

Everything depended upon what happened when Banty took his pot-shot.

The wagon passed Tom, and rolled on into the very centre of the ambush so innocently that Tom had to put up a terrific fight not to shout out a warning. The driver was half dozing in his seat, and the escort were singing a range chorus with all the lightheartedness that was one of the glories of Western life.

Yet they were within inches of death!

Suddenly a horse's hoof clattered on the trail—Raymer was out.

"Get 'em up—you're surrounded!" he rapped out.

Instantly, from all around, came riders, guns in their hands which glinted in the sunlight. And only a

fraction of a second behind Raymer's signal came the sound of a gun shot, and a bullet shrieked through his hat.

Tom grinned, and slipped a few yards towards the gang leader.

The escort and the driver, wakened into desperate life, took advantage of the immediate confusion caused by Banty's shot, whipped up the horses, and made a dash for their lives.

It was then that Tom spotted Nevada, and he began a noiseless crawl towards Raymer's chief gangster. Nevada had not ridden out, and was not therefore looking for signs of the enemy who had started the shooting.

He was, in fact, the only gangster who made the slightest attempt to stop the runaway wagon. He got his gun levelled on to the leading horse.

But his finger never pulled the trigger that day. Tom twirled his own gun and brought down the butt with a crash on the side of Nevada's head. The gangster went down into a pit of blackness without knowing what had hit him.

Tom had a moment then to look around. Raymer and his men were riding pell-mell for cover of the bushes, shooting right and left in the bare hope of getting at least a few of the men they believed surrounded them.

And the deep rumble of the wagon wheels grew less and less as the whipped-up horses drew it at amazing pace away from Ghost City.

Once the trail was empty there was still no sign of Raymer's enemy. He rode out at last, boldly determined to draw the enemy's fire, but no shot came his way.

"All right—come out, boys!" he shouted, and it was curious how he managed to get a snarl into such a loud pitch.

The men came out of their hiding-places, guns still in their hands, their eyes blazing with anger and wonder. Nevada fairly staggered out, rubbing a huge bump on his head as though he thought he could remove the pain of it with his fingers.

"What happened, boys?" demanded Raymer fiercely.

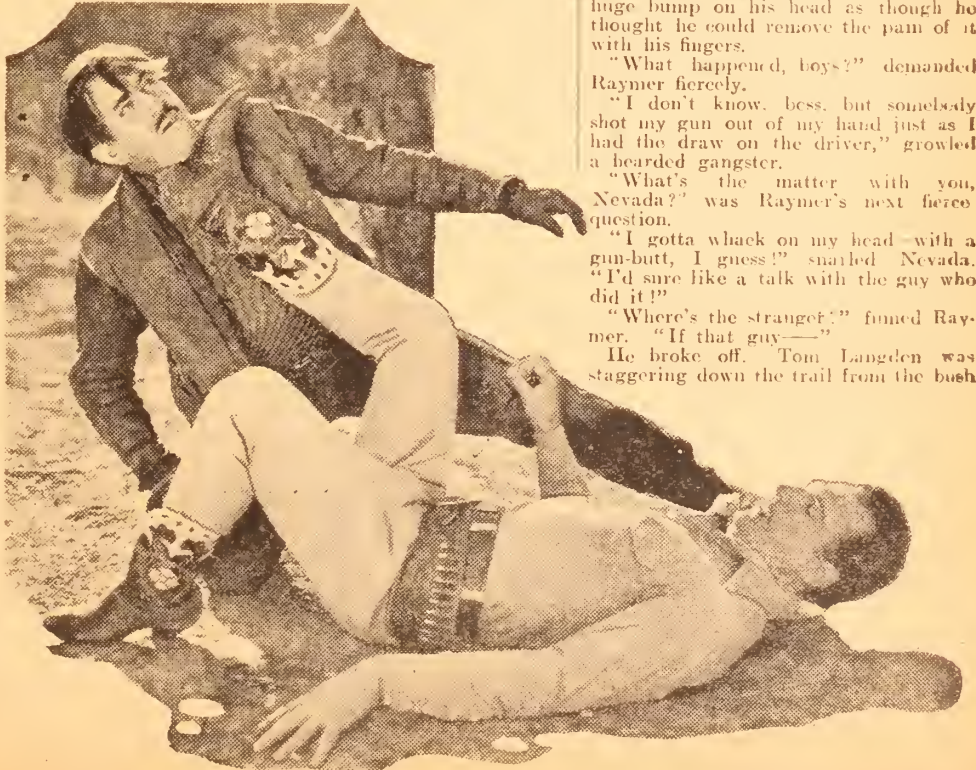
"I don't know, boss, but somebody shot my gun out of my hand just as I had the draw on the driver," growled a bearded gangster.

"What's the matter with you, Nevada?" was Raymer's next fierce question.

"I gotta whack on my head with a gun-butt, I guess!" snarled Nevada. "I'd sure like a talk with the guy who did it!"

"Where's the stranger?" fumed Raymer. "If that guy—"

He broke off. Tom Langdon was staggering down the trail from the bush



In order to avoid a stranglehold, Tom kicked out with his right leg to beat back his man.

where he had been placed, his hat in his hand, and his other hand engaged in rubbing his head.

"What's the big idea, boss?" he asked truculently. "I got a crash on my head with a gun-butt, and I don't like it! Did that bullion driver have some pals out there, or what?"

Raymer did not answer. He just stared hard at Tom for a moment, and then gazed up the trail along which the bullion wagon had disappeared.

"I'd like to have a chat with the guy who bashed me!" said Nevada viciously, and shot a vengeful, suspicious glance at Tom that made that worthy instantly aware of the fact that here was an enemy who might prove more troublesome than Raymer himself.

"Well, it's no good talking here," snapped Raymer. "Get your horses, boys, and let's be going."

And the party he led back to Ghost City was surely the most silent and morose gang of bandits the West had ever known. Only one of them could find it in him to raise a faint smile.

That was Tom Langdon. The first blow against Raymer had been struck, and Tom had won. It promised well for the future, a future into which it was just as well for Tom that he could not see.

The Court Sits.

MINUTES before Kurt Raymer went into his headquarters the whole of Ghost City knew that the raid had failed dismally. The surly attitude of the whole bunch fairly shrieked the news.

Bess and Rose, watching from their doorway, knew it instantly, and a worried frown corrugated Bess' brows.

"If there's been a failure, they might blame the stranger," she said uneasily.

"They might. What of it?" demanded Rose.

Bess did not answer in words. She just flushed a glorious red, and dropped her eyes.

For a moment Rose stared. Then she understood, and for once there was just a trickle of a smile at the corners of her lips.

"If it's like that, I'll have a word with the stranger," she said in tones of the most reluctant resignation. "They won't get busy until they have had a drink to drown their sorrows, and some of them look as though they'll want the whole saloon to do that."

Bess smiled. Rose was such a wonderful good sort, in spite of her blunt way of speaking.

They were still at the doorway when Tom Langdon strolled by, to give them a cool, smiling glance that spoke of the world's confidence.

"Young man, Kurt Raymer is the Laramie Kid, so look out!" said Rose, in an undertone and scarcely moving her lips.

Bess started, but even she did not miss the sudden tightening of Tom's fist and the sudden glint in his eyes. He passed on as lazily as he had approached, and did not even turn his head to see if it were possible to thank Rose for her help.

But his mind was busy. It was flaming with resolution. Plans had to be altered now. Raymer was the Laramie Kid, the man who alone could save old Lafe Langdon from the grim penalty the law would demand for the murder of Jim Halliday.

A dozen plans were formed and cast aside in the next hour or two, and Tom began to get really anxious.

September 5th, 1931.

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Ghost City was so impregnable. There appeared absolutely no way of getting in the boys or of himself getting out alone, without taking into consideration how much less his chances were of persuading Raymer to leave with him at the end of a gun.

His concentration was interrupted by Nevada, who came up to him with a glint in his eye that spelt trouble.

"Raymer wants you at headquarters," he growled. "Tell anybody else you meet up with. And look lively, stranger. Raymer doesn't like being kept waiting."

Tom nodded calmly and moved off at once. He saw half a dozen others moving in the same direction and more were coming in from the other side of the town.

Bess and Rose, coming to the door to see the cause of the rattle of so many boots, looked on with bated breath.

"Kurt Raymer is holding a court," said Rose tonelessly. "That means death for someone."

"You—you think it—" breathed Bess.

"That young man looks as though he can take care of himself," muttered Rose. "Slip down to the corral, Bess, and have some horses ready. Likely as not there will be a running fight."

Bess slipped off just as the last of the gang went in the wooden headquarters and closed the door.

To say that there was a tense atmosphere in that room was to put it too mildly.

A long table had been set straight across the room, and Raymer's men as they came took their seats at the table without so much as a single word. Raymer himself stood at the head of the table, and Tom found himself being edged to the seat at the foot.

The door was closed, and there was utter and complete silence in the room for a full minute while Raymer surveyed them with his beady, cunning eyes.

"I'll have to ask you for your gun, stranger!" he said at last, and his words were so sudden that they came like pistol shots through the silence.

Tom drew his gun and pushed it on to the table. In a moment half a dozen hands had pushed it until it was right up in front of Raymer.

"There's a spy in our camp," resumed Raymer, and his tone was icy, menacing, bitter. "I'm listening for a name, boys."

No one answered. None turned a head save Nevada, who gave Tom Langdon one piercing glance. Tom returned the glance coldly, and then used his eyes for a much more useful purpose. He was measuring the distance his hand would have to cover to get at the gun which was sticking out from the holster of the gangster next to him.

"Well, if there is no talking, I've a way of making someone talk!" said Raymer in the same tones. "Get that prisoner in, Slim."

Tom nearly started then. The prisoner could only mean Banty.

Not a word was spoken whilst Slim went out, but Tom's mind was in a turmoil. If the prisoner was indeed Banty, one glance of recognition as he was brought in would spill all the beans.

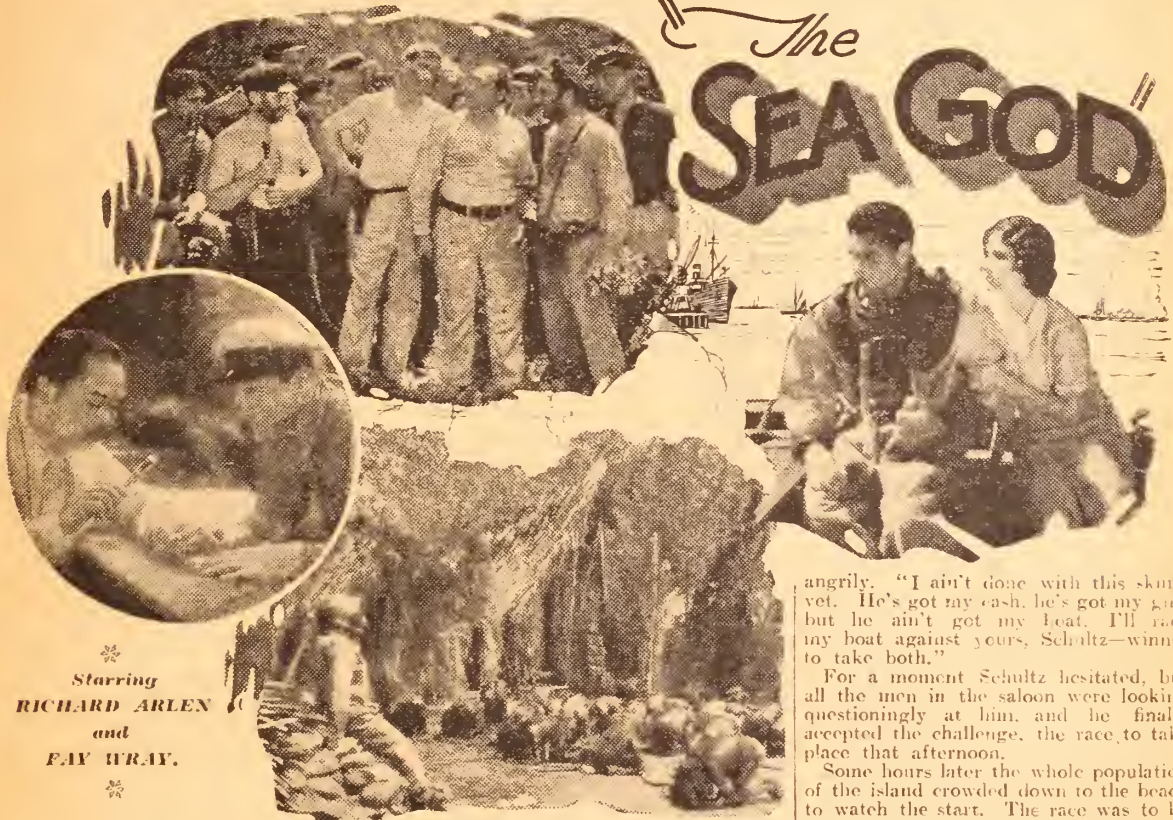
He waited, outwardly calm, but seething inwardly.

The door opened. Banty came in, with two guns sticking at his back. But he was cool and collected as if he were drawing his pay-roll way back on the ranch.

(Continued on page 25.)

A tale of outlaws of the sea—priceless pearls—a cannibal island—and of a girl who fought for her hero.

The SEA GOD



Starring
RICHARD ARLEN
 and
EVA HRAY.

A Crazy Gamble.

A LONG, brilliant beach of smooth white sand; a coral reef, encircling the whole coast; a fringe of low land beyond the beach, covered with orange, banana, bread-fruit, and coconut trees; patches of cultivated ground here and there, where pineapples and yams were grown; little winding paths, delightfully cool from the shade of the tropical vegetation, leading to houses scattered amongst the trees. Such was Teepaa, a lovely island in the great Pacific Ocean.

Phillip Barker, nicknamed "Pink" by his friends, guided his schooner, the General Grant, through the only opening in the reef to the anchorage within the lagoon. Pink was a tall, handsome young fellow, full of health and vigour. He had made a successful voyage, and when he landed with "Square Deal" McCarthy, his mate, he was in a reckless mood.

"Come to the saloon, Square," he cried. "All the drinks are on me to-night."

"Go slow on the drinks," warned the mate, a thick-set, good-natured sailor, with a reputation for honesty which had earned him his nickname. "Remember the last time!"

"Cut it out, boy!" retorted Pink as they entered the saloon. "I don't wanna remember the last time."

He ordered drinks all round, and was soon recounting the story of his voyage to the company. Presently his chief rival, a shifty-looking trader named Schultz, notorious as unscrupulous dealing, came up to the table and sat down.

"Have a drink, Schultz," cried Pink jovially. "It's on me!"

"Had a good voyage?" asked Schultz as he drank.

"Sure! Best I've ever made," replied Pink. "Look at that, boy!"

He fetched out a handful of notes and slapped them down on the table recklessly.

"If you're as flush as all that," said Schultz, his eyes narrowing, "what d'you say to a game? I can't cover that lot, but I'll go as near as I can."

He, too, planked down a wad of notes, and soon the two traders were engaged at dice. Pink drank heavily, and grew more and more excited, while his rival kept dangerously cool. Square Deal looked on helplessly, knowing that it would be useless to interfere, though his young captain lost steadily from the start.

"Hard luck!" said Schultz presently as he drew Pink's last notes across the table.

"You young fool!" cried McCarthy viciously. "Come on out of this!"

"I ain't finished yet," exclaimed Pink wildly, taking a pearl necklace from his pocket. "I'll stake this against the lot. It's worth more, anyway. Here goes!"

He threw a six and a five, and laughed jubilantly as the dice fell. Schultz eyed him coolly, and shook up the dice with great deliberation.

"Double six," he remarked calmly. "That's lucky! I wanted to give someone a present. Girl you know, I believe," he went on, taking the necklace. "Daisy!"

"You'll give that necklace to Daisy?" howled Pink, staggering to his feet and glaring angrily at his rival. "You won't dare!"

"Sure I will," grinned Schultz. "What's it to you if I do? She's through with you since that drinking bout of yours last time."

"Come out of it, I tell you!" cried McCarthy, gripping his captain by the arm.

"You leave me alone!" shouted Pink

angrily. "I ain't done with this skunk yet. He's got my cash, he's got my girl, but he ain't got my boat. I'll race my boat against yours, Schultz—winner to take both."

For a moment Schultz hesitated, but all the men in the saloon were looking questioningly at him, and he finally accepted the challenge, the race to take place that afternoon.

Some hours later the whole population of the island crowded down to the beach to watch the start. The race was to be over a course of twenty miles, and Pink's luck seemed to have turned at last. The General Grant got better away, and sailed out beyond the reef well ahead.

"My luck's in this time," exulted Pink as he watched the President, his rival's schooner. "We've just got a slant of wind, and he's missed it."

The breeze was very light and fitful, and for a while both boats made slow progress, but the General Grant gradually increased her lead. When half the course was covered she was a good two miles ahead.

"Canoe on the starboard bow!" cried the helmsman suddenly.

"Never mind, Abe," said Pink. "Keep her on the course."

"There's a man in it," exclaimed Square Deal presently. "He ain't dead. I saw him move, but he's all out, I reckon. You going to pick him up?"

"No," said the young captain shortly. "We'll lose if I do."

They went on for a few minutes more, while Pink watched the canoe and his rival alternately through his glass.

"Might just do it," he muttered at length, after a last long look at the President.

Another minute went by, and then the captain's voice rang out:

"Keep her away for that canoe, Abe!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" replied the helmsman, altering course.

In twenty minutes the General Grant came up with the canoe, and its occupant, a human derelict, thin, haggard, and starving, was hastily hauled aboard.

This act of humanity cost Pink the race, for the President got home first by a few minutes. As the General Grant drew in to the harbour the rescued man, now somewhat recovered, staggered up to Pink, who had not yet spoken to him.

"Say, boss, must thank you for saving

my life," he said feebly. "My name's Nick. 'Pearly' Nick they call me."

"You lost me the race!" snarled Pink. "Get out of my sight!"

"But, boss, wait a minute!" cried Nick. "I've got something for you."

The young captain turned on his heel, shouted for McCarthy, and went off.

"You've done a good thing to-day," remarked Square Deal. "I wouldn't worry!"

"Of course you wouldn't—you're too fat!" snorted Pink. "I've lost my money, my girl, and now my boat. All my own darned fault, too. And you tell me not to worry! I've sure got something to worry about, ain't I?"

"I reckon not," said McCarthy slowly. "It'll all come out okay in the end."

I Pearly Nick's Gratitude.

PINK and his mate walked up to see Schultz, and behind them, some way off, shambled the unkempt figure of Pearly Nick. Schultz was in his office when his rival came in.

"You'll have to pay my crew," said Pink. "I ain't got a dollar left."

"I'll do that," replied Schultz, "and I'll put the boat up for auction to-morrow morning."

Pink did not hear the last words. He was staring across the office at a pretty, dark girl who sat behind a desk in the corner.

"Daisy's my cashier now. Didn't you know? And I'll say she's the goods, too," remarked Schultz.

"Smart girl you are, Daisy," cried Pink scornfully. "You've picked a man with real estate."

Daisy flushed and turned away, while Pink went on talking to Schultz.

"Nice little thing, and I regret losing her. Only thing you've won from me that I do regret. Well, I'll send my crew up. See to that, McCarthy."

He went out of the office without looking again at Daisy, and Pearly at once waylaid him.

"Say, boss," he began, "you just listen—"

Pink angrily brushed him aside, and set off quickly for his own house, but he had hardly arrived there before rapid footsteps sounded behind him.

"I'm sorry you've been so unlucky," said Daisy's voice as he turned.

"You don't need to be," was the careless reply. "It's my own fault."

"Don't speak in that horrid way!" cried the girl. "We needn't hate each other after being such friends."

"We were getting bored—or you were tired of my wicked ways," sneered Pink. "So why try to drag it on?"

"I won't!" exclaimed Daisy fiercely. "I hate you now!"

She ran off in great anger, and hardly had she gone when Pearly Nick loped up and this time he could not be shaken off.

"Boss, you look!" he cried. "See this! I'm givin' it to you!"

He put a large pearl into Pink's hand. The young sailor glanced at it, and then took Nick into the house.

"Where'd you get this?" he asked suspiciously.

"You think I stole it? You're wrong, boss. I didn't. I can take you where you'll get more."

Nick took some more pearls from his pocket and gave them to Pink just as McCarthy entered. Pink passed the pearls to his mate, who examined them. "I'll say they're the goods," exclaimed McCarthy. "Where did he get 'em?"

"Boss, I've gotta plan," said Nick. "You take the pearls and buy your boat back. Then I'll take you to the

Solomon Islands to find more. Take a big crew—natives are cannibals. They—

—they killed my friends, an'—an'—"
Nick's voice grew weaker and weaker. He swayed, and suddenly collapsed in a heap. Pink and McCarthy lifted him on to a bed and gave him a drink. He recovered somewhat after a while, and began feebly to tell of the exact position of the pearl island.

"I must look after him now," said Pink. "He's very sick, sure. Find someone to nurse him, Square, while I sell these pearls."

"Okay, skipper," replied the mate, going out. He returned presently with a native woman who had agreed to take care of Nick, and then Pink went off to the store.

"How much for these?" he asked the Chinese storekeeper.

The man took a glass and examined the pearls carefully.

"One thousand dollars," he said at length.

Pink knew that the pearls were worth at least fifteen hundred dollars, but he could not screw more than twelve hundred out of the Chinaman, and finally he went away with that amount fairly satisfied.

In the morning the General Grant was put up to auction, and to the surprise of the whole company the boat was knocked down to Phillip Barker, who went off at once to prepare for the trip to the Solomon Islands.

"Where did Barker get the cash?" exclaimed the astonished Schultz to his right-hand man, one Rudy. "He told me he hadn't a dollar left."

"Can't say, unless he stole it," said Rudy.

"No, he ain't that sort," replied Schultz thoughtfully.

"Say, he's got that fellow Nick at his house," remarked Bill, another of Schultz's men. "Pearly they call him."

"You've got it, Bill," cried Schultz excitedly. "Nick gave him some pearls, sure. Where's Barker now?"

"Down on the boat," answered Rudy.

"Well, I'm going to see this guy Nick," said Schultz. "I'll maybe get something out of him."

Schultz went off at once to Pink's house. Brushing aside the remonstrances of the nurse, he came to the bed where Nick lay and looked down at the wasted form of the rescued man. Nick opened his eyes, saw someone standing by the bedside and began to babble deliriously, thinking that Pink had returned.

"Boss, I'll tell you. Solomon Islands."

"Where?" asked Schultz eagerly, leaning over the bed.

"Go to Bougainville, then sou'west—small islands," muttered Nick, trying to sit up.

"Bougainville. That's one of the biggest of the Solomons. Well, go on, Nick."

"Stop, Nick!" cried a voice, as Pink came in. "What are you doing here, Schultz? Get out of my house!"

"I'm taking him with me," said Schultz coolly. "I've got an order from the mayor to remove him. He ain't being looked after properly here."

"That's a lie!" cried Pink. "You want to get him to tell you something, that's all."

"Well, an' if I do?" sneered Schultz. "Who'll stop me?"

"Something even you can't fight has stopped you," said Pink slowly, looking at Nick, who had fallen back on the bed and lay still. "Your spying's finished. The poor fellow's dead!"

The Stowaway.

DAISY came back from Pink's house to the office feeling very angry and yet unhappy, for in spite of her fierce words to him she still loved the young sailor in her heart. Hardly had she sat down before Schultz came in.

"Well, Daisy," he said, "where have you been?"

"That's nothing to do with you," replied the girl sharply.

"Soon will be," retorted Schultz angrily. "We're going to be married, and don't you forget it."

"I don't want to be married," cried the girl.

"Now see here, Daisy, I ain't going to be made a monkey of!" snarled Schultz. "And I'll tell you I've decided we're getting married next week."

"I won't marry you!" exclaimed Daisy. "I'll run away first!"

"Don't run away," laughed the trader. "There ain't a place to run to, and you know it."

He went out, and Daisy spent many miserable hours until she happened to overhear Rudy and Bill talking after the auction.

"Pink's ready to sail, I hear," said Rudy. "Wonder where he's going."

"Schultz knows, maybe. I don't," replied Bill. "But Pink's off to-night, sure."

Daisy suddenly saw a way out of the hateful prospect of marriage with Schultz. That evening she slipped down to the quay and managed to steal on board the General Grant, unseen by the crew. Only a loafer on the bank saw her, and he took little notice. It was not his business, he thought.

Presently Pink gave orders to cast off, but even as his men got to the ropes Schultz came on to the quay, followed by several of his gang.

"I know all about that pearl expedition, Barker," he said, "and I've declared myself in."

"That's mighty good of you," retorted Pink, stepping on to the quay and confronting his enemy.

"Sure!" sneered the trader. "We can be friends or enemies—it's up to you."

"Then we'll be enemies!" said Pink shortly.

Schultz did not reply in words. He sent a sharp jab to Pink's chin, a jab that nearly toppled him back into the water. The young captain countered with a right to the jaw, and in another second a fierce battle was raging.

Schultz put up a good fight for a few minutes, but a stiff uppercut took most of the courage out of him. He sprang back, seizing a knife which hung at his belt, while his men sprang forward to assist him.

"Stand back there, you skunks!" roared Square Deal promptly, raising his gun.

The men drew back, and Schultz tried to finish the fight by an attempt to stab his opponent in the chest with his knife. Pink caught his arm just in time, twisted his wrist so that he was forced to drop the weapon, and then with a mighty heave he hurled the rascally trader over the edge of the quay into the sea.

"Cast off there!" yelled Pink, jumping on board.

The ropes were cast off, and a couple of minutes later the General Grant was sailing away. She passed out of the opening in the reef just as Schultz was hauled back to land, furious with wrath and disappointment.

"Why didn't you plug him, Rudy?" he shouted angrily.

"McCarthy got his gun out first," remarked Rudy with great coolness.

"I know where Barker's gone," cried Schultz, "and I'm following him. He ain't getting away with it so easy. Go and get my boat ready, Rudy, and you, too, Bill, and look slippy!"

"Say, Mr. Schultz," said a man, coming up with a grin on his face, "d'you know who's on that boat?"

He pointed to the General Grant, which was now spanking along at a great pace before a favouring breeze, several miles out already.

"Lady you know is on board," the man went on. "Miss Daisy. I saw her slip down to the deck."

"I'll—I'll kill Barker!" howled Schultz, mad with rage.

Daisy was on board the General Grant, sure enough, but it was some time before her presence was discovered. The boat was many miles from Ieepaa when Square Deal happened to open the door of a cabin he thought to be empty.

"Great Jupiter!" he cried as he saw the girl within. "What are you doing here? Hi, Pink, come down, quick!"

The captain came down and glared angrily at Daisy.

"A stowaway, eh?" he said. "What's the meaning of this?"

"I had to get away from Schultz somehow," replied Daisy. "I can pay my fare, and I'll go ashore at the first port."

"It ain't that sort of a boat," said Pink. "We don't take passengers, and we shan't make any port this journey."

"Oh," cried Daisy, in dismay, "I thought—"

"You'll have to do your share of the work, now you're here," interrupted Pink, "and share our risks—and our profits, too, if we make any," he added.

Daisy was forthwith installed as cook, and except for a few days when the ship was blown off her course by heavy storms, she worked very hard. Pink hardly spoke to her, and until the pearl island was at length reached she was very lonely. Only Square Deal had now and then a few words to say, and even he was too busy most of the time to give her much attention.

"That's the island," sang out Pink one morning as land was sighted. "We'll go on shore and prospect a bit. Nick said the natives were cannibals, so we must keep our eyes skinned."

The General Grant was anchored in a little bay. Pink, McCarthy and three or four men got into a small boat, and Daisy insisted on coming, too, in spite of warnings of danger. With their guns ready, they landed on the beach, to find everything seemingly peaceful and quiet.

"Stand by a minute," said Pink. "I'll throw a bomb into that clump of trees."

He hurled a bomb, and then another and another. They exploded among the

trees with a roar, and a cloud of earth and stones arose, mingled with smoke. The noise died away, and silence fell again.

"Okay!" said McCarthy. "No one there."

"Look!" screamed Daisy. "There to the right! I saw one of them!"

The men looked in vain. Another bomb was thrown in the direction the girl had pointed out, but nothing more was seen.

"You must have imagined it, Daisy," said Pink at length.

"I didn't. I saw a hideous face, all painted with stripes of colour—one of the cannibals!" cried the girl tremblingly.

A search disclosed no signs of the natives, and the men returned on board convinced that Daisy was wrong, and that the pealing might start at once, without any fear of interruption from the savages.

A New God.

PINK sat in the stern of the General Grant that afternoon almost ready to begin the search for pearls. He had put on his diving dress, except for the helmet, when Daisy came up and sat beside him.

"I want to know, Pink, please," she said timidly, "is it dangerous?"

"Diving? You wouldn't care, anyway!" retorted Pink harshly.

"I do care. I care if anybody's hurt," cried Daisy.

"Do you care for me any more?" asked the young sailor, in a changed tone.

"Of course not!"

"I love you, all the same, and always shall."

"Yes, in the moonlight!" laughed the girl.

"No, all the time, day and night, more than anyone else. You've been working for me all this time till your

hands are all rough and spoilt. I'm sorry. Can't we be friends?"

"No," said Daisy, not very decidedly, turning away.

Pink might have said more, but McCarthy came up to put the helmet on, and soon the diver clambered over the side and went down. The water was not very deep, for the ship was not far from the shore, and Pink soon found an oyster-bed. He began to detach the shells and send them up in a basket.

After a while a noise overhead came faintly to his ears, and the supply of air that was being pumped to him suddenly ceased, but after a second went on again spasmodically.

"Something's wrong," muttered Pink, as the air supply failed again. "I'll have to wade out and see."

Something was wrong indeed. The diver had not been below more than ten minutes when a great fleet of canoes came round the point of the bay and made swiftly for the ship. Instantly everything was in confusion. The men rushed hastily for their guns, and Abe, who was turning the wheel operating the air supply, left his task and rushed with them. Daisy took one hasty glance at the canoes, then seized the wheel and resumed the pumping.

The savages came on quickly, despite a rapid fire from the deck of the ship. In two minutes their canoes were alongside, and a host of grotesquely attired natives poured on board. The crew battled desperately, and many of the cannibals went down, but one by one the white men were killed by the spears of the enemy.

All through the noise and confusion of the fight Daisy kept on pumping air to Pink, till Square Deal, who had defused her with desperate valour, fell to the deck beneath the attack of half a dozen natives. Two more seized the girl and carried her screaming to a canoe.

The General Grant was by this time



They gazed towards the end of the clearing at some strange object which had suddenly appeared.

on fire, and with loud yells of triumph the victorious savages pulled away, carrying McCarthy and Daisy with them. The rest of the crew they had slain to a man.

As the canoes turned away from the ship, Pink's helmet emerged from the shallow water inshore. He cut the air-hose only just in time, for in another minute he would have been suffocated. Floundering on a few more steps, he turned to see dimly, through the glass of his helmet, that the General Grant was a mass of flame. The native canoes were disappearing round the point, amid the loud beating of war-drums, mingled with yells of triumph.

There was nothing Pink could do. He struggled to the shore, and tried in vain to get the helmet off. Then he walked aimlessly on, stumbling wearily through the woods hour after hour, stunned by the thought that Daisy and all his men were dead.

Yet, though he little knew it, every step that Pink took was bringing him nearer and nearer to Daisy and Square Deal. Their captors had led them to a village built in a clearing in the midst of the woods, and there they were tied securely to adjoining trees, while a crowd of exultant cannibals danced wildly around them.

"Will they kill us?" whispered Daisy presently.

"Well, we ain't dead yet!" replied Square Deal, with affected cheerfulness. "and I reckon I'll try to wriggle loose later on. They're bound to have a feast and get drunk, and then our chance will come."

"But—but perhaps they'll feast on—on us!" shuddered the girl.

Before the mate could reply, the savages around them stopped their wild dance, and gazed towards the end of the clearing at some strange object which had suddenly appeared.

"What's that?" exclaimed McCarthy, looking in the same direction.

"It's Pink!" screamed Daisy frantically. "I can see the helmet. He got out safe, after all. Oh, Pink, Pink, come and help us, quick!"

Pink had indeed stumbled upon the native village, and he came on into the midst of the savages, who gazed in silent awe at the grotesque figure of the diver. Suddenly, as he reached the trees where the two victims were bound, the whole tribe of cannibals sank prostrate to the ground before him.

"They think you're a god!" shouted Square Deal. "Play up to 'em, boy!"

At the end of the open space Pink saw an idol erected on a pedestal. Hoisting up to it, he seized the image and hurled it aside. The god fell into a great fire which the savages had kindled, and Pink solemnly took its place on the pedestal.

The natives raised their heads and gazed stupidly at him as their idol was destroyed. Then they bowed once more before their new god, this queer figure with a metal head and grotesque garments. The drums began to beat again, and the howling re-commenced, until once more there came an interruption.

A beam of light came flickering

through the woods, and the cannibals fell flat on their faces in terror. Schultz had arrived that night off the island in his schooner, and he immediately turned a searchlight upon the land. The light played here and there high up among the trees, and the savages began a low chant to their new god.

"O god of the sea, if you are a true god, save us!"

The searchlight suddenly went out. Schultz had seen no signs of life, and he was not quite sure that he had hit upon the right island, so he had determined to wait until the morning before doing anything more.

The natives sang songs of praise to their new god as the mysterious light disappeared, and some of them began to bring to him gifts from their temple. Rubies and pearls were cast at the feet of the "God of the Sea," and again the whole tribe bowed before him. Still Pink sat motionless on the pedestal, waiting his chance, for he felt sure that his chance would come.

The End of Schultz.

ACTING on the information he had obtained from Pearly Nick, Schultz had followed Pink to the Solomon Islands, bent on searching every island to the south-west of Bougainville. As it happened, he had heard far off the sound of the bombs thrown by Pink, and he had steered in the direction indicated.

Schultz and his men came ashore in the morning, and in a long straggling line, their guns all loaded and ready, they entered the woods and cautiously advanced. No signs of life were to be seen until they reached the clearing. The native village was empty, but the "God of the Sea" still sat on his pedestal.

"One of Pink's men!" whispered Rudy.

"Pink himself, I reckon," said Schultz. "Go forward slowly, and we'll get the mutt easy."

They went on step by step, and the god did not move. Schultz at length reached forward to seize Pink's shoulder, and as he did so the figure fell forward and lay still.

"Diving dress is empty," said Schultz disgustedly. "He's got away, or the niggers have got him."

"Is this anything, boss?" asked Bill, showing Schultz a stone he had picked up from the path.

"Sure!" cried the trader delightedly. "It's a ruby, boys. I reckon we're in luck. C'mon, and look around some more!"

"Help! Help!" came a distant voice from among the trees.

"This way!" yelled Schultz, and the men doubled towards the sound. In a few minutes they came to a deep pit, and, looking down into it, they saw a white man.

"It's McCarthy," said Schultz. "Haul him out, boys."

Square Deal was pulled out, and the gang ringed him round.

"Now, McCarthy, I'll have the truth," cried Schultz. "Where's Daisy, and where's that skunk Pink?"

"Dead!" said Square Deal solemnly.

"Dead!" echoed Schultz and his men. "How then?"

"The niggers captured the boat while Pink was down below," said McCarthy. "They brought Daisy and me up here and tied us up. Pink got ashore in his diving dress, and the natives took him for a god."

"I guessed that," remarked Schultz. "Okay so far. Go on."

"They had a feast last night and got drunk, most of 'em," McCarthy continued, "and Pink came up and cut us loose. We were making away, but they chased us and they killed Daisy and Pink with spears. I fell down this pit, and they missed me."

"I don't believe all that," growled Schultz. "Half his yarn is lies, I reckon. I saw the back of the diving dress had been cut, and I guess Daisy and McCarthy got Barker out. I believe those two are somewhere on the island."

Square Deal was roped up and hurried off to Schultz's boat, while the trader and his men searched the island.

Schultz had guessed correctly, for Pink and the girl had escaped the night before, and after wandering a long way across the island, they found refuge in a cave just before dawn.

"Take these, Daisy," said Pink presently, giving a small bag to the girl. "I put all the rubies they threw at my feet into that bag. You look after 'em."

"Why give them to me?" asked Daisy.

"I believe Schultz is here—you saw that searchlight. We've got away from the niggers, but we shan't dodge him so easy. He won't hurt you, but as for me—"

"If he—kills you, I'll die, too, Pink," said Daisy in a low tone. "We'll go together, dear."

"Then you don't hate me any more?" cried the young sailor joyfully.

"No," replied Daisy; "I never did. I only tried to think I did."

Pink took the girl in his arms and kissed her, very happy in spite of the dangers surrounding them. Presently he stepped out of the cave to survey the country. It was an unwise move, for Schultz happened to be ensconced behind some trees not far off, looking through his telescope, and he caught a glimpse of Pink. He called up his gang, and a few minutes later Daisy and Pink were surprised and captured.

"You ever see this before?" growled Schultz, producing the ruby. "Got any more like it?"

Pink looked contemptuously at his rival, but did not reply, and Schultz turned to Daisy.

"I've got something special to say to Daisy," he snarled. "Her boy friend is going to be accidentally shot."

"Why can't you leave us to die?" cried Daisy pleadingly.

"I'll leave him to die, and take you along," snapped Schultz.

"You'll never take me with you!" exclaimed the girl.

(Continued on page 27.)



They entered the woods and cautiously advanced.

"WEST OF CHEYENNE."

(Continued from page 20.)

He was just as calm when he saw Kurt Raymer take up his gun.

"Say, one of these men is your pal," said Raymer quietly. "Give him a name, stranger."

"I ain't got nothing to say," said Banty. "And no guns is goin' to make me say anything."

"I've got a way of makin' homhres like you speak up," said Raymer. "You're going to name your pal, stranger. What's your answer?"

The answer came from elsewhere.

There was a crash as Tom's chair flew back as with a single movement he rose to his feet and snatched at the gun in his neighbour's holster.

"Here's the answer!" flashed Tom. "Reach for the skies! Up! Quick, Banty!"

The gangsters' hands went up; there was a command in that voice only equal to Raymer's. Banty needed no orders. He snatched at Tom's own gun from under Raymer, grabbed a second, and in a moment he was going round the gang relieving them of their guns.

Raymer was speechless, but his eyes spoke volumes. There was hatred, fear and desperation.

"So you're named, stranger," he said between his teeth. "You just can't get out of here."

"You'll see!" said Tom, and laughed. "You're coming with me, Kurt Raymer. They sort of want you down Circle B way. There they know you as the Laramie Kid!"

Raymer's face went ashen, and for a moment his hands shook as if he would chance dropping them.

But Banty poked a gun quickly into his ribs, and he changed his mind.

"All you bunch get against the wall, and keep facing it!" snapped Tom. "Banty, blow holes in the first man that drops his hands!"

"Sure, and it would be a great pleasure, Tom!" grinned Banty. "Move, you yellow rats!"

The men moved. None of them was asking for a bullet, and Raymer had to fare for himself just then.

"You get out of this place, Raymer—and let me warn you that you're going back to Circle B dead or alive!" said Tom briskly. "I've come for you, and you're sure goin' back! Get moving!"

Surlily Raymer moved to the door and passed out, Banty bringing up the rear with his arms full of guns. Tom, his eyes on Raymer, waited until he heard the door closed and the lock turned.

"Beat it, Banty, but keep an eye all around. Shoot anything you see!" snapped Tom. "Move, Raymer—I'm in a hurry—"

"Say, young man, they've got more guns hidden in there!" came from Rose, as she rushed up to them. "Bess is down at the corral with your horses. Move, stranger!"

"Hustle, Raymer—you're the first that's going to die if it looks as if I'll lose you! Hustle!"

Raymer hustled down to the corral, where Bess was already mounted.

"Get into that saddle, and you have got to ride like fury! I'm behind you, with a longing to plug lead into you! Get that under your hat!" rapped out Tom. "Shoot for the trail, Bess. You next, Banty—now, Raymer—"

The thudding of the hoofs coincided

with the crashing in of the headquarters door. A fusillade of bullets shrieked their way an instant later, but the run-aways were already out of range.

But the main trail had scarcely been struck before they heard the shouts of the gang, and the thudding of many hoofs. The chase had begun, and shooting would soon commence.

But Nevada stopped that.

"Surround 'em, boys; we'll outride them, with the girl on a slow hoss!" he shouted. "Don't shoot yet, 'cos you might hit the boss. Ride like fury!"

His men obeyed only too well for Tom Langdon's hopes. He shouted to Banty to ride up alongside the girl and try and whack out a bit more speed from her horse.

Anxiously Tom peered behind. The gang was coming up; he saw them splitting into two groups. That meant trouble.

"We'll have to pull up and fight!" shouted Tom. "Get into that undergrowth! Move, Raymer!"

Raymer obeyed, and he was the first to slip from his horse when they had got into undergrowth too thick for them to ride through. In a moment Tom was by his side, a piece of cord in his hands.

"Turn around—sharp!" he grunted. "I don't want you to be shot, Raymer, even by your own men; and I ain't having you getting away whilst we look after you—and ourselves."

Raymer obeyed surlily, his anxious eyes watching for signs of his men.

The first notion he got of them was just as Tom put the finishing touches to binding his wrists behind him.

"It's another sort of rope you're booked for, but this will do for now!" said Tom between his teeth. "Bess, get under cover; they're moving around. Banty, slip ahead—and shoot straight! Where are the boys?"

"Out in the valley; they can't be very far away!" called Banty, as he ran forward.

A moment later he was shooting at two or three targets that presented themselves, and a hail of bullets came from the wooded range. Bess got well down under cover, her heart beating so fast that she felt it would burst.

But Tom fired no shot until he had chased his horse out on to the trail and had seen it careering madly away from Ghost City towards the valley.

Then he joined Raymer again, and kept the enemy well down by his lightning-like shooting. For fifteen minutes the battle went on, and in that fifteen minutes enough lead was lost in the shrubs to fill a decent-sized dustbin.

But Banty and Tom kept the enemy at a distance that made shooting with certainty an impossibility.

The moment anything like a target appeared, a bullet crashed beside it with a message that meant any better target was death.

Bess looked on, frightened but thrilled, and it was she who saw Kurt Raymer dash away with loose cord dangling from his wrists. He had struggled free of his bonds whilst Tom was busy shooting.

For the moment

Tom hesitated, as Raymer was running towards his own men, who would certainly shoot past him at Tom if he gave chase. Something like a groan left Tom's lips at the sudden realisation that he was running into certain death if he moved, and that he was losing the Laramie Kid if he did not move.

He started up, desperately determined to do his best, and at that precise second there came shots from down the trail. Fifty horsemen thundered amidst the dust, shooting as they came, and with reckless daring they spread out in a semi-circle to surround the scene of the battle.

Tom's boys had arrived!

"Stick 'em up—or we'll shoot you where you lie!" shrieked Banty. "Oh, good for you, boys! Look at Tom!"

The shooting stopped as if a bugle had sounded the "Cease fire!" The gangsters knew when it was wise to give in. They marched out of the undergrowth, their hands in the air, fear on every face.

But Tom was not looking on. He was making for the Laramie Kid with the speed of a hare, and the joy of one from whom all troubles have been suddenly lifted.

In that frame of mind Tom Langdon was an unbeatable giant. Raymer found that out, but Tom had to hatter the fact into him before he would admit defeat. He came back to the rest of his men with a face that was so rarely recognisable, and in a moment Banty, as cheerful as a schoolboy on holiday, took command of the whole gang.

"Bunch 'em down Circle B!" he chirruped. "Guess they will be glad to see 'em down there! Where's Tom now?"

He looked round eagerly—and then suddenly pushed his hat back upon his head.

"Say!" he murmured resentfully. "If I ain't a bad prophet, we'll be having a new hoss before long!"

For Tom Langdon and Bess were already in their saddle, looking at one another in a manner that gave Banty ample reason for his prophecy. When, five minutes later, the cavalcade was riding towards Circle B with the prisoners, Banty looked back and found that Tom's saddle had two people upon it, and a very discreet little horse that had been ridden by Bess was walking slowly behind a very much engaged couple, it wanted no one so bright as Banty to make such a forecast.

The trip to West of Cheyenne had been the most dangerous, but the most glorious, trip Tom Langdon had ever made.

(By permission of the British Lion Film Corporation, Ltd., starring Tom Tyler and Josephine Hill.)

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"SWEEPSTAKES."

(Continued from page 14.)

Six-Shooter and the Six Partners.

SLEEPY had been in Agua Caliente a week when he bought a horse, or, rather, paid a deposit on same. Now Buddy had introduced him to Jake, the head barman and his three assistants—they were crazy about horses. "I wanna let you boys into a fortune," Sleepy said in a knowing fashion. "How would you like to own a real live racehorse?" They scoffed, but soon they were all ears.

"I've just told you all about the horse and his condition. You would like to know why the horse is goin' so cheap. The reason is because the horse ain't easy to ride. Find the jockey that can ride him and you're on a fortune. After winning the Gold Cup, Six-Shooter—"

"The horse that—" cried Jake. "Shurrup, I'm talking!" growled Sleepy. "After winning, Six-Shooter wouldn't do a thing, and Pop Blake, the owner, sold up everything. The horse went from stable to stable, but he ain't had a victory. I've just bought him off a horse-dealer for three hundred and fifty. That ain't quite correct. I've paid a deposit of fifty dollars, and I know of a partner who will stand in for a hundred, leaving me to raise two hundred." He gave them a speculative glance. "Four into two hundred makes—"

"Guess it's time we went home," shouted one of the barmen. "I hear my nurse calling."

"You'll miss the chance of your life," hissed Sleepy in his most dramatic fashion. "Who rode Six-Shooter? Buddy Doyle! Buddy was suspended, but that ended three months ago—they cleared the lad's name. If I could produce Buddy as the jockey, what would you say?"

"We'd stand in with you," Jake was carried away. "Yes, we'd stand in: but where is Buddy Doyle?"

"Ever seen his picture," Sleepy grinned. "You have, Jake? Then take a look at a waiter what sings in this dive. Ain't his name Doyle?"

"Gosh, I've nearly driven myself crazy trying to think where I'd seen his face before," gasped Jake. "So that boy is Buddy Doyle!"

"Yeah, that boy sure is Buddy Doyle," sniggered Sleepy. "And as I was his trainer for several years I can tell you he can ride. If Six-Shooter, with Doyle up, were entered for the Agua Caliente Handicap, would we pull it off? You bet we would. Do you boys want to stand in on this deal?"

Sleepy Jones left the saloon the richer by two hundred dollars.

The race was to take place in a week's time, and it was necessary to enter the horse at once. Sleepy got busy on the long-distance 'phone and raised the entrance money, and when the entry form had been duly signed, Sleepy danced with joy and anticipation.

Next day he went first of all to the railway-station, where he met a very excited, nervous and attractive young woman.

"We're gonna surprise Buddy twice," chuckled Sleepy. "He gets off about September 5th, 1931.

two for a couple of hours, and I'll spring the first surprise on him then."

The saloon was empty save for Buddy Doyle, who was reading a racing paper. Though he scarcely ever mentioned a horse, he could not forget the old game. Now and again the old hankering to ride would grip him, and then a cold chill would go down his back.

"The old firm!" chortled a voice, and Sleepy walked across the saloon floor. "How's me lucky lad?"

"Pretty good, Sleepy," was the answer. "What have you been doing these last few days? Nothing but dodging about, whispering to Jake and the other lads. I'm all suspicious of you when you keep on rubbing your hands together."

"I've got a surprise for you—several of them, in fact." Sleepy smiled and gave a quick glance towards the saloon door. If only Buddy knew who was outside. "My first startler is that I've bought a hoss."

"You've bought a horse!" gasped Buddy. "I hope you haven't been razed—they're a slippery lot in these parts."

"The name of the hoss is Six-Shooter."

"Six-Shooter!" Buddy gripped the edge of a table. "Not my old pal? Oh, Sleepy, how does he look—is he fit?"

"Not as fit as he were when you rode him, Buddy." Sleepy gave a short laugh. "But still a mighty good horse. I've entered him for the Agua Caliente Handicap."

"Who's the jockey?" asked Buddy through tight lips.

"Name of Doyle." Sleepy rubbed his hands together.

"You haven't put me down to ride?" Buddy was on his feet and his eyes gleamed with a strange frenzy. "I'm through with riding. I won't ever ride again. You've got to get another jockey. I hate anything to do with racing." He passed his hands before his face as if he saw a ghost. "I can see their faces now—thousands of them—all leering at me; disgraced and suspended."

"But that's all finished with, Buddy." Sleepy was uneasy. "With you up this handicap is a cinch."

"I can't and won't ride!" muttered Buddy. "I'm finished."

From behind the bar four heads slowly appeared—Jake and his three assistants. Their glances of rage and despair must have penetrated to Sleepy, because he turned and saw them. At once his finger went to his lips, and he made a gesture for them to hide. When Sleepy pointed to the swing doors and made strange gestures they wondered what he could mean.

"I'm sorry, Sleepy." Buddy had sunk into a seat and was staring into space. "I've lost my courage. I'm a coward! I couldn't face the mob again."

"Jake and the boys have backed you," argued Sleepy. "I was so sure you would ride that they came in. Are you going to fail them, Buddy?"

"I should take a toss," came the dull reply. "I'd be scared stiff. I'm sorry, Sleepy, but I'm finished—finished!"

Sleepy glanced down at the bowed shoulders and began to tiptoe towards the swing doors. The four heads appeared and their gaze was suspicious. Sleepy edged towards them.

"I've got his gal outside," he hissed, and winked assurance, though he did not feel so certain.

Buddy did not look up when a hand was laid gently on his shoulder, but he fairly leaped to his feet when a soft voice called him.

"Buddy!" "Babe!" He stared at her, unable to say anything more.

Babe Ellis was changed. She was prettier, but the gay, laughing girl had changed into a woman; there were marks of suffering about the cheeks, and the whole body seemed slimmer. A tear trickled slowly down her cheeks.

"After all this time I've found you, Buddy," she whispered. "Please say you forgive me."

"I was too harsh in my judgment," admitted Buddy in a humble voice. "I ought to have known that Weber had a tongue like a snake and would double-cross his best friends. But how did you ever find me?"

"Sleepy." The girl came close to him. "Oh, Buddy, aren't you going to kiss me?"

Buddy hugged her close and for some moments he was sublimely happy. His Babe had come back to him, but all the sparkle and joy of life left him when she said quietly:

"Buddy, you must ride Six-Shooter." "I couldn't face the crowd!" His face was twisted as if with pain. "I've gone yellier, Babe. I should cut and run for it!"

"Listen, Buddy." She waited till he had finished a long tale of the hardships that he had experienced in his search for work. "We want to get you back once more on the ladder. Sleepy has got four good men to buy Six-Shooter, and I helped as much as I could. Are you going to fail us? It was I who caused your downfall, and for my sake I want you to fight back."

"I'm scared, Babe." Buddy clenched and unclenched his fists. He could see himself coming up the straight, and there ahead lay the winning-post, but on all sides were thousands of leering faces. "I haven't the pluck."

"Must I go away, knowing that not only have I ruined you, but caused Sleepy and his friends to lose a lot of money?" She laid her hands on his shoulders. "They believe in you, and so do I. Won't you do this just for my sake?"

"If only I could muster up enough courage."

"Why not try out Six-Shooter before you start work?" Babe felt she was winning. "Once you feel a horse under you the old courage will return. Try, Buddy, and if you still don't want to go on after that we won't worry you again."

"I'll do it." Buddy set his jaw. "But you've got to help me to be brave, Babe."

When they had gone, four heads rose slowly above the bar counter, and each man looked at the other.

"Boys, I ain't gonna sleep nut h tonight!"

The Agua Caliente Handicap.

HAD Buddy conquered his nerves? He had certainly ridden Six-Shooter many times round the course, but only his friends had been watching.

But it was a different thing on race day. Everywhere seethed a mass of people. They seemed to be staring at him. "Weighing-out" was an agony because one of the officials was very inquisitive when he heard the name of Doyle; even went so far as to find out when the suspension had been removed. His gruff manner badly shook the quaking Buddy. The walk round in the paddock was an agony with the smartly-

dressed men and women. Did he see and hear someone pointing and talking about him as the jockey who had once been under a cloud? At last that was finished, and now came the saddling-up.

His tongue seemed swollen, and he could hardly speak as he mounted Six-Shooter. Would the eye deride him as he paraded past the grand-stand on the way to the start?

"Keep yer chin up, son!" said a voice, and Buddy stared down into the face of the Dude.

"I feel as if I were going to a funeral!" he gasped out.

"If you win you may go to a wedding," chipped in Sleepy. "If we lose there may be a funeral—maybe I'll be the corpse if Jake and his pals catch me."

"Go in and win," the Dude whispered. "And, remember, I've backed you for fifty bucks, and you're my star tip for the day. You've gone from fifties to tens, and before you're off the mark it will be fives. Whoop-te-do, Buddy!"

That talk did Buddy good, and he did not feel so afraid as he cantered up the course.

A perfect start, but Six-Shooter was a little late getting away. The distance was a mile and a half, and there was a big field of sixteen runners. Soon the field began to tail out, and those that had no chance in the race dropped back.

All the old tricks and cunning came back to Buddy with a rush. Not yet must he try to get past the four horses in front of him in order to challenge the Admiral, The Saxon, and Warship. "Whoop-te-do!" Buddy chanted the magic words, and Six-Shooter answered the call with a quickened stride.

"Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do—I'm coming through!" Buddy yelled. "Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do!" Like a streak Six-Shooter flashed through the stragglers.

Four furlongs to go and a difficult bend that made passing extremely difficult. Luck favoured Buddy, because he saw that Warship was overhauling The Saxon, and that The Admiral was only just holding off the challenge of The Saxon. If the straight of two furlongs could be reached with the leader only a few lengths in the lead, then it might be possible to sweep by to victory.

It timed out as Buddy had hoped. The Admiral and The Saxon were running neck-and-neck, with Warship coming up on the flank. Six-Shooter was half a length to the rear.

"Whoop-te-do!" chanted Buddy, and the horse was level with Warship.

"Six-Shooter! Six-Shooter!" came the cry from the stands, and then what a thrill as he heard the crowd shouting for him. "Ride him, Doyle! Six-Shooter! Doyle!"

"Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do!"

The Admiral and The Saxon were left standing as Six-Shooter flashed past them.

Even then Buddy was not going to take any risks. In the old days he might have eased, but to-day he was all out.

"Whoop-te-do! Whoop-te-do!" he shouted, and Six-Shooter flashed past the winning-post six lengths ahead of Warship.

The Dude had done his work well, and many had backed Six-Shooter at long odds. They howled and yelled their joy at Buddy's success, and it was music in the jockey's ears, but best of all was the joyous grin of Sleepy Jones and the glad light in the eyes of Babe Ellis—the girl who had won back his manhood.

(By permission of P.D.C., starring Eddie Quillan as Bud Doyle.)

"THE SEA GOD."

(Continued from page 24.)

"You'll see," sneered the trader. "Take her on board right now!"

Two of the men seized Daisy and carried her off in spite of her frantic struggles, and Schultz turned to Pink, who had been pinioned tightly by four of the gang.

"And now I'll deal with you," he cried. "Hand over any rubies or pearls you have, or I'll fill you with lead right now."

Pink still did not reply, and Schultz slowly raised his gun. His finger was just about to press the trigger when, with a tremendous howl and the beating of many drums, a horde of natives burst out of the woods. Too late Schultz remembered that in his eagerness to dispose of his rival he had neglected to watch for the cannibals. Several of his men were struck down before they even realised that enemies were upon them, and the rest began to retreat towards the shore, fighting desperately against overwhelming odds.

Pink's guards let their captive loose and rushed into the fight. The young sailor instantly dived into the undergrowth and began to crawl away on hands and knees. He was lucky enough to get away safely, and presently he reached the clearing. The empty diving dress was still there, and with some difficulty he got into it, though he was not able to secure the helmet properly.

Thus equipped once more as the God of the Sea, Pink started for the beach. He arrived there only just in time, for a raging mob of savages was manning the canoes to attack the schooner President. Of Schultz and his men there was no sign. Their bodies lay still amongst the trees, for the natives had killed every one of them.

The crowd on the beach saw Pink, and the howling ceased. The natives fell to the ground, praising this "god" who had helped them, as they thought, to

overcome their enemies, and Pink walked between the prostrate ranks straight into the sea.

There were only four men on the President, together with Daisy and McCarthy, the prisoners. When the natives appeared on the shore, Square Deal was unbound so that he might help to defend the boat. Soon he saw Pink advancing and the savages falling prostrate before him. On he came until his helmet disappeared beneath the surface, and Daisy screamed in fear.

"Stand by to hoist the mainsail!" roared Square Deal. "He'll be coming on board."

Pink came swimming up to the side of the ship as the sail went up. He had managed to get off the diving suit under water, and he was hurriedly hauled on board just as the anchor was weighed and the ship began to move.

"Thank Heaven you're safe!" cried Daisy fervently.

The schooner sailed away, while on the beach a crowd of natives bewailed the disappearance of the "sea god." Presently Daisy and Pink, standing by the rail, looked back, to see the last of the sinister island of pearls.

"I'm sorry for Schultz and his men," whispered the girl. "He was a wicked wretch, but I don't like to think of his awful fate."

"Forget all about it, girl," said Pink. "Have you still got those rubies?"

"Yes. I was going to throw them into the sea when I thought you were dead, but Square Deal stopped me. Here they are."

"And you keep them, Daisy," replied Pink. "I give them to you, and you shall do what you like with them, even when—"

"Well, go on," smiled the girl, for Pink had stopped in some confusion.

"Even when we are married—that is, if you will marry me, after all."

"I don't know if I dare be the wife of a 'sea god,'" laughed Daisy. "but when we get home I think I'll risk it!"

(By permission of the Paramount Film Co., Ltd., starring Richard Arlen and Fay Wray.)

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September 5th, 1931.



(Continued from page 2.)

British International Pictures at Elstree.

The hero of the affair was Lance Fairfax, the Australian star who recently arrived in this country, and the cause of the excitement was a horse which went into a panic, broke loose from the man in whose charge it was placed, and dashed round the studio, wrecking everything that lay in its path.

Fairfax, who takes the part of Escamillo, the torador, in the film, was testing the horse on the set when the full battery of lights, suddenly put on, frightened it.

He had momentarily left the animal in charge of a studio hand while he was making an adjustment to his make-up, and in a flash, as the full glare of the great arc lamps flooded the studio, the horse was on its hind legs, kicking wildly right and left.

Artistes rushed for cover as the animal tore its bridle loose from the man who held it and stamped around the studio, dashing into sound apparatus and knocking over several lamps in its wild career.

The situation had become desperate indeed when Lance Fairfax dashed up to the horse, grabbed its bridle and began to fondle and talk to it. In a moment or so it had quietened down and was taken off the set, leaving a bewildered but grateful unit to thank Fairfax—who had been slightly bruised on the left knee by the flying hoofs of the horse—for his timely intervention.

It was afterwards revealed that Fairfax had spent many years in breaking in horses in New Zealand and Australia. He served in the cavalry during the war, and gained an M.C. He was twice mentioned in despatches by Sir Douglas Haig.

Cameraman Locked Up in Bankruptcy Court.

For the purposes of reconstructing in the studio a furniture of the interior of the Bankrupt Court in London, the

art department of British International Pictures at Elstree sent a still photographer to take pictures inside the buildings.

The man duly arrived and was about to take the necessary photographs when his camera jammed, and a search ensued for a dark room in which the adjustment could be made. Various rooms in the building were visited, but none was found suitable. All had windows.

The position was getting critical as the pictures were needed by the evening, and the question of light had to be considered, when it was suggested that the safe seemed to be the only dark room available.

The next problem was: How were they to know outside when the cameraman had finished in the safe? No sound that he could make would be heard through the thick steel door. Finally it was decided to allow him five minutes in which to complete the job.

The minutes ticked away in the darkness of the safe. The five minutes passed and the door was flung open. But the camera was still jammed. Five more minutes were allowed him in the safe, and it was a perspiring but triumphant cameraman who emerged.

A Film Star's Mascot.

Gordon Harker, who plays the typical burglar-butler rôles in the British Lion-Gainsborough screen version of the Edgar Wallace racing thriller, "The Calendar," is possessed of an exceptionally clever mascot in the person of Jim, a blind terrier.

Jim unfortunately lost his sight just over a year ago, and since that time has been a pathetic and subdued figure unceasingly at Mr. Harker's side. They are, in fact, inseparable and devoted friends. Jim goes to the studio every day, where he follows his master from dressing-room to set, and so highly developed is his sense of intelligence that, despite his blindness, he can sense

when filming is in progress and when it is ended. He understands that when the microphones are open he must remain perfectly quiet and still, which he does, stretched out behind the powerful arc-lamps and cameras, nose in paws. Once the shooting is over he shakes himself and hurriedly joins his master.

Jim's patient submission to the calmity of eternal darkness and his super-intelligence have captured the sympathy and admiration of the studio staff and also of Miss Edna Best and Mr. Herbert Marshall, who are playing the leading rôles in "The Calendar." Jim has won the highest studio recognition—he is a "great feller."

Answers to Questions.

Yes, we have readers in all parts of the world, R.F.B. (Beckenham). Thanks for your appreciation of this paper. Bob Steele's real name is Bradbury. He is still appearing in films, some new ones being "The Sunrise Trail," "Headin' North," "The Ridin' Fool" and "The Oklahoma Cyclone." Yakima Canutt during the war served in the United States Navy, and later took up film work. Among his pictures are "The Human Tornado," "Desert Creed," "The Fighting Stallion" and "The Man With the Car." He does not reveal his age. Jack Perrin meant to become a scenario writer, but changed his mind when a film company gave him the chance to act. His pictures include "Grey Devil," "Code of the Range," "The North-West Mounted Police" series and "The Flaming West." He is six foot in height, and has brown eyes. Yes, the ever-popular Tom Mix will be seen again in Westerns produced by Universal.

Albert E. Smith is an Englishman who was born in Faversham, Kent, C.R.B. (London, S.W.). He went out to America several years ago, and with Stuart J. Blackton, another Englishman, they founded the Vitagraph film company, which Warner Bros. took over a few years ago. I presume, however, your query relates to Albert J. Smith who, as far as I am aware, is no relation, and was born in Chicago. He made his film debut in 1915, and since then has appeared in a number of cowboy films. You can get a photo of Johnny Mack Brown for 9d. post free from the "Picture Show," Photo Dept., Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

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CRACKED NUTS



The News Reel

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"Cracked Nuts."

Wendell Graham, Bert Wheeler; Zander U. Parkhurst (Zup), Robert Woolsey; Aunt Minnie van Arden, Edna May Oliver; Betty Harrington, Dorothy Lee; Carlotta, Leni Stengel; Baron Bogardus, Stanley Fields.

"Gun Smoke."

Brad Farley, Richard Arlen; Sue Vaucy, Mary Brian; Stub Wallock, Eugene Pallette; Kedge Darvis, William Boyd; Hampsey Dell, Louise Fazenda; Tack Gillup, Charles Winniger; Posey Meed, Guy Oliver; John K. Horton, James Durkin; Spot Skee, Brooks Benedict; Strike Johnson, William V. Mong.

Doug's Love for Travel.

It would not be surprising if Douglas Fairbanks gave us on the screen in the near future some of the results of his sight-seeing abroad. As is generally known, he recently returned to Hollywood after several months in the East, but though he had announced his intention of making it a hunting trip, he did not overlook the valuable material to be found. Doug very wisely accumulated quite a lot of it to be used for screen purposes.

Doug's "wanderlust" evinced itself early in his career. He had not long begun his acting on the stage when he felt a desire to see something of the world. Other Americans were crossing the Atlantic to see what lay beyond. Why shouldn't he? So with two pals Doug started for Europe on a cattle-boat. Each had ten pounds.

They worked their way safely across, had a glorious time, and within three months were back again in New York. A few years later after having left the stage for a time and then gone back to it, Doug once again felt he must travel.

This time it was the mysterious Orient which captured his fancy. He wanted to see what Japan, in particular, was like. So once more he set out, but in London stumbled across a friend from New York and, changing his mind about Japan, shortly afterwards returned to the States.

Doug has been abroad more than once since then. The idea of rest does not appeal to him. He must be up and hurrying off somewhere, and travel enables him to satisfy the "wanderlust" he has always felt.

"Beau Hunks."

The Hal Roach studios are again busy with a picture which is sure to raise a laugh. About a hundred and fifty members of the Hollywood American

September 12th, 1931.

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"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

Legion are acting as soldiers of the Foreign Legion, and as desert Riffs in "Beau Hunks," in which will also appear those two inimitable comedians, Laurel and Hardy. There will not be many serious moments with them in the film. The desert scenes are being filmed on Hemmosa Beach.

An Interrupted Holiday.

Gary Cooper is now hard at work on his new talkie, and feeling quite fit once more after his illness. Following it he had gone abroad to recuperate, and after spending several weeks in Italy had come over to London to finish his holiday. But he had been here only a little more than a day when a cable was sent to him requesting his immediate return to Hollywood to begin work again in pictures.

Gary's interrupted visit to this country must have been, I am sure, a keen disappointment, for there is no doubt he hoped to revive memories of his stay here when a boy. His parents, both of them English, had gone to America before his birth. Cooper, senior, became a superior-court judge in Helena, Montana, and was also the owner of a cattle ranch sixty-five miles from the city on the headwaters of the Missouri River.

Gary was born in Helena, and soon learnt to ride and swim.

Then when he was nine years of age, his parents came back to England for a time, bringing Gary and his brother Arthur with them. For three and a half years the two boys attended school in Dunstable, and then returned to America. Gary is certain to come over here again, and when he does will probably arrange for a longer stay amid old English haunts.

Inspired by Lindbergh.

Jack Oakie is once more really happy, which may seem a strange thing to say of a comedian who has never looked anything else. Some weeks ago, however, Jack Oakie asked Paramount for an increase in salary. But there was no readiness to give it to him, and matters reached the stage when it seemed likely that Jack would be temporarily out of pictures. But things ended happily, and now he is.

Many of you may not know, perhaps, that it was Lindbergh's feat of flying the Atlantic which really inspired Jack Oakie to take up film work. There is, obviously, no connection between these two things. But until his fellow-countryman had attempted something really difficult and achieved success, Jack Oakie had fought shy of the screen as being beyond his powers.

It was Lindbergh's daring which changed his mind. Jack left the stage as soon as he could, and began haunting the studios. Then one day while trying his luck at First National, he saw Wesley Ruggles, the director. He asked him for a job, and was given a small and unnamed part in "Finders Keepers." About eight months later Jack Oakie joined Paramount and was cast in "The Fleet's In." It "made" him, and he found himself just as famous as Lindbergh.

Answers to Questions.

Harry Richman and Clara Bow have not acted together in a film, F.S. (Plymouth). Harry Richman has, in fact, appeared in only one picture, "Puttin' on the Ritz," after which he returned to New York to resume his stage work. Hero is the cast of "True to the Navy": Clara Bow (Ruby Nolan), Fredric March (Gummer McCoy), Harry Green (Solomon Bimberg), Rex Bell (Eddie), Eddie Fotherston (Michael), Eddie Dunn (Albert), Ray Cooke (Pee-wee), Harry Sweet (Artie), Adelo Windsor (Maizic), Sam Hardy (Grogan), Jed Proaty (manager of the dance hall).

Wendell bought a revolution, Zup gambled for a crown, and so they both became King of El Dorania—with comic complications. A joyous farce, starring Wheeler and Woolsey, who are aided and abetted by Dorothy Lee and Edna May Oliver.



Aunt Minnie Speaks Her Mind.

OVER the diminutive but tempestuous South American kingdom of El Dorania King Oscar happened to be still reigning as Wendell Graham approached a big block of flats on Park Avenue, New York City, on the second floor of which the girl he loved and her aunt—who despised and detested him—occupied luxurious apartments.

Wendell, however, was not at the moment interested either in King Oscar or in his kingdom, nor did it occur to him that he ever would be. His thoughts were occupied exclusively with beautiful Betty Harrington and the distressing intimation he had received—by telephone—that she was going away.

Wendell was young as well as ardent, clean-shaven, and not bad-looking. His brown hair was curly, and his eyes were grey—nearly as dark as grey as the smartly-cut lounge suit he was wearing, and considerably darker than the grey soft felt hat upon his head. In his right hand he carried a large and expensive bouquet of roses.

He stepped into the hallway of the building and approached the lift-shaft. A taller young man was already standing before the gate of ornamental ironwork, jabbing impatiently at the bell-push, and, according to the illuminated indicator above the gate, the cage was hovering somewhere between the fifteenth and sixteenth floors.

Wendell waited, sniffing appreciatively at his roses, but the tall young man smote the gate with his cane as the pointer proclaimed that the lift, instead of descending for his benefit, was ascending still higher. For a while the cage remained stationary at the twentieth floor, then began to move upwards again.

The tall young man lost his temper utterly. He kicked savagely at the gate; he caught hold of a portion of its filigree work with both hands, and he rattled the gate with all his might.

Wendell was beginning to feel impatient, but he stared at the tall one in surprise. And just then something happened. The gate, for all its ornamentation, was only of cast iron. The piece of filigree work snapped off in the hands that treated it so ill, and the young man, having stared at the fragment in dismay, flung it down on the marble floor, and fled up the adjacent staircase.

The illuminated pointer began to trace the downward career of the lift-cage. Wendell was sniffing at his roses when the door was flung open and the lift-man emerged.

The lift-man, a lurchy fellow, looked down at the broken ironwork on the floor, looked up at the damaged gate, and looked fiercely at Wendell.

Wendell said nothing; the lift-man said nothing; but abruptly a massive fist crashed into Wendell's jaw, and he went sprawling on his back, still holding the roses. As he picked himself up he perceived that his assailant was picking up the broken piece of iron, and his

back was turned. He made a dive for the doorway, and descended the front steps to the street. Explanation, it seemed to him, would be useless, and might be painful.

On the pavement outside the building he stopped short. A long ladder had been left leaning against the wall by a man who had been attending to a broken window-pane on the second floor, and not far from the sill against which the ladder was resting was the open window of the bath-room of the flat in which Betty van Arden resided with her aunt, Minnie van Arden.

Depositing the roses on a step, Wendell struggled manfully with the swaying ladder till its topmost rung reposed against the open bath-room window. Then, retrieving his roses, he climbed gingerly upwards.

In the spacious drawing-room of the flat of which the bath-room was an essential detail, Aunt Minnie van Arden and Betty were packing.

Betty, a dainty little slip of a thing with a wistful expression and large blue-grey eyes, was standing beside a half-filled cabin trunk. Her aunt had just emerged from her own bed-room, tall, plain, severe, carrying some of her own frocks from a wardrobe.

Evidently in the intervals of stowing things in the trunk these two were carrying on a conversation concerning the young man who was in the act of climbing up the ladder.

"But Wendell said he's going to build up his fortune," said Betty defensively.

"Oh, he did, eh?" retorted her aunt, grabbing up a frock she had dropped on the carpet. "He's never made a cent! He inherited five hundred thousand dollars, and promptly reduced them to a hundred thousand. If he ever loses that, he'll never earn a penny."

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HELP THE NEWSAGENT.

Have you ever thought how difficult it is for a newsagent to order just the right number of copies of any particular paper each week? You can make his task much easier if you place a regular order with him. You will not only help him to order correctly and avoid waste, but will make sure of getting your copy regularly each week.

And if you think you can live on love, try to pay the grocer with a kiss!"

Wendell by this time had reached the sill of the bath-room window and was clambering over it.

"He has a lot of sensible ideas," declared Betty. "He says that, with prudence, two can live as cheaply as one."

"Why doesn't he marry Prudence?" inquired Aunt Minnie tartly.

"Oh, auntie, please be nice to him—just for to-day."

Wendell, who was now standing behind the half-open bath-room door, heard that plea and smiled at the roses. What a darling Betty was, he reflected lovingly.

"As long as I have my strength," cried Aunt Minnie, "he'll never get in here! I'm sick and tired of shooing that insect off the premises!"

Having deposited the frock in the trunk she rose with clenched fists.

"If he comes here again," she went on vehemently, "he's likely to get his throat caught between my fingers."

Wendell stepped back from the half-open door on to the little marble platform, behind curtains, where one ordinarily retreated to indulge in a shower-bath. The chain which worked the contrivance was hanging beside him. He was concealed from view, but he could still hear everything that was said.

"Oh, auntie," protested Betty, "why are you so cold?"

"I'm not cold!" snapped Aunt Minnie. "I'm hot! I'm burning up! You shouldn't mention his name to me! I'm going to take a shower!"

Betty was fully dressed in a dainty frock of figured silk, but her aunt was wearing a wrap over an astonishing suit of pyjamas. She stalked from the drawing-room into her bed-room and out of her bed-room into the bath-room.

"Wendell Graham!" she snorted as she went. "A total loss!"

Soaked!

SHE closed the bath-room window and fastened it. She took a syringe from a glass shelf, opened her mouth, and sprayed her throat with an antiseptic lotion, as though washing away from her tonsils and her larynx the contamination of the name she had just uttered.

"That little sap!" she hissed, and sprayed again.

Betty looked in at her from the doorway leading to the hall.

"If he gets in here again," said her aunt, inhaling and exhaling, "to—propose to you—refer him—to me."

"Oh, but it's me he wants to marry!" laughed Betty. "Why do you dislike him so?"

"Why shouldn't I? He's a wealthy idler, who produces nothing, achieves nothing, and means nothing. He has a hundred thousand dollars—and isn't worth a cent!"

She put down the syringe and snapped her fingers.

"Oh, but Wendell is a deep thinker," persisted Betty. "He told me so. He's going to leave footprints on the sands of time."

"He's a lot more likely to leave fingerprints!" scoffed her aunt, shedding her wrap.

Betty pouted, and Betty looked perfectly adorable when she pouted. Wendell, imprisoned behind the curtains of the shower-bath, could see her with one eye, and appreciated the fact. Her aunt, who could see her with both eyes, relented slightly, stepped forward, and took her into her arms.

"Oh, can't you get it through your silly little head that I love you, too?" she exclaimed, and kissed her.

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"Where's my cap?" she wondered, looking about the room.

The cap—a waterproof contrivance devised to protect its wearer's hair against the water from the shower—was hanging on a peg quite close to Wendell's face. He took it down and dropped it neatly through the tiny gap between the curtains clean into Aunt Minnie van Arden's hand.

She stared at it, but imagined that Betty had tossed it to her on her way out from the bath-room. She pulled the cap over her head, plunged a hand through the curtains, and pulled vigorously at the chain.

A stream of water descended upon Wendell's head, soaking him to the skin. He held up the roses, but they provided only a negligible protection.

"In my opinion," shouted Aunt Minnie to Betty, who had gone back to the cabin trunk, "he's all wet! Put him out of your mind—forget him! The next time I see him I shall ignore him completely. Oh, what's that?"

The sound of a crash had reached her ears, and she ran into the drawing-room. Betty had dropped a bottle of scent, which had spilled its contents all over the carpet, and when her aunt appeared she was mopping up a perfumed pool with a towel.

"Oh, good heavens, the carpet! Here, give me that!" And Aunt Minnie snatched away the towel and went down on her knees. "They'll probably make us pay for this."

Wendell crept out from the shower, and peeped round the drawing-room doorway.

"Wendell!" cried Betty involuntarily, and immediately Aunt Minnie scrambled to her feet. She was about to blaze at the intruder when she became aware of his saturated condition.

"Is it raining?" she exclaimed.

"No," replied Wendell facetiously. "I perspire so freely."

"Stop dripping on my carpet!"

On a little desk beside him there was a blotting-pad. He deposited it on the carpet and stood upon it.

"Get off!" shouted Aunt Minnie angrily.

Wendell stepped off the blotting-pad and sank into a chair.

"Get up!"

Wendell got up, and Aunt Minnie, restoring the blotting-pad to the desk, pointed imperiously to the front door.

"Get out!"

Wendell retreated into the hall, and she followed him; but the sound of running water sent her scurrying into the bath-room. She dashed clean into the shower in order to turn off the water, and Wendell promptly darted back to the drawing-room doorway.

"I brought these for you," he said to Betty, holding out the dripping bunch of roses. "I've been crying on them because you're going away."

"Oh, thanks, Wendell!" said Betty, taking the flowers and smelling them appreciatively. "I do hate to leave you."

"Where are you going?" he inquired. "Abroad."

"Yes, but what part of abroad?"

"The answer," boomed the voice of Aunt Minnie close behind him, "is non-essential."

"Is that far?" asked Wendell, facing her almost boldly.

"Just far enough to escape pests like you! Now wriggle, you worm!"

"Oh, but auntie," began Betty, "he's —"

"Yes, auntie," began Wendell, "I'm —"

"Don't speak when I'm interrupting!"

Aunt Minnie snatched the bunch of roses

from her niece's hands and thrust them into Wendell's. "How dare you breathe into this apartment?"

Wendell observed that Betty's aun was very wet, if not quite so wet as he was.

"You're dripping on your carpet!" he informed her.

"Imbecile! Don't you realise that Betty is too healthy to catch a germ like you? Don't stand there acting like a fool!"

"I'm not acting!" protested Wendell. "I just came to say good-bye!"

"You've said it—now get out! We'll have nothing to do with one of your ilk."

"I'm not an elk! You think that I can't make good, don't you? Well, I'll show you! I've already advertised in the papers for an opportunity to invest my money. Mark these words, and mark them well—I'll make my mark—I'll come through with a crash!"

He waved his arms dramatically as he spoke, and one of them came into violent contact with a vase on a slender table near the door. The vase was smashed to atoms, and Aunt Minnie straightway bundled him out into the hall, and opened the front door.

"Get—get——" she spluttered.

Wendell stepped meekly forth into the corridor, and the door was slammed behind him.

The Winning of a Crown.

NEXT morning Wendell, having bathed and breakfasted, was sitting at an ornate table in the lounge of his own elaborate apartment at the other end of Park Avenue when his manservant announced that two gentlemen had called to see him in answer to his advertisement.

Wendell, who was wearing a decorative dressing-gown, fastened the cord around his waist and told the manservant to show the callers into his presence.

They came—two obvious foreigners, but of distinguished appearance, smartly dressed in morning clothes with white waistcoats. One of them was carrying a large portfolio under his arm.

They bowed before him, and, at his request, seated themselves. It transpired that the name of one was Boris Andrieff, the name of the other Ricardo Valdez.

"We have read with great pleasure your advertisement in the papers," explained Boris, caressing his tiny black moustache.

"Yes," said Wendell. "Pretty good, wasn't it? I wrote it myself."

Boris and Ricardo bowed politely. Boris said, with a smile:

"We have for sale a revolution in the beautiful country of El Dorania."

"Eh?" exclaimed Wendell in astonishment. "El Dorania? A revolution?"

They nodded, for all the world as though both were actuated by a single spring. Wendell rubbed his chin, recently shaved, and stared at them.

"I want to produce something," he said. "Achieve something! Mean something!" He rose to his feet to make his words really impressive, and they rose with him. "A revolution! El Dorania! Tell me, if I bought this revolution, would it distinguish me?"

Boris looked at Ricardo, and Ricardo looked at Boris. Boris, who spoke English well enough, but with a decided accent, gestured and replied:

"That's just what it would do. You will depose the present monarch, King Oscar. Then you will automatically become king!"

King! A wonderful word! An incredible proposition!

"You mean," gasped Wendell, "that

I'd have a crown and a sceptre—and—
and everything?"

"Everything!"

Boris did not even trouble to point out that it was a sceptre, and not a sceptre that a monarch—metaphorically—wielded.

Wendell became elated. Revolutions, as he knew quite well, were of fairly frequent occurrence in El Dorania, and money, he had always been given to understand, could accomplish anything—except Aunt Minnie's approval of his suit. Surely even she would surrender unconditionally to a king!

"It will take a man of your force, your aggressiveness, your leadership," declared Boris, "to rattle the ancient bones of El Dorania."

He saluted; Ricardo saluted; Wendell saluted—and then Wendell sank down into his chair entranced and clasped his hands. Boris and Ricardo regarded one another significantly—it is to be feared that one of them even winked—and a discussion ensued—a discussion which reached a conclusion entirely satisfactory to all parties.

But neither Boris Andrieff nor Ricardo Valdez were aware of what was happening at the moment in El Dorania. The voyage between that diminutive but tempestuous kingdom and New York Harbour took six days—and in less than six days El Dorania could make (and also unmake) history.

In the evening of the day upon which Wendell signed his name to a magnificent-looking document produced from the portfolio Ricardo carried beneath his arm a remarkable American with the remarkable name of Zander Ulysses Parkhurst was at the royal palace in Caldera, capital of El Dorania, as the guest of King Oscar.

Zander Ulysses Parkhurst—usually known as "Zup" for short—parted his red hair in the middle, wore tortoiseshell rimmed spectacles, and smoked innumerable cigars. His nose was long,

his face was longer, his self-assurance was enormous.

He had met the king at a café which that monarch patronised incognito, and the king—for his own purposes—had invited Zup to dine with him at the palace.

Zup went, only too delighted to go, because—as he himself informed Oscar—he was keen to see all the sights.

The dinner was an excellent one, and Zup did full justice to all the courses which were set before him by a variety of flunkies.

Afterwards there was a ball in the ball-room, which did not specially interest the thin-faced American, and in another spacious chamber the cream of El Doranian nobility and society played roulette, dice, and a variety of other gambling games.

King Oscar, seeing that Zup was bored with the dancing, led him away to this spacious apartment, and a golden-haired beauty in a gorgeous evening-frock, which vaguely suggested mourning, followed them.

Zup and the king lost a few hundred dollars at the roulette-table, then gravitated towards another table at which dice were being thrown. The courtiers of both sexes made room for their monarch and his friends, then crowded round to watch the play that followed between Zup and Oscar.

It seemed that luck, instead of merely smiling upon the American, laughed aloud that night. Every time he threw he beat the monarch's throw. He won, and won and won till the heat of the room, combined with the champagne he had swallowed and the success he achieved, made him a trifle light-headed.

"There you are, Oscar, old king!" he exclaimed triumphantly as he picked up an absolute bundle of El Doranian banknotes. "You know, I'm kinda glad I dropped into your little village. I think I'm going to like it here."

"Most extraordinary," said King

Oscar, smiling, in spite of his losses. "But I shall venture again."

"Yeah," nodded Zup, puffing at a cigar and waving the notes. "Go ahead and venture. Anything you like, from your regal shoes to the royal baking-powder!"

"Very well, then," decided Oscar. "I shall wager the royal timepiece." And from a pocket of his resplendent uniform he produced a watch.

"The royal timepiece, eh?" said Zup, examining the watch. "Oscar, you've got to lay off those bazaar boards. This thing won't go—for you, or with me!"

King Oscar looked mildly surprised and retrieved the watch. He made his way across the room and came back with a square box, which he opened. Inside the box a golden crown, studded with diamonds, reposed in a nest of purple velvet.

"'Tis a pretty thing," decided Zup, glancing at it. "What do you call that, Oscar—the El Doranian panama?"

"'Tis the Imperial Royal Crown of El Dorania," said Oscar indignantly.

"Quit your kiddin', Oscar, quit your kiddin'," laughed Zup. "How many cigarette coupons did you have to save for that?"

"Coupons?" breathed the king aghast, while a murmur ran round the assembly like the sound of wind in a corn-field. "Man, that came from two of the greatest jewellers in the world!"

"Okay!" responded Zup cheerfully. "Anything to help out a king friend of mine!"

He picked up the dice-box with one hand and extracted his cigar from his mouth with the other.

"Come, babies," he cooed, "show me those seven wonders of the world!"

He emptied the box on to the baize-covered table. Three double-sixes!

King Oscar took the dice-box—and threw a three, a four—and a one!

"There you are, Oscar," chortled Zup, helping himself to the crown. "Another forward pass!"

He put the crown upon his head in the casual manner in which a more



"It will take a man of your force, your aggressiveness, your leadership," declared Boris, "to rattle the ancient bones of El Dorania."

ordinary person might have donned his bowler hat, and beamed at the man he had defeated.

"Hail the king! Hail the king!" cried the crowd of elegant men and women; and the golden-haired beauty in the gorgeous evening-frock looked smilingly up at Zup.

"Oscar," said that young man, "take a bow."

"Ah, but they mean you!" was the amazing reply.

"Me?" scoffed Zup. "Nix, Oscar! You wouldn't give a pal the run-around, would you?"

"It is the custom in El Dorania," replied the king calmly, "that whosoever wins the crown by fair means shall automatically become king."

Zup's eyebrows went up and his eyes opened widely, but it seemed evident that Oscar was in earnest—and Zup had heard things about this quaint little kingdom.

"In that case," he decided, "I shall automatically take a bow." And he bowed in all directions.

"Hail the king! Hail the king!" chorused the crowd, but it occurred to Zup that the hailing was a trifle lukewarm.

"Aw, come, come, come, boys!" he cried. "You're not hailing—you're just drizzling! Come on now—let's have some real hail! Shoot!"

He waved his arms as though conducting them and set the pace.

"Hail the king! Hail the king! King! King! King!"

They shouted with gusto, and, having shouted, applauded their own efforts.

"That's better—that's better!" approved Zup, shaking hands with those nearest to him. "Zander is my name—I'm to be your new king. Come around to the palace any old night and see me, will you, boys? How d'you do?"

"Congratulations!" cried a voice. And Zup, grinning broadly, moved about amongst his new subjects, shaking hands with them till his own hand ached.

Something Like a King!

OSCAR, leading aside the golden-haired girl, said to her in a low voice:

"He thinks he's beaten me with my own loaded dice—but 'tis I who have won, by relinquishing the crown and escaping assassination, Carlotta."

"Oscar," replied Carlotta, "you're much too smart to be a king!"

Oscar nodded, and was making for a doorway when a shabbily dressed and wild-eyed man came running at him from the direction of the grand staircase, a revolver in hand. The fellow fired, and an electric fitting against one of the walls fell to the floor in fragments.

Oscar staggered, clapped a hand to his side and collapsed. Confusion reigned.

The would-be assassin was seized; a stretcher was brought, and Oscar was borne away upon it. Zup, deserted by his new subjects, puffed thoughtfully at his cigar. Evidently it was not all joy to be King of El Dorania!

But Oscar, even as Carlotta had said, was much too smart to be a king. The would-be assassin was in his pay, the men who carried the stretcher were his friends. In an ante-room the stretcher was lowered and Oscar bounded up from it, consulting the watch which Zup had despised.

"I've got just twenty minutes to catch the boat for Vera Cruz," he said. "Where are the tickets?"

"Here they are, you lucky Majesty," laughed one of the stretcher-bearers,

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and handed him a strip of tickets, while another produced a cloak. "The luggage is already on board."

"Thanks," said Oscar cheerfully. "Good-bye, boys—don't miss the assassination of the new king!"

He scurried out from the palace, and the golden-haired Carlotta, having watched him go, returned to the room in which Zup was now mounted on a chair in response to a general demand for a speech. Oscar's supposed demise troubled nobody.

"This is," began Zup, "this is—er—Zander Ulysses Parkhurst speaking. The initials are Z-U-P, so just call me Zup, folks. Z-U-P—Zup!"

He waved his cigar in the air and looked down with a smile at Carlotta, who had reached his side and was looking archly up at him.

"My thoughts," he went on, "go back to a little farmhouse in America—and while my thoughts are away I would like to make a few remarks. Fellow subjects, you now stand on the threshold of prosperity."

He stepped from the chair on to the table at which he had dined so successfully. "Gather in a little closer, friends," he urged. "Get on the threshold. That's fine! As King of El Dorania I shall stand behind every home, inside every bank. We will endeavour to make this a land of milk and honey."

He leant down to Carlotta's left ear and repeated, "Honey!" then continued:

"My dear friends, what more can I say? I want you to know that we are all for one, and I'm for all, and you for me, and me for you, and two for tea and tea for two, and—and—"

He found that he was holding one of Carlotta's hands without quite knowing how it had happened.

"Thank you, folks, thank you!" he said, and jumped down from the table.

The crowd, thus dismissed, streamed towards the doors, but Carlotta lingered. "Your Royal Highness is cute," she told him roguishly.

"Yeah!" drawled Zup. "Well, you're not so bad, either."

And he slipped his arm through hers and was led away by her out of the overheated room on to a noble terrace overlooking the harbour and the sea.

"Well," she said softly, as they stood beside the pillared parapet, "I hope your Majesty will have a long reign." "Don't worry, honey," returned Zup brightly, "this isn't going to be a reign—it's going to be a cloudburst!"

King Zup slept that night in the royal bed in the royal bedchamber with a couple of armed guards outside the two doors, and by the time he went to bed he had consumed so much champagne that he was unpleasantly reminded of the proverb "uneasy lies a head that wears a crown," for he had neglected to remove that structure of gold and precious stones!

Next morning, after dealing with sundry affairs of state which struck him as being of singular unimportance, he arrayed himself in a stylish uniform as commander-in-chief of the El Doranian army, and went for a stroll in the palace grounds, followed by a bodyguard of four soldiers with fixed bayonets.

By seeming accident he encountered Carlotta, dressed in black velvet, wearing widow's weeds. The bodyguard was dismissed and the two walked and talked.

"Your Majesty," said Carlotta, after a while, "will, of course, take unto himself a queen?"

"Well," said Zup cheerfully, "my Majesty hasn't thought much about that. I notice, however, that you have annexed yourself to the royal right arm."

"It's an old El Doranian custom," she told him demurely.

They sat together on a marble bench. "Tell me all about yourself, honey, tell me all about yourself," said Zup encouragingly.

"Well," said Carlotta, nestling closer, "I have been the bride of every king this country has had in the past year—all twelve of them!"

"All twelve of them?" echoed Zup. "You're not a wife—you're a calendar."

She laughed at that and held up her left hand, from which she had removed a glove. Her fingers were loaded with wedding-rings.

"You see these?" she said. "These are the wedding-rings of my late royal husbands."

"Your late royal husbands, eh? What a great time you must have had shopping for widow's weeds."

"I get so tired of the funerals; they're very dull."

"Yes," he nodded, "and from now on we ought to cut 'em out, honey—we ought to cut 'em out."

She projected her thumb in his direction.

"This space," she said, "is for you."

"Me? Thirteenth? I should say not. I don't want to break your luck."

"Oh, but have you never thought seriously of marriage?"

"Certainly. That's why I'm single."

"Haven't you ever been in love?"

"Twice; but I'm all right now." And he nudged her playfully.

The Lord Chamberlain had approached unnoticed. He addressed Zup in El Doranian, which was Greek to that American.

"He's full of atmospheric," complained Zup.

"What he says, your Majesty," explained Carlotta, "is that next week you will get your face on all the coins of the realm."

"Never mind about getting my face on 'em," said Zup. "What I want is to get my hands on 'em!"

Carlotta laughed heartily. This King was certainly different in every way from his predecessors!

A Shock for Aunt Minnie.

THAT day Aunt Minnie and Betty set out from New York harbour in a liner bound for various South American ports including that of Caldera, capital of El Dorania. The Atlantic was comparatively calm, the weather was excellent, but Aunt Minnie did not emerge from her state-room. She was seasick.

She continued to feel ill throughout the voyage, and south of Florida the heat added to her troubles. It seemed to Betty that she was always groaning—and nearly always sniffing at a bottle of smelling-salts.

On the morning of the sixth day she was huddled in a chair with a towel soaked in ice-water round her forehead and the inevitable bottle of smelling-salts in her hand. Beside her was a little table loaded with all manner of supposed cures for sea-sickness.

"Auntie," cried Betty, "you really must pull yourself together. We shall be landing soon."

"Why pull myself together?" demanded Aunt Minnie with a loud groan. "I'll only fall apart again. Got any more aspirin?"

"The whole six boxes are empty."

"Well, give me the boxes. Do some-

thing. Put another cold compress on my head. Oh-h-h!"

Betty removed the towel, soaked it in fresh ice-water, and restored it to the sufferer's head.

"We haven't been outside this state-room since we started the trip," she complained. "It's a gorgeous day. It's a shame to stay inside."

She moved across to a window overlooking the promenade deck, but her aunt's only response was a groan. She opened the window and leaned out of it.

In a deck chair just below the window Wendell was lounging, though not at his ease, and beside him stood Boris and Ricardo.

"And did your Majesty have breakfast?" inquired Boris solicitously.

"Yes—for a while," Wendell gloomily responded.

"Ah, but do not worry, your Majesty. Soon we shall have arrived in El Dorania."

"You mustn't call me 'Majesty' till I'm king," protested Wendell. "I'm just Wendell to you."

Boris bowed. Betty listened. She had known all the time that her lover was on board, but so far she had found it impossible to converse with him.

"Thank you, your Majesty," said Boris, "but you must at once begin declaring yourself king for the sake of the morale of the revolutionary cause."

"All right, if you say so," growled Wendell; "but as soon as we land I'm going straight to bed."

Boris looked at Ricardo and frowned.

"Oh, but, your Majesty, your subjects will probably wish to crown you immediately."

"Yes? Well, they won't—see?"

"Every time I think of that little shrimp," complained Aunt Minnie, flinging aside the wet towel, "my temperature goes up to two hundred and sixty. The sap! Mark my words and mark them all—I'll come through with a crash!"

Betty made no response to this outburst, for Boris and Ricardo were leaving Wendell to make arrangements about the landing.

"Wendell!" whispered Betty, leaning still further out of the state-room window.

"Sweetheart!" exclaimed Wendell, looking up.

"S-s-sh!"

"What are you doing here?" he whispered, moving close to her.

"I'm going to El Dorania—your Majesty."

"What d'you mean?"

"Oh, I heard what he said. You're a king! I just knew you'd turn out to be something like that!"

"Whether I'm king or not, you're my queen—and I love you so much it hurts."

"Yes—it hurts auntie!"

"Honey, I've simply got to talk to you!"

"Well, I can't come out, and you can't come in. If Aunt Minnie sees you there'll be a riot!"

She held out her hand to him, and he kissed it. But Aunt Minnie, from her chair, cried out indignantly:

"Stop hanging out over that ocean, with me in here dying!"

"Wait a minute," whispered Betty to Wendell. "I'll be right back."

She pulled a little curtain across the window and went back to her aunt.

"Here I am in the last stages of something-or-other," wailed the suffering lady, "and you hanging out of that window! What's the big attraction out there?"

"Something marvellous," replied Betty. "You'd go wild if you saw it."

"You and your romantic surprises!" scoffed Aunt Minnie, holding her head. "Let me see it!" And she rose uncertainly to her feet.

"Oh, auntie," Betty cried in alarm, "you don't have to see it!"

But Betty was pushed unceremoniously aside, and Aunt Minnie tottered resolutely across to the window, pulled aside the curtain, and thrust forth her head.

Wendell, eagerly awaiting Betty's return, did not pause to look. His arms swept round Aunt Minnie's neck, and his lips were crushed on hers.

"Oooh!" she howled; and Wendell shrank back.

"I—I didn't mean it!" he stammered. "Honest, I didn't mean it."

"Runt!" howled Aunt Minnie, almost murdering him with her eyes. "What are you doing on the same ocean with me?"

"I'm a king," he told her proudly. "You're a what?"

"Well, that is, I'm going to be a king. I told you I'd make good. I bought a revolution—and they're going to make me King of El Dorania."

Aunt Minnie disappeared from view,

but the door of the state-room opened, and she came running out from it, her physical condition entirely forgotten, her sufferings overwhelmed with mental panic.

"Say that again!" she cried, standing threateningly over him.

"I'm going to be King of El Dorania."

"Oh!" she shrieked. "Oh, my plantations! My sugar! My wheat! My corn!"

"Got a corn?" inquired Wendell sympathetically.

While Betty peeped out at him round the curtain she raved and stormed at him.

"You miserable ninny!" she shouted. "You idiot! You interfering fool! You listen to me! I've given King Oscar two hundred thousand dollars to save my plantations! If you dare to set foot on El Doranian soil, King Oscar will have your head!"

She bounced back into the state-room, and while he stared blankly at the spot where she had stood the door was slammed and the window beside him was closed with a crash.

Rival Monarchs.

CALDERA possessed a natural harbour, formed by a narrow inlet from the ocean which opened into its bay. Liners called there seldom, and their coming was an event. As the vessel from New York steamed majestically into the bay, King Zup proceeded across the palace grounds to the waterfront to welcome it, and beside him walked Carlotta. To suit the occasion he was dressed as Admiral of the non-existent El Doranian fleet, with a cocked hat (such as Nelson might have worn) perched upon his head.



By seeming accident, he encountered Carlotta, dressed in black velvet, wearing widow's weeds.

The quay was crowded with men, women and children, and several Court functionaries were gathered together on the edge of its granito wall.

Behind Zup and Carlotta marched four flunkies, one carrying a large box of cigars, another carrying an automatic lighter, the third a cigar-cutter, the fourth an ash-tray. Not an old El Doranian custom this, but one that Zup himself had initiated.

"My Majesty would have a cigar," said Zup, turning to the box-carrier, "and remember, none of those fireproof stogies like you handed me yesterday."

The box was opened and presented, a cigar was selected; the flunkie with the cutter clipped off the end, the man with the trick lighter created a flame in which Zup ignited his smoke.

"I'll meet you in the billiards-room in half an hour," he said with a wave of dismissal. "Scram!"

The flunkies returned to the palace, and Zup and Carlotta went out through a gateway on to the quay and stood beside a gun-carriage, looking out across the bay at the liner which was being anchored there.

"On the level, Carlotta," said Zup, turning to his fair companion, "you're a jewel."

"And you, your Majesty," breathed Carlotta, "you are my pearl."

"Don't string me, honey—don't string me," he said, waving his cigar.

"And your Carlotta—is she attractive to you?"

"Attractive? Why, your eyes are like the heavens—your hair is a golden cascade—your cheeks are like luscious peaches—your lips are like ripened cherries—"

"Oh, your Majesty!" exclaimed Carlotta, delighted.

"Yes," said Zup. "If only you had money you'd be beautiful!"

He stepped backwards, chuckling, stumbled against the cannon and clutched at a lever.

The cannon, which had been loaded for the firing of a salvo, went off with a deafening roar, causing the crowd on the quay to jump violently and causing Zup to look anxiously down at his nether garments.

"Did you hear something rip?" he inquired.

"No," responded Carlotta, somewhat coldly. "It was only your little joke misfired!"

A boat had been lowered from the liner and the third mate escorted Aunt Minnie and Betty over the side and down the iron ladderway into it. The sailors were pulling sturdily towards the quay when Boris and Ricardo emerged with Wendell from his state-room, and a second boat was lowered from its davits.

"So this is my country?" said Wendell, gazing across at the crowded quay. "Yes, your Majesty," replied Boris, "and we will now go ashore and arrange your reception."

"Okay!" said Wendell. "You go first." And he followed them down the steps.

An outburst of cheering from the shore, intended for the boat which was drawing near the landing-steps, caused him to look round just as he was stepping into the waiting boat. He slipped and fell with a splash into the water, and after floundering about for some minutes was hauled on board by a sailor who also saved his straw hat. He was soaked to the skin, and looked anything but a monarch as he sat dripping in the stern.

Zup, standing on the quay with his ministers around him, thoughtfully con-

templated Aunt Minnie and Betty as they were helped ashore. He turned to an enormous fellow in uniform, Baron Bogardus, General of the El Doranian Army, and maker and unmaker of monarchs.

"By the way, baron," he said, "who is this woman we're saluting?"

"Mrs. Minnie van Arden, the richest property owner of our country," was the reply.

"You don't say?" exclaimed Zup. "Stand by, then, baron, while I unbend to the lady."

He strode majestically forward, cigar in hand; but it was to Betty that he mistakenly addressed himself.

"How do you do? On behalf of the Chamber of Commerce of El Dorania, I wish to welcome you to our sun-kissed shores."

"Oh, thank you so much," said Betty. "Who are you, then?"

Zup drew himself up to his full height and waved the cigar.

"I am the king."

Aunt Minnie, who was gazing about her, turned and stared. Betty exclaimed:

"You the king? Impossible!"

"Why, Mrs. van Arden—"

"I'm not Mrs. van Arden! I'm Betty Harrington."

"Then," reproved Zup, "you've made a very grave error. Who *is* Mrs. van Arden?"

"Why, my Aunt Minnie—over there."

"How do, Aunt Min?" said Zup, striding across to that lady.

"And who might you be?" she inquired frigidly.

"Why, I am the king."

"I'm hysterical!" howled Aunt Minnie. "Why isn't King Oscar here to greet me? If you're a king, I'm an ostrich!"

"Enough of this!" cried Zup disgustedly, and he turned commandingly to his congregated subjects. "Crowd up, men! It's time to hail!"

"Hail the king! Hail the king! King! King! King!" From hundreds of throats came the acclamation, and Zup grinned triumphantly at the flabbergasted property owner.

"You're an ostrich!" he informed her.

Aunt Minnie seized her niece by the arm and dragged her away.

"You come with me!" she snapped.

They entered a waiting carriage, and were being driven off to Caldera's principal hotel when Wendell climbed out of the second boat on to the quay, with the assistance of Boris and Ricardo.

Baron Bogardus immediately strode forward to greet the two immaculate emissaries, and Wendell stood wringing the water out of his garments.

"Well, Boris," said the baron, "then you have brought another one?"

"Yes, my general," Boris replied. "What they call in America, 'A live one.'"

"How much did he pay for my revolution?"

"One hundred thousand dollars."

"One hun— Why, the last time you sold the revolution it was for only fifty thousand!"

Zup, puffing at his cigar, caught sight of Wendell and moved over to him.

"Come up to the house and use our wringer," he said facetiously, tapping him on the shoulder.

Wendell swung round—and gaped.

Zup gaped.

"Zup!" cried Wendell.

"Wendell!" cried Zup.

They clasped hands.

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed Zup.

"How've you been?" inquired Wendell.

"Well. And you?"

"Well, I—"

"I know—you *haven't* been well! Ha, ha, ha!"

"This seems like old times," rejoiced Wendell.

"Yes, sir," boomed Zup. "Good old Brooklyn—good old Brooklyn! D'you know I haven't seen you since you fell into that half-million. What a fall! What a fall! But let me warn you, son—there are a lot of crooks around here."

Wendell sneezed, then laughed.

"Don't worry about me," he said.

"I've made a great investment. I've come down here to run this place. I'm the King of El Dorania."

"You—you—you're the king? There must be a slight mistake! I'm the king!"

"Zup, I cross my heart—I'm the king!"

"I reiterate for the sake of emphasis," exploded Zup. "I'm the king!"

"We'll see about this!" cried Wendell, losing his temper.

"Yes," said the voice of the enormous baron, close beside them, "we shall certainly see about this!"

"Whose side are you on?" demanded Wendell.

"Yours, your Majesty. I am Baron Bogardus, commanding the revolutionary forces."

He turned to Zup.

"This gentleman," he said fiercely, "has bought the revolution, and automatically becomes king. If his authority is questioned, we will settle the matter on the battlefield!"

"Don't be a sap!" expostulated Zup. "I'm the Royal Highness of this joint—and if there's any trouble I've got a standing army that won't sit down."

"Come with me," said the baron to both of them. "I'll show you, Mister Zup, just how perilous your position is!"

A Battle Postponed.

THE baron led the way with gigantic strides, and it was only by breaking into a sort of jog-trot that Wendell and Zup managed to keep up with him.

He plunged into a big building, situated in Caldera's principal street and facing the palace, and he mounted a flight of stairs and threw open the door of a room.

"I'm going to show you," he said to Zup, "that you haven't a chance to cope with King Wendell."

Large maps hung upon the walls of the room, but the baron went straight over to a huge table, the top of which was covered with a papier-mâché model representing the kingdom of El Dorania, complete with rivers, roads and mountains. Ranged on either side of the model were a number of lead soldiers!

"Here is the battlefield," said the baron with a sweep of his hand.

Zup blinked, and Wendell—in spite of his wet clothes and a tendency to sneeze his head off—felt inclined to laugh. But the baron was obviously in earnest. He made Zup stand on one side of the table and Wendell on the other.

"This is your army," he told Zup, indicating the toy soldiers on his side. "And this"—jerking a thumb at the leaden warriors on the other side, "is your army, your Majesty."

"What's this—a game?" inquired Zup indignantly.

"Not at all," retorted the baron. "It cost so much to keep real soldiers in

training that the royal army was disbanded twelve kings ago."

"But the revolutionary army——" began Wendell.

"The battles of the last eleven kings," interrupted the baron, "have been fought on this table. It saves needless bloodshed!"

Zup picked up a fallen soldier on his side of the table.

"This man is drunk!" he exclaimed humorously, and sniffed. "Son, you've got to stop drinking that hair tonic! Get in the guard-house and sleep it off."

"Here," said the baron, jabbing a finger at a collection of miniature buildings on Zup's side of the table, "is the town of Azazaz."

"Serves it right," retorted the irrepressible Zup.

"And here," pursued the baron, jabbing a finger of his other hand at a collection of tiny buildings on Wendell's side, "is the town of Eep. From Eep to Azazaz is twenty miles as the crow flies."

"My, my!" murmured Zup. "Twenty miles as the fly crows."

"No," mis-corrected Wendell, "twenty miles as the cry flows."

"I hope I can control my nasty temper!" cried Zup indignantly.

"Listen, youth—absorb this! It isn't 'cry flows,' it's twenty miles as the flow cries."

"Bah!" thundered the baron. "I've had enough of this. I'll not be annoyed by two men who can't say a simple sentence like 'Twenty miles as the—as the fly flows.'"

"Please yourself," responded Zup. "Fight your own battle!" bellowed the baron, and went out and banged the door.

"Now we're getting together," said Zup with an air of relief. "This, as you will already have surmised, Wendell, is a comic kingdom. Shall we fight?"

"I'd sooner change my clothes. We'll have the battle on—er—well, say Monday."

"No," said Zup, shaking his head emphatically. "Monday is a holiday, celebrating the death of King Louis."

"How about Tuesday?"

"Fine! We'll have the battle on Tuesday."

"You might just as well go back to New York."

"Not me! I'm the king!"

"No. I'm the king!"

The argument might have continued indefinitely, only Wendell began to shiver violently and to feel that he didn't much care whether he was king or not so long as he had a hot bath and a change of clothes. So the argument was suspended, and Zup marched his chum across to the palace, where a chill was averted, and the two subsequently sat down to a meal they thoroughly enjoyed, the question of kingship having been shelved.

That afternoon the royal minstrels were playing in the palace grounds as Wendell sat by himself in a marble seat beneath a spreading palm, gloomily occupied with his thoughts.

Aunt Minnie, elaborately gowned, descended the stone steps from the palace, with Betty beside her.

Aunt Minnie was seeking the Baron Bogardus, to obtain from him a definite statement as to the affairs of El Dorania and the well-being of her plantations. She had not found him in the palace, and for this circumstance—as for all other disagreeable circumstances—she held Wendell largely responsible.

"Wendell Graham!" she exploded on the steps. "A fine specimen for a zoo! I told him an hour ago that you wanted nothing more to do with him."

"But, auntie," expostulated Betty, "we're engaged!"

"No, you're not! I've made up your mind for you on that point. And if I find you two together again, I'll pull his ears and throw him out! You stay here! I'm going to find that baron, wherever he's hiding!"

The bottom of the steps had been reached, and Aunt Minnie stalked off

along a curving path and was lost to sight. Betty, with a sigh, seated herself on the bottom step.

Wendell crept over to her, seated himself beside her.

"I heard what she said," he told her miserably. "Honey, I guess we'll never be married."

"Don't worry, Wendell," she urged. "Everything'll turn out all right. You know, they say 'all the world loves a lover'."

"All the world except Aunt Minnie!" He held her hand, and if sadness was in his soul, at least the sound of romantic music was in his ears. She snuggled against him.

"Hear that music?" he said, after a while. "Let's dance! Come on!"

"I don't feel like dancing," she declared, but he coaxed her to her feet, and they began to dance a tango all about the broad expanse of paving at the bottom of the steps.

Both had forgotten their misery in the joy of dancing together when Aunt Minnie, who had failed to find the baron, reapproached the steps. She glared, rushed forward, and stamped viciously on one of Wendell's feet.

He swung round and saw her, and promptly stamped on one of hers. She stamped back, but it was the toe of Betty's left shoe that was caught beneath her heel.

Betty cried out with pain, stared at her angry aunt, and stamped back, then limped away up the steps, with tears in her eyes.

Regrettable as it may sound, Wendell straightway kicked out at Aunt Minnie's ankles, and flew upwards after Betty, and Aunt Minnie, groaning loudly, tried to follow, but fell sideways and rolled down again.

Wendell Wins a Gun.

THE court official who had assured Aunt Minnie that Baron Bogardus was not in the palace had lied to her, but that was not the official's fault. The baron had given him instructions.

"I win!" exulted Wendell. "I win! Look! Don't I win?"



Aunt Minnie's affairs could wait, but this question of kingship was urgent. It had been reported to the baron that Zup and Wendell had lunched together in perfect amity, and a close inspection of the remarkable table in the War Office had revealed only too plainly the fact that no battle had as yet been fought.

To deal with the situation the baron had repaired to the council chamber of the palace, whither he had summoned his two trusted agents, Boris and Ricardo.

"Our duty is clear," he decided after considerable discussion with them. "We must assassinate King Zup! He has provided the country with nothing but his own preposterous self, and he won the crown from King Oscar with a mere fortuitous throw of dice."

"Let us draw straws," suggested Boris, "to see who shall have the honour of eradicating him."

The baron laughed approvingly.

"'Tis a good idea," he said, "but we must not be selfish. We must let King Wendell have a chance at the drawing. I'll go and get him."

He picked up his military hat, jabbed it on his head, and went out.

Boris grinned at Ricardo, and Ricardo moved across the chamber to a desk, from a drawer of which he took four straws of equal length. Solemnly he broke pieces off three of them, so that their lengths varied.

A clock on a marble mantelpiece ticked away several minutes, and then the door opened, and the baron led Wendell into the room and up to the table, beside which Boris and Ricardo were patiently standing.

"The grand drawing," boomed the baron, "will now take place, and King Wendell will participate."

Wendell was puzzled, but not displeased.

"You know," he cried, "I've never won anything in my whole life, though once I almost won a turkey—in Brooklyn."

"This time you may win something," the baron declared. "The straws, Boris!"

Boris presented the straws, only their ends projecting from his closed hand.

"The short straw will win," explained the baron. "Draw!"

Wendell drew a straw, the baron drew a straw, Ricardo drew a straw, and the fourth was left in Boris' hand. They held them out, comparing lengths.

"I win!" exclaimed Wendell. "I win! Look! Don't I win?" He laughed loudly.

Undoubtedly his was by far the shortest straw.

The others nodded solemnly.

"That's the first time I ever won!" cried Wendell.

"Your Majesty is a very lucky fellow," said the baron.

"I certainly am. But what do I win? What do I—"

He broke off, to stare aghast at a large and formidable six-shooter which Ricardo was offering him by its barrel.

"B-but I—I can't carry this," he exclaimed. "I haven't got a licence."

"You don't need a licence," said the baron cheerfully. "You're the king."

"Yes, but I—I haven't any use for a gun."

"You haven't? Then how do you expect to kill King Zup?"

"K-kill Zup?" faltered Wendell.

"But I don't expect to kill him! He's a pal of mine."

He backed nervously towards the door, leaving the weapon still in Ricardo's hand, but Ricardo reversed it and pulled the trigger just as Wendell was opening the door. A shot rang

out alarmingly, and a large vase fell in fragments from its pedestal just beside him. Wendell shivered with fear.

"Were you t-trying to attract my at-t-tention?" he stammered.

"I forgot to tell you," said the baron, snatching the gun from Ricardo and striding with it towards the terrified young man, "that if you refuse to kill King Zup I'll be glad to do it, but I shall have to kill you first! It's an old El Doranian custom."

The gun pointed, a finger was on its trigger.

"W-well, now you see, baron—er—I never did care much about traditions," shivered Wendell, "so we'll just let this one go by, eh? I'll be seeing you again."

"Stop!" roared the baron. "Where is your heart?"

"Betty has it. I—I—"

"Come here!"

Wendell tottered towards the mighty baron, shaking in every limb.

"It—it isn't really necessary to shoot me, baron," he said hoarsely. "I—I'm leaving here on the first."

"The first of what?"

"The first chance I get."

"Will you stand still?" barked the baron.

"You—you're getting serious about it, aren't you? I w-was only just kidding." He essayed a feeble laugh. "J-just tell me who you want me to shoot, and—and the why, and the when, and the w-where."

The baron lowered the gun.

"The why," he said sternly, "is because he is an insurgent and he threatens your throne. The where is at dinner, and the when is to-day."

Ho thrust the weapon into Wendell's quivering right hand and bundled him out of the room.

Aunt Minnie and Betty by this time had left the palace and returned to their hotel. Wendell, in a state of mind that baffles description, retired to his own royal apartments. Fortunately—or otherwise—there was not very long to wait for dinner.

Zup had been out for a drive with the golden-haired Carlotta during the afternoon, trying to believe that he was still a monarch, and trying not to dislike Wendell for butting in. But the populace had shown no great enthusiasm in the streets, and even Carlotta had seemed less demonstrative than usual.

On returning to the palace he amused himself by making further investigations into the royal wardrobe. He discovered a kilted uniform he had not as yet worn. It had fitted the ex-King Oscar when that fugitive monarch had created the Scottish El Doranian Guards and appointed himself their commander-in-chief—and dressed all four of them in somewhat similar garb, and Zup found that it fitted him none too badly. He decided to wear it for dinner.

Behold him, therefore, seated at table in the vast banquetting chamber close beside Wendell, and wearing four decorations on his tunic which meant nothing to him except added ornament.

"A cordial welcome," said Wendell, hiding the big six-shooter beneath his serviette.

"And a welcome cordial," quoth Zup, helping himself to a glass of wine. "Waiter!"

One of four gorgeous flunkeys approached his chair.

"How about my Majesty having the table of contents?" asked Zup.

"There's no menu," Wendell informed

him, "but you can have anything you wish."

"Thanks," said Zup, and ordered some lobster, which was brought. The meal progressed and was nearly over when the gun fell from between Wendell's knees to the gorgeous carpet. He picked it up in haste and rammed it into the breast-pocket of his coat, but Zup had seen, and Zup, considerably surprised, inquired:

"What are you toting that revolver around for?"

"Well, you see," said Wendell unhappily, "I—I've got to shoot a fellow."

"Huh! Is that all?" said Zup airily.

"What's the best way to go about it?"

"Well, if you want to shoot a man and have him really enjoy it, always give him a good square meal first."

"That's just the system I'm following right now."

"Eh?" cried Zup, sitting bolt upright in his chair. "What was that last crack you made?"

"I said that's just what I'm doing—I'm giving you the best meal I can."

"Are you sitting there trying to tell me that you're going to put me on the spot?" howled Zup incredulously.

"Gee, pal, but I hate to do it," lamented Wendell, drawing the gun from his pocket. "But if I don't shoot you, I'll be shot."

"So you think more of yourself than you do of me, eh? I always knew you were conceited."

"Well, you'd be assassinated, anyway," Wendell assured him. "And I've got to live for Betty."

He rose to his feet with the gun in his hand, and he pushed back his chair. Zup looked down with distaste at his plate and rose, too, absent-mindedly thrusting a cigar between his lips.

"Boy," he said, patting Wendell affectionately on the shoulder, "you're in a jam! You know, I'm not so hungry as I thought I was!"

"No," growled Wendell. "And I never thought I was hungry. Stand still!"

He jabbed the barrel of the gun against a golden star on Zup's breast, over his heart, and he averted his face and held up his left hand to screen it.

Zup put his fingers in his ears, declaring tremulously that he never had liked the sound of firearms.

A nerveless finger trembled against the trigger but could not pull. Zup removed his fingers from his ears, pushed aside the gun, and caught Wendell by the arm.

"Boy, you are in a jam!" he exclaimed. "Let's take the air, and maybe we can figure a way out of this."

They went out from the banquetting chamber together, arm in arm, but their state of mind was such that instead of making their way into the grounds they descended the wrong flight of stairs, pushed open a door and found themselves above stone steps leading down into the royal cellar.

They blundered down into semi-darkness and stood blinking at one another. Then:

"Say, what is this?" exclaimed Wendell. "A brewery?"

There were shelves on two of the walls—shelves loaded with baskets and bottles; there were bottles in bins; there were at least a dozen barrels on wooden stands, some large, some small, all fitted with taps. On the flagstoned floor stood a rough table and several stools.

"This is one of our six best cellars, my boy," declared Zup, recognising the

subterranean retreat. "As good old Caesar said, 'All roads lead to rum.'" The projected assassination temporarily forgotten, they prowled about among the bottles and barrels, and Zup presently pointed to a little barrel on which was chalked: "Napoleon Brandy, 100 years old." "A hundred years old!" breathed Wendell almost in worship. "How could they let it live that long?"

The Baron Decides.

HAVING discovered the Napoleon brandy it was perhaps only natural that they should decide to sample it. They found it remarkably palatable and potent. They sampled it again and again.

They became a trifle incoherent in their speech, but re-cemented their friendship.

"Who is this big four-flusher Baron Bogardus, anyway?" scoffed Zup.

"I'm glad you brought the matter of that pup up, Zup," said Wendell.

"What? Who? Which?"

"Pup—Zup."

"All right. Now where's this guy Bogardus going to get off, trying to put me on the spot?"

Wendell waved the drinking-cup which was in his right hand.

"I'll lead with my left," he said, "sock him with my right, and you can rub him off the floor with a darned big eraser."

Now Baron Bogardus had been informed by the royal servants that the rival kings had departed from the banquetting chamber, leaving their meal unfinished. He had been informed, also, that no shooting had taken place. He set out to find the pair, and having searched the grounds he returned to the palace.

The open door above the cellar attracted his attention and the sound of voices reached his ears from below. He crept stealthily down the stone steps.

"Now wait a minute, wait a minute," said Zup, quaffing Napoleon brandy.

"What you say's all very well, but I think I know better how to handle him. The last man I hit they arrested ten miles away—for flying without a licence."

Wendell laughed.

"You know what I'm goin' to do—when I see him?" he inquired thickly.

"I'm goin' to say, 'Hallo, Fishface!'"

"Oh, that's perfect!" chuckled Zup.

"Perfect! But lemme—let me call him fishface, will you? I'd like to!"

"No, I'm gonna call him fishface."

"No I wanta—"

"I thought of it first—I'm going to call him Fishface."

"All right, then. But when I see that big hunk of cheese—why, I'm goin' to walk right up to him—like this—and I'm goin' to say to him—"

Zup was lurching across to Wendell with a truculent air appropriate to the humiliation of a detestable baron. But he stopped short, and his eyes widened, and his jaw dropped, for the baron had now descended the last step and was towering over him.

"I'll see you later," gasped Zup, and would have scrambled up the steps in his panic, had not a massive paw shot out and dragged him back.

"What were you going to call me?" roared the baron.

"Fishface!" cried Wendell, whose back was turned to both of them.

"No, no!" cried Zup, and whistled warningly. "The baron!"

Wendell turned, went very white, and spilled a quantity of precious brandy.

"Why haven't you been assassinated?" demanded the baron, giving Zup a push that sent him staggering backwards against the table. And: "Why didn't you shoot him?" he bellowed, swinging round on Wendell.

"He—he's wearing my shirt," lied Wendell fearfully.

"Yeah, I got his shirt on," said Zup.

"My spies are everywhere," the baron roared. "Escape is impossible. You, king Zup, shall die!"

"Oh, but listen, baron—"

"You shall die! That's final!"

"Yeah," persisted Zup. "I—I got that point all right, but here's the—the thing I don't like about it. I don't like this shooting business. Never did! Surely there must be some clever modern way of bumping me off?"

The baron scowled and thought.

"A more modern way, eh?" he jeered.

"Well, you shall have it! What is the newest thing in science?"

"Einstein's theory about relatives," suggested Zup.

"No," said the baron.

"No?"

"No—the aeroplane."

"The aeroplane?" echoed Wendell.

"Yes. To-morrow we shall declare a holiday. There will be a ceremony—and some time during that ceremony a bomb will be dropped on you from an aeroplane."

"On me?" gasped Zup. "A bomb?"

"A bomb?" shivered Wendell.

"Yes!" cried the baron triumphantly. "It will be new—it will be novel. It will be remembered for years."

"Yes," groaned Zup, "but not by me."

"Oh, you—"

And the baron turned contemptuously on his heel and went up out of the cellar.

Wendell and Zup looked at one another in silence for a while.

"Well, that's all settled," said Wendell, finally. "You won't have anything to worry about now."

A black cat came out from the shadows beyond the barrels to rub its head against Zup's legs; but in the circumstances Zup was not prepared to believe that this portended good luck for him.

Wine was dripping from a tap of a barrel into a pan beneath it, and the cat, having made a fuss of Zup in vain, went over to the pan and lapped at its contents. The two unhappy monarchs stood watching curiously; they had never seen a cat drink wine before.

Presently the animal reeled, rolled over on its back, and pawed the air.

"Careful!" exclaimed Wendell, backing hastily away. "Don't let him kick you!"

Assassination Day.

THAT night criers were sent out into the streets to announce that the next day would be a public holiday, and the news was broadcast by radio all over the kingdom. "Assassination Day" became the topic of the hour.

By morning posters containing full details were to be seen everywhere, and the State Railway ran excursions from every corner of the little country to its capital.

By ten o'clock the royal park was crowded with people who had paid to enter it; flags and banners waved in the streets, and a military band paraded the city and marched proudly into the park, playing the El Doranian national anthem.

Trees were few in the park, and seats fewer. Two enterprising tradesmen made a small fortune by selling footstools and cushions to those who wanted to sit down. Refreshment stalls and booths sprang up like mushrooms all round the rails, but—by the baron's orders—the



"Rejoice, son, rejoice!" boomed Zup. "I am rejoicing," declared Wendell, September 12th, 1931.

great central space of gravel paths and velvet lawns was kept clear.

Where two paths intersected, an elaborate throne had been placed—for Zup's benefit. On the palace side of the park a small grandstand had been erected (in the small hours of the morning) to provide members of the royal court and men and women of high social standing with a complete view of the proceedings.

At ten-thirty Zup descended the stone steps from the palace, arrayed in military uniform and a plumed helmet, carrying a gold-mounted cane, smoking a cigar, and trying to look cheerful. Behind him marched four soldiers and a young officer, full of importance.

"Squad—right! March!" cried this officer at the foot of the steps.

Carlotta came running up to Zup, appropriately dressed all in black.

"Squad—halt!" howled the officer.

"Ah, there you are, you little dumpling," said Zup.

"Your Majesty," exclaimed Carlotta, wiping away a tear, "I am sad."

"I don't blame you, honey," responded Zup. "This is going to be pretty tough on you."

"You'll be missed!"

"I hope so," said Zup, but without conviction.

"Your Majesty," said the officer, saluting, "the royal bomb chair awaits you."

"Thank you, my man, thank you," Zup answered, returning the salute, and then, whimsically to Carlotta:

"You know, I don't want to be late for this," he declared. "They tell me the house is nearly sold out."

"Be brave, your Majesty," wept Carlotta, "be brave. Promise me you won't go to pieces."

"That's up to the aviator," remarked Zup gloomily. "Come, men!"

"Forward—march!" barked the officer.

Carlotta moved away; Zup and his guardians marched on—and a thousand pairs of eyes were focused on them.

But as they approached the drive out of which opened the path that led to the waiting throne, Wendell stepped forward and beckoned.

He was neatly dressed in a light grey suit and was wearing a grey top-hat. He seemed to be bursting with eagerness, and Zup turned towards him.

"Guard—halt!" cried the officer. And the four soldiers stopped short, while Zup went on to meet his chum.

"What's the matter?" he inquired.

Wendell made signs that he did not want to be overheard by the guard, and Zup promptly waved his arm and cried out:

"Hi! Army—reverse!"

The soldiers turned about.

"Now what is it?"

"Boy," said Wendell excitedly, "have I got good news for you?"

"I suppose," growled Zup, "you're going to tell me that you've thought of a more enjoyable way of bumping me off?"

"No—no! Listen, Zup! I've been up most of the night taking out the caps that make the bombs explode!"

"Wait a minute—wait a minute!" said Zup incredulously. "You mean to tell me that the bombs won't explode?"

"They can't explode now!"

"Oh, well!" Zup drew a long and quivering sigh of relief. "Then I can speak freely." He held out his hand, which Wendell grasped and shook.

"What a pal! What a pal!"

On one of the lawns, far across the park, an aeroplane was resting, ready

for flight. Its pilot, a cross-eyed man in overalls, was tinkering with a number of elongated bombs which he was attaching to a contrivance over the under-carriage. Baron Bogardus made his way heavily across to the machine.

"Is everything ready?" he demanded harshly.

"Sure!" replied the cross-eyed pilot. "Everything!"

"Look me in the eyes when you speak to me!" rasped the baron.

The pilot stood up and faced him, but his double squint prevented him from obeying the command in full. He scrambled over the side of the machine into the cockpit and leaned down.

"Lovely day for the assassination," he observed.

"How do you feel—pretty steady?" inquired the baron.

"No—rather shaky. I've been up half the night, putting back the caps so the bombs can explode!"

"Very good, my man—very good!" boomed the baron, and pointed to the distant throne. "There's your objective—King Zup will sit on that. And don't drop any of your bombs on the crowd!"

The baron strode away along the paths to one of the walls of the palace beneath which Boris and Ricardo were awaiting him. Two mechanics stood by the aeroplane, ready to swing the propeller.

The band, which had lapsed into silence, struck up the national anthem again as Zup and Wendell marched together in front of the four soldiers and the officer in the direction of the throne. The spectators waved and shouted; the throne was reached.

Wendell helped Zup into it, but Zup stood on its little dais and raised his cane—and thereupon a man in front of the little grandstand put a megaphone to his mouth and yelled:

"Now, boys, come on! Let's give a big shout for the king!"

The baron was annoyed. This interruption was not on the official programmes. But there came a tremendous roar from the grandstand.

"Rah! Rah! Rah! Siss—Boom—Bah! Rickety Rex! Rickety Rex! Rickety Rup—King Zup! King Zup! King Zup! Hooray!"

As if by magic huge cards were raised on high, spelling the word "Zup." And Zup bowed from his throne, or bomb chair.

Baron Bogardus was furious—and a little scared. Evidently Zup had far more friends than he had imagined. A dangerous fellow! Given a few more days, he might even have brought about the baron's own downfall!

He barked at Boris, and Boris waved a signal for the aeroplane to ascend. The engines roared, the propeller began to revolve, the machine went rushing across the grass on its wheels, then took off, skimmed just over the top of some bushes, circled and rose higher.

"Everyone out of the danger zone!" shouted Boris at the top of his voice, and the man with the megaphone heard, and took up the cry.

Immediately there was a stampede for safety, and the park was ringed with spectators, leaving the heart of it empty, save for Zup on his throne, and Wendell, lingering beside him.

"Zup," said Wendell gleefully, "you're getting another break! Guess who is going to be the aviator that drops the bombs!"

"Who?" asked Zup, puffing at his cigar.

"You remember cross-eyed Ben?"

"Old cross-eyed Ben?" exclaimed Zup.

"You mean that? Why, I knew him in Brooklyn!"

"Is he really cock-eyed, or does he just look that way?"

"Is he cock-eyed?" repeated Zup.

"Why he's so cock-eyed that he spent three years in the south-east trying to join the North-West Mounted Police!"

Wendell chuckled, and clapped his chum on the back.

"Look," he said, pointing, "the plane has taken the air."

"Take the air yourself, pal," recommended Zup. "This is the danger zone!"

They shook hands and parted, and Wendell made his way slowly towards the spot where the baron, Boris, Ricardo, and the soldiers were standing, pulling out a handkerchief as he went and pretending to shed tears into it.

The Final Bomb.

ALL round the park workmen were closing gaps in a ring of barbed wire erected to keep impetuous sightseers from venturing into danger.

Wendell, looking back at the lonely Zup, blundered clean into a patch of it, and was trying to extricate himself when the first bomb fell.

It exploded in the middle of a path about a hundred yards from Zup—exploded with a tremendous noise. A black cloud rose up into the air, and dust and stones were showered in all directions.

Wendell, still more entangled with the barbed wire by the force of the explosion, looked wildly towards the throne and shouted:

"I think I must have forgotten to take the cap out of that one!"

Zup had removed his cigar from his mouth in alarm as the bomb went off, but it hadn't fallen near him, so he restored the cigar and puffed vigorously.

"Boy," he called back, "this kills me!"

Two more bombs fell in rapid succession, while Ben, the cross-eyed aviator, circled above his intended victim. Zup stepped in haste from his throne as the first one exploded—perilously near the grandstand—then darted back to it as the second whined and burst right ahead of him.

"You must have forgotten to take the cap out of that one, too!" he shouted.

Wendell's clothes had become a wreck, and so had his hat, in his frenzied efforts to free himself from the barbed wire. Blood was trickling down his cheeks and arms—and now Ben, in his machine, was swooping lower.

Another bomb droned earthwards, buried itself in the ground, and exploded. A column of smoke and dirt arose—and the dirt descended. But as the air cleared it was seen that Zup was running back to the throne he had deserted and was unhurt. All round the park the spectators began to boo.

Ben, swooping low, released another bomb, and this one exploded so near Wendell that he was flung clear of the entanglement, but with barbed wire festooned all about him. He stared as he raised himself to his knees. Zup was sitting calmly on his throne, but the grandstand had collapsed, and men and women were crawling from the wreckage.

The baron danced with rage; after all, there was little else he could do without risking his life—a thing he wouldn't dream of doing on purpose!

Yet another bomb fell, but this one did not explode. Evidently Ben had not restored its cap.

It struck the path immediately in front of Zup's legs, bounced, rolled, and came to rest almost beneath his feet, its fuse sizzling.

Eastern gunmen, in the guise of capitalists, come to a Western ranch. Within a few weeks the finding of gold starts a war between the gunmen and a band of fearless men of the plains.

Gun Smoke



STARRING
RICHARD ARLEN
AND
MARY BRIAN.

Welcome to Bunsen!

AN express train roared its way across the plateau of Wyoming, on its long journey to Seattle in the far north-west of the United States. Around a table in one carriage sat five men, well-dressed and, to all appearance, prosperous citizens of that great nation which stretches across America from Atlantic to Pacific. A tall, stern-looking man, about thirty-five years of age, was obviously the most important member of the party, and the others paid marked attention to everything he said.

"Seen this, boys?" he remarked. "Listen!"

From a newspaper in his hand he began to read. "Gang War Rages! Kedge Darvis, New King of the Underworld. His chief rival shot dead. Where are our police?"

"That's the most important news of the day. And the editor hands it out to the police good and strong."

The company laughed heartily, for the man who had read the glaring headlines from the newspaper was Kedge Darvis himself, and the others were the chief members of his gang.

"Just as well we moved out for a while," said "Spot" Skee, Kedge's right-hand man. "I reckon the excitement will be all over in a week or two, and, anyway, the cops won't put you in the chair this time."

"Me? You mean yourself, I guess, Spot," remarked Darvis. "You shot him."

"Anything you say, Kedge," grinned Spot. "I shot him, if you say so!"

"Can all that!" snapped Darvis, taking up another newspaper. "Now, boys, see here—an advertisement from the leading citizens of the rising city of

Bunsen, Idaho. Ever heard of Bunsen?" "No!" cried the gangsters in chorus. "Nor I," said Darvis. "It's one of those little places in the West they try to boost as great cities. I reckon."

"Well, what about it?" asked Spot. "The advertisement says the citizens of Bunsen will welcome visitors, and will give concessions to capitalists. Now, that's us!"

"But we ain't capitalists, Kedge!" protested a gangster.

"We are capitalists, if I say so!" snapped Darvis, glaring angrily at his followers.

"Okay, Kedge," said Spot. "We're capitalists, sure, and what next?"

"I'm sending a telegram from the next station to the Mayor of Bunsen, saying that Darvis and friends, capitalists from the East, will arrive in his city this evening. We'll spend our vacation there."

"Think they'll have heard your name?" asked a gangster doubtfully.

"Heard my name? Heard of anything that's going on outside their own county, or the State of Idaho at the most? Not they! You don't know these Western States—they're out of date. Never heard the word gangster, very likely. You boys will be quite the 'gentlemen from the East' till I give the word."

"We may find nothing worth doing in a place like that," remarked Spot.

"Sure we may. Then we can go back East when the excitement there is over, can't we? But even Bunsen will have a bank and a few rich men. And I figure that Bunsen will want more capital when we've gone than it did before we came!"

The gangsters grinned at the idea of opening the eyes of the poor niftis at Bunsen, and Darvis duly sent his tele-

gram when the train stopped again. The result of that message over the wires surprised even him, for when, some hours later, the train drew up at Bunsen, the town was apparently en fête. Flags and streamers decorated the station, and seemingly the whole population of Bunsen had assembled there.

Darvis got out and looked unconcernedly at the crowd. His followers grinned openly, until a sharp look from their leader set their faces into a look of rigid solemnity, just as John K. Horton, the Mayor of Bunsen, came forward to greet the "capitalists" from the East.

"Mr. Darvis?" he inquired. "Welcome to the city of Bunsen."

They shook hands, and a little girl came up with a bunch of flowers.

"I—I—" she stammered nervously. "Well—here's some flowers for you!"

Darvis took the bouquet amidst the irrepressible grins of his men, and the mayor then formed a procession to escort the distinguished visitors to the hotel. The town band led the way, playing with great strength and vigor. There was more drum than anything else, certainly, for the burly citizen who carried the drum seemed to think his instrument the most important of all. The cornet player, too, was a bar behind everyone else most of the time, but the intention was good if the result was poor.

Kedge Darvis marched solemnly along with the mayor, and the four gangsters followed, trying their best to look like "capitalists" from the East. Soon the company arrived at the hotel, and the mayor led Darvis and his men up the steps and began to introduce them to the chief citizens of Bunsen.

"This is Miss Vancey," said he presently, bringing forward a very pretty

dark-haired girl. "She owns the biggest ranch in this county. Miss Vancey, meet Mr. Darvis."

"I'm honoured," said Darvis with a very creditable bow.

"I'm sure very pleased to meet you," exclaimed Sue Vancey, "and I hope you and your friends will come and stay on my ranch for a few days while you're looking round."

"We shall be delighted, Miss Vancey," replied Darvis with studied politeness, "and it's sure very kind of you to ask us."

"Speech!" yelled the crowd which had gathered in front of the hotel. Darvis started, and his followers looked with secret delight at the worried expression that came over his face. For Kedge's lino was not speech-making. His remarks in public had hitherto been confined to some such terse effort of eloquence as "Put 'em up!"

"I'm afraid you'll have to say something, Mr. Darvis," said the mayor, and the gang-leader went forward reluctantly.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "I'm very pleased to visit Bunsen, and I hope—"

The crowd was denied the chance of learning what Darvis hoped, for his remarks were suddenly interrupted by an outburst of gun-firing. Round the corner of the street came an exuberant mob of mounted cowboys, galloping at full speed and firing their six-shooters in the air.

"Say, sheriff," cried the mayor angrily, "you going to stand for this?"

"I reckon I'm not," replied Posey Meed, the sheriff, as he went off to intercept the riders. At their head he saw a tall, handsome young fellow, with clear blue eyes and a frank, open face.

"Brad Farley," he shouted, as the leader of the cowboys reined up outside the hotel, "I've told you before—this town's grown up, and we ain't standing for this shooting any more."

"You don't say, sheriff," smiled Brad. "Well, we've had some luck to-day. Caught a fine lot of mustangs, and the boys are a bit excited, that's all."

"You've spoilt the reception," grumbled the sheriff. "We've got some gentlemen from the East in Bunsen, and they're going to invest some money here."

"Ain't that sweet of them?" laughed Brad.

"You laugh!" growled Meed. "We want some men with money in Bunsen, I reckon."

"Yes. If we pay 'em enough they'll put up buildings to hide the sky, and the country will be black with smoke and the streets foul with petrol fumes. I wanna keep this country clean and fresh."

"Huh!" snorted the sheriff. "You're too old-fashioned for these times. We aim to make Bunsen a real live town, and no more shooting up in the streets, Farley, or I'll sure gaol you!"

He went back to the hotel, and Stub Wallock, Brad's foreman, a stout, hearty, good-natured fellow, nudged his boss significantly.

"Say, Brad," he remarked, "there's Sue Vancey, talking to some strange guy—one of these millionaires Posey was yarning about, I reckon."

"You round up the horses and take 'em to Horton's corral," said Brad. "I'm going to speak to Sue."

As Stub rode off, Brad Farley mounted the steps and approached Sue, who looked at him with disgust, for the interruption of the reception had

annoyed her very much. Still, she introduced him to Kedge Darvis.

"Mr. Darvis, meet Mr. Brad Farley," she said, and the two men shook hands, eying each other with instinctive dislike the while.

"Say, Brad," said Mayor Horton, coming up, "I'll give you 1,400 dollars for those mustangs."

"I've sent 'em to your corral, mayor," replied Brad, "and I'll take 1,300—all they're worth. I ain't robbing you any then."

"As you like," said Horton, and he turned to one of his men. "Give Mr. Farley the 1,300 right now."

The gangsters looked at each other in surprise, and they were still more astonished when the man went to an old-fashioned safe just inside the door, took out some notes, and gave them to Brad, who pocketed them at once.

"He didn't even count 'em," whispered Spot Skee, to whose mind such simple trustfulness was amazing.

"I'd like to show you some of the old-fashioned things we have about here," said Brad politely to Kedge Darvis.

"I don't think Mr. Darvis would be interested," cut in Sue at once.

"I'm giving you a horse that will be just okay for you, Sue," said Brad, in some dismay at the girl's tone. "You could come along as well."

"I've got quite enough horses," snapped Sue. "And I'm very busy—just now!"

This time Sue's tone was so significant that Brad turned and slowly descended the steps, while Darvis watched him with a derisive smile.

"I don't reckon to understand women," muttered Brad as he mounted his horse, "but Sue beats me. Smiles from her yesterday, snubs to-day! She's falling for that guy Darvis, I reckon, and if he ain't a crook I never saw one in my life!"

Brad Takes a Back Seat.

HAMPSEY DELL. Sue's cook, was busy setting the breakfast next morning on a table in the open air just outside the house on the Vancey Ranch. It was a bright, sunny morning, and the servants were full of excitement, for the "capitalists" from the East were coming out to stay on the ranch.

A feeble old man came stumbling up to the table and spoke to Hampsey.

"Say, girl, where's Miss Vancey?" he asked. "I've found gold—a real rich vein this time, an' I want to tell her about it."

"Go away!" cried Hampsey impatiently. "You're always finding rich veins, and they're always no good. Go away, and don't bother me!"

"Strike" Jackson, the old prospector, tottered away, looking disappointed, and Hampsey Dell thought no more about him, for she had noticed several cars coming up the road. To her surprise, they were accompanied by a crowd of men on horseback, amongst whom she recognised Brad Farley and Stub Wallock.

Brad had hoped to please Sue by getting his cowboys to escort her guests to the ranch that morning; but so far his hopes had been in vain, for the girl had not even looked at him. When the cars drew up, she beckoned to Stub Wallock, for she knew that the burly foreman was very fond of Hampsey Dell.

"I didn't expect to see you to-day, Stub," she said, as he came to the side of the car.

"Well, Brad just thought he'd come," replied Stub, glancing at his boss.

But Sue did not follow his glance, for she was still annoyed with Brad Farley. "You would like to come in and have

breakfast—and see Hampsey, wouldn't you?" she asked.

"Sure I would, Miss Vancey," cried Stub, beaming with delight.

Sue got out and went up to the breakfast table, followed by the mayor, the sheriff, Kedge Darvis and his men, and Stub Wallock. Stub did not get as far as the table. He saw Hampsey Dell on the veranda, and at once made in that direction. As for Brad Farley, Sue had completely ignored his presence, and he sat moodily on his horse, watching her, with bitter jealousy in his heart.

"C'mon, boys!" he cried after a minute or two. "We ain't wanted. We'll be going right now."

"What about Stub?" objected a cowboy.

"He'll catch up," said Brad, turning his horse. "C'mon!"

"Wait a minute!" shouted Tack Gillup, Sue's foreman, running out and coming up to Brad. "What's your hurry? Ain't you coming in?"

"When a door is slammed in my face," replied Brad sourly, "I begin to think it is about time I went."

"Oh, shucks!" cried Tack, whose secret hope was that Sue would before long be Mrs. Brad Farley. "Girls go by contraries. Now, if Sue Vancey slams the door in your face, she really wants you to go and open it, I reckon."

"Don't think so," said Brad unbelievably.

"Well, you wait a minute!" exclaimed Tack Gillup. "I figure I've gotta plan, so you wait."

He ran off, and Brad decided to wait a few minutes, though he had no idea what Sue's foreman meant to do. But Tack did not reappear, and at length Brad called to his men and rode slowly off, looking back now and then.

The cowboys had not gone far when a terrific hubbub of shouts and cries arose behind them. Tack Gillup had carried out his plan. He had let a herd of lively young calves loose, and had carefully shepherded them towards the breakfast table in front of the ranch-house.

The guests were still at their meal when the calves came scampering along. In vain the mayor, the sheriff, and the gangsters tried to drive them off as they stormed the party. Over went the chairs as the startled guests scrambled to their feet, and, despite the best efforts of Kedge Darvis and Spot Skee, one calf, bolder than the rest, mounted the table and ran along it, scattering the crockery right and left.

Tack Gillup appeared suddenly and ran to the gate, shouting for Brad.

"Hi, Brad, come back and help! Calves broken loose!"

Brad and his men turned and came riding back. In a very few minutes the experienced cowboys had the animals back in their enclosure, and only Stub, running out hurriedly on foot from his talk with Hampsey Dell, had the worst of an encounter with a very lively calf, after a struggle in which both went to the ground.

"Say, Miss-Sue," said Tack Gillup, when the calves were safely corralled and the servants were repairing the ravages which the animals had made on the breakfast table—"say, ain't you going to ask those boys to breakfast? They sure did better work with the calves than those millionaires you've got."

Sue was annoyed at her foreman's tone, but she went out to the waiting cowboys with a smile.

"You boys come along and have something to eat," she called.

"Sure, miss!" yelled a dozen voices,

and the cowboys rushed for the house in a body—all but one, for Brad Farley still sat on his horse, looking eagerly at Sue.

She turned her back on him and walked away, but Tack Gillup made frantic signs to the young man, who hurriedly dismounted and caught Sue up at the door.

"Can't we take up where we left off, Sue?" he said pleadingly.

"No!" snapped the girl, going into the house without another word, and Brad turned disconsolately away to Tack Gillup, who was holding his horse.

"You giving up like that for a word?" said Tack as Brad came up to him.

Still holding the reins with one hand, the foreman put the other on the young man's shoulder, and spoke very seriously.

"Sue wants your help, boy, though she don't know it. I've seen those guys from the East, and those fellows are rattlesnakes, Brad. They're dangerous. Don't give up. Go in after her, boy!"

Thus encouraged by the friendly foreman, Brad went back to the door, opened it, and found Sue Vancey inside the house.

"What," she cried, "you again? What do you want now?"

"I want to talk to you, Sue," said Brad determinedly. "We used to be good friends, and not long ago, either. Why not now?"

"I know, but things are different now, Brad," replied Sue.

"Why different?" asked Brad, in puzzled tones.

"Why don't you make something of yourself?" Sue burst out suddenly.

"Make something of myself? Why, I reckon I've done middling well these two years," said Brad. "Even this last six months—"

"Oh, yes," interrupted Sue impatiently, "well enough in your way. But the West is all behind, out of date—and you're part of it. Do you call looking after cattle a man's job?"

"Never seen any cripples make good at it," said Brad dryly.

"I wish you were more like these men from the East. There's Mr. Darvis, now. He's got money, power, position. He's up-to-date."

"Sue," cried Brad very gravely, "you know nothing about these men, except what they have told you, and—"

The door opened behind them, and Kedge Darvis came in. Sue turned and smiled on him, to Brad's ill-concealed disgust. She began to talk eagerly to the "capitalist," and Brad retreated to the window. Presently Darvis asked the girl to play something on the piano.

"I don't play well enough for you folk from the great cities," said Sue. "Why don't you play something yourself, Mr. Darvis?"

"Perhaps Mr.—er—Farley will play to us," sneered Darvis.

"I don't play," said Brad shortly.

"I thought you had a lot of cowboy songs ready to hand," came the scornful reply. "Must be very interesting!"

Sue laughed, and Brad turned on his heel and went out in disgust. And as he went he saw Kedge Darvis sit down at the piano to play, with Sue's eyes still fixed admiringly on the up-to-date man from the East.

Ordered Off!

STUB WALLOCK made much more progress with Hampsey Dell than his boss had done with Sue Vancey. The jovial foreman found his sweetheart very busy on the veranda, and, creeping up behind her, he seized her round the waist, laughing heartily.

"Oh," screamed Hampsey, "is that you, Stub? You're always coming at the wrong time, when I'm busy, or when I've got a cold or something."

"I come when I can, girl," protested Stub.

"Why don't you come and see me in the moonlight sometimes, instead of when I'm peeling potatoes or cooking the dinner?" wailed Hampsey. "And now I'm going to be ever so busy in the daytime, 'cos of these visitors we've got."

"Okay, Hampsey! I'll come along in the moonlight next time if I can," said Stub. "But say, girl, what d'you think of these millionaire guys, eh?"

"I've heard 'em sneering at the West already," replied Hampsey, "and that one they call Spot has been laughing at you cowboys—said you were a lot of out-of-date saps, or something like that."

"He did, eh?" cried Stub angrily. "I'll show 'em! You watch me!"

The conversation was interrupted at that moment by the arrival of the calves, and after the cowboys had driven the animals back into their corral, the cook was too busy to talk to Stub for a while. The foreman took his place at

the breakfast-table when it was ready again, and he, with some of the guests, went on with the interrupted meal, though Sue Vancey and Kedge Darvis did not come back.

"Fine, the way you boys rounded up those calves," remarked Spot Sice in a sarcastic tone.

"Well, we're used to that kind of thing," replied Stub complacently, failing to observe the sarcasm in the gangster's voice.

"Way you fought that calf to the ground was sure the goods," observed another gangster with a grin.

"If that's your work I reckon it's like child's play," sneered Spot.

Stub saw the sneer this time, and Hampsey Dell, who happened to overhear the last remark, glared angrily at the gangster.

"You try it for a week," she snorted, tossing her head.

"Say, d'you remember that yarn about the man who made fun of my hat?" asked Stub, turning to the mayor.

"Sure, Stub," said Horton wearily. "I've heard you tell it twenty times."

"Maybe, mayor, but these guys ain't heard it, so I reckon I'll just tell 'em. I was getting off the train one day, and a fellow comes up and sees me, and he begins laughing at my hat."

"You don't say—laughing at your hat?" said Spot, winking at his companions.

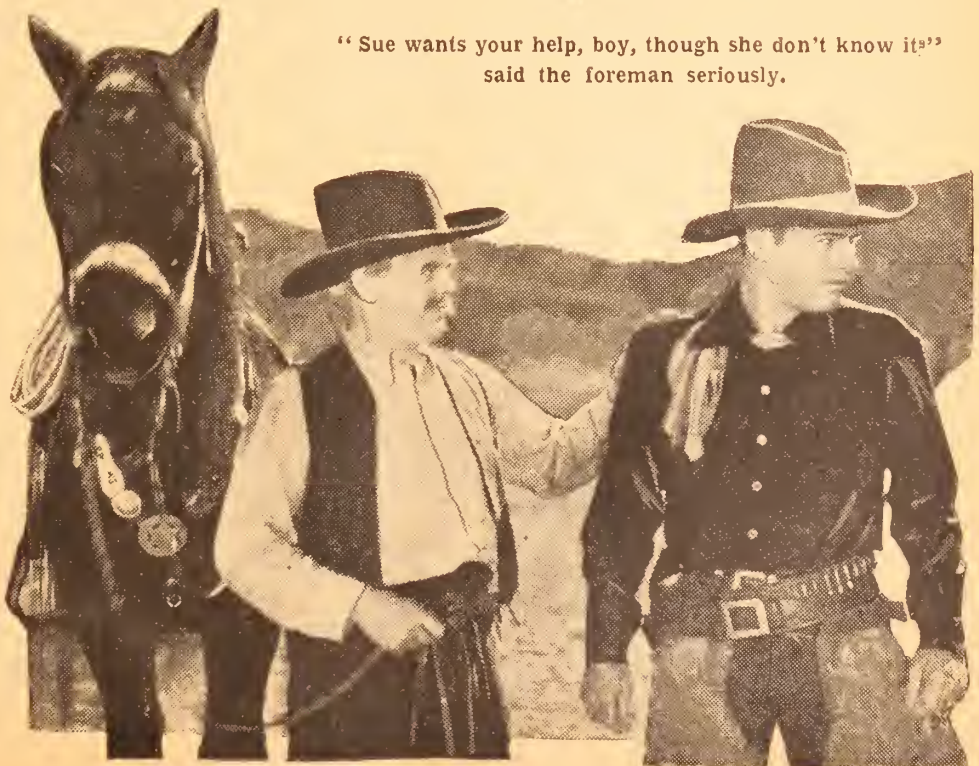
"Sure he was laughing," repeated Stub. "Now that fellow was smoking a cigar, a big, fat cigar; so I gets out my gun, and—"

Stub checked himself and looked round for a mark. On the other side of the table he noticed a dead tree, and on it one branch which had broken off short, leaving a little stump.

"See that stump?" he cried. "Well, say that stump was the guy's cigar, and the tip of it was just the glow, see? Now, you watch!"

He raised his gun and fired at the stump. The tip of it vanished as the

"Sue wants your help, boy, though she don't know it," said the foreman seriously.



bullet reached its mark, and Stub looked round for the applause of the company. But no applause came, and no one seemed surprised.

"That's how I did it," remarked Stub, "and I'll tell you the guy didn't laugh at my hat again."

"Let's look at your gun," said Spot Skee. "I used to have a gun like that," he added, as Stub handed him the weapon, "and I used to be able to shoot some, too. Watch!"

He aimed at the remainder of the stump, and shot off another inch of it. One by one the gangsters showed Stub Wallock that they could shoot quite as well, if not better, than he could, and the foreman's face fell more and more as the firing proceeded.

"Don't get it into your head that the cowboys of the Wild West are the only guys who can shoot," sneered Spot Skee, as he gave the gun back to Stub.

"I thought so," replied Stub dejectedly, "but I'll allow I was wrong. You city men can shoot some, sure!"

Sue Vancey, fascinated by the conversation of the wily gang-leader, had remained in the house talking to him. She had put on her hat and coat in readiness to take Kedge Darvis for a walk round her gardens, when the sound of shooting came to her ears.

"What's that?" she exclaimed. "Come out, Mr. Darvis. They've got their guns out. I hope there's nothing wrong!"

She rushed out, followed by Darvis, to find nothing wrong, except that the gangsters were still tormenting Stub Wallock with their sneers at life in the West. Brad Farley had been walking disconsolately about by himself, but he had now come back to the front of the house and was talking to Mayor Horton. Sue was in time to overhear what he said.

"Well, mayor, I don't believe these guys are capitalists at all. I reckon they're just fakers."

"How dare you say such a thing!" flashed Sue angrily. "You ought to apologise to Mr. Darvis right now."

"Don't trouble, Miss Sue," said Darvis. "It isn't worth taking notice of such remarks as that."

"Are you going to apologise?" demanded Sue fiercely.

"I reckon not," replied Brad quietly but firmly, looking the gang-leader straight in the face. "I'll say it again—to him this time, if he likes!"

"You can't talk to my guests like that!" stormed Sue indignantly.

"I'm sure sorry if you're annoyed, Sue," said Brad calmly, "but I ain't apologising to anyone for saying what I think is the truth, even if he is your guest. Guest under false pretences, I reckon. Get that, Darvis?"

"Mr. Farley," remarked Sue in her iciest tones, before Darvis could reply, "you can get off my ranch—and keep off!"

"Okay, Sue!" said Brad quietly. "If that's the way you feel about it, I'm off. C'mon, Stub, we'll go!"

And in another minute Vancey Ranch had seen the last of Brad Farley and Stub Wallock, who rode off at a gallop to resume their mustang-hunting in the hills.

Darvis Shows His Hand.

FOR a whole week Kedge Darvis had played the gentleman. His followers were growing impatient, for rarely had they passed so long a time without some excitement, and in this remote country ranch there seemed little chance of any opportunity to show their prowess with the gun. No orders came from Kedge. Nobody was put "on the

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spot," nor did it seem likely that anyone would be "taken for a ride."

Sue Vancey had forgotten the warnings of Brad, and she took no notice of the occasional well-meant hints of Tack Gillup, who distrusted the "capitalists" more and more as the days went on. She rode out daily with Kedge Darvis, taking him all round the great ranch until he was heartily tired of riding, for he was not at home on a horse. His conversation, with its suggestion of great wealth, power and position, still fascinated the girl, though, so far, none of the "millionaires" had shown any disposition to invest any money in Bunsen.

One day Sue and Darvis were riding together in a little valley some miles from the ranch-house. Down the middle of the valley ran a small stream, and in the distance they saw a man stooping over the water. Presently they came up to him, and Sue saw that it was "Strike" Jackson, the old prospector.

Hampsey Dell had told her mistress that the old man had announced the finding of gold. Sue did not believe the tale, for Strike had obtained his nickname by continually finding veins of gold which invariably turned out to be worthless.

"Say, Miss Vancey," cried the old man as Sue rode up, "I've struck it rich this time. See here. Nuggets. Real gold!"

He came up to Sue's horse, and put some nuggets into the girl's hand. She examined them carefully, and so did Kedge Darvis. His eyes gleamed at the sight, and he looked thoughtfully at the old prospector, who was still talking eagerly to Sue about his discovery.

"Well, Strike, I believe you really have found a good vein this time," exclaimed Sue at length. "Come back with me to the house and I'll make arrangements for working the vein. You shall have half of whatever we find."

"Thank you, Miss Vancey," said the old man. "That will sure be okay."

Sue, with Kedge Darvis and the old prospector, rode straight back to the house, where they found Tack Gillup talking to Spot Skee and the other gangsters.

"Strike Jackson really is Strike this time," cried Sue joyfully as she dismounted. "Show them the nuggets you found, Strike."

"I'll say they look good," remarked Spot Skee, examining them.

"It's sure the real thing this time," added Tack Gillup. "He found 'em on your land, I suppose, Miss Sue?"

"You going to work the vein?"

"Of course," cried Sue excitedly. "I'm going into Bunsen right now to register the claim."

Kedge Darvis looked at his men. That one glance was enough, and the next instant each of the gangsters had a gun in his hand.

"Put 'em up!" barked Darvis, as his men covered Sue, Strike Jackson and Hampsey Dell, who had just come out of the house, while the gang-leader himself thrust his gun ominously forward as Tack Gillup turned upon him.

The whole group seemed frozen stiff with astonishment for a moment, and then slowly the hands went up.

"You ain't going to town this morning," said Darvis to the bewildered Sue, who could hardly believe her eyes as she saw the "capitalist" change in a moment from a polished gentleman to a ruthless-looking gunman.

"No one's going to Bunsen," continued the gang-leader. "And I'm

working that gold myself. Get that!"

"Why—why, whatever is the matter with you, Mr. Darvis?" gasped Sue.

"I'll put you poor mutts wise," said Darvis. "I'm what the papers call a gangster, and my business is murder."

"I ain't going to stand for this," stammered Strike Jackson, turning to walk away. "I'm going to fetch the sheriff. There's law for rotten skunks like you."

Darvis fired instantly at the old man's back, and before the report of the gun had died away Strike Jackson lay face downward on the ground, dead.

Sue Vancey shrieked with horror and fear as she witnessed the cowardly murder of the helpless old prospector, while Tack Gillup took an involuntary step towards the gang-leader, but the pressure of Spot Skee's gun in the small of his back was convincing proof that resistance was useless.

Brisk footsteps came along the path, and round the corner of the house appeared Mayor Horton and Posey Meed, the sheriff, who stopped short in amazement at the unexpected sight of the hold-up and the dead body of Strike Jackson.

"Stay there and put 'em up!" shouted Darvis. "Now, Mr. Mayor, I'll tell you I'm taking over the town of Bunsen and this ranch. You'll stay here and so will the sheriff. Don't move, or I shoot!"

"You take over the town of Bunsen?" gasped the mayor. "Who are you, then, to talk like that?"

"I'm a gang-leader," snapped Darvis, "and I run a town three hundred times the size of Bunsen. And what I say goes. Another word and you'll follow that old fool there," he added, nodding towards Strike's body.

The sheriff was an utterly fearless man. Disregarding the threatening gun, and wholly undeterred by the gangster's menaces, he advanced to do his duty.

"I arrest you for the murder of Strike Jackson," he said firmly. "I call on you to submit to the authority of the law. You—"

That word was the last the sheriff ever spoke. Kedge's gun barked again, and Posey Meed fell by the side of the old prospector, a bullet through his heart.

"That'll show you I mean business!" snarled Darvis, glaring angrily round. "There ain't any law where I am. The law is ME!"

Nobody thought it safe to reply to this statement, and Darvis continued his remarks to an audience petrified with horror.

"Now, Horton," he said, addressing the mayor, "there's this girl Sue. You wouldn't like anything to happen to her, would you?"

Horton managed somehow to gasp out "No," while Sue, her face drained of all colour, nearly fainted with horror at the sight of the murdered men and at the threat to her own life.

"Then you'll do as I say," continued Darvis. "Into the house, all of you!"

As the captives were hustled into the house, Kedge Darvis turned to Spot Skee.

"Go down and wire for the boys," he ordered. "We'll have the whole crowd up here right away."

Tack Gillup Escapes.

KEDGE DARVIS made sure of his ground at once. All Sue's servants were rounded up and imprisoned in the house, except for Hampsey's Chinese assistant, Yuan Lee, who was allowed some measure of

freedom in order to do the cooking. Sue and Hampsey were shut into a room together, and the door was locked upon them, while Tack Gillup was thrust into the cellar. One gangster was ordered to keep a special watch on the Chinaman, particularly when he took food to the prisoners.

"Now," said Kedge to his men when these arrangements were completed, "I reckon the good folk of Bunsen are going to get a surprise to-morrow when the boys come. Some of 'em will work the vein. I'll see to that, and the others will take over Bunsen. Spot, you'll run the town."

"Okay, Kedge," grinned Spot Skee, "that's sure an easy job."

"There's only one guy who might butt in on us," said Kedge thoughtfully, "and that's Brad Farley. It's sure lucky Sue Vancey quarrelled with him."

"He won't trouble us, Kedge," laughed Spot. "I'll see that no news gets to him. Trust me!"

The next day the boys arrived, and Darvis had some seventy men at his disposal. The people of Bunsen had as yet no idea of what had happened on the Vancey Ranch, though they were beginning to wonder why the mayor and the sheriff stayed there so long. The townsfolk were amazed to see the mob of gangsters pour out of the station, and there were many rumours as to the reason for the arrival of so many strangers. It was not long before Bunsen found out the reason.

Kedge Darvis and Spot Skee met the gang, and while the former took half of them off to begin work at once on the vein of gold, Spot informed the others that Bunsen was to be "run." And, without delay he began to run the town.

Gangsters were posted at strategic spots, and all the roads leading into the town were patrolled. The railway station was picketed, and passengers wishing to leave Bunsen by railway were kept out, while the officials dared not inform the guards or drivers of passing trains about the situation, for they were working under the eyes of armed gangsters. The telegraph office received Spot's special attention, and a gunman sat there continually watching the operator, and handling his gun significantly whenever a message was sent off.

For the next few days Bunsen lived under a reign of terror. One or two of the bolder spirits made an attempt at first to shoot Spot Skee and some of his henchmen, but in vain. The gangsters were far quicker on the draw, and the dead bodies of several unfortunate fellow-townsmen told the citizens of Bunsen that resistance was useless.

Meanwhile at Vancey Ranch, Kedge Darvis was monarch of all he surveyed. His men were busy working the vein, which proved to be very rich. The prisoners were closely guarded, and no news of what was happening was allowed to reach them.

Tack Gillup, in the dismal cellar, had no idea whether Sue Vancey was alive or dead, and at length he determined to try to get some information from Yuan Lee.

"Say, Yuan," he remarked the next time the Chinaman brought him a meal, "these guys are sure doing the thing in style. Bread and water, eh? Well, I suppose I can live on that. What have they done with Miss Sue?"

"Me no talkce," said Yuan Lee in an unnaturally loud voice, looking fixedly not at Tack Gillup, but at the half loaf of bread he had brought to the

prisoner. And Tack caught the faintest suspicion of a wink.

"No, you no talkce," cried a gangster from the cellar stairs. "You talkce, you die. You no talkce, you no die. Savvy?"

"Yis, sah, me savvy allee light," said Yuan, retiring hastily.

Tack Gillup waited until the Chinaman and the watching gunman had gone, and then he very carefully examined the bread. Cunningly concealed within it he found a tiny scrap of paper, which he smoothed out eagerly.

"Me dig hole. One day you come out," he read.

Tack destroyed the note at once, and that night he lay awake for a long time listening intently. He heard nothing to indicate that Yuan Lee was at work, either on that night or the next, but on the third night faint sounds outside seemed to show that the Chinaman was endeavouring to keep his promise.

"Sounds like digging," muttered Tack as he listened. "I wonder how he's managed to dodge that gunman. Too cunning for him, I reckon."

Tack was right. The cunning of the Oriental had proved more than a match for the brute force of the gangsters. The gunmen had treated Yuan Lee like a dog. Kicks and blows were showered on him daily, until he was filled with a bitter hatred of Kedge Darvis and his men. He showed no outward sign of his feelings, simulating a cowardly fear so well by cringing and cowering before his tormentors, that their vigilance began to relax.

The gangster appointed to guard the Chinaman began to grow careless, thinking that no danger could possibly come from such a mean-spirited coward as Yuan appeared to be. Little did he



"I'm a gang leader," snapped Darvis, "and I run a town three hundred times the size of Bunsen. And what I say goes!"

suspect that Yuan's cowardice was only a cloak that concealed a courage and resource far greater than that of the gangsters themselves.

Yuan's door was locked at night, but he picked the lock with a wire and got out. Finding a spade, he began to dig a hole towards the cellar as he had promised to do. It was a slow job, for he had to convey the earth from the hole to the garden, where he had been digging trenches openly by daylight under pretence of planting various vegetables. He had also to cover the hole with boards before the dawn and to scatter earth on top to hide what he had done.

Slowly the work went on, and still the gangsters were unsuspecting. On the ninth night of his imprisonment, Tack Gillup heard the sound of the spade very close. Presently some bricks fell in from the side of the cellar, and Yuan's voice whispered faintly:

"You help make hole bigger, then you come out."

Tack helped with great vigour, and long before the dawn of the next day he stood unobserved outside the house.

"Now you go find Mr. Farley," said the Chinaman. "He in hills somewhere."

"What about you?" asked Tack. "They'll kill you if they find you. You come with me."

"No," said Yuan, shaking his head. "I stay here—help Miss Sue. She and Hampsey in prison in house. P'raps they not find me out. If they do, they kill me, yes, but Brad kill them. I not 'fraid. You go find him."

"Well, boy, I'll be as quick as I can," remarked Tack.

"Horse I got for you over here," said Yuan, leading the way silently down the road. A few minutes later Sue's foreman, mounted on a good horse which the Chinaman had managed to obtain from the stable, was making rapidly for the hills. Yuan Lee went back to his room after obliterating as well as he could the signs of Tack's escape, and in the morning the Chinese cook appeared as timid and as harmless as ever to the suspicious eyes of the gangster who had him in charge.

Brad Farley to the Rescue.

DURING the ten days of the gangsters' rule in Bunsen, Brad Farley and his boys were busy hunting mustangs in the hills, and no news of the astonishing events in the town reached their ears.

On the morning of Tack's escape, Brad had rounded up the mustangs they had captured, and the cowboys prepared to set off on the road to Bunsen. Before they started, however, Sue's foreman came galloping up. He had got clear away from the ranch, and after a hurried search in the early hours of the morning he came upon Brad and his boys just in time to warn them of the danger they would incur by going into the town.

"Stop, Brad!" gasped Tack Gillup. "I've got news. Don't go down to Bunsen. The town's in the hands of Darvis and his gang, and they've got Miss Sue, too."

Brad Farley and Stub Wallock looked in bewilderment at the foreman, for though they had been suspicious of the pretended capitalists, the news Tack brought seemed to them to be quite incredible.

"What are you talking about?" asked Brad, surveying the dishevelled figure of Tack Gillup as though he suspected the worthy foreman of being out of his right mind.

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"I'm telling you the truth," replied Tack with great energy. "They're killing. They had me tied up, but I escaped. Yuan Lee got me away."

Brad still did not understand, and Tack had at last to tell the whole story, so far as he knew it.

"Strike Jackson found a vein of gold, and when Sue was going to ride off to register the claim, Darvis and his gang got out their guns and held us up."

"You don't say!" cried Brad. "Is that all?"

"All? No, Strike said he'd go for the sheriff, and Darvis shot the old man in the back. Shot him dead in cold blood; never gave him a chance. Then the sheriff came up and started in to arrest Darvis, and the skunk plugged him, too."

"If they're gunmen, they've come to where killing was invented," cried Brad fiercely, his face setting in hard and stern lines as Tack's narrative proceeded.

"Sure they have!" exclaimed Stub Wallock, getting out his gun as though he were ready to do a little killing there and then.

"And Sue?" asked Brad anxiously. "What about her?"

"She and Hampsey are shut up in the ranch-house," replied Tack.

"It's me for the ranch-house right now!" yelled Stub angrily, turning to get his horse.

"Wait a minute, Stub," said Brad calmly. "We ain't going to make any mistakes over this business. I reckon Tack has got more to tell."

"You bet I have," said Tack. "Yuan helped me to get away. I expect the skunks will plug him when they find I've gone, and he told me he's heard that the gangsters are running Bunsen. The place is thick with 'em, and so is the ranch."

"That so?" asked Brad. "Then it ain't any manner of use riding straight down into Bunsen. We've gotta go about this job carefully—get right into the town before they know we're coming."

"Can't be done, Brad," said Tack. "Yuan thinks they're watching all the roads."

"You leave this to me, Tack," replied Brad quietly, "and I'll fix it. Those guys are sure going to get a surprise this morning. We'll take the mustangs down to Horton's corral first, and then I'll tell you my plan."

Later that morning a wagon piled up with hay came into Bunsen, driven by a decrepit-looking old man. The gangster on guard at the entrance to the town stepped out into the road when he saw the wagon coming and hailed the driver.

"Where you going?" he demanded.

"I be a-going to take this load of hay to Grant's store," came the reply in a cracked feeble voice, as the old man pulled up. "He ordered it last week, and he'll sure be wanting it by now."

The gunman glanced casually at the loaded wagon, but saw nothing to make him suspicious.

"Okay," he said. "Get on with it!"

The wagon went on, and presently drew up in front of Grant's store. The driver got down, and with great difficulty pulled a number of planks from the back of the seat. Bending almost double beneath their weight, he staggered with them into the store, and deposited the timber in a corner.

Grant, the storekeeper, came forward to ask the driver what he wanted, and suddenly he saw an amazing change

come over the feeble-looking figure. The man took off the old slouch hat which had nearly covered his face, raised himself to his full height, and stood revealed as Brad Farley himself.

"Why, if it ain't——" began Grant in astonishment.

As Brad put a finger to his mouth warningly, Grant stopped, and turned to the door. Rapid footsteps were coming along the street, and a moment later a man burst hurriedly into the store.

"Say, Grant," gasped the newcomer, "you heard? They say Darvis——"

"Another man, a gangster this time, rushed in, a gun in his hand.

"Another word, and I drill you!" he yelled fiercely.

"Is that so?" remarked Brad coolly, stepping out from behind the timber in the corner. "Then I'll say the next word right now!"

His gun barked as he spoke, and the gangster slumped to the floor and lay still.

"That's one less, anyway," Brad said calmly.

The report of Brad's gun seemed to rouse the street into life. Two gunmen who were strolling past the haycart ran for the store at full speed, but they were still some yards away when the young cowboy appeared at the doorway.

"You guys are downright careless," he remarked. "You're running right into it."

Twice Brad's gun spoke, and the two hurrying gangsters fell.

"And that's three of 'em," said Brad, as he dashed across the street for the cart. As he reached it, the hay suddenly lifted, and from beneath it appeared the cowboys, each ready with his gun. Bunsen was in an uproar a moment later, for a number of gunmen came running up, and a rapid exchange of shots began.

Most of the townsfolk lay low at first, but as the firing continued windows opened here and there, and some of the citizens joined in the fight, using guns which they had concealed while the gangsters were in possession of the town.

Brad Farley crawled beneath the cart, and lay between the wheels firing rapidly on the gunmen. The street of the little town was soon veiled in a mist of gunsmoke, and it became difficult to see how the fight was progressing. But the gangsters had been completely taken by surprise, and they were fighting a losing battle from the start.

The people of Bunsen were taking heart, and every moment more and more of them came out to help Brad and his boys. Soon many of the gunmen were down, while only three of Brad's followers had been hit, none seriously.

"I've got it, boss!" cried a cowboy who had come down to lie at Brad's side under the wagon. He rolled over, clutching his shoulder where a red stain began to appear.

"Where did that bullet come from?" asked Brad.

"That window over there, I think," gasped the wounded man faintly.

"See to him, Dave," said Brad to another of his men, "and I'll get that guy in the window."

Brad surveyed the house from which the shot had come. Spot Skee was there, for he had seen that the fight was going against his men, and had dived into a house. Establishing himself at an upstairs window, he had opened fire on the cart, hoping to plug Brad Farley. The last bullet from his six-shooter wounded the man next to Brad, and Spot dropped to the floor to reload his gun.

Brad sprang up, crossed the street at a run, and began to climb a stack pipe

leading to the roof of the house. As he climbed, a gunman who had hidden himself in a doorway farther down the street peered out, saw Brad half-way up the pipe, and raised his gun to fire. Stub Wallock observed him just in time.

"That's for you!" growled the foreman. His gun barked a second before the gangster's, and the man fell, his bullet going well wide of Brad Farley.

Spot Skee poked his head cautiously above the sill, and looked out. He could no longer see Brad, and the cowboys appeared to be gazing at something farther down the street.

"I'll plug that fat guy, anyway," muttered Spot, taking aim at Stub. His finger was on the trigger, when a lithe, active form swung in at the window, and bore the gangster to the ground with a crash. Brad had contrived to scramble down from the roof and swing himself in at the window just in time to save Stub.

With the capture of Spot Skee the resistance of the gangsters ceased. Brad's boys combed the town, and rounded up all the gunmen who were still alive. Many of the gangsters had been killed outright, and most of the survivors were wounded.

Soon a jubilant crowd of townsfolk gathered in front of the store. Brad and his boys were there, once more on horseback, with a bunch of prisoners in their midst.

"Any of you seen Darvis?" asked Brad.

There came a chorus of "No," and Brad turned to Spot Skee.

"Where's your boss?" he demanded.

"Out on the ranch, I reckon," said Spot sullenly.

"You look after this bunch of rattlesnakes," cried Brad to the crowd of citizens. "C'mon, boys! It's us for the ranch, right now!"

Darvis Makes a Getaway.

KEDGE DARVIS sat in the ranch-house that morning reckoning out the amount of gold which the gangsters had already obtained from the vein. Several large nuggets figured amongst the spoil, and the gang-leader handled them thoughtfully.

"Say ten thousand dollars' worth here," he muttered to himself. "I'll give it a few days more, and then—"

The door burst open, and two gangsters hurriedly thrust in the Chinese cook, Yuan Lee.

"What's the meaning of this?" exclaimed Darvis angrily. "You wait till I ask you to come in."

"Boss," cried a gangster quickly, "that guy we put in the cellar—he's gone! An' this Chinese got him away, we reckon. He dug a hole, and—"

"Dug a hole, did he?" interrupted Darvis, glaring fiercely at his erstwhile confederates. "And where were you when he was digging a hole, may I ask? Ain't you got eyes? I told you to watch this yellow-faced heathen, didn't I?"

"Well, boss, it was this way," began one of the men.

"Shut your mouth," snarled Darvis, and he turned to the Chinaman.

"So you let that guy out, did you?" he said slowly, with menace in every word, and getting out his gun as he spoke.

"Mo do it, yis!" replied Yuan, facing the angry gangster with complete unconcern. "They beat Yuan, they kick him like dog, but Yuan trick them."

Darvis glared first at the Oriental, and then at his men, who wilted beneath his glance.

"You darned fools!" he breathed.

"Go and get the horses saddled, warn the others, and then come back here. And make it snappy!"

The men turned to go, and Darvis spoke again to Yuan Lee.

"When they come back, you die!"

"When Mr. Farley come, you die—and you—and you!" chuckled Yuan, pointing first at Darvis, and then at the departing gangsters. "Mr. Farley he clean you all up, and you all die quick."

"Not before you," growled Darvis.

"I die now," said Yuan, without a tremor in his voice, "you die presently; to-morrow or next day, allee same. All got to die sometime; no matter to Yuan when he die."

Darvis surveyed the impassive face of the Chinaman with unwilling admiration. The two gangsters came back a moment later, and reported that the horses were ready.

"You fools told me the other day that this Chink was a coward," said Darvis scornfully. "I'll say he's got more pluck than the whole darned lot of you. He'd have made a fine gangster. Take him away and tie him up, but don't drill him—yct."

All the gangsters who were on the ranch had by this time gathered at the house, and Darvis told them of the escape of Tack Gillup.

"There's a time to stay, and there's a time to move," he concluded, "and our time to move it right now. We'll take what gold there is, and make a getaway."

"Where to, boss?" asked a gunman.

"How about the boys in Bunsen?"

questioned another.

"Spot must make his own getaway, if he can. I figure he's been surprised this morning by the cowboys," replied Darvis. "Listen!"

The gunmen stood listening eagerly, and a faint crackling sound far off but distinct came to their ears.

"You're right, boss, sure enough!" cried the men. "That's guns, down in Bunsen."

"We'll make for Pine Creek, over the mountains, and get on the railroad there," Darvis went on. "Bunsen ain't healthy for us any more, unless Spot beats the cowboys off, and I ain't taking the chance of that."

"Too fond of your own skin," muttered a gangster under his breath, for the gunmen could not fail to see that Kedge Darvis was showing a yellow streak. A bold dash with the thirty or so gangsters from the ranch, and the cowboys might even yet be foiled.

"We don't know the way to Pine Creek," protested another gunman.

"The women do," answered Darvis. "We'll take 'em with us, and they'll show us the way. We'll take 'em right back to the city. If nothing happens to them, nothing happens to us."

Sue Vancey and Hampsey Dell had been kept as prisoners for the ten days that had passed since the murder of the sheriff. Once or twice they had been allowed to go out into the garden under an armed guard of gunmen, and during the last day or two their door had been unlocked, and they had been permitted to go about the house, but not to speak to anyone.

Hoping against hope to find some chance of escape, the two girls were about to go down to the kitchen that morning when the key was turned in the lock outside.

"They've locked us in again. Something's wrong!" gasped Hampsey, clutching Sue by the shoulder.

They waited in great anxiety behind the locked door for some time, listening eagerly. Presently footsteps sounded along the passage outside, the door was opened, and Darvis came in.

"Get yourselves ready!" he said harshly. "We're going to Pine Creek, and you are both coming with us." "We're not!" screamed both the girls at once.

"I say you are!" barked Darvis. "You'll do what I say. Get that!"

The girls saw that resistance was hopeless, and before long they were riding away from Vancey Ranch over the plains



"This country's too small for the two of us!" he cried. "Get up and fight it out, you dirty hound!"

towards the mountains, in the midst of the armed party of gangsters.

From time to time they looked back, hoping to see Brad Farley and his boys in pursuit, but in vain. The plain was empty of horsemen, save for the gunmen, and the girls almost gave way to despair. When the party approached the mountains Kedge Darvis came up to Sue.

"You'll lead the way to Pine Creek now," he said sternly.

"And suppose I say I won't?" retorted Sue defiantly.

"Then you'll stay here, with several bullet holes through you!" snarled Darvis angrily. "You know me by now. I ain't playing. You'll show us the way, or I'll drill you—both of you," he added, turning to Hampsey Dell, who shrieked with fear.

Sue looked the gang-leader straight in the face, and his eyes could not meet her fearless glance.

"You cowardly hound," she said in a low voice of concentrated scorn, "to threaten two helpless women!"

"Maybe!" muttered Darvis. "Are you going to lead the way, or must I shoot?"

"I don't want to die just yet," said Sue, "especially at the hands of a cowardly murderer like you. I'll show you the way to Pine Creek, and I hope you'll like the journey!"

Sue and Hampsey were sent to the front of the party, and they led the way into a long, narrow mountain gorge which wound up and up into the heart of the hills. Darvis looked round apprehensively as they went on, for the gorge seemed the very place for an ambush, as Sue very well knew when she agreed to go on. But there was as yet no sign of an enemy, and Kedge Darvis began to congratulate himself on having made a smart getaway.

In Chase.

BRAD FARLEY and his boys were just turning their horses to ride off to Vancey Ranch when a man on horseback came galloping furiously up.

"Say, stop a minute!" he yelled. "One of the gangsters gave me this note, and told me to bring it along. You'd better read it before you start."

Brad Farley took the note, opened it, and read aloud:

"To any rube whom it may concern. If we take to the city the ladies will come back safe. If not—you may say it with flowers."

"They've taken Sue and Hampsey with 'em as hostages, and as a protection against bullets into the bargain, the low skunks!" growled Brad wrathfully.

"I'd sure fill that Jasper Darvis with lead!" cried Stub Wallock, his face lengthening as he thought of Hampsey's danger. "Sure I would—if I knew where he was!"

"I figure they're making for Pine Creek across the mountains," said Brad thoughtfully. "I suppose they reckon to get on a train there. They won't come down into Bunsen. Still, you folk guard the station, just to make sure, and we'll go off and try to catch 'em in the mountains."

A posse of townfolk was at once formed to guard the station, quite an unnecessary move, as it proved, while Brad and the cowboys set off at a gallop across the plain. Before a mile had been covered the young leader threw up his hand, and the men drew rein.

"Stub," he cried, "take half the men down to Horton's corral, and bring up that lot of mustangs we left there this morning. You'll find me along the

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gorge—you know the old track that comes down into it half-way. We'll get there before 'em if we hurry, and so will you, too, I reckon. These guys will make a slow journey—they can't ride—they just sit on horseback."

"Okay, chief!" replied Stub, and he went off at once with half the men on his errand, while Brad rode on with the remainder, and in due course took the old track over the mountains, hoping to intercept the gangsters when the track led down into the gorge.

Meanwhile the gunmen were making very heavy weather as they slowly and painfully pursued their way along the gorge. The road was rough, and the gangsters were unaccustomed to horses. They were soon reduced to a walking pace, and even that was a labour and sorrow to most of them.

Suddenly a loud rumbling, followed by a crash, made all the gunmen jump.

"What's that?" howled one.

"Just a rock!" growled Darvis. "Don't get scared because a rock rolls down the hill."

"What made it roll down?" gasped a gangster, looking fearfully round.

"What d'you mean?" snarled Darvis. "It just fell, I reckon. There's another."

A second loud crash just behind the last of the party sent the gunmen scurrying forward in fear. They looked in affright at the sides of the gorge, but no one was to be seen there, and no more rocks moved as Darvis and his men went on.

Yet, though Darvis did not suspect it, Brad Farley and Stub Wallock were concealed behind some rocks on the mountainside. They had got ahead of the gangsters, and had sent off some of the men with instructions about the mustangs which Stub had brought up. Other cowboys were scattered here and there among the rocks, watching the gunmen until Brad gave the signal to attack.

"That's scared 'em," grinned Brad, as the rock he had pushed down fell at the rear of the gangsters' line. "We'll wait until the boys bring up the mustangs, and then we'll catch Darvis on that steep slope, half a mile down."

"They'll shoot the women," said Stub dolefully.

"Not they!" cried Brad. "This is our country, and we'll sure give 'em something to think about. And I've told Tack Gillup what to do about the girls."

The gangsters went on cautiously, and presently Sue and Hampsey, still in the lead, saw a steep slope in front. Down it the gunmen went, more slowly than ever, trying to make the horses pick their way amongst the stones. The two girls, looking back, choked with silent laughter as they saw the doleful faces of the uncomfortable riders, most of whom sat their horses as though they were afraid every moment of being thrown off.

"Say, I reckon you'd be more comfortable in a car," said Hampsey to Darvis, who was riding just behind her.

"You shut your mouth!" growled Darvis, looking enviously at the two girls, who were managing their horses with perfect ease. "If I can't ride I can shoot, so don't you try to run off."

"Oh, no," grinned Hampsey. "I'd sooner stay and watch you try to ride. It's so funny it makes me laugh."

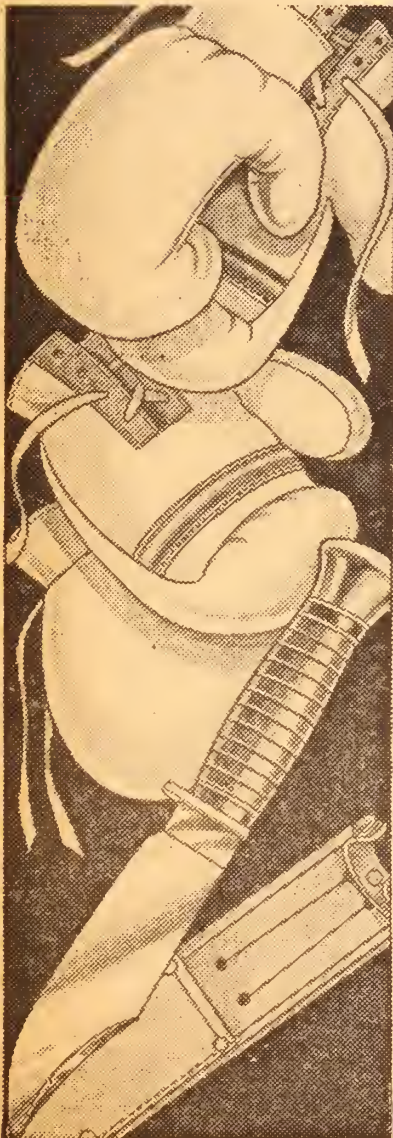
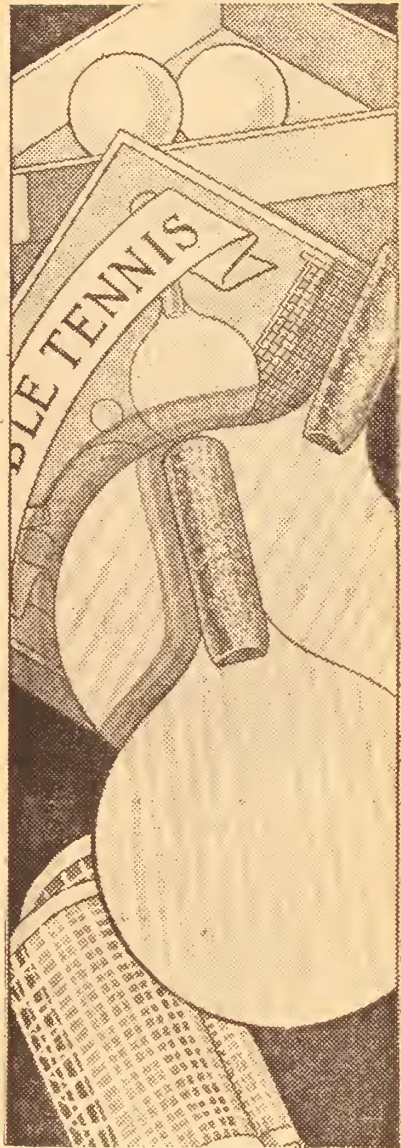
Darvis, with a vicious oath, raised his hand to strike the girl, but a frantic yell from behind made him turn.

"Wild horses! Look out there!" Coming down the slope at a furious gallop, the gangsters saw a herd of mustangs, riderless and wild, snorting

(Continued on page 23.)

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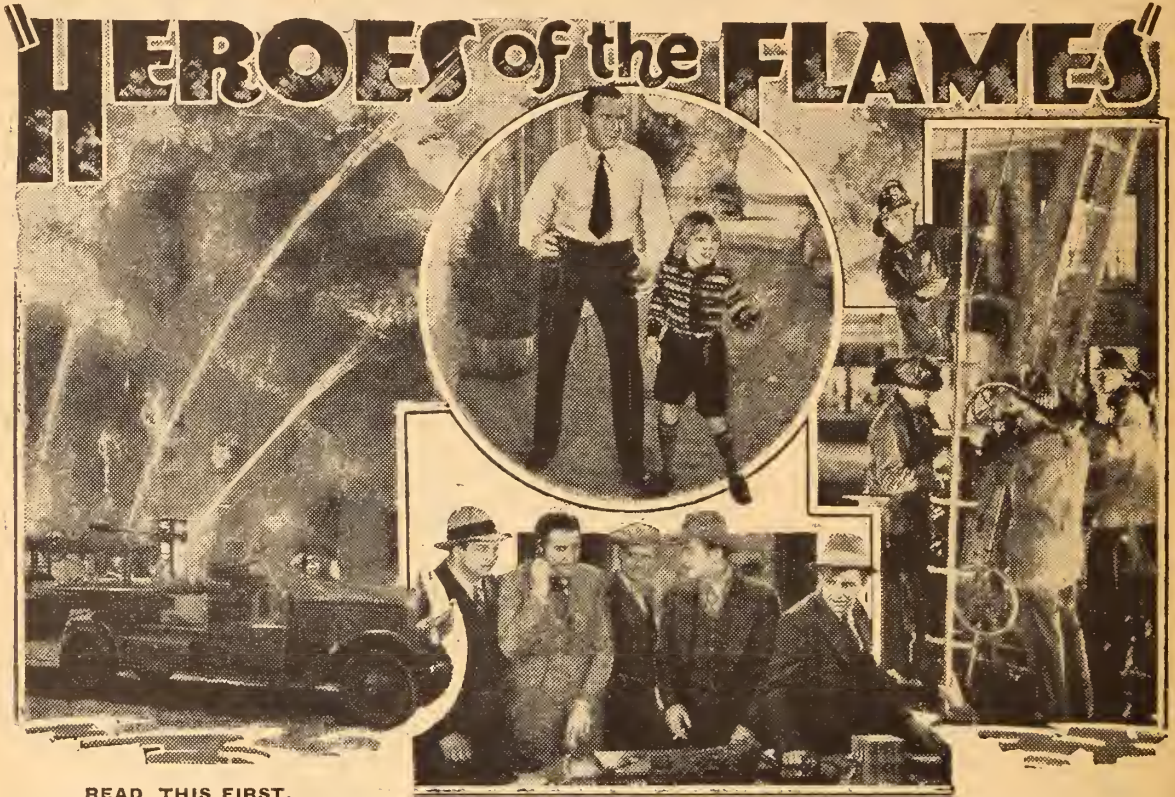
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READ THIS FIRST.

While en route with his comrades to the scene of a fire, Bob Darrow, of the San Francisco Brigade, saves the life of a boy who falls in front of one of the monster engines.

Later, he calls on James Madison, head of a chemical company, to whom he puts up an idea for a patent fire-extinguisher. Madison is not interested, and Bob leaves disappointed, after meeting Dan Mitchell, a shady promoter who is befriending Madison for his own ends.

Out in the street, Bob remonstrates with a beautiful girl who has "parked" her car beside a fire-hydrant. The girl, though he does not know it, is Madison's daughter June.

An hour afterwards, an accident in the Madison laboratories fires the whole building in which the company's offices are situated. The brigade is called out, and Bob learns that a girl is trapped in a beauty parlour on the top floor.

The girl is June Madison, but, still unaware of her identity, Bob climbs fearlessly to her rescue. He fails to reach her with the escape, but fixes the grappling-iron of a hook-ladder on the parapet of the roof, and saves her from the flames.

He is descending the hook-ladder with her when the coping-stone comes asunder. Man and girl are plunged to—

Now Read On.

The Ledger.

IN that awful moment of the downward plunge towards the street, hundreds of feet below, Bob Darrow instinctively clenched his grasp on the cross-step of the falling hook-ladder.

It was that circumstance which saved his life and the life of the girl he had

EPISODE 2.

"FLAMING HATE."

carried from the top-floor room of the burning building. For suddenly their hurtling rush through space was arrested with a violent jerk.

Bob's arm was almost wrenched from its socket, and the weight of the girl on his shoulder almost tore his fingers from the cross-step. But he hung on desperately.

The coping-stone that had come asunder swept past man and girl, missing their heads by inches. Bob watched it like one in a trance, and saw it twisting and turning in mid-air till it finally struck the sidewalk with smashing force, the sound of the impact coming to his ears like the crack of a gun heard at some distance.

A volume of smoke sweeping around himself and his inert burden recalled Bob to his situation and the miraculous escape that he and the girl had had from a terrible death. He looked up, and realised that by the merest chance the grappling-iron of the hook-ladder had clamped down on the ledge of a window immediately beneath the room from which he had rescued her.

The main fire-escape, from which he had pulled himself by means of the hook-ladder a few minutes before, was now within easy reach. Keeping a firm hold on the girl across his shoulder, he swung himself on to that escape with a litheness that came from strict training on the towers in the fire-station yard.

He descended rung by rung, and as he drew nearer to the street he became aware that his comrades and the crowd,

which had gathered near by, had broken into a spontaneous storm of cheering. It embarrassed him, for he was not the one to seek public acclaim, and reckoned he had done no more than his duty.

The moment he stepped to the ground he handed June Madison to three or four of the other firemen. She had fainted again, and they were making efforts to revive her when the girl's father pushed his way through the group, an expression of indescribable thankfulness on his countenance.

Bob did not notice him, nor did he see the face of the girl he had rescued. For, with the ordeal over, the iron nerve and will-power that had sustained him almost gave way, and, reeling back, he stumbled like a sick man.

He would have fallen but for the grasp of a hand on his arm. The hold steadied him, and, turning his head, he recognised Captain Wilson.

"Darrow," the battalion chief said, "you were magnificent. I've seen some pretty heroic jobs done in my twenty-five years' service with the brigade, but never one to beat that."

"I guess luck was on my side, sir," Bob told him. "I thought the girl and I were finished when that coping-stone gave way."

"I'm not thinking of your luck, my boy," the captain rejoined. "I'm thinking of your grit. But you're all in, Darrow," he added. "You'd better rest for a spell. We can get along without you."

"No, sir, I'd rather stick to the job," Bob protested, and, heedless of the battalion's chief's advice, he joined those of his comrades who were still engaged in the task of fighting the fire.

Meanwhile, June Madison was being carried to the auto, which she had

"parked" farther along the street, before she had kept her appointment at the hairdresser's on the top floor. Her father climbed in beside her, and, taking the wheel, drove towards his home on the outskirts of the city.

Long after Madison's departure, Wilson's men continued their battle with the flames, but it was not before a "General Call" had been sent, and the sub-stations had dispatched assistance, that the fire was eventually extinguished. A section of the roof had caved in by then, and, the danger of falling masonry being imminent, the street was condemned for traffic and pedestrians.

When Bob returned to his quarters that evening, he retired almost immediately. He was played out, and slept soundly, but the following morning awoke little the worse for his experience.

He was told to report to Captain Wilson, and the battalion chief received him at his desk.

"Darrow," he said at once, "I don't know whether you're aware of the identity of the girl whose life you saved yesterday?"

"No, sir," Bob confessed. "I didn't get a straight look at her face."

"Even if you had, I don't suppose it would have told you anything, except that she's mighty good to look at," Wilson observed with a smile. "But it might interest you to learn that she was June Madison."

Bob appeared startled.

"Not James Madison's daughter?" he exclaimed.

"The same," the captain answered. "And Madison's just been on the 'phone to me. He wants me to give you a few hours' leave, so that you can go down to his house. He'd like to thank you personally."

Bob did not seem too happy over the idea, for his natural modesty made him averse to praise or gratitude.

Yet he felt it would be ill-mannered to refuse the invitation, and consequently he changed into civilian clothes and took a taxi to the exclusive residential suburb where the Madisons lived.

Three-quarters of an hour after leaving the station he was admitted to James Madison's palatial home and announced by a footman. He found himself confronted by three people when he was shown into the lounge—Madison, his wife, and his small son Jackie.

The moment the latter caught sight of Bob he uttered a delighted cry.

"Why, it's the fireman who saved me from bein' run over!" he exclaimed.

Bob had recognised the boy, and he stooped and patted his head.

"Hallo, young man!" he said cheerfully. "I'm glad to see you again. Haven't been trying to knock over any more fire-engines, have you?" Then he looked up and caught James Madison's eye.

"Darrow," the scientist told him, "I wanted you to come here, so that I could express my gratitude for the way in which you saved my daughter's life. When I asked the captain to send you, I didn't know that I was indebted to you for my little boy's as well. Nothing I can do will ever wipe out that debt, Darrow, but I would like

to show my appreciation somehow or other."

Bob fidgeted awkwardly.

"It's against my own principles and the principles of the service to accept any kind of reward, Mr. Madison," he said. "I did no more than my duty."

"You risked your life on two occasions," Madison rejoined, "and, whether you consider you were acting according to your duty or not, it does not alter the fact that I am more grateful than I can ever say—"

He was interrupted at that moment by the opening of the door, and as Madison caught sight of his daughter he called her over to introduce her.

"June," he began, "this is the young man who rescued you yesterday."

The girl turned towards Bob, and their recognition was mutual.

"You!" June ejaculated, and then, after an embarrassed silence, she broke into a charming smile and held out her hand.

"When I met you yesterday, Mr. Darrow," she said, "I didn't think I'd have to thank you for my life. But I do thank you whole-heartedly, and—and you were quite right about that hydrant. I had no business to park my car alongside it."

June's father spoke again.

"Darrow," he murmured, "I wouldn't insult a man of your calibre by pressing you to accept some financial reward. But nevertheless, I wish you'd let me do something. If there's any way whatsoever in which I can help you, please tell me."

It was perhaps natural that Bob's mind should revert to the interview he had held with Madison in the latter's

office the previous day, when he had discussed his patent fire-fighting invention with such disappointing results.

He did not want to trade on Madison's gratitude to further his interests, but he at least desired a chance to show the world whether or not the extinguisher on which he had been working was a success.

"Mr. Madison," he said, "you'll remember I called on you yesterday and tried to interest you in an idea of mine dealing with the quelling of outbreaks of fire. I'm afraid I'm not a good talker, and perhaps the invention didn't sound very favourable, particularly as I haven't had much opportunity for perfecting it."

"That's so, Darrow," Madison interrupted, "and under the circumstances I'm prepared to look into it a good deal more thoroughly than I was then."

Bob shook his head.

"I don't want you to think I'm urging you to take it up merely as a personal favour," he mentioned. "But I sure would be obliged if I could have the use of a laboratory for a spell and carry out one or two experiments. If the idea proved a success, all well and good—I'd give you the first option on it, Mr. Madison. But if it didn't satisfy me, I'd be the first one to admit failure, and I wouldn't let you take it up simply as a means of repaying me for any service you think I may have done."

"Darrow," Madison answered, "it's the very least I can do to provide you with lab. space for conducting your experiments. Of course, there will be no facilities in Firth Street for some time to come. Yesterday's fire has disorganised everything there. But my



"There it is, Jackie," Bob declared. "The Darrow Fire-Bomb, all ready for use."

own private laboratory attached to this house is at your disposal."

The Experiment in Sight.

IN the week or two that followed Bob Darrow took advantage of every moment of his spare time by frequenting the Madisons' house.

Not all of those moments were spent in the laboratory, for his acquaintance with June ripened into a sentiment that promised to be stronger even than friendship—a circumstance that Dan Mitchell was quick to notice during his occasional visits.

In spite of the pleasant distraction of June's company, however, Bob put in a great deal of work on his invention, and he took Madison thoroughly into his confidence.

Madison was helpful, and it soon became obvious that he was keenly interested in Bob's project, little as it had appealed to him at first.

"Dan," he said to Mitchell, when the latter called one morning, "that young fellow Darrow has brains as well as courage."

Mitchell's lip curled slightly. "You think so?" he drawled. "Well, he never struck me in that light. Climbing ladders with a hatchet in his fist seems about all he's good for to me."

"Which is something very much to his credit," Madison put in curtly, feeling some annoyance at the tone Mitchell had used. "But he's clever, too. He's no talker—that's why neither you nor I were impressed with him that day we met him in my office. But his knowledge of practical chemistry doesn't fall short of mine, and I tell you candidly that I have high hopes he is on the right lines with his invention. If it succeeds, as I think it will, it will revolutionise the accepted theories on the extinguishing of fires."

Mitchell affected a mere casual interest, but to anyone but the unsuspecting James Madison the glint in the man's eyes might have betrayed something of his innermost thoughts.

"What makes you think Darrow's idea will turn out a success, Madison?" he asked.

"I've been watching him at work," the scientist answered, "and he's discussed the invention with me in detail more than once since he's been coming about the house. I'm convinced there's something in it."

"Well, I hope you're not disappointed," Mitchell observed, without sincerity, and a few minutes later he took his departure.

Leaving Madison's house, he motored to a shady little office not far from the docks. It was occupied by a certain Bat Thompson, who had figured in many an unscrupulous enterprise during a chequered career, and who was at present involved in the patenting of a fire-extinguisher which he and Mitchell hoped to market.

Thompson, a short, stoutly-built man with a crafty eye, was in conversation with a rogue known as Spike Beldon when Dan Mitchell entered the office. He cut short that conversation on seeing Mitchell, and greeted him breezily.

"Hello, Dan," he said. "Any news?"

"Bad news," Mitchell snapped. "Listen, Bat, that guy Darrow is on velvet. Madison's taken him under his wing, and he's giving him all the help he can with his invention."

Thompson leaned back in his chair comfortably.

"We should worry," he sneered. September 12th, 1931.

"Madison naturally feels under an obligation to this fireman, but he surely ain't crazy enough with gratitude to put money into something that's bound to be a failure."

"I'm not so sure that it's going to be a failure," Mitchell retorted. "Madison seems to think a lot more of it than he did at the start. In fact, he just told me he was confident it was going to turn out to be 'the goods.' If it does—well, you know what that means, Thompson."

"Sure," was the rejoinder; "our own little patent goes up in smoke, as you might say."

Mitchell nodded. "Too true," he ground out. "I was banking on Madison to put it across, and though he didn't seem too interested, I felt pretty certain I could win him round. But this fellow Darrow is in the way. If he gets in first with his invention we're done."

"How are you gonna stop him, Dan?" Thompson demanded.

Mitchell leaned forward confidentially. "I don't know a lot about the principle of Darrow's invention," he said softly. "But I do know that it's a form of explosive—not damaging to life or property—but calculated to quell fire instantaneously. Does that suggest anything to you?"

"Can't say it does," answered Thompson, after pondering a moment. "Does it to you, Spike?" And he glanced inquiringly at Beldon.

Spike shook his head. He was a foxy-looking individual whose proper element was the gutter, possessed of a certain low cunning, but not much intelligence.

"Well, I'll tell you what it suggests to me," said Mitchell. "Supposing somebody was to tamper with that chemical compound Darrow has discovered. Supposing somebody was to substitute it for a dangerous explosive just before the final experiment was made. Get the idea?"

Thompson and Beldon glanced at each other.

"Who's gonna do the job?" the latter demanded.

"You, Beldon," said Mitchell. "I'll put you wise to just what I want of you, and I'll hang around Madison and watch points in the meantime. When you get the okay from me, you'll go ahead according to instructions."

An Impromptu Test.

ANOTHER week had passed, and Bob, working in the laboratory attached to James Madison's house, had completed a series of minor tests which led him to feel fairly confident that the final experiment, planned for that afternoon, would prove a success.

Young Jackie was in the laboratory with him, an interested spectator of the last stages of a process that resulted in a glass bulb being filled with a dull, yellowish fluid.

"There it is, Jackie," Bob declared. "The Darrow Fire-Bomb, all ready for use."

"Fire-bomb," murmured Jackie. "It'll go off with a bang, then?"

Bob nodded smilingly. "Not a very big bang," he said. "You see, Jackie, it isn't meant to blow things to pieces. But it is meant to blow out a fire. In fact, that's just about what it does—blows it out at one gust."

"Without hurting anybody at all?" Jackie asked, in a tone of awe.

"I could drop it right here between us," Bob told him, "and we'd come off

without a scratch. But you wait and see."

The barking of a dog from a kennel not far away reached Bob's ears just then. He paid no heed to it—was scarcely aware of the sound, indeed—or he might have detected a quality of menace in it, the deep-throated meow with which a good watch-dog greets the appearance of an intruder.

There was an intruder in the vicinity. He was Spike Beldon, hirling of those partners in a shady enterprise—Mitchell and Thompson.

From Mitchell, only an hour or so before, Spike Beldon had received the "okay," and, according to instructions, he was "going ahead."

The discoloured end of a cigarette stuck in the corner of his mouth, he sealed the wall surrounding the Madison grounds. It was the scraping of his feet against the stonework that started the watch-dog barking, and as the animal saw Beldon's head rise above the parapet his manner became as agitated as it was ominous.

He was bound to his heavy kennel by a strong chain, which sprang taut as he bounded towards the wall. His paws slithered in his frenzied but vain efforts to reach this and the ruffianly-looking stranger on the parapet, and wisps of straw flew in all directions, straw that had been piled inside the kennel and around it, so that the dog could bask in the sun or retire to the shade at will, with the same maximum of comfort.

Beldon was alarmed at first, but felt reassured the instant he realised that the dog was on a chain. He peered over the wall and singled out the laboratory, which he recognised from a description that Mitchell had given him. Then he shifted his glance towards the right, and perceived a dense mass of shrubbery growing close to the wall.

The shrubbery suited his purpose. It was out of reach of the dog below him, and it was an effective place of concealment, through which he could worm his way close to the laboratory.

The dog was still harking, and, with an imprecation, Beldon took the cigarette butt from his mouth and flung it at the animal. It struck the dog's coat and then fell amongst the straw, to smoulder there. But Beldon was unaware of this. He had already dropped back to the road, and was running alongside the wall, which he sealed at the point where the shrubbery grew thickest.

He dropped into the bushes and stole through them in the direction of the lab. As he was approaching the building he heard voices coming through an open window, and, drawing still nearer, he glanced cautiously over the sill.

He saw Bob and Jackie standing at the bench.

Meanwhile, the cigarette which had been tossed so carelessly from the wall was burning into the straw around the dog's kennel, straw on which a fierce Pacific sun had been beating down the entire morning. Soon a flicker of flame started up from the pile, and in the space of a few seconds a formidable blaze was raging.

The dog's barking took on a panic-stricken note, and if it had not attracted the attention of Bob and Jackie before, it certainly did so now. They moved to the door of the laboratory and looked out, and as they saw the flaming straw they uttered a simultaneous cry.

Bob whipped round and made a dive for the fire-bomb that stood on the bench. He snatched it up, and, with Jackie at his heels, dashed in the direction of the kennel.

The flames had already gained a

strong hold on the small wooden hut, and the dog was dragging at his chain in a frenzy of terror. Bob's first concern was to release the animal, and, having done so, he retreated with Jackie to about twenty paces and then hurled the fire-bomb at the kennel with all his might.

The bulb struck the hut, and there was a dull report. A cloud of gas arose immediately after the explosion, and for a few seconds obscured the scene. When that cloud cleared away there was not a trace of flame coming either from the straw or from the kennel, and not a spark glowed where but an instant before a miniature fire had been burning furiously. Nor did the kennel show any sign of having been damaged by the bomb.

"Gee, it's wonderful, Bob," Jackie exclaimed in awe. "It put out the flames quicker'n forty buckets of water could've done."

"You're right, Jackie," Bob declared. "The invention's had an impromptu test, and it's turned up trumps. I only wish your father had been on the spot to see it. Never mind, though. He'll see the real test for himself this afternoon."

"But where are you going to get another fire-bomb from?" Jackie asked.

Bob grinned. "That wasn't the only one I'd made ready," he explained. "That was the last of half a dozen. The rest are in a rack in the lab. But come on, pal. We'd better have some lunch. Then, when your dad comes home from the City, we'll get busy for the big experiment."

They walked on to the house, neither of them being aware that a pair of eyes had been watching them from the shrubbery.

The moment they had disappeared Beldon slipped out of his hiding-place, climbed in through the window of the laboratory, and scanned its interior.

Mitchell had told him exactly what to look for and exactly what to do. Above the bench he perceived the rack in which Bob had placed the fire-bombs as each in turn had been filled with the precious chemical he had created.

From his pocket Beldon took a bottle, and he added a few drops of its contents to the liquid in the bulbs. Then he clambered through the window again, plunged back to the wall through the shrubbery, and scrambled over the parapet.

Sky-High!

AT some distance from the Madison house there stood an old tool-shed that Madison had for some time thought of demolishing. Since Bob had been at work in the laboratory, however, he had abandoned this idea, for the young fireman had declared that it would suit his purpose admirably, and it had been spared for the experiment with the fire-extinguisher.

Shortly after lunch, James Madison arrived from the city in company with Dan Mitchell. The supercilious manner which the latter reserved for Bob seemed tempered with a curious air of expectancy to-day, and in some vague way Bob was aware of it, though it was not till long afterwards that he was to connect it with the events of that afternoon.

"Well, Darrow," said Madison, after he had greeted Bob, "I'm here to eye-witness that test, and I'm hoping the fire-bomb doesn't let you down."

"I'm hoping it doesn't blow you all up," put in Mitchell, with a sardonic smile. "I wish you every success, Darrow, but I rather anticipate failure." Bob gave him a straight glance.

"It remains to be seen," he made answer, "but I haven't much fear of the consequences. An incident cropped up this morning that gave me an opportunity to try it out unofficially. The dog-kennel caught fire, and I pitched one of my fire-bombs into it. Jackie will tell you that it put out the flames instantly."

"It did?" exclaimed Madison. "That sounds hopeful, Darrow."

"Still," sneered Mitchell, "a dog-kennel on fire is hardly to be compared with a city sky-scraper, or even a shed like the one you're going to experiment on, for that matter."

"But it's an indication," observed Madison impatiently, "and if Darrow's fire-bomb proves effective when that shed is ablaze I'm taking it up. Anyhow, we'll very soon know the result. Are you staying on, Dan?"

Mitchell thought of the grim work on which his hiring Beldon had been engaged, and decided that he had no desire to be anywhere near at hand when the shed was blown sky-high by the "doctored" chemical.

"No, I don't think so," he told Madison. "I have rather an urgent engagement in town. But I'd like to say 'hallo' to June if she's around."

"I saw her through the window just now," said Bob. "She was walking in the grounds."

The three men stepped out through the French windows of the lounge, and presently discovered June not far from the shed.

"All set for the experiment?" June asked Bob.

"Yes," he told her, "and if you people will excuse me I'll slip off to the laboratory and bring the fire-bombs."

He hurried away, and June, her father and Mitchell were left in conversation. Presently Jackie appeared on the scene, but he was romping with the dog which had had such a narrow escape that same morning from being burned to death.

The grown-ups paid little heed to Jackie while he was playing around with his pet, and, the dog suddenly eluding him, Jackie gave chase. It was a chase that led him through the shrubbery and then back to the shed which was to be prepared for the experiment.

The door of the shed was open, and the dog dashed inside. Jackie followed him in full cry and crossed the threshold. The dog turned and tried to dart past him again, but Jackie pulled the door to with a triumphant gesture and then made a grab at his canine playmate.

The dog evaded him, and Jackie stumbled, twisted his ankle and fell with a little exclamation of pain. As

he went sprawling he saw his pet leap for a small window in the side of the shed, to vanish through the aperture with a frisk of his tail.

Jackie sat on the timber floor of the hut and nursed his foot.

Meanwhile Bob Darrow had returned to the spot where the Madisons and Dan Mitchell were standing. He was carrying the rack containing the fire-

bombs, and this he laid on a garden table that had been placed near an old elm tree some little distance from the shed.

Mitchell glanced at his wrist-watch. "Well," he announced, "I guess I'd better be on my way."

"Aren't you going to stay and see the experiment?" June asked him. "It's going to be the latest thing in fire-extinguishers, you know."

"Take care that it isn't the last thing in fire-extinguishers for you and your father," Mitchell warned. "Since it is explosive in principle, I wouldn't advise anybody to stand too close to that shed, just in case something goes wrong. I suppose you agree, Darrow?" he added airily. "You don't propose to risk other people's lives for a theory, do you?"

Bob controlled the feelings of resentment that the man's manner invariably aroused in him.

"I don't consider my patent to be merely a theory, Mitchell," he retorted. "But at the same time I'm not foolhardy enough to let anyone take chances, even though I have every faith in the experiment's success. Standing by this tree, Mr. Madison and June would be safe even if a charge of dynamite were to go off under that shed."

"Most reassuring," Dan Mitchell murmured insolently. "Well, Darrow, in that case I guess I'll stick around after all and get a little amusement—from behind the tree, I may add. Go ahead."

Near the shed stood a considerable pile of dry brushwood that had been dumped there by James Madison's gardener, and Bob turned his attention to this and began pitch-forking it against the walls of the wooden out-house.

He packed it in great quantities around the shed, completely encircling it. Then he set light to a brand and moved from point to point, plunging it into the decayed twigs and foliage.

"I'm not concerned about the shed," Madison remarked to June, "but you'd think Darrow was starting something that no fire-extinguisher could possibly overcome. With all that brushwood packed against the hut, it's going to be a regular beacon."

"Bob certainly doesn't seem to believe in half measures," June agreed. "He's giving his invention a terribly severe test."

"There are a lot of shrubs near by, too," Madison added, "and we've had practically no rain for a month. If anything went wrong and they caught fire we'd have a pretty fierce time heating out the flames. Still, I suppose Darrow knows what he's doing."

(Continued on page 27.)

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"GUN SMOKE."

(Continued from page 20.)

fiercely, charging full upon them. It was impossible to stop that rush, and Darvis shouted wildly to his men.

"Off your horses—quick!"

The gunmen hurriedly dismounted, some of them falling off in their haste, and tried to squeeze themselves against the sides of the gorge. Then with a thundering roar the mustangs swept down upon them, and stones flew in showers as the wild horses rushed past, taking all the gunmen's animals with them as they galloped on furiously down the hill.

Another moment, and the herd had disappeared round a corner, leaving the gangsters alone without their horses in a wild mountain gorge, in a country they did not know at all.

Sue and Hampsey had dismounted at the first alarm. They crouched together in a little crevice at the side of the gorge and watched the mustangs go by.

"Brad sent them down the hill, I reckon," whispered Sue.

"Maybe," replied Hampsey. "I wish I could see Stub before I'm shot."

"Shot!" cried Sue scornfully. "You're not going to be shot. Darvis has forgotten us by this time. I expect he's run away. Let's look."

The girls peered out of their hiding-place, but Darvis was not in sight. For Sue had spoken truly. The gang-leader had forgotten the girls. He had a sterner job on hand than the threatening of helpless women or the shooting of unprepared men. The West he had despised had him in its grip, and escape would prove no easy matter, even for the boasted "King of the Under-world."

The End of the Gunmen.

AS the mustangs thundered past, one of the gangsters saw something so strange that it appeared to him to be miraculous. Hanging on the side of one of the wild horses he observed a man, and he yelled a warning at the top of his voice.

"Look out, boys, there's a man on that horse!"

No one heard him amidst the noise and confusion, and Brad, for it was he, hung on to the mustang until he came level with Kedge Darvis, who had found a side gully in which he was sheltering till the herd had gone by.

Skilfully throwing himself off the horse, Brad hurled himself on the astounded gang-leader, and bore him to the ground. But the young cowboy came down himself rather awkwardly, and the two men were on their feet again almost together.

In another moment a fierce fight was in progress. Quite alone in the gully, Brad Farley fought out his quarrel with the gangster, and he soon found that Kedge Darvis, driven to bay, was no contemptible opponent. Twice the two men came to the ground together, and each time they rolled nearer to the end of the gully. They got to their feet again, and closed. With a swift upward jab to the chin, Brad sent Darvis down once more, and stood over him.

"This country's too small for the two of us," he cried. "Get up and fight it out, you dirty hound!"

Darvis got up, and with a tiger-like spring came at the young cowboy. He dodged Brad's right as he came, threw

his arms around his opponent, and down they went for the third time.

Over and over they rolled, striking fiercely at each other, and soon they were at the very edge of the gully. Beneath them yawned a great chasm, hundreds of feet deep, at the bottom of which flowed a swift river.

Another roll, and Brad was underneath, his head overhanging the chasm. The gangster got one hand firmly on his opponent's chin, and thrust fiercely. Back went the cowboy's head, until it seemed that the next moment his neck must break. Darvis knew that he was throttling his enemy, and he let out a yell of triumph.

With a last despairing effort, Brad brought his knee up in a jab to the gunman's stomach. Darvis lost his grip, winded for the moment by the blow, and before he could recover, Brad had scrambled to his knees. With a swift punch to the jaw, the cowboy thrust his enemy back, and then again the two men were on their feet, gripping each other and struggling with mad fury on the dizzy edge of the precipice.

Brad's face was streaming with blood from a cut on the cheek, but he paid no heed to his injury. Youth and clean living were on his side, and Darvis at length began to weaken. Brad felt his grip slackening, and with a great effort he called up all his reserve of strength, and raised the gangster in his arms.

With a mighty heave he hurled Darvis over the edge of the precipice. The gangster, screaming with fear, fell sheer down hundreds of feet into the stream below, and there disappeared beneath the surface of the water, to be seen no more.

Brad, gasping for breath, and trembling from his exertions, watched his enemy's fearful death, and when Darvis had vanished in the water, he turned slowly away.

"Well, he plugged poor old Strike Jackson and Sheriff Meed," muttered Brad. "I ain't got any pity for a skunk like that; the world is well rid of him. Now I'll find the boys."

The boys had done their part manfully. Some of them lay on the slopes, well in cover, firing down on the gangsters; others heaved away at the rocks, sending them crashing down into the gorge beneath.

The gunmen were beaten from the start. Their leader had vanished, they knew not where. Invisible enemies were firing at them from all directions, and rocks kept crashing down on their heads. They fired back as well as they could, taking what cover was available, but none of the cowboys was hit, and minute by minute the gangsters were losing men.

After a while Brad's boys heaved a great rock out of its place, and a tremendous landslide hegan. Hundreds of tons of rock fell into the gorge, and buried a party of gunmen beneath the debris.

Presently only one of the gangsters was left. He threw away his gun, and fled down the hill as fast as he could go. Stub Wallock got on his horse and followed. Picking his way through the masses of fallen rock, the foreman came in sight of the fugitive and gave chase, whirling his lariat round his head.

A skilful throw, and the last gangster was down, the rope round his body. Stub did not trouble to dismount. He drew the lariat tight, turned his horse, and rode back, dragging the unfortunate gunman behind him.

Sue and Hampsey had long been safe. Tack Gillup had been given the task of rescuing them, and he had contrived to

hang on to the side of a mustang until he saw the girls in the crevice at the side of the gorge. Then he dropped off, waited until the mustangs had passed, and rushed up to the women.

"Quick!" he shouted. "Come out of that. We'll go down to the end, out of the way of the fight."

"But Brad?" gasped Sue.

"And Stub?" cried Hampsey.

"Brad's orders," yelled Tack, dragging the girls on. "You're to wait at the end of the gorge until he comes."

Tack got Sue and Hampsey down to the end safely, and there they waited in terrible anxiety, listening to the firing and the crashing of rocks as the fight went on.

"Nobody's come this way yet," remarked Tack presently, as the firing began to slacken, and at last died away altogether. "I reckon the boys have put those guys on the spot this time, sure!"

Meanwhile Brad had found the boys just as Stub Wallock dragged up his captive. A burst of cheering went up as he appeared.

"Well, Stub, did you get 'em all?" he asked.

"Yeah! Cleaned up the whole bunch, all but Darvis. I ain't seen him. None of the others got away—here's the last of 'em," replied Stub triumphantly, as he indicated the bruised and groaning prisoner.

"I got Darvis," said Brad, and the boys cheered more vehemently than before. "I pitched him over the cliff. He won't plug any more helpless old men!"

"Say, what about the girls, Brad?" asked Stub anxiously.

"Tack has got 'em out of the gorge by this time, I reckon," replied Brad.

"We'll go and see. You boys ride back slowly. We'll catch you up."

Brad and Stub rode away. They came to the foot of the hill, and there, to their great joy, found Sue and Hampsey safe.

"Oh, Brad, you're hurt!" cried Sue.

"You're not hurt, Sue. That's more important," said Brad. "This ain't much. Just a cut or two."

"We wiped up that bunch," proclaimed Stub joyfully. "Every one of 'em."

"Sue," said Brad rather sternly. "I warned you Darvis was crooked, and you wouldn't listen!"

"I was wrong," replied Sue humbly. "I will listen to you—after this."

"You wanted me to make something of myself—to imitate Darvis, you meant. I reckon. But I ain't going to be any different, so if you don't want—"

"Brad," interrupted the girl tearfully. "I don't want you to be any different. I love you—as you are!"

"You mean that, Sue?" demanded Brad, taking her in his arms.

"Of course I do!" whispered the girl happily, as he kissed her.

Stub Wallock looked on, and then turned doubtfully to Hampsey Dell.

"You—you— What d'you think of that?" he asked dubiously.

"I think you're the worst foreman I've ever seen," said Hampsey dolefully. "Your boss shows you what to do, and you— Say, d'you think Sue's the only girl who wants to be kissed?"

"Why, no," replied Stub, as, taking his courage in both hands, he approached Hampsey and gathered her clumsily in his embrace. "I reckon I'll kiss you, too!"

And he did!

(By permission of the Paramount Film Service, Ltd., starring Richard Arlen and Mary Brian.)

"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

(Continued from page 25.)

June nodded. "I'm sure he does," she declared loyally, and her father looked at her with a shrewd expression on his face. "You seem to have taken a fancy to Bob Darrow, June," he mused, while Mitchell stood by frowning. "How could anyone help taking a fancy to him?" she answered, with a slight flush. "I'll never forget that he saved my life, and besides—he's so genuine."

"A fine fellow," Madison rejoined, and glanced in the direction of the shed again.

The brushwood piled against three of the walls was now blazing fiercely, and Bob had passed out of sight to kindle that which had been pitchforked alongside the farthestmost wall, the one containing the window.

The flames reared up there only a moment after he had touched the brushwood with the burning brand, and it was as the ugly tongues of fire lifted to the level of the window that Jackie suddenly became aware of his peril.

He was still sitting on the floor when he saw the flames, and as he caught sight of them he sprang up with a squeal and rushed to the door.

The door was on that side of the shed where the brushwood had first begun to flare, and the heat had already taken effect. The door was jammed, and refused to budge under Jackie's frantic efforts to open it. Outside, an inferno roared and crackled, an inferno that wrapped the frail walls and roof of the shed—blistering the woodwork and eating its way into it.

A volume of smoke poured in through the window, rolling about the trapped boy as he struggled in vain to escape.

He screamed out in mortal terror. "Bob! Help, Bob! Oh, Bob, I can't get out!"

The young inventor heard the cries, and his face paled.

That was Jackie's voice, and it was coming from the blazing hut!

Dan Mitchell and the Madisons heard the lad's cries, too, and a look of horror passed between June and her father.

"Jackie!" Madison faltered. "Good heavens! My boy is in that shed!"

Bob Darrow was seen to wheel round. The burning brushwood seemed well-nigh impenetrable, but, stripping off his coat, he flung it about his head and shoulders and rushed into the flaming mass of twigs and foliage.

The impetus of his dash carried him through the barrier of fire, and the point of his shoulder hit the door with a shock that burst it open. He lurched across the threshold, flame and smoke whirling in behind him.

Bob slammed the door to gain a moment's relief, for, though his jacket had protected him to some extent, his clothes were smouldering in places and he had been burned about the hands.

Jackie was cowering in the middle of the hut, and Bob snatched him up and wrapped him in his coat. Then he turned back for the door and dragged it open.

He had managed to force his way into the shed, but to escape from it was a different proposition. For the brushwood through which he had hurled himself had tumbled back into position, and was blazing even more fiercely.

A solid sheet of fire challenged him, and the heat drove him back. Protected though he was by the coat, it was doubtful whether even Jackie could have survived an attempt to fight clear, and Bob himself was fairly at the mercy of the flames.

He closed the door again, and turned to examine the window. A glance told him that there was no possibility of effecting a getaway there. It was too small, and just beyond it the fire was raging as furiously as at the door.

There was only one chance. If he could smash his way through one of the walls bodily, the woodwork, in its collapse, might serve as a shield against the flames, driving them under as it fell.

He threw himself at the planks. The shed was the reverse of substantial, but the wall against which he levelled his attack did not give at the first impact. There was a slight splintering sound, however, and though he staggered back bruised and shaken, it nerved him for a second attempt.

Fifty paces from the blazing hut Dan Mitchell and the Madisons waited breathlessly for Bob to reappear. Then all at once June started forward.

"Jackie!" she sobbed, breaking into a run.

Dan Mitchell dashed after her and caught her by the wrist.

"Come back here!" he panted. "You can't go into that hell of flame, June—you'll be killed! This cursed experiment should never have taken place!"

He was pulling her towards the tree again when he heard her father utter a sharp exclamation, and out of the corner of his eye he saw Madison dart to the table and snatch one of Bob Darrow's fire-extinguishing grenades from the rack.

Drawing back his arm, Madison hurled the fire-bomb at the shed with all his force.

Dan Mitchell blanched, and promptly sprang for cover, for he knew what to expect when the glass bulb smashed to pieces and the "doctored" chemicals reacted to the flames!

(Don't miss next week's breath-taking episode of this thrilling new serial. By permission of Universal Pictures, Ltd., starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.)

"CRACKED NUTS."

(Continued from page 12.)

Wendell saw what had happened, but Zup was looking anxiously up at the circling plane.

"Will you get out of there before it's too late?" he vociferated.

"Thanks!" shouted Zup scornfully. "I've had enough of your advice—I'm going to stay right here until something happens!"

"Come here! Come here!" howled Wendell. "Before it's too late!"

Cried Zup, unwittingly putting a foot on the sizzling bomb:

"You lied to me—and I'll never believe you again as long as I live!"

"You won't have long to live if you stop to argue!" yelled Wendell frantically.

"Something's burning around here!" remarked Zup to himself, as his nostrils were smitten by an acrid odour.

He sniffed at his cigar, but decided that it must be something else, and he was gazing inquiringly around when Ben, almost directly overhead, pulled the lever that released the last bomb the machine carried.

It was the largest, the heaviest, the most formidable of all the collection—and its cap had been replaced. Just as it was whistling through the air, Wendell, a human wreck, reached the throne, dragged Zup out of it, and tried to tug him to safety.

The bomb struck the deserted throne fair and square, blowing it to smithereens and exploding the other capless bomb that lay in its path. Wendell and Zup were flung on their faces, and for a few minutes everything was blotted out.

Indescribable noises followed, combined with shouts, shrieks, groans. By degrees the air cleared as a terrific shower of debris settled. Zup and Wendell found themselves sitting side by side on a patch of blackened grass, staring at what seemed to be a black fountain issuing from the earth where the throne had been and leaping towards the sky.

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"What is that?" gasped Wendell. "An inkwell?"

"No," said Zup, staggering excitedly to his feet. "It's an oil well!"

"An—an oil well?"

"Yeah—we're rich, Wendell! We're rich!"

He tugged his chum to his feet and, gripping both his hands, almost danced with joy.

"We're rich! We're rich! We're rich!"

He held his cane upright upon the grass.

"Your fist on mine," he boomed, "my fist on yours, your fist on mine! That's right! We're pals and partners! Wendell, my boy, I have more friends in this little kingdom than I knew—and all will be well. There goes cock-eyed Ben to earth, and the worst is over. Rejoice, son, rejoice!"

"I am rejoicing," declared Wendell.

Zup took his arm and marched him across the wrecked ground and around the spurting fountain of oil towards a little group dominated by the baron. Boris and Ricardo were there, their black coats in ribbons, their top hats smashed in, their trousers torn—and behind them stood the four soldiers with their fixed bayonets.

"It's great! It's marvellous!" the baron was exclaiming over and over again, his eyes fixed on the rising column of oil. "El Dorania is rich! We are rich!"

Zup stalked right up to him and knocked down his extended arm.

"Where do you get that 'we' stuff from?" he demanded angrily.

The baron glared at him.

"You should be dead," he said, "but as you've struck oil we will not proceed with the assassination."

"You shall be dead if you don't shut up!" retorted Zup.

"Yes," said Wendell. "You know, Zup, I've been thinking this thing over. El Dorania shouldn't be a kingdom—it should be a republic."

Ho looked at the four soldiers, and the four soldiers nodded.

"You're right!" decided Zup.

"It's a marvellous idea," cried the baron. "And I will be—"

"You'll be surprised!" interrupted Zup. "Remove him, men, remove him! Your first president speaking!"

Obediently enough the soldiers seized the baron.

"Them, too?" inquired the officer, indicating Boris and Ricardo.

"Both of them," directed Zup. And all three of the troublesome conspirators were taken off to the palace dungeons.

But Wendell, watching their departure, said petulantly to Zup:

"Who says you're first president?"

"Why not?"

"We haven't decided."

"All right," responded Zup, "let's decide right now."

He flung his cane into the air and they both made a grab at it. Wendell managed to get one fist round it, but Zup gripped it with both fists.

"Congratulations," said Wendell resignedly. "You're our first president."

"Yes," nodded Zup, "and, for your sake, we'll make Aunt Minnie Secretary for War."

Aunt Minnie Looks Down.

NEITHER Aunt Minnie nor Betty had been present at the attempted assassination. Aunt Minnie disapproved of such El Doranian tricks, and Betty was horror-stricken. So they remained fearfully in the sitting-room of their suite at the hotel, shuddering every time an explosion occurred.

"I wish I had never bought any plantations in this dreadful country," whimpered Aunt Minnie. "That wicked baron is the cause of all the trouble. I wish somebody would assassinate him!"

"Wendell will have him beheaded if I ask him," said Betty.

"That rat!" raved Aunt Minnie.

"Zup was a far better man than he. I was almost beginning to like Zup—and now they're murdering him!"

A messenger arrived from the palace with the startling news that the kingdom had become a republic, that Zup was very much alive and had become president, that Baron Bogardus was incarcerated in a dungeon in chains with Boris and Ricardo for company, and that an oil well had been discovered which would make everybody rich.

"And you, madam," said the messenger pompously—probably because he was decorated with a lot of gold braid—"have been appointed Secretary for War."

"Me?" exclaimed Aunt Minnie ungrammatically. "Secretary for War? Me? Who did that?"

"President Zup," was the bland reply. "And His Excellency the President desires you and your niece to be present at the palace at three this afternoon."

"I shan't go!"

"In that case, madam, I am instructed to inform you that your estates will be confiscated!"

Aunt Minnie changed her tone completely.

"At three o'clock, you said?" she inquired graciously. "Tell his Excellency that I shall have much pleasure in calling on him."

At precisely three o'clock she and Betty presented themselves at the palace and were escorted to the council chamber, where Zup sat importantly behind a massive desk with an entirely new set of ministers around him.

In the streets of the city the flags and banners still waved—there was something for them to wave about now. And out in the royal park a number of workmen were busy with the preliminaries of dealing with an entirely unexpected oil well.

"I'm afraid," said Zup, "that we can't admit your niece to our council, Aunt Min—she had better go for a stroll in the grounds."

Aunt Minnie concurred, and Betty left the chamber. In the wide corridor just outside the double doors she encountered an eager young man in a ceremonial suit with a piece of sticking-plaster on his face—a young man who embraced her feverishly and raced her away downstairs to the terrace.

President Zup was discussing affairs of State in the council chamber which failed to interest Aunt Minnie. She wandered petulantly away to a window overlooking the terrace, and since the window was wide open, she stepped out on to a little balcony.

Down below she saw, to her infinite annoyance, Betty and Wendell, standing side by side before a man in black clothes who held a book in his hand. She leaned over the balustrade, and at the top of her voice she shouted:

"Don't you remember my telling you to keep away from that runt?"

"I do!" said Betty quietly. But she was looking at the man in black clothes, not at her aunt.

"And—and do you remember the warning I gave you?" howled Aunt Minnie.

"I do!" said Wendell—but not to Aunt Minnie.

The man in black clothes was a minister; the whole thing had been neatly contrived.

"I now pronounce you man and wife," said the minister; and then he smiled up at the balcony above his head, while Betty and Wendell flung their arms about one another's necks—and kissed.

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EVERY TUESDAY.

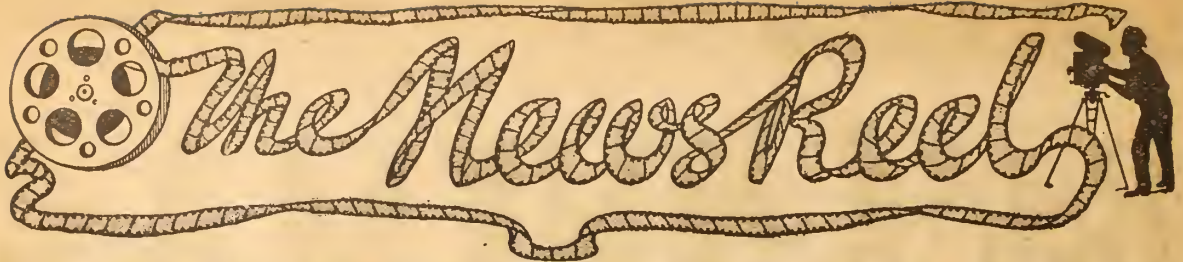
SEPTEMBER 19th, 1931.



BUCK JONES in

The TEXAS RANGER

A Fighting Drama of the West



The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"The Texas Ranger."

Jim Logan, Buck Jones; Helen Clayton, Carmelita Geraghty; Matt Taylor, Harry Woods; Nevady, Ed Brady; Highpockets, Nelson McDowell; Tubby, Billy Bletcher; Lynn Alder, Harry Todd; Breed, Budd Fine; Mr. Clayton, Bert Woodruff.

"Trapped."

Jerry Coleman, Nick Stuart; Sally Moore, Nena Quartaro; Bettina Moore, Priscilla Dean; Captain Baxter, Tom Santschi; Jim Moore, George Regas; Joe Farley, Tom O'Brien; Ferguson, Jimmy Aubrey; Tiger Callahan, Reed Howes; Lena, Patsy Daly.

"Creeping Shadows."

Disher, Franklin Dyall; Sir Edwin Paget, Arthur Hardy; Lady Paget, Henrietta Watson; Gloria Paget, Margot Grahame; Brian Nash, Lester Matthews; Paul Tegle, Gerald Rawlinson; Cable, Hal Gordon; Sparrow, Ernest Stilwell; Peter Hoyt, David Hawthorne; Olga Hoyt, Jeanne Stuart; Inspector Potter, Matthew Boulton; The Limping Man, Percy Parsons; Chicago Joe, Charles Farrell; Sandel, Samuel Pringle.

Splendid Gifts.

Portable gramophones, pocket knives, pencil cases, wireless sets, wireless valves, accumulators, fountain pens, electric torches, watches, footballs, boxing gloves, etc. These are a few of the splendid gifts included in the Nestlé's Milk Chocolate Presentation List, which will be found in the revised and enlarged edition of Nestlé's Gift Book. Here is a splendid opportunity for you to obtain these attractive gifts by collecting the Free Gift Coupons which will be found in Nestlé's popular chocolate packings. You should send for one of these Gift Books, and with it will be sent a voucher for five free coupons to start your collection. Address your letter or postcard to Nestlé's (Gift Dept.), Silverthorne Road, Battersea, London, S.W.8, and be sure to mention BOY'S CINEMA. This offer only applies in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

About Eddie Cantor.

Eddie Cantor, star of the £500,000 Ziegfeld-Goldwyn film "Whoopee," may be in Europe by the time this appears. His tour includes the principal cities, including London, Paris, Vienna, Rome and several other places of importance and interest. His visit is in connection with his second talking picture, "Palmy Days," recently completed by Samuel Goldwyn for United Artists. Both these films are based on Broadway stage successes.

Eddie Cantor's personal appearance in London will be his second since 1914, when he and his bride first came here for their honeymoon. In that year he appeared in Andre Charlot's revue, and introduced the song, "I Love the Ladies." Eddie's struggle for success has been a very real thing.

September 19th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



EDWARD G. ROBINSON

in

"SMART MONEY."

There was not a man who could beat him at gambling. He became famous for his luck at cards and at last the law went after him. They framed a girl to betray him. A crook drama that is one long thrill from start to finish.

"THE LAST RIDE."

A racketeer is "taken for a ride" by a rival and killed. When his brother found the body he swore revenge. A brave girl becomes his ally in his dangerous task. A gripping story, starring Dorothy Revier, Tom Santschi and Charles Morton.

ALSO

The fourth episode of our gripping new serial of the Fire Brigade, starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley:
"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

Left an orphan when he was only two, the streets became his playground, and he contributed not a little to the bedlam and chaos that is New York's East Side. When twelve years of age he began selling newspapers, and also picked up dance steps from those who knew the art. He was keen to go on the stage, and at Minor's Music Hall in the Bowery scored his first success during an exhibition of amateur talent.

Next he appeared as a singing waiter at a Concy Island open-air cafe, and in 1911 was given his first start as a vaudeville artiste in New York. Real popularity did not come to him, however, until some time after his return to the States from London. His silent appearances on the screen in "Kid Boots" and "Special Delivery" did not give much scope for his talent.

Eventually he became more famous on the stage, and in 1928 appeared as the star in "Whoopee." The play ended its successful run in March 1930, after which Eddie went to Hollywood for the film version and wider fame.

He Knew.

Matt Moore, who is Hollywood's most confirmed bachelor, was being directed in a love scene.

"Look here," said the director, growing impatient after three or four retakes. "don't you know what love is?" "Yeah," drawled Matt. "It's a term that's used in tennis."

Fog in Summer.

A fog indoors on a sunny day is a curious thing to have. But this queer happening for the screen was necessary when filming a November scene for "A Night Like This" at the British and Dominions Studio at Elstree. It was a fine sunny afternoon with only a few clouds flecking the sky, but within the studio a thick fog enveloped everybody and everything.

Along a London street there could be seen moving slowly the ghostly figure of policemen and a few other pedestrians. A spraying apparatus had created the fog, and as soon as the scene was over those who could were glad to get out and realise it was still summer.

Veteran Canine Artists.

About nine years ago in the silent version of "Penrod and Sam," there appeared a dog named Cameo who played the part of Duke. This same fox-terrier, despite her age, is still full of vigour, and will be seen barking her way through the talking version of the same picture, in which Leon Janney is the star. Incidentally, it may be of interest to know that Cameo is the only dog owning a motor-car in her own name. She has also her own room and her own little bed in her master's home.

Answers to Questions.

I shall be pleased, W.A.S. (Bristol), to send on letters to your favourites. With regard to artistes appearing in American films, remember when writing to them to give your address in full, including the name of your country. All letters should be in closed envelopes bearing only the names of those for whom they are intended, and the stamps should be loose.

Here is the cast, Edward (Winnipeg), of "The Indians Are Coming": Tim McCoy (Jack Manning), Allene Ray (Mary Woods), Francis Ford (Tom Woods and George Woods), Edmund Cobb (Bill Williams), Don Francis (Rance Carter), Charles Royal (Uncle Amos), Dynamite (Himself).

Helen Clayton became an outlaw to get even with a crook—and Jim Logan, a resourceful Texas Ranger, was sent to arrest her for a murder she had not committed. A splendid drama of the West, starring Buck Jones and Carmelita Geraghty.



The TEXAS RANGER

Burned Out!

IN Lorado Valley, Texas, one of the most fertile areas of rolling plain and wooded hollow in the cattle country of the Lone Star State, the name of Matt Taylor was hated and feared by all decent ranchers.

Avaricious and unscrupulous, he had persuaded the wilder and coerced the weaker of the settlers to join forces with him, so that he had become the head of a huge cattle syndicate and an absolute tyrant. But this was not enough to satiate his greed: he wanted the whole of the Valley to himself, and he had decided upon drastic measures to secure it.

Time and again he had interviewed and threatened the few who dared to hold out against his insolent demands. Now, considering himself to be above the law, he proposed to obtain by force what he could not obtain by cunning or intimidation.

He chuckled in a manner ugly to hear as he looked down through the dusty panes of a window of his office over the Syndicate Saloon in the little town of Bellington. A dozen of his hirelings were riding out into the valley to attach to the front doors of ranch-houses copies of an ultimatum which he had drawn up in this form:

"Be out of Lorado Valley by 5 o'clock or be smoked out.
"Last warning.

"MATT TAYLOR."

"By morning," he said triumphantly, moving back to his desk and addressing Ed Lanning, who was seated beside it tugging nervously at his moustache, and Sam Lanning, who was standing by the door as though he would like to escape, "there won't be a rancher left in the valley! Every acre of grazing land will belong to us!"

He dropped into his chair and glanced across at Ed Lanning. Ed and his brother Sam had been the last to fall in line with Taylor's demands, and their ranch—now absorbed by the syndicate—was one of the largest.

"I know it's pretty strong medicine, Lanning," he said, "but it's the only way we can get rid of these mangy homesteaders. There's only room for one ranch in Lorado Valley—and that's our Syndicate outfit."

"Don't you think you're going a bit too far, Matt?" ventured Ed Lanning. "There is such a thing as the law, and, though you may be sheriff around here, and owner of most of the town, there are such people as the Texas Rangers, and—"

"What's the matter with you?" broke in Taylor harshly. "You getting yellow? I don't want any welters trailin' with me. I'm after big stakes, and I want men I can depend on. It ain't too late for you Lanning brothers to go over to the other side—if you want to!"

Ed Lanning's hand slid from his moustache to his throat, which it caressed almost as though it were in danger. He smiled feebly at the narrow-eyed but otherwise good-looking

schemer, and he liked not at all the malevolent twist of those thick lips beneath the fiery red moustache, the glint in those dark eyes that glared at him.

"Why, we're with you, Matt, whatever you think best," he managed to say.

"Sure," added his brother hastily, lest he, too, should be suspected of disloyalty. "Haven't we always done what you've asked of us?"

"Then you can help to-night, dear friends," taunted Taylor. "We shall need all the boys, I guess—and there may be trouble with the Clayton crowd."

He dismissed the two with a wave of his hand, and they were glad to go. But that night they were doomed to take part in a lawless raid that sickened them.

Taylor's men had attached the notices to ranch-house doors—mostly with the aid of knives, to give added significance to the threat—but not one of those who were warned had abandoned their property by nightfall, and at nightfall Taylor and all his men rode out of Bellington, carrying lanterns and flaming torches.

Six ranchers there remained in Lorado Valley who had defied Matt Taylor, and all save the Claytons had small holdings. One after another they were smoked out—which is to say that their barns and outbuildings and bunk-houses were burned to the ground and their ranch-houses set on fire.

Two of the six showed fight, but against overwhelming numbers bowed to the inevitable. At the M-Bar-M, the smallest ranch in the district, old Martin Spearman and his wife were deserted by their outfit as the horsemen came riding through the dark in a long procession, illuminated by the torches and lanterns they carried.

The outfit was hardly to be blamed, for already in three different directions

HELP THE NEWSAGENT.

Have you ever thought how difficult it is for a newsagent to order just the right number of copies of any particular paper each week? You can make his task much easier if you place a regular order with him. You will not only help him to order correctly and avoid waste, but will make sure of getting your copy regularly each week.

flames were leaping to the sky. Old Martin Spearman, white of beard and nearly seventy, hurriedly packed his most treasured possessions, assisted by his wife, then rushed to get out the buckboard. By this time the buildings and stacks were on fire.

"Don't cry, mother!" he urged, as he helped her up into the seat of the vehicle. "We'll get another home, some place. Them jaspers will pay for this before we're through. Look! They've turned away from here—they're headed for the Clayton ranch now! We'll have to warn 'em before it's too late! Giddap!"

Mrs. Spearman was weeping at the loss of a home and a livelihood, but she came of a stock that had faced with courage even worse dangers when the West was young.

"Hold tight, Mart!" she said. "And gimme that whip. If we're goin' to head Taylor's gang off, we've got to move lively!"

Mart drove with amazing recklessness for his years in the direction of the Clayton ranch-house, avoiding the beauteous trail, taking all manner of risks. But Helen Clayton and her father had already made preparations of a sort.

They had called the men into the pleasant ranch-house, and in the living-room Helen, slimly beautiful, but full of spirit, had addressed them collectively. Her father was the owner of the ranch and he dealt with details, but in most things she had been its manageress since her mother died.

"Well, what are we going to do?" she asked, her deep brown eyes flashing, her voice a trifle shrill. "Make our stand, or run like a lot of sheep?"

"We're in the right," responded Bob Nevady promptly, "and we've got the law behind us."

"Behind us is correct," growled Bill Garnham, a long, lean fellow with a remarkably ugly face and a tremendous walrus moustache, who was invariably known as "Highpockets." "So durned fur behind us it don't help any!"

"You've said a mouthful," agreed Tubby Bolt, the burly foreman of the outfit.

"What chance have we got against Matt Taylor and his gunmen?" demanded a more timorous cowman.

James Clayton, sitting uneasily in an easy chair, glanced up at his high-spirited daughter and shook his grey head. He had fought against all manner of odds in his younger days, but now he was old enough to desire peace at almost any price. So far he had resisted the overtures of Matt Taylor, but against gunfire and flame he felt unwilling to expose his daughter.

"Perhaps, after all—" he began.

But just then there came an urgent banging at the front door, and one of the men opened it, admitting Martin Spearman.

"The Taylor gang smoked me out, Miss Helen," he cried, "and they're headed this way."

Immediately the men who had responded so half-heartedly to Helen Clayton's appeal changed their attitude completely.

"Oh, they are, are they?" howled Highpockets, drawing his guns.

"Let 'em come!" chimed in Nevady; and there was a chorus of approval.

"Wait a minute!" commanded Helen crisply. "Are we going to fight—or only talk about it?"

"We're gonna fight, and we're gonna beat 'em, too!" shouted Tubby Bolt.

Mart Spearman ran back to his wife, who was still on the buckboard.

"Ma," he urged, "you get away with

the things—I'm stayin' to see this thing through."

"All right, Mart, and Heaven bless you!" replied his wife. "If I was twenty years young—"

"Look!" exclaimed Helen, and pointed to a string of lights and flares moving down under a belt of trees. "Come on, boys, let's get ready for them. Hurry away, Mrs. Spearman. Turn out the lights, Tubby!"

Mrs. Spearman lashed at the horses and drove off, and her husband followed the others into the living-room. He was carrying a rifle, and was grimly determined to use it at the first opportunity.

All the lights in the ranchhouse were extinguished; the front door was barricaded.

"The back door—quick!" directed Helen.

And tables and chairs were piled against the back door, and beside and beneath the windows of the ground floor the men crouched ready to shoot.

Matt Taylor and his gang swept down into the farmyard and rode round and round the ranchhouse, Indian fashion, firing as they rode.

Broken glass fell from the window-frames in showers; six-shooters spat vicious jets of flame and bullets, and old Mart Spearman sent at least two of the night-riders to the dust with his rifle.

But Matt Taylor was taking no more chances than he could avoid. While he and most of his men circled the building the remainder were told off to fire the ricks, the bunkhouse, and the sheds, and after a while flames lit up the scene.

A wagon piled high with hay became a flaming furnace and was drawn by ropes to the porch of the ranchhouse, while all the time besieged and besiegers continued to fire. The porch was in flames when Matt Taylor himself rode close to a window and fired almost point-blank at the grey head of James Clayton.

The gun the old rancher was about to use fell from his hand, and he collapsed in a heap at Helen's feet. Tubby sent three bullets after Matt Taylor, but that schemer escaped without a wound, and, pulling up beyond revolver range, he shouted to his men:

"It's smoking now, boys. Let's go!"

They went, flinging their torches at the building, leaving behind three wounded men. Helen, who had been feeling feverishly at a heart which had ceased to beat, rose up and thrust her head out of a broken window.

"You'll pay for this, Matt Taylor!" she cried at the top of her voice.

"You'll pay for this till your dying day!"

One Thousand Dollars Reward.

AT eight o'clock in the evening of a dull day in March, eight months after this outrage, Ranger Jim Logan stepped smartly into headquarters of the Texas Rangers (Division "A") in Sterling City, entered the captain's office, and saluted that stern-faced officer.

"Ranger Logan reports, sir," he said.

Captain Jackson looked up from a mass of papers on his desk at the tall, broad-shouldered young man who stood before him. Jim was not specially handsome, but his clean-shaven face was a strong one, his grey eyes were quick and keen, and humour lurked around the corners of his mouth. A dare-devil by nature, a good friend, an implacable foe, and one of the most resourceful men in the service. That was why the captain had sent for him.

"Jim," he said, "you'll be relieved of patrol duty for the present. I've got some special work for you to do."

"Very good, sir."

"I suppose you've heard of that Clayton woman and her gang?"

"Yeah," Jim nodded. "Most everybody has. In the past few months she's become mighty popular."

The captain stared.

"And mighty unpopular," he said, "especially with those big ranchers in Lorado Valley. She's got 'em on the run, raid after raid, and nobody's been able to do anything about it. I heard something about those ranchers, but that was last year, and nothing came of it. Naturally, I know the story about this Clayton woman, and I've held my hand up to now out of sympathy—I had no absolute case against her. But now she's committed murder! One of the ranchers in that district was shot down in cold blood. Ed Lanning. Do you know him?"

"Seems I've heard of him."

"Well, pinned on his body was a note; 'With Helen Clayton's compliments.' Your orders are to bring in Miss Helen Clayton."

Jim looked as though he found the task little to his taste, and the captain interpreted his frown correctly.

"Sometimes the law compels us to do some mighty unpleasant things, Jim," he said, "but—"

"I understand, sir."

"All right—handle it your own way, and good luck."

"Right, sir."

Jim saluted again, went out and sought his quarters. An hour later he rode out of Sterling City on his white horse Silver, and any stranger who had met him would have imagined him to be a typical cowboy, for he had exchanged his uniform for cowboy rig, and was wearing a ten-gallon hat on his head and was carrying a lariat on his saddle-bow.

From Sterling City to the Lorado Valley is a matter of thirty miles, but in Texas thirty miles is considered quite an ordinary ride. Towards noon on the following day he dismounted outside the Syndicate Saloon in Bellington—and stumbled as he reached the ground.

He fastened Silver to a hitching-rail and went into the saloon, which was crowded with ranchers and cowhands. A few men were at the bar drinking, three dancing-girls were displaying their agility to the noise of a cracked piano and a banjo, but the majority of the patrons were grouped round a notice attached to one of the wooden walls.

Captain Edwards had taken action before he sent for Jim. Two rangers had visited the district the day before, and the notice on the wall was precisely similar to notices which decorated other buildings in the town and a considerable number of tree-trunks in the neighbourhood. It ran:

\$1,000 REWARD

for the capture of
HELEN CLAYTON,
Dead or Alive.

"Boy, that's a lot of money for one woman," remarked a little fellow whose cow-hat looked almost like an extinguisher on his head.

"Yeah—an expensive female," agreed another.

"I'd like to know what part of the country she's in," declared a third avariciously.

Jim heard and watched without appearing to watch. He lurched over to the bar, ordered some whisky, and gulped it down. He appeared to be already drunk, and his face was unshaven and his hat was awry. With a second drink in his hand he approached the group, pushed his way forward, and blinked at the notice.

"I'd know that woman if I met up with her," said a burly cowboy, conspicuous in his flaming red shirt, "but I'll say she wants some finding."

Matt Taylor descended the staircase from his office overhead in time to hear that observation.

"Boys," he proclaimed, "two thousand dollars to the man that brings her to me personally."

Jim swung round and nearly collided with the speaker.

"Two thousand," he said thickly, "thash a lot o' dough. Soon's I get caught up on my drinkin'—hie—I—I'll have her—that is I—I'll bring her to you pershon'ly."

Matt Taylor glared at Jim, and was completely misled. He gave him an impatient push which seemed nearly to upset his balance, but he returned with drunken gravity to inquire:

"Do any o' you hombres know where this fe-female bunch o' trouble is located?"

"That's something we'd all like to know," quoth the little man scornfully. But a bulky though short-legged rancher from an adjoining district declared emphatically:

"I wouldn't turn her in if I could. It would be blood-money! That girl's in the right!"

Instantly Matt Taylor's gun was in his hand and its barrel was thrust into the speaker's back.

"Is that it?" he snarled. "Well, now that you've had your say, get out of Lorado before morning—and stay out. Go on!"

The discomfited defender of Helen Clayton moved reluctantly towards the swing doors.

"It don't pay to talk too freely in this town," taunted one of Taylor's followers as he went.

"I'll shay it don't," guffawed Jim, and shuffled over to the bar again.

"With Helen Clayton's Compliments."

THAT morning Helen Clayton and her own faithful followers had ridden through a gulch in the foot-

hills at the southern end of the pan-handle, forded the Lorado River—tributary of the Rio Grande—and raided Matt Taylor's own ranch.

Word had reached her in her hide-away that Taylor was in town with nearly all his men, and the opportunity had seemed to her too good to miss. A score of cattle had been driven down-stream, just far enough to lose their tracks, then headed for the gulch.

"There's some more stock Matt Taylor will be missin' when he gets back!" chuckled Bob Nevady.

"Take them over to our place," directed Helen, "and tell Lynn to go to Joel Winters at once and get that supply wagon out of town by midnight."

Bill Garnham, otherwise "Highpockets," rode up with four of Helen's outfit and a prisoner in their midst—a n ill-favoured, wide-faced rascal

named Breed, who had been left in charge of the cattle.

"Just caught one o' them wabble-eyed, shoot-'em-in-the-back fellows," he reported. "Miss Helen, I'm wondering how it would be to plant a slug in the middle of such a nice, broad back!"

Helen, from her horse, looked down at the squirming captive.

"I've got a better idea," she said. "Tie him up and deliver him to Taylor—with my compliments."

"You won't let us boys have any fun," complained Highpockets. "All right—hog-tie him, then."

Breed was trussed up with a rope and replaced on his horse's back, whereafter he was conveyed to a spinney and dumped in the undergrowth till night-fall, with one of the outfit to keep guard over him.

After dark Highpockets returned, and Breed was conveyed cautiously into town. The main street was comparatively deserted, the saloon was full; but Matt Taylor was up in his office, talking to Sam Lanning, a bigger man than his dead brother had been, but a very nervous man since that brother had been murdered.

"Matt," he complained, "I can't stand this bounding any longer. Every turn I make I find a warning note from that Clayton girl. They're stuck in the doorway—they come flying through the window on the point of a knife in the dead of night. I haven't slept hardly since Ed was done in."

"Well," growled Matt Taylor, "don't you think I've been getting any little love-notes? The last one I found was wrapped round my cigar!"

"I half wish that bullet had got me, instead of Ed."

"Aw, come off it, Sam," said Matt, lighting a cigar which obviously was not wrapped in any message. "That reward will bring her in sooner or later. And remember—you can't play for high stakes unless you take some risks."

From the street came the sound of galloping horses.

"What's that?" cried Sam Lanning, starting to his feet.

The sound ceased outside the saloon. Highpockets and his companion had brought Breed to the very foot of the steps leading to the veranda, and there they pushed him from his horse so that he fell heavily to the ground and rolled over on his back, roped hand and foot.

Without dismounting, Highpockets turned about, and over the top of the swing doors he threw a screwed-up slip of paper, weighted with a stone.

The bald-headed bar-tender almost dropped a bottle in his haste to secure the missive. The habitués of the place crowded round him as he smoothed out the piece of paper and stared at its message.

"With Miss Helen Clayton's compliments," he gasped.

Jim, who had remained in the saloon ever since his arrival, and who had appeared to sleep away most of the afternoon with his head on a table, lurched forward.

"With Miss Helen Clayton's compliments, huh?" he cried. "I guess that's a good 'un."

In the noise and excitement of the moment, the sound of retreating hoofs went unnoticed. Matt Taylor had peered out of a window upstairs, but had assumed that some festive cow-hands had arrived, and had gone back to the table at which Sam Lanning was sitting.

But down in the saloon the receipt of that note and a shout from Breed sent nearly everyone running out into the street. Breed was lying in the roadway, shouting and cursing, and they gathered round him.

"Where's Taylor?" he howled.

Jim, stooping drunkenly beside the bar-tender, his hands on his knees, his hat on one side, and a foolish expression on his face, immediately replied:



Breed was lying in the roadway, shouting and cursing, and they gathered round him.

"Upstairs! S'pose you're not wantin' to wear that rope all night, eh?"

He produced a clasp-knife, but was shoved aside by the bar-tender while willing hands freed the sufferer from his bonds and helped him to his feet.

"Well," announced Jim, "I guess I gotta sleep off some o' this rye, so's I can go out and find that shertain party and catch the reward. My room's all ready, huh?"

The bar-tender nodded curtly, and Jim entered the saloon and tottered up the stairs. He was no more than half-way when Breed passed him, seeking Matt Taylor, and the bar-tender, watching from below, exclaimed disgustedly: "He's loco!" and went back to his duties.

The men who had surged out into the street re-entered the saloon—and Jim at last reached the landing and the wide passage on the floor above. But instead of making for the room he had engaged for the night he crept with the utmost sobriety and caution to a door which was slightly ajar—the door of Matt Taylor's office.

Breed was telling his story.

"And I found out where Helen Clayton gets her supplies," Jim heard him say. "Joel Winters is one of her sympathisers, and there's a wagon leaving the back of his store at midnight, bound for her hide-out."

"That's great news, Breed," rejoiced Matt Taylor, and filled a glass with raw spirit and pushed it over to him. "She's over-reached herself this time, lettin' you hear that and then sending you back here. Now we can get down to business! We'll stop Lynn Alder outside of town, hide in his wagon, and make him drive us to her hang-out. We'll take them by surprise—and when we've finished we won't be bothered any more with Helen Clayton and her gang."

Jim had heard enough to make him grin triumphantly. Resuming his imitation of a drunken man, he waddled along the passage to his room, entered it, and closed the door behind him. Then, once more, his alert and resourceful self, he went over to the window which he had opened.

Silver was still at the hitching-rail beneath. He clambered out on to the roof of the veranda, slid down it to the guttering, and after a low, warning whistle, descended neatly astride the horse's broad back.

The Hold-up!

At midnight, as arranged, elderly Joel Winters assisted Lynn Alder to load the covered wagon which was drawn up behind his store. Sacks of flour, numerous tins of corned beef and of fruit, together with household stores, were stowed away in the vehicle, and neither Joel Winters nor Lynn Alder had any idea that their movements were being watched with interest by a stranger whose right eye was glued to a knot-hole in the tarred fence of the yard.

"Looks like that's all," said Lynn finally.

"It is," responded Joel Winters. "Good-night, Lynn—and give my regards to Helen."

"I sure will." And Lynn Alder, a wiry, middle-aged man with a chin-beard, swung himself up into the driving-seat and picked up the reins.

"Good luck!" Joel Winters called after him.

The covered wagon careered across the waste behind the town, and Jim crouched behind the fence till the store-keeper had re-entered his establishment and bolted the door. Then he mounted the waiting Silver and shot off round

the side of the building into the main road.

He had no wish to catch up with the vehicle; his aim was to head it off, and, quite as importantly, to discover on the way the spot where Matt Taylor and his men were lying in wait.

The road twisted and turned, and there was no moon. Jim very soon deserted the dusty way for the grassland bordering it, upon which he could ride without much sound. Half-an-hour out of town he heard voices beneath a clump of trees, and the rumble of the wagon behind him. He sought the shelter of a patch of mesquite, and crept closer to the waiting horsemen.

"There he comes now, boys!" exclaimed Matt Taylor. "Let's go down after him."

Between the trees and the roadway was a huddle of rocks, fallen at some time from a ledge that guarded the bank of the Lorado River just beyond. Taylor and half a dozen men rode down to wait behind these rocks and dismounted, but Jim sat motionless in his saddle.

The wagon approached, and Breed rushed out, flourishing guns.

"Stick 'em up!" he shouted at Lynn. "And get off that wagon pronto!"

Lynn, instead of obeying, lashed at the horses, and several shots rang out. Lynn clapped a hand to his right arm and dropped the reins, but the horses needed no urging now. With their ears laid right back they bolted, frightened by the bullets and the shouts.

"Follow that wagon!" yelled Taylor, from the middle of the roadway. And he and his men, having rushed out from the rocks in vain, went rushing back to re-mount their steeds.

But Jim had calculated things to a nicety. While the others were firing at the wagon he had ridden down to the horses and fired several shots over their heads, startling them into a stampede.

"Hi, stop those horses!" cried Taylor wildly. But the horses were not lightly to be stopped by seven men on foot. They had come tearing back towards the town, and it was not till the town was reached that they were re-captured.

Jim, meanwhile, had galloped off round the bushes and rejoined the roadway two hundred yards further south.

"Catch 'em up, Silver!" he directed. And the white horse sped like the wind after the runaway wagon, which was swaying precariously now over the bank of the river where the road ran.

A crescent moon came out from behind a bank of cloud in time to witness the daring act which followed. Silver drew level with the horses attached to the wagon, and Jim, braced ready to jump, his feet free of the stirrups, took a flying leap—and landed clean on the driving-seat beside the drooping figure of Lynn Alder, who was groaning.

"Oh-h-h, boy!"

"Where'd they get you?" inquired Jim sympathetically, as he snatched up the reins.

"In the arm, I believe. Oh-h-h!"

A masterly use of the reins restored confidence in the runaways. Their precipitate speed slackened gradually to a mere jog-trot, and Silver slowed down beside them.

"Let's have a look at that arm," said Jim, and stopping the horses completely he rolled back Lynn's shirt-sleeve and inspected a nasty flesh wound where a bullet had ploughed its way.

"I'll wrap it up for you, partner," he announced, and produced a large handkerchief which he bound tightly round the bare arm.

"Hurt much?" he inquired,

"Pretty bad, but I'm sure grateful to you, stranger."

"That's all right," said Jim. "Glad to be of service to Helen Clayton. Say, you'd better let me drive this team the rest of the way."

"Oh, I can handle 'em all right. I guess."

"Doubt it—and besides, I want to join up with Helen Clayton's gang."

Lynn stared at him suspiciously, but Jim seemed to be in earnest, and his grin was frank and friendly.

"You on the level, stranger?" demanded Lynn.

"Didn't I stop your dad-busted team?"

"Yes, that's right enough."

"How do you get there?"

"Well," replied Lynn, deciding to trust his rescuer, "you take this trail to Sentinel Rocks, then you take the lower trail through Hidden Valley, and cross the Lorado River."

"How far is it?"

"Well, after you take that curve it's about twelve miles, more or— Hi, what's the idea?"

The last four words were uttered in amazement; for Jim had abruptly drawn a six-shooter and its barrel was staring Lynn in the face.

"I'll tell you later," chuckled Jim. "But you've got to get down here!"

Nearly three hours afterwards Jim guided the horses across the Lorado River and reached the southern bank. He was alone on the driving-seat of the covered wagon, and Silver was trotting beside the leaders.

He saw the gulch ahead—and at the same moment was seen by two men, armed with rifles, who were perched on the wall of rock on the right of the gulch and were silhouetted against the grey sky of dawn.

"That's the wagon all right, Jack," said one.

"But there's a stranger driving it," growled the other, who was holding field-glasses to his eyes.

"Stranger?"

"Yeah—take a look!"

His companion took the glasses, examined the distant Jim through them, and handed them back.

"Gee!" he exclaimed. "I hope everything's all right. Let's go down there."

They clambered down to the far end of the gulch, where they took cover behind a tree, and Jim presently came driving the team neatly through the narrow opening.

"Pull up them there horses, stranger!" shouted the man who had been addressed as Jack, and he and his companion stepped out from their hiding-place with their rifles to their shoulders.

Obediently enough Jim obeyed, then held up his hands. He was not surprised; he had quite expected Helen Clayton's retreat to be well guarded.

"What are you doing with that there wagon?" demanded Jack.

"Driving it," replied Jim calmly.

"Don't fool with me!"

"I'm not fooling with you. Put down them guns, will you? They make me nervous."

One of the men climbed up beside him and poked the business end of his rifle into a broad chest.

"Where did you get this outfit, anyway?" he asked.

"Back about fifteen miles. Say, do you know old man Lynn Alder? They waylaid him back there, and me being a friend of his I thought I'd bring the wagon through for him."

"Yeah?" said the guard who was still on the ground. "You'd better take

him over and let Miss Helen have a look at him, Bill."

A Close Shave.

THE gulch opened into a great fertile hollow, rimmed with hills, but its pasture-land was not immediately visible because a belt of trees intervened. Beyond those trees stood a ranch-house and outbuildings, and beyond the ranch-house was a large corral full of cattle.

Helen Clayton, in riding-kit with a gaily coloured scarf around her neck, rode over to the corral with Tubby Bolt, who was still her foreman, and Tubby contemplated with glee the latest additions to the stock.

"A couple more raids like that, Miss Helen," he chuckled, "and Taylor won't have enough beef left to fry himself a steak!"

"Yes, Tubby," said Helen gloomily, "but that doesn't bring my father back." And she turned her horse abruptly and rode back to the ranch-house.

She had dismounted and was standing in the doorway of the building when Jim, a prisoner between Highpockets and Nevady, was marched in at the back door and led into rather a bare room, used as an office.

"What did you hear about Miss Clayton in Lorado?" inquired Highpockets.

Jim, instead of answering, looked round at Nevady, who had taken up his stand by the door of the room and was whittling away at a piece of wood with a particularly formidable knife.

"What's he doing?" he inquired. "Building a house?"

"No—I'm making a trigger for a trap," snapped Nevady.

"I don't like that cowpuncher," Jim informed Highpockets; and at that moment became aware of a slim and very beautiful girl who was looking into the room over Nevady's broad shoulder. Her deep brown eyes enveloped him.

"What was that you wanted to know?" he said impishly. "What they told me about Miss Clayton? Well, one

thing they told me was that she had big feet, and another was that she was knock-kneed."

The trick succeeded. Helen pushed her way past Nevady into the room and walked straight up to the prisoner.

"So I have big feet, have I?" she cried angrily.

Jim looked down at her feet, which were encased in riding-boots but were obviously small. Her riding skirt was short, but she raised it above her knees. "And I'm knock-kneed, am I?"

Jim rubbed his unshaven chin and contemplated a pair of knees that seemed to him absolutely perfect.

"Lady," he said apologetically, "somebody misinformed me."

"Who are you? And how did you get here?" she demanded icily.

Highpockets explained matters, and during the explanation she glanced frequently at the tall young man, so that Jim became acutely conscious of his unkempt appearance. Without waiting for her to decide what should be done with him he asked pleasantly:

"Can I clean up?"

She nodded and told Highpockets to take care of him.

Highpockets, highly disgusted, said:

"Well—er—you go on over to my cabin and make yourself at home."

"Thanks," said Jim gratefully to Helen, and was escorted to the back door of the ranch-house, where Highpockets jerked a grimy thumb in the direction of a cabin at the bottom of the yard.

The two guards who were waiting within call followed him across to the building, and Highpockets returned to his young mistress.

"I seem to have seen that Jasper some place before," Nevady said thoughtfully. "Can't just place him now, but I've got an idea it was along the border."

"Do you think he's a law man?" asked Highpockets.

"Well, I don't know—maybe it'll come back to me."

"I rather like the look of him," decided Helen, and left them standing there, staring rather blankly after her.

"I got an idea!" announced Highpockets. "Come on, Nevady!"

They went out together and crossed to the cabin. Jim was looking out of one of its windows as they entered. He had just washed his face and hands in a basin and was holding a towel.

"Reckon you'll want a shave," said Highpockets. "You'll find hot water back there on the stove."

"Thanks," said Jim, and took a tin cup from a table and filled it from a kettle on the stove, while Highpockets took an old-fashioned razor from its case on the dresser and proceeded to sharpen it carefully on a hone.

Jim, having made a lather in the soap-dish on the wash-stand, held out his hand for the instrument.

"Guess that's sharp enough," he said. "I can shave with that."

"Sit down," barked Highpockets, kicking forward a chair but withholding the razor. "I got a weakness for shaving gents. Close or medium shave?"

"Oh, just once over," replied Jim, soating himself rather reluctantly on the chair.

Highpockets draped a towel around his neck, pushed back his head, and lathered his face. Then re-opening the razor, which he had closed for the nonce, he began to shave his victim.

With the blade caressing a very exposed throat he said suddenly:

"By the way, you run across any Rangers down in town?"

"No—why?" inquired Jim.

"We heard one blew in last week."

"They're liable to blow in anywhere. Can't ever tell when them fellows are going to pop up."

"You're right, son," responded Highpockets grimly, sliding the blade over Jim's adam's apple. "You ever down around the border country?"

"No, I'm from the north. Why?"

"Nothin'. Have some friends down there. Thought maybe—Wait a minute—I'm not through!"

But Jim had pushed away the hand that wielded the razor and got to his feet.

"Oh, yes you are," he said, making

Helen, instead of obeying, snatched at Breed's whip and slashed Jim across the face with it.



once more for the wash-basin to remove the remains of the soap. "You know my skin's tender!"

Throughout the remainder of that day, Jim was permitted to roam the hollow, but was kept under surveillance. Late in the afternoon he came upon Nevady in the farmyard, fixing up his trap. The trigger was touched by accident, and the jaws of the trap closed mercilessly upon a podgy finger. Nevady gave vent to a howl of pain.

Jim raised his eyebrows, and Nevady scowled at him.

"It worked," he said. "I want to catch a skunk in it."

"You got one," laughed Jim. "Too bad you didn't have your neck in it!"

He went into Highpockets' cabin, and that lanky caricature of a man found him there tidying up the place—and stared. There came a thump at the door, and he opened it to find Minnie, a plump and middle-aged Indian squaw, who was Helen's faithful cook and housekeeper, peering through the window at Jim.

"What do you want?" growled Highpockets.

"Miss Helen, she say tell the stranger she expecting him to dinner to-night," was the unexpected reply, and Minnie stepped into the cabin to deliver the message in person, her plaits swinging defiantly.

"You tell Miss Helen I'll be delighted," said Jim.

The squaw retreated, but lingered outside the door to listen for comments. Highpockets was speechless with indignation, but Jim said confidentially:

"You know, Miss Helen is just the kind of girl I'd like to marry. Just my style!"

"Gar!" growled Highpockets, while Minnie ran back to her mistress, laughing as though she had heard a great joke.

"Minnie," said Helen severely, "what is that's so funny?"

"The stranger," cackled Minnie, "he say he like to marry a girl like you. You just his style."

"Oh!" exclaimed Helen involuntarily. And then: "He looks rather nice now he's shaved, doesn't he?" she said thoughtfully. "I've seen him several times out of the window. A real man, eh?"

"And his chest!" enthused Minnie. "It is so broad! And his jaw, so strong! And his eyes, so clear! I cook a nice dinner!"

§ Nevady Remembers.

THE dinner was a great success, though it was spied upon through the two windows of the living-room by nearly all the members of the outfit, who utterly disapproved of it.

Jim and Helen became friendly over the meal, and Jim was enrolled as a member of the gang long before it was over. A measure of intimacy having developed, Jim suggested a stroll in the moonlight, to which Helen quite readily agreed.

They walked and talked under the trees—and Jim appeared to be entirely unconscious of the suspicious men who followed them about at a discreet distance.

As day followed day, Highpockets and Nevady became more and more concerned about the increasing friendship between their young mistress and the stranger. But Jim proved a wonderful cowboy and a real help in the running of the ranch; and he treated Highpockets as a firm chum because he shared his cabin, and Highpockets struggled valiantly not to like him. Bad enough—from the lanky one's point of view—that Miss Helen had fallen under the stranger's spell.

A week after Jim's dramatic arrival, he and Helen indulged in a race across the hollow to a fallen tree on its southernmost side, one afternoon, and she beat him easily.

"Well, you won," laughed Jim, as he arrived ten lengths at least behind Helen.

"Yes, I won this time," responded Helen, seating herself on the tree-trunk. "But I wonder if I'll always win?"

Jim stood looking down at her. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes were very bright.

"You're awfully mysterious, Miss Helen," he told her. "I don't know what you mean."

"I mean all this," she replied with a sweep of her hand. "Living like a hunted beast—outside the law. I'm wondering what the outcome will be."

"Well," said Jim gravely, "there's only one end for an outlaw. You know what that is."

"Yes, I know," she said quite frankly. "I've thought of it many times. Oh, I'm not thinking of myself, but of Tubby, Highpockets, Nevady and the others. They're outlaws just because of their loyalty to me."

At that very moment Tubby, Highpockets and Nevady were watching the pair from a distance, and their view of the situation was summarised by Highpockets thus:

"She's invited him to supper five times in succession. I'm wonderin' if she's fallin' for him."

"You wonder?" growled Tubby. "I know darned well she is! Come on—it's not for us to butt in."

The three retreated. Jim, dropping down beside Helen, said to her earnestly:

"Why didn't you let the law take care of all that happened, instead of taking revenge into your own hands?"

"The law!" she echoed bitterly. "Do you suppose I wanted to do what I'm doing? There's never been any law in Lorado Valley—except the law Matt Taylor made. If your father had been shot down in cold blood and your ranch destroyed with fire, what would you have done?"

"About the same thing as you did, I guess," admitted Jim.

That evening Highpockets, Tubby and Nevady, riding towards the gulch to receive reports from those who guarded it, stared blankly at a wiry, middle-aged man with a chin beard who was galloping in their direction. It was Lynn Alder.

"Why, what's the matter?" he cried as he drew near. "You fellows look like you'd seed a ghost!"

"That's what we thought you was, for a minute," declared Highpockets. "We figured you was dead."

"Yeah," put in Tubby. "The fellow who brought in the supply-wagon said you'd been bush-whacked."

"The heck he did!" laughed Lynn; but offered no further explanation, for Nevady's ugly face had become twisted with sudden recollection.

"It's just come to me!" he cried. "Who that stranger is! He's a Ranger!"

Lynn pursed his lips; but Highpockets howled:

"What?"

"He is that!" insisted Nevady. "Last time I saw him he was handcuffed to a prisoner down in Mexico Joe's place—on the border!"

Tubby gave vent to a shrill whistle; Highpockets, tugging at his enormous moustache, said thoughtfully:

"A Ranger, eh? That puts us in a

tough spot, boys! We've got no direct quarrel with the law."

"No," snorted Nevady, "but we got to look after ourselves."

"And Miss Helen, too," nodded Highpockets. "I've got a plan, boys. Look! Here they come now. Quick—get out of sight!"

All four scattered, seeking cover behind a bush, as Helen and Jim wandered up together.

"I'm expecting you for dinner, don't forget," said Helen, and turned in the direction of the ranch-house.

Jim leaned against a tree-trunk, and was rolling a cigarette when the four bobbed up from behind the bush, with their guns in their hands.

"What's up?" inquired Jim—and grinned at Lynn Alder.

They surrounded him, and Highpockets assumed the rôle of spokesman. He informed Jim that they all knew now that he was a Ranger; and he did not deny the accusation.

"I gotta proposition to make," said Highpockets. "We got no quarrel with the Rangers, and we'd like to avoid having any. Give us your word of honour you'll leave and forget everything, and you'll ride out a free man."

"Thanks!" said Jim gruffly. "And I wish I could; but it's not on the cards, boys. I've already given my word of honour—to the Rangers."

"Well, there's only one course left," declared Highpockets significantly.

"I understand," nodded Jim resignedly. "Do what you're going to do—but don't let Miss Helen know who I am."

"We've decided that! We'll fix things, so that you just naturally disappear, and we'll tell her you deserted."

"Thanks!" said Jim ironically.

"Come on, fellows," barked Highpockets. "We gotta lot to do."

Jim was conveyed back to the cabin and made a prisoner in it; and at least five men mounted guard over him to see that he did not escape. But Minnie came to announce that dinner was ready—and this was a contingency for which Helen's devoted followers had not provided.

"Well, I guess you better go through with it," decided Highpockets gloomily. "We'll wait till after you've ate. But don't try anything funny, young fellow—we'll be watching you from every window."

"Yeah," drawled Nevady, "and you'd better make the most of 'this meal, Ranger, 'cause it's your last one on this earth!"

"Eat hearty, too," added Tubby. "They tell me the devil don't overfeed his guests!"

In the Hands of the Enemy.

IT was a remarkable meal that followed. Jim was escorted to the ranch-house, and in the living-room he sat beside Helen at table; but his appetite was conspicuous by its absence. He shifted uncomfortably in his chair, and every other minute he glanced from one window to another, wondering if the watchers would decide to shoot him while he offered so conspicuous a target, instead of waiting till the meal was over, as promised.

"What's the matter?" asked Helen. "You're the mysterious one to-night! Is it too hot in here? Shall I open a window?"

"No," said Jim hastily. "I—er—I just had a kink in my neck. A man gets it once in a lifetime, you know."

Somehow he managed to swallow some food, though he felt that it would choke him. And once when he looked at a window, Nevady displayed his clasp-knife as though he were slitting a

throat, and once Highpockets pointed his six-shooter to indicate a growing impatience.

After the meal, Minnie brought in a teapot and cups and saucers, and Jim, only too eager to postpone his end, drank several cups of tea.

"Did you ever have your fortune told in a teacup?" Helen asked him, and insisted on telling his. But when she picked up his empty cup and examined the accumulation of leaves in it, she exclaimed:

"This is terrible! It looks like you're going away. I see a long, long road. No, I don't think it's a road. It could be a long rope."

Jim shivered slightly.

"I don't believe in those things," he said, and took the cup from her and set it down. "It's a wonderful night out to-night—with a great big moon. How would you like to take a walk with me?"

She sprang to her feet immediately, delighted with the suggestion; and together they went out into the scented night.

Five heads bobbed back out of sight as they emerged, five bodies were pressed close against walls or bushes; but after Jim and Helen had passed beneath the first of the trees all the nine men who formed the outfit followed stealthily in their wake.

"Isn't it quiet and peaceful?" exclaimed Helen. "It's a wonderful night—and you were right about the moon."

She turned abruptly, for Tubby had stumbled over a bucket, and she became aware of several shadowy figures behind.

"The boys seem playful to-night," she remarked.

"Yes," said Jim. "What say we fool 'em?"

She nodded readily, and he led her in the direction of the stables.

They entered one of them together, and the watchers immediately became suspicious and stole closer, quite prepared for Jim to come galloping out on his white horse in a desperate bid for freedom.

But Jim had fooled them. He and Helen strolled out from the stable and over the fields towards the distant gulch; and out in the open the watchers had to fall back or attract their young mistress' attention.

Five minutes elapsed, and then Jim,

still strolling beside Helen, whistled shrilly; and out from the stable flashed the white form of Silver, hastening to the master who had summoned him; and while Highpockets and the others stared in consternation, Jim vaulted into the saddle—and lifted Helen up on to his knees.

"Oh, this is thrilling!" she cried delightedly.

It was! Jim shot off towards the gulch, and long before his discomfited custodians could saddle and mount their own horses he was through the gap, across the river, and careering through Hidden Valley.

But if Jim had left danger behind, danger lurked ahead. The trees were dense on either side of the trail in the heart of Hidden Valley, and as they rode out of the moonlight into the shadows they found themselves surrounded by horsemen.

"Oh!" gasped Helen.

"Helen Clayton!" cried the voice of Matt Taylor exultingly. "This sure is a great pleasure. We were looking for your hideout, and here you are! Rex, give the young lady your horse. She'll be more comfortable, because we've got a good way to go."

He turned to Jim.

"Who are you?" he barked, and his gun threatened.

Helen slid obediently to the ground and was helped on to another horse. There was no possibility of escape for at least ten men were gathered round them, and Jim had to think quickly.

"Don't you remember?" he said.

"I'm the fellow that promised to bring that girl to you—and you promised two thousand dollars reward. I want it!"

"The drunk!" exclaimed Matt Taylor.

"So you caught up with your drinking, eh? Well, she's worth that much and more to me. Head for the home ranch, boys."

The man addressed as Rex climbed up behind Breed on the horse which that ruffian was riding, and the whole party set off in the direction of Syndicate Ranch.

Highpockets and his companions streamed across the valley some little while later and drew rein on almost the very spot where Taylor had captured Helen.

"Well," exclaimed Nevada disgustedly, "that wabble-eyed son of a

gun has got clean away! It's all your fault, Highpockets. We should have strung him up the minute we knowed who he was."

"Well, we're not giving up—not until we've scoured the entire panhandle!" declared Highpockets. "Let's get going, boys!"

Taylor and his gang were, by this time, well beyond Sentinel Rocks, and consequently out of sight. Almost a bee-line was made for the ranchhouse below Bellington, and in the very early hours of the morning the long, low wooden building was reached, and Helen was marched into a well-furnished living-room by Matt Taylor, Jim following of his own accord.

"I've been looking forward to this pleasure for a long time," said Taylor mockingly.

"Perhaps it won't be so pleasant for you when my men find out where I am," retorted Helen defiantly.

"It will be a pleasure to receive them, too," laughed Taylor. "I've been trying for months to draw them out of their hole so my men could wipe them out."

Breed appeared in the doorway, grinning maliciously, and Taylor turned to him.

"Show Miss Clayton to our guest room," he directed.

"Come on, Miss Clayton!" commanded Breed.

But Helen, instead of obeying, snatched his whip and slashed Jim across the face with it.

"She sure loves you, buddy!" jeered Matt Taylor.

"Yeah," drawled Jim, caressing a red welt on his right cheek.

And then Helen dropped the whip and moved past him, following Breed out into a passage which led to other ground-floor rooms and to the stairs.

She was escorted to a pleasant bedroom, and the door was closed upon her and locked. She went over to the window and looked down into the moonlit farmyard, torn between love and hatred for the man she misunderstood.

Downstairs, Sam Lanning had entered the living-room, and Taylor, motioning him to a chair, said to Jim:



"Here I am, Captain," said Jim cheerfully, "and I arrest Matt Taylor for the murder of Ed Lanning."

"Well, you've done me a great favour, pardner, and you're welcome to stay with the Syndicate outfit if you care to. Just wander around for a while, will you—we'll have a talk later."

"Thanks," said Jim, with every appearance of gratitude, and went out on to the veranda with a swinging stride. But once outside the building he crept along to the window of the living-room, which was open, and, crouching beside it, listened intently.

Sam Lanning was evidently uneasy. He and his dead brother had been coerced into joining Matt Taylor's precious syndicate, but neither had ever had any liking for the fellow, or for their association with him.

"What are you going to do with that girl?" he demanded anxiously.

"The same as I'd do with any other dangerous enemy," was the immediate retort. "When she's served my purpose she'll just disappear."

"Taylor," exsulated Lanning, "we've had enough of killing. It was rotten to shoot down her father in cold blood, but I won't stand for it being done to a woman."

"That's quite enough from you!" blazed Taylor. "I'm giving orders here. Will you listen to me?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then get out!"

A six-shooter gleamed in the light of the hanging oil-lamp, and Sam Lanning went out, passing Breed in the doorway.

"Shut that door!" snapped Taylor. "Listen, Breed: Lanning's getting dangerous; give him the same medicine you gave his brother. Understand?"

Breed nodded, and the listener outside the window crept away.

Lanning had crossed the veranda and was making for his horse. He had mounted it when Breed emerged from the building with a six-shooter in his hand; and he was taking aim at the man who was about to ride away when Jim's voice, close behind him, said urgently:

"Hi, half a minute!"

Breed turned his face—and in that instant a sledge-hammer blow caught him clean on the point of the jaw and sent him sprawling on his back, completely knocked out. Jim flew across the yard to Lanning.

"Breed was just going to shoot you in the back—Taylor's orders," he said. "Let's get him out of here, then I'll explain to you."

Sam Lanning nodded and slid to the ground. Together they crept back to the unconscious form of Breed, and between them they carried him into an outbuilding, where Jim roped him securely hand and foot, while Lanning stood on guard in the doorway with his gun.

"You say Taylor ordered him to get me?" inquired Lanning, as Jim rejoined him at the door.

"Yeah—just like he got your brother."

"What?" gasped Lanning. "But it was Helen Clayton—"

"It was that trussed-up guy back there," interrupted Jim with a jerk of his thumb. "I got the low-down when I heard Taylor instruct Breed to do the same with you."

"So Taylor killed my brother?" said Lanning savagely. "I'll settle with him now!"

"Wait a minute," urged Jim. "D'you want to commit suicide? Besides, Taylor belongs to me. Listen, I'm a Ranger, and I was sent down to bring in Helen Clayton for the murder of Ed Lanning, but this clears her. You do as I say, and I'll see the law gives you
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an even break. You can ride out of here all right, but I can't. I want you to go to Rangers Headquarters at Sterling City, and tell Captain Edwards I need him here immediately."

"I'll do it!"

"If you kill your horse, the Rangers will give you a new one—and you can sleep well in Sterling for as long as you like."

The Way of a Ranger.

OVER the lower half of the door of the outbuilding Jim watched Sam Lanning move stealthily across the farmyard to his horse and ride away. Then he looked up at the ranch-house—and Helen's face was plainly visible at an upstairs window, in the light of the moon.

Without a moment's hesitation he made his way cautiously to a post of the veranda, swarmed up it to the roof, and within a very few minutes was clambering in at the open window of the guest-room.

Helen started back in alarm, thinking at first that it was one of Taylor's creatures thus intruding—or even Taylor himself. With her back to the locked door she cried wildly: "Get out!" But Jim said masterfully:

"Miss Helen, I want you to listen to me. You've got to listen to me!"

"You get out of here!" she retorted, recognising his voice, and she punched him in the face with her little ineffectual fists. But he gripped her by both arms and drew her across to the window, where he swung her round so that they could see one another's faces.

"I'm not what you think I am," he said in a low voice. "I'm a Ranger, and I was detailed here to arrest you for the murder of Ed Lanning."

"I didn't kill him!" she shrieked. "I didn't kill him!"

"I know you didn't," he replied earnestly. "I just found out who did. Look!"

Still holding her tightly with one hand, he plunged the other into a pocket and displayed his badge. But at this moment Taylor ran out into the yard below, calling:

"Where's Breed? What's become of Breed?"

Several of the crook's followers came running to him—and then Breed called out from the darkness of the outbuilding in which he was lying on his back in bonds.

Immediately there was a rush for the doorway.

"Now we're in for it," groaned Jim. "They've found Breed!"

He told her hurriedly of the things he had overheard, and of the mission upon which he had dispatched Sam Lanning.

"But suppose Lanning should double-cross you, and not bring the Rangers back?" she exclaimed. "My men can't be far away; let me go after them."

"You'd be shot down before you got fifty yards. There's men all round this house."

"Jim," she whispered feverishly, "what can we do?"

"I got an idea," he answered reassuringly. "Get a piece of paper and write a note to Highpockets. Tell him to follow Silver, and sign it yourself. Guess it's about our only chance."

He himself found a piece of paper for her in one of his pockets, and while she scribbled a note with his pencil he pulled the curtains across the open window and stood behind them with his gun, ready to fire at any instant; for there was quite a commotion in the outbuilding where Breed had been found.

That shifty-eyed creature had recovered consciousness while he was being trussed up, and he had heard far too much.

"That cowpuncher you brought in with Miss Clayton," he informed Matt Taylor, while being freed of his bonds, "is a Ranger—and he knows who killed Lanning!"

Taylor's language was not fit to be heard, but his quick wit convinced him that Breed was not mistaken; every-thing fitted in only too well.

"Put a guard round the ranch, boys," he directed savagely. "If he gets away, we're finished!"

He darted out into the farmyard, and the others followed, Breed stretching his cramped limbs as he went. A score of men were summoned, and the farmyard and outbuildings were searched, but in vain. It did not occur to Taylor, or any of his men, that Jim could be up in the bed-room with Helen.

The search widened, the yard beneath the bed-room window became deserted. Jim, with the note in his pocket, said to Helen:

"The coast's more or less clear now. As soon as I get out, close these curtains."

"Be careful, Jim!" whispered Helen, as he clambered over the sill. "And I'm sorry I distrusted you."

From the edge of the veranda roof, where he crouched flat, Jim whistled, and Silver came cantering up.

His master slid off the veranda roof on to the broad white back and descended thence to the ground. He thrust the folded note under the bridle, and whispered in the intelligent animal's ear, and Silver immediately went galloping off in the direction of Hidden Valley, while Jim climbed back to the bed-room.

"I got Silver away all right," he told Helen, "but we'll have to make a stand till the gang comes. Here, take this gun and stand over there. I'll knock anybody who comes close."

Out in the roadway Silver was speedily sighted by Taylor's men, and by Taylor himself.

"He's sent that horse for help!" howled Taylor. "We've got to stop him!"

Guns spat and bullets whizzed after Silver, but the horse was soon beyond range of mere Colts. Horses were mounted, and more than half of Taylor's men set off in pursuit, while the rest, under their leader's direction, went back to the ranchhouse.

But Jim had been quick to take advantage of the diversion thus created, and all the doors of the ranchhouse were locked and all the ground-floor windows were shut and fastened.

Taylor, almost mad with fury at being defied in this fashion, shouted orders, and there followed a siege in which a girl and a Ranger held the building against the persistent attack of ten men.

A tree-trunk was being used as a battering-ram against the heavy front door when Highpockets, Tubby, Nevady, and the rest of Helen's men came galloping up. Silver had found them by the river, and Highpockets had found the note; but on the way to Syndicate Ranch there had been a battle with those who had pursued the white horse.

Taylor's men were routed, and two of them were left wounded in Hidden Valley, but the rest tore back to the ranchhouse, there to join forces with the attackers, who abruptly found themselves between two fires.

For hours the struggle continued. Breed went down, shot through the heart, and Nevady was badly wounded before Taylor resorted to subterfuge. He instructed half of his men to keep

(Continued on page 27.)

A gentleman of leisure saves a beautiful girl and becomes involved in a mix-up with desperate racketeers. Starring Nick Stuart and Nena Quartaro.



TRAPPED

The Mountain Road.

JERRY COLEMAN awoke with a swollen head, literally a swollen head, since it was not the result of having an excellent opinion of himself, but of having supped too liberally on excellent wines the previous night.

"Never again," quoth Jerry, holding a cool water-carafe against his aching temples, and then he called weakly for his manservant.

Ferguson by name, otherwise known as Fergie, the manservant speedily appeared. He was a dapper individual of timid mien, and though he had one of the most tolerant and generous of masters in young Jerry he had certain grounds for saying that being employed by a wealthy man-about-town was not always an ideal occupation, unless one's nerves were in perfect condition.

"Fergie," said Jerry, "where's my friend?"

The valet looked at him in bewilderment.

"Your friend, sir?" he echoed, looking around wonderingly.

Jerry nodded. He had crawled from under the blankets and was sitting on the edge of his bed, and he was still regarding Fergie inquiringly when he suddenly bethought himself of the top sheet and flung it back to reveal a bandy-legged, thick-set bulldog.

"Oh, here he is," exclaimed Jerry. "Isn't he cute, Fergie?"

"Your friend, sir?" the valet repeated dazedly. "Is that him, sir?"

Jerry nodded. "That's him," he announced. "Bought him off another fellow at the party last night."

Fergie coughed a disapproving cough. "Beg pardon, sir," he said, changing the subject. "But your breakfast is on the table."

"Breakfast!" wailed Jerry, with a

grimace. "Fergie, where's your tact? Can't you see I don't feel like breakfast this morning? Listen, get me some ice-water. You hear? Ice-water. And then pack my things. I'm leaving for Monterey and going on a yachting cruise."

"Very good, sir."

Fergie departed, and Jerry made his way to the bath-room. He washed and shaved, and when he returned to his bed-room discovered that there was no longer any sign of his bulldog. He heard snuffling sounds next door, however, and passed through to the dining-room to see his pugnacious pup worrying the remnants of a pair of white trousers.

Fergie came into the room and gave a horrified cry at the spectacle which greeted his eyes.

"They're your yachting trousers, sir," he gasped. "And the only ones you have. The pair you ordered from the tailor's hasn't arrived yet."

"Great Scott!" said Jerry. "That means I'll have to go yachting in a lounge suit. Well, it can't be helped."

Twenty minutes later, attired in blue serge and yachting cap, Jerry stepped into a powerful roadster with Fergie, and took the road that leads from San Francisco through the Coast Range to Monterey Bay.

Had he but known it, it was a road destined to lead him into adventure such as he had often craved, but never dreamed of encountering.

Monterey was not the underworld, yet it was into the sinister realms of the underworld that that road was to take him.

The home of Bettina Moore, on the outskirts of San Francisco, was the home of a woman who had made a fortune out of the night club business, and who continued to swell her banking account

from the profits of one of the most exclusive midnight restaurants in town.

Bettina Moore was a woman of some forty-odd years, still strikingly beautiful, though in her face a shrewd judge of character might have read traces of a past that had been marred by sadness and tragedy—a past that was like a closed book to Bettina Moore, hiding events that she sought to forget.

It was a past of which Sally, her daughter, had no inkling—Sally, fresh from the finishing-school, eager to see the world.

Bettina Moore leaned back in a deep armchair and watched Sally dressing before a mirror in her boudoir. She was following the girl's movements smilingly when a tap on the door diverted her attention.

It was the chauffeur, a man new to the Moore domicile, and none too savoury in his appearance, though his references had seemed adequate.

"My daughter wants you to drive her along the Monterey Road," Mrs. Moore told him. "Please bring round the car, will you?"

The chauffeur went off to do her bidding, and presently Sally came over from the mirror.

"Mother," she said, "supposing you take me to the Blue Moon Night Club to-night. I've never been, and I'm simply longing to go."

Her mother shook her head.

"No, Sally," she answered. "I want you to keep away from night clubs." "Oh, but mother," Sally protested, "the Blue Moon is your own night club. You're not trying to tell me that it isn't respectable enough for me to go to?"

Bettina Moore smiled. "The Blue Moon is one of the few night clubs that are respectable," she said. "But just the same, I'd rather you didn't go."

"Oh, all right," Sally murmured, "I won't ask again, mother. You know I wouldn't go to any place you didn't want me to. Good-bye," she added cheerfully, pulling on a close-fitting hat. "I'll be in for lunch."

She made her way to the hall and let herself out of the house. The chauffeur was waiting for her in the drive, and caught sight of her as he was taking a pull at a flask of bootleg liquor, which he quickly returned to his pocket.

Sally climbed into the car, and the chauffeur took his place at the wheel. They picked up the Monterey road in the hills, and had been driving for a little less than half an hour when Sally felt something steal about her shoulders.

She looked round swiftly, and saw that it was the chauffeur's arm. She could only stare at him in amazement for a moment, then with an indignant exclamation she pulled free.

"How dare you?" she cried. "Have you gone mad?"

He grinned at her insolently. "Aw, don't be sore, girlie," he coaxed. "A little pettin' never harmed anybody." And he slipped his arm around her again.

Sally became convinced that the man had been drinking.

"Stop the car!" she ordered fiercely, but he only drew her closer.

She began to struggle, thoroughly alarmed now. But the chauffeur did not release her, nor did he take his foot from the accelerator, and the car swayed from side to side of a road that was flanked by a lofty embankment on the one hand and by a cliff fifty feet in depth on the other.

Meanwhile, about half a mile to the rear, another automobile was travelling in the same direction at a high speed. It was Jerry Coleman's roadster, and with the speedometer registering seventy-five on a serpentine road Jerry was fairly enjoying the terror of his passenger.

"Mr. Jerry," Fergie howled, "Mr. Jerry, I can't stand it! My nerves, sir—oh, my poor nerves!"

The car flashed round a bend, its wheels showering dust into the ravine below. Fergie shut his eyes tightly as he glimpsed the fifty-foot drop, and uttered a prolonged wail.

But Jerry was no longer heeding him. He was now in sight of the auto in which Sally Moore was travelling, and as he saw it zigzagging along the road his gaze became riveted on it.

He was soon close behind the other car, and it did not take him long to realise what was wrong. At the first opportunity he pulled level with the chauffeur-driven auto, and then, setting the throttle, called to Fergie to take the wheel.

"The wheel!" screeched the valet. "But I don't know anything about cars. Oh, Mister Jerry!" This in an agonised yell as Jerry abandoned the steering, clambered over the side and leapt into Sally Moore's roadster.

The ruffianly chauffeur felt a grip on his collar, and, snarling, turned to strike out at Jerry. But the young man-about-town blocked the punch, and, dragging the fellow into the back of the car, battered his mercilessly ere finally tumbling him out on to the road.

Sally had had the presence of mind to take the wheel, and she brought the automobile to a standstill. Jerry instantly sprang from the car and sprinted to where the chauffeur was struggling to his feet. As he ran he realised that his own car was no longer in view, and imagined that Fergie had succeeded in drawing up.

But for an intervening turn in the September 19th, 1931.

road he might have seen the panic-stricken Fergie clinging to the steering-wheel like a limpet while the auto took a wild plunge over the fifty-foot slope to the right of the road.

Jerry came within striking distance of the chauffeur as the latter put himself in a posture of defence. But the man's guard failed to stop a stiff left to the mouth, and he was staggering back with blood on his lips when a smashing right-hander rolled him in the dust. He lay with one arm over his face in a cowardly attitude of surrender, and, his lip curling in contempt, Jerry made his way back to where Sally had pulled up.

"Oh, I—I don't know how to thank you," she said.

"That's all right," Jerry told her with a grin, brushing his yachting cap on his sleeve as he spoke. "You see, I—"

A scream from the girl arrested him, and, as he saw her point along the road, he whipped round and caught sight of the chauffeur moving towards him with a heavy piece of rock in his hand. His fists bunched, Jerry started forward to meet him, but the rogue took fright, dropped the rock and showed his heels.

Jerry turned to the girl again. She was smiling now.

"You certainly showed him where he got off," she said, and then, growing serious all at once. "But what about your master?" she went on. "He looked almost beside himself when you jumped out of his car to save me. He—he'll probably fire you, won't he?"

It took Jerry only a moment to realise that she had mistaken his yachting cap for a chauffeur's, but with an impulsiveness characteristic of him he decided not to enlighten her.

"Oh, yes," he murmured, "my employer. Well, I didn't care for the job much, anyway, and I daresay I'll be able to get another one."

"You don't have to look any farther," Sally told him. "Mother and I will be needing another chauffeur now. You can drive me home, if you like, and I'll recommend you right away."

The idea of keeping up the deception appealed to Jerry hugely, particularly as it would give him the opportunity of furthering his acquaintance with someone so attractive. So that afternoon, following an interview with Sally's mother, he returned home to don a chauffeur's uniform which he purchased at an outfitter's in the city.

He was studying his reflection in a mirror when the door of his room opened and a forlorn, battered figure appeared. It was the figure of Fergie, wearing a burst auto-tyre round his neck and carrying a broken steering-wheel in his hand.

"Your car, sir," he said bitterly.

Jerry laughed, and slapped him on the shoulder, a lusty gesture that brought a yelp from the valet.

"Fergie," he declared, "I'm through with driving my own car. I'm going to chauffeur for the prettiest girl in the world. And you, Fergie—you can take a holiday."

"I need one, sir," the valet groaned. "In a sanatorium—"

An Echo of the Past.

A BANK robbery was staged in Visalia, two or three hundred miles to the south-east of San Francisco. Three raiders figured in the hold-up, but as they piled into a car with their booty a town-marshal and a couple of deputies appeared on the scene, and one of the bandits was left in a heap by the roadside, shot dead.

Two hours later Bettina Moore's maid, Lena, announced a caller by the name of

Farley, a name that seemed to draw something of the colour from her mistress's face.

"Show him in," she said, after a moment's hesitation.

Joe Farley crossed the hall and entered the lounge even as Jerry Coleman, spick and span in sky-blue uniform, descended a flight of stairs from his room on the top floor, to which he had been conducted a little while previously.

Farley did not notice the young gentleman-chauffeur. He was too eager to consult Bettina Moore to pay much heed to the household's staff of servants.

Rising from a chesterfield, Bettina Moore regarded Farley coldly. A thick-set man with a nose that had been broken at some stage in his chequered career, he looked out of place in that sumptuous room.

"You've got your nerve, Farley," Bettina said, "coming here like this."

Farley chewed the stump of a cigar. "Aw, that's no way to talk," he told her, in a tone of smug reproach. "I can remember a time when you wasn't so particular about what kind o' visitors you had."

"Farley," Bettina Moore answered bitterly, "that's a time I want to forget. It wasn't by any choice of mine that I mixed with a bunch of dirty crooks like yourself. And it wasn't through my influence that the man I married turned gangster. You were responsible for that, Farley—you rat!"

"Say, them's hard words, Bettina," Joe Farley protested, "an' I didn't come here to start any unpleasantness. I came to ask you a favour, for the sake of the old days before you bust into society as proprietress of the Blue Moon Night Club."

Bettina Moore laughed mirthlessly. "A favour?" she reiterated. "And you think I'm likely to do you one?"

"You'll do this one," Farley rejoined. "Listen, three friends of mine raided a bank this forenoon in Visalia. I've just had word that one of them got bumped off, but the other two are headed this way and they want me to hide 'em out. That's where you come in, Bettina. Nobody knows your record, and you're a personal friend of Baxter, captain of the police. These guys I'm tellin' you about would be safe with you—"

"So that's the idea," Bettina Moore interrupted. "I'm to hide a couple of your crook friends for you. Well, I won't do it. Understand? You and your talk of the old days. What do they mean to me? Do you think I'd jeopardise my daughter's happiness by letting her know that her father was a criminal?"

Farley blew a cloud of cigar-smoke towards the ceiling.

"I'm glad you mentioned that," he mused. "You see, Bettina, I was goin' on to tell you that one of those fellows who pulled off the Visalia bank robbery is Jim Moore."

If he had struck her the effect could not have been more staggering than that which those words produced. For a moment she seemed unable to speak, and then:

"You're lying," she said. "It's a cruel lie! Jim died ten years ago, five years after I cut loose from him and told him I never wanted to see him again."

Farley shook his head.

"You're wrong," he answered. "He was reported dead all right. But not long ago I learned the truth. Ten years ago Jim Moore was nailed in Oregon for killin' a night-watchman, but he was convicted under another name."

"I—I can't believe it," Bettina Moore whispered.

"I'm tellin' you the truth," Farley declared. "Jim's alive, Bettina, and it's him and his side-kick that you've gotta shelter. Listen, they've made a big haul, and you and me can make 'em share out for the protection they get—see?"

Bettina Moore's lip curled.

"Yes, I see," she said scornfully. "You want to make some easy money. Well, you can count me out. I don't want any of that dirty money. And as for Jim Moore, I wouldn't raise a finger to help him. What did he ever do for me except bring me unhappiness—while I was fool enough to stand by him?"

Farley's eyes hardened, and his ugly mouth tightened viciously.

"Supposin' your precious daughter was to find out about her father, though," he snarled. "Supposin' I was to drop the hint in certain quarters that one of the guys responsible for this Visalia job was Jim Moore, lawful husband of that prominent night club proprietress of the same name. Supposin' the newspapers was to blaze it out in the headlines."

Bettina Moore leaned weakly against a table. Her features no longer maintained that expression of fearlessness and resolution with which she had endeavoured to confront Farley. The man's cowardly threat seemed to have overwhelmed her.

There was a spell of silence. When ultimately she spoke, her voice was querulous.

"All right, Farley," she said. "I'll do it. You can bring Jim and the other man to the back door of the Blue Moon Night Club at ten o'clock. I'll see them in my office there and come to some arrangements for hiding them out for a few days. But get this and get it straight—if my daughter Sally ever hears what kind of man her father was, I'll never rest till you and every one of your gang are behind the bars."

"Bettina," Farley told her, "you don't have to worry about that." And with an air of supreme satisfaction he strolled out into the hall and let himself out of the house.

The moment the front door had closed behind him, a figure stole out from the folds of a velvet curtain near the entrance of the lounge. It was the figure of Jerry Coleman, and, approaching Sally's mother, he spoke to her urgently.

"Mrs. Moore," he said. "I couldn't help hearing part of your conversation just now. I thought that fellow sounded threatening, and so I hung around."

Bettina Moore was looking at him dully.

"How much—did you hear?" she murmured.

"Most everything," was the answer, "but your secret's safe with me. I wouldn't have dared to mention to you that I'd been listening, but I thought I might be able to help. If there's anything I can do, you can bank on me."

The woman studied him for a moment. He had shown the stuff he was made of that very morning, when he tackled Sally's chauffeur, and it suddenly occurred to her that he might be a useful ally in a vague plan that had been at the back of her mind during the interview with Farley.

"Listen," she said, "I've got an idea, and you can help me in putting it into practice."

At the Blue Moon.

SHORTLY after a hurried consultation with Jerry, Bettina Moore received a caller in the shape of Captain Baxter, of the San Francisco Police.

Captain Baxter was a fine, upstanding figure of a man, and a frequent and popular visitor at the Moore home.

"I happened to be passing, and thought I'd drop in, Bettina," he explained to Sally's mother.

"You know you're always welcome," Mrs. Moore told him. "Did you want to see me about anything important?"

Baxter took her hands in his own.

"Yes, Bettina," he said. "I wanted to ask the old, old question again. When are you going to marry me?"

"Did I ever tell you that I would marry you?" was the rejoinder.

Baxter gave her a rueful smile.

"No," he admitted, "I've never even been able to get you to promise that much. But you'd make me the happiest of men if you would."

Bettina Moore frowned. A little while ago she had been very near to accepting Baxter's proposal, but the news that Farley had brought her had changed her outlook entirely. She was no longer free, as she had imagined herself to be. She was tied—tied to a man who had long since lost all right to her affection, a man whom she had believed dead, but who was coming back into her life, unknowingly perhaps, to revive bitter memories.

"There was a time when you told me that you couldn't marry so long as Sally needed a mother's care," Baxter told her. "But Sally is of age now, and I don't think I'm wrong in thinking

that I'd be quite acceptable to her as a stepfather. Bettina, won't you give me your answer here and now?"

She drew her hands from his grasp and turned away so that he could not see the expression on her face.

"John," she said, "I like you more than any other man I know, but I can't marry you. Please—please don't ask me why."

She had hardly spoken the words when Sally appeared on the threshold, and, running into the lounge, she kissed Baxter affectionately.

"You're almost a stranger, captain," she told him reproachfully. "Why, we haven't seen you for over a week, and usually you manage to look us up at least three times every seven days."

"The criminals in this town have been keeping me occupied lately, Sally," Baxter replied. "But I dropped in just now to ask your mother if she would consider me as a husband."

Sally glanced from one to the other.

"I see," she murmured, "and, judging by your face, mother turned you down again."

"That's about the hang of it, Sally," Baxter confessed. "What do you think about it?"

"Well, captain," the girl returned, "any man worth his salt shouldn't take 'no' for an answer."

Baxter looked at her mother and smiled.

"All right," he declared, "I won't. The next time I'm here, Sally, I'll still be asking your mother to change her name."

He said good-bye, and Sally saluted him comically. When he had gone she moved across to her mother and slipped an arm around her shoulders.

"Why won't you marry Captain Baxter?" she protested. "I know you're fond of him, and I'd just adore him for a father."



The ruffianly chauffeur felt a grip on his collar, and, snarling, turned to strike out at Jerry.

"Young girls shouldn't mind their mothers' business," Bettina Moore retorted laughingly. "Now listen, Sally, I want you to find that young chauffeur Coleman and tell him to have the car ready in a quarter of an hour."

Sally departed thoughtfully, and located Jerry near the garage.

"Mother wants you to drive her somewhere in the car," she told him. "Do you know where she's going?"

"Yes," said Jerry, "to the Blue Moon, I think."

Sally gave him a penetrating glance. "By the way," she said, "I saw you and mother in close conversation not long ago. What were you talking about?"

The question embarrassed Jerry, for he knew too well that the subject of his conversation with Bettina Moore was one which must on no account be divulged to Sally.

"You mustn't ask me that, miss," he stammered, and, beating a hasty retreat, he entered the garage and started up the car.

A few minutes later he was at the front door, which was presently opened by Sally's mother. She joined him in the automobile, and he drove her into the centre of the city, finally pulling up in a side street that flanked the premises of the Blue Moon Night Club. Telling Jerry to follow her, Bettina Moore let herself into the building and took him to an office with a door that opened immediately on to the restaurant, which was already half-filled with diners.

The office was occupied by a big man with an amiable but formidable countenance.

"I got your message, Mrs. Moore," the big man said, "and some of the boys are on hand."

"This is Tiger Callahan, my manager," Sally's mother told Jerry. "You must understand that, although this place is on the level, I have to have protection against the racketeers. Tiger has a gang of rough-necks at his beck and call, and no racketeer or black-mailer dares to dictate to me. Farley is going to find that out to-night."

Tiger Callahan smiled grim appreciation of the statement, and then broached the subject of their consultation. It was not long before full arrangements had been made.

"I get the idea," said Callahan. "Farley and these bank bandits are to show up in this office at ten. Sharp on time, the boys start a fight in the restaurant."

"Then you call the cops," put in Jerry, "and Farley and the bandits will be grabbed in the round-up. It'll look like just a plain accident, and they'll never suspect Mrs. Moore has arranged it. They'll go to gaol without squealing about anything that happened in the past."

They separated, Tiger and Mrs. Moore going out into the restaurant, Jerry returning to the car, where he waited for the space of an hour.

At the end of an hour he saw three stealthy figures enter the side door of the Blue Moon Night Club.

The Back Room.

WITH a good deal of caution Farley led his associates into that back room which was Bettina Moore's office.

His companions looked around them suspiciously. One was a tall, dark man with a hatchet face and a pair of brooding eyes; the other was a coarse-featured thug of scant intelligence.

"What's this, Joe—a double-cross?" the taller man demanded of Farley in September 19th, 1931.

a threatening tone. "It don't look much like a hide-out to me!"

"Ah, keep your shirt on!" snapped Farley, his eyes fastening greedily and covetously on a leather bag that the other was carrying. "When you find out who's runnin' this joint you'll feel as safe as a baby in a cradle, Moore."

"Okay, Joe," Jim Moore returned, "but I'll take no chances. Slug," he added to the third man, "go out and watch that side door we came in by."

The hour of ten was striking, and at that moment Tiger Callahan was phoning Baxter. He gave the captain only a few bare details, but as a result of that conversation a radio call was sent forth from the broadcasting-room at headquarters.

"Squad cars seven and nine," ran the message. "Squad cars seven and nine. Squad cars seven and nine. Hold up the Blue Moon Café. Hold up the Blue Moon Café. Hold up—"

But Farley and his associates had never an inkling of the net that was closing around them, though they stood on the qui vive when the door leading to the restaurant was opened.

Farley breathed again as he saw that it was only Bettina Moore. Then he heard a startled exclamation from the man by his side.

"You!" said Jim Moore.

"Yes, your wife, Jim," Bettina Moore answered.

"So you're with Farley's mob now," the man from the past said slowly.

Bettina's eyes flashed.

"Get this straight, Jim," she said curtly. "I'm not with any mob. I was forced into this hide-out act, and I'm doing it to save Sally."

"The kid!" breathed Moore, starting forward, and for a moment his face seemed to lose the villainy of its expression. "Betty, I'd like to see her. How is she?"

"What's it to you?" his wife rapped out. "She thinks you're dead. You are to her. And get this—if you try to open up to her and tell her who you are, I'll kill you!"

She had scarcely spoken the words when there was a sudden outcry in the restaurant, and next instant pandemonium was raging in the café. With an oath Farley wrenched open the door and saw a mob of men fighting in the middle of the dance-floor. They were Tiger Callahan's rough-necks, and they were playing their part convincingly.

Farley whipped round in time to see Bettina take to her heels in feigned alarm. He looked at Jim Moore sourly.

"Somebody's started a fight," he snarled. "Swell break for us, isn't it? Next thing we'll know, the cops will be here. Come on—let's beat it!"

He slid out of the office with Moore on his heels, and made for the side entrance by which they had gained admittance to the premises. As the two men approached the doorway they made out the form of Slug, and realised that he seemed to be having an altercation with someone.

That someone was Jerry Coleman; for, meaning to be in the thick of any excitement, Jerry had left his car and attempted to enter the building, only to be stopped by Slug.

"You can't go in there," Slug was now informing him, with grim emphasis. "Nobody gets past me!"

"Try and stop me!" Jerry challenged. And, with the words, he knocked Slug staggering with a right-hander to the jaw.

Even as he struck the blow Farley and Moore slipped from the shadows, and something round and hard was

jammed into the small of Jerry's back.

"Be yourself, chauffeur!" Farley ground out. "Quick, where's your car?"

Jerry had lifted his hands, knowing that he was covered by a man desperate enough to shoot in cold blood. In answer to Farley's question, he now jerked his thumb to where the dim outline of Bettina Moore's limousine could be seen.

"Hop in and drive us to 16, Franklin Court!" Farley ordered.

Jerry did some fast thinking, and suddenly lowered his hands.

"Put down that gun!" he said. "I'm in the know. I'm driving for Mrs. Moore."

Farley and Jim Moore exchanged a glance. It was the latter who spoke.

"We'll take a chance on you, chauffeur," he growled; "but watch your step! Come on—get goin'!"

Jerry made for the car, Moore and Farley following him, and Slug bringing up the rear. A moment later the auto was swinging out of the side street.

Sixty seconds after it had vanished, Squad cars Nos. 7 and 9 skidded to a standstill outside the Blue Moon Night Club. They were joined at the kerb by another car containing Captain Baxter in person, and it was the captain himself who led the rush of uniformed officers into the café.

A flying bottle hurled by an over-enthusiastic rough-neck struck the captain a glancing blow on the temple, and as he recoiled Tiger Callahan sprang towards him anxiously.

"Are you hurt, captain?" he demanded.

"No," Baxter told him, recovering himself with an effort. "But these bank raiders who were supposed to be here! Are we too late?"

"I hope not," Tiger rejoined crisply. "They were in the back room."

Baxter hurried towards the office, but entered it only to find that the birds had flown.

"A clean get-away," he jerked. And then: "Where's Bettina?" he asked of Tiger.

"I don't know, captain," Callahan answered. "She went out of here during the fight."

Baxter turned to one of his subordinates in the force.

"Keep a couple of the boys here," he ordered. "I'm going to find Mrs. Moore and see if she is all right."

In a Corner.

STEERING the car into the drive of Bettina Moore's home, Jerry brought the automobile to a standstill and then led the crooks into the house.

He had no very clear plan in his mind, but he was playing for time. The scheme to have Farley, Moore and Slug rounded up as if by accident had unfortunately failed, and force of circumstances had compelled Jerry to bring them to the Night Club Queen's private residence after all. He was hoping, however, that a chance might occur to straighten things out and rescue Bettina Moore from her strange dilemma.

Jerry escorted the crooks to the lounge, and there found Sally. She started up at sight of him, and then looked at the men behind him in a bewildered fashion, for she was immediately struck by their scoundrelly bearing.

"These gentlemen want to see your mother," Jerry said, and at that he saw Jim Moore start forward, as if unable to restrain the impulse to take the girl in his arms and announce his identity.

If that were his intention, he never put it into practice, for at that same moment Farley swaggered towards Sally and laid his hand on her shoulder familiarly.

"Well, well," he said with a leer, "so you're Betty's little daughter. My old friend Betty's little girl—all grown up and everything."

Sally recoiled involuntarily. "Jerry," she said hurriedly, "you'd better try and get in touch with mother by 'phone."

Jerry went out of the room, and Sally was attempting to follow him when Farley caught her by the arm. There was an expression on his evil face that made the girl recoil, but the grasp of his hand tightened as she tried to draw away.

"Why don't you be a nice little girl an' entertain us until your mother comes?" said Farley, baring his teeth in an ugly grin.

Standing in the background, Jim Moore's eyes were blazing like live coals, and suddenly his voice cut across the room:

"Farley!"

That was all; but the fierceness with which he spoke expressed a threat as ominous as the gun he carried on his hip, and Farley's hold relaxed. The moment she was free, Sally hurriedly made her escape from the room, and as she disappeared Jim Moore stepped close to his associate.

"Still up to your old tricks, eh, Farley?" he snarled. "Well, you lay off this kid! You understand?"

Farley looked at him venomously, but held himself in check, reflecting that there would be plenty of opportunities, during the next day or two, of seeing Sally when Moore wasn't around.

"Ah, don't get het-up, Jim!" he scoffed. "I didn't mean no harm. Was just tryin' to be affable, see?"

The front door of the house opened and slammed before he could say more, and Sally's mother came into the room. As she caught sight of the three crooks she knew that her scheme to have them rounded up at the Blue Moon Café had failed completely, but, at the same time, she realised that for Sally's sake they must not be taken prisoner here.

"Quick!" she rapped out. "Upstairs! The police may be coming here!"

She had scarcely disposed of her unwelcome guests when she received another visitor in the person of Captain Baxter, and as she saw the wound on his temple her dilemma was for the moment forgotten in her concern for the police chief.

"Oh, my dear," she said anxiously, "you're hurt!"

"It's just a scratch," Baxter assured her, "and I wouldn't stop to have it attended to until I knew you were all right. But if you don't mind, I'll go upstairs and clean up a bit."

She caught his arm swiftly. "No," she gasped. "Let me—take care of it for you."

"All right," Baxter agreed, to her relief, and followed her into the lounge, where she made him sit down while she fetched water to bathe his injury.

"Tell me how it happened," she said, when she had finished dressing the wound.

"Well, I dropped into your club, and found you were gone," he explained. "There was a little trouble, and I got hit with a bottle."

Bettina Moore drew in her breath.

"Thank heaven it was no worse!" she said fervently. "You might have been killed."

"Not me!" the captain retorted. "It would take more than an empty bottle to finish me. You know," he added with a chuckle, "I'd take a sock on the head every day in the week if I knew you were to be my nurse. If I get another one to-night I'll be back."

"You're going now?" Bettina asked him.

"Yes," he replied, "I'll have to turn in a report to the district attorney. Thanks, Betty—and—good-night!"

He left the house and drove off in his car. As he was approaching the gates his headlights picked out a young couple sitting in a leafy bower, and he smiled as he recognised Sally and the new chauffeur.

He might not have smiled had he been in a position to overhear their conversation.

"Jerry," Sally was saying, "I'm simply terrified. Something queer is going on. Mother has been upset all day, and then—those awful-looking men! What are they doing here? You brought them, Jerry. You know more than you'll admit. Won't you tell me what it's all about?"

"There's nothing I dare tell you," Jerry murmured, "or I would."

"Don't you trust me?" she appealed.

"Of course I do!" he answered emphatically. "But I don't know what to do. This mix-up is too serious for a girl like you, and what you've got to do is to trust me."

She lowered her eyes. "I do trust you, Jerry," she told him, "and I'll do anything you say."

"All right, then," he declared, with a sudden change of manner, "then you'll marry me to-morrow, so that I can take you away from all this trouble."

Five minutes later Sally led Jerry into the house and walked through to the lounge, where she found her mother.

"Mother dear," she announced boldly, "Jerry has something to tell you."

Bettina Moore looked at her new chauffeur inquiringly, and Jerry cleared his throat.

"Yes, Mrs. Moore," he began, "you see, Sally and I have decided to get married. I—I want to take care of her."

Sally's mother leaned back in her chair and regarded the young couple in amazement.

"What a brilliant idea that is," she observed, as soon as she had found her voice. "It's too bad that it won't work."

"Won't work?" Jerry echoed. "That's what I said," Mrs. Moore rejoined. "You want to take care of Sally on a chauffeur's salary, do you? Why, you couldn't take care of yourself if you didn't get room and board."

A twinkle appeared in Jerry's eye. He was thinking of his palatial home on the other side of the city.

"It's true my salary as a chauffeur is small," he agreed, "but—"

Sally interrupted him.

"Mother," she insisted, "I'm in love with Jerry, and I wouldn't care if he didn't have a nickel. We could get along."

"Oh, that's nonsense!" Mrs. Moore retorted, and, turning to Jerry: "Young man," she continued, "my daughter has been raised in luxury, and, no matter how much she thinks she cares for you, I have other plans for her."

"But—"

"Let's hear no more about this," Mrs. Moore said with finality. "To-morrow you'll both realise how foolish you are."

Farley was still alive, but it was plain that he was very near the end.



A House of Fear.

THE three fugitives from the law had fairly installed themselves in Bettina Moore's residence by the following morning, and, with the exception of Jim Moore, seemed completely at their ease.

Reclining in the lounge, they read the morning papers, and they were engrossed in the headlines which dealt with the affair at the Blue Moon Café when Sally's mother hurriedly entered the room.

"Quick!" she said, in a tone of agitation. "Upstairs and out of sight. The police are here!"

A car was drawing up in the drive at that very moment, and from it stepped Baxter and three or four subordinates.

"Harrigan," the captain said to one of his men, "go round to the back of the house and watch it on that side. The rest of you boys spread out."

While the officers were scattering to surround the building, Baxter walked up the steps to the front door, which was opened by Lena, the maid. He was shown into the lounge, where he discovered Bettina Moore alone.

"Hallo, my dear!" she greeted him. "How's the head?" And then, as if noticing his serious mien for the first time: "Why, what's the matter?" she inquired. "Why so grim?"

"Bettina," he told her, "they aren't satisfied, back at headquarters, with that mix-up at your café last night. The men who pulled that bank job at Visalia were seen leaving the night club in a car registered to you, and are believed to have come here. The district attorney wants an investigation."

Bettina Moore's heart was pounding against her ribs, but she managed to control her emotions.

"Why, you're not accusing me of a tie-up with that kind of trash, are you?" she exclaimed. "My car's in the garage, and you're certainly welcome to search the house."

"Don't talk that way, dear," he urged. "I know you don't know anything about it, but the D. A. wants to speak to that new chauffeur of yours. Where is he?"

Bettina Moore shrugged.

"He's not in just now," she answered. "But this is so silly. Jerry is just a nice young fellow who wouldn't do any harm to anybody."

"I'm sorry, dear," Baxter rejoined. "but my orders are to bring him in, and you'll have to tell me where I can locate him."

"I fancy I'm the man you're looking for," said a voice behind him. "I'm Mrs. Moore's chauffeur."

Jerry stood in the doorway of the lounge, prepared to make some show of giving himself up in order to help Sally's mother out of her predicament and prevent any intensive search that might reveal the presence of the three men hiding there.

Baxter faced him

"I guess you'll have to come along," he declared. "If you're on the square, you can soon prove it. So long, Bettina!"

He escorted Jerry from the house, and recalled his men from the grounds. With their prisoner in their midst, the officers drove off, but as the auto swung on to the road Jerry made a sudden bid for liberty.

Taking his captors unawares, he eluded them and sprang from the back of the car. As he dropped to the ground he saw a familiar figure running towards him.

It was the figure of his valet Ferguson, and Fergie was leading his master's bow-legged bull-dog by a leash,

September 19th, 1931.

"Mr. Coleman," he wailed, "Mr. Coleman, I've been looking everywhere for you."

Jerry dived past him, and sprinted through the gateway to Bettina Moore's house. He was halfway up the drive when the police-car came to a standstill, and a couple of officers leapt from it to give chase.

On a lawn not far from the french windows of the lounge Jerry caught sight of Sally and raced across to where she was standing.

"Listen," he panted, "before anything else happens we're going to be married, right away. Meet me in twenty minutes at the little church parsonage. I'll be waiting there for you!"

His two pursuers appearing at that moment, Jerry dashed on, plunging into a dense mass of shrubbery. Meanwhile Sally slipped into the house and hurried upstairs to her room, where she began to make preparations for her appointment at the minister's.

She was pulling on a close-fitting hat when, in the mirror before which she stood, she saw the door slowly open, and next instant a sharp exclamation escaped her as she caught sight of a man's reflection.

The man was Farley, and, coming into the room, he grinned at her affably as she whipped round.

"Get out of here!" she cried indignantly.

He continued to advance, and suddenly caught her about the waist in his powerful arms.

"Get out of here, I tell you!" she cried, struggling in a frenzy of terror.

"Keep quiet, baby!" he cried. "I ain't gonna hurt you. Keep quiet!"

She beat at his face with her clenched fists, but he only laughed, and he was stooping to kiss her when a hand gripped his shoulder and wrenched him back. Staggering, he released Sally, and spun round to find himself face to face with Jim Moore.

Pale with fear, Sally slipped past the two men, and a moment later her feet were pattering on the staircase. But Farley and Moore did not hear her, nor did they hear the slam of the front door as she fled from the house. They were eyeing each other like two animals crouching for a spring. Moore's whole attitude one of quivering rage, Farley's reminiscent of a creature at bay.

"You rat!" Moore grated. "Can't take a warning, can you?"

"Ah, what's bitin' you?" sneered Farley.

"I told you to keep your hands off my little girl," Moore rasped, and with the words he whipped an automatic from his pocket.

Farley jerked back, a glint of fear in his eyes as he saw Moore level the gun deliberately.

"Listen, Farley," his partner in crime went on, "I'm going to do one decent thing in my life—and that's keep you from having hands on that girl again!"

"You've got me wrong, Jim," Farley protested huskily. "I wasn't going to touch your brat."

"Don't lie, you hound!" Moore barked. "I know you, Farley. If it hadn't been for you I'd be a respectable man now, living with my wife and child—instead of a dirty crook like yourself."

Farley scowled.

"Fine talk," he ground out. "So I'm a dirty crook, huh?"

"Yes," was the grim rejoinder. "And this is where you and I part company."

Moore's finger curled on the trigger, but at that instant the glint of fear in Farley's eyes was succeeded by a flicker of cunning.

"Put down that knife, Slug!" he

jerked, glancing past Moore's shoulder to the doorway.

Moore turned with an exclamation of alarm, only to discover too late that the doorway was empty, and that Farley had tricked him.

Before he could face round again, Farley had snatched a "gat" from his hip-pocket and shot him through the breast at point-blank range.

A stab of pain seemed to sear through Moore's body. He reeled and fell, and, crouching on the floor in agony, he saw Farley through a blue swathe of gun-smoke—a grinning fiend mocking him in his death throes.

A froth of blood came to Moore's lips and ran warm and crimson down his chin. His eyes glazed, but still he saw that grinning, hateful face, and the taunt in its expression stung him into a fierce, dying effort. Up came his hand with a spasmodic movement—a hand which still clutched the gun with which he had intended to slay Farley.

A blast of flame leapt from the muzzle of the weapon, and the walls of the room echoed the smash of the shot.

Farley seemed to stiffen out and then come up on his toes. The grin vanished from his ugly features, and gave place to a startled expression that swiftly turned to agony. Next instant he pitched to the floor beside Moore, even as the latter slipped back and breathed his last.

To that room came Bettina Moore, panic stricken by the sound of shooting, and at sight of the two men she paled. Then, as she discerned a movement on Farley's part, she dropped to her knees beside him.

"You shot Jim?" she faltered. "Killed him?"

Farley turned his head slowly, painfully.

"Yeah," he groaned. "An' I ain't—sorry. Listen, Betty—this is my finish, too. I've been tipped off—you're in love with that cop—Baxter. Get him—on the 'phone—an' have him beat it here. I've something to tell him before I pass out. Quick—'phone him!"

Bettina Moore rose swiftly and crossed to a table on which the telephone stood. In a few seconds she was in touch with the Police Department.

"Give me Captain Baxter," she called. "It's urgent!"

She was put through to Baxter's office, and in a few brief sentences told him what had happened. Secrecy was no longer possible. The fatal gun-duel in her house must end in a complete revelation of the circumstances.

"I'll be over right away," said Baxter, when she had finished, and, hanging up the receiver, she turned back to Farley.

"Betty," he said weakly, "I want a favour you once did me. Remember—that time you hid me from the cops? It was a long while ago, and—you didn't know I was a crook then. Well, I'm gonna—tell Baxter everything—tell him it was me as got Jim Moore into his first jam and turned him crook. An' I'm gonna tell him that you—that you never was one of our mob—that you was always on the square and never did hold with my racket. It's the least I can do, Betty."

Fifteen minutes later the police-car swung into the drive of the Moore's home, and as it drew up at the front door Baxter saw a suspicious-looking character slinking through the grounds. He was the ruffianly Slug, and the captain held him up at the point of a gun.

Baxter then entered the house, driving Slug before him, and, on being admitted, made his way straight to the room in which Farley lay dying. On

(Continued on page 28.)

A young man inherits an old house and at once strange things begin to happen—behind everything hovers the shadow of a limping man. Starring Franklin Dyall.



CREeping SHADOWS



Tinker's Revel.

A WOMAN'S scream rang through the old house.

One moment she had been playing the piano with apparent unconcern, and the next she was on her feet staring at the panelling of the room with horrified eyes; then she screamed and ran blindly from the drawing-room.

And from the panelling came a shuffling noise like someone dragging a chain. The sound died slowly away; silence, and then a babble of voices from people hurrying towards the drawing-room.

Quite a crowd poured into the room, and they stared round, trying to denote anything unusual. Eight people, and all are worthy of description, because they were to look askance at each other within the next few hours.

The grey-haired man of fifty with the well-cut blue suit, dark cravat, and soldierly appearance was Sir Edwin Paget. His clean-shaven face was lined, but not from worry, as Sir Edwin always looked on the bright side of life. A kindly man, who had never experienced undue worry, and had been blessed with a splendid wife and a beautiful daughter.

Lady Paget was a white-haired, buxom woman, a year younger than her husband. She was still very good-looking, and her face was as free from wrinkles as that of a girl. She wore a travelling dress of blue serge, and did not look unduly distressed by the fact that the house seemed to be haunted.

The tall, fair-haired girl with the slim figure, soft skin, and smiling blue eyes so resembled her mother that sometimes people, for a joke, called them sisters. She was wearing a sports outfit of cream and buff, and her eyes were dancing with excitement. A healthy, athletic young woman, who could give any man a good game at tennis and could ride the fiercest of horses. Gloria was a typical sporting English girl.

By her side was a dark-haired young man with a well-knit body, a strong chin, and alert brown eyes. Brian Nash, the new owner of Tinker's Revel, stood there with clenched fists as if ready to do battle with an enemy. Seeing

nothing, he turned for explanation to the two people behind him.

Mrs. Hoyt was rather too well-dressed, and, though she looked young, a close study of her features would have revealed that her beauty and youth were mainly due to the aids of beauty parlours. The type of woman who does not reveal her age, and who is always inclined to be gushing.

"I was playing the piano." She spoke on the high note of hysteria. "Suddenly I stopped as I heard a noise, then I heard a weird clanking noise, and it sounded like someone walking, but not properly."

The middle-aged man behind her watched his wife from narrowed eyes. A touch of the Spaniard about Peter Hoyt, and though the eyes were rather close, he seemed a very decent fellow, very much in love with his beautiful wife.

"Olga," he said, "are you sure you weren't dreaming?"

"Of course I wasn't dreaming!" she flashed at him. "It was behind that panelling."

"Tinker's Revel is very old," spoke a solemn voice, and Sparrow, the butler, gave a respectful bow. "They say that this place was the haunt of smugglers, and that secret passages are hidden all over the house and grounds. I would respectfully suggest that Mrs. Hoyt heard a mouse, or perhaps some old bricks—"

"Do mice wear chains?" Mrs. Hoyt retorted.

"Ha, ha! Mice wear chains—that's good!" guffawed Sir Edwin. "Bet I know one woman who would like to see 'em manacled." He grinned at his wife, then turned to Brian. "Well, my boy, you seem to have inherited a spooky old place."

"Sparrow's right about smugglers," stated Brian, walking slowly along the panelling and tapping with his knuckles. "I haven't been here since I was a kid, but I remember my uncle telling me some tales that made my hair stand on end. Smugglers, desperate men, soldiers in hiding. We're some miles out of Canterbury, and to the east lies marsh country and the sea—an ideal spot for smugglers in the old days.

Uncle told me that our family made all their money by smuggling brandy and silks, but he was a bit of a tale-teller. I never came here again, as my mother quarrelled with him, and he swore he did not want to see his sister again."

"Yet he left you this fine old place?" The question was asked by the eighth member of the party—a short, thick-set, sandy-haired young man with rather fierce blue eyes. "Wonder he didn't leave his money to a dog's home."

"Would have done if he hadn't died unexpectedly—groggy heart." Brian shrugged his shoulders. "Left no will, and I was next-of-kin, except for a younger—" He did not finish what he was going to say. "Paul, this panelling sounds hollow."

Paul Tegle grinned at Gloria, then joined Brian Nash. Both tapped the panelling, whilst the Hoyts watched in a nervous, expectant manner.

"Seems hollow," admitted Paul. "When I've got settled I'll have the panelling down," decided Brian. "At any rate, I think it was only a rat or some loose bricks, and I suggest we go back to the fire in the lounge."

"Hear, hear!" seconded Sir Edwin. "I hate spooks; besides, I've got something I've been itching to get off my chest—I loathe speeches."

Solemnly the party trooped back to the lounge, where Sparrow begged to be excused.

"Mabel and Agnes have gone out, sir," he said to the new master. "It was their evening, and they're in Canterbury. I did not know you were coming down so soon, sir, and servants are very difficult. They would not give up the evening, and, I'm afraid, sir, September 19th, 1931,

we shall not see them till the morning. But I've got everything in hand, sir, and I will bring the sandwiches and the tea when you ring."

"Very good, Sparrow," Brian nodded, and, when the butler had gone, laughed. "I took over this place a fortnight ago and hired Sparrow about a week since. He's as solemn as an owl."

"And now for the announcement." Sir Edwin tucked his thumbs into his waistcoat and beamed at everybody. "Brian has invited you all down here for a preliminary house-warming, and I have decided that it is an auspicious occasion to announce the engagement of my dear daughter Gloria to Brian. I can't say how pleased I am that—"

The news of the engagement affected Paul Tegle strangely. His face was contorted for a moment as if with rage or disappointment, and only with an effort did he manage to smile at Brian, whom he had known ever since school-days. Both loved Gloria, but Brian did not know of his friend's infatuation—perhaps Gloria had guessed. Paul had not felt his financial position was good enough to offer marriage to the wealthy Gloria Paget, and now it was too late.

After the usual round of congratulations, Brian rang for Sparrow, who seemed strangely perturbed when he brought the sandwiches.

"I think I heard noises, sir," he stated respectfully. "I think some more stones must have fallen down in that panel."

"Never mind, Sparrow, I'll look into it in the morning—the days of ghosts are dead," Brian did not want his friends to get scared. "I think we'll have in the port." He noticed that Peter Hoyt was studying the huge painting of a soldier on the lounge wall near the fire.

Mrs. Hoyt, with a whisper to Lady Paget that she would take some aspirin for a headache, went out with the butler. The rest of the party studied the painting.

"That is supposed to be a Rembrandt," announced Brian. "Worth oodles of boodle if genuine—and about fourpence if a fake! Supposed to be a great, great ancestor—fine looking chap."

"What's that bell hanging near the picture?" asked Peter Hoyt. "Funny place for a bell."

"That's the bell of doom," chuckled Brian. "I remember uncle telling me about it as a kid. It is a sort of body-guard to the picture and rings when anything dire threatens this house."

"What a quaint idea!" cried Gloria. "Have you ever heard it ring, Brian?"

"Never, and don't suppose I ever shall," was his laughing answer. "It must be all rusty now, and—"

But what he might have added will not be recorded because suddenly and unexpectedly the bell of doom moved and rang three times.

A hush of superstitious fear descended on the lounge.

Shots in the Night.

It was Brian who saved a panic by blaming a draught for making the bell ring. It was all nonsense, because often it jingled on a windy day.

"Phew, I could do with a breath of air," Paul Tegle wanted to be alone with his thoughts. "Think I'll take a sharp walk down the lane to the cross-roads."

"And I'll come with you," decided Peter Hoyt. "Fresh air might clear away the spooks!"

Why did Peter Hoyt, as he went to put on his hat, give Sparrow—hovering in the hall—a deliberate wink? Why did Sparrow nod back as if he understood that signal?

September 19th, 1931.

Half an hour later they returned to the house to report that it was raining and blowing a gale.

"Went as far as Copp's Corner," explained Hoyt. "Any more weird doings?"

Brian smiled at Gloria's father. "We've decided that we're all far too jumpy and that Tinker's Revel is a very ordinary old-fashioned place. Nothing out of the ordinary ever happens here, and—"

The lounge door opened and Sparrow appeared.

"Did you ring, sir?" "We didn't ring," Brian was perplexed. "You heard the bell?"

"Yes, sir, I'm sure someone rang," insisted the butler.

"I must have an architect to look this place over," Brian frowned as he feared all these petty irritations would spoil the house party and he especially wanted Sir Edwin and Lady Paget to enjoy themselves. "By the way, Sparrow," Brian switched to a new topic. "Where's Sandel?"

"The chauffeur is out in the grounds," was the solemn reply. "He thought he saw someone moving down by the bushes. Perhaps it might be a poacher, sir, as I've been told that a raiian on a fish is a certain trap for pheasants and down by the Dell Copse I saw a number of birds."

"My word, Brian, this is a place," Lady Paget drew nearer the fire. "What with noises, bells, falling bricks and poachers! Whatever next shall we—"

A shot rang out from the gardens. "Good heavens!" Brian rushed to the window. "Someone must have spotted Sandel. Ah." He opened the french windows. "Here he comes—now we shall know."

Sandel was rather shame-faced; he was an earnest, very keen young man who hoped one day to own a garage.

"I can't abide these 'ere poachers, sir," he explained. "Mister Sparrow told me how he'd seen something down by the Dell, so I took that old rabbit gun. Of course, I never expected to see anyone and when it began to rain I thought about turning in and started for the house. Then something darted from behind a bush to another bush and I thought I was dreaming. I had half a mind to fire at the bush when the figure appeared again and I gave a yell. 'Here, what's the game?' I cried, and when the man limped off I put a shot close to his heels. They won't be no poachers round here for a bit, sir, but I'm sorry if I disturbed you."

"Not at all, not at all," approved Sir Edwin. "Very commendable conduct, should have done the same myself; hope you winged the fellow. Mary," this to his wife. "I think a little whisky would do my cold a lot of good."

"Did you say the man limped?" asked Brian of his chauffeur.

"Yes, sir, he wore a dark cloak and seemed to lug the ground," Sandel was enjoying his tale. "Kind of ghost-like he was—this limping man."

"Oh, send him away, Brian," came the petulant cry of Mrs. Hoyt. "I think it's dreadful all this talk of limping men and nasty ringing bells."

"Hang around for a bit with that gun," Brian gave Sandel a knowing glance. "Don't fire unless you can help it, but if you see any more shadows or figures come and find me."

"Very good, sir," Sandel went back into the gardens, and Brian closed the french windows. "Phew, I think I'll join you, Sir Edwin, in a small drink.

How about you, Paul, and you, Peter?"

"Great notion," decided Peter Hoyt. "I suppose, Paul, you wouldn't care for a game of billiards afterwards? I sort of feel I could enjoy a bit of fun. What with bells and—"

The ringing of the telephone in the study made all of them jump and catch their breath.

Brian laughed. "Wonder who the blazes that can be?" Sparrow appeared.

"A gentleman wishes to speak to you on the 'phone, sir." He bowed to his master. "He says it's important."

Brian, with apologies to Lady Paget, hurried off. Gloria picked up an illustrated paper.

"I would open the page at a picture of Satan amongst a lot of nasty flames!" She held up the colourful plate for all to see. "Hope that isn't a bad sign," she smiled at her father. "Your hand looks quite shaky, daddy."

"Nothing of the sort," cried Sir Edwin. "I nearly spilt some whisky. Well, Brian, what's the latest?"

Brian was all smiles as he came into the room.

"Great news, Lady Paget!" he told them all. "That was an old pal of mine who has just landed at Dover from the continent and wants to know if he can spend the night here as he need not go to London for a day or so. I told him I was delighted. You'll like him—Disher's a charming man."

"Disher," Peter Hoyt cried. "I seem to have heard that name somewhere before."

"He's the Disher," chuckled Brian. "The famous criminal investigator."

Mrs. Hoyt exchanged a quick and startled glance with her husband, who fingered his chin in a nervous fashion.

"I'm glad your friend is coming here, Brian," Gloria slithered an arm through that of her lover's. "He'll fairly revel in all this mystery." She screwed up her delightful chin. "I wish it wasn't raining, Brian. We might have had a walk. I wonder if it is still raining hard or just drizzling?"

Gloria walked to the french windows and peered forth.

"Oh, Brian, the moon has come out; it's quite nice!" she cried. "Let's take a walk before—O-oh!"

"Whatever's the matter?" demanded Brian, as he heard Gloria's agitated cry.

"There's a man in the garden!" came her quick answer. "Oh, Brian, he's coming in here!"

They gazed at the french windows with horror as Gloria slowly backed away with hands held against her blanched cheeks.

The Murder at Copp's Corner.

BRIAN NASH flung open the windows.

A smiling man in a much-stained old macintosh and carrying a spanner stepped over the ledge. He twirled a sandy moustache and beamed at the company.

"Evening, ladies and gents!" He nodded to Lady Paget. "Excuse me disturbing you: I've had a break-down at Copp's Corner. My little bus has flopped out, but a wee drop of petrol would soon put her on her legs again." He waved a spanner towards the grounds. "Got lost in a winding drive, and, seeing this yere light, I took the liberty of walking across the lawn. I'd be mighty obliged for a spot of gas."

"I'll ring for Sparrow to send down to the garage." Brian felt like heaving a few home truths at the man for scaring his friends.

"And might I be allowed to 'phone?" hopefully hinted the motorist. "My name's Hawkins, and I'm working for a garage in Canterbury, and they might think I've pinched the bus."

"Sparrow shall take you to the 'phone." Brian turned as the butler appeared. "Take this gentleman to the 'phone in the study and get him a tin of petrol up from the garage."

"Very good, sir." "Thanks, mister," Mr. Hawkins beamed affably. "Do the same for you one of these days. Lead on, Macduff."

"What a queer motor man," cried Lady Paget, when the door had shut. "I think he's been drinking, Brian."

Brian brightened visibly when three boots from a motor horn sounded.

"That's old Disher," he exclaimed. "I'll go and let him in."

"A most disturbing evening," Sir Edwin sipped his whisky. "I hope we shan't have any more bother. Ah, now we shall see a real sluth!"

Maurice Disher was a tall, quiet-spoken, refined type of man. He wore very plain, good clothes, and seemed like any ordinary individual; he was clean-shaven, dark-haired, lean and about forty years of age. Sir Edwin and Lady Paget liked him at once. The crime investigator showed no sign of any undue interest when he shook hands with Peter Hoyt and bowed to Olga Hoyt.

"Glad you're here," Sir Edwin cottoned on to Disher. "This house is haunted. I reckon you're in for a busman's holiday."

Whereupon Disher insisted upon Brian telling him all that had happened. He showed marked interest in the Rembrandt, and when Sparrow and Mr. Hawkins appeared he almost registered surprise. Even Brian noted the way Sparrow suddenly drew back at sight of the detective.

"The telephone is out of order, sir," Sparrow quickly regained his poise.

"We can get no reply, and I regret to say that all the petrol cans have been emptied."

"What's that?" gurgled Brian. "Someone poured away my petrol?"

"Y e p , and I reckon someone's cut your telephone wire," chuckled Mr. Hawkins. "I wonder if there are any burglars around?"

Lady Paget nearly went into hysterics at the idea, and would have done so if there had not come a thundering on the front door.

"Go and see who it is," Brian almost snarled the words at Sparrow. "Tell whoever it is to go and boil themselves!"

What a surprise when Sparrow, very frightened, returned with a police-inspector.

"My name is Potter—Inspector Potter." The man of the Force fixed them with steely glances. "I want to ask a few questions, please." He moistened his lips and

produced a notebook. "Down in the copse near Copp's Corner a man has been shot in the back—murdered!"

Lady Paget went off in a dead faint.

The Dummy Bookcase.

PAUL DISHER had at once set to work to unravel the tangled skein.

He took charge of the proceedings, explained to Inspector Potter who he was, and asked everybody to remain in the lounge till he came back. One action of his completely surprised the company.

"Mr. Hawkins," said the investigator, "can I rely upon you to see that no one leaves the house?"

"You may," Hawkins spoke in changed, crisp accents. "I might have known you would have seen through this get-up."

"Why have Scotland Yard sent you down here?" asked Disher.

"Just to watch the movements of a certain man," was the answer. "Sparrow, you'd better stay right where you are."

When Disher had gone off with the inspector, everybody wanted to know the mystery about Sparrow, but the Scotland Yard man would not say much.

"My name's Cable, and Sparrow here knows me," he said grimly. "His references must have been faked. Maybe I can tell you more when Disher gets back. I don't quite get the angle on this shooting."

"I'm not a killer," Sparrow quite lost his suave manner. "I know nothing about this murder at Copp's Corner!"

Disher was not gone more than half an hour, during which time everybody sat and looked at each other. Every-

body watched Sparrow to see if he were going to make a break for liberty, but the late butler seemed cowed and sullen.

The two detectives had a consultation, and the result was a curt order to Sparrow to stand up.

"Cable is taking Sparrow into Canterbury presently," explained Disher. "I think we've cleared up one small mystery."

"His references seemed all right to me," grumbled Brian. "What was his great idea?"

"That picture"—Disher pointed to the Rembrandt. "Cable rather thinks he was in league with someone else." For a moment his amused gaze rested on the Hoyts. "But that remains to be proved. We shall know more in the morning." His smile was reassuring. "I'm not the host, Brian, but I would like to suggest that the ladies retire. It must have been a tiring evening."

"Yes, and I'm locking my door," Lady Paget shuddered. "Come to bed, Edwin."

"In a few minutes, my dear." Sir Edwin eyed the decauter. "I must help lock up, now that Sparrow fellow has gone. I knew that chap was a crook—I always can tell 'em."

A white streak of forked lightning and a heavy clap of thunder did nothing to make Tinker's Revel more peaceful. Disher and Sir Edwin went to lock round the drawing-room and kitchens, whilst Brian tackled the study and lounge. Peter Hoyt and Paul Tegle acted as escort to the ladies, who were scared to go upstairs alone.

Brian was in his study. He was very angry that all these strange happenings should have upset his house-party. He had tried to pump his friend about the man murdered at Copp's Corner, but Disher was very reticent. All the crime investigator would say was that the murdered man was an American and looked like a gunman.

Deep in his own thoughts, Brian did not hear a faint click or see the bookcase near the fireplace swing open and reveal a black hollow in the wall.

A bowed figure crept out and with crooked fingers moved silently towards Brian. But the most amazing thing of all was that the mysterious newcomer was the living image of Brian.

A sudden spring forward and steel-like fingers were round Brian's throat. He tried to cry out, but the throttling pressure stifled all noise. The assailant forced Brian backwards and, with a tremendous effort, lugged his victim through the opening.

Slowly the dummy bookcase swung



"I was lying helpless when a light was flashed in my face."

back into place. A dull crash sounded from behind the bookcase. Brian and his counterpart were engaged in a desperate struggle.

Minutes passed, and then came the voice of Disher, calling: "Brian! Brian!"—and the reply of Sir Edwin that the lad must be in the study.

The bookcase swung open, and Brian Nash, whose face was badly bruised, crawled through the opening, jerked to the bookcase, staggered towards the desk, and then appeared to collapse in a heap.

Sir Edwin gave a yell of fright when he saw the motionless figure on the carpet, and his urgent call brought Disher. Water soon brought life back to the young man.

"Came over suddenly giddy," Brian's voice seemed husky. "Must have fallen and hit my head against the desk. Not been feeling too fit lately."

"I didn't know you had been queer," said Sir Edwin. "Gloria never told mother and I that you were seedy."

Brian took another gulp of water. Disher rubbed his chin and frowned.

"Sir Edwin, you'd better help Brian to his room," Disher decided. "I'm going to stay around here for a spell."

"I'll stay with you," said Brian.

"You'll go to bed," Disher walked to a table and pointed to a chess-board. "This will keep me amused. I'll work out a few problems while waiting for something more exciting to happen."

"How folk can waste their time on chess I can't imagine," grumbled Brian, and clasped his head. "Guess I'll take a drop of something before I go to bed."

"And I'll join you, Brian," chuckled Sir Edwin. "Then we'll get Gloria to bathe that bruise."

"No, no, it's nothing," Brian poured out a liberal dose. "Well, here's to a quiet night!"

Disher stared ruminatingly after Sir Edwin and Brian as they ascended the stairs. Why did he follow them up and watch them along the corridor, then come back to the study and set out the chess-men? It was a long time before he made any effort to move any of the pieces.

After a few moves he got up and placed the ladder for the bookcase against the wall, and climbed up to look at the bell of doom. He found something that pleased him, for he gave a quiet chuckle. Back he toddled once more to his chess.

What had the murder at Copp's Corner to do with Tinker's Revel, if anything? Paul Tegle and Peter Hoyt had gone for a walk to Copp's Corner—did they know anything? He decided that the clue afforded by the Rembrandt cleared Hoyt of any part in the murder; but what of Paul Tegle, a one-time admirer of Gloria's?

"A jealous, hot-headed young man, but not the sort to shoot a person in the back," decided Disher, communing with his thoughts. "Potter found the pistol that did the murder in these grounds—yes, I'll only tell Cable about that until I know a bit more. That seems to indicate that the murderer is somewhere mighty close. Is the murderer in this household? And what the blazes was Chicago Joe, who did five years in the Tombs for robbery with violence, doing down here in Kent? Who would shoot him? An enemy—someone he knew in the States! There must be a link to all this—but where?"

Once during the night the crime investigator went to the window to watch the lightning. Distinctly he saw, near a great oak, the shrouded figure of a man.

Almost he decided to go after the September 19th, 1931.

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follow; but as he watched the figure disappeared, and the next flash showed the man at the far end of the lawn. He walked with a limp.

The next morning heralded a glorious summer day. Disher was dozing over his chess-men when Gloria woke him.

"Hallo, you're up early! Pleasant night?" he greeted her. "I think I've solved one or two small problems, but nothing great. You look worried, my child."

"I think that bruise has driven Brian crazy," Gloria decided to speak frankly to the man who was his friend. "He has actually decided to sell Tinker's Revel after promising to live here with me."

"What!" gasped Disher, genuinely startled.

"I met him arm-in-arm with the Hoyts," cried Gloria. "Had hardly a word to say to me, except that he'd sold Tinker's Revel for ten thousand to Peter Hoyt, and that he would be leaving after breakfast to settle the deal. Not a word of apology or explanation of his strange action. He told me only yesterday that never would he sell Tinker's Revel, because it had belonged to his family for generations. That blow seems to have in one night changed him."

"Changed?" Disher started to his feet. "By gad, I believe you're on the scent! Where is Brian, Miss Paget?"

"In the study with the Hoyts," was her answer. "But I don't see what you mean." She stared at him in perplexity. "You think that the blow has—"

"Come with me, young lady!" Disher took her arm. "And don't say anything unless I give you a key."

Brian Nash frowned when Disher and Gloria appeared.

"I've got some business with Mr. and Mrs. Hoyt," he complained. "If you'll give us a few minutes more we'll be through. I'm selling Tinker's Revel."

"A very sound idea," approved the crime investigator. "You remember that when you and I were in Canada you saw a house at Quebec you said was just like Tinker's Revel? You remember, don't you?"

"Oh, sure I do," was the answer. Brian seemed ill-at-ease. "If you would excuse me, old boy, I'd like—"

"Remember how I wanted to go spinning for trout, and how you fished me out when I fell in?" Disher took an easy-chair. "Remember how we went camping together and I tried to teach you chess?"

"Never played chess in my life," Brian sneered the words. "Now, if you and Gloria would excuse me, I—"

"Why are you selling Tinker's Revel?" the crime investigator shot out the question.

"That's my business!" Brian snapped back. "I'll thank you not to meddle in this business. If I choose to sell Tinker's Revel to my old friends the Hoyts, I don't see what business—"

"Oh, Brian, how could you?" wailed Gloria. "You told me you would never part with this lovely old manor."

"Well, I've changed my mind," Brian seemed sullen. The Hoyts looked anxiously at each other.

"You mean you've changed!" Disher's voice became suddenly harsh.

"It was Brian who fell in and a lumberman who got him out of the river. I never went to Canada, and it was you, Brian, who first taught me how to play chess. Yet you don't play chess!"

In a flash a gun appeared and Gloria gave a scream of fright.

"Stay where you are!" snarled Brian. "Not a move, or I'll croak you,

(Continued on page 25.)

A fearless young fireman invents a fire-fighting machine, but a fiendish enemy does everything to steal the plans and rob the hero of the girl he worships. A grand new serial of breathless suspense and thrilling drama. Starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.

HEROES of the FLAMES



READ THIS FIRST.

While en route with his comrades to the scene of a fire, Bob Darrow, of the San Francisco Brigade, saves the life of a boy who falls in front of one of the monster engines.

Later he calls on James Madison, head of a chemical company, to whom he puts up an idea for a patent fire-extinguisher. Madison is not interested, and Bob leaves disappointed, after meeting Dan Mitchell, a shady promoter who is befriending Madison for his own ends.

That afternoon Bob rescues June Madison from a fire in her father's office, then learns that the boy he had saved from the wheels of the fire engine was Madison's son, Jackie.

In gratitude, Madison helps Bob to perfect his invention, the Darrow Fire Bomb. But Dan Mitchell is anxious to sell Madison an extinguisher of his own, and to discredit Bob he sends a hireling to "doctor" the fireman's invention with a deadly explosive.

To test the Darrow Fire Bomb, an old shed in the Madison grounds is set ablaze. Only when the fire is at its height does Bob discover that young Jackie is trapped in the hut.

Bob dashes into the shed, and is himself imprisoned by the flames. He is attempting to batter his way out when Madison throws one of the doctored bombs!

Now Read On.

Trickery.

THE walls of the hut had never been particularly solid, and the fire had weakened them still more when Bob gathered Jackie in his arms and made his desperate bid to break out of the ramshackle building.

His shoulder smashed into the rotten timbers in the very instant that Madison

EPISODE 3.

"THE FIRE TRAP."

threw the grenade. The woodwork splintered under the impact of his charge, and he plunged through the mass of brush that had been piled against the shed and then fired by his own hand.

He was scarcely clear of the blazing structure when the fire-bomb struck it. There was a blinding flash and a terrific detonation, and the hut was blown sky-high in a thousand fragments.

The concussion hurled Bob to the ground; but, dazed as he was by the force of the explosion, the young fireman had the presence of mind to shield Jackie with his own body. For it was with the boy's safety and not his own that he was mainly concerned.

Debris rained down on Bob. He could hazard no guess at the cause of the explosion. He only knew that some accident had occurred to mar his experiment, and that pieces of flaming wood were falling all around him.

The last echoes of the report died away, and the scene cleared.

Bob struggled slowly to his feet, lifting Jackie with him, and then, reeling towards a tree and setting the boy in a fork of it, he looked in the direction where the hut had stood.

It had been blotted out of existence, only a few charred remains marking the site it had occupied. The fire had certainly been overcome, but not in the manner that Bob Darrow had intended, for had he acted with less promptitude neither he nor Jackie would have been alive to see the havoc which had been created.

Meanwhile, some distance away, June and her father were crouching on their knees, panic-stricken and horrified by what had taken place. It was only when they rose that they discovered to their intense relief that Jackie and Bob were safe.

"Look!" Madison breathed, pointing towards them. "Look, June!"

June ran forward, her father stumbling after her. As she reached the forked tree she flung her arms around Jackie almost hysterically.

"Jackie," she sobbed, "thank Heaven you're safe!"

"Aw, I'm all right!" the boy answered stoutly. "Say, lemme go, sis, will you? I'm not a little girl. I can take harder bumps than that. Quit fussin' over me, will you?"

Madison came up and gripped Bob by the hand. The fireman was in his shirt-sleeves, and had not escaped without one or two burns, while his clothes were blackened and scorched. He was scarcely aware of his hurts, however, counting them slight enough.

"Darrow," breathed Madison, "how can I ever thank you for getting my boy out of that death-trap?"

"Never mind about that now, Mr. Madison," Bob rejoined. "What blew up that shed, anyway?"

Madison answered him in a hoarse tone.

"When I saw you turn back to Jackie's rescue," he explained, "I picked up one of your extinguishers and threw it at the hut, hoping to put out the fire. The explosion followed immediately."

Dan Mitchell had drawn somewhat nearer, moving from behind a gnarled oak-tree, to which he had jumped for shelter when Madison had flung the

fire-bomb. His satisfaction at the apparent failure of the experiment was not complete, since he realised that the whole affair had served to increase the debt of gratitude which the Madisons already owed Bob Darrow.

Bob's voice reached the shifty promoter's ears.

"But I don't understand, Mr. Madison," the fireman was saying. "I'll admit that a slight explosion should occur when one of the fire-grenades is thrown. But it's an entirely harmless explosion, and I doubt whether the force of it would knock over a matchbox. There's nothing in my chemicals to cause the complete destruction of that hut."

Madison pursed his lips.

"Well, I took the bomb from that tray you brought from the laboratory," he muttered.

Bob strode over to the table on which the rack containing the grenades had been placed. He lifted one of the glass receptacles and uncorked it, sniffing its contents suspiciously. Then he held it up to the light and scrutinised the liquid which had been poured into it, and finally he turned up the neck of it and moistened the end of his thumb with a few drops from it.

"Say, daddy," young Jackie declared, "something must have happened to that stuff after Bob made it in the laboratory."

Madison shook his head. It was plain that he had been bitterly disappointed by the test, and was under the impression that it had proved Bob's invention to be utterly worthless, as well as dangerous.

"Nothing could have happened to it, sonny," he mused.

"Then how was it that when the dog-kennel caught fire this morning Bob put it out in a jiffy?" the boy argued.

Madison shrugged.

"Well, if anything did happen to it," he said, "Darrow will find it out. That extinguisher seems to be about the only thing he can think of just now, and—"

He was interrupted by a shout from Bob, and turned to see the fireman hurrying towards him, clutching the uncorked fire-bomb which he had been examining.

"What's wrong, Darrow?" Madison demanded.

"Someone has tampered with this mixture," Bob told him quickly.

"There's nitro in it! You know what that means."

"Nitro!" Madison exclaimed, "Good heavens! No wonder we had an explosion!"

Bob looked at him earnestly.

"Mr. Madison," he said, "I want you to understand that what happened just now was no fault of mine. I want you to understand that it was caused by no flaw in my invention. I've got complete faith in the extinguisher, sir, and all I ask is another chance to prove its value to you. I'll have to scrap the 'doctored' contents of the remaining grenades, and make up a fresh supply of the true ingredients. Fortunately, I have a formula, and I can be ready for a fresh test in a few days. And, believe me, I'll take every precaution to see that the grenades aren't tampered with again."

"Very well, Darrow," Madison returned. "I guess the least I can do is to stand by you. My laboratory is still at your disposal."

The Nightingale Club.

"YOUR move," said Fireman Pat Heeley to a comrade who had challenged him to a game of chess.

September 19th, 1931.

The other "smoke-eater" pondered long and deliberately, and then shifted one of his pieces tentatively. Fireman Pat Heeley glanced up at Battalion Chief Watson, who was looking on with amusement.

"He moved, sorr," said Pat, with more than a trace of Irish brogue, and then he proceeded to make a series of manoeuvres that swept the board clean.

Not far away two other men were discussing a subject that had no relation to a chess-board, excepting perhaps that one of them was the pawn of a masterly schemer who played his own deep game from a checkered background of shifty enterprises.

He had given the name of Thompson, and had asked to see Bob Darrow, and, with his first words to the young fireman, had broached the reason for his call.

Facing him now in the entrance to the station, Bob looked at the man curiously.

"How did you know I was working on a chemical fire-extinguisher?" he asked.

Thompson smiled an oily smile. He was a small, stout, suave individual with a deceptive air of being a prosperous business man.

"It's my business to know about things that there's money in," he mentioned.

"And I believe that your extinguisher will be a *big* money-maker."

"If it's successful," Bob murmured.

"Well, I happen to know that it worked once," Thompson stated.

"That's enough for me. All I want is an opportunity to talk this thing over with you."

Bob was interested. Of course, he reflected, Madison had first claim on his process. But in the possible event of his turning it down, this fellow Thompson might take it up. There was no harm in following up this interview, at any rate. At least, so Bob imagined.

"I'm off on Thursday night," he said to Thompson. "But, by the way, I'd like to be perfectly fair with you. Mr. Madison is interested in this chemical fire-extinguisher of mine, and I'm indebted to him for some assistance in perfecting it. Naturally, I'd like him to handle it if it promises any success."

"Don't worry about that, Darrow," Thompson rejoined. "I can probably come to some mutual agreement with Mr. Madison after I've talked it over with you. So we'll make it Thursday night, eh? And if you've no objection we'll combine business with pleasure. Nothing like talking business over a good dinner in cheerful surroundings. What do you say to meeting me at the Nightingale Club?"

"I don't believe I know it," Bob told him. "Where is it?"

Thompson wrote out the address for him. Bob did not know that it was a place with a somewhat ugly reputation, and, having agreed to meet Thompson there at nine o'clock on the evening of the following Thursday, saw his visitor off the premises.

Leaving the fire-station, Thompson took a street-car to a block of offices down-town, and half an hour later he might have been seen opening a door which bore the legend, "D. Mitchell. Investments," that simple word "Investments" covering a multitude of shady activities.

Mitchell was dictating a statement to a girl secretary, but the moment he saw Thompson he dismissed his employe and sent her into an adjoining room.

"Well," he said, as soon as he was alone with Thompson, "what's the news?"

"Mitchell," was the snug answer, "he fell for it like a ton of coals!"

"Did you fix it for the Nightingale Club?"

Thompson grinned.

"He'll be there Thursday night—with bells on."

"Good!" said Mitchell. "I'll have the Madisons there."

Thompson leaned over the counter of Mitchell's desk.

"Say," he drawled, "do the Madisons know that you *own* the Nightingale Club?"

"No," Mitchell rejoined curtly; "and they'd better not find out, either. They don't know I'm connected in any way with that kind of a joint. They sort of figure that I'm of independent means. Get me?"

"Oh, don't worry about me!" Thompson told him. "I'm speechless. But I ain't so sure of that girl Trixie you've been runnin' around with. She's mighty jealous, Dan, an' if she sees you there with another dame—"

"I'll take care of Trixie," Mitchell interrupted. "Now let's get down to business. I want to have everything cut and dried."

Thursday Night.

HAUNT of notorious characters, the Nightingale Club was packed on the evening of Bob Darrow's appointment.

Entering it by an unpretentious doorway in a back street, one suddenly found oneself in a bizarre restaurant. Dancing-girls provided entertainment on a polished strip of floor surrounded by small tables, and through a glitter of bright lights stuffed elliges of song-birds flashed overhead on concealed wires, cunningly symbolical of the club's title.

The habitués of the place were an unsavoury-looking crowd, but not all of those present were regular patrons. There was a sprinkling of sightseers who had merely come to study the types of humanity to be found there, and to thank the fates that they themselves were decent, law-respecting citizens.

It was in the guise of a curious sight-seer that Dan Mitchell had prevailed upon June Madison and her father to visit the place, and, seated with them at a table in a corner of the restaurant, he affected to deplore the surroundings.

"Yes, Dan," said Madison, "it's an interesting enough place, but a regular plague-spot, for all that. I notice, for one thing, that they don't abide by the prohibition laws. It's the kind of place, Dan, that the police ought to get their hands on."

"I agree with you heartily," lied Mitchell, and then turned his attention to June.

At a table in a kind of alcove on the other side of the room a man and two girls were sitting. The man was Thompson, and his companions, a blonde and a brunette, had been chosen for their attractiveness, though they were somewhat too heavily made-up.

The brunette was Trixie Farrell, that same Trixie in whom Dan Mitchell had been interested, though his infatuation for her had begun to wane ever since he had met June Madison.

Trixie was staring at the table occupied by Mitchell and the Madisons, and there was a tiny glitter in her dark eyes that betrayed resentment.

"Who's that baby-faced dame with Dan?" she demanded of Thompson.

Thompson fidgeted a trifle anxiously.

"Oh, that's Madison's daughter June," he returned, trying to sound casual.

The woman at his side bit her lip.

"So that's Mitchell's game!" she snapped. "Playing up to the old man to get the girl, huh?"

"No, Trixie—no!" Thompson pro-

tested impatiently. "Mitchell is after the old man. He wants to pawn off that phoney fire-extinguisher that he's been handlin', and if he can fool Madison with it he'll rake in a lotta money. Mitchell don't want the girl."

"Well, he'd better not!" Trixie Farrell said ominously. "Mitchell can't give me the run-around."

"Aw, cut it out, Trixie, will you?" put in the other girl. "You don't want to start anything now. We're here to help Mitchell, if we can. Aren't we, Tommie?"

"Atta girl!" Thompson rejoined. "We gotta all stick together."

It was at that precise moment that Bob Darrow entered the Nightingale Club, and, having left his hat and coat in the cloak-room, he crossed the threshold of the restaurant and stood looking around him uncertainly.

A waiter approached.

"Have you a table reserved, sir?" he asked Bob.

"Why, yes, I think so," Bob answered. "I'm to join a Mr. Thompson."

"Oh, yes, sir. This way, if you please."

The waiter led him to where Thompson and his companions were sitting, and as the stout man recognised Bob he rose to his feet with an exclamation.

"Oh, hallo, Darrow!" he said breezily. "Glad to see you. By the way, I'd like to have you meet two lady friends of mine. Mr. Darrow—Miss Georgia Robinson and Miss Trixie Farrell."

Bob shook hands and then sat down in a chair next to Trixie. The girl's petulant expression had quite gone now, and she leaned towards Bob smilingly.

"You know, Mr. Darrow," she told him, "we're going to have a perfectly wonderful time after you and Mr. Thompson get through with that big business deal."

Bob grinned awkwardly. He had not anticipated feminine company, and

somehow he felt ill at ease, though he could not have explained just why.

"It's rather embarrassing for me," he said, "because I—I feel as though I am sort of insinuating business into a very pleasant evening."

"Well, then, let's forget business for the meantime," Trixie suggested. "Have a drink, Mr. Darrow." And she poured out a glass of wine.

Bob shook his head.

"No, thanks," he said. "I don't drink."

Trixie endeavoured to persuade him, and while she was still pressing him to accept the glass, Dan Mitchell looked across and saw that Bob had arrived.

Mitchell spoke to Madison.

"There sure are a lot of queer people come to a place like this," he observed.

"Yes," said Madison grimly, "it's quite a melting-pot."

Mitchell glanced around him with apparent casualness, and then fixed his eyes on the table at which Bob had joined Thompson and the two girls.

"Why, isn't that young Darrow over there?" he exclaimed.

June and her father turned their heads quickly. Trixie was still attempting to coax Bob to take the wine, and there was something amorous about the manner in which she proffered the glass now. Dan Mitchell saw Madison purse his lips, and—what was even more to his liking—he detected an expression on June's lovely face that was akin to disillusionment. He knew then that the situation for which he had been secretly responsible had undermined the Madisons' regard for Bob, affecting the father's confidence in him, and the daughter's respect for him.

"I guess Darrow isn't so different from other men, after all," Dan Mitchell mused. "That is, where the ladies are concerned."

June said nothing; but her father spoke.

"I fancy you're right, Dan," he muttered. "I'm rather shocked to find him

here at all, and I certainly don't admire the company he seems to be keeping."

Meanwhile Bob was making tentative efforts to discuss business with Thompson, but he met with no success, the other man seeming to be bent on hilarity, and at length the young fireman announced that he must be returning to the station.

A few minutes after his departure June Madison suggested leaving, but Mitchell prevailed upon her to dance with him, and when he escorted her back to the table he found her father in conversation with a business acquaintance, whom he introduced as Fowler.

"Mr. Fowler is sightseeing, too," said Madison, "and thinks about as much of this place as I do."

"It's certainly my last appearance here," declared Fowler. "Oh, by the way, Madison, I hear you're promoting a new motor engine that promises to revolutionise the auto industry. That right?"

Madison nodded.

"Correct," he said; "and you can take it from me it's a wonder. I've had scientists working in co-operation with skilled engineers for some time past now, and this motor is going to make a stir."

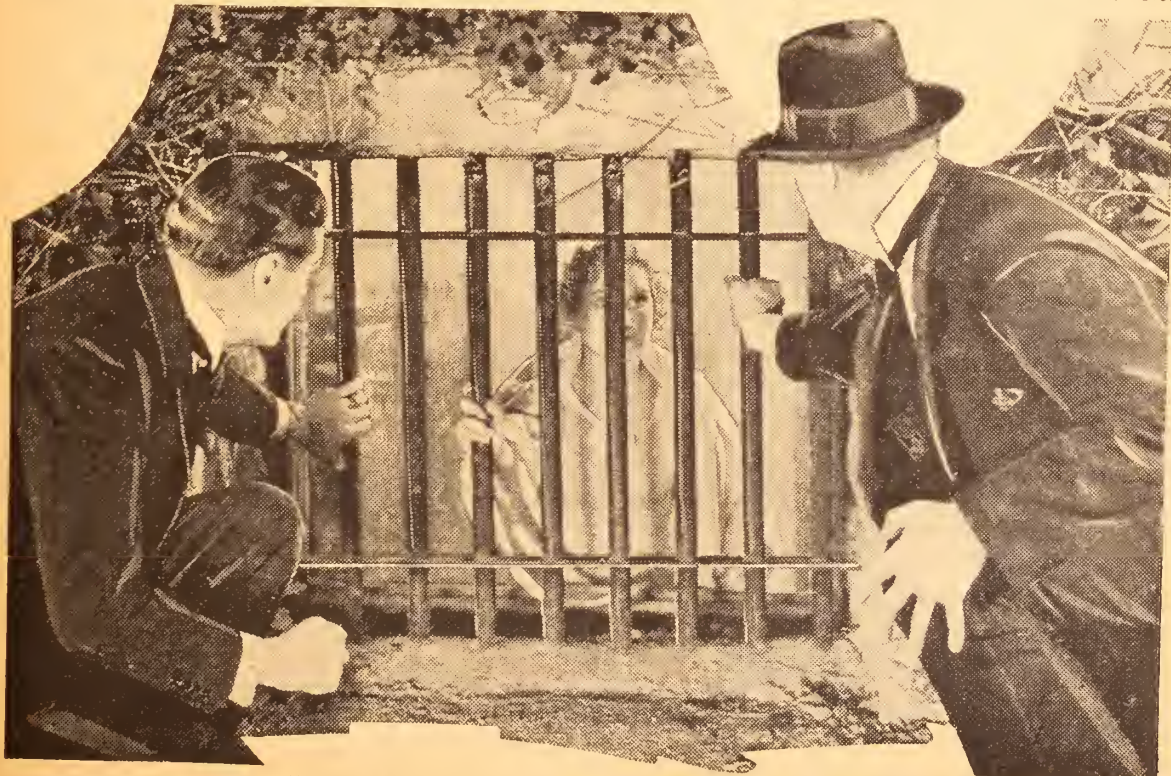
Mitchell turned to June.

"Your father seems in for a long discussion," he mentioned, "and this is your first visit to a night club. How would you like to see the inside of it before you go? It's forbidden ground to most people, but I happen to know the owner."

"Oh, it would be a novel experience!" June answered, and Mitchell repeated his suggestion to her father.

"Show her around, by all means," Madison agreed. "I'll wait for you in the car, June—after I've had a chat with Mr. Fowler."

Mitchell gave June his arm and escorted her along a corridor that led from the restaurant to a flight of steps which descended to a basement. Near



"Can't you get to that door?" Dan Mitchell jerked.

the foot of the steps was the doorway of a wine-cellar, stacked with barrels of illicit liquor, and Mitchell spoke to a man who was on guard there.

"The boss said I might show Miss Madison where the treasure was kept," he explained, with a wink that escaped June's notice.

The man at the doorway moved off, and Mitchell took June across the threshold.

"Well, there's the treasure," he said, indicating the casks, "and it's guarded like the United States Mint."

"Guarded?" June echoed. "From whom?"

Mitchell smiled. "From lots of people," he told her, "who would like to get their hands on those barrels. But they'd have a hard time getting in here. You see, the cellar is built like a bank vault. Take a look at that window over there. The iron bars on the outside of it are set in cement."

"Then the weird tales you read in the newspapers about hi-jackers and bootleggers are really true?" June asked.

"They certainly are," Mitchell answered.

June did not know that she was at that very moment in the presence of one of San Francisco's most active bootleggers. Nor did she dream that this cellar, built like a vault, was to be transformed by force of circumstances into a deadly trap.

The Outbreak.

TRIXIE FARRELL stood face to face with Spike Beldon in a private room behind the restaurant. Her face was white with temper, and it was with a fierce gesture that she struck a match and lit a cigarette.

"You heard me!" she said shrilly. "Go and tell Mitchell that I want to see him—and see him quick!"

One of Mitchell's most valued hirelings, Spike tried to reason with the woman.

"Listen, you!" he ground out. "Don't you get red-headed and spoil the whole game, or—"

Trixie snatched something from a table beside which she was standing. It was a whisky bottle and, like a fiend, she swung it up threateningly.

"You beat it and do as I tell you, Spike!" she screamed.

The gangster struck at her arm with the side of his hand, and the blow took her smartly on the wrist and sent the bottle flying out of her grasp. It burst against the wall, its contents drenching a curtain that decorated a window close to the spot where the bottle had been smashed.

Trixie clawed at Spike with her nails like a woman in a frenzy, but the gangster managed to seize her hands and hold her at bay.

"Listen, will yuh?" he appealed. "I'll go for Mitchell, but you gotta pipe down. If you lose your head an' spoil his plans there's liable to be trouble, I guess."

"Tell Mitchell I'm waiting for him here," Trixie said through clenched teeth.

Spike left her, and two or three minutes later he located Dan in the doorway of the wine cellar.

"Oh, Mr. Mitchell," he said, pausing on the steps, "may I see you a moment, please?"

Dan Mitchell turned his head. "Yes, surely." And, to June: "Pardon me."

He moved up the stairs to where Spike was standing.

"Trixie's on the rampage," the

gangster whispered, "and wants to see you right away. Thought I'd better tell yuh, for she don't seem in her right mind."

Mitchell's eyes narrowed dangerously. Then he glanced over his shoulder to where his fair companion was still inspecting the wine cellar.

"Oh, June," he called, "I'll be right back in a moment. Don't go away from here."

He hurried along the corridor to the room where Trixie was awaiting him. She was pulling viciously at a cigarette, but flung it away as he entered.

Neither she nor Mitchell noticed that the cigarette-butt, so carelessly thrown aside, fell among the folds of the curtain that had been soaked with whisky.

"Well, what's eating you?" snapped Mitchell.

"Plenty!" the girl retorted. "Maybe you thought I didn't see you dancin' with that Madison dame."

"What of it?" Mitchell said with an ugly scowl.

Trixie's eyes flashed. "I'll show you what of it!" she cried. "You can't give me the air for her and get away with it, Mitchell!"

He caught her by the arm, grasping her so fiercely that his fingers bruised her flesh.

"I'm telling you that you'd better watch your step," he grated harshly, "or I'll have you thrown out of here! Understand?"

"You will, will you?" the woman shrieked. "Let me go!" She began to strike at him with her free hand. "D'you hear me? Let me go, you pig!"

There was a violent scuffle, and Mitchell was compelled to use rough tactics to defend himself. The woman's tones rose still higher and still louder, Mitchell's low-pitched but angry voice breaking in on the abusive words that poured from her lips.

"Be yourself, confound you! What's the matter with you? Don't be a nut—"

"You pig! You dirty four-flusher! You talked a lotta bunk to me, an' I was fool enough to believe it—"

Spike slid into the room.

"What's the trouble, Mitch?" he jerked, holding himself in readiness to lend assistance.

"Come on, Spike!" Mitchell panted. "Help me to get this wild-cat out of here."

The gangster obeyed. Fighting and screaming in the arms of the two men, Trixie Farrell was dragged into the corridor and thence to a back door, through which she was hurriedly propelled.

Meanwhile, in the room where the "scene" between Mitchell and Trixie had taken place, the glowing cigarette-butt was burning into the spirit-soaked material of the window curtains.

A few thin wraiths of smoke rose from the silken folds at first, but it was not long before the inflammable spirit caught fire. In a moment the window was enveloped in a fierce blaze, a blaze that rapidly spread from the curtains to the oak-panelled wall, to the thick rugs on the floor, to the costly furniture.

Alone in the basement, June Madison ventured farther into the cobwebbed recesses of the wine cellar, reading the names on the various casks of bootleg liquor, and picturing the dark deeds of crime for which these barrels had been responsible.

The guard, whom Dan had accosted some time before, returned to his post at the cellar doorway. He glanced

inside, but failed to see June, who had passed out of sight behind a tall stack of kegs.

The guard presumed that Mitchell and his girl-friend had both gone upstairs again, and decided that he might as well fasten the cellar door. The restaurant would shortly be closing.

He pushed the door to and shot a heavy bolt. At that same instant he heard a panic-stricken cry from the corridor above.

"Fire! The joint's on fire! Everybody out! The place is on fire!"

The guard rushed up the stairs.

Fire-fighters to the Rescue.

BACK at the station, Bob Darrow was accosted by the battalion chief, in whom he had confided.

"Well, Darrow," Wilson said, "did you clinch the deal with that fellow Thompson?"

Bob shook his head.

"Not yet," he answered. "Thompson had a couple of girls with him. He seemed to be having too good a time to talk business. They were thinking of going on to another night-club when I left, and as a matter of fact it was all I could do to get away. I guess I'll turn in now, chief."

He made his way upstairs to the dormitory and slipped off his clothes. He was asleep shortly after his head touched the pillow, but he seemed to have been scarcely five minutes in bed when the ringing of the alarm bell aroused him.

Every man in the dormitory was stirring himself. Bed-covers were thrown back as the firemen sprang to the floor. In the space of a couple of minutes uniforms had been donned and the stalwarts of District Number Five were sliding down the poles to the engine-room where the fire-wagons stood—shining monsters of scarlet and brass.

Bob Darrow was one of the first to clamber aboard the leading engine, Pat Heeley sharing the distinction with him, and in thirty seconds less than the regulation three minutes the big trucks were surging forth into the street.

Engines and escapes stormed through the city, sirens wailing, bells clanging. Folk gathered on the sidewalks to watch their passing, and others leaned anxiously from bed-room windows and then gazed towards an ominous red glow that seemed to hover in the sky some distance away.

The Nightingale Club had flared up with a rapidity that was well-nigh incredible. But timber figured prominently in its scheme of interior decoration, and this factor was responsible for the swiftness with which the fire had spread.

Half an hour after the outbreak in that room where Trixie Farrell had quarrelled with Mitchell, the ground floor and the first floor were both ablaze.

Down in the wine-cellar June Madison remained ignorant of her danger for some time, for the basement was last to suffer. It was only when she moved to the barred window and saw people gathering outside that she realised something must be wrong. Then a whiff of smoke found its way into the cellar through the crevice under the door.

She guessed the reason for the commotion outside then, and with a stab of alarm she ran to the door. Alarm was succeeded by terror as she discovered that the door had been bolted on the

outside, and, rushing back to the window, she clutched at the bars in a frenzy of panic.

Only a few paces away stood her father. He had been waiting for her with the car when the fire had started, and now he was mingling with the crowds who came pouring out of the doomed night-club. With growing anxiety he scanned the hurrying passers-by in the hope of seeing his daughter among them, and, suddenly discerning Mitchell, he sprang towards the man.

"Is June out here?" Mitchell panted. "No," the older man jerked. "Where is she? Quick, man—where is she? Where did you leave her? You were with her last!"

Mitchell stared at him stupidly. "I left her in the store-room—downstairs," he faltered. "I was called away while I was showing her around. Then the fire started."

"Good heavens, Dan, didn't you go back and make sure that she was safe?" Madison cried.

"I thought she'd be out here—" Mitchell did not complete the sentence, for at that moment a girl's voice reached the ears of the two men. It was June's voice, and as they whipped round they caught sight of her pale face framed in the basement window.

With one accord they ran to the wall of the night-club and knelt down, so close to the girl that they could have touched her by reaching forward. She was standing on tiptoe, her fingers clenched on the bars that held her a prisoner.

"Daddy!" she sobbed. "Oh, daddy, get me out of here!"

"June," Madison cried, "why didn't you make your escape when you knew the building was on fire? The whole place is blazing now!"

"Can't you get to that door?" Dan Mitchell jerked, pointing across the cellar.

"It's bolted!" June answered frantically. "I'm trapped, Dan—trapped! The smoke's beginning to pour in under the door. Get help—quickly!"

"My little girl!" groaned Madison, in the voice of a man distracted, and he turned in the direction of the night-club entrance.

Mitchell guessed his intention and tried to hold him back. The two men were struggling when the fire-wagons from Number Five Station swerved into the street with a warning clamour of bells.

Helmeted figures in blue sprang from the trucks, and, running out the hoses and the escapes, made ready for the perilous work ahead of them. The battalion chief's special car drew up, and Wilson stepped out to superintend operations. He was giving a string of orders when he caught sight of Madison endeavouring to break away from Dan Mitchell and entered the burning building.

"Madison," jerked Wilson, "what's wrong? You can't go in there!"

"My daughter—" Madison began hoarsely, and, with that, a fireman who was running past pulled up short in his tracks.

It was Bob Darrow. "Mr. Madison," he gasped, "where's June?"

"Locked in the vault downstairs," cried Madison, fighting to free himself.

Bob's glance leapt to the cellar window, and he saw June. Behind her there was a background of flame, for the fire had eaten its way under the door

and was taking a hold on the stacked casks of spirit that lined the walls.

"Bob!" she called, recognising him. Few men could have resisted the direct appeal in that voice, and Bob Darrow never even hesitated. Wheeling, he made a rush for the blazing entrance of the night-club.

"Darrow!" the chief called. "Darrow, you can't go in there! Don't be a fool!"

But Bob did not heed him. Plunging into the flames, he fought his way to the steps leading down to the basement.

Burned and half-blinded, he found the hasement was a roaring furnace. The wooden staircase was enveloped in fire, and the paintwork on the steel door of the wine-cellar was blistered with the intense heat.

Bob drew the bolt and pressed against that door. It had jammed, and he had to use force to shift it. It stood firm against two assaults, but at the third attempt his shoulder hurled it open.

It flew wide and struck a pile of kegs. The barrels toppled, and then crashed to the floor. One or two of them splintered, and their contents spilled forth at Bob's feet, so that as he stumbled across the threshold his boots were spattered with the spirit and the strong fumes of it assailed his nostrils.

The accident had almost instantaneous consequences. The flames that had already found their way into the cellar swept across the spreading pools of bootleg liquor. There was a vivid flash like the flash of an explosion, and next moment, as Bob reeled on to where June was cowering, a fierce and steady blaze reared up between him and the doorway.

"Oh, Boh," June moaned, as he reached her side, "take me out of here!"

She swayed uncertainly, and he was just in time to catch her in his arms as she fell. Swinging her up, he spun round towards the door, but as he saw the inferno that the spirit from the shattered barrels had created he knew that the only way of escape was blocked.

The belt of fire that had risen by the door was impenetrable. No man could have entered it and lived long enough to pierce it, for, swift-spreading, it had already covered a wide section of the floor.

The heat drove Bob back to the window. He knew that he was trapped, and could only wait for the end, with June in his arms. That the end would not be long in coming he had no doubt, for the roof had already been affected by the flames on the floor above.

A blazing mass of timber fell at his feet.

(To be continued in another thrilling episode next week. By permission of Universal Pictures, Ltd., starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.)

"Creeping Shadows."

(Continued from page 20.)

Disher." He had reached the bookcase and must have touched some secret knob, for the bookcase swung open. "Curse you for a meddling fool!"

The bookcase shut with a metallic clang.

"Brian has gone mad!" moaned Gloria. "Oh, what shall we do?"

"Don't worry." Disher laid a comforting hand on her shoulder. "Ah, now we can get moving!" The sound of a car had taken him to the window. "Cable and a company of special men."

Cable did not waste time when he came into the study. A signal to his men and they lined up on either side of the Hoyts.

"In league with Sparrow," briefly explained the Scotland Yard man. "After that picture. Probably would have given Nash a dud cheque for house and grounds and then cleared off with the Rembrandt. What's your news, sir?"

"Quite a lot," Disher answered. "I tumbled to the Hoyts, and I'm pretty certain one of them left their fingerprints on that bell of doom. With some black thread they rang the bell, hoping to create a scare and get Brian to sell. We can deal with them later, so I suggest the boys take them away, because we've got a big job before us." He pointed to the bookcase. "There's a secret passage behind there, and only a few moments ago Brian Nash held us up with a gun and disappeared."

"Let him go," Gloria implored. "Far better to let him go—he must be out of his mind."

Disher made no answer. His thin fingers were feeling over the bookcase. "Ah, here's the secret knob," came his eager cry. "Now we'll search this secret passage. Be ready for emer-

(Continued on page 27.)



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RICHARD BARTHELMESS
as Francisco Delfino in the First
National Production, "Adios."

"THE TEXAS RANGER."

(Continued from page 10.)

Helen's gang at bay while the other concentrated their attack on the front of the ranchhouse.

"You hold 'em here," he said, "and I'll take care of that Ranger."

He had received a slight flesh wound in his shoulder, but he was determined at all costs to settle accounts with Jim. He made for the back door of the building, and, stealing close to it, shot away the lock and the bolts.

Jim heard, divined what was happening, and thrust Helen behind an open door between two rooms, then rushed to the back door; and as Taylor kicked it open he fired point-blank at the outlaw's head.

But his last cartridge had been used, and the trigger pulled on an empty chamber. He flung the useless weapon at Taylor's head.

Taylor dodged, but he did not succeed in dodging the terrific blow Jim aimed at him with his fist, and he went down with a crash on the concrete floor of the kitchen.

Dawn had begun to break some little time before, and now daylight was rapidly increasing in strength. From the farmyard came the mingled din of shouts and shooting, Matt Taylor raised himself painfully on an elbow and glared defiantly up at Jim. He reached furtively for the gun which had been knocked from his hand, but Jim, with a dexterous kick, sent it spinning across the floor.

"Come on!" he shouted, jerking his enemy to his feet. "If you've got any fight left in you, fight!"

With the snarl of a wild animal, Taylor hurled himself forward, clutching at Jim's throat, but Jim tore away the murderous hands, and, with a sudden effort, lifted Taylor up bodily and sent him somersaulting over a table.

The table went down on its side with him, but he crawled from beneath it, and, battered, dishevelled, and nearly spent, he made once more for his opponent.

But Jim's left fist came up with a terrific swing, caught Taylor under the chin, and sent him clean out through an open doorway into the passage, where he fell in a crumpled heap.

Silence followed—a silence that sent Jim running fearfully into the living-room. Helen had sunk into an easy-chair, her face very white, her right hand holding her left forearm, where a patch of crimson stained a grey sleeve.

"I'm—all right," she faltered with a wan smile. "It was the last shot—the Rangers are here!"

Jim flew to a window and looked out. The sudden silence was explained! A score of Rangers had arrived, and such of Taylor's men as had escaped crippling wounds were riding for dear life in all directions across the plains.

Sam Lanning had not ridden all the way to Sterling City, or even half the way. He had encountered Captain Edwards and a party of his men only a few miles beyond Bellington on their way to that unimportant little town because no word had come from Ranger Jim Logan, and no news could be gleaned of him in the neighbourhood by a man who had been detailed to find out what had become of him.

Jim was bandaging Helen's arm when Captain Edwards himself entered the ranchhouse by the open back door, in company with Highpockets and others. He looked round the wrecked kitchen.

"Where's Jim Logan?" he shouted. Jim appeared from the passage, pushing before him by his coat-collar the dazed and damaged Taylor.

"Here I am, captain," he said cheerfully. "And I arrest Matt Taylor for the murder of Ed Lanning—not to mention a few other things!"

"Why, but, Jim, I thought that—er—" began the captain in surprise.

"So that's the way of it?" howled Highpockets delightedly. "Well, when I got that message—"

"I'll see you later, captain," interrupted Jim, and, without any regard whatever for official etiquette, he ran back to the living-room.

Helen had just risen to her feet, but she was lifted clean off them as he took her in his arms.

"The captain," he fibbed, "has told me to hold you as a material witness."

"He didn't tell you to hold me this way, did he?" inquired Helen with a radiant smile.

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"Creeping Shadows."

(Continued from page 25.)

gencies—Brian is a desperate man. If my theory is right we shall find—"

Even as he spoke there came from behind the panelling the sound of shooting; then the scream of a man in mortal agony.

The Limping Man.

DISHER waited just long enough for Cable and three plain-clothes men to join him before pressing the secret spring. The bookcase swung back and they piled down some stone stairs into a cellar. The pale light from an iron grating in the stone wall showed a strange scene.

"Seize that man!" shouted the crime investigator, pointing to a figure in the shadows.

The police hurled themselves forward, and Cable managed to grab away a big gun. A brief struggle and they had secured a prisoner.

"You've got me proper." The man's voice was hoarse with a gloating triumph. He spoke with a nasal twang. "But I got that skunk, though I nearly croaked the wrong 'un."

Disher spied a bound figure lying helplessly on the floor. The links were slowly forming and joining together.

Down the stone stairs came Sir Edwin and Gloria. They ran to the bound man and began to untie his bonds. Gloria stared down at Brian with anxious eyes, then gave a scream as she saw a huddled figure against the wall. She could see a white face—there were two Brians.

"That's the Squealer," muttered the prisoner. "That cove on the floor is the guy I nearly croaked."

"You're the limping man," accused Disher.

"What of it?" was the scornful answer. "Chicago Joe and I swore vengeance. He got Joe—but I got him. The Squealer won't do any more whining."

Sir Edwin and Disher helped the real Brian to his feet.

"I was in the study when fingers gripped me by the throat and I was dragged down here. We fought, but he stunned me with a stone." Brian fingered a bruise on his forehead. "He must have taken my clothes and impersonated me. This man and his pal, Chicago Joe, know him as the Squealer—I know him as someone else. They trailed him here, and your prisoner"—he pointed to the captive—"must have found the secret entrance in the old oak. I was lying here helpless when a light was flashed in my face, and—"

"And I'd a-croaked you, if yer double hadn't showed up on those stairs," interrupted the limping man. "Then I knew which was which—knew you wasn't the Squealer. Guess he won't try and more of his dirty tricks." He laughed. "I got him through his black heart."

Gloria had her arms round Brian Nash.

"Darling, I'm so glad you're safe!" She shuddered as she glanced towards the still figure, which two men were gently raising. "Who is that man, Brian? He's so like you."

"And who is the limping man?" demanded Disher. "Guess we'll get out of this gloomy place back to the study, and clear up these mysteries for good!"

(By permission of Wardour Films, Ltd., starring Franklin Dyall, Margot Gramme, and Lester Matthews.)

September 19th, 1931.

"TRAPPED."

(Continued from page 18.)

the threshold of it he was met by Bettina Moore.

"Farley and this other man," he asked her quickly, "where are they?"

"In here," Sally's mother answered, and led him through the doorway, where he saw the bodies of the two crooks.

Farley was still alive, but it was plain that he was very near the end. Bettina left Baxter with him, but a few minutes later was joined by the police captain outside the room.

"Don't worry, dear," he said, taking her hands. "Farley cleaned up everything before he died, and you can rely on me to see that no scandal attaches itself to you or Sally."

The Runaways.

JERRY arrived at the parsonage on time, complete with the marriage lines, and he had not long to wait ere Sally put in an appearance.

The minister was only too willing to perform the simple ceremony, and examined the certificate that Jerry handed him.

"Yes, this is all right—all in order," he declared, "but where are your witnesses?"

"Witnesses?" Jerry murmured. "Do we have to bring our own witnesses? You see, we—we don't know much about it. We've never been married before."

The minister smiled.

"It is customary for marrying couples to bring their own witnesses," he explained. "However, if you'll wait here a moment I'll go out and see if I can find someone."

He made his way to the front door, leaving Jerry and Sally together.

"Gee, I didn't know we had to have witnesses!" Jerry said.

"I didn't, either," Sally confessed. "I hope the minister can find somebody."

Her hope was at that moment on the very point of being realised, for, standing in the porch, the divine caught sight of two police officers prowling near by. They appeared to be looking for someone. Not for a moment did the minister suspect that they were looking for the young man he was about to marry.

"Oh, gentlemen," he called; "just a minute, if you please!"

The officers approached inquiringly,

and the minister explained the situation.

"All right, we'll be your witnesses," one of the cops agreed, and added to his companion: "I reckon that guy we were chasin' has given us the slip, anyhow."

The parson led them into his sitting-room, and as they appeared Jerry recognised his pursuers. The recognition was mutual, and the officers started forward involuntarily.

"You thought you'd got away, didn't you?" one of them growled.

"No," Jerry stammered. "I'll come with you right after the ceremony."

"We'll see to that," he was told.

The minister stepped forward.

"Will you take your positions, please?" he suggested, and, with the police-officers behind them, Jerry and Sally edged closer to one another.

"I hope you don't mind waiting a minute," Jerry said, glancing over his shoulder at the cops.

"No, take your time."

The parson proceeded with the ceremony, and finished by raising his hands above the young couple's heads.

"I now pronounce you man and wife," he chanted, and scarcely were the words uttered when one of the police-officers advanced and snapped a pair of manacles on Jerry's wrists.

"Come on!" he ordered, and, with Sally hurrying after him, Jerry was escorted from the parsonage.

A cab was hailed outside, and the cops gave Bettina Moore's address, then pushed their captive into the taxi's dim interior.

Sally followed, and sat opposite Jerry. Presently she began to look tearful, and dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief.

"Don't worry, dear," Jerry told her, while the cops maintained a stolid silence. "Everything is going to be all right."

Ten minutes later the taxi swerved into the drive of 16, Franklin Court. Jerry was dragged from it, and, still with Sally at his heels, was marched up to the front door.

The maid answered the police-officers' summons.

"Is Captain Baxter here?" she was asked.

"He's in the lounge with Mrs. Moore," the girl answered, gazing in consternation at Jerry and Sally.

The two policemen pushed past her unceremoniously, and hurried their prisoner across the hall and into the lounge, where Baxter and Bettina Moore were sitting on a chesterfield.

The captain and Mrs. Moore started to their feet as the officers appeared with Jerry and Sally.

"Say, what's the idea?" Baxter demanded.

"We got our man, captain," was the answer. "Do you want us to go on to headquarters with him?"

Baxter exchanged a smile with Mrs. Moore, and then:

"No," he said; "take off those bracelets. This case is closed. By the way, if you go upstairs you'll find two men lying in a room there. Have them carried away—to the morgue."

A key was produced, and the manacles were removed from Jerry. As the two policemen departed he began to rub his numbened wrists.

"Sally," said Mrs. Moore, coming across to where her daughter stood, "this is one of the happiest days of my life. Captain Baxter and I have just decided to be married."

"Oh, mother," Sally cried, "I'm so happy, too. Jerry and I are married!"

"What?"

Mrs. Moore's face registered amazement. Watching her anxiously, both Jerry and Sally expected indignation to follow, and waited for the storm to break. But quite unexpectedly Bettina turned to Jerry and held out her hands.

"Congratulations, Mr. Jerry Coleman," she said. "Mr. Jerry Coleman, of Park Avenue, I believe."

Jerry stared at her. In the background Captain Baxter was grinning a broad grin.

"Why didn't you tell us who you were in the first place?" Mrs. Moore went on.

Jerry found his voice.

"I might have lost my job as your driver," he answered laughingly. "You see, that day I first met Sally, I sort of scented adventure, and—well, romance. So when she mistook me for a chauffeur, I let her go on thinking I was. Just that, and no more."

"Well, you certainly found adventure," Mrs. Moore commented, "and you seem to have found romance, too."

"But how did you discover who I really was?" Jerry asked.

Sally's mother beckoned him to the threshold of an adjoining room.

"Look," she said, and, following the direction of her hand, Jerry caught sight of two old acquaintances.

One was the valet Ferguson, sitting in a deep armchair and mopping his brow with a handkerchief as if he were burdened by all the cares in the world. The other was a thick-set, bow-legged bulldog, squatting contentedly at Fergie's feet.

(By permission of the Filmophone Renters, Ltd., starring Nick Stuart and Nena Quartaro.)

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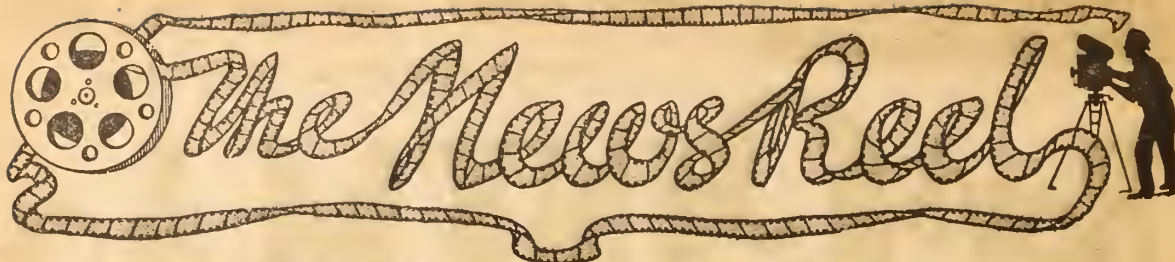
Boy's **CINEMA** 2^d

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EVERY TUESDAY.

SEPTEMBER 26th, 1931.





The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"Smart Money."

Nick Venizelos, Edward G. Robinson; Irene, Evalyn Knapp; Jack, James Cagney; Marie, Noel Francis; District Attorney, Morgan Wallace; Mr. Amnoppoulos, Paul Porcasi; Schultz, Clark Burroughs; Sleepy Sam, Ralf Harold; Sport Williams, Boris Karloff; Dealer Barnes, Walter Percival; Snake Eyes, John Larkin; Lola Polly, Walters.

"The Last Ride."

Lita Alvaro, Dorothy Revier; Big Boy, Tom Santschi; Brady, Francis Ford; Roy Smith, Charles Morton; Doris White, Virginia Brown Faire; Piccardi, Frank Mayo.

Where Did You Get That Hat?

That's probably what you would ask your favourite movie star if you happened to meet him—or her—away from the studio.

Greta Garbo always wears a round tam, pulled down until nary a wisp of hair is showing. John Gilbert wears an old grey felt, with the top crushed in by hard usage and stuffing into his overcoat pocket. Marion Davies comes to work with a sailor cap on, and Buster Keaton may be seen sauntering from a hard day at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer plant with a white cap that accentuates his swarthy complexion.

Ramon Novarro invariably wears a green felt, several sizes too small. Adolphe Menjou, ever immaculate, favours a smart black felt with turned-down brim. Norma Shearer, usually wears close-fitting green turbans, and Wallace Beery is seldom without his tweed cap with crumpled peak. Marie Dressler's hats made her famous on the stage many years ago, but in private she goes in for plain toques with simple ornaments. Cliff Edwards always wears his hats backwards, and Hedda Hopper may be sure to have a skull-bonnet pushed far back on her head.

Anita Page usually wears only a scarf about her blonde tresses, and Robert Montgomery goes hatless.

Not Enough Rain!

Norman Lee, the director of "Four Winds," now being produced at Welwyn Studios, must surely be the only person in England to complain that insufficient rain has fallen this summer.

Officially, the English summer should have arrived just as "Four Winds" was due for production, and accordingly rain storms descended unceasingly. Lee, however, required a constant torrential downpour for scenes in the film, and had hoped to harness Nature for his purpose, but in his opinion the falling rain was too mild, and there was not enough of it!

To provide Lee's idea of real rain, a system was introduced by which water was conveyed into the Studio itself and released through a huge sifter. The unfortunate members of the cast were

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in

"THE FLYING FOOL."

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The fifth episode of our thrilling serial of the fire brigade, starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.

"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

grouped under the sifter, and there received the full benefit of Lee's rain-storms. Every precaution was taken, however, to prevent chills and colds. Hot baths and welcome drinks were provided, and though this damp climate was maintained for three days, no one even sneezed.

The cameramen and sound engineers were in such close proximity to the actors that they were also drenched to the skin throughout the three days, but Lee had somehow managed to keep dry. At last, even he was forced to come within the rain's radius, but owing to a misunderstanding the most violent flood of all was precipitated at that moment, and he was soaked to the

skin. Anxious inquiries immediately followed:

"Have you got enough rain now, Mr. Lee?"

A Cruising Holiday.

When Richard Arlen and Walter Huston were working together in "The Virginian," they bought a yacht and frequently went sailing in it during week-ends. On completion of the above picture, however, the two men found little opportunity for meeting as before, and Dick is said to have bought up Huston's interests in the yacht, and hopes shortly to take a cruise in it. His latest picture is called "The Secret Call."

Nearly Knocked Out.

Charles Bickford relates an incident which made him feel really sore—so much so, in fact, that he is now more careful of the microphone than ever before.

It happened when he was playing in his new picture, "East of Borneo." The scene required that Charles should recline in a chair, say a few words, and then jump hurriedly to his feet. The filming began and the actor did exactly as directed. With a dull thud, however, his head came in forceful contact with the heavy microphone suspended directly above him.

Charles let out a yell and then said a few words about microphones and things in general. But you won't hear them in the film. The director thought it best to cut out this part of the dialogue so that our ears might be spared!

Why They Changed Their Names.

Do you know why film artistes changed their names? The reasons are many and varied, but the following few will suffice.

Stan Laurel's real name is Arthur Stanley Jefferson, and his reason for adopting his present one was simply due to an old variety trick. When he left Fred Karno's Mummings Birds, Stan arranged to strike out on his own. But Arthur Stanley Jefferson was too long for bill displays, programmes, etc., and so he changed to another and shorter name.

Claude Allister's real name is Palmer, but his father, a general, forbade his son to use the family name in a conjuring act he was going to perform in London. So young Palmer borrowed a name he had seen somewhere and became Claude Allister. John Loder's father, also a military officer, forbade his son to take up a stage career. But John Lowe, as he was, would not give up his ambition and became John Loder.

James Hall was at one time known as James Brown. He ran away from home to go on the stage, changed his name to Hamilton, and then when he went into pictures was persuaded by Jesse Lasky, the producer, to make yet another change and call himself Hall.

(Continued on page 27.)

There was not a man who could beat him at gambling. He became famous for his luck at cards and at last the law went after him. They framed a girl to betray him. A crook drama that is one long thrill from start to finish. Starring Edward G. Robinson and Evalyn Knapp.



Luck!

NICK VENIZELOS, of Irontown, lounged behind the counter of his hair-dressing saloon. His assistants were busy with razor and scissors, shearing hair and whiskers and conversing with the customers as they did so.

Nick toyed with a dice-box, and for his own amusement rolled forth the little cubes colloquially known as "the bones." He was of Greek parentage, Nick, but hundred per cent American for all that, and a personality in the small Middle-Western township.

A newly-shaven customer rose from the chair wherein he had sat while Jack, Nick's chief assistant, had removed the stubble from his chin. He came over to the counter and handed Nick a check and a coin.

Nick lifted the coin and grinned at his client.

"Aha," he said, "double or nothing, Joe?"

"Not me," the customer rejoined. "Gimme my change. I've paid you double too many times, Nick."

Nick's grin broadened, and into his eyes came the glint of the gambling lure. It had ever been so with Nick Venizelos. Dimes, nickels and dollars—dice, ponies and card-decks—the very sight of them roused in him the urge to take a chance, and the fact that his small business was one of the most flourishing of its kind in Irontown was a testimonial to his good fortune.

"Faint heart never won fair lady or fat turkey," Joe," he coaxed. "Come on, what do you say—heads or tails?" And he spun the coin deftly and clapped it on the back of his hand.

"Oh, well—tails!" the customer muttered, and then, as Nick uncovered the coin, gave a rueful laugh.

"Heads," Nick observed. "Better luck next time, Joe."

"I never seen such a lucky stiff," his customer grumbled on his way to the door.

Nick slipped the coin in the till and came round the counter to where his assistants were operating on the last two customers.

"Well," he declared, "I guess we've got enough money to close up!"

He paused, and looked hard at the neckwear of Jack. "Say, that's one o' my ties, ain't it?" he challenged.

Jack shared a room with Nick, and had a habit of borrowing certain items of attire which happened to appeal to him.

"Why—er—when I got up this mornin'," he stammered, "I sort of—er—"

"Yeah, I know," Nick put in sarcastically. "Why didn't you put on my new check suit while you were about it?"

"It didn't fit," answered Jack, whereupon both of them burst out laughing.

They were more like brothers than employer and assistant, and Nick had entirely recovered his good-nature and was clapping Jack on the shoulder when one of the last two customers spoke to him.

"Hey, Nick," he asked, "what do you fancy in the final race at Louisville?"

"Why, I got my dough on Abie Kabibble," Nick rejoined complacently. "Think he'll win?"

Nick smiled. "Sure he'll win," he said. "If nothing else, he'll win by a nose."

When Nick spoke of shutting up shop he meant that business was over for the day, but nevertheless the premises continued to witness the passing of money,

and the mute walls to hear the clink of coin and the crisp rustle of notes.

Nick collected dimes and dollars during the day behind the counter. Of nights, he collected them in a discreet back room, raking them across a long gaming table as he matched his luck successfully against the luck of a number of cronies.

To that back room Nick now made his way, and presently men began to drop in on him and stand around the table—men of a sportive persuasion, willing to risk a dollar or two on the goddess Chance. By dusk, some eight or nine men were gathered for the "play," and the number was brought up to a dozen by the appearance of Jack and the other assistant, a swarthy Greek known as Mitros Bikelas.

"I'm looking for action to-night, Nick," someone said, speaking through the buzz of conversation and the haze of tobacco smoke which by this time filled the room.

"Don't worry, boy," Nick retorted with a grin, "you'll get it."

The dice rattled in the little box, and play began. A dozen pairs of eyes watched the white cubes with the black dots roll forth upon the table as throw after throw was made. Small bets were placed, and coin and small bills were soon changing hands—their destination generally tending towards that part of the table where Nick Venizelos stood.

Dark and dapper, smiling the smile that rarely seemed to leave his queer, twisted mouth, Nick gathered in the little piles of money with monotonous regularity, and he had just taken a ten-dollar bet when a darkie entered the room, his ebony face shining like a new shoe.

"Hallo, Snake Eyes!" Nick greeted September 26th, 1931.

him, recognising the coloured handyman who did odd jobs about the shop. "What do you want?"

"Mistah Nick," the darkie announced, "dere's a lady outside what wants to see you."

"How do you know she's a lady, Snake Eyes?"

The darkie grinned, and mirth lurked in the whites of his rolling optics.

"Well, boss, she done got a skirt on," he murmured.

"All right," said Nick, laughing, "I'll see her."

Mitros Bikelas laid a hand on his arm.

"Don't forget to remember, boss," he observed prophetically. "'Lucky weeth the cards, onlucky weeth lov.'"

"Ah, that's a lotta bunkaroo," Nick rejoined. "Don't forget to remember—I'm lucky with the women, too."

"But mebbe sometime you gonna pick de wrong filly," Bikelas muttered, whereupon Nick chuckled placidly.

"Not a chance," he drawled, inspecting himself appraisingly in a mirror. "Nothing but favourites in my stable. Well, lady, here I come."

And he made his way out into the street, where he found a flaxen-haired, innocent-eyed girl of his acquaintance awaiting him.

"Oh, Nick," she said in a distracted tone, "I've got to have some money right away."

She proceeded to tell him a hard-up story that touched the little barber's heart, and before she was fairly through with it he interrupted her gently.

"How much do you need?" he asked. "I've got to have a hundred dollars," she told him in a pathetic little whisper.

"Well, you know Nick," he said, patting her on the shoulder, and forthwith produced a wad of bills.

He took one from the top of the sheaf. It was a note that had received rough handling in its time. Its corners were frayed, and at one time it had been torn in halves, the two fragments having been gummed together again with strips of stamp paper. Nick casually noticed its condition as he handed it over.

"Gee, you're a swell fellow," the girl told him with a wealth of gratitude in her voice.

"Glad to do it," Nick assured her. "Glad to do it, baby."

They parted. Nick did not see the girl make straight for a shop doorway and hand the hundred-dollar bill to a tall man in a slouch hat who had been waiting in the shadows there. For by the time the note had been passed over to the loiterer Nick was already back with his cronies.

Snake Eyes was still there, and, with the true negro's weakness for a dice-game, proclaimed his intention of making a bet on the "bones."

"Who'll give me half-a-dollah fo' mah hand?" he called, as he made his first throw.

"I wouldn't give a nickel for your whole body," Nick grinned. "No vivisection hospital would take it as a gift."

The nigger was hardly listening. His eyes were fastened on the dice, which had now come to rest.

"Eight's the point," he said. "Ah'll bet a dollah, Mistah Nick."

Nick, as banker, took the bet, and collected the money when Snake Eyes threw a fatal seven.

"Up pops de Devil," the darkie murmured sadly. "Mistah Nick, you sho' is one lucky white man."

Nick looked at him shrewdly.

"You got carfare home, Snake Eyes?" he asked.

"No, suh, I ain't, boss," was the answer. "I ain't got a red cent."

"Then take this," said Nick, pushing some money into his dusky paw. "And stay out of this game, from now on."

He turned back to the table, and at the same moment became aware that a tall man in a slouch hat had appeared in the room, and was elbowing his way to the fore. The geniality faded from Nick's countenance as he recognised in the newcomer a certain "Sport" Williams, whom he had no reason to admire.

Even gamblers have their scale of honour and respectability, and Nick knew Williams for a sponger and a rogue.

"Say," he mentioned, barring the way with his arm, "we're not takin' any two-bit bets to-night, Sport."

Williams scowled.

"I'm not makin' any two-bit bets to-night," he said. "Does that look like two bits to you?"

He threw down a hundred-dollar bill, and Nick picked it up. At once his glance became riveted on it, for he saw that the corners of the note were frayed, and that at one time it had been torn in two, then pasted together again with stamp paper.

Nick's face hardened. So the pitiful story of the flaxen-haired girl had been just a trick, engineered by Williams to secure ready cash, break in on the dice-game and play his luck against the little barber's.

And the proverbial Venizelos' luck had already been in the balance against him when Nick had chanced to give that girl a note that lent itself so readily to recognition.

"I'll shoot ten of that hundred," Williams said.

Nick looked up. His eyes seemed to bore into the sponger.

"You'll shoot all of it or nothing," he rapped out.

"Eh?" Williams blurted. "Say, what are you talkin' about?"

"You heard me—you'll shoot the hundred or nothing!"

Williams hesitated, and then nodded reluctantly. "All right," he growled. "Shoot the piece."

The rest of the group gathered round to watch the play, for hundred-dollar bets were rare occurrences in the back room of the Irontown barber's shop.

The dice began to roll, and looking on excitedly, the bystanders quoted the numbers that turned up.

"Three and two. The point is five." Again they rolled, and: "A six, and the Sport wants a five."

The rattle of the "bones" as they were picked up and returned to the box seemed to echo those words: "The Sport wants a five."

Once more the little white cubes danced over the table. They came to rest, and a murmur arose at the sight of that number which is the dice-player's despair.

"Seven makes Williams a loser!"

"Huh!" grunted Nick Venizelos, pocketing his patched hundred-dollar bill. "And the prisoner ate a hearty breakfast. Go on, Williams—breeze—scram—pull your freight. And as you go out that door take the 'Welcome' sign off it."

Williams departed savagely, and Nick turned to resume the game. But he found the boys unwilling to take any further chances, for it was plain that the little barber's luck was running especially strong to-night.

"Say, Nick," observed one of them

conversationally, "you're wasting your time in a small tank like this. You should be in that big game in the city. Why, Hickory Short would be a cinch for you."

The speaker was a travelling salesman who had occasion to visit New York pretty frequently, and the Hickory Short he had mentioned was perhaps one of the greatest gamblers of a city that almost boasted of its personalities in that sphere—though now and then they were singled out for attention by the police.

"You ain't kidding me, are you?" asked Nick. "You see," he added reflectively, "I've been kind of thinking, myself, that this town's getting too soft for me. How much do you figure it would take to bust in on that game in the big city, anyhow?"

The salesman shrugged.

"Well, a fellow shouldn't try to bust in on it unless he has at least ten thousand dollars."

Ten thousand dollars was an amount that the big city gamblers lost in an evening without turning a hair, but to the small-time plungers of Irontown it was a fortune, and the salesman's estimate was received with awe.

"Ten thousand bucks," Nick mused, while the rest of the fellows were commenting on the magnificence of the sum. "I'll have that one day!" His dark, live eyes were agleam. "And when I do, I'll show those city birds something!"

It was Jack who conceived the inspiration that was to equip Nick for the big city game earlier than he anticipated.

"Say, listen," the young assistant exclaimed, "why don't we make up a pool amongst us, and stake Nick to that Hickory Short racket? I'll put in all I've got for a start."

"You can bank on me for a couple hundred," declared the salesman who had been to New York.

Nick looked round.

"That's a great idea!" he jerked. "Why, I could raise five thousand on the barber shop."

"I geev' you da thousand dollar what I was gonna send back for my wife to bring her here," cried Mitros Bikelas excitedly, and from all around came offers of various other amounts.

Nick wandered thoughtfully to the far side of the room. A bird-cage hung from the ceiling, and a coverlet drooped over it. The little barber took off the coverlet to reveal a twittering canary bird, a tiny creature on which he lavished a tremendous amount of affection.

"Well, Blondie," he asked, "what do you say about us two going to the big city, huh?" Then, turning all at once with an odd, pent-up laugh, "Boys," he proclaimed, "you're on!"

"Attaboy, Nicky!" Jack said. "And you'll knock those big city gamblers for a loop."

Thus it came about that, two or three days later, Nick Venizelos prepared to step aboard the New York train with something just over ten thousand dollars in his wallet.

He was attired in the classiest suit that the best tailor in Irontown could provide, carried a brand-new valise in one hand and Blondie's cage in the other. Around him, as he stood on the steps of a Pullman car, a crowd of his associates gathered—the men financially interested in his trip, and a party of former girl friends—every one of them as fair as he was dark.

Snake Eyes was among those present, and, edging his way to the front, he handed Nick a rabbit's foot.

"Jes' keep that in yo' pocket, Mistah

Nick," he said, "and you'll win fo' sho'."

"Thanks, Snake Eyes," Nick answered. "You know, I've practically cleaned up that big game now. Come here, nigger, and gimme luck." And to the amusement of the onlookers he rubbed the palm of his hand on Snake Eyes' crop of woolly hair.

"Say, Nick," someone called, "you know where to send my share of the dough you make?"

"Sure, I know," Nick answered laughingly. "Of course, you boys all understand. I pay you back your original investments, and we split the winnings in proportion."

"How much you t'eenk you gonna win, boss?" asked Bikelas the Greek.

"Why, I ween so much," Nick rejoined, imitating the Greek's accent, "you can send back to de old country for your wife—and your sweetheart, too."

Jack came forward.

"Nick," he said, a little unsteadily, "I'll miss you."

"Boy, as soon as I make my killing I'll send for you," Nick assured him, "and that won't be long."

"All aboard," came the voice of an official, and a moment later the gambling coterie of Irontown was waving farewell to their "best bet" as the train pulled out.

Nick dumped his luggage and made his way to the observation car. Standing on the small platform there, he watched familiar scenes till Irontown was out of sight, and then he turned briskly to an official who happened to be near by.

"Say, conductor," he asked, "what time do we get into New York?"

"We're due in there at six-forty-two," the official answered, "and we've never been late yet."

"Bet you ten to five we don't make it on time," Nick offered quickly.

The Big City.

NICK emerged from the room he had booked at a certain New York super-hotel, and took the elevator to the ground floor. A rapid descent

through sixteen stories brought him to the palatial foyer and lounge.

"Nice ride—thanks," he drawled to the lift attendant, and with the air of a man entirely at his ease he strolled over to the register clerk's desk.

"Good-morning, Mr. Venizelos," the clerk greeted politely. "I hope you are finding everything satisfactory."

"Oh, yeah!" Nick rejoined. "Fine hotel you got here. Er—by the way, you haven't seen Hickory Short around to-day, have you?"

A queer look passed across the clerk's face.

"Oh, you mean—Hickory Short the gambler?" he said. "He doesn't live here."

"No? I heard he did," Nick eyed the clerk keenly. He was convinced that the fellow was evading the truth, and could hardly blame him. With the authorities always on the look-out for any breach of the gaming laws, the utmost caution had to be exercised.

"Oh, say," he went on, leaning closer and speaking to the clerk in an undertone, "you don't happen to know in which room the—er—the big roving poker game is going on to-night?"

"No, sir, I don't," the clerk answered. "We don't permit anything like that around this hotel, sir."

"Oh, I see! Thanks."

Nick moved away, looking around him casually till his glance encountered two things which, in unison, were as irresistible to him as the gambling lure—a blonde head and a pretty face.

They belonged to a girl behind a candy and tobacco counter, and Nick walked over and asked for a good cigar.

"These are very nice," the girl said, producing a box of cheroots. "A dollar each. I can recommend them."

"Do you smoke them yourself?" Nick inquired whimsically, and then, as she shook her head with a pretty laugh: "I'll take five of them."

He had handed her a bill, and was telling her to keep the change when he observed a familiar-looking object on

the counter—a small, cylindrical wooden box containing two ivory cubes.

"What are these things for?" he asked innocently.

"Poker dice," the girl explained. "It's a dollar if you lose, and if you win you get two dollars' worth of merchandise."

"Anything behind the counter?"

"Anything in merchandise," the girl informed him, with a twinkle in her eye.

Nick grinned.

"Well, you're a cute little package," he declared. "Mind you, I'm a little green at this sort of thing, but here goes. Poker dice, one flop." And he picked up the box and rattled the "bones."

Three times he played his luck against the girl's, and three times he won.

"Look here," he said then, "we'd better quit this. I'd hate to see a nice little girl like you lose her job."

"All right, we quit," the girl answered. "That's three games on the house. My, but you're lucky! Do you gamble much—I mean for big money?"

"Well, do I look like a tinhorn?" Nick retorted. "Sure, I take a little flutter once in a while. But how much do I owe you?"

"Three dollars for the games," the girl told him, "and you got six dollars' worth of merchandise. What will you have?"

Nick pointed.

"I've got my eye on that big box of candy marked six bucks," he said. "No, no, don't wrap it up. You keep it, baby."

"Oh, I couldn't do that!" she protested sweetly.

"That's all right," Nick rejoined. "I don't eat candy. It gets in my teeth. Look here, I'm a stranger in town, you know, and I'm kinda lonesome. How'd you like to come out and have dinner with me to-night?"

She shook her blonde head.

"Oh, I couldn't—my mother doesn't let me stay out at night."

"Too bad," Nick murmured. "Are



Nick seemed to sag in his chair. Said Hickory Short, sitting on his left: "The luck's certainly running against you to-night, barber."

you sure you won't change your mind?"

"Oh, I couldn't," she said. "I really couldn't!"

That evening Nick was dining with her in a Broadway restaurant and calling her by her first name.

"This is one of the best places I've been in, Marie," he declared, while enjoying a cigar after the last course.

"I thought you'd like it," Marie told him sweetly.

Nick inclined his head.

"Not a bad cigar you sold me this morning, either," he mentioned. "Of course, at home I smoke my own brand—"

"This with an airy gesture. "A fellow in Havana makes em up for me."

"Is that so?"

"It is," Nick declared, and then, leaning forward confidentially: "Say, Marie, he went on, "I suppose you know most of the regulars that hang around the hotel, don't you?"

"Well—yes," she answered. "Why?"

"Ever see Hickory Short around?" Nick asked her. "You know, the big gambler."

Marie nodded.

"He's an awfully nice fellow," she said. "He's around most of the time."

Nick's voice took on an eager note.

"You don't happen to know in which room they're holding the game to-night, do you?" he questioned.

"I just happen to know," was the rejoinder, "but you won't say I told you, will you? Mr. Short ordered some cigars to be sent up to his room this afternoon—and it's three-forty-six."

"Boy," said Nick, rubbing his hands, "Am I itching to get in that game?"

"Oh, Mr. Venizelos," Marie went on, concernedly, "I hope you don't think I'm butting in, but—but I'd suggest you put some money in the hotel safe for car fare home—just in case—"

Nick laughed genially.

"There won't be any 'in case', baby," he announced, with confidence. "But I'll tell you what I'll do. Here—take this hundred dollars and keep it for me. After the game I'll make you a present of it."

"Oh, I couldn't—"

"Keep it, baby," Nick insisted. "And if I should lose—gee, that sounds funny—but if I should lose— Well, I'll need that hundred for cigar money."

"But you don't know me," Marie protested. "I might run away with the money. You can easily put it in the hotel safe."

"You're safe enough for me," Nick declared. "Listen, baby, I'm a gambler. It's my business to read human nature—to know people—and I can tell that you're on the level."

The girl slipped the hundred dollar bill into her handbag.

"Oh, well, if you insist," she murmured.

The Game.

NICK tapped at the door of Room 346, situated on the floor above his own. He was answered by a tall, lean man with a sharp caste of countenance and a pair of heavy-lidded eyes.

"I'd like to see Hickory Short," said Nick promptly.

"Well," was the slow, drawing rejoinder, "I'm Hickory Short."

"Yeah?" Nick held out his hand. "I'm Nick Venizelos of Irontown. Nick the Barber, they call me."

Short drew back.

"Oh, come in, Mr. Venizelos," he said. "I've often heard of you. Of course"—as he closed the door—"you have some way of identifying yourself."

Nick produced papers and photographs, and, after glancing through them, Hickory Short drew him towards a table at which four other men were sitting—a table littered with cards and chips.

"Boys," said Hickory Short, "I want you to meet Mr. Venizelos. Nick, this is Mr. Tompkins—"

"Honest John Tompkins!" Nick exclaimed.

"And this is Mr. River," Hickory Short continued.

"Old Deep River himself, huh?"

"And on the other side of the table," Short proceeded, "Back-to-Back Schultz and Mr. Barnes. Say, Nick, how about a drink?"

Nick accepted the offer, and Hickory Short poured him out a glass of champagne.

"Fizz water, huh?" said Nick, testing it. "Good stuff, too. Where'd you get it, Hickory? I'd like a case of it myself."

"Well, I'll send you down a case to-morrow," Hickory Short told him with a smile.

"Maybe I'll be better able to pay for it to-morrow," Nick retorted with a broader smile. "Well, what are we waitin' fer? How about a little game of skill and chance?"

"I've heard of such things," Short drawled. "We're playin' five card stud, Nick, and the roof's the limit. Now we're all friends here, Nick, and, though we ain't playin' marbles, we don't want no arguments. Anything ain't right, you just say so."

"Right," Nick answered, and then called a waiter who was in attendance. "Bring a dozen new decks of cards," he said.

"What's the matter, Nick?" asked Hickory Short. "Ain't the cards we've been usin' good enough for you?"

"Oh, sure, it's just an old barber-shop custom," Nick answered wisely. "A fresh towel with every shave—that's my motto. Here, gimme five thousand dollars' worth of chips."

He handed over the money and received in exchange a number of poker discs, the lowest of which stood for a hundred dollars, and the highest for a thousand.

"If you run out of those," observed Barnes, "there's more where they came from."

"Brother," Nick retorted, "you'll be buyin' 'em off me before the night's over."

Hickory Short laughed.

"Well, you're an optimist anyway," he commented, and the game began.

In the small hours of the morning Nick Venizelos was still occupying the chair which had been drawn up for him at the commencement of play, but the genial confidence had gone from him and he was no longer the dapper figure that he had cut on his arrival.

He was sitting in his shirt-sleeves, his tie was disarranged and his hair was rumpled, while his face seemed to have become almost haggard. And the pile of chips that had rested at his elbow had been considerably reduced.

Nor were those remaining chips the survivors of the first batch he had bought. They were the relics of a second five thousand dollars' worth, purchased in the desperate hope that the initial losses would be retrieved.

It looked as if the goddess of fortune had at last abandoned Nick the Barber

Hand after hand was dealt, and Nick's store of chips dwindled. The high cards were not coming his way, but, though the memory of his friends in Irontown was like a spectre haunt-

ing his mind, he was not the man to whine. He had struck a bad patch—that was all—and it could not last indefinitely.

Nor could his money—

A hand was dealt to him that looked good for a wager. He had had many such during the course of the evening, and had backed them only to find himself beaten by a 'spot.' But now or never was his chance, and he resolved to plunge.

"I'll call," came the voice of Hickory Short.

"Raise you," said Schultz.

Barnes, Tompkins and River dropped out of the bidding, but Nick sat tight and played his hand up to the last chip.

"A pair of aces," observed Hickory Short, laying down his cards, "with the queen."

Nick drew in his breath.

"I think I got you, Hickory," he said in a voice that quavered. "Aces too, but with the king."

He leaned forward with the intention of raking in the hoard of chips in the middle of the table, but Schultz anticipated him with a smile.

"Thanks, gentlemen," he stated. "Mine are two jacks and three sixes. I guess that beats the band."

Nick seemed to sag in his chair. Said Hickory Short, sitting on his left:

"The luck's certainly running against you to-night, barber."

Nick stood up with an effort and forced a game grin. He was cleaned out, but he knew how to take a trimming.

"Oh, it's just a matter of the breaks," he declared. "Now, don't worry about me, boys. My brother works in the mint."

The gamblers laughed at the jest, and their laughter was in Nick's ears as he pulled on his coat and left Room 346 for his own apartment.

He was awakened next morning by a splitting headache and a knock on the door. A bell-boy appeared, carrying in one hand a telegram, and in the other a heavy erate.

Nick rose and ripped open the telegram.

"Hope you knocked 'em dead," it ran. "The Gang from Irontown."

A kind of groan escaped Nick.

"Knocked 'em dead," he muttered, and then, turning, he saw that the bell-boy was waiting for a tip.

Nick looked at the erate which the hotel messenger had also brought. When he opened it, he found that it contained the champagne that Hickory Short had promised him; but, far from expressing a friendly sentiment, the gift seemed to Nick a mockery. For he remembered his own boast of the previous night that he would be sending a case to Short.

In lieu of a tip, Nick gave the bell-boy one of the bottles, and the messenger departed jubilantly. Half an hour later Nick took the elevator to the ground floor and walked over to the candy and cigar counter, dismally reflecting that he would want that hundred dollars from Marie after all.

But the girl he found in attendance there was a dark-eyed brunette.

"Where's Marie?" he inquired.

"Marie?" the brunette echoed. "Oh, you mean the girl that worked here. I don't know, sir. She left suddenly, I think. I got a call to report here this morning."

Nick went away with a dull suspicion in his mind, and, scarcely realising where his steps took him, wandered into a cafeteria and dropped into a chair.

An elderly man sat opposite him, reading a paper. The front page was turned towards Nick, and suddenly a headline caught his eye—a headline that seemed to transmit a violent shock to him, so that all at once he sprang to his feet and snatched the paper from the stranger's grasp.

"Say, what's the idea?" gasped the man. "Give me back my paper! You've got a nerve!"

But Nick was not listening. He was glaring like a madman at that headline:

"HICKORY SHORT TO BE RELEASED FROM GAOL AT END OF THE MONTH."

There in cold print Nick Venizelos read of the genuine Hickory Short's arrest six weeks previously for a breach of the gaming laws. There, before his eyes he saw a revelation that told him he had been fooled into entering the wrong game, and he knew then that he had been amongst a school of card-sharpping swindlers.

That was the news he would have to take back to Irontown unless—

The Return of the Trimmed.

A KNOCK on the door of Room 346 brought the bogus Hickory Short, otherwise known in crook gambling circles as Sleepy Sam, to his feet.

"Well, well," he said, as he recognized his caller, "if it isn't Nick."

"It ain't his sister," the little Irontown barber replied with an affability that masked the volcanic rage in his soul. "By the way, Hickory, it was nice of you to send me down that fizz water."

"Not at all," drawled Sleepy Sam. "The pleasure was all mine. But is this a social visit, or did you locate some fresh money, Nick?"

Nick pulled out a thick wad, held by an elastic band. The top note was genuine currency, and, before a close examination could detect that those beneath were mere blank slips of paper cut to the same shape, he returned the package to his wallet.

"I told you my brother works in the mint," said Nick, and, fairly into the room now, he greeted Schultz, Tompkins, Barnes and River, who were sitting at the card table.

"Sit in, Nick," called Barnes.

"Sure," Nick answered, taking a chair. "Gimme some chips. I'll take three thousand dollars' worth."

A stack of discs was pushed across the table, and Nick contrived to take them without immediately offering cash in return. There was nothing unusual in this so long as the other gamblers continued to believe he carried a bank-roll.

Cards were dealt. If the procedure of the previous evening was followed, Nick knew that he would be allowed to win a fairly comfortable amount on the first few hands, merely to encourage him.

He was not disappointed. Hundred-dollar chips and thousand-dollar chips were pushed into the pool as the players backed their cards, and, with the stack in the middle of the table representing five

thousand "bucks," the betting was brought to a close.

"Pair of kings," said Schultz, showing his hand. "That beats you and Barnes, Tompkins"—as these two laid out their cards.

"Beats me, too," put in River.

"But not me," said Sleepy Sam. "Mine are aces, and a queen."

Nick leaned forward and revealed his hand.

"I think I top you, Hickory," he observed. "Aces, and a king."

"You win, Nick," Sleepy Sam agreed. "Looks like your lucky day."

But as he said the words he exchanged a sardonic smile with his confederates.

Nick raked in the chips, kept two thousand to himself and then pushed the rest across the table.

"Here's my three thousand back," he explained. "I'll play with the two-grand I won."

"Ah, you keep those three thousand as well, Nick," Sleepy Sam told him.

"Keep 'em—pay for 'em. You may need 'em later."

"That's all right," Nick persisted. "If I need more than the two thousand I've won, I'll buy some. But why buy now?"

A glitter began to assert itself in the heavy-lidded eyes of Sleepy Sam.

"Well, that ain't the idea, Nick," he argued. "I mean, a guy can come in here and sit in cold, without any dough. Oh, I know you've got dough, but it just ain't done—that's all. We like to see the colour of the money. You buy your chips and then cash in on your winnings when you're through playin'."

"Oh, what's the difference, Hickory?" put in Schultz. "We're holdin' up the game."

"This is my room and my game," Sleepy Sam rapped out, his voice rising a key. "An' the game is gonna be played according to rules."

Nick stood up, feigning indignation. "All right," he jerked. "Pay me off. I blew another game to come up here to-night, and I reckon I'll go back to it."

"We ain't runnin' any credit system," Sleepy Sam barked. "You ain't in Irontown now. Let's see your dough."

"You saw my dough yesterday—ten grand of it!" snapped Nick. "Pay me off!"

"Yesterday was another day," Barnes cut in. "What's the idea, Venizelos? Tryin' to pull a fast one on us? Say, who do you think you're playin' with—a lotta chumps? Come on, show us your dough!"

Nick bared his teeth.

"I don't show nothin'," he blazed. "You cheap bunch of chiselers. I know who you are! Hickory Short, huh? Didn't take you long to get out of that gaol in Florida, did it—Sleepy Sam?"

"Supposin' I ain't Hickory Short," sneered the leader of the gang. "Supposin' I am Sleepy Sam."

"Yeah, an' supposin' these guys ain't Schultz, Tompkins, River an' Barnes either," Nick flung at him. "Ah, you guys ain't gamblers—you're burglars. How'd you like somebody to show your racket to the police, huh?" he added fiercely. "Come on—do I get my dough or not?"

"You get nothin'," snarled Sleepy Sam. "You small-time squaler—you tinhorn from the sticks. You get nothin' from us."

"Well, I'll show you!" Nick shouted, and, reckless of the odds against him, he threw himself at the leader of the card-sharp ring.

The following morning, a large plaster over one eye and a mournful countenance betrayed the fact that the odds had been too heavy for Nick Venizelos, and that he had received rather more than nothing—in short, a good deal of punishment, but not a cent in cash.

The little gambler laid her on a couch, Jack watching him the while.



He was not the man to carry out his threat of informing the police, who would have shown scant sympathy for him anyway, and would probably have found that Room 346 was no longer tenanted by Sleepy Sam. His chief concern was to locate, without delay, the girl Marie, and from the hotel management he was able to learn her address.

He called there before noon, and rung the door-bell of her flat. She answered the summons in person, and looked at him coldly as he addressed her.

"You must have the wrong apartment," she said.

"Why, you know me," he stammered. "You remember, I gave you that hundred bucks to keep for me?"

"I never saw you before," she lied with emphasis; and at that moment Nick saw a man standing in the hallway behind her—a man whose grinning face he recognised as Sleepy Sam's.

"Say, what's this?" the little barber ground out.

"It's the big city, Hiram," Marie sneered. "Scram!"

She slammed the door in his face. For a moment he did not move, but stood there like a man paralysed. Then suddenly he gave vent to his fury in a shower of harmless blows.

"Open this door!" he screamed. "I thought so! You were band-in-glove with those burglars! Stole the money that belonged to my friends! Sent up packs of marked cards from that hotel service-counter! I've figured out the whole dirty game, and now I know I've figured right. Open the door, you dirty little cheat!"

A mocking laugh reached his ears—a girl's laugh and a man's laugh intermingling beyond the door. He drew back, quivering with fury.

"All right," he shouted; "all right. If that's the way you play the game in this town, I'll play it the same way. Only I'll play it in spades, and that means you'll pay double. You little thief, I'll have you on your knees beggin' for a cup o' coffee before I'm through. And as for that guy you're workin' for, I'll run him right into the mud!"

Backing!

TIME had passed, and Nick had returned to his profession as a barber. He had not returned to Irontown, however, but had secured a post as assistant in one of New York's super hairdressing saloons, where he speedily became known for that characteristic luck which had made him famous among former cronies and customers.

His experience with Sleepy Sam and his gang had left him a sadder and a wiser man, but a man with a purpose, too. He knew that it had not been his luck which had impoverished him, but the swindling tactics of the card-sharping ring, and he intended one day to square accounts.

Among the many patrons who made a point of having Nick attend to them on their visits to the hairdressing saloon was a certain Mr. Amenoppopulos. Like Nick, he was of Greek origin, seemed to be fairly well-to-do, and had a decided leaning towards a little flutter on the cards or the horses.

One day, while Nick was shaving Amenoppopulos, he chanced to look through the doorway of the saloon and see a familiar figure signalling to him from the sidewalk. It was the figure of his friend and former employee, Jack, who had left Irontown for New York shortly after receiving the news that Nick had been "cleaned out."

"Oh, excuse me just a minute, Mr. Amenoppopulos," Nick apologised, and, September 26th, 1931.

leaving the elderly and portly Greek, he hurried outside.

"Well, have you got a job yet, boy?" he demanded.

Jack shook his fair head, and his clean-cut face took on a rueful expression.

"Nope," he answered. "I just missed one this morning. That makes the eighth in succession. Aw, I know you didn't want me to come here on the off-chance like I did. But I couldn't stand Irontown after you left, Nick."

Nick laid a hand on his shoulder.

"You'll find a job yet," he said. "Have you had any lunch?"

"Not to-day," Jack confessed.

"Then here's two dollars," said Nick.

"Put it on Flying Feet in the third race at Churchill Downs. And here's two hits for your lunch. Now go and put on the feed-bag."

"Thanks, Nick," Jack murmured, and his benefactor returned to Mr. Amenoppopulos.

"Sorry I had to leave you, sir," he said, "but I had to speak to an old friend."

"That's all right, Nick," Amenoppopulos told him. "By the way, what do you like in that fifth race at Louisville?"

Nick smiled.

"I've got a little bet on No Regrets," he informed the older man.

"Huh, how have you been doing lately, Nick?"

"Oh, swell," was the answer. "You see, the boys in the saloon here have been staking me in a little card-party I attend, and I've won quite a lot of dough for them—and a little bit for myself."

"I see," said Amenoppopulos through a lather of soap. "They've been making a pool for you, huh?"

"Yeah, that's it," Nick rejoined. "but it's small-time money. Oh, if I had some really important dough," he added, with a gleam in his eye, "I could get into a big game where the sugar is sweet."

The elderly Greek's interest was aroused.

"Oh," he said, "And how much would it take to get into that big game?"

"A lotta money. Mr. Amenoppopulos," Nick replied. "But with what I know now about the racket, I could trim 'em plenty."

Ten days later Mr. Amenoppopulos introduced Nick to a Greek merchant with whom he was acquainted, and then broached the subject of backing the little barber.

"I tell you he is the luckiest man in the world," Amenoppopulos declared. "I've been staking him in a small way myself, and he's won for me every time. Now, if we could put him in this big game, I'm sure he could make a lot of money."

"Well, I tell you, Alex," the merchant observed, "what's good enough for you is good enough for me to take a chance on. I am not gambling man, but you can count on me for 'ree thousand."

Thus, through the influence of Amenoppopulos, Nick again equipped himself from various sources to the tune of fifty thousand dollars, and, ready for the fray, he made preparations for another meeting with Sleepy Sam.

Those preparations culminated in a visit to a hotel to which Sleepy Sam and his confederates had shifted soon after Nick's previous encounter with them. Here Nick bought up the entire stock of card-packs available at the service-desk in the foyer, only to hand in a dozen of them the same evening.

"I'd like to return these," he said to

the salesman behind the counter. "I took more than I needed. I'll have cash for them, but keep a dollar to buy yourself a cigar."

"Thank you, sir," the salesman answered, and Nick strolled across the foyer.

On his way to the elevator he passed Jack and another man, notorious for some skill with a gun. He exchanged a glance with them and then passed into the lift which carried him swiftly to the tenth floor.

By judicious inquiry he had found out Sleepy Sam's exact address, and, locating the gambler's room, he knocked on the door. It was opened an inch or two, and the voice of Sleepy Sam asked to know who was there.

"It's only me, Sam. Nick the Barber."

The door was pulled wide, and Nick stepped across the threshold to find himself in the presence of that same bunch of rogues who had swindled him out of his first stake.

"Why, hallo, Nick," Sleepy Sam greeted him, with a peculiar twist of the lip. "How are you? I haven't seen you in six months."

"It's taken me that long to catch up with you," Nick retorted crisply. "Now listen, you lotta mugs. It's no use chicken-scratelin' around. You know what happened to me once, and I've got something to say to you. Especially to you, Sam."

"No hard feelin's, I hope," drawled Sam.

"No, just lookin' for evens," was the answer. "You haven't any objections, Sam, have you? You can see me dough this time!" And he displayed the fifty thousand dollars he was carrying on his person.

"Oh, you're okay with me, Nick," said Sleepy Sam, his eyes fastening greedily on the roll. "I'll play."

"Yeah," Nick rejoined, "and we'll play freeze-out for fifty thousand—pay after each hand."

"Phew!" breathed Schultz. "That's a lot of dough."

The little barber looked at him.

"Not for Nick Venizelos," he said. "That brother of mine owns the mint now. Hey, Sun-Tan," he added to a coloured waiter, "go downstairs and get half a dozen new decks of cards. Here's some money, and keep the change."

"You're still superstitious, huh?" mused Sleepy Sam.

"No," Nick answered, "Just careful. Come on, let's get set. Just you and me, Sam, and we'll deal our own. The rest of you fellows stand aside."

"Don't mind if I take a piece of Sam's play, do you?" asked Barnes, and Nick shook his head.

"I don't care what you do," he rejoined. "If you want to cut in on his losses you can, but only him and me are sittin' down at the table. And by the way, Sam, let's see your dough."

"I think I can match you all right," Sleepy Sam observed, and laid a thick sheaf of bills on the baize.

The darkie waiter returned with the cards—purchased, of course, from the service-desk in the foyer. A pack was split and the game opened.

An hour later Nick was sitting with a pile of notes before him, and Sleepy Sam with a thin wad of five; and the twister was marvelling, in no very pleasant mood, at the run of luck that had favoured his antagonist.

Meanwhile the rest of the gang stood in a group and watched a pool that was assuming a formidable aspect as the two players laid bet after bet on a couple of hands that had just been dealt.

"How much money have you got left?" Nick asked all at once.

"I've got five 'hundreds,'" Sleepy Sam replied.

"Well, you'd better put 'em in the centre," Nick told him, "because that's just what I'm going to raise you."

Sleepy Sam shrugged.

"I've got to call you," he muttered, and, as the notes fluttered into the pool, he displayed the cards he held.

Nick did the same, an unholy grin on his face, and Sleepy Sam leaned back in his chair.

"You win," he said slowly, "and I'm cleaned."

Nick gathered the notes, one hundred thousand dollars' worth of them, and began to stuff them into his hip-pocket.

"Sorry, Sleepy," he declared. "Tough luck. Can't say that you got the breaks. Gee, I wish those tailors would make these pockets a little bigger. Er—Sun-Tan, my hat, my cane and my gloves. I heard that in a play once. And here, Sun-Tan, take this ten-dollar bill and go with it as far as it'll take you."

"Thank you, bawss," said the nigger.

Nick moved towards the door, but, with his fingers on the handle of it, paused and looked over his shoulder.

"So the Barber gave you a trimming, huh?" he laughed. "Well, I'll be seein' yuh—"

"Just a minute!"

"Wait a minute, Nick!"

The voices of Barnes and Schultz spoke as one. Schultz reached for his hip. Barnes for the inside of his waist-coat. But before they could draw their guns Nick whipped open the door, and across the threshold stepped Jack and the hired gunman, each levelling an automatic in his right hand.

Nick chuckled light-heartedly.

"How do you like it, boys?" he said to the gamblers. "What you singin' the blues about, anyway? I told you I was gonna get even, and I once told Sleepy Sam I was goin' to play your way."

The sharpers stood by, raging inwardly but impotently. The disaster to the finances of Sleepy Sam, who was banker for them all, had broken up their ring more effectively than a police-raid could have done.

"Of course," Nick went on. "you smart gamblers have heard of marked cards—shaved cards, as we call them in the profession. Well, Nick the Barber can shave 'em a little closer than you can. Just take a good look at those decks I sent out for and you'll see what I mean."

The eyes of Sleepy Sam and his confederates darted to the table. As they snatched at the cards lying there they again heard the voice of Nick.

"Well, good-bye, hoys. And—thanks for the buggy ride."

The door closed behind him and his bodyguards, blocking out the taunting laughter that was on his lips.

Stepping High.

NICK the Barber reclined in the sitting-room of the sumptuous hotel suite that he had rented. Beside him was a blonde and attractive manicurist, and as the girl was paring his nails Nick took a cigar from the corner of his mouth and spoke to her.

"Is the smoke bothering you?" he asked solicitously.

"Oh, no," the manicurist

assured him. "I like the smell of a good cigar."

"That so?" Nick murmured. "You know, a fellow in Havana makes these up for me."

"You don't say," the girl rejoined, and then, after a pause: "I suppose you're very happy this morning, Mr. Venizelos? I've just been reading in the papers about you winning a lot of money from that gambler—er—Sleepy Sam, I think his name was."

"Those guys in the Press get hold of everything," Nick observed. "But that was nothing. I'm just starting. Before long you'll be reading a whole lot about me."

"My, it must be wonderful to win a lot of money like that!" the girl sighed.

Nick shrugged.

"Oh, money don't mean anything to me," he told her, and then, leaning forward: "Say," he went on, "you're a pretty smart girl. Maybe you can give me a little advice. Now, if you were a man, and a certain girl had made a sap out of you—huh—once upon a time—how would you get even with her? I don't mean hurt her, or anything like that—but just make her change her mind about me being a sap."

"Oh, you're only kidding, Mr. Venizelos. How could anyone make a sap out of you?"

"I'm not kidding," Nick said emphatically. "And I'd just like to get a little satisfaction out of that lady. Now how would you go about it?"

The blonde manicurist pondered a moment.

"Well, if I were a man," she told him at length, "I'd send her some flowers. Then I'd follow up with a bracelet—you know, one with diamonds in it."

"Diamonds!" Nick echoed. "You're not this girl's manager, are you?"

The girl shook her head laughingly, and, despite the bewilderment which her suggestion first aroused in him, Nick began to see the subtlety of it.

It was a suggestion that he put into practice, and three months later Marie had been coaxed from Sleepy Sam by costly gifts, and was irrefragably at the service of Nick the Barber.

And, once on the list of his growing army of hirelings, she ceased to receive expensive presents, and received only curt orders.

One day, six months after he had triumphed Sleepy Sam, Nick stepped aboard the New York to Louisville train and passed along the corridor to a private saloon, Jack, Marie and a nigger porter on his heels.

Nick himself was carrying the cage containing his precious canary bird, without which he never travelled any long distance. But as he entered the saloon he turned to Marie.

"Here, take care of Blondie," he said, in a tone that was like a knife-cut.

The girl obeyed him with a flush of humiliation, and Nick turned to the porter. He took out a ten-dollar bill, tore it in halves and handed one fragment to the darkie.

"You'll get the other half at the end of the line," he explained, "if you're good."

The darkie grinned.

"Yes, sir," he said. "Ah won't be good. Ah'll be perfect."

"Come here," Nick beckoned him nearer, and rubbed his palm over the nigger's woolly crop of hair. "Gimme luck. And say, what room is Hickory Short in?"

"Mistah Sho't, suh? Oh, he's in 3 A, suh."

Nick's eyes glistened. At last, he reflected, he was going to meet the prince of gamblers face to face.

"Marie," he snapped, rousing himself all at once, "open the suitcase and hang up my check suit." Then, turning to Jack: "Well, boy, I wish the



Jack clutched him by the shoulder. "Lay off, Nick," he said earnestly. "She's framing evidence on you."

crowd back in the old barber shop could see us now," he continued. "Louisville-bound with a bank roll big enough to choke a cow." He laughed complacently. "I guess after to-night I'll be able to send the boys back home a few thou."

"You've already paid 'em double," Jack protested.

Nick shrugged. "What of it?" he argued. "I got plenty. Besides, ain't they still my pals? Listen, Jack, I'm goin' in there to trim the great Hickory and make him look like a hick. If I lose I'll be back in the old barber shop matching pennies with Snake Eyes. But how can I lose?" And again he laughed.

It was not till some time later that the whole story leaked out concerning Nick the Barber's clean-up on the Louisville Express, and the instantaneous departure of the famous Hickory Short from the realms of big-time gambling.

By the time that story was on everybody's lips Nick was adding countless others to it—stories that intrigued and mystified—stories that placed him in the limelight even more effectively than his connection with a certain magnificent gaming saloon which was secretly opened off Fifth Avenue.

One night about a month after Hickory Short's fade-out Nick stepped out of a fifteen-thousand dollar limousine and crossed the sidewalk to the portals of his new venture, which to all appearances was merely a private house of palatial design.

A couple of uniformed doormen saluted him, and Nick handed each of them a cigar.

"Try these," he said. "A fellow in Havana makes 'em up for me."

Nick passed on, handed his hat, coat and scarf to a cloak-room attendant, and, looking more dapper than ever in an immaculate evening suit, walked into a big room crowded with fashionable women and well-dressed men.

Nick had to be careful, and an introduction to the salon could only be effected by recommendation. It was astonishing how quickly smart society flocked to the tables of Nick Venizelos, however, bringing rolls of greenbacks that found their way via the roulette croupiers to the little Irontown barber's coffers.

The room into which Nick now strolled was packed, but amid the throng he suddenly perceived Marie, whom he found useful as a "hostess." Her job was to see that any new "guests" were made to feel at home, and in the course of her duties she was permitted to take a little flutter on the wheel herself if she chose to risk the scanty salary that Nick paid her.

Nick caught sight of her as she was drawing back from one of the tables, and next moment she was hurrying towards him excitedly, a bundle of notes clutched in her hand.

"Oh, Nick, Nick," she gasped joyously, "look at what I've won! My luck's changed, and I just can't seem to lose! I've made a hundred and ten dollars."

"Here, let me see." Nick took the money out of her hand and began to count it. "Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty, ninety—a hundred. Great! Just what you owe me." And he handed her back the odd ten dollars.

Mario stared at him blankly.

"What I owe you?"

"You never did have a good memory, sister," Nick told her with a twisted smile, and then he moved away from her

and approached another fair-haired girl on whom he had lately been showering attentions.

"How you doin' now, Lola?" he asked.

"Great," the girl answered, leaning forward over one of the gaming tables. "I'm playing the red."

"Well, here's a hundred," said Nick, giving her Marie's winnings. "Put that on the red, too."

He glanced at Marie over his shoulder as he spoke, and saw that she was watching the money change hands. Her face was scarlet.

The Stool Pigeon.

NICK the Barber had become a figure as prominent in the public eye as the president, though a figure far less meritorious. His gaming-palaces, now legion, were the objects of seathing attacks by reformers who demanded that the city be purged of such dens of ill fame.

The district attorney stirred himself. He issued orders that were carried out to the letter by the police. The house off Fifth Avenue was raided. Others were discovered, and shared a similar fate. But Nick the Barber maintained his liberty, his joviality and the even tenor of his way to fabulous wealth.

The district attorney consulted his chief deputy.

"Well, what are we going to do about it?" he demanded.

"Every time we raid Nick," the deputy explained, "he proves he doesn't own the place. None of 'em are leased in his name. He's got a phoney front for every one of his joints, and you can't pin anything on him."

The district attorney pursed his lips. "That isn't a suggestion," he said. "That's an alibi."

"We close him one night," the deputy went on gloomily, "and he opens up the next—in another spot."

"Another alibi," observed the D. A. in a curt tone. "Now, look here, I demand a show-down. With the election coming up and the reformers howling for blood, I'm not going to let this tin-horn gambler's activities throw me out of office."

There was a knock on the door, and a detective put in an appearance.

"We found Sleepy Sam, chief," he told the district attorney. "He got in from 'Frisco last week."

"Good," said the D. A. "I'd like to see him alone."

Sleepy Sam was brought in from the outer office. He looked sullen, and gave the impression that he intended to be reticent whatever the purpose for which he had been brought to headquarters.

"What's up, Black?" he demanded. District Attorney Black smiled affably.

"Just want to get some gambling information from you, Sam," he explained.

"Yeah? Well, three of a kind still beat two pairs," was the sneering rejoinder. "Ah, lay off me, D. A. I've got no dope for you. I've been outta the gambling racket for months. I got tired of it."

"Yes, after Nick the Barber pushed you over and rubbed it in," the district attorney retorted. "I understand he took your girl, too."

Sam scowled.

"If you know so much, why did you send for me?" he asked.

"Now, listen, Sam," the district attorney appealed. "We're both holding the same bag. This little grease-ball, Nick Venizelos, is giving us both the run-around. Why don't you come

clean and tell me how to bring him down? He must have some weakness."

"If I knew how to bring him down," Sam rapped out viciously, "I'd do it myself. Nick the Barber, eh? A small-time hick at heart, but just dumb enough to be smart." He slid his eyes to the D. A.'s face all at once, and: "You know his weakness, don't you?" he finished.

"What?"

Sam laughed and turned towards the door.

"He's nuts for blondes," he drawled. "Yeah. Send your wife around. He'll fall for any old hag—"

The district attorney leapt to his feet. "Why, you rotten—" But Sam had slipped hastily from the office.

Meanwhile, not exactly oblivious of the stir he was causing at police headquarters, Nick Venizelos was holding audience with a group of reporters.

He did not receive them in his latest gaming-palace, the ownership of which he so flatly and humorously denied. He received them in a hairdressing saloon that he had opened as a mild blind to his other activities, and here, while Mitros Bikelas shaved him, he answered the questions of the Press.

"We'd like to know what you've got to say to this latest blast from the district attorney," one of the reporters announced.

Looking round at the newspaper men from his barber's chair, Nick affected an expression of innocence.

"Oh," he murmured. "Has he been talking about me?"

Another reporter showed him an early edition which quoted a blistering speech that had been directed against Nick by the irate and harassed D. A.

Nick read it and then spread out his hands in a gesture of injured protest.

"Why, he's got me all wrong, boys," he declared. "I'm not a gambler, I'm a barber. This is my shop. This is the only business I got. Nick the Barber—ain't that what everybody calls me?"

The reporters smirked facetiously, and Nick grinned, too, but continued in the same style, saying nothing that would incriminate him.

"Now what's he want to go ahead and make a lotta trouble for?" he asked.

"I'm just a nice little fella tryin' to get along. Now what's he want to go ahead and blow a lot of steam off for?"

"Then you're going to keep open, as usual?" one of the newspapermen inquired, slyly referring to the latest house where Nick had instituted his casino.

"There's no law against running a barber shop, is there?" Nick retorted craftily. "Say, have some cigars, you boys. A fella in Havana makes 'em up for me."

The reporters helped themselves, and then left in high spirits.

"So long, Nick," one of them called over his shoulder. "See you in the gaol-house."

"Sure," Nick answered, waving. "I'll come and visit you in the can any time, brother."

Bikelas leaned over the chair.

"Boss," he said, when the Presmen had gone, "you sure one smart fella. You sure tell 'em big mouthful. But eef that doeristrict attorney get too fresh, Nick the Barber geev him eloso shave, huh?" And he made a pass with the razor in his hand.

Five minutes later Nick left the shop and made his way to his new gaming-palace. Passing through the salon, he went up to a second-floor room which he had converted into an office, and he

was looking over some accounts here when Jack entered, spick and span in a tuxedo suit.

By signs Jack indicated that a lady of arresting beauty desired an interview with Nick, who immediately gave instructions that she was to be shown in.

She proved to be all that Jack had indicated, and—she was a blonde.

"Oh, how do you do?" she said, coming forward with an almost regal carriage of her lissom figure. "Are you Mr. Venizelos?" And then, as Nick inclined his head "Oh, I—I wonder, Mr. Venizelos, if I—if you could—"

She stammered prettily, and the little barber indicated a chair.

"Sit down," he invited, "and call me Nick."

The blonde took the chair smilingly, and then leaned forward, her face becoming troubled.

"I'm in an awful plight," she explained. "I lost all my money at the roulette table, and I wondered if you could lend me some to get home with."

Nick fingered his chin.

"Well, I don't believe in lending," he stated, "but I'll give you ten."

"Ten?" the woman repeated. "Oh, I—I need five hundred."

"Where do you live, lady?" Nick inquired politely. "China?"

She laughed, then took a diamond bracelet from her wrist.

"I could leave this for security," she offered. "If you know jewellery, you'll believe me when I tell you that's worth a thousand."

"I know jewellery," Nick said, "and I know women, too. You see, it's my business to make a study of human nature, and I can see you're on the level. How about a little drink?"

She accepted the invitation, and Nick filled two glasses.

"Here's to the most charming man I've ever met," the blonde toasted. "You're certainly a friend in need."

"Big-hearted Nick, they call me,"

was the rejoinder. "Never said 'no' to a woman in my life. Say, I'll take you to the cashier's and get that money." And he slipped an arm around her waist familiarly.

The blonde did not seem to object, and he escorted her to the door and opened it.

"Tell me," he said, "when am I going to see you again?"

"When would you like to?"

"To-morrow?" Nick suggested.

"For lunch? At the Savoy? You could give me your address and I'd send my car for you."

"Oh, no, that's all right," she assured him. "I'll meet you there, at one o'clock. Good-bye—Nick."

"Good-bye," he said in his most charming tone—"And tell the district attorney I'll see him on Tuesday," he added with sudden violence.

As he spoke he pushed the woman through the door and then propelled her forward with a lusty thrust of his boot. Down she went on her hands and knees with a startled squeal, and almost before she had fallen Nick had spun around and reached for a phone.

"Hallo, hallo," he shouted into the mouth-piece, snatching up the receiver. "Say, operator—get me the district attorney at his home right away—Hallo! Is that you, Black? Well, this is Nick the Barber. I just kicked your stool-pigeon right out of office, and what's more—if you don't quit messing around in my affairs I'm goin' to kick you right out of town!"

He hung up savagely, and turned to find that Jack had come into the room.

"Stool-pigeon?" Jack echoed. "How did you know it, Nick?"

"Boy, I can tell 'em," was the complacent answer. "She had district attorney written right across her kisser."

"Congratulations," said Jack.

"You've got wise to yourself at last, so far as blondes are concerned."

Nick had by now cooled down considerably.

"Say," he declared, thinking of Marie, "no woman will ever make a sap out of me again. Nick is plenty smart these days. Yes, sir," Then he began to laugh. "Oh, boy, I'll never forget the expression on that dame's face when I gave her the boot, though."

The Girl from the River.

DRIVING home to the gaming-palace after a little recreation in the way of a late party one night, Nick and Jack were held up on Brooklyn Bridge by two or three men who waved to the little Greek's chauffeur excitedly.

"What's the matter?" Nick demanded, as the car drew to a standstill.

"We just dragged a girl out of the river," one of the men on the bridge answered. "Will you take her to town? She's alive, but unconscious."

Nick laid hold of a rug.

"Wrap this around her and bring her here," he commanded. "Bill,"—to his chauffeur—"give them a hand. We'll take her to the hospital."

Jack clutched Nick's arm.

"Wait a minute," he hissed. "What do you know about this dame? How do you know she ain't another plant from the district attorney's office?"

"Yeah?" Nick scoffed. "I suppose they brought her here and threw her into the water, huh?"

"Don't forget, you can still pour water," Jack retorted, but, heedless of his friend's arguments, Nick helped to lift the girl into the car and then ordered his chauffeur to drive on.

A hundred yards from the bridge the girl stirred and opened her eyes wearily. In the light of a lamp that the car was passing, Nick saw that she was lovelier than any girl he had ever known, and he found himself marvelling at the transparency of her complexion, and the silken texture of her pale-gold hair.



"You dirty double-crosser, you!" Nick raged.

"Where am I?" she whispered.
 "You're all right," Nick assured her.
 "We're taking you to hospital."
 She started up at that.
 "Oh, don't take me there, don't take me there!" she panted. "Let me out here. I'll go home. I can get a bus."
 "You're wet—you'll get pneumonia."

"Let her go if she wants to," Jack broke in. "We might get in a jam, Nick. You don't know what her racket might be."

Nick agreed reluctantly, and, as the car was drawn up, he let the girl climb out. But she had only gone a few paces when she reeled dizzily, so that Nick was just in time to leap from the limousine and catch her as she fell.

"Ah, the act's on again," Jack sneered contemptuously.

"It looks to me as if the kid was starved," Nick jerked. "I suppose you think that's actin' too. Come on, help me put her in the car, and we'll take her home—"

So the girl from the river was carried to Nick's magnificent casino-residence. The little gambler laid her on a couch, Jack watching him the while. Then the two men left a maid in charge of her.

In an adjoining room Jack appealed to the little barber's judgment for the last time.

"Just what do you aim to do about this dame?" he demanded. "Are you runnin' a sanatorium, or something?"

"Say, are you still harping on that girl?" Nick rejoined impatiently. "Why don't you snap out of it? Your face looks so long I'd charge you two prices for a shave—"

Before he could proceed further a door opened, and the girl with the golden hair came through from the other room, where she had been placed in the care of the maid.

"What!" exclaimed Nick. "You up?"

"I'm leaving," the girl answered. "I just wanted to thank you for being so kind."

"But you can't walk out like this," Nick protested. "I had a doctor in to see you a few minutes ago, and he said you might get pneumonia."

Jack put in a word.
 "I have a few questions to ask you, young lady," he began grimly, but before he could learn any more than her name, which was Irene Graham, Nick interrupted him.

"Say, what do you think you are—a policeman?" he demanded. "You get out and leave me to talk to her."

Jack departed sourly, and as the door closed behind him the girl Irene stole a glance at Nick.

"Your friend doesn't seem to like me," she murmured.

"Aw, don't mind him," Nick told her. "He's a swell guy, really. Say, listen, were you—were you working?"

She bit her lip.

"I lost my job, and then I got sick," she answered. "I had a few dollars, but everything seemed to go wrong—and then, last night— Oh, I was a coward!"

"Lots of people would be cowards if they went through what you've had to go through," Nick said gently.

"But I'm straightened out now," she declared, brightening a little. "I feel like a new person, and—and I must go. I can't stay here."

"You'll need some money, anyway," Nick said, and would not hear of her refusing the wad of notes that he offered.

"But I'll probably never be able to

pay it back," she told him, whereupon he laughed.

"That's all right," he announced. "I own the mint. My brother gave it to me. Well, good-bye, sister, if you're bent on going. Keep off the bridges."

He stopped, for all at once she swayed and drew her hand across her forehead dazedly. He started forward at once, concern in his manner.

"Look here," he insisted, "you're stayin' here until you're better and can get some colour in those cheeks. You're set on keepin' that date with the undertakers, aren't you? But there's nothing doing. You take orders from me, and I take 'em from the doctor. See?"

So the girl Irene remained under Nick the Barber's roof, recuperating from the effects of her ordeal, and so far as Nick was concerned, a new sentiment began to play a part in his life. He knew what it was to be in love, genuinely and wholeheartedly.

Then, one day, meeting him as he came into the lounge with some flowers for her, she asked him to sit down while she spoke to him of something that was on her mind.

"You've been so nice to me," she said, "you've done so much. And—there doesn't seem to be anything I can do for you."

"Why, you've done plenty," he told her. "Just being around is enough. You don't owe me anything." Then, as he saw that her eyes were swimming with tears: "Here, here," he cried, "what's all this about? Now, don't cry, baby—don't! What's bothering you, honey, anyway?"

"I—I haven't been on the level with you, Nick," she sobbed.

"You're not from the District Attorney's office?" he jerked.

"No, but I haven't told you the whole truth about myself."

Nick laughed.

"Oh, that's all right!" he answered. "I haven't told you the whole truth about myself, either. Say, apart from bein' Nick Venizelos, the gambler, I used to play a saxophone in the Iron-town band."

"I'm serious, Nick," she said distractedly. "I'm wanted by the police—for blackmail! Oh, it wasn't really blackmail—I didn't mean to blackmail the man in the case at all. But I think you should know that I might get you into some trouble with the police, for I seem to be a jinx wherever I go."

"Well, you haven't been a jinx to me," Nick grinned. "And as for the cops, they've got nothing on me. I'm just a barber-shop proprietor so far as they're concerned."

She looked at him meekly.

"And you don't want me to get out of here now?" she asked.

"What for?" he rejoined. "I wouldn't care what you'd done. I'm not exactly a Sunday School teacher myself."

The Snare.

THE district attorney drummed his fingers on the edge of his desk.

"I hate to do this," he said.

"but it's the only way we can nail him."

"Of course," the deputy pointed out,

"it's really compounding a felony."

The D.A. shrugged.

"Well, what of it?" he reported.

"The end justifies the means, and we've got to drive Nick Venizelos out of town. The disgrace is we have to resort to such round-about methods to get him. But if we can put him in gaol for only a few months, we can break up his gambling ring. Then the

public and the Press will lay off me."

There was a knock on the door, and a woman operator appeared.

"The girl's here," she announced.

"I picked her up at the Savoy."

"Send her in," ordered the D.A., and, turning, the woman operator spoke to someone behind her.

"Miss Graham," she said. "Come in."

Pale and tremulous, Irene crossed the threshold hesitantly. The district attorney, politeness personified, drew up a chair for her and then indicated to the woman operator and his chief deputy that he desired to be alone with the girl.

"Miss Graham," he said, as the door closed behind his departing subordinates, "I have a warrant charging you with blackmail, together with enough evidence to convict you."

"I—I didn't mean to blackmail him!" Irene cried, with a pitiful break in her voice.

"That's your story," observed the district attorney, "but what you did was extortion in the eyes of the law, and you can be sent to the penitentiary. Now there's a way you can avoid going there, Miss Graham. A very simple way."

She looked at him fearfully.

"What do you want me to do?" she asked him in a querulous tone.

"Just a little favour," he said.

"While we were checking up on Nick the Barber, we found that you were staying at his place. The sentence for blackmail, Miss Graham, is from two to ten years in the penitentiary, but you can avoid it if you will just do what I ask you."

"Well, what is it?" she faltered.

"Not much," the D.A. rejoined. "I want you to get some of those gold keys that Nick's customers use as an 'open, Sesame' to his gambling house—"

"I won't!" she cried out. "I won't do it! You can send me up for trial!"

"Now, don't be foolish," the district attorney said. "It's a case of you or him, and he'll never know you did it."

"I—won't!" she answered again and again, yet somehow with more desperation than finally. "I won't! I won't!"

"Don't get excited," the D.A. soothed. "All we want to do is to give Nick a good scare. He'll be out in a month. That wouldn't hurt him at all, while if you went to the penitentiary for a long sentence—"

She began to cry, and the sound of her sobbing made the D.A. set his teeth. He could not say that he had at any moment looked forward to this task with pleasurable anticipation, and it was proving as unenviable as he had imagined it would be.

"He's the only person that's ever been kind to me," the girl moaned.

"He's a public menace," the district attorney rapped out. "He's trying to corrupt public officials. He's put his filthy hands on policemen, State's attorneys—even made overtures to our judges with the intention of bribing them."

"I don't care," Irene sobbed. "I can't help it. Let me alone. Please don't make me do it!" The tears streamed down her cheeks. "Oh, please—please don't make me do it!"

That night, in the lounge of his apartment above the gaming salon, Nick Venizelos sat on the edge of a chair and fondled Irene's golden hair.

"You look swell, baby," he declared, looking at the fashionable evening gown and fur-trimmed coat she was wear-

(Continued on page 26.)

A racketeer is "taken for a ride" by a rival and killed. When his brother found the body he swore revenge. A brave girl becomes his ally in his dangerous task.



Starring
DOROTHY REVIER,
TOM SANTSCHI
 and
CHARLES MORTON.

The Ambush—and Afterwards.

THE Bowery, New York City, were live some of the most desperate criminals in the world—men who never hesitate to use the gun when in tight corners or up against some rival gang. Racketeers and bootleggers for the most part, making big money "running" illicit liquor in and around the city.

A dangerous spot and generally seething with sinister activity, but at this time, with the hands of the clocks approaching one in the morning, all seemed quiet and still. Yet at one end of a narrow and squalid street there lurked three shadowy forms, hat brims pulled down over foreheads, coat-collars turned up about necks, hands thrust deep into overcoat pockets.

Still as statues they were, till suddenly the roar of a high-powered engine shattered the silence, and almost instantly a tarpaulin-covered lorry came sweeping out of a garage some hundred yards down the road. Straight towards the three waiting men the heavy vehicle came, rapidly gaining speed.

"Now!" came the hoarse whisper from a thick-set fellow who was obviously leader of the trio.

On the instant, guns flashed from overcoat pockets and almost instantaneously three shots crashed out, the bullets narrowly missing the driver and the man who sat next to him on the oncoming lorry. Cursing violently they quickly snatched out their own revolvers, but before either could fire their assailants again loosed their guns at them.

There came a sobbing gasp from the man beside the lorry driver as a bullet took him clean in the chest and, slumping sideways, he pitched from the vehicle to the road. Clutching frantically at the steering-wheel with one hand, the driver fired back at those

three shadowy figures now but a few yards distant. Whether he hit them or not he did not care over much—but he did fervently hope to get the lorry past the ambush.

But there was no escape for him. Again there came three shattering reports, and with never so much as a sound the driver crumpled in his seat, three slugs imbedded in his limp body.

Out of control now, the lorry rocketed on, swaying dangerously, threatening to crash on to the pavement at any moment. But with a terse command from their leader the killers sprang forward, and heedless of the risk they ran, they leaped on to the vehicle and quickly got it under control again.

Behind came hoarse shouts, the running of many feet, and then the loud reports of revolver shots. But the men who rushed from the garage, from whence had come the ambushed lorry, were much too late, for in a matter of seconds the heavy vehicle had disappeared round the end of the road at a wild, reckless speed.

A private apartment, luxuriously furnished as a drawing-room, in the Blue Dragon restaurant. Seated in deep armchairs, their bodies tense, four well-dressed men, but with the unprepossessing countenances of crooks, and a rather pretty, fair-haired girl—all looking inquiringly at the imposing figure of the man who had just slammed the telephone receiver savagely back upon its hooks.

"What the heck's the matter, boss?" ventured one of the seated men.

"Matter?" Piccardi, owner of the restaurant and one of the most powerful racketeers in New York, clenched his hands as he fixed his hirelings with his smouldering grey eyes. "Big Boy's the matter, curse him! Just bad word

from the garage that he ambushed the lorry running out to Gondoza's, shot Jake and Mike, and made off with the cargo. The swine! But we'll get him for it—hell we will!"

His satellites were on their feet in an instant, revengeful expressions upon their coarse features, hands clasped tightly around the butts of guns that lay concealed in their pockets. Each of them was ready to set out at that moment to settle with Big Boy, the rival gangster who for so long had been a thorn in Piccardi's side. He it was who had stolen a goodly portion of their trade in the last few weeks, audaciously encroaching on their territory. And now the successful raid on their cargo of contraband liquor—that was the very last straw!

"We'll get the dirty skunk in his apartments, boss," growled Tony Havers, Piccardi's chief lieutenant, his pig-like eyes flashing ominously.

But Piccardi waved the suggestion aside with an angry motion of his hand.

"No good—his house is full of burglar alarms. If we broke in he'd be warned. The only way is to take him unawares." He bit his nails savagely, fingered the small, neatly clipped moustache that adorned his upper lip, meditating the while. Then suddenly an ugly smile crept into his face, and his eyes settled themselves on the fair-haired girl who still reclined in her chair as if uninterested in what had occurred. "Lita, my pretty, this is where you can prove how very real your affection is for me. Big Boy's going to pay, and pay dearly for having the darned nerve to cross my path, and you can help materially in getting him."

"Me?" Lita Alvaro, a cabaret star who had recently fallen on evil times and drifted into the Bowery, where she had soon become acquainted with most of the gang leaders there, got languidly

to her feet and came over to Piccardi. "But, Piccardi, Big Boy's a friend of mine. I couldn't—"

"That's just it, Lita." The gangster caught at the girl's arms and squeezed them affectionately, smiling down into her pretty face. "Big Boy's a friend of yours. That makes your task easier."

"But, Piccardi—"

"Now, now, Lita, you know where your bread's buttered. Big Boy's never given you the clothes and the handsome presents I've given you, has he?" Piccardi's smile vanished suddenly, and again his face took on a vicious expression. "Just you forget him, Lita, and do what you're told. There's a lot in it for you, if you do, but if you defy me—"

He did not finish, but shrugged his shoulders expressively, causing the girl to shudder. But quickly mastering the fear that had invaded her soul, she smiled up at him and nodded.

"Very well, Piccardi," she said in a steady voice. "What is it you want me to do?"

While plans were being made in that room at the Blue Dragon to put Big Boy "on the spot," in another such well-appointed apartment, in a house on Fourteenth Street, there sat a man, fast asleep, his head resting on his arms, which were sprawled upon the table before him. A thick-set man, with huge shoulders, heavy features, and hair that was fast thinning and turning grey.

Undisturbed he slept till, in the region of seven in the morning, footsteps descended the stairs from the floor above, and there came into the drawing-room a well-built and not bad-looking youngster, with dark curly hair and clear brown eyes. At sight of the sleeping man, he whistled in amazement, then went across to him, took him by the shoulders and shook him.

"What tho Hades!" The sleeper started up in alarm, his hand going instinctively to his jacket pocket. But next second it dropped to his side as he became aware of his surroundings, recognised the boy gazing down at him so curiously. "Oh, it's you, Roy! Jove, but you gave me quite a start."

He got to his feet, stretched his cramped limbs, then went and sat down in an armchair beside the empty grate.

For a moment or two there was silence, then Roy Smith seated himself in the chair on the opposite side of the fireplace and gazed across at the thick-set man with a wistful expression in his eyes.

"Was it necessary to sleep down here all night, Howard?" he said reproachfully.

"Well, no." The big man smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "But you see, kid, I was exceptionally late home, and I didn't want to disturb you when I came in. Extra work. A darned nuisance, but it couldn't be helped."

"But it's knocking you up, old man." A worried frown settled on Roy's brow. "And it's all my fault. Howard, you're too darned good to me. My brother, but father and mother to me as well. No, no, you can't deny it. Ever since the old folk died, you've looked after me and kept me, working yourself almost to breaking point. Oh, but if only I could end all that—give you a chance to ease down. But I don't seem to have the least opportunity to—"

"That's all right, Roy," his brother broke in soothingly. "You do your best I know. No fault of yours that the paper doesn't pay you more than ten dollars a week. A measly wage, but I suppose, with its poor circulation, it can't go to more."

September 26th, 1931.

"That's because of the dud reporters we've got. They never bring in anything worth while—they haven't the guts to go out for the big stories. Why, when Miller had the chance to—" Roy suddenly sprang to his feet, a determined light flashing into his eyes. "But hang Miller! Howard, I tell you I'm not going to stick in a groove—remain a proof reader and junior sub. all my life. I'm going to do something big, force them to give me a better wage. And I'll see Mr. Jackson as soon as I get to the office this morning, and ask him to let me go out after news. Gang stuff. There's Piccardi and the fellow they call Big Boy to be exposed, and I'll—"

Howard Smith started violently and half rose from his chair. Then sank back in it again as he saw the curious look his younger brother gave him. With an effort he summoned up a smile.

"Gee, kid, you go easy," he said in a somewhat strained voice. "I admire your pluck, your determination to do something worth while, but I'd rather work till I dropped than have you run yourself into danger for the sake of a few more bucks. And let me tell you there is real danger for anyone who noses into the affairs of such crooks as Piccardi and this fellow Big Boy."

"But, Howard," protested Roy glumly, "I—I—"

"Forget it, kid." There was a note of appeal in Howard's voice now. "You stick to inside work. Sooner or later your chance will come."

He rose wearily to his feet, came over and patted his brother affectionately on the shoulder, then went from the room, quite sure that Roy would take his advice as he had been wont to do in the past. But in this belief, Howard Smith was wrong, for Roy was grimly resolved that nothing should stop him from making headway on the "Daily Bulletin," and his own experience on the paper told him that the quickest way to do this was to become a news-hound, as reporters were popularly called.

Revenge!

OBSESSED with the resolve, Roy was all eager to ask Mr. Jackson, the managing editor of the "Daily Bulletin," to allow him to transfer to the outside staff. But Mr. Jackson did not put in an appearance at the office that morning and so Roy sat at his desk fuming with impatience—and he fumed all the more when the news came of the previous night's raid on a lorry of illicit liquor that belonged to Piccardi, the racketeer. Big Boy they said had held it up and run off with it and Roy simply itched to go out and try his hand at fathoming the mystery of Big Boy's identity.

Who was this sinister racketeer and gunman? If only he could get his life's history for the "Bulletin," Roy knew that he would be made.

Afternoon came and still no Mr. Jackson. Five o'clock, and Roy was due to leave. And then, just as he was thinking it was useless to hang on a moment longer, the editor came in and with a casual nod to the staff went over to his desk and sat down. Roy allowed a few minutes to elapse and then summoning his courage, he approached the big man's desk.

"Mr. Jackson," he said a trifle hesitantly, "can you spare me a minute?"

"Well?" The editor was busy with some copy for the next day's issue and he did not raise his head.

"I—I want to ask you if you'd be good enough to transfer me to the out-

side staff, sir?" Roy fidgeted with the lapel of his jacket, for Mr. Jackson was somewhat of a tyrant and the youngster was fearful lest he should turn round on him and rail him. But the editor made no move, no answer, and regaining courage Roy went on: "You see, sir, I want to advance my position on the paper, to make more money and—"

"And you think you can do it by becoming a newsgetter, huh?" Mr. Jackson shot at him almost fiercely.

"Yes, that's right, Mr. Jackson," Roy replied stoutly enough. "I'm ambitious—I feel that if I had the chance I could get the dope on people like Piccardi and his gang, solve the identity of Big Boy—"

"What?" The editor spun round in his chair and looked up at Roy with a sneer on his hard lean face. But as he saw the eager light in the boy's eyes his expression softened and he caught at Roy's arm. "By heck, but I'll say you've got guts and that's something this paper is sadly lacking. Want to be a news-hound, do you? Right, then you shall. Get busy, young man, get busy, and if you bring in the goods, I promise you you'll get a darned good rise."

In the seventh heaven of delight, Roy flew from the office to the street. Already his keen young brain had formed a plan. He was quite friendly with detective Brady, who was attached to the local police station and Brady, as he knew, was at present engaged in trying to bring in Piccardi and Big Boy, and other such powerful gang leaders. He was bound to know their hide-outs, their haunts and that was just what Roy himself wanted to know; with such information in his possession he might find some way of learning quite a lot about them.

It was as Roy was half-walking, half-running in the direction of the police station that Lita Alvaro, dressed in a smart black evening gown with a rope of exquisite pearls around her neck, came into that private room at the Blue Dragon.

Piccardi and his "boys" were already there, lounging in chairs, but as she swept into the apartment they rose to their feet, the gang leader hurrying to meet her with a sinister smile playing about the corners of his hard cruel mouth.

"Okay, Lita?" he inquired eagerly.

"Dead easy. Thought he'd still be as keen as mustard on me. Coming along here for a friendly little pow-wow." She glanced at the expensive gold watch on her wrist, then shrugged her shapely shoulders. "Should be here any moment now—and he's not the faintest suspicion that you've anything to do with this place. Trust me to tap him gently and find that out."

"Good girl." Piccardi beamed with pleasure and squeezed her arm. "When that big stiff's out of the way you're going to be well rewarded, my dear. You'll find Piccardi can be very grateful for services rendered."

Lita shivered a little, for though immensely fond of this brute she could not bear the thought of being in the tiniest degree responsible for sending a man to his death. But there was no turning back now—she had given her promise and any hesitancy on her part to carry out the part she was to play could have but one ending. Men and women alike—Piccardi treated any who hesitated to do his bidding or who double-crossed him in but one way. Death from his fell gun!

A knock on the door that made the girl start violently, then she felt the

pressure of Piccardi's fingers on her arms again—saw his hirelings instinctively stiffen as their hands flashed to coat pockets where their fingers fastened around the butts of their guns.

"You know what you've to do, Lita," Piccardi hissed through gritted teeth. "Act naturally and he won't suspect—then we'll get him."

She nodded slowly; watched the racketeer and his men tip-toe swiftly to a door that gave access to a smaller room, then, as they disappeared, she dropped into the chesterfield and picked up a magazine that was lying there.

"Come in." She glanced up with every appearance of casualness as the door from the restaurant opened, then smiled bewitchingly as her visitor strode into the room. "Oh, it's you, Big Boy. Sharp on time, too. Splendid, for I've only engaged this room for half an hour. Time enough for a nice little chat, though, isn't it?"

Howard Smith alias Big Boy nodded and coming across to her, he dropped on to the couch and took her hands in his.

"Look here, kid," he said somewhat gruffly, "when I met up with you last month I thought we were going to be mighty good friends. Then what happened? I went off for a spell and on my return found that you'd been mixing with another crowd. Too bad, Lita. Of course, Pecunni's all right, but—"

"Piccardi did you say?" she interrupted him teasingly.

"Hell!" The word ripped from between Big Boy's curling lips and his eyes blazed with an ugly gleam. "Why, Lita, if I thought you'd been mixing with that skunk I'd kill you both—I swear I would!"

But Lita only smiled. It pacified her to know that he had not the slightest suspicion of her relationship with his rival and it also gave her the necessary bit of confidence to go right through with the diabolical part she had to play.

"Then I'm glad I don't know this Piccardi, Big Boy, if that's what you'd feel about such a friendship," she said with a disarming smile.

"Yeah." He squeezed her hands, gazing wistfully into her pale blue eyes. "But forget Piccardi, Lita, and let's talk of more pleasant things. Now I'm back in the city and have lit on you once more, why not join up with me again? You're a pretty kid and I'm mighty fond of you. What do you say?"

Lita was silent. Not because she was at a loss for words, but because her gaze was riveted on the door across the room that led into the adjoining apartment. Slowly and stealthily it was being pushed open by avenging hands!

"Stick 'em up, you rat!"

The words were spat out with savage intensity, but if Big Boy felt any qualms he did not show them even by the merest flicker of an eyelid. Slowly, he turned his head, and Lita, watching him closely, could not help but admire the coolness of the man.

"Ah, Piccardi. Let me congratulate you on this very clever prearranged meeting." He looked with an air of bravado at his deadly rival, and then at the five men with him, who were claspng revolvers which were directed at him through their jacket pockets. "But why get a woman to frame me for you, Piccardi? That shows that you are—"

"Silence, you skunk, or by heavens I'll drill you just where you are!" Piccardi's face was a mask of cold fury, and his finger trembled on the trigger of the gun that he gripped in his hand. A moment of silence while the two eyed each other levelly, then: "You get up, Big Boy, and keep your blamed hand away from that pocket. You hear me?"

Big Boy rose languidly to his feet, dropping Lita's hands, then smiled quizzically as Piccardi's hirelings ranged themselves around him, still covering him with their guns.

"Well, and what's the big idea?" Big

Boy inquired, though he knew the answer.

"You know well enough!" snapped Piccardi, glowering savagely at him. "Encroach on my territory, steal my trade; run off with my booze, kill my men! You'd do that, would you, you swine! Well, you'll not do it again, by heavens you won't! I've got you—got you at last, Big Boy, and, by heck, you're going for your last ride! You hear me, you scum?"

Big Boy drew himself up, eyes agleam, hands clenching tightly at his sides. For a moment it seemed that he would fling himself at his rival, but a sudden threatening movement of those hands held ready in the pockets of Piccardi's henchmen told Big Boy that violence would avail him nothing.

"Through that door there!" Piccardi stabbed a finger viciously towards a door opposite the one that led into the small communicating room. This was a way out to the back of the premises. "And keep moving, Big Boy. Understand?"

Big Boy inclined his head, gazed deep into Piccardi's burning eyes for a moment or two, then bracing his shoulders he turned on his heel and strode towards the indicated door.

Not a sound in the room, then, save the shuffling of feet as Big Boy strode onwards to his doom followed by Piccardi's men with their guns trained on his back. They disappeared, then Piccardi, lighting a cigarette, turned to Lita who was standing white-faced by the chesterfield striving to master the emotions that stormed her breast.

"I'll be seeing you, Lita," he said in a cool gloating voice, and quickly turning from her he sped after that grim little procession.

Big Boy's Homecoming.

AT the precise moment that Big Boy was forced from that room at the pistol's point a man and a boy came into the almost deserted restaurant. Roy Smith and Detective Brady, a wizen-faced little man with

Sight of Roy standing at the door evidently listening to what was being said by Piccardi and his men in the conference room sent a thrill down Lita's spine. A spy!



steely grey eyes and dressed in a shabby brown suit and grease-stained velour hat that gave him the appearance of anything but a sharp and very successful detective.

Roy's request for information concerning Piccardi and Big Boy had met with immediate response. Brady would be pleased to tell him all he knew about those two powerful gangsters, and what was more show him where Piccardi had his hide-out—perhaps even give him the chance to come face to face with that terror of the underworld.

So it was that Roy came to the Blue Dragon, and as he cast his eyes about the trim and neat little restaurant he marvelled that such a place should harbour so desperate a character as Piccardi.

Then Roy's gaze came to rest on the prettiest girl he had ever seen. Dark-haired, with big blue eyes and neatly, though quietly, dressed in a pale-blue frock with lace trimmings. She was sitting by herself at one of the tables in a far corner of the room, and as she became aware that the boy was looking at her she gave him the faintest of smiles that caused the youngster's heart to beat a trifle faster.

Little did Roy dream that Doris White, looking for all the world like some demure schoolgirl, was in reality a very close friend of Piccardi's, one of the two gangsters he hoped to expose through the medium of the "Daily Bulletin"!

"Come along, kid," Brady touched Roy's arm, and as the youngster turned back to him the detective jerked his head towards a door on the left-hand side of the restaurant. "If Piccardi's anywhere around he'll be in there. A private room, and as the door's bound to be locked we'll have to knock."

He drove Roy over to the door and rapped upon its panels. A wait of a moment or two during which time the door was unlocked so quietly, that even the alert detective failed to hear any sound, then:

"Come in," came the call in a feminine voice.

Brady grasped the handle, turned it and opened the door. Then, with another motion of his head to Roy, he marched into the room with the youngster close at his heels.

"Hallo, Lita," Brady nodded in a casual way as the girl looked up from the chesterfield where she had swiftly seated herself after unlocking the door. "Piccardi not at home?"

"The boss?" Lita arched her eyebrows as she dropped the magazine she had caught up. "No, I don't think he is."

"Too bad. Just my luck when I'd brought a young friend specially round to meet him." He indicated Roy with a jerk of his thumb while his keen eyes were sweeping the room. Obvious to him that Piccardi had been there quite recently, and others with him. The thick pile of carpet was ruffled as by many pairs of feet while the smell of scented tobacco smoke hung thickly on the air—the scent of the perfumed cigarettes that Brady knew Piccardi smoked. A long, lingering look at that door across the room that opened into the smaller apartment, then the detective's gaze came back to the girl who, after a cursory nod to Roy, had been watching Brady closely. "Well, Lita, tell Piccardi I called and that I'll be seeing him some time. You won't forget, will you?"

She nodded, wondering, with fear clutching at her heart, if Brady had at last got something on Piccardi. But that it was impossible to tell—the detec-

tive's inscrutable face gave nothing away.

And then Brady was gone, with never another word, and Roy with him.

Roy was partaking of a somewhat belated tea on that pleasant summer's evening. Though a trifle disappointed at not having come face to face with the dread Piccardi, he nevertheless felt more than a little elated that he was acquainted with the scoundrel's hide-out, knew the description of the man. With this information in his possession he could form his own plans—work all he knew to expose him in the sheet for which he was now a news-hound.

It was as the boy was thus ruminating that a high-powered car came racing along the street down below. Some dozen or so yards from the building in which Roy was munching his tea, its speed slackened considerably, and the nearside door swung wide. Level with Roy's home, and then something shot out of the vehicle and came to rest in the gutter in a grotesque heap. Barely had it touched ground than the car was speeding away again, its doors reclosed.

A bullet riddled body, and a woman who happened to be passing along the side-walk at that moment let out a frantic scream as her horrified eyes encountered the corpse.

Instantly there came the sound of running feet, growing clearer as the purr of the high-powered car died in the distance. Next second, half a dozen men and women, with a uniformed policeman in their midst, crowded around the hysterically shouting woman and the form that lay so lifeless by the kerb.

"By gar—murder!" exclaimed Police Officer Simms after a brief glance at the corpse, and promptly whipped out his whistle and blew three thrill blasts on it.

Attracted by the sudden commotion Roy rose from the tea-table, went over to the window and peered down into the street. Clearly he could see the lifeless figure of the man, the little knot of people clustered curiously around with the policeman striving to keep them back, and his journalistic instincts were at once aroused. Perhaps here was the makings of an excellent story for the "Bulletin"—perhaps even a scoop!

No sooner did the thought occur to him than he was darting from the room. Down the two flights of stairs to the street. He came to the little cluster of people gathered on the pavement, and pushed eagerly through them. But then his progress was impeded by the grim-faced policeman who thrust out a gnarled fist and held him back.

"Now then, younker, you clear off!" he growled officiously.

"But I'm Press—see this!" Roy quickly jerked his official pass from his breast-pocket and thrust it under the officer's nose. "I'm hoping there's a story here for my paper, officer."

Police-officer Simms nodded, satisfied with the youngster's credentials.

"Right! Fire ahead, sir!" he said tersely. "It's murder!"

Roy replaced his pass, and as the policeman again set to work to keep back the curious crowd which was fast increasing its numbers, he dropped to his knees beside the dead man. But the face was turned downwards, so it was necessary for Roy to lift the head if he was to obtain a description of the man's features.

Gently he did this and then a horrified expression leaped into his face, and he gave an agonised cry.

"Heavens, it—it's Howard—Howard!" he gasped pathetically

With the tears rushing to his eyes he swept the lifeless body into his arms, hugging it close, while those on the pavement cast curious eyes at him. Then Police-officer Simms turned his head, quickly moved forward and clutched Roy's arm imperatively.

"Say, you can't do that!" he said commandingly. "The body mustn't be moved till—"

"But, officer"—Roy turned his tear-dimmed eyes on the man—"he—he's my brother."

A gasp ran around the watchers and the officer looked at the boy incredulously.

"Your brother?" he echoed. "Why, kid, he's—"

The officer broke off as there came the unmistakable whine of a police tender, and next second the van came swinging round a near-by corner into Fourteenth Street. It pulled up almost in its own length beside Roy, who still clung to his brother's lifeless form, and at once three uniformed figures leaped out from the back, to be followed more slowly by a shabbily-dressed, wizened-faced little man with steely grey eyes.

A hurried conclave with Police-officer Simms, and then the plain-clothes man strode up to Roy and touched him on the shoulder, while two of the uniformed men from police headquarters went back to the tender and dragged out the stretcher that reposed there.

"Come along, kid; take it easy." But as Roy looked dully up at him, the plain-clothes man caught in his breath. "Gee, it's you, Roy Smith!"

"Ye-yes, Mr. Brady." Roy's voice was little more than a hoarse whisper as he dragged himself wretchedly to his feet, his face white and strained, the tears still glistening in his eyes, striving to find an outlet. "He—he was my brother."

"Your brother!" Detective Brady looked as astounded as Police-officer Simms had done. "Big Boy—your brother?"

"Big Boy?" echoed Roy dazedly. "What do you mean? I—I don't understand."

The detective glanced towards the uniformed men who had placed the dead gangster on the stretcher and were now bearing it towards the back of the police tender, followed by many pairs of curious eyes.

"Just that that man's Big Boy, the notorious gang-leader, kid," Brady said quietly. "And I'll wager all I've got that he's been bumped off by his greatest enemy, Piccardi!"

Big Boy—his brother! The revelation almost stunned Roy, and it was with the utmost effort that he took a grip on his reeling senses. A terrible discovery. To think his brother was a gangster—a murderer!

But his brotherly affection for the dead man did not allow Roy to turn against him in revulsion. Howard had always been so good and kind to him—had kept him for years; had been both father and mother to him since the death of their parents many years ago. Only Howard's good side did he know; and, knowing it, a hot rage stormed up in his breast.

"Piccardi killed my brother!" he hissed through clenched teeth. "By heavens, I'll not rest till I've avenged Howard's death! I swear I won't!"

The police tender had sped away and Police-officer Simms had succeeded in dispersing the curious onlookers, though one or two still remained at a distance, their eyes focused on the raging boy and Detective Brady standing so quietly beside him.

"Don't take it so hard, Roy." Brady was an understanding man, and he was aware how deeply the youngster was grieved. Poor kid, he had never known just what type of man his brother really was; obviously he had believed him an honest and good fellow. "Let's forget about Big Boy and think only of the man who was your brother, shall we? See what I mean? Big Boy is gone; he's suffered to the full. But Piccardi—he can't get away with it. I'll have him and you can help me a whole heap to put him away. Your revenge, see? Now, just you come along home with me, and I'll tell you what we'll do."

Roy nodded, unable to speak on account of the emotions that raged within him. But he followed Brady down the side-walk when that shrewd detective touched his arm and set off towards his apartments on Twenty-fifth Street.

Into the Lion's Den.

YOU run along, and don't be so infernally jealous, Lita."

A smile on his cruel lips, Piccardi stabbed his cigarette-end into an ash-tray, rose languidly to his feet, and, reaching out his hand, patted Lita Alvaro patronisingly on the shoulder. But the fair-haired girl made no move—just stood looking at him with angrily blazing eyes.

"But I tell you I won't stand it, Piccardi!" Lita suddenly shot at him. "I won't be second to anyone. That girl, Doris—you're absolutely crazy on her. You buy her presents, take her out in your car, while I have to kick my heels and run this rotten restaurant for you. It's got to stop. I love you, and, by heavens, I'm not letting anyone—"

"That's enough, you darned fool!" Piccardi caught at her arm with brutal force, digging his fingers into the soft flesh till she cried out with the pain. "Now, you get an earful of this, my pretty! I'll do what I like—go out with any girl I choose without any darned interference from you. See?"

"Very well." The words hissed from between the girl's white lips with the venom of a serpent. "Then you'll only have yourself to blame if I tell the cops what I know about—"

She broke off with a choking gasp as his hand clapped violently over her mouth. But there was no terror in her eyes as he thrust his face threateningly into hers; only a cold defiance.

"So that's it, huh?" Piccardi pushed her away from him and gave a brutal laugh as she staggered into a chair. "Well, Lita, you know I'm a dangerous man to double-cross. A word to the bulls, and, by hades, it'll be your last!"

But his threat did not scare her in the least, for Lita knew well enough that the overwhelming love she bore this brute would not permit her to go back on him. She must regain his affection for her somehow, and, woman-like, she did not doubt her ability to do this, even though Doris White was good-looking and had captured Piccardi's interest.

"Better be going, Lita, for the boys'll be here any minute for a pow-wow." Piccardi jerked his head commandingly towards the door that led to the back of the premises. "And remember, my dear, to keep your mouth shut!"

She made no answer, just gave a sneering laugh as she flounced to the door that caused the crook to bite his lip with rage.

The door opened and closed on her, and, quickly mastering his wrath, Piccardi lit a cigarette and dropped into a chair. There were other and far more important things to think of than this refractory girl. But he was not left to his musing for long, for bare seconds later the door through which Lita had passed opened again, and in trooped half a dozen members of his gang with Tony Havers, his chief lieutenant, among them.

"Decided, boss?" asked one of the gangsters, a tall, vicious-looking man in a grey lounge suit and grey felt hat.

"Sure thing, Mike. Pedelty's going to get his liquor to-night even if we have to blaze a way through a regiment of cops." Piccardi rose to his feet and nodded towards the door of the adjoining room. "But we'll discuss plans inside. Come on."

But as Tony Havers stepped to the door of the communicating room to open it there came a knock on the door leading from the back of the premises that caused him to instantly pull up in his stride. In a flash his hand was around the butt of a gun nesting in his jacket pocket, and his colleagues were not a fraction of a second behind him in reaching for their own automatics.

"Well, boss?" inquired Tony, shooting a glance at Piccardi.

"See who the heck it is," The gangster shrugged his shoulders expressively. "And be ready to shoot."

Tony nodded, an ugly grin spreading over his coarse features, then he slouched to the door and jerked it open. Outside stood a well-built and quietly-dressed young man with dark hair and brown eyes.

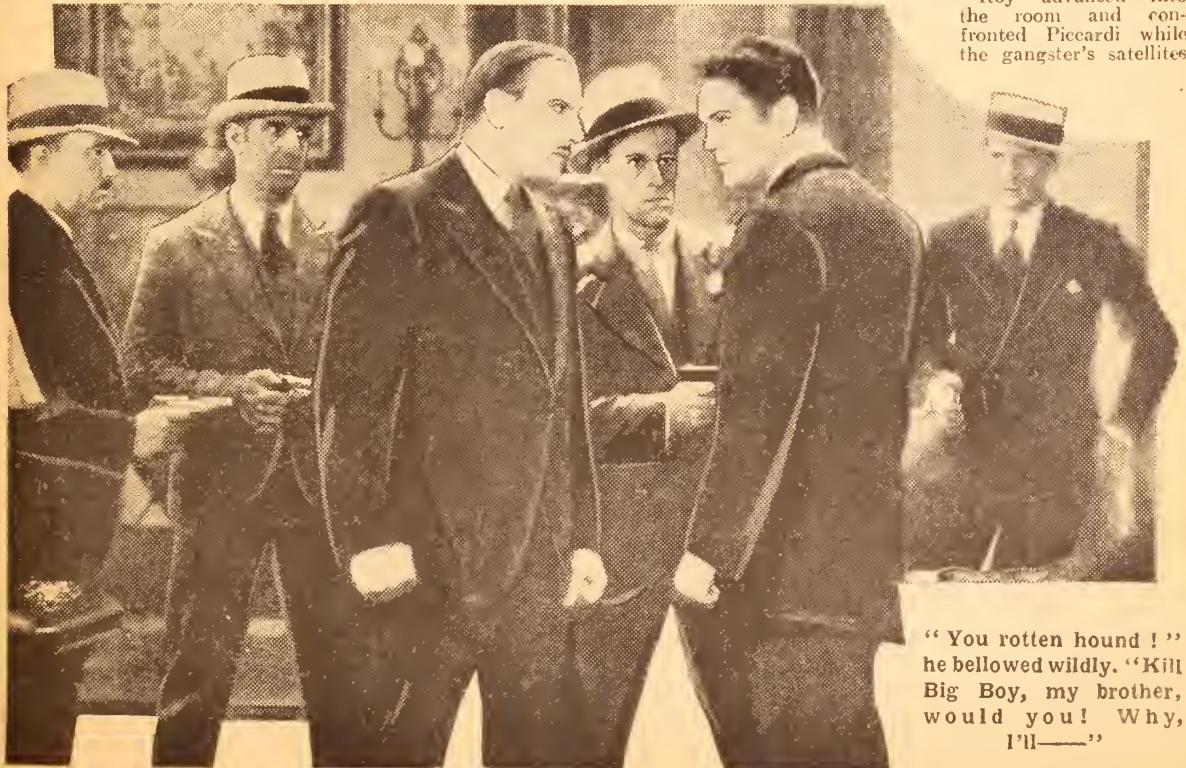
"Well?" Tony scrutinised the caller carefully, his hand all the while clutching the butt of his concealed gun. "What the blazes you want, huh?"

"Mr. Piccardi—he about?" Though his heart was beating faster than usual, Roy Smith's voice did not betray the sudden anxiety he felt now that he was fully embarked on his great venture. "He is? Good! Then tell him I'd like to see him. Danny Holtz from Chicago."

Out of the tail of his eye Tony saw his chief nod his head, for Piccardi and his hirelings had heard every word that Roy had uttered.

"Come in, kid." Tony closed the door as Roy stepped past him, then quickly turned to the youngster again and jerked a thumb in Piccardi's direction. "That's the boss, there, waiting to hear your piece, so just you spit it out and make it snappy."

Roy advanced into the room and confronted Piccardi while the gangster's satellites



"You rotten hound!" he bellowed wildly. "Kill Big Boy, my brother, would you! Why, I'll—"

kept their guns trained on the boy in case of emergency.

"Well, what is it you want?" Piccardi asked smoothly.

"A job. I was with Don Rawson in Chicago, but had to beat it sudden like. Not healthy for me there any longer." Roy winked an eye, marvelling at the easy manner in which he was falling into his part. Then he took from his pocket a letter which Mr. Jackson, of the "Daily Bulletin," had written and concocted for Piccardi's special benefit, and handed it to the gangster. "A letter of introduction from Rawson. You'll find it okay."

Piccardi took the missive and read it through. He had heard of Don Rawson—one of the most powerful gangsters in Chicago. And Rawson asked him in the letter to take in Danny Holtz, the bearer of the missive, who was a two-gun man. "An acquisition to any racketeer," so ended the epistle.

"Sounds good enough. I'll take you on," Piccardi handed the letter of introduction back to Roy, then turned to his hirelings, motioning them to lay up on their guns. "Boys, meet Danny Holtz from Chicago. He's going to be one of you."

Words of greeting were exchanged, during which there again came a knock on the door. But the knock had a peculiar sound to it, and, without waiting for any signal from Piccardi, Tony Havers went across and opened the door.

Into the room came Doris White, and at sight of her a pained expression instantly came into Roy's brown eyes. So she was friendly with these men—a girl he had believed to be clean and good—a girl he had lost his heart to at sight as she had sat out in the restaurant the previous day.

A swift glance she gave him, and then she came up to Piccardi and held out her hand, smiling bewitchingly up at him.

"Hallo, my dear!" He took her outstretched hand, drew her close to him, and, before them all, kissed her on the lips. "So sorry that I'll have to disappoint you, but I've some important work to do. Just going to have a conference with the boys. Shall we say to-morrow?"

"Sure."

Piccardi smiled and squeezed the hand he held, then a thought suddenly occurred to him. This Danny Holtz. His credentials were all right as far as one could judge, but it would be best to make certain of him before trusting him with any inside secrets. He was in the way at the moment, with such important plans to be discussed, but Doris' presence offered a good way out.

"Look here, Doris. I promised you a nice little drive in the country to-night, and I hate to disappoint you," Piccardi indicated Roy with a jerk of the head. "So Danny Holtz here shall take you. You'll find my tourer in the garage at the back. Suppose you can drive, Holtz?"

"Sure I can." Though disappointed that he could not start right away to probe into the secrets of this arch-crook, Roy was nevertheless elated at the chance to become really acquainted with the girl. Somehow he felt that she was out of her natural environment—here with these crooks. Perhaps he could persuade her from the crooked path and— Then it came to him in a flash that she might know much about Piccardi—sufficient, at least, to put the crook behind prison bars, and with the thought he was all eagerness to be off with her. "And when shall I report back—you'll want me again to-night, huh, boss?"

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"To-morrow will do. But get this. You take good care of Miss White. See?" Roy nodded, and Piccardi turned back to the girl and kissed her again. "And I'll see you to-morrow, Doris, huh? Perhaps we may do a show—a cabaret or a theatre?"

She nodded with apparent eagerness, then, with a gay wave of the hand to Piccardi, she went from the room, followed by Roy. Out to the garage at the back of the premises, where she indicated to the youngster a comparatively new open tourer.

"I'll drive," she told him, and took the wheel while he clambered in beside her.

For some half-hour or so the girl drove in silence, with Roy gazing at her pretty averted face in adoration. Then the hum of the city's traffic was left behind, and they entered a winding country lane with green fields on either side, and the sun, a golden ball, slowly dipping to the West before the approaching night.

"I say," Roy ventured suddenly. "it gave me a bit of a shock when you marched into Piccardi's place to-night."

"Did it?" Not for a moment did she take her eyes off the road ahead. "But why, may I ask?"

"Well, you see, you—you—" Roy hesitated, at a loss to know exactly what to say. "Well, because when I saw you in the restaurant last night it struck me that you were a darned nice girl—too good to—"

Again he broke down, but his words had sent a rosy flush into Doris White's cheeks, had caused her heart to beat a trifle faster.

"You think I'm too nice to mix with crooks like Piccardi, eh?" She looked at him out of the corner of her eyes and smiled as he nodded. "Well, how about yourself? I should think you're too decent to be a crook."

Roy did not know what to say to that, so he remained silent. But her next words staggered him, though when they sank in he realised that they were only to be expected.

"And you're not a crook, I know that." She saw him start, and looked at him for a long moment with what seemed to him accusing eyes. "You came into Piccardi's place last night with Brady, the cop. You deny it?"

"No." Now that she suspected him he felt that he could put on a bold front, and his brown eyes met hers unflinchingly. "But look here, Miss White. Something tells me you're decent—that—"

"You're going to give me a lecture—try to get me to run straight, eh?" she interrupted him. "Why?"

"Because—because I—well, because I rather like you," Roy blustered.

She blushed deeper than ever, and in that moment she realised that she returned his affection—that here was the one boy in the world for her.

"But supposing I'm straight enough—that it is for a very special reason that I'm friendly with Piccardi," she said, with a whimsical smile. "What then?"

"Why, it'd make me happier than I've ever been in my life before," Roy replied with much fervour.

Silence again fell between them. Roy watching the girl with longing gaze as she drove on down the country lane. Then suddenly she swung the car into a side turning, brought it to a standstill outside the gates of a little church, jumped out, and beckoned to him to follow her. Mystified, he did so, and she led him into the churchyard, stopping presently before a large grave with a massive marble stone rearing at its head.

"There lies all I had in the world." There was a catch in her voice and her eyes were moist with tears as she pointed to the stone. "My mother, my father, and my brother."

He bowed his head reverently, more mystified than ever. That here was some great calamity in her young life was evident, and he felt deeply sorry for her.

"But I don't understand," he said in little more than a whisper.

"I'll tell you. My brother, a good enough boy but very easily led, fell in with that brute Piccardi. After a while he got sick of the whole dirty business and wanted to get out—and he went out riddled by the bullets from the guns of Piccardi and his men. They were afraid he'd squeal, I suppose." Her voice very nearly broke, but with an effort she regained control of herself and brushed the tears from her eyes. "It was a terrible blow to mother and father, for they almost worshipped Dick. Poor souls, they pined, and eventually died of broken hearts. Now you can see, of course: why I'm friendly with Piccardi. Revenge—and I'll not rest till—"

"And I'm after revenge, too, Doris." Roy told her grimly as she hesitated. "That brute Piccardi killed my brother, the best and only pal I had in the wide, wide world. Howard was a gangster, though I didn't suspect it—a rival of Piccardi's. But that our shall pay—I've sworn it, and you and I'll now work together to bring him to justice."

She nodded her head, for she could not trust herself to speak, such was the torture of her soul as she stood there looking at the gravestone with tear-dimmed eyes.

Presently Roy touched her arm, gently and tenderly, and moments later the two were back in the car, driving towards the city, the bond of suffering bringing them even closer together.

Denounced.

ANOTHER meeting of Piccardi's gang and still the master-crook did not see fit to bring Roy into the conference. A letter had been written to Rawson in Chicago, and till such time as an answer was forthcoming guaranteeing Danny Holtz's credentials beyond question, Piccardi was resolved not to let him into any secrets connected with the workings of the gang.

So Roy had to kick his heels in the large apartment at the Blue Dragon while Piccardi and his "boys" repaired to the smaller room to discuss their plans. But they had scarce been in there a moment before Roy rose from the chesterfield on which he had been sitting and crept stealthily across to the door, where he applied his ear to the keyhole.

An opportunity to learn what coup they were planning next. If only he could get a line on them and pass the information on to the police they might be caught in the act—ambushed by the police and either killed or captured and sent up river to the dread Sing-Sing, there to spend many a long day behind prison bars. And for one at least the chair—Piccardi, if he were taken alive!

The boy could hear the drone of voices beyond the door, but the words were undistinguishable. Greatly daring, he caught the handle, turned it quietly as he could, and pushed the door open an inch or two. An eager gleam coming into his eyes, he leaned his head sideways the better to hear what was being said within the small room.

Then it was that the door giving access to the back of the Blue Dragon was softly opened, and Lita Alvaro crept into the large apartment.

Jealousy had brought her here, for she expected to find Doris White in Piccardi's arms, and was ready to make a scene—to again threaten to expose the gangster to the police if he did not at once send Doris away. Love Piccardi she did, but this seemed the only way to win him back, and, what was more, she was resolved now to keep her threat if he persisted in slighting her.

Sight of Roy standing at the door, evidently listening to what was being said by Piccardi and his men in the conference room, sent a thrill down Lita's spine. A spy! And then she caught a glimpse of his profile—recognised him as the youngster Detective Erady had brought in with him two nights ago, and knew beyond all doubt that he was indeed a spy.

Triumph sung in the girl's breast. Here was a way to win Piccardi over to her for all time. But it was no good raising the alarm now—the listener might get away before Piccardi and the others could dash out and secure him.

Crafty Lita! She decided that her best course was to go out and round to the front entrance of the restaurant, and there send a message into Piccardi by one of his men.

She backed to the door without the listening youngster being aware of the menace that threatened him, opened it without the least sound and slid out into the passage beyond. But in closing the door the catch clicked slightly, and Roy, hearing it, turned his head with a startled jerk.

No one, but his heart was pounding so madly with the sudden shock he had received that he pulled the door to the council chamber quietly to and returned to the chesterfield.

Five minutes passed during which time he recovered his nerve, and then the door to the smaller apartment opened and Piccardi and his men returned.

"Don't forget—twelve o'clock it's to be, boys," announced Piccardi as he lit a cigarette he had just taken from a handsome gold case.

"Sure, boss," nodded Tony Havers, and, glancing at Roy, who had risen to his feet as the gangsters had filed back into the room, he beckoned to the youngster with a motion of his head.

"Come on, Danny—off you go! You'll not be wanted on this little jaunt of ours."

"No?" Roy arched his eyebrows, jerking the brim of his hat down over his eyes in what he thought was the best gangster style. Then he turned to Piccardi. "See here, boss, I hate this life of idleness. You'll let me do something soon, won't you? And the bigger the better, for I'm a glutton for big work."

"All in good time, Danny." Piccardi smiled behind the cloud of tobacco smoke he blew ceilingwards.

"But you just trot along now and take it easy till I can fix you. See?"

It was the signal for dismissal, and Roy turned to follow Tony and the others as they slouched across the room. But he had taken no more than two or three strides when there came a knock on the door leading from the restaurant. On the instant Piccardi's men pulled up in their tracks, Roy with them, and in answer to the gang leader's "come in," a short, thick-set man with an unprepossessing face entered and came straight over to Piccardi. In the man's hand was a folded piece of paper which he handed to the crook with never a word.

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Wonderingly Piccardi took it, opened it out and read the pencilled words thereon. And as he did so his eyes gleamed, and his face took on an expression that was ugly to behold. For the missive was from Lita Alvaro denouncing Roy as a spy!

"Here, you!" Piccardi swung round on Roy in a flash. "Come here—I want you!"

Thinking that the crook intended to assign him to a job, Roy quickly approached and confronted him.

"So you're a spy, huh?" Piccardi clenched his fists, his eyes blazing at the youngster with murderous intensity as Roy started back under the suddenness of the accusation. "A stool pigeon! Here to find out enough dope to put us safely away. Well, you little swine, you've run into a hornet's nest, and, by heck, you'll find you won't get out of it!"

The fury within the man rose with his words, and of a sudden he brought up his fist and crashed it with all his savage strength to the point of Roy's chin. Back went the youngster as if propelled by some giant catapult to bring up against the chesterfield with a painful gasp.

Tense silence for several seconds while Roy slumped there striving to regain his shattered senses. Then, the daze clearing from his brain, he straightened quickly, and, with a furious cry bursting from him, hurled himself at Piccardi like some mad-dened bull.

"You rotten bound!" he bellowed wildly. "Kill Big Boy, my brother, would you? Why, I'll—"

"That's enough of that, you little runt!" broke in Tony Havers' harsh voice. "Another move, and I'll drill you! You hear me?"

Out of the tail of his eye Roy saw Piccardi's men threatening him with their guns, and the sight had the instant effect of steadying him. But he faced Piccardi bravely enough, a defiant look in his brown eyes.

"Aw, so that's the lay of it! Big Boy's kid brother out for revenge, huh?" Piccardi thrust his face into Roy's, and there was a sardonic sneer on his cruel lips. "Well, now, if that isn't darned funny. A chance for me to pay a little more back. Yes, you poor simp, you're going on your last ride! Know what that means?"

The colour drained instantly from Roy's fury-distorted face, and a terrified expression came into his eyes, for he knew well enough what those grim words meant. And he was powerless to do anything to save himself with those guns threatening him on either hand.

A nod from Piccardi and his underlings quickly closed in on the boy. But as they did so there came a knock on the door leading to the back of the premises, and they pulled up with a jerk.

"See who it is, Tony," said Piccardi, calmly enough. "But keep your gun ready. See?"

Face to Face with Death.

BUT it was only Doris White at the door, and as Tony stood aside for her to pass into the room she almost cried out in terror as she saw Roy standing there with Piccardi's men threatening him with their revolvers.

A moment only did she waver, however, for in a flash she realised that any hesitancy on her part, any show of friendly sympathy for the boy, might arouse Piccardi's suspicions. If she was to save Roy, as save him she must now that it was obvious they knew him for what he was, she must

resort to all the craft of which she was capable. And what better way than to wheedle to this brute of a man?

"Hallo, Piccardi!" She came over to the gangster, smiled bewitchingly up at him and held out her hands. "Sorry I've butted in at such an inopportune moment; but you promised me a ride, you know!"

Piccardi laughed boisterously as he thought of the ride that his victim was destined to take, then he caught at Doris' arms, pulled her close to him and kissed her affectionately.

"It's all right, my dear," he told her lightly. "That ride stands, for I'm through with business for to-night."

"But Danny Holtz?" She waved her hand carelessly towards Roy, who was watching her closely, knowing full well that she would make some effort to save him from his terrible plight. "What's he done—why the guns?"

"What's he done, huh?" Piccardi's face again took on a vicious expression. "Well, my dear Doris, I've discovered that he's a spy. And, by heck, he's going to suffer dearly!"

"But he's only a kid." Doris gently pushed Piccardi into an armchair, sat down on an arm and ruffled his hair with soft fingers. "Isn't it rather degrading to harm a mere boy?"

"In a way, perhaps you're right," conceded the gangster, but there was no relenting of his hard soul. "But this is different, Doris. The brother of an old enemy—a dangerous stripling. If I was to allow him to go free he'd have all the cops in New York blazing around our heads in next to no time."

She bit her lip, knowing that no words of hers would have any effect on him. His mind, cruel and relentless, was made up and nothing would shake it from its purpose.

With tears in her eyes, writhing at her helplessness to do anything to save the boy she loved she saw Piccardi grimly nod his head—saw his ruthless hirelings crowd in on Roy, and at the pistol's point march him from the room.

Another helpless victim going for his last ride!

The door closed with hardly a sound on the grim cortège, and Doris shuddered with repulsion at the sinister laugh that broke from Piccardi's twisted lips.

"Well, my dear, that's what happens to all who are darned saps enough to cross my path. But why be morbid. He's gone—finished!" The brutal expression on his face relaxed, and he smiled almost pleasantly as he looked into the girl's white, strained face. "Doris, our little ride. We'll go right away. A blow in the country; then, afterwards, a cabaret show. What say?"

She wanted to shriek, such was the agony that tore at her soul—to fly from that grim apartment in a last desperate endeavour to save Roy from the avenging guns of those brutal fiends of Piccardi's. But Piccardi held her tight, an arm around her waist, though even if she had been free she doubted if she would have had sufficient strength to move a muscle just then.

"Well, you don't seem particularly keen for a night out, baby," said Piccardi, with an impatient note in his voice. "Don't tell me that that little affair's given you the willies?"

She felt she could not answer him, though she realised she must say something, for otherwise he might smell a rat. That boy—he had meant a great deal to her, but she was powerless to do anything to save him. All she could do now was to carry on with the part

she had been playing. Her time would come. There would be an additional death to avenge. Piccardi should pay—pay in full when her hour struck!

"Of course I'm keen." She laughed, though it was somewhat shakily. "Let's go at once, dear. It's so very stuffy in this room that I feel I shall faint if I don't soon get some fresh air."

She rose to her feet and he quickly followed her example, reaching for his soft felt hat that lay upon the table.

"Anything you say goes for me, Doris." He thrust the hat on his head, caught her in his arms and kissed her. "There, that shows you just how I feel about you—"

But the rest of the sentence remained unsaid, for at that moment there came the sudden slamming of a door, and with a startled gasp Piccardi released his hold on Doris and spun round on his heel, reaching for his gun as he did so.

"A very pretty little speech." Lita Alvaro looked at the pair with mocking eyes as she advanced into the room. Straight to Piccardi she came, ignoring Doris completely. "So this is all the thanks I get for tipping you off about that spy. You still spurn my love for this other woman. Well—"

"That's enough, curse you!" Piccardi's face reddened with the fury that suddenly flamed within him, and, thrusting out his hand, he caught Lita savagely by the arm, squeezing it with brutal strength till she whimpered with pain. "You know what I told you last time, don't you? That I'm a dangerous man to cross. Now, you get out, you poor fool, while it's healthy, and bear that well in mind."

A sudden twist of his arm and he sent Lita hurtling across the room, to crash into a small table which rocked precariously on its legs. But the girl caught at it instinctively, thereby steadying the table and herself.

Eyes in which blazed a sudden deep hatred fixed themselves on Piccardi, while Doris White crouched against the chesterfield, fearful what the gangster might do, sorry for the girl who believed that she had stolen her man.

"You think I'm scared, Piccardi, don't you?" Lita gave a wild, reckless laugh. "Well, you're darned well mistaken. I warned you before that I wouldn't let any other girl come between us, and I meant it. You thought I'd given in without a murmur, but I aimed to win you back without stirring up trouble. But I'm through with you now—through! Hear me?"

Piccardi laughed uproariously. Such wild threats, coming as they did from the hot-headed Lita, amused him vastly. Men he could take seriously, but a woman—never.

"Laugh, would you?" Lita Alvaro almost danced with the insane fury that blazed in her outraged heart. Then she swiftly ran to the telephone that reposed on a window-sill and snatched the receiver from its hooks. "Well, this'll make you laugh on the other side of your ugly face!"

Then it was that Piccardi realised that the girl was in dead earnest. Obvious that she intended to ring the police, as she had threatened to do on that other occasion, and to turn informer against him.

A vicious oath ripping from between his bared teeth, the gangster reached for his jacket pocket, dragged out his gun and levelled it straight at the girl whose blazing eyes never left his face for a single moment.

A shriek of fear from Doris White as

she clutched frantically at the chesterfield, her legs growing suddenly weak beneath her as she realised the man's deadly purpose, then came Piccardi's harsh voice.

"Drop that receiver, you little cat, or, by heavens, I'll drill you! You hear me?"

But Lita only laughed wildly, and as the operator's voice sounded in her ear she imperatively demanded to be put through to police headquarters.

"You would, would you, you dirty little rat!" Piccardi's face was working with the terrible fury that had him in its grip, and his evil eyes glinted like those of a madman. "Well, Lita, it's coming to you now, by heck it is!"

Doris White let out a terrified scream as she saw the brute's finger curling round the trigger of the gun, while Lita, with sudden and amazing coolness, now that she realised that her end was near, returned the telephone receiver to its hooks, a wan smile playing around the corners of her white lips as she did so.

A shot came, crashing out with the sound of some vast explosion in the confines of that room. Followed instantly a shriek of terror—but in a masculine voice, as Piccardi went tumbling head first to the floor. Then in at the door from the restaurant came a wizen-faced little man with steely grey eyes, dressed in a shabby brown suit and greastained velour hat.

Detective Brady, and in his hand—a still smoking revolver which he promptly stowed away after one swift glance at the fallen gangster.

"Just in time, I think," he said to no one in particular.

A groan came from the stricken crook, and it had the instant effect of rousing Lita Alvaro from the stupor that had her in its grip. It came to her swiftly, then, that there on the floor lay the one man that she had ever loved, and though he had turned against her, her loyalty to him came back with a rush now that he was sorely injured.

"Oh, Piccardi, Piccardi, my dear!" She ran to him, went down on her knees and gathered his head in her arms. Then as she saw his hand go weakly to his side, where a trickle of blood showed, saw the ghastly pallor of his cheeks, the glassiness in his eyes, she burst into heart-rending sobs. "Piccardi, don't die—for heaven's sake don't die! Oh, don't leave me, for I love you, dear! I—I didn't mean to ring the cops—it—it's just that I was—"

She could say no more, for her distressed state of mind completely overwhelmed her then. A pitiful object she looked as she knelt there, clutching frantically at the stricken man, the tears streaming down her haggard face.

Doris White looked at her with deeply sympathetic eyes, knowing just how it felt to lose a loved one, and even the stony-hearted Brady was touched by the pathetic sight.

"It—it's all right—Lita, for-get it."

Just for a moment a wan smile showed on Piccardi's pain-twisted face, then his body gave a convulsive shudder and he went limp in Lita's clutching arms, causing her to scream hysterically in her terrible grief.

And then the door from the restaurant opened and someone came into the room. Roy Smith, his face white and drawn, his dark curly hair tousled.

"Roy! Roy! Is—is it really you?" Doris White gazed at him incredulously as she stood there and was joined at that moment by a tall, thick-set man—

(Continued on page 27.)

A fearless young fireman invents a fire-fighting machine, but a fiendish enemy does everything to steal the plans and rob the hero of the girl he worships. A grand new serial of breathless suspense and thrilling drama. Starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.

"HEROES of the FLAMES"



READ THIS FIRST.

While en route with his comrades to the scene of a fire, Bob Darrow, of the San Francisco Brigade, saves the life of a boy who falls in front of one of the monster engines.

Later he calls on James Madison, head of a chemical company, to whom he puts up an idea for a patent fire-extinguisher. Madison is not interested, and Bob leaves disappointed, after meeting Dan Mitchell, a shady promoter who is befriending Madison for his own ends.

That afternoon Bob rescues June Madison from a fire in her father's office, then learns that the boy he had saved from the wheels of the fire-engine was Madison's son, Jackie.

In gratitude, Madison helps Bob to perfect his invention, the Darrow Fire-Bomb. But Dan Mitchell is anxious to sell Madison an extinguisher of his own, and to discredit Bob he sends a hireling to "doctor" the fireman's invention with a deadly explosive.

The experiment fails, but Madison's faith in the invention is unshaken, whereupon Mitchell has Bob tricked into attending a low night-club. He then points him out to the Madisons, and afterwards takes the disillusioned June over the premises.

June is accidentally locked in a vault filled with bootleg liquor. A fire breaks out, and the brigade answers the call. Going to her rescue, Bob enters the vault, but is trapped by the flames!

Now Read On.

Help From Outside.

WITH blazing fragments of the ceiling falling around him, and the farther end of the wine cellar a raging mass of flame, it seemed to Bob Darrow that he and June Madison were doomed.

EPISODE 4.

"DEATH'S CHARIOT."

But as he stood there with the girl in his arms he suddenly heard a familiar voice calling to him through the bars of the basement window, and, turning, he saw the sturdy figure of Fireman Pat Heeley.

The Battalion Chief was with him, while June's father and Dan Mitchell were crouching near by.

"Back away, Darrow," said the chief. "We're coming through."

A glance at something in Pat Heeley's hand told Bob how the last-minute effort at rescue was to be made. The Irishman was carrying an oxy-acetylene burner, and, levelling the muzzle at one of the bars, he directed the fierce jet of flame against the metal.

At the point where the iron met the cement the bar began to weaken. The hissing blast of concentrated fire, gradually cut through it, and Pat then shifted the burner so that the jet played on the topmost end of the rod. But the task of severing it was one that took up precious moments, and in the meanwhile the fire in the cellar was rolling nearer to the man and the girl imprisoned there.

Battalion Chief Wilson turned and shouted for a hose, and a few seconds later a powerful stream of water was challenging the flames in the basement. It could not quench the blaze, but it held it in check as Pat Heeley worked on the bars.

The first bar came asunder, but there were three more to be disposed of, and the inflammable bootleg liquor in the cellar continued to feed the inferno in spite of the hose. Masses of suffocating

smoke rolled about Bob, too, and he cough racked his lungs. He felt that he could not last much longer, and all at once he stumbled with his burden.

"He can't hold out!" cried Madison distractedly, and like a man in a frenzy he tore at the remaining bars with his bare hands.

Captain Wilson dragged him back by main force.

"Steady, Madison, steady," he jerked, struggling with him on the sidewalk. "If it's humanly possible, Heeley and Darrow will save your daughter. Hang on, Bob!" he called in a louder voice. "We'll soon be through!"

Bob pulled himself together with a tremendous effort, and stood waiting. Another bar was severed, and then another. The fire in the cellar was now closing in. A fall of blazing timber missed Bob's shoulder by inches and showered sparks over him.

The last bar was cut near its base, and without waiting for Pat Heeley to complete its destruction, Wilson and one or two others seized the iron rod and bent it upward. Next moment willing hands were reaching through the aperture for June Madison.

Bob lifted her towards the rescuers, and she was pulled through the window and carried across the sidewalk to Madison's waiting car. Then Bob himself was dragged out of the death-trap, and as he scrambled clear the remains of the cellar roof fell in with a crash that raised a mass of angry, lurid flames.

Bob straightened up, reeled uncertainly for an instant, and then felt the steady grip of Pat Heeley's arm about his waist.

"Are yez all right, me bhoy?" the Irishman gasped.

"Sure, Pat—sure," Bob told him huskily. "But, June—is she—"

"Och, she'll be as roight as rain to—
September 26th, 1931

morrow," Pat assured him. "Look, she's beginnin' to come round now."

He pointed to Madison's car. June had been lifted into it, and she was lying with her head against her father's shoulder, sobbing hysterically in her semi-conscious state. Dan Mitchell had climbed into the auto as well, and now that June was safe, he inwardly cursed the turn that events had taken—events that had added to the esteem in which the Madisons already held Bob.

Captain Wilson was standing by the car, and Madison spoke to him.

"Chief," he said, "take good care of Darrow. I owe him more than I can ever repay."

Bob did not hear those words of gratitude, for at that moment Pat Heeley was addressing him, voicing a question that had been on his mind for some time.

"Say, Bob," he asked, "phwat wuz that explosion that went off just as ye got into the basement?"

"Oh, that," Bob answered casually. "That was a barrel of bootleg whisky going up."

Pat's eyes seemed to dilate. "A barrel of whisky?" he echoed. "Down there in that cellar? Begorra, and it might be prime Irish!"

No sooner had he uttered the words than he made a bee-line for the basement window, but before he could reach it Bob hailed Captain Wilson laughingly.

"Oh, chief," he shouted, "you'd better call that thirsty Irishman. I just told him there was whisky in the cellar there."

Wilson glanced in Pat's direction, and:

"Hey, Pat!" he roared. "Back out—back out!"

The sturdy Irishman stopped, hesitated, and then sadly retraced his steps. Chuckling, Bob watched his mournful return.

New Tactics.

IN his down-town office, where he carried on business as a promoter, Dan Mitchell sat at his desk and pored over the headlines on the front page of a morning newspaper. They read as follows:

"JAMES MADISON, WELL-KNOWN CHEMIST AND FINANCIER, WILL ENTER MYSTERY CAR IN THE ROAD RACE NEXT SATURDAY.

"Brown Special," With Recently-Invented Motor, is Rumoured to be in Class by Itself.

Mitchell handed the paper to a man standing at his shoulder. The man was Spike Beldon, Dan Mitchell's henchman.

"This is just the chance I've been waiting for—to trip Madison," the unscrupulous promoter said. "Gus Pollard is going to win that race in the Hayden Special."

"Yeah?" Spike muttered. "An' how is that gonna do you any good?"

"Because I've got money invested in the Hayden outfit," Mitchell answered. "I happen to know, too, that Madison has a lot of cash tied up in the exploitation of this new Brown motor-engine, and if it lets him down he's going to be pretty near a financial failure."

"Well?"

Mitchell smiled crookedly. "Let me put it to you this way, Spike," he said. "Supposing Madison was in a jam, and supposing I showed up with an offer to lend him big money—in exchange for an interest in his company. I reckon I'd be in a position then to market some of those phoney inventions we've got hold of—particularly that fire-extinguisher I'm in-

terested in. I could make a million dollars on the initial rake-in."

"I think I get you," Spike murmured. "The name 'Madison' would be enough to sell our stuff, huh?"

"Yes," Mitchell rejoined, "to start with, anyway. And before the orders fall away and the crash comes I'd have feathered my nest and sold out my interest in the company."

"Yeah, sounds all right," Spike granted. "But about this road race, Madison is bound to win. He wouldn't be in the race unless he knew the Brown Special was the fastest car. Besides, Tim Shayne is drivin' for him, and Shayne is the best man on the track."

Mitchell looked at his hireling narrowly.

"It isn't always the fastest car that wins," he said, "and as for Shayne—I know how to handle him."

Shortly after his conference with Spike, Mitchell left his office and drove to Madison's home. Parked in the drive he saw another car, which he recognised as a run-about that Bob Darrow sometimes used, and an unpleasant frown appeared on his sallow face as he observed it.

A maid admitted him to the house, and as he entered the hall he found Madison in conversation with a slightly-built, keen-looking young man whose features were familiar. He was none other than Tim Shayne, racing-driver, and it was in connection with the Brown Special that Shayne had called.

"I took her out over the course at daylight this morning, Mr. Madison," Tim Shayne was saying, "and I can tell you she has everything. Her speed is limited only by the nerve of the man at the wheel."

"Well, I reckon you've got all the nerve that's needed, Shayne," Madison declared, "and I'm glad to hear of your confidence in the Brown Special. Good luck, boy," he added, holding out his hand. "I'll see you on the day of the race. And remember, I'm depending on you."

Shayne said "good-bye," and, walking towards the front door, caught sight of Dan Mitchell. The race-driver checked and looked at the promoter with sharp distrust, for he knew Mitchell and the man's unsavoury reputation.

Mitchell returned his glance mockingly, then strolled on to greet Madison as Tim Shayne left the house.

"How are you, Dan?" Madison asked him affably.

"Fine," Mitchell answered, "but mighty sorry to learn that you've fallen for that triek motor. You'll lose money and prestige on this Brown Special venture, Mr. Madison."

Madison laughed.

"You heard what Tim Shayne just said?" he inquired. "He said that, in his opinion, the Brown Special would leave everything standing, and I'm willing to back his judgment."

"Pollard will beat you by a mile in his Hayden turn-out," Mitchell stated. "And when I say that, I'm willing to back my judgment against Shayne's. By the way, where's June? And how is she feeling after her ordeal?"

"She's fine," Madison told him. "I think she's out in the garden with Bob Darrow just now."

He was right, and at that particular moment Bob was relating to June the combination of circumstances that had brought him to the notorious Nightingale Club the previous evening.

"And that," he observed, in conclusion—"that explains my first visit to the café."

June smiled bewitchingly.

"I was terribly disappointed at seeing

you there on your first visit," she confessed. "But you'll never know how glad I was to see you on your second visit—in fireman's uniform, Bob."

"Thank Heaven I got to you in time!" he murmured earnestly. "You see, June, I—I—"

He faltered, and lapsed into an awkward silence. Her eyes bent on the ground and a slight flush in her cheeks, June spoke in a low tone.

"Was there—anything else—you wanted to say?" she coaxed.

Bob's arm moved towards her waist, but he checked himself. He wanted to tell her how much he cared for her, but felt that he had no right to do so. She was the daughter of a wealthy man, a girl reared in luxury. He was only a smoke-eater—with ambitions, perhaps—but ambitions that had yet to be realised. Until he had something to offer her he must continue to be no more than a friend.

"Well," he stammered, "I—I want you to know that I've a great regard for—you and your father. But say," he added, glancing at his watch, "I'd better be getting back to the station."

Had he but known it, June found it difficult to conceal her disappointment, for she had sensed that he had been on the point of proposing, and had eagerly awaited the moment when he would ask her to marry him. She managed to affect a matter-of-fact air, however, and after seeing him to his car, made her way indoors.

She was about to hurry upstairs when she saw her father and Dan Mitchell in the hall.

Mitchell was speaking, and she could not help overhearing his words.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Madison," he said. "I need just ten thousand dollars to buy an engagement ring for June, and I'm prepared to bet that amount that Pollard's Hayden wins on Saturday."

Madison pursed his lips, and seemed about to turn down the suggestion when June called to him from the staircase.

"Take his bet, dad!" she urged.

The two men whipped round and caught sight of her. She was smiling, and turned her eyes on Mitchell challengingly as he came towards the banisters.

"You mean, June," he asked, "that if I won you'd accept my engagement ring and marry me?"

"Yes," she declared, with that reckless smile lingering about her pretty mouth.

Mitchell looked at her keenly. "I hope you're in earnest, June," he said. "For I am. Is it a promise?"

June gave vent to a light-hearted laugh.

"Yes, definitely it's a promise," she rejoined, "because you haven't a chance, Dan. I watched Tim Shayne drive the Brown Special this morning, and it's the fastest thing ever."

Mitchell wheeled towards Madison again, and at the same time June caught her father's eye and winked at him encouragingly.

Madison squared his shoulders. "Mitchell," he announced, without another moment's hesitation, "I'll take that bet. We'll both write out our cheques, and June will be the stakeholder."

June came down the stairs. Not for an instant did she suspect the consequences that were to arise out of that impetuous wager.

Foul Play.

A BIG touring car pulled into a thickly-wooded side road leading off the main Oakland to San Francisco highway. It contained three men

—Mitchell, Spike Beldon, and a villainous-looking confederate.

Spike remained at the wheel as Dan Mitchell and the other man alighted. To the latter Mitchell spoke in an undertone.

"Tim Shayne will be covering this stretch in his sports single-seater at any minute," he explained, "heading for the starting-point where he intends to take over the Brown Special from Madison's mechanic. All you have to do is to go up to the brow of that hill and tip me off when you see Shayne coming. I'll be posted at the edge of the trees here, and I'll give Spike the word as soon as I get your signal."

The look-out nodded and ran to the brow of the hill Mitchell had indicated. The promoter himself stood at the junction of the side road and the highway, and was waiting there when Spike called to him from the tourer.

"Say, boss," Beldon mentioned, "supposin' Shayne dodges the crack-up. What are you gonna do then?"

"He'll crack up if you're smart enough to do this job the way I want it done," Mitchell retorted. "If you're not, I've still got a trick left in my hand. I've been in touch with Spud Rossiter, the mechanic working on the Brown Special, and I oiled his palm to the tune of a hundred dollars last night."

He turned his attention to the brow of the hill, and had not long to wait before he saw the look-out turn and wave his arm, then dart out of sight. On the instant Mitchell backed into the side-road and gave Spike Beldon the signal for action.

A high-pitched engine whine suddenly became audible on the highway—the whine of a light car travelling at top speed. Next second Tim Shayne hurtled into view in a bullet-shaped auto.

He was touching seventy in a dash to the San Francisco Speedway, from which the competitors were to set forth on a two-hundred-mile road race, following a course that would bring them back to the stadium and the finishing-point. Crouched behind the steering column and the segment of wind-shield that protected his face, he looked like some dare-devil demon symbolical of the cult for Speed.

With foot crammed on the accelerator and exhaust throbbing out the vibrant scream of the engine, Shayne flashed down the long hill, from the crest of which he had first been sighted. He was almost level with the side-road at the foot of the descent, when Spike Beldon drove out into the middle of the highway.

Tim Shayne slung round the steering-wheel madly and swerved to avoid the crash. Spike swerved, too, and wheel to wheel, crowded Shayne off the road. The race-driver's bullet-shaped auto seemed to leap from the highway, then plunged down an embankment, turning over and over in its wild career, and finishing up with its wheels to the sky.

Luckily Shayne had been flung clear, or he must have been pinned

down and crushed by the weight of his machine. He was found by two passers-by not long afterwards, lying at some distance from the car, with both legs broken and his right arm fractured.

But he was conscious, and a pitiful moan escaped him as the two men who had found him tried to lift him from the ground.

"I'll get to the nearest 'phone and call an ambulance," said one of the men.

To the other, who remained with him, Tim Shayne spoke falteringly, giving out a brief message before he sank back in a dead faint.

"Shoot a wire to James Madison at the speedway," he groaned, and the man beside him took out pencil and paper.

An hour later, standing by the sleek, grey racing car known as the Brown Special, James Madison received that fateful missive, and as he read it his face blanched.

"Why, what's wrong, daddy?" asked June, who was beside him.

Without a word Madison handed the telegram to his daughter.

"Hurt in accident," she read. "Unable to drive.—TIM SHAYNE."

A familiar figure approached at that moment, and, looking up with dismay written on her lovely face, June saw Dan Mitchell. She held out the wire to him in that same stricken silence with which her father had passed it over an instant before.

"That's tough luck," observed Mitchell, when he had scanned it. "And no time to find another driver, huh?"

He glanced towards the starting-line, to which the entrants were already beginning to drive their cars, and June and her father looked at each other hopelessly—June because the horror of that thoughtless promise she had made was weighing on her mind almost intolerably.

She had given her word that she would marry Dan Mitchell if Pollard's Hayden

Special won the race, and, with the Brown Special out of the running, Pollard was a certainty for first place!

It was while June was facing this unforeseen and overwhelming dilemma that Bob Darrow reached the speedway. From the grand-stand he caught sight of the Madisons and Dan Mitchell near the starting-point, and he was making his way down the terraces when he was hailed by Pat Hooey, who, like himself, was off duty and in civvies.

Bob exchanged a few cheery words with the Irishman, and then continued his descent to the track. As he approached the spot where the Brown Special was standing he could not help noticing the Madisons' gloom.

"Hallo!" he said, coming up to June. "Is anything wrong?"

She answered him with an effort. "Oh, Bob," she told him, "Tim Shayne has been hurt—and there's no one to drive the Brown Special."

Bob did not realise the magnitude of the catastrophe.

"Why, that's too bad," he murmured. "But still, there will be other races, and—"

June interrupted him. Her father was close by, but Mitchell's attention had been diverted and was out of carshot.

"You don't understand, Bob," June said desperately. "Dad had a ten thousand dollar bet with Mitchell, and—and I agreed to accept an engagement ring from Mitchell if Pollard won in the Hayden car. Oh, I must have been mad, but I felt so confident about the Brown Special, and I never dreamed this would happen."

Bob was staring at her incredulously, as if he could scarcely grasp the situation.

"It's a promise I can't break," June went on tremulously. "I gave Dan my word in all seriousness, and if the



Spud Rossiter tried to stop him, but Pat tweaked him violently by the nose and then reached for a suit of overalls.

Hayden car wins I've got to go through with it."

Bob clenched his hands involuntarily, then all at once he turned from her and confronted her father.

"Mr. Madison," he said quickly, "I had some experience of racing before I joined the brigade. The excitement of it appealed to me until I got the idea for my fire-extinguisher, and I've driven in both track races and road races. If you'll take a chance on me, I'll pilot the Brown Special!"

Madison looked at him doubtfully for a moment, and was still deliberating when Dan Mitchell arrived back on the scene and discovered what was afoot.

"Let Bob drive, daddy," June urged. "I believe in him, and after all—he's our only hope of winning to-day's race."

Madison compressed his lips. Tim Shayne had told him that the speed of the Brown Special would be limited only by the nerve of the man at the wheel. Well, if Bob Darrow showed as much nerve in a racing car as he did in an outbreak of fire, he would be worth a chance.

"Go ahead, Bob," he said.

Loitering in the background, Dan Mitchell touched the arm of a man in overalls who was examining the engine of the Brown Special. The man was Spud Rossiter, and he lifted his head and slid a sidelong glance of inquiry at Mitchell.

"Refuse to ride with him," Mitchell said out of the corner of his mouth.

Rossiter nodded, and then, dropping the hood of the car with a clang as Bob reached for a suit of white overalls that Tim Shayne was to have worn, he called out to Madison in a harsh and rasping voice.

"Just a minute!" he grated. "I ain't ridin' in this car with any amatoor at the wheel. Count me out."

Madison exchanged a glance with Bob.

"I guess we're helpless, Darrow," he said gloomily; but the fireman was not of the same mind. Running towards the grand-stand, he located Pat Heeley and brought him back to where the Madisons stood.

"Pat," he explained to the Irishman, "I'm driving the Brown Special, and I need a mechanic. There isn't much about an engine that you don't know. D'you want the job?"

"Do I want it?" Pat cried. "I've got it." And with the words he began to clamber into the racing-car.

Spud Rossiter tried to stop him, but Pat tweaked him violently by the nose and then reached for a suit of overalls. Meanwhile Bob was talking to the Madisons, and assuring them that he would do his level best to win.

"I know you will, Darrow," said Madison, as Bob was peeling off his jacket. "But I may as well tell you that I've got a fortune at stake, and it's on the nose of that car."

"There's more than a fortune at stake, Bob," put in June, and on a sudden impulsively she stood on tiptoe and kissed him.

Before he could recover from his surprise she had turned and was running in the direction of the grand-stand, Bob gazed after her for a few moments, and then jubilantly began to don overalls.

Pat Heeley was similarly occupied when Dan Mitchell drew near Spud Rossiter and again addressed him in an undertone.

"Get busy," he snapped, indicating the car. "Fix it."

Rossiter gave him a look of understanding, and, spanner in hand, stooped

beside the off-side front wheel. He had slackened off one or two vital nuts when Pat chanced to turn his head.

"Hey, youse," the Irishman rapped out, "what do ye think ye're doin'? I'm the mechanic on this car."

"I was only tightenin' up some screws," growled Spud Rossiter.

Rossiter slunk away. In passing Mitchell, he inclined his head meaningly.

Mitchell strolled off to join June, but James Madison lingered to address a few final words to Bob as the latter climbed into the Brown Special racing-car.

"Good luck, Darrow," he said. "We have seats booked in the stand, and we'll be watching you as you leave—and waiting for you to come in—first."

The Race.

THE starter was flagging the competitors individually and sending them on their way. Looking down from the grand-stand, the crowd on the terraces saw a big red racer slide forward to the line, a figure "3" painted on each side of its bonnet.

"That's Pollard," said Dan Mitchell, sitting next to June and her father. "No. 3—Hayden Special. He's got the race in the bag, June—and my ring or your finger—right now."

"I think you're wrong," declared June, with perhaps more confidence than she felt, and then followed the Hayden machine with her eyes as it stormed forward over the straight.

The next to move up into position was Number 7, the Brown Special, with Bob and Pat in the cockpit, and, as he paused by the starter and let the engine tick over with deep-toned throb, the young fireman at the wheel lifted his goggles and waved to June.

The signal was given, and Number 7 rolled forward. With engine-note rising to a full, thunderous roar as Bob nursed the gear-lever from "low" to "top," the Brown Special hurtled on her way.

Once round the track and then out on to the open road. This was the programme, and with bated breath and an unuttered prayer on her lips, June Madison watched car Number 7 till it was out of sight.

With the highway stretching away in front of him, and a string of rival cars ahead, Bob Darrow coaxed the accelerator and watched the speed indicator climb from sixty to seventy, seventy to eighty, eighty to ninety—up to the hundred mark and past it.

Masses of spectators were gathered at various vantage-points on the route. The long procession of flashing racers screamed past a knot of them on the rim of a hill and tore down a long declivity. A car numbered fourteen was leading, and Number Three was running fifth, but before another mile was covered Gus Pollard had forged into third place.

Ten miles from the starting-point the racers hit an ugly bend, but no mishap occurred there. Running sixth as he approached it, Bob Darrow negotiated it in a neck-or-nothing skid, slashed past a rival car almost broadside-on, and then straightened up to give the Brown Special the "gas." Over a three-mile stretch he kept her at the hundred-and-thirty mark and fought his way into fourth position.

Wind and engine-roar shrilled in his ears deafeningly. He felt as if he were battling his way through a terrific gale, a hurricane of hot air that burned his face with the concentrated force of its impact.

Ahead lay the worst curve in the

route. Raking into the bend to challenge a car immediately in front of him. Bob was enveloped in a mad smother of dust that obscured the scene. Through that dust the torpedo-body of a gleaming racer was seen suddenly to leave the road and plunge to its ruin down a forty-foot embankment, hurling two mangled, human bodies from its cockpit.

Back at the speedway, loud-speakers were carrying intelligence of the race to the crowds which packed the stands. An announcer imparted news of the tragedy.

"Wreck at Hell's Corner," his terse voice came. "Will give particulars as soon as received."

Moments of breathless silence—and, for the Madisons, the agony of suspense. Dan Mitchell's anxiety was plain as well, though it sprang from very different sentiments.

"The wreck at Hell's Corner was Car Number—"

June's hand travelled to her heart.

"Car Number Ten—"

Meanwhile the race was being fought out at lightning pace. Gus Pollard's Hayden stormed into second place and then challenged Number Fourteen for the lead. At Redwood Cliff, where the road wound along the coast, the Hayden's stream-lined bonnet bored in front.

But the Brown Special was not losing ground, and Bob forced her past another rival. He was on a bend at the time, and two wheels were thumping on the rim of the precipice as he slammed the gear-lever from "top" to "third" and made the curve.

He was hardly past when the car he had beaten out of third place took a wild swerve to the left and dived over the cliff into the sea, with engine shrieking at top pitch.

"Car Number Three now leads the field," came the voice of the announcer at the speedway. "But Number Seven is coming up like a rocket—only fifty yards behind Number Fourteen now."

"Daddy, daddy," June breathed, "Bob's going to do it! He's—"

The announcer's laconic tones interrupted her.

"Third wreck of the race. Car Number Six jumped road and piled up in hay-rick. Driver and mechanic fortunately uninjured—"

Seven, Fourteen, and Three were now in a bunch. But wild driving by the man at the wheel of Number Fourteen held Bob Darrow in check, and Pollard in his Hayden began to increase his lead steadily, putting a mile between himself and his nearest challenger.

Bob awaited his chance, and, when it came, slipped through to take second position in masterly style. Next moment the Brown Special was beginning to lop yard after yard from the Hayden racer's advantage.

The news came through that Bob Darrow was gaining, and, up in the grand-stand, Dan Mitchell scowled darkly. He had imagined that by now Spud Rossiter's last-minute handiwork would have taken effect. Had the fool bungled in his attempt to cripple the car?

Rossiter had not bungled the job, but Pat Heeley had interrupted him ere he had slackened off those nuts to the extent that he had intended, and only now was the strain beginning to tell on them.

It was not Rossiter's handiwork that threatened to spoil Bob Darrow's chances of victory, however. For, speeding along the home course at something

over a hundred-and-thirty, he and Pat suddenly became aware of a fierce heat playing on them.

"Begorra!" yelled the Irishman, in a voice that was almost drowned by the engine-roar. "She's on foire!"

He was right. A trail of flame lined the sleek form of Car Number Seven. The wind drove it along the gleaming body and swept the cruel, lurid tongues into the cockpit to blister driver and mechanic. A whirling stream of smoke wrapped the red-hot exhaust pipes and enveloped the racer's two occupants in strangling clouds.

"Car on fire!" shrilled the voice of the announcer at the speedway. "Car Number—Car Number Seven!"

Bob drovo on grimly. He could see Pollard's Hayden just ahead of him, and soon the Brown Special was clinging to its tail. Another mile and the speedway would be reached, the track circled for the last spurt to the finishing-line!

Number Seven crept up on its rival. Wreathed in flame and scurrying fumes, it moved abreast, held its position quivering for thirty desperate seconds, and then stole ahead.

"Cars Number Seven, and Three approaching the track—"

The masses in the stands rose as one. Tension and excitement were at fever-pitch, but the sentiment of June Madison and her father was anxiety. The Brown Special was on fire, and the two men in its cockpit were in peril of their lives!

"Number Seven is blazing, but her driver is staying the course. Number Seven takes the lead!"

The cars thundered on to the track.

and a simultaneous cry arose from a hundred thousand throats as Number Seven stormed into view, with fire and smoke beating back into the faces of driver and mechanic.

The Brown Special slackened momentarily as Bob's foot eased up on the accelerator. Flames were rising through the floor-boards, searing his legs. He was in agony, and out of the corner of his eye he saw that Pat Heeley was sinking lower in his seat, half-stupefied by the pain of his burns and the wild smother of smoke.

Gus Pollard's Hayden pushed level, and, skidding on the banking of a bend, regained the lead. But next instant Bob had crammed his foot on the accelerator again, and, hitting the straight, he fought abreast once more.

The stands were in an uproar, but Bob did not hear the din of shouting, and scarcely heard the dual scream of the engines. His brain was reeling. He was driving automatically now, his tortured body obeying the fierce resolution of his iron will.

Then suddenly his mind grasped the fact that something else was amiss. A vicious drag on the offside front wheel told him that another danger had been added to the peril of the flames.

Spud Rossiter's handiwork was beginning to reveal itself, had Bob but known it. But he only knew that the racer was threatening to leave the straight, and his hands clenched on the steering wheel like grim death.

Fifty yards in front of him Bob saw the checked flag fluttering in the hands of the official at the finishing-line, and

he forced the last ounce of power out of the Brown Special. Number Seven moved ahead, rocking crazily, but making certain of the lead.

Ten yards in advance of Pollard's Hayden, it crossed the line in a stream of smoke and fire, and the checked flag signalled Bob's triumph with a flourish as a vast throng rose in one mass and cheered him frantically.

Up in the grand-stand, James Madison wheeled towards the discomfited Mitchell.

"Well, Dan," he said, "I'm afraid we've won, and your—"

He never finished the sentence. The cheering ceased, and was succeeded almost instantly by a shout of horror, a shout that almost drowned the shriek which sprang to the lips of June.

For, immediately beyond the line, the offside front wheel of Number Seven came adrift, and next moment the Brown Special swept round in a mad spin and crashed near the fencing of the track.

The car could be seen lying on its side amidst a welter of dust and black smoke, with lurid tongues of flame belching from it.

Mitchell looked at Madison and saw that his face was ashen hue.

"Yes, Madison," he said hoarsely. "your Brown Special won—and killed Darrow."

(Don't miss next week's enthralling episode of this thrilling serial. By permission of the Universal Pictures, Ltd., starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.)

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EL 24

"SMART MONEY."

(Continued from page 12.)

ing. "You've got class. That's what I like about you. You know, I think you're about the prettiest little thing I've ever seen—and the sweetest!"

A shudder seemed to pass through her. She could not bear to hear him talking like that, when her conscience was telling her that she was a coward and a traitor—a traitor to the man who had done so much for her.

"Nick," she told him dully, "I'm not what you think I am."

"What, not sweet?" he cried. "Now, don't tell me; I know. Nick used to be a sugar-taster." He laughed, and: "Say, look at this! Something I got for you." And he pulled out a jewelled bracelet and snapped it on her wrist.

"I can't take it, Nick," she faltered. "Oh, yes, you can!" he told her. "And what's more, before long I'm goin' to give you a ring for that third finger of yours. But what's the matter?" he added with sudden concern. "Honey, you're shaking like a leaf."

"I—I'm all upset to-night, Nick," she said, and even as she spoke there was a sudden uproar in the salon below.

Nick seemed to stiffen, and then, wheeling, he darted to a small, concealed trap-door and lifted it. Beneath him he saw men and women running in a panic as the district attorney and his minions burst into the room. He saw tables overturned, gambling paraphernalia wantonly smashed by the representatives of the law. He saw Jack in the grip of a plain-clothes man, fighting like mad to free himself.

Nick whipped round. "It's a raid," he said to Irene. "You stay right here."

And with the words he dashed through to his office with the intention of destroying all incriminating papers in his desk.

Irene rose to her feet slowly. Tears were glistening in her eyes, and her under-lip was quivering. She opened her handbag and took out a folded sheet of paper. Then she moved towards a clothes-stand on which Nick's overcoat was hanging.

With a hand that trembled she slipped the folded sheet of paper into an inside pocket.

Evidence.

IT was only after he had lost his jacket and bruised both knuckles with a considerable amount of hard punching that Jack managed to escape the attentions of the plain-clothes man who had seized him.

At the top of his speed Jack raced to the head of the staircase, turned sharp to the left along the landing and then hurled himself at the door of Nick's private sitting-room.

As he flung it open and lurched across the threshold he saw Irene at the clothes-stand—saw her in the very act of thrusting that folded sheet of paper into the inside pocket of Nick's overcoat.

She had turned her head quickly as Jack had plunged into the room, and now, as her eyes met his own, Jack detected the guilt written on her face. Pausing in the doorway, dishevelled, breathless, he remained motionless for a spell, and, while pandemonium continued to rage in the salon below, he looked at her in mute accusation. Then all at once he closed the door behind him and moved across to her.

"I thought so," he said, his lip curling scornfully. "It was you who let those coppers in. You dirty little stool-pigeon!" And he took his hand across her cheek with a sting that left a red weal.

"Oh!" she cried sharply, stumbling back, and in that same instant a pantherish figure leapt from the adjoining office.

It was the figure of Nick, and he was white with rage. He had turned in time to see the blow struck, without realising the reason for it, and in a bound he was between Jack and Irene.

"What's all this about?" he rasped, gripping hold of Jack and drawing back a clenched fist.

Jack clutched him by the shoulder.

"Lay off, Nick," he said earnestly.

"She's framing evidence on you!"

"Ah, you and your suspicions—"

"She's fram'in' you, I tell you!" Jack blurted. "She put somethin' in the inside pocket of your coat. Look for yourself."

Nick glared at him and dipped into the garment. He glanced at the folded sheet of paper and then thrust it back.

"Hub, nothing but a racing-form, you smack-off!" he blazed. "And you struck her, eh?"

A fit of ungovernable rage seized Nick. He lashed out at Jack, his bunched knuckles battering into the younger man's face. Jack cannoned against the wall and Nick pounced on him, hitting at him with both fists.

"Lay off, Nick, I tell you!" Jack panted. "Quit it, will you? I'm trying to steer you straight—tryin' to steer you straight—"

A savage blow to the mouth cut short his protests, and his temper flared up.

"Hang you, Nick!" Jack ground out. "I'm goin' to let you have it!" And he rushed blindly.

He had the reach, but in Nick's stocky form there was a reserve of strength

which more than counter-balanced that advantage. Nick broke the attack and took the offensive again, hammering fiercely, connecting at last with a terrific jolt that swept Jack off his feet and hurled him to the floor.

His head struck the "surround" of parquet with a sickening smack, and he lay still, with arms wide-spread. And in the very instant of his fall the door was flung open and

District Attorney Black stepped into the room with three or four plain-clothes men.

"Come on, Nick," Black said quietly, "let's go down-town."

"What for?" snapped Nick, glowering at him. "You got nothin' on me. I'm just a guest here, like a hundred others. You can't hang anything on me. I don't own this place—look up the deed in the County Recorder's office. All I own here is what I've got on."

One of the detectives went to the clothes-stand and took Nick's overcoat. From a chair into which she had sunk miserably, Irene watched the man remove it from the hook, and there seemed to be an agonised expression on her face.

"It's hot and stuffy in here, Nick," said the district attorney. "Let's take a walk."

The detective came over from the clothes-stand with Nick's coat and held it open for him.

"H'm," Nick mused. "You got good manners for cops, you guys. All right," he added, with a laugh. "I'll oblige you, for all the good it's gonna do you."

The district attorney leaned forward before the coat could be donned, and he took something that was protruding from the inside pocket.

"So all you own here is what you've got on, eh?" drawled the D.A. "Then, in that case, you've got plenty."

"That's nothin' but a racing form," Nick retorted.

The district attorney smiled.

"You probably don't know that there's an old Blue Law that classifies a racing form as gambling paraphernalia," he observed. "That same law makes possession of one punishable by a six months' gaol sentence. I didn't know it myself till just a few days ago, but I know it now—and so do you. It's a law that most of us have forgotten."

Nick's eyes blazed. He realised all at once how he had been tricked and "framed," so that he could be put away for six months while his gambling-ring was systematically broken up.

Round he wheeled, and started for the bowed figure of the girl in the chair. But before he could reach her the district attorney and one of his men had seized him.

"You dirty double-crosser, you!" Nick raged. "You—"

"Say, what's the matter with this fellow?" came the voice of a detective who had come upon the still form of Jack.

Nick turned his head. "I socked him," he said between his teeth, "and I'm darned sorry! He didn't have it coming to him."

"He's unconscious," observed the 'tec. "Let's be going, Nick," said the district attorney. "I—"

"Wait a minute!" It was the voice of the detective stooping beside Jack. "This fellow ain't unconscious. He's dead!"

Nick blanched. "What's that?" He suddenly tore free and rushed to where his friend lay. "Jack—Jack!" he cried. "Jack, I'm talkin' to you! Jack!"

He lifted the dead man's head, and then he understood. There was a pointed door-stop screwed into the floor, and Jack, in his fall, had struck it just between the neck and the skull.

Someone drew the little barber to his feet. Like one in a trance he heard the voice of the district attorney, a voice which betrayed Black's feeling of awe.

"It looks like manslaughter now, Nick—"

Nick turned slowly and looked at the girl who had betrayed him.



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"So you gave me the works, huh?" he muttered vaguely.

"Yes, Nick," she moaned, "I did. But I—I didn't think it would be for anything like this. I've always been a little coward. Oh, Nick, could you forgive me?" And all at once she was raked with a fit of sobbing.

Nick drew back and made a gesture with his hand.

"That's all right, Irene," he said in a toneless voice. "I've always been a sap with women. Come on, Black, let's go!"

The trial was over, and Nick was about to take a train journey—up the river at the State's expense.

A little party of friends and reporters were gathered to see him off, and as he was moving towards the steps of one of the railroad cars Nick perceived a black, shiny face amidst the group.

The faithful Snake Eyes came forward, carrying the cage that contained Nick's favourite canary bird, Blondie.

Nick glanced at the detective to whom he was handcuffed.

"Are you sure I can't take her along with me?" he asked.

"Not a chance," was the answer. "No blondes where you're going, Nick."

"Well, I got a rabbit's foot heah, boss," suggested Snake Eyes; but Nick shook his head.

"Nothing doing," he stated. "You gave me one of those once before. Here's the way to bring me luck, Snake Eyes." And he rubbed his palm over the negro's woolly pate.

He was moving on when he saw the figure of a girl near by, and once again he paused.

"Hallo, Marie!" he called.

The girl drew near him.

"I suppose I should be glad you're going up, Nick," she said with a catch in her voice, "after the way you treated me. But I'm not. I came down here to laugh in your face, and—I can't! A sob broke from her. "You're a swell guy—and I deserved what I got!"

"Oh, that's all right, Marie," Nick told her. "I'm sorry the way everything turned out between us. Here"—pushing some money into her hand—"buy yourself a box of candy. You know, I can't eat it—it gets in my teeth."

He laughed whimsically, and was laughing still when the cry of "All aboard!" went up.

"Any final statement, Nick?" a reporter shouted, as the gambler and his escort climbed into the car.

"Sure," was the answer. "You tell my public I've put close clippers on a lot of other fellows, and now I'm going to find out what it's like myself. Say, I wonder how I'll look with that monkey hair-cut they give you up there."

There was a general laugh, and then a photographer pushed his way to the fore.

"Hey, Nick," he suggested, "how about a picture?"

"All right. Just a minute. I'll tell you when." The little barber straightened his tie. "Go ahead."

The camera clicked, and the detective who was to escort Nick to the penitentiary tugged his prisoner's sleeve.

"So long, Nick," called a Press man. "See you in seven years."

Nick turned half-round as he was climbing the steps of the Pullman.

"Seven years?" he grinned. "I'll bet you two-to-one I'm out in five!"

(By permission of Warner Bros. Pictures, Ltd., starring Edward G. Robinson and Evalyn Knapp.)

"THE LAST RIDE."

(Continued from Page 20.)

one of Brady's colleagues from the station. A nod from the boy, and quickly brushing away the tears that dimmed her eyes, the girl flew to him and almost flung herself into the haven of his arms. "Oh, Roy, dear, to think you escaped those brutes. But how—how—"

"A darned near thing, missy." Brady shrugged his shoulders expressively. "If I hadn't thought to have this place watched to-night Master Roy would have got his as sure as eggs are eggs. But I had a feeling he'd be wanting me this evening—we were working together in this little stunt of his, as I believe you know—so I came along with a car load of the lads. And we struck lucky. Out came the kid with those killers, and we soon nabbed the lot. Got the dope on them proper then, and on Piccardi, too. Safe to shoot the brute when he was threatening the woman."

But Roy and Doris were paying him no heed, for they were clasped in each other's arms, gazing rapturously into each other's eyes. Brady grunted disgustedly as he became aware of their inattention, and his colleague chuckled. Then the wizen-faced little detective touched the boy's arm.

With a start Roy swung round and blushed as he saw Brady grinning at him. Then the detective jerked a thumb imperatively towards the door.

"Best be getting along, Roy," he mentioned. "This is no place for that girl—revenge has been exacted, and there's that story to do for your paper. The smashing of Piccardi and his gang, like you told me you hoped to do. Gee, kid, it'll make fine reading, huh?"

Roy nodded, and with his arm about Doris' waist he led the girl from the room, followed by the heartrending sobs of Lita Alvaro as she mourned over the dead body of Piccardi, whose reign of brutality and terror had at last been crushed.

(By permission of Universal Pictures, Ltd., starring Dorothy Revier, Charles Morton and Tom Santschi.)



(Continued from page 2.)

Noah Beery as Host.

When Noah Beery is not at work at the studio he is usually to be found playing the genial host at his Paradise Mountain Trout Resort. There he dons old corduroy trousers, a flannel shirt and a Stetson hat, and is then ready to welcome his friends. He is always glad to have them call, and extends them the glad hand, a cheery smile. In his latest picture, "The Millionaire," to be released later on, you will once again see him playing the "bad man."

Tom Tyler's First Film Lessons.

Among cowboy heroes Tom Tyler still has after a number of years a good following among picturegoers, and there are many of you who will by now have seen him in his recent release, "West of Cheyenne."

It may not be generally known that this popular actor once tried to learn film acting through the post. Tom Tyler was in his teens when this curious idea possessed him. He had seen advertised in some magazine that for quite a modest payment each week he would receive a correspondence course. All he had to do then was to study the lessons at home in front of his own mirror, after which he would be sent a certificate of proficiency, and then film fame would be his for the asking.

Well, it seemed easy and tempting enough, and for weeks Tom saved up and bought the lessons. But neither what he learnt nor the certificate which duly arrived helped him a bit. Casting directors placed no value on the instruction he had gained in this way, and for three years he tried studio after studio without getting even a bit in a crowd.

Then one day Tom Tyler's perseverance secured him a beginning. He was asked to make up as a Red Indian chief. So in paint and feathers he appeared before the camera, and years later attained his ambition of being famous in films.

But he smiles now when he thinks of what he expected to gain through those correspondence lessons in acting.

FILM NOVELS YOU SHOULD NOT MISS!

"SALLY IN OUR ALLEY."

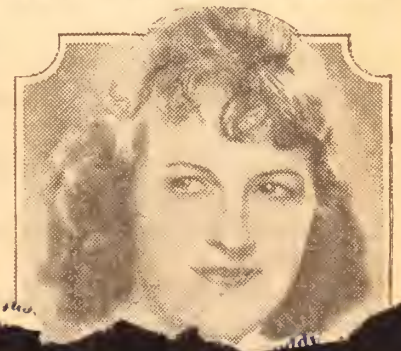
The enthralling drama of a girl who was the life and soul of an East End coffee-shop, and of a lover who wished her to think he was dead, because he had been badly injured in the War. A tale of mean streets, but very human beings.

"THE FLOOD."

Not caring whether she lived or died, a girl is rescued from a threatened flood by a young engineer. Happiness results until the first man comes back to haunt her life. Then the waters burst through the banks, and— A gripping drama, starring Monte Blue and Eleanor Boardman.

"THE SPELL OF THE CIRCUS." EPISODE 1.

Intrigue, mystery and romance beneath the big tops. A vivid and gripping drama of the same ring, starring Francis X. Bushmen, Albert Vaughn.



Don't

“



The News Reel

(Continued from page 27.)

The Strangest Village in the World.

At the back of the huge buildings which enclose the sound stages of the B.I.P. Studios at Elstree stands a collection of structures which would give a casual observer much food for thought, were it not evident that they are part of the neighbouring buildings where films are made.

The houses built therein consist, for the greater part, of one wall only, that is the front wall, which in the majority of cases is merely a thin coating of plaster on three-ply wood. These walls are shored up at the back by timber, which is cunningly placed so that no evidence of them is visible when walking along the "streets."

The first thoroughfare that one enters on is a reproduction of a street in Port Said, complete with a tramway which would be the joy, if not the pride, of any municipal council. This particular "street," which contains about twenty different shops, stores, steamship offices, etc., is a reproduction of an actual street existing in Port Said, which will appear in Alfred Hitchcock's next picture, "Rich and Strange." Actual scenes were photographed in Port Said for this film, but it was necessary that certain important "close-ups" should be filmed at Elstree, and therefore this particular spot was reproduced in all its detail at the back of the Elstree Studios.

Five yards farther on and we enter a partly enclosed stretch of sand, whose walls obviously indicate the corner of a bull ring. The transition from Egypt to Spain, passing an English rustic bridge en route, is amazingly sudden, but one gets used to these things in the film industry. The bull ring "set" was seen in the Stanley Lupino comedy, "Love Lies," interspersed with some remarkable real life exterior shots of bull-fight scenes actually photographed in Spain.

From the bull ring we turn half-right and find ourselves confronted with five or six houses that might be seen in any typical London street. Macadam road and grey pavement are wonderfully realistic, even to the most critical eye, and yet both have been made out of the

studio carpenter's best friend, three-ply wood. The houses themselves are four stories high, complete with glass windows, genuine front doors, with the usual knockers, bells and letter-boxes. One instinctively looks for signs of life behind the curtained windows, or milk bottles standing on the doorsteps as evidence of human residents of such realistic-looking buildings.

One of these houses has obviously suffered from serious fire, for the windows are missing, and the front of the house has that incurably desolate and stained appearance resulting from the blackening smoke and the water from the fire brigade's hoses. Such is the London street constructed at Elstree for the scenes in "The House Opposite."

An acute observer could see in the vicinity the remains of Flanders trenches, and farther over in the same field stand the smouldering remains of an English water-mill; relics of former British International Productions.

This is a rough description of what could be rightly termed—the strangest village in the world.

Getting Dad into Pictures.

You have seen Chester Morris in pictures, and in "The Gang Buster," Jack Oakie's new comedy, you will see Chester's dad, William Morris, playing a big part.

"It took more than a year of constant persuading on my part," said Chester, "to get dad out to Hollywood and into pictures. You see, dad has been more than forty years on the stage, and veterans of the stage are not always keen to leave the footlights. They think that acting before a camera cheapens their art. However, after I got a foothold in pictures, I persuaded dad in coming to pay me a visit. He came and just mooched around, said the climate of Hollywood was grand, but that he couldn't stand doing nothing.

"Those long waits in the studio, which every artiste has to experience, nearly drove him crazy. Then he was offered a part in Bert Lytell's picture "Blood Brothers," and because he was bored he accepted it. Well, he got much more salary for that than he ever had on the

stage, and now he loves pictures. He's Hollywood to stay."

Hollywood's Circus Specialist.

"Everything from a trained flea to a five ring circus." This is the slogan of A. W. Copeland, who is recognised as Hollywood's official circus provider for the films. Copeland was at one time an acrobat, but found that there was more money to be made by establishing himself in a line of business which was not overeroded.

Not only does he supply the animals required, but he furnishes all the props, and can obtain as many as a thousand people to fill the big circus tent. All this saves producers a deal of worry. But as circus pictures are not always being made, Copeland does not wait for Hollywood to engage his services. He sends out circuses to tour the States while keeping an organisation in readiness in Hollywood.

Answers to Questions.

For reasons of space, Clifford (Aberdare), I am obliged to give only two of the casts you mention, but don't hesitate to write again. "Racing Hearts": Agnes Ayres (Virginia Kent), Richard Dix (Roddy Smith), Theodore Robert (John Kent), Robert Cain (Fred Claxton), Warren Rogers (Jimmy Britt), J. E. MacDonald (Martini), James A. Murphy (Racing Driver), Edwin Brady (Pete Delaney), Fred J. Butler (Burton Smith), Robert Brower (Horatio Whipple), Kalla Pasha (Mechanic). "Lure of the Wild": Jane Novak (Agnes Belmont), Alan Roscoe (James Belmont), Little Billie Jean ("Cuddles"), Richard Tucker (Gordon Daniels), Pat Harmon (Polcon Dufresne), "Lightning" (Laddie Boy).

Ramon Novarro and John Boles are both very popular without a doubt, Thomas (Widnes), but when you ask me to express my opinion of their singing in order of merit, you must think, my boy, of the brickbats that would be hurled at me by picturegoers who disagreed. But to tell you something of Ramon keeps me on safe ground. Born in Durango, Mexico, on February 6th, 1899, he displayed his vocal ability from an early age, and sang not only in his bath but everywhere else. His talent led him to the stage, and later he made his first big screen hit in "The Prisoner of Zenda." His latest picture is "Son of India." Sure you can write again. One more letter won't do any harm.

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Boy's Cinema

**"SUBWAY EXPRESS" and
"THE LONESOME TRAIL."**

Complete Film Stories in This Issue.

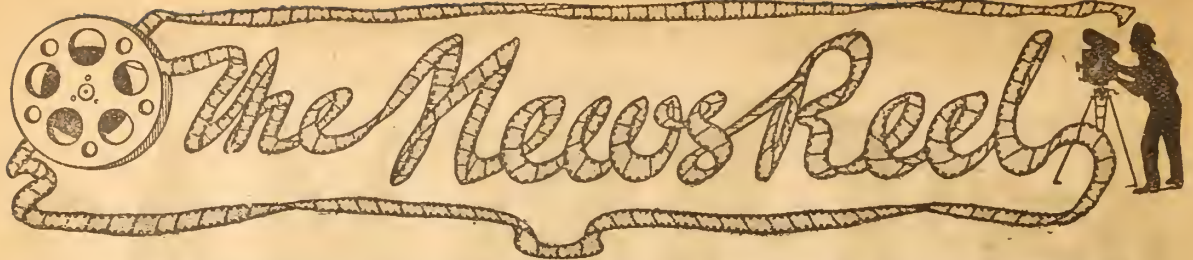
Boy's **CINEMA** 2^D

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EVERY TUESDAY.

OCTOBER 3rd, 1931.





The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"The Flying Fool."

Vincent Floyd, Henry Kendall; Marion Lee, Benita Hume; Morella Arlen, Ursula Jeans; Michael Marlow, Wallace Geoffrey; Jim Lanzer, Martin Walker; Madame Charron, Barbara Gott; Hicks, Charles Farrell.

"Subway Express."

Police-inspector Killian, Jack Holt; Kearney, Fred Kesley; Dale Tracy, Eileen Pringle; Edward Tracy, Alan Roscoe; Paul Borden, James Robards; Herman Stevens, Sidney Bracey; Mason, Selmer Jackson; Mrs. Cotton, Ethel Wales; Mr. Cotton, William Humphrey.

"The Lonesome Trail."

Judd Rascomb, Charles Delaney; Sweetheart, Ben Corbett; Teuderfoot, Jimmie Aubrey; Gila Red, Monte Mantague; Martha, Virginia Brown Faire; Rankin, William McCall; Enoch Crabb, George Berkner; Oswald, George Hackathorne; Mau In The White Sombrero, William Von Brincken; Sheriff, Lafe McKee; Slim, Art Mix.

Our Grand Annual.

No reader can afford to miss the first handsome copy of BOY'S CINEMA ANNUAL, which is on sale at all news-agents and bookstalls, and can be had for the very small sum of six shillings. In this wonder book you will find pages and pages of gripping film stories, numerous pictorial articles which tell you all about such interesting things as Film Making, Life Stories of Famous Film Stars, Filming Wild Animals, Sports and Pastimes, and all the big pictures of the year. There are also three beautiful coloured plates and sixteen full-page plates of Famous Stars.

In a nutshell, the BOY'S CINEMA ANNUAL is the very book for the ardent film fan.

Teaching Dogs to Act.

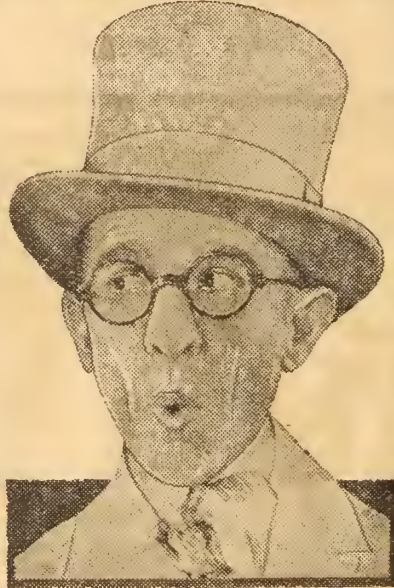
There are few men better qualified to speak on "How to bring up a dog to be an actor" than Rennie Renfro. For it is he who trains most of the canines used in Hollywood's "talking dog" productions.

Renfro has a dog farm near Hollywood. There he keeps a collection of hounds of all varieties, among them being his two famous stars, Buster and Oscar. There is one kind of dog, however, which does not appeal to him for his work. That is the thoroughbred. Not one is to be found among the hundred canines in his collection. He believes the "mutt" dog, as he calls the other type, to be much easier to work with in a company of different dogs without becoming excited.

"The first step necessary in training dogs for pictures," says Renfro, "is to pick the smart dogs from each litter. By a 'smart dog,' I mean one who shows more general intelligence and nervous organisation than the others. It is possible to judge this by looking

October 3rd, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



ROBERT WOOLSEY

in

"EVERYTHING'S ROSIE."

"Doc" Droop has stood in many market-places — without a licence — selling quack medicines, when a little waif named Rosie followed him out of town and insisted upon being adopted. Years afterwards, when a lover for Rosie had appeared on the scene, Doc was charged with theft and thrust into jail, while Rosie was bundled into a home. But Doc was resourceful, and in the end everything became rosy — for Rosie.

"UP FOR MURDER."

A cub reporter accidentally kills his boss during a fierce quarrel, and the sentence of the court is — death! Read of a girl's sacrifice to save him. Starring Lew Ayres and Genevieve Tobin.

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"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

a pup in the eyes. There is a certain alert fire and gleam denoting possibilities that can be brought out in training."

Mr. Renfro begins his teaching after the pup is two months old. First comes simple tricks, such as sitting up, crawling, rolling over, and so on, all of which serves as a foundation for more difficult stunts at later stages. Intensive training follows when the dog is about six months old. He is taught to walk on his hind legs, open doors, pick up different objects and other tricks. The most important of these is the movement of the jaws in response to a hand signal.

For example, when making "Trader

Airedale," a skit on "Trader Horn," one dog used for the part of an African savage did not know any mouth movements. So Mr. Renfro had to teach him for several days before filming began. This is what he does. First, he massages the animal's jaws so as to make them supple, then gently opens and shuts them. In time the dog gets to know that when the command "speak" is given by a hand signal to move his jaws as though talking.

The dogs not able to learn this trick are given a bit of toffee to chew while the filming is being done. Then they move their jaws sometimes more than is required. Patience and kindness are essential in teaching a dog tricks. Frightening the animal by cruelty will do no good at all.

Thanks to His Nose.

There is at least one actor in Hollywood who has reason to be thankful for a broken nose. This is Stanley Fields. He was at one time a professional boxer and had made quite a name for himself with his nose in perfectly good condition. Then he met Benny Leonard, retired lightweight champion, in the ring, and as a result of that boxing match Stanley Fields found his nose quite out of joint.

Fields, however, decided to make the best of a bad thing, and trading on his battered nose he entered vaudeville in partnership with Frank Fay. For eight years the two played before the footlights until the coming of the talkies dealt a severe blow to variety and threw numbers of artistes out of work. Frank Fay went to Hollywood and soon obtained parts in pictures. Inspired by his partner's success, Stanley Fields followed him.

There again his broken nose helped him. Norma Talmadge was so impressed by his ferocious appearance that she signed him to play the part of the gunman in her first sound picture, "New York Nights." Fields made such a hit in this picture that Al Jolson next engaged him to play as "Pig Eyes," a tramp, in "Mammy." Paramount has since used him as the menace in "Street of Chance" and "Ladies Love Brutes." Stanley Fields has now a featured player's contract, and his other films include "Dangerous Paradise," "The Border Legion," and "Manslaughter."

Quick Rise to Fame.

Fate has a strange way of dealing with those who seek film fame. There are hundreds of artistes in Hollywood who began years ago to climb the ladder to success and are still nowhere near the top. Lew Ayres, however, is among the specially blessed.

About a year ago he was a novice and unknown. Now, at the age of twenty-three, he is among the stars of the cinema firmament and with a brand new five-year contract. He began work recently on "Heaven on Earth," will ap-

(Continued on page 23.)

A young English detective swears to get a murderer within a week and a battle of wits follows with a desperate gang of crooks. A mysterious and beautiful young girl becomes involved in this grim story of crime. Starring Henry Kendall and Benita Hume.



The Challenge.

"MORNING, James. A pint of your best and brightest Burton, and step on it as I've a thirst I wouldn't sell for thousands!"

The speaker was a lanky, sprawling young fellow in check plus-fours. Strong clean-shaven features, a thatch of thick brown hair, powerful shoulders, a fine physique, and yet he looked only half-awake.

Vincent Floyd was something of an enigma to those who thought they knew him. His age was twenty-eight, he had plenty of money, was very fond of sport, always seemed to enjoy life, and he did everything in a hurry. He would tear down to Walton for a game of golf in his sports racing car, then would charge back to Hendon and go flying for an hour, land and tear away somewhere else for a game of squash, and finally finish with a night club. And yet he always seemed rather bored with life.

"Too much money, that's his trouble," was what his friends and enemies thought, and would have been surprised to learn that his wealth consisted of four hundred a year. But Vincent was well off, and the reason was "work," and hardly a soul knew this or what was his particular form of obtaining money.

Vincent was lounging in an armchair of the Terrace Club on the London Embankment, and his chief thought at the moment was beer.

A young man in a blue suit came into the room.

"Fancy seeing you here at the hour of eleven o'clock, emuna!" cried Jim Lancer, a friend in whom Floyd confided more than anybody else. "Not playing golf?"

"I've knocked the cover off the ball down in the Surrey Hills," came the happy answer. "Started soon after breakfast. Jim, I've developed an appalling hook."

"Swinging the club round the body or too much right hand," decided his friend. "Having hacked up the course, you're drowning your sorrows in drink?"

"Nothing of the sort." Vincent did not move from his lolling position. "I'm searching for a—" He stopped suddenly, and Jim saw his friend give him a warning glance. The butler had appeared with the beer. "Thanks," drawled Vincent, and then when the servant was out of hearing shot out a remark that shook Lancer. "I'm searching for a murderer."

"W-w-what's that?" gurgled his friend since schooldays. "Did you say murderer?"

"Yep, you know my hobby." Vincent sat up and took a deep draught of ale. "Ah, that's the stuff! Marlow knows his goods. I've let you into one of several of my small doings and you've been very useful at times. Just as well to keep in with a big noise at the Croydon airport, and it may be that you can help me this time. At the moment I'm working on shreds, but they're patching up."

"I haven't heard about any murder," came the puzzled question. "Are the Yard keeping—"

"Not so loud with your yards," warned Vincent Floyd, and dived his hand into his pockets. "Take a squint at these."

Many a time Jim Lancer had been startled by the deeds of his dare-devil friend. He was one of the very few who knew Vincent was one of Scotland Yard's ablest investigators. But the

glinting necklace fairly startled him.

"Why, those are—"

"Lady Angela's sparklers," came the cool reply. "Got those last night."

"You were here last night and slightly binged, old top," Jim reminded him. "I was surprised to see you so bottled."

"Maybe I wasn't quite so binged as you thought," Vincent said quietly. "One can appear to drink and yet not drink. Many a full glass I've parked under my chair or out of a window. At any rate, I got 'em last night, and they're my first big clue to the murder."

"What murder?"

"Ever hear of James Hirst?"

"Hirst—Hirst?" Jim frowned. "Yes, I did somewhere. I remember—he was a detective who came over from America, and then something happened."

"Yep, disappeared; he was one of Pinkerton's best men." Vincent finished his beer. "Marvellous stuff to get the brain busy. He was found drowned a week ago. Yes, Jim, drowned in the Seine, on the mud flats near those underground sewers. There was no evidence of violence, but we know he was murdered. What's more, old boy, how did it happen that Hirst should disappear in England and his body turn up in the Seine? That is the problem in a nutshell. Those sparklers I associate with the bunch who caused Hirst's death. Sounds easy, don't it? Join me in another beer?"

"No, thanks, Vincent." The Croydon official got to his feet. "I just popped into the club to see if there were any letters. By the way, didn't you promise to meet Morella this morning?"

Vincent Floyd clapped his hand to

October 3rd, 1931.

his mouth in a typical schoolboy gesture.

"So I did. The balloon will certainly go up now." He banged a bell. "Gee, I must have another beer to get my strength up! Now to think of some tale. My uncle in Norfolk is ill. No. One of my dogs has the mange. No. Important business affairs. Poor excuse. I went to the wrong meeting place. A poor lie. I—"

Jim's vigorous shake on his arm brought him to a stop. Someone had entered the lounge.

Morella Arlen was tall, sweeping and very haughty. Her hair was brown, but clever work at beauty parlours had made it almost blonde; her figure and carriage were perfect, her clothes the latest word, and her age not more than twenty-five. Society knew and approved of Morella because of her beauty and her brains. She knew everyone and every place, but should she go to some low night club she went not so much for the fun as to tell her world of her experiences. She never did anything that Society would disapprove.

The glance from her blue eyes and the slight lift of pencilled eyebrows made Jim Lancer give his chum a quick glance. Morella was in a bad mood.

"Morning, my dear, I hope this fine morning is to your liking?" Vincent beamed good humour. "You're looking remarkably well, Morella."

"More than I can say of you," was the sharp answer. "Are you aware that you arranged to meet me at Barings this morning?"

"Oh, bless my soul!" Vincent frowned. "I have some recollection of a fur coat, but surely I never promised—"

"You said you would be there at eleven, and it is now half-past." Morella studied a small diamond wrist-watch. "I rather imagined that you might be here." Her sensitive nostrils quivered as she gazed at the beer tankard. "Thirsty so early in the morning? I should have thought that after last night you—"

"Well, I'll be getting along," hastily interposed Jim Lancer, not liking the signs. "Ring me up some time, Vincent."

"It may be pretty soon," Vincent grinned. "I want to pop over to Paris soon. So-long, old boy."

"Well, have you nothing to say?" Morella tapped her heel impatiently. "Why did you not keep the appointment, and what is your explanation of last night's disgraceful conduct? Don't deny it, Vincent, because I heard all about your excesses."

"Oh, Morella, I wish you wouldn't be so hard." Vincent looked dismal. "I did not forget this morning, and I rang up the stores to say I had urgent business."

"Urgent business!" Morella gave a scornful laugh. "You who have never done a stroke of work in your life to talk of business! I got your message and I guessed the rest. You came here to drink."

"The beer is mighty good." Vincent started to grin, then saw her frown and subsided. "There were some shares, stocks and stuff, had to meet my broker, and talking is thirsty work. But this afternoon, darling, I could manage—"

"I am going to Hurlingham this afternoon," was her answer. "Michael Marlow is taking me. You had better ring me this evening some time. A little more of this treatment, Vincent, October 3rd, 1931.

and our engagement will be definitely at an end."

"Oh, but Morella darling, I—" Vincent tailed off as the lady left him. He stared after her. "I wonder if I should be dreadfully upset if she did break off our engagement? Let's read the racing news, more interesting. So she's keen on Marlow. Ah, ha, the plot thickens!"

Some five minutes later Vincent looked up as someone paused by his side. A well-groomed man in a morning coat. Dark, suave, with bold, sparkling eyes. Spanish or South American origin and a great favourite with the ladies.

"Good-morning, I trust your head is better this morning?"

"Hallo, Marlow. I was going to send for you." Vincent got to his feet and his face was one large smile. "You've just missed Morella. I want to tell you how good the beer is, and also to have a little talk. Busy?"

"I am. Is it of importance?" Marlow asked, and his tone implied that nothing Floyd said could ever be of any great matter.

"Yes." Slowly the big fellow withdrew his hand from his pocket. "Ever seen these pretty little things?"

In a moment Marlow had changed from the suave proprietor of the latest type of modern club into a thin-faced, slant-eyed man, whose eyes gleamed balefully and whose fingers were crooked as if he would claw the other's face. His whole body was rocking with the effort to control a terrible spasm of rage.

The light in the eyes died down and Michael Marlow became once more the polite official and kindly proprietor.

"Pretty, where did you pick them up? Off my floor?" he asked, but his eyes were watching.

"I reckon you've got time for a quiet talk, Marlow." Vincent Floyd was no longer smiling, and his voice was dangerously quiet. "Those jewels came out of your safe, and I want to talk to you about them." He took Marlow's arm. "Lead me to your den of iniquity."

"The pleasure is mine." Marlow showed no sign of perturbation.

The Challenge.

THOSE who saw Marlow and Floyd strolling through the lounge of the Terrace Club thought how friendly the two men seemed. Some even went so far as to whisper:

"Floyd is a good customer! No wonder Marlow is friendly! You should have seen Floyd last night—oiled up and no mistake. A fellow like Floyd ought to be made to work!"

Whilst there were other criticisms, mainly from keen sportsmen:

"Fine three-quarter—plays a clean game! I've never seen a man hit such a long ball! Do you remember when he was at the Varsity—how he won everything, including the heavy-weight boxing? If Floyd had to work he would make a name for himself!"

Little did they guess that Vincent Floyd was one of the most valued men at Scotland Yard, and that most of his indolent attitude was a pose that had deceived many a criminal.

In the privacy of Michael Marlow's private sanctum the two faced each other, Floyd amused and Marlow smiling apparently good-naturedly. The proprietor bowed his guest to a chair, and then walked across to the safe in the wall.

Vincent lit a cigarette and watched him, and his eyes were mocking until Marlow straightened his back—when they became very much alert.

"You are an enigma that interests me," coolly stated Marlow. "Might I ask how you obtained possession of that necklace? Of course I deny ever having seen it before, and have invited you here because I feared that last night's—"

"Binge," prompted Floyd. "You would like to say that the fumes of many quarts of priceless alcohol have changed a rather pleasant young man into a muddled owl. I suggest that we put our cards on the table, and—he patted his pocket—"let us talk like friends, and—"

"May I offer you a cocktail?" Marlow picked up a shaker. "I can assure you it is not poisoned or drugged."

"An admirable idea." The big athlete sprawled in his chair. "Only a mild one, please. Now, Mr. Marlow, I presume you would like to know something about me. Why I have taken this sudden interest in your affairs?"

"You interest me." Marlow poured out two drinks with a steady hand. "For some while I have not been altogether satisfied with your attitude. For instance, you are much too clear-eyed this morning after your potations of last night." He raised his glass. "Here's fun."

"May we have plenty of it before we're through," was the retort. "Many think I do nothing, Marlow, but I will lay my first card on the table, and tell you that I am attached to Scotland Yard."

"One of those terrible amateur sleuths?" mocked Marlow.

"You've said it." Vincent sipped his drink. "Good stuff this, almost as good as your beer. Another card is the robbery at the home of Lady Angela. The Yard suspect that a bright little gang, recently arrived from America, which they had made too hot for them, have had a hand in this robbery. The methods were similar to those of New York, and the finding of the necklace in your safe is fairly conclusive evidence. As a thief of international fame I presume, Marlow, you have few equals?"

"With equal frankness, may I say that you honour me." Marlow watched Floyd with twinkling eyes. "Perhaps I have not always run exactly according to law. Now that you've found those jewels, what do you propose to do? You will find no finger prints on them, and I can produce witnesses to—"

"Swear you are as innocent as a child." Floyd chuckled to himself. "I could run you to Vine Street, but you might get away with it, and such a course would hinder my main object. Lady Angela's necklace was not my chief reason in wasting so much money on liquor—by the way, I poured most of it away. A scandalous waste, but needs must on some occasions."

"You relieve my anxiety." Marlow drained his glass. "Might I ask what other robbery you have fastened on to me?"

"I hinted that you had found the States too warm for you. So warm that it was necessary to quit! America was most annoyed about it, but determined to have a shot to get you back. Does the name of James Hirst mean anything?"

Again Michael Marlow changed to a narrow-eyed scoundrel, whose hand was near his pocket, but the pat that Floyd gave his pocket restored the man to the calm demeanour of a moment before.

"You have heard his name?" Vincent Floyd blew out a cloud of smoke. "Hirst was a Pinkerton's man, and he got on the trail of his quarry; yet soon after his arrival in England, not so many weeks ago, he disappeared."

"They never found him. Very sad—"

and very curious. You suspect foul play?"

"Oh, yes, there was foul play right enough." Floyd's eyes seemed accusing. "Hirst disappeared in England, and the Yard were perturbed, because they knew he was on your—pardon—the gang's trail. He had only given the Yard the briefest statement over the 'phone of what he knew. Then he disappeared."

Marlow asked sharply:

"Well, has he turned up again?"

"Oh, yeah, as you say!" Vincent's smile hid his thoughts. "His body was found in the Seine on a mudbank—three days ago."

This time Marlow showed no vestige of surprise—just cynical amusement.

"You are not seriously suggesting, Floyd, that I murdered this man, are you?"

"I have no proof yet, but I think I'm on a very good trail." The athlete lifted himself to his feet. "What's more, I'm willing to wager that I'll have that murderer under lock and key within a week."

"You are clever, my friend, and very frank." Marlow shrugged his shoulders. "I should think the waters of the Seine must be very unpleasant. You know I might be inclined to take your wager. I am a born gambler, and I usually win."

"A gamble against a hangman's rope," Vincent Floyd stubbed out his cigarette. "If you lost, Marlow, you might not be able to pay the wager out. Think that out."

"I will," Marlow opened the door. "I have a habit of removing things from my path—especially when they annoy me."

"Do I annoy you?"

"I trust you won't be conceited when I admit the fact," Marlow smiled. "It is not often that I am bluffed; it makes

me terribly angry. I want to square accounts."

"You'll pay your account right enough," growled Vincent Floyd. "Guess I'll go and consume some more of your excellent beer. Be seeing you soon—behind bars!"

"Maybe you won't laugh when you do," thought Marlow as he stared after Floyd, who was calmly whistling and not even glancing back. "If you do!"

The Fainting Girl.

AFTER consuming half a pint of beer Vincent ambled over to a call-box, and was soon talking to Jim Lancer.

"What's that? Just arrived at Croydon? You must have been going some! I say, Jim, can you let me know all about your jolly old machines because —"

"Are you wanting to go to Paris again?"

"Yep, I am and all," Vincent laughed gaily. "Why the suspicious growl, O Fat One?"

"You've been over to Paris too much lately, and that's one reason why Morella is so angry. It may be your husiness, but you can bet she thinks there's some other reason."

"She would, but, all the same, I'd like to go." He jotted down various times and, when he had checked them, concluded: "I may want to book a berth some time to-day, but should Morella talk about Paris to you, remember to act your normal self—just dumb. 'Bye!'"

As Vincent lounged out into the main hall he became aware of a small group of people clustered round a bench. One servant in blue livery held a glass of water.

"Stand back! Stand back! Give the lady air!"

"Hallo, a damsel in distress," decided Vincent, and craned his neck.

He saw a slim girl, very white of face, dressed in neat, dark coat and skirt, small felt hat, apparently on the point of collapse. Vincent watched as she tried to sip the glass of water.

From his pocket Vincent produced a small bottle—a very strong restorative that a medical practitioner had made up for him—the mixture was a lightning cure for morning after the night before!

One sniff made the girl jerk back her head; eyes that almost seemed to express indignation stared up into his. Then the girl—she could scarce be twenty, gave a faint smile.

"I feel better now." Her voice was soft and rather sweet. Obviously she was well educated. Vincent was of opinion that she was distinctly good-looking. He liked the small nose, dark hair and perfect features—a faint colour stole into her cheeks and she lowered her eyes.

"Sudden change in the weather," Vincent suggested. "How do you feel? You stay quiet for a bit and then I'll get a taxi."

"Oh, I'm much better," the girl answered quickly. "I've been on my feet since daybreak, and I've been so busy I haven't bothered about food. I sort of forgot about eating." The girl stood up and revealed herself as tall, slim and graceful. "Oh, I feel quite recovered now. So stupid of me to faint—a thing I've never done before."

"You'll take a taxi straight home." Vincent was quite decided.

"I've got to call somewhere first," was her reply. "It's in this street. I'll go home afterwards."

"Have you far to go?"

"Number thirty-six."

"Thirty-six," Vincent stared at the girl in astonishment. "But thirty-six is next door, and the place is empty."

"Thirty-six was the number." She smiled timidly at the staring onlookers. "Thank you all so much. I'm so sorry I fainted on your doorstep."



"They wanted to put the case on the roof of this cab and take it away. You've got to stop 'em—I want to know what's inside it," said Vincent.

Quietly a figure stole up to watch the little scene. It was Michael Marlow, and his small moustache hid the ghost of a smile.

"I'll see you to the street," announced Vincent in a determined manner. The other members turned away—the incident was apparently at an end. "Are you sure you haven't made a mistake?"

"The number is thirty-six." She smiled shyly. "Don't bother about me, please. I'm quite all right."

At the door of the club she held out a gloved hand.

"Good-bye!" The girl spoke firmly. She did not require his assistance any further.

"Good-bye!" blurted out Vincent. He watched the girl go down the steps, scratched his chin, then resolutely turned his back. Why should he feel such an interest in this young girl? Why had he not insisted upon getting a taxi and seeing her home?

"A chance to become friends and I neglect it," he murmured as he scowled at the club notice-board. "What the blazes does she want to go to number thirty-six for? I'll see if she has made anyone hear."

Cautiously Vincent walked the few steps to the front door and stepped out on to the stone steps leading to the main entrance of the Terrace Club.

The girl was standing before the door of number thirty-six, and was actually letting herself in with a latch key. Even as he gasped over this baffling incident she opened the door and stepped inside. Vincent ran down the club steps and gave the empty house, with its broken and shuttered windows, a keen look-over. The front door was half open, and he glimpsed for a moment a bare, dusty hall and stairs; before the door closed noiselessly he had seen two figures coming down the stairs. Men with caps over their eyes and dressed in dark suits.

Boldly Vincent walked up to the door of number thirty-six and tried to peer through the keyhole. He would have liked to have knocked, but could think of no good excuse. He decided he had better go back to the club before a lot of inquisitive pedestrians formed themselves into a crowd.

Reluctantly he walked down the stone steps and stood rubbing his chin and staring.

Obviously the place was empty, although there was no "To Let" sign pasted on the windows. The place had caused several of the members to complain, as it was an eyesore in a stylish neighbourhood. There was a rumour that the owner wanted too big a rental. Yet this queer girl had a key! Perhaps she had an order to view?

Then he almost leaped in the air. He had heard a sharp scream of fear.

Vincent ran up the steps and thundered his fists on the closed door.

Michael Marlow had hastened back to his room.

"Curiosity killed the cat," he chuckled softly. "I wonder if it will get young Floyd?"

Swiftly he put on a dark overcoat and picked up a felt hat, then he rang a bell and a sleek man-servant appeared.

"Deliver this letter at once to Miss Morella Arlen," were his orders. "At once—you will find her in the main restaurant having coffee with some friends."

When the servant had gone, Marlow walked over to what looked like solid wall. He pressed a hidden spring and a panel slid back on oiled wheels.

Beyond was the dirty, dusty hall of number thirty-six.

October 3rd, 1931.

The Mysterious Packing Case.

VINCENT hammered on the door. A click and it swung open. A pasty-faced, dirty-looking ruffian in an old brown suit and a filthy felt hat stared at Vincent from narrowed eyes.

"Hi! Hi, mind our door!" he grumbled. "We ain't deaf."

"What's going on here?" demanded Vincent. "A young lady came in a few moments ago. I heard a cry for help."

"Ho, did yer!" The fellow sneered. "Honest-to-goodness folk live here, and they can't make a sound without nosey-parkers shutting in! The stairs ain't too good, and maybe you heard someone slip on a loose board—or maybe it was just your imagination. Guess you're making a mistake."

"I'll come in and look round." "You'll do nix of the sort," was the answer, and then a big, burly fellow appeared by the speaker's side. A typical water-front tough, with cauliflower ears and a great red face. "Bill, this guy thinks he heard a scream," said the first fellow.

"He'd better take the air. Had a drop too much, mate?" growled the big man. "Come on, Sid! We gotta move that box."

"You run along and tell your mother all about it," jeered the man called Sid, and slammed the door in Vincent's face.

He retreated down the steps. Impossible to break into the house—and quite probably there were other customers like these two. If ever he had seen two ruffians, he had seen them in this old house. Why were they there? He had not overlooked the presence of Marlow when the girl had fainted, and he wondered if that arch-scoundrel knew anything about this house.

"Something fishy going on." He paced slowly up the road. "I wouldn't mind staking a level quid that those bright lads are some of Marlow's gang—the chaps who helped him in that Lady Angela business. Have I got enough evidence to persuade the Yard to give me a search warrant, and, if I go away, will the birds have flown by the time I get back? I might 'phone from the club, and—"

His murmurings died away. A taxi had drawn up before No. 36.

The front door opened, and the two men that Vincent had seen came down the stone steps. They spoke to the driver, who got out. They appeared to be discussing the roof of the taxi, at which they kept gazing from time to time.

"What the blazes is up now?" ruminated Vincent.

He was not long kept in doubt, because the two men went back into No. 36, and a few moments later reappeared, carrying a huge packing-case. Sid and Bill carried the front portion, whilst two other pleasant-looking ruffians supported the end of the case, which was over seven foot long, about three foot broad, by two in depth. It was evidently very heavy.

The men had just got the case to the pavement when Vincent strolled up.

"Hullo!" Sid nudged the big fellow. "Here's little Willie again! What yer want now, Nosey?"

"What's inside that case?" "Grape fruit." Sid's remark made the other men guffaw.

"Well, I'm not swallowing them," Vincent holdly walked up to the box, by which two of the men were standing. He did not see Bill and Sid wink at each other.

The amateur detective passed his hand down the wood and rapped with his knuckles.

"Come in!" Bill chuckled. "I dunno what's coming to this country. Why is he at large? He's a danger to the public."

"Reckon he's escaped from some place," Sid cried. "Come on, boys, get the case on the roof. We ain't got too much time. Now then, Nosey, stand back—unless you want a punch on the jaw!"

"Are you going to give me one?" Vincent strode up to Sid, over whom he towered. "One flip from my fist, and you wouldn't have so much to say: What's in that case?"

A policeman came leisurely along the street, and quickened his pace when he saw that trouble was evidently brewing.

"What's going on here?" demanded the man in blue.

"Officer, you see that case?" cried Vincent. "They wanted to put it on the roof of this cab and take it away. You've got to stop 'em. I want to know what's inside that case!"

"He's talking out of his hat!" Sid explained, in an aggressive manner. "That there box ain't got nothing what would interest him inside of it. We got orders to come here and take that case away, and all the while this guy keeps badgering us. If you likes to take a look, constable, you'll see it's marked fragile. I dunno, but I reckons it's one of them valuable foreign mummies, or maybe glass. We ain't got to drop it on no account. We'd be obliged if you'd ask this gentleman to pass on. We're in a hurry."

"Fraid I can't do anything, Mister Floyd." The policeman had often been inside the Terrace Club, and knew Vincent as a somewhat eccentric sportsman.

The four men proceeded to lift the case to the roof of the taxi, whilst Vincent tried to argue with the rather stupid police-constable.

"Officer, why can't you demand to know what's inside that case?" he said. "I'm pretty certain some dirty work is going on here. They came out of a deserted house carrying that case. Why can't they be burglars?"

"That house ain't deserted, though it looks it." The constable stared at No. 36. "It was sold a month ago, and that gentleman"—he pointed to Sid, who smirked—"is the new owner. Took over about a fortnight ago, didn't you, sir?"

"Quite right—quite right!" Sid waved his men into the taxi. "We'll be getting along, sonny boy!"

"Ask 'em where they're taking that case!" raged Vincent.

"Croydon air-port for France, Nosey!" shouted Sid from the window. "Anything else you want to know? I'm thirty-two, got a wife and two children, and—" His sally caused much mirth. "Would you like to come and call some time, sonny boy?"

Even the policeman had to smile. He waved them off, and the taxi-driver shoved in his gears.

Floyd stood there with clenched fists, watching the taxi drive away, with Sid and Bill waving their hands to him.

"I'm sorry, Mister Floyd, but I couldn't say anything to them." The policeman shook his head. "If they chooses to cart cases like that about, it ain't none of my business."

"You'd be a sergeant if you made it your business," snapped Vincent. "But I'm not beaten yet."

Up the steps into the Terrace Club he ran, and at once got himself put through to the Croydon air-port.

"I want to speak to Jim Lancer." An interval that seemed like hours before his friend answered, with a:

"Hullo! Who's that speaking?" "Vincent Floyd. Jim, is there a

machine going to Paris in about an hour? Not down on any schedule?" A pause. "There is a specially chartered machine? Is there a vacancy for a passenger? What's that? One only? Hold it for me—I'm coming right along. 'Bye!'"

Seconds later his car was speeding south to Croydon.

Scarcely had Jim Lancer finished talking to Vincent Floyd when Morella Arlen came through on the 'phone.

"I've heard dreadful news about Vincent," came her angry voice. "You know he's been going to Paris quite a lot recently—and do you know why? He's a drug fiend! I've thought for some while it might be something like that. Yes, I've got proof." Morella did not say it was Michael Marlow who had supplied the information. "And has Vincent rung you up to-day? He is going to Paris? You must try to stop him, Jim. We *must* keep him away from these drugs—they will kill him. You promise you'll do your best? All right. I'll come down to the air-port at once."

The Prisoner.

VINCENT FLOYD made good time down to Croydon—half an hour before the machine for France was due to start. The sight of an ancient taxi made him smile. He would deal with those gentlemen some other time. First he must get his ticket.

Now Floyd was often at Croydon, and he knew all the little tricks of the game. Many of the officials and staff knew him, though the clerk in the office was apparently a new man. Vincent had just got his ticket when a buzzer went and the clerk went to speak on the 'phone.

The passage booked in the name of Vincent Floyd was cancelled.

"Excuse me, sir." The clerk was worried. "Didn't you say your name was Floyd? May I see your passport for a moment? There's been a slight mistake."

"My name's not Floyd—it's Lloyd," blandly answered the detective. "And I should just hate to have a name like Vincent. I think it's going to be a nice crossing. 'Bye!'"

Vincent left the office before the clerk could quite make up his mind what to do. Floyd declared that, after locating the 'plane, he would lurk around in dark places till just before starting time. Who the dickens wanted to stop him going to France?

It was therefore a distinct surprise when he noticed Jim Lancer nosing round the aerodrome as if he were looking for someone. Vincent decided not to show himself; he did not like the watchdog look on his friend's face.

Then a few moments before time of departure a car drove out and Morella appeared. He managed to get close enough to hear what she said to Jim.

"Where is he?"

"Can't find him. My clerk, a new man, reports a tall man in plus fours something like Vincent, but the name given was Lloyd. There is a Lloyd crossing this afternoon, but —"

"Can Vincent have guessed we're trying to stop him?" cried Morella. "Oh, Jim, what can we do?"

"The 'plane's being watched by two of my lads." Jim took her arm. "I've left the seat in his name because I can't monkey about without due reason; don't want the company on my trail. But those two lads will see that Vincent doesn't get on the 'plane leaving at one-thirty, or on any other machine."

"Is that so?" Vincent slunk back into hiding behind some crates. "I'd like to know why dear darling Morella wants to stop me. Some crazy idea, I expect. Ah!"

The exclamation came from him as he saw the big packing-case being loaded on to a passenger cross-Channel machine. The four thugs carried the case as if it were very precious.

Vincent had a pretty good idea that two hefty mechanics lounging near the machine were Jim's men.

At last the packing-case was on board and various officials and passengers appeared. Vincent decided to dive back into cover.

Not until he heard shouts and orders did he show his nose, but on the word "Contact" he hared towards the machine. The two mechanics heard him and turned, but he did a ruggier swerve and gave an easy miss. The 'plane was on the move and the cabin door was on the point of closing when Vincent clutched a rail to run alongside. He dragged open the door and stumbled inside into the arms of a steward.

"Name of Floyd!" panted Vincent. "Only just made it!"

"Mr. Vincent Floyd?" The steward touched his peaked cap. "That was a close shave, sir. Your seat is along this way, sir."

Vincent sank into an armchair and mopped his brow. He gazed out of the glass windows and saw the ground sliding away below. He wondered what Jim was saying to his two hire-

lings. Idly the young detective turned to scan his fellow-passengers.

The machine was one of the latest models, divided into fore and aft cabins. Vincent shared the aft cabin with an unenviable assortment. There was Bill and Sid, the other two rascals, and three men whom Vincent decided were also of the gang and—

The girl who had fainted and had gone into No. 36 was also in the cabin. She was gazing at him with eyes large with fear. Her face was ashen white and she seemed about to cry out.

"Well, this is a pleasure," began Vincent, and paused because something hard was tickling his ribs.

"There's a gun agin yer side," snarled Sid's voice. "One shout from you and it goes off."

"Has it got a silencer?" Vincent smiled as if he did not care in the least. "I'm sure it has." He waved his hand towards the packing-case that was standing on the floor of the passenger cabin. "I hope you haven't got bombs inside that?"

"Can it, Buddy!" came a threat. "We ain't in a mood for laughing, and you ain't in a position that's too healthy."

"What a nasty rough man," gurgled Vincent, and suddenly caught the man's gun hand, whilst his left banged a nasty jab to the chin.

Like a flash the whole cabin leaped on Vincent and he hadn't a chance. He opened his mouth to yell for help when a life-preserver crashed down on his skull and he sagged back a limp heap.

"Back to yer seats!" hissed Bill, and raised Vincent so it seemed as if he were sleeping. "That steward may be back any second. If he gets wise we gotta get *him*."

The steward looked in and asked if anyone required anything to drink, but the passengers all looked so glum he hastily retired.

"Shut the door," Sid motioned to Bill. "Give us the wire if that



"I swore I'd get the murderer of James Hirst," Vincent cried. "Down in that cell I found a message from Hirst and a Pinkerton badge—enough evidence to make you swing, my dear Michael!"

"Thank heavens, you're safe!" she gasped. "There's no time to waste as the water will soon be over this grating!"



steward comes back. Now, boys, open the case."

Seals were cut, two padlocks unfastened and rope dragged off, then Sid undid a lock and lifted the lid.

Inside lay the form of a man in a smart overcoat.

Michael Marlow was speedily helped out of his prison.

"Our little trick worked like magic." Marlow went across to the limp figure. "Help me search Floyd. I want his passport."

All this while the girl had crouched in her seat, staring with agonised eyes at what was proceeding. Her mouth was half-open as if she were going to scream, though in her fear she knew that such an action would mean sudden, swift death.

It was a simple matter for Marlow to remove the photograph of Vincent Floyd from the passport and substitute a picture of himself.

"Shall we pitch him out, boss?" asked Bill.

"Don't talk like a fool!" Marlow gave a nasty laugh. "I haven't finished with our friend yet. Put him in the case and fasten it up quick. When you've done that we'll ring for the steward. Myself and Miss Lee would like some tea, wouldn't you, Marion?" "Thank you," the girl managed to say.

Marlow smiled. "A dash of brandy won't do you any harm. Bill, you sit in Vincent's chair, because you're not unlike his build. I don't suppose that fool steward will notice any difference. If he does, then he'll get a ride without a parachute. Get slippery with fastening down that case."

The Writing on the Wall.

ON the floor of a stone cell lay the prostrate figure of Vincent Floyd.

There was a bruise on his forehead, and a thin stream of clotted blood had dried on one side of his face. He was so still that the girl, who had been admitted by a big, heavy-faced Frenchwoman, wondered if he were alive.

"You can have ten minutes, cherie," winked the woman. "And remember, we go halves in all you get."

"I won't forget."

October 3rd, 1931.

When the door had closed the girl knelt beside Vincent Floyd.

"Hallo!" drawled the apparently lifeless body. "What's the game—going through my pockets?" Vincent had opened his eyes and was grinning at her.

"Thank heavens, you're not badly hurt." The girl turned to glance towards the closed door. "We must speak low—she may hear us. I thought you were dead when I first looked at you."

"I was pretending to be." Vincent scrambled to his feet with the aid of the girl. "Didn't know what to expect, and thought it better to look dead. Now, young woman, are you friend or foe? You should be a foe, as you got me into this mess, but somehow I can't quite get used to the idea of you being a wrong 'un."

"My name is Marion Lee, and I was mad on dancing. A misguided friend introduced me to Marlow, and he took me into his show. He has places in London, New York, Paris and all over the world. London was all right, but Paris was different. This cellar is below the Chat Noir."

"On the hill of Montmartre—a pretty spot," murmured Vincent. "The ladies are a swift lot of hussies."

"I wouldn't mix with them, so Marlow made me his secretary." The girl sighed. "I entertained his friends, and after a while found what sort of a man he was. But I was in his clutches. He swore to frame me if I breathed a word. Always they watched me, and I had no one who could help. I was taken to London to deal with the correspondence of the Terrace Club, and I worked in a room upstairs. Marlow made me do that fainting business in the hall, but if I had known the real reason then I would never—"

"You found out, when you went into number thirty-six?" asked Vincent. The girl nodded. "And you feared to give the alarm on the cross-Channel 'plane?"

"That would have meant certain death for both of us. Alive I might be of service to you. I laughed and danced when you got here, and that bluffed them; finally I persuaded Madame Charon to let me see you, on the condition that if I could get you to pay out any money, she should have a half share."

Dim light streamed through rusty

bars, and Vincent drew the girl nearer so that he could see her face. For a long time he stared into the dark eyes, but they faced him bravely.

"Yes, you're telling the truth," was his verdict. "Well, I'm a Scotland Yard man, and I'm after Marlow."

"Guessed that," admitted Marion. "But what has Marlow done that he should want to murder you?"

"Murdered another poor 'tec. Hallo!" His gaze roaming round the stagnant, crumbling walls of the cell had seen something. "What's that writing?"

"I've never seen it before." Thoughtfully Vincent Floyd studied the letters, and then a glad cry escaped his lips.

"It's a code." He pointed. "See that word—Knnj—well, add the next letter after each one. After K comes L, after N an O, then another O, and finally after J comes K—that spells L-o-o-k—look." Quietly he did the other three words, and his eyes gleamed. "The two top words spell James Hirst, whilst the word next to 'look' is Zanud, or, translated reads as 'above.' James Hirst wrote his last message on that wall, and he wants us to look above."

"Was Hirst the murdered detective?" "Found in the Seine near here a few days ago," Vincent was staring at the cobwebbed roof. "Where they'd like to put me if I give 'em the chance. Ah, I see the clue. May I lift you up—there's something stuck in the plaster."

Easily he lifted the girl, and then the two were staring thoughtfully at a badge—Pinkerton's.

"Madame will be back any minute," spoke the girl. "What can I do to help you?"

"Take this badge and get in touch with Scotland Yard. Tell them I'll bring the murderer of James Hirst in before the week's out. Tell them about this badge and don't lose it. I don't want any help at the moment, but the Yard is to be ready for quick action and to watch all ports, especially airports. Tell them about the Chat Noir and Marlow, but they are not to act unless they hear nothing from me after twenty-four hours. The man you want is Colonel Gardner. Have you got all that, Miss Lee?"

"Yes, but your life is in danger." She clung to his arm.

"I've been in worse scrapes than this," from the heel of his shoe, which slid back, he produced some notes. "Here is some money—you'll need it. You'll have to give madame her share. I—"

"Madame is knocking for me," whispered the girl. "She is coming in here."

"Okay; watch me go dead." Vincent suited the words by flopping on to the stone floor.

Madame made a stare at the still figure.

"He looks mighty queer," she mumbled. "Did you find any money, cherie?"

"Here you are." The girl passed over some notes into clutched fingers. "He's doped, so you needn't worry about him."

Arm in arm with the cackling and villainous old Frenchwoman she left the cell, and not till the door had clanged did Vincent Floyd show any signs of life. Then he moved to the bars of the cell and shivered a little as he spied the muddy waters of the Seine.

Marlow's Vengeance.

IN a filthy underground cellar of the Chat Noir Michael Marlow prepared to deal with Vincent Floyd. All round were wine and beer casks, and the atmosphere was stale and musty. A table and two comfortable chairs had been brought down from the restaurant, and on a tray were bottles and glasses.

A rap on the table brought madame. "Bring in our worthy friend."

"Very good, m'sieur." The old hag disappeared, and Vincent Floyd, a little ruffled and dirty, marched firmly into the presence of his captor, who seemed surprised at his alert appearance.

"I understood, my dear Vincent, that you were rather ill?" he said. "I'm glad to see you so much recovered."

"We 'tees are hard nuts to crack," Vincent beamed. "What's the latest? How about a spot of torture?"

"Ratlier mediæval," was the answer. "The other day you put your cards on the table, and I always like to return a compliment."

"Ah, this sounds interesting," Vincent said quietly, taking in all details of the cellar. "Do I ask questions, or do you prefer to tell the tale in your own way?"

"In my own way." Marlow flicked a speck of dust off his immaculate dress trousers. "Let me tell you what has happened since your trip from England. I guessed your fatal curiosity might lead you into my trap. I was inside that case, and you were placed inside, after we had secured you. I took your passport, and it was all quite simple, my photo inserted in place of yours. You were brought to the Chat Noir in Montmartre and given a comfortable bed in one of my rooms."

"Cut out the heavy sarcasm and come to the point. I hate the smell of the Seine."

"You were drugged and remained unconscious for a day and night," Marlow proceeded, with evident enjoyment. "Now I had informed a certain lady, Miss Morella Arlen, that the reason of your repeated visits to Paris was drugs, and she thinks you are a drug addict. On arrival here I put through a long-distance call, and told Morella that I could prove my statement about drugs. She flew over, and about six hours ago had the pleasure of viewing your inanimate form—I laid you on that bench there. There is a small puncture in your arm, and she saw that. I rather like Morella, and she likes me—we understand each other. She was disgusted, and washed her hands of you for good. She is staying in a near-by

hotel, and will shortly return to London after—"

Marlow paused. "After you have disposed of my body," blandly hinted Vincent. "So you've stolen my beautiful Morella," he went on. "Frankly I think you've done me a favour, old boy. Morella is a very domineering woman, and you may be the biggest villain in the world—but you won't boss her! I am not sorry the engagement is at an end, though I should have preferred some other method of disentanglement."

"It doesn't really matter, because I've got to get rid of you," Marlow smiled at this cold-blooded statement. "You know what happened to Hirst. Well, I have a more refined method, and it is as follows: You will be doped with gas, then drugs inserted into your body, and lastly you will be lowered through that trapdoor." He pointed to a huge ring in the floor. "And your body will be placed on the mud—at low tide. Some time later you will be found." Vincent Floyd, drug-fiend, found drowned in the Seine. So simple, is it not?"

"Jolly little scheme! Phew!" Vincent indicated the glasses. "I'd love a spot before the programme commences, as I'm not feeling like knocking a house down."

"Certainly, let me help you!" Marlow had one hand in his pocket, and from this he produced a gun. "Sorry to have to take this, but you are apt to be violent." He placed the gun on the table. "Would you mind standing back a little way? Thank you."

"I've learnt that Hirst shared the same cell as myself." Vincent saw Marlow start. "I found evidence he had left behind, so I know who was his murderer."

"Pity you will have no chance of using your knowledge," sneered Marlow, passing a glass. "Well, here's fun!"

Vincent took the glass and drank half of the whisky. He sipped a little more, swayed uncertainly and clutched at his heart.

"I feel terrible," hoarsely cried Vincent. "I believe you've drugged me again, you swine!"

"I've done nothing of the sort!" cried Marlow, and was just in time to catch Floyd as the latter sagged forward, a dead weight in his arms. The crook laughed. "The poor fool is scared stiff, and thinks I doped him. I'll get the boys to bring him round, and—"

Suddenly the limp figure stiffened, and steely arms gripped Marlow. The surprised scoundrel was suddenly flung away from the table, and when he recovered his balance he turned to find Floyd on his feet. In his hand was the gun.

"I swore I'd get the murderer of James Hirst before a week," Vincent cried. "and I'm going to do it! Down in that cell I found a message from Hirst and a Pinkerton badge—enough evidence to make you swing, my dear Michael."

Marlow's face had for a few moments depicted rage and chagrin, but now he assumed his old rôle.

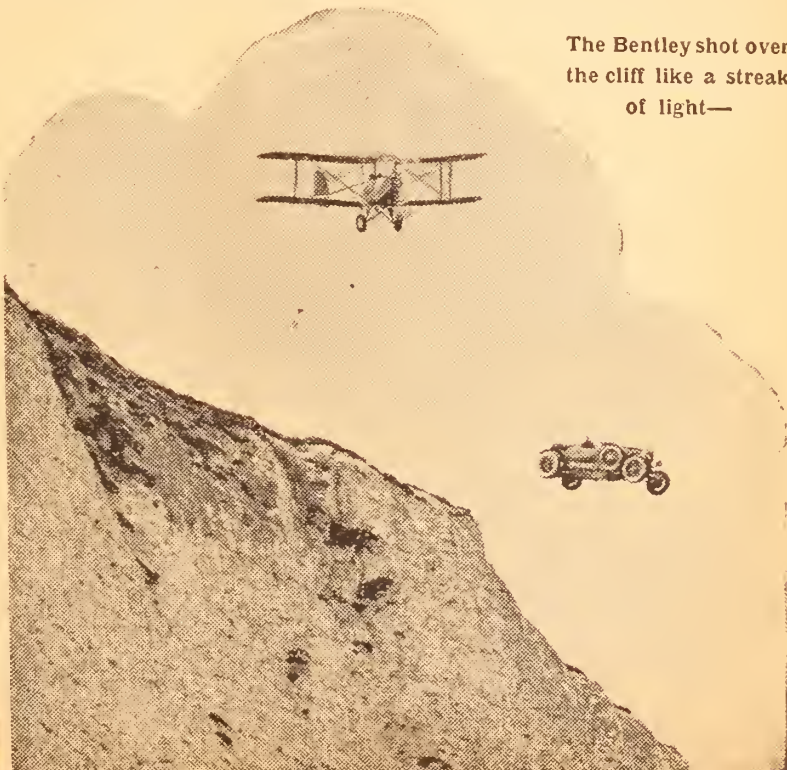
"Very clever, my dear Vincent," he drawled. "For the moment you have the upper hand, but I always win in the end. Besides, you've found out a little too much, and one of us has got to visit another world."

Marlow had set one of his men on the stairs leading down to the cellar, and he knew that the gang would be warned at once of what had happened. Behind Floyd a door opened, and a man gently slid into the cellar. He crept towards the unsuspecting detective, and two other men—Sid and Bill—came after the first crook.

"I don't feel like trying the next world yet," Vincent retorted.

"No more do I," Marlow agreed with him. "And I still think that I hold the trump cards."

In an instant Floyd became suspicious—his enemy was too confident. Some instinct of self-preservation made him turn, and as he did so a sack came down over his head.



The Bentley shot over the cliff like a streak of light—

The gun was snatched out of his hand as Bill and Sid flung themselves on the detective. He managed to flatten out one ruffian with a hefty punch before they got him pinned down across the table. Several more of the gang had appeared, so that five were holding him down.

"Take away that sacking," ordered Marlow. His face was gloating with triumph. "Not quite so clever as you thought, my dear Vincent! And now for the final act." He beckoned, and a man came forward with a mask, a cylinder and various tubes. "We are going to give you a mixture of chloroform and ether first, then another gas that will keep you under for several hours. Then you will be placed on the mire of our beautiful sewers to await the tide. Good-bye—sorry I can't shake hands with you, old boy."

"You murderer!" yelled Vincent, struggling desperately. "If I could get free I'd wring your neck."

"I'd rather not," Marlow motioned to a white, flabby-faced evil little man of Slavonic origin. "Doctor, your patient!"

Struggle as he might, Vincent could do nothing. Soon the nozzle was over his mouth, and then everything went black.

The gang stood away, and Marlow surveyed his victim.

"The syringe," he ordered. "I'll fill him so full of cocaine that it will leave no doubt. In half an hour take him down into the sewers."

The drug had been injected, and the final dose of gas administered when Marlow donned hat and coat.

"I'm flying to England within the hour. You stay here, and don't bungle this business," were his crisp orders. "In a short while place Floyd on the mud. Remain here until further orders." He bowed in mockery to the gassed detective.

The Paris Sewers.

TWO hours had passed. Long since Marlow had sped away with Morella Arlen for England.

The cellar was deserted. The gang had done their work, and had gone upstairs to celebrate their foul work. Into the cellar stole Marion Lee. This was her first chance of getting away unseen from the too attentive madame—from whom she had learned the fate of Vincent Floyd.

Desperately the girl tugged at the iron ring, but it would not move. She was not strong enough to open the trapdoor, but Marion would not give up. She knew where the sewer entered the Seine, and perhaps the tide might carry Floyd towards the entrance.

And as Marion rushed out of the Chat Noir to find a boat Vincent Floyd was battling for life.

His fitness and strength had saved him so far. The majority would have been overcome by the gas, drugs and sewer water, but Vincent possessed stubborn vitality.

For two hours he had lain on the mud, and at last the water had lapped round his feet. Another hour passed, and the water was rippling over and around him. Sometimes a current banged his legs and head against the slimy, smelly walls of the sewer, but the detective showed no signs of life.

But when foul water poured into his open mouth he spluttered and stirred. Everything was vague and distorted, but the desire to live made him struggle to get back his strength. Somehow he pulled himself on to a higher mud-

bank and lay there prone whilst the water splashed over his feet.

His whole body was limp, his head ached, and he longed to give up the fight. The tide came in with a rush and weakly he tried to keep afloat. His head began to clear of the gas fumes and his strokes became stronger.

A dim light pervaded the sewer, and he wondered from whence it came. Soon his strength would go and he would drown.

"Vincent! Vincent!" A voice was calling, and at once his mind completely cleared. Strength came back with a rush—Marion's voice, and it brought a message of hope.

Strongly he struck out towards the light, and coming round a bend saw a narrow pinprick ahead.

"Vincent! Vincent!" cried Marion. "I'm here!" he shouted back. "Keep on calling."

Her voice helped to guide him and give him encouragement to fight against the foul odours of the sewer.

The patch of light grew larger and larger, and at last Vincent managed to reach rusty iron bars. Outside was a boat and an anxious Marion.

"Thank heaven you're safe!" she gasped. "There's no time to waste, as the water will soon be over this grating."

"Push that oar between the bars," cried Vincent, but the iron was much too strong.

"Can I go for help?" wailed a white-faced Marion. "The water rises so swiftly."

"Back away, my girl." Vincent still managed to smile though death was so close. "I'm going to dive down through the mud and try to get through underneath this grill; but listen first. If I don't get through, get in touch with the Yard and tell them what happened. How they drugged me and put me on the mud of the sewer like Hirst."

"I've already been in touch with the Yard," was her reply in anguished tones. "Oh, don't waste time, but try to get through the mud, and you must get through—for my sake!"

"That gives me double strength," was his fearless reply. "Here goes!" Gurglings and many bubbles and what seemed hours passed.

The girl was almost on the point of screaming hysterically when out of the river bobbed a muddy head.

"Help me in!" spluttered Vincent. "That stench nearly finished me!"

Sid and two of the gang stared down through the open trapdoor. One of the gang held a powerful torch in his hand.

"Floyd's not there!" shouted Sid. "Listen, do you hear that voice; it's that danged girl. I always thought she was a spy. Floyd's escaped, and we'll all swing if we don't stop him!"

"What can we do?" moaned the flabby-faced rascal known as the "Doctor." "Can we get a boat and—"

"Too late; he'll be free!" Sid clenched his fists. "Floyd will charter a machine and fly back to England. Marlow was so sure of killing Floyd that he talked a lot, talked enough to put us all in queer street. We've got to pick up the trail of Floyd and the girl at once. Should they fly to England we can follow in the 'plane that the boss keeps in that hangar near Le Bourget; there's a machine-gun on board and we'll bring them down. Come on, let's get going."

The Fight in the Air.

VINCENT FLOYD was an experienced pilot and had no difficulty in borrowing a machine from the aerodrome at Le Bourget.

Marion had got him some clean clothes and found a place where he could remove some of the evil-smelling traces of the sewer, then a fast car had taken them to the aerodrome. Vincent soon obtained suitable flying-kit for himself and Marion.

"We're going to see a lot of each other when this is through," Vincent said to her before she climbed into the passenger cockpit, and the light in her eyes gladdened his heart.

Vincent had decided that no time could be wasted on telling the French police all that had happened, but planned to speak to Croydon from his machine, which was fitted with wireless. It was late afternoon when the machine gracefully took off and they soared away over France towards the Channel and England.

All went well until halfway over the Channel, when Vincent cursed under his breath and spoke by telephone to his passenger.

"Fog-bank!" came his clipped words. "I shall soon have to ask Croydon for bearings. Comfortable?"

"Fine!" A pause. "Vincent, there's a machine about a mile behind us. I've noticed them for some while. They're gaining. Could they be following us?"

"I shouldn't think so," came his answer. "I'll push the bus a bit faster, in case of accidents."

The following machine drew closer and closer and anxiously Marion watched. A powerful monoplane, and she could read the markings. Were they genuine? Why should she feel so uneasy?

The machine was directly behind them and about two hundred yards' range when there sounded a sinister plop, plop, plop, and bullets whined dangerously close to their heads.

"Vincent, they're some of Marlow's gang!" came her warning.

"The fog will save us if I can reach those banks," Vincent answered. "Hold tight, dear, I'm going to try and shake these fellows off. Hold tight, Marion!"

Morella and Marlow were still at the Croydon Aerodrome. Marlow was cursing and fuming, but he had already learnt that Morella was a very determined woman. She had decided that she would like to be shown over the aerodrome, and a word to Jim Lancer had gained the permission. She had grandly swept aside all Marlow's objections.

They came at last to a dome-shaped office of glass with a gallery outside. A tired official was explaining various gadgets to Morella whilst Marlow stifled a yawn.

A loud speaker blared forth, and the official explained.

"There is a fog over the Channel. That is one of our pilots telling us his altitude. I shall get one of my operators to instruct our man to go up five hundred feet, because there is a Belgian 'plane returning to Europe flying on his present altitude. In this way a collision is avoided. We keep in touch with all our pilots by wireless." He broke off to hurry over to Marlow. "You mustn't touch those instruments, sir. They regulate our ground signals."

[Continued on page 26.]

Who killed Edward Tracy? A baffling murder mystery that will keep you guessing till the end. Starring Jack Holt and Eileen Pringle.



The Slaying.

THE New York subway train crashed into the underground station and came to a grinding standstill as the motorman at the front of the first car applied the brakes. The guard turned the switch that operated the doors, and they slid open to admit a mob of passengers, among them a party of three men and a girl.

The foursome called for some attention, by reason of the various sentiments that their faces betrayed. The girl was attractive, but there was something about her that suggested life had not dealt too kindly with her. Between two of the men there seemed to exist a subdued air of hostility, and the third was plainly in a state of agitation.

There was a row of vacant seats near the right-hand central doors, looking front. A woman and a husband with an ear-trumpet that betrayed defective hearing occupied the two nearest the motorman's compartment. The next seat was taken by the agitated member of that party of four already described. Three more remained vacant, and the nervous man's companions dropped into these.

The girl of the party chose the one between the two men who seemed at loggerheads, but the younger of these—a good-looking fellow with a small, dark moustache—indicated an open window.

"You'd better change places with me, Dale," he said to the girl, offering her the seat next to the central doors. "She's in a draught there, Tracy," he added to the man next him, using a tone that seemed to reproach the other for a lack of attentiveness.

"That's so, Borden," Tracy agreed curtly. "You'd better change with him, my dear," he continued, speaking to the girl without any real affection in his voice.

The girl accepted Borden's invitation, and Borden planted himself between her and his hostile associate as the train moved out of the station.

The car had become fairly crowded, and two men were standing near by. One wore the uniform of a police-officer. The other was in plain clothes, but from his conversation appeared to be a detective. Both were bound for headquarters to take up their duties, and they addressed each other as Mulvaney and Kearney respectively.

At 14th Street Station the motorman entered the car from the control cabin and asked Tracy to rise.

Tracy looked up at him almost truculently. He was a sour-tempered man, Tracy, of about forty-five.

"I've got to fix the 'juice,'" explained the motorman.

Tracy stood up. The motorman lifted the seat, tampered with a switch-box for a spell and then returned to the control cabin. Tracy sat down again as the train resumed its journey.

At Times Square a couple of Italians stumbled into the car. They were both the worse for liquor, and one of them sprawled into the lap of the girl sitting next to Borden.

"Hallo, kid," he said with a stupid grin, whereupon Borden launched forward aggressively with an angry exclamation.

The Italian lurched to his feet. "I do nothing, Boss," he mumbled in a scared tone. "I do nothing, I say nothing."

He blundered on with his companion. A moment later a stout little woman of fifty moved in front of Borden, who politely gave up his seat. He stood strap-hanging beside a tall, lean man who was bracing himself against the swaying of the car.

Thirty seconds out of Times Square Station the motorman had occasion to apply the brakes while the train was hurtling over its underground track, and at the same instant the lights temporarily failed. In the darkness the standing passengers were almost thrown off their feet by the sudden jolt, and the two unsteady Italians were fairly taken off their balance. The one who had previously annoyed Borden again finished up in the lap of the girl Dale, and as the lights came on once more he grinned a foolish grin of recognition.

"I com-a back," he announced, pawing at her.

Borden wheeled on him. "Get up out of there," he ground out, seizing the Italian by the collar.

The Italian swung at him, but the train was still moving forward, though its speed had been considerably slackened, and the blow went wide.

Borden retaliated, battering the Italian against the central doors.

"Oh, don't, Paul," the girl cried, but Borden was not in the mood to hear her.

The other Italian came to the rescue of his compatriot and friend, and a fierce scuffle ensued. Then all at once the stout little woman sitting next to Tracy screamed and shut her eyes. For somehow a gun had found its way into the struggle, and Borden and the Italian who had been the cause of the disturbance were fighting for possession of it.

A shot crashed out, and almost simultaneously the second Italian landed a lucky punch that took Borden in the jaw.

Borden fell, and the Italians stumbled away. Meanwhile, the car was in an uproar which was only quelled when the raucous voice of Detective Kearney made itself audible.

"Hey, guard," he bellowed, "keep the doors closed. Don't let anybody out!" Then, to the girl known as Dale: "It's all right, miss," he said. "Don't get excited. Your friend ain't shot. Just took a bump in the jaw. Mulvaney, put the bracelets on them two Italians an' get 'em seated."

"He's hurt," panted the girl Dale, falling on her knees beside Borden.

"Serves him right for startin' a fight," was Kearney's unsympathetic comment.

"But he didn't start it," the girl protested. "Edward," she added, turning to Tracy, "you can tell the officer what happened. Edward! Edward!"

Then she stopped, a look of unripled horror and incredulity on her face. Tracy was sitting with his hands on his knees, his eyes wide in an expressionless stare, his face a ghastly complexion and his body rigid.

Kearney ripped out an exclamation and bent over him.

"Yeah, he got it all right," he said. "Mulvaney, pull the communication cord."

Mulvaney obeyed, and as the train squealed to a standstill the motorman came through from his cabin.

"Man shot," Kearney told him cursorily. "He's dead. Can we 'phone from anywhere?"

"Outside on the tracks," was the rejoinder. "There's an emergency 'phone every two hundred feet. But say, we're tying up the whole subway system stayin' here."

Kearney was of the type whose brain acted according to the regulations of the Force, when it acted at all—a block-headed ex-patrolman who had by some strange piece of good fortune been promoted to the investigation bureau.

"You'll start the train when I tell yuh to," he roared. "Mulvaney, get headquarters on the 'phone and tell 'em a murder's been committed. And watch the live rail."

The central doors were opened for Mulvaney. Several people tried to rush them and escape from the car, which had so unexpectedly become a setting for death, drama and—though the circumstances at first belied it—mystery—Kearney held them in check, but had some difficulty in driving back a big fellow in a sweater.

"I'm One-Round Dolan," he of the sweater appealed, "and I've gotta get off. I'm fightin' Bull Yancy in half-an-hour."

Kearney shoved him into his seat, and Mulvaney dropped to the track. In a few minutes he returned.

"They're sending Inspector Killian to meet us at 72nd Street," he announced. "We've gotta hold everybody in the car until he gets there."

"Inspector Killian," Kearney echoed smugly. "He'll be glad to see me on the job. I'm his right-hand man. Hey, you, motorman—start this train up-town, and don't stop till you hit Seventy-Second. And guard, when we pull in, don't open them doors till I give you the word."

Killian.

THE train ran into 72nd Street station, and Inspector Killian and a couple of subway officials stepped across the platform to the central doors of Number One car. At Kearney's signal the doors were opened, and Killian entered.

"Get the passengers out of the other cars," Inspector Killian said to the two subway officials over his shoulder. "I won't need them. But everybody in this car will have to remain."

Kearney confronted him. "Listen, chief," he began to explain, "that Italian over there shot this guy here." And he pointed to the dead, rigid body of Tracy.

"No, no," cried the accused Italian. "I no' have gun."

"Did you see the Italian do it, Kearney?" asked Killian, ignoring the suspect's outburst.

"No," Kearney confessed. "But I almost did. He's your man, anyway. You see, a fight starts with that guy there"—indicating Borden, who had come round some time before—"and somebody pulls a gat. It goes off accidental-like, and that other guy gets the works." And once more he motioned to Tracy.

Killian's strong face registered an expression of mild scorn.

"Accidental?" he repeated. "Then why did you send for me, Kearney? All you had to do was to take these men

down to the station house on a charge of manslaughter."

"Sure, that was my idea," said the unabashed Kearney. "Shall I call up for a wagon?"

"No," was the rejoinder, "I've got a medical examiner meeting the train at 145th Street. Tell the motorman to drive there, and no stops on the way."

The motorman obeyed the instructions sourly, and, the train on the move, Killian spoke to Kearney again.

"What's the dead man's name?" he demanded.

"Well, I hadn't got round to askin' that yet," Kearney muttered. "But the dame called him by his first name."

He motioned to the girl known as Dale, and Killian repeated his question to her.

"His name is Edward Tracy," the girl answered. "Mine is Dale Tracy. He was—my husband!"

"Huh?" interrupted Kearney in a startled tone. "Then who's this guy that got the sock in the jaw?"

"My husband's partner—and his best friend—Paul Borden," the girl told him.

"Triangle," Kearney breathed darkly. "Listen," put in Killian. "What did Borden do when he found out his partner had been shot?"

Kearney took it upon himself to answer.

"He said he didn't do it, chief. He only knew about it when he came round from a sock on the jaw that he got in the fight."

"Was the blow struck before or after the shot was fired?" Killian asked.

"Well, I don't know, inspector," Kearney replied. "It all happened so fast. But, anyway, that Italian's your man. I've got it all figured out, chief."

"How many times have I told you not to jump to conclusions, Kearney?" Killian snapped. "Listen, we'll get the names of everybody in the car to start with. I'll start with these two Italians."

"I no' shoot," wailed the one on whom Kearney had fixed the crime. "I no' have da gun, inspect! Aw, meester, you no put dees in da paper. My wife she raisa da devil—she tink I'm in Brooklyn with sicka da friend."

"I want your name," said Killian, "and the name of this countryman of yours, too."

Both names were well-nigh unpronounceable to an Anglo-Saxon. Killian bade them write them down, the suspect's beginning with Antonio, and his companion's with Giuseppe—Tony and Zippy for short.

Meanwhile Kearney and Mulvaney were scouring the identities of the other passengers. The woman with the deaf husband answered to the name of Cotton, and the stout little person to whom Paul Borden had given up his seat pronounced herself, "Mrs. Mary Mullins—housewife."

"Kearney," said Inspector Killian presently, "give me the gun that was fired." And the weapon being handed to him; "Which of you fellows owns this?" he continued, addressing Borden and the two Italians.

None of them admitted ownership, and Killian's face hardened. "All right," he jerked, "but I'm going to find out whose gun this is if we stay here all night. Everybody take up the positions they were in when Tracy was killed."

He was obeyed, the dead man staring impassively before him the while. Then Killian beckoned to the Cottons.

"Move over, you two," he said. "You were sitting on the dead man's right, weren't you?"

"Oh, no," Mrs. Cotton put in, glance-

ing at the empty seat next to Tracy. "The other man was next to Tracy, the nervous little man that was with Tracy's party. I—I don't see him now."

"That's right," Mrs. Mary Mullins interposed. "There was another man. He was wearing a brown suit, so help me." And she raised her hand aloft as she had seen witnesses do in a police-court.

"Would you know him again?" Killian demanded.

"Yes, yer honour," was the reply. "That's the man over there. I remember the brown suit."

Mrs. Mullins had made a mistake. The man she pointed to was the tall individual who had been standing next to Borden after the latter had offered her his seat.

"She's wrong, inspector," said the man in the brown suit. "I never saw Tracy in my life before. I'm only an employee here in the subway—George Mason, Switch Inspector. Here's my card."

Mrs. Mullins was not ready to admit her blunder, but Killian was satisfied.

"Kearney," he ordered, "take the bracelets off those two Italians."

"Right, chief," said Kearney, and did as he had been told.

Killian then compelled the principals to re-enact the struggle, which they did half-heartedly. Then Mrs. Mullins spoke again.

"That's just how it was, inspector," she declared. "Only more violent. And suddenly the Italian—Tony or whatever you call him—pulled the gun out of Borden's pocket."

"That's right," another passenger corroborated. "I saw that much."

"So the gun did belong to you, Borden," Killian said, turning round.

Dale Tracy interrupted.

"No," she explained quickly. "It belonged to my husband. He asked Paul to take it home and clean it for him, as he himself knew very little about firearms."

Killian considered for a moment. "Mrs. Tracy," he said at length, "from what I can understand it was Borden, and not your husband, who resisted this Italian's conduct. Were you happily married? If so, you don't seem to show any extraordinary signs of grief at your husband's death!"

"This has gone far enough," Borden began heatedly, but the inspector cut in on him.

"Keep quiet, Borden," he said. "Maybe I'm through questioning Mrs. Tracy, maybe I'm not. But I'll ask you one question. What business were you in before you tied up with Tracy?"

"Electrical engineering," Borden answered, "but I found it was too crowded. So I went into the brokerage business with Tracy."

"I suppose you carry business insurance," Killian observed.

"For two hundred thousand dollars," was the rejoinder. "Tracy and I covered each other for a hundred thousand apiece."

Killian looked thoughtfully at the ceiling of the swaying car. "Meaning that, in the event of your death Tracy would stand to get a hundred thousand dollars," he mused. "And now he's dead, you collect the hundred thousand."

"So you think I shot him to collect the insurance," Borden ground out.

"I don't think anything," Killian retorted. "Now, Mrs. Mullins—and you, Mrs. Cotton—I want you to sit over there and see if you can identify that man who was sitting on Tracy's right. Kearney, have all the males in the car file past me and give their names."

"Right, chief," said Kearney, and he and Mulvaney proceeded to hustle the men forward.

The impatient prize-fighter was amongst the first batch. "One-Round Dolan," he announced, introducing himself. "The Kansas City Terror. One hundred and ninety-five pounds." And he waved his clasped hands aloft as he might have done to an appreciative ring-side audience.

"Come on, get goin'," snarled Kearney, giving him a shove.

Several other men filed past, and then a small, agitated individual was thrust forward.

He called himself "Herman Stevens," and had hardly given his name when Mrs. Mullins and Mrs. Cotton pronounced him the man who had been sitting on Tracy's right. He was immediately seized by Kearney.

"No, no," Stevens babbled. "I was at the other end of the car. You can't do this to me. I didn't kill him. I had no gun! I couldn't kill anyone."

"But you came into the car with Tracy, his wife and Borden, and you took the seat next to Tracy, didn't you?" Killian rapped out. "Come on, answer me!"

Kearney twisted the fellow's arm, and he sobbed out an answer in the affirmative.

"I—I'm a clerk in Tracy's office," he said, in response to further questioning. "I—I hid myself just now because—because I didn't want to get mixed up in any murder!"

Too late he realised what he had said, for Killian fairly pounced on those last words.

"So it was a murder, was it?" he jerked out. "Now we're getting somewhere. Why did Borden and Mrs. Tracy keep so quiet when there was some mention of you by these other passengers just now? Why didn't they confirm the impression that you had been with them?"

Stevens was in a sweat of terror.

"They—they may have been frightened I'd say something about the quarrel Borden had with Tracy at the office this evening," he blurted.

"Tracy—accused Borden of being in love with his wife, Borden said he'd like to kill Tracy for the way he treated her—"

Borden started forward impetuously, but Killian held him in check.

"Hold it, Borden," he rapped out. "I reckon I've found out all I wanted to know, and I'll have to arrest you—for the murder of Edward Tracy—"

"Hundred-and-forty-fifth Street," called the motorman, opening the door of the control cabin as the train ran into its terminus.

The passengers looked hopeful, but Killian was not prepared to release them yet. He ordered them to remain in their seats while the medical examiner and a couple of attendants came aboard.

"Hallo, doc," Killian greeted the ex-

aminer. "A little shooting affair here. Man drilled through the heart. There he is."

The doctor stooped to make his examination.

"Didn't bleed much," he observed as he opened Tracy's waistcoat and glanced at the spot where the bullet had entered the body.

"Yeah, that's funny, isn't it?" Killian murmured.

The doctor straightened up.

"Inspector," he said startingly, "that man was not killed by a gunshot. He was already dead when the bullet entered his body!"

Killian gaped at him.

"You mean—heart failure?"

"No," said the doctor, "it wasn't heart failure. This man was electrocuted."

The Mystery Deepens.

THERE was a blank silence. Then the medical examiner spoke again.

"You will notice the rigidity of the body," he pointed out, "which is always characteristic with electrocution. Furthermore, in a case of electrocution there is always a burn left on the body at the point of contact. Look at that right wrist," he added, pointing to a round blister above the dead man's hand. "The contact was made by a piece of metal the size and shape of that burn."

Killian pushed his hat back on his head.

"What a help you turned out to be," he declared. "Here we have a murder mystery already solved, then you come in and ruin everything."

"I'm sorry, Killian," said the doctor with a smile. "Well, if you've finished with the body I'll have it taken along and will perform an autopsy to-night."

The rigid form of Tracy was removed from the car, and Killian ordered the guard to close the doors again.

"Now listen, folks," he told the passengers, "there's been a murder committed, and the culprit is still in this car. I'm going to find out who it is if I stay here all week. Has anybody got anything to say?"

Someone remembered that the motorman had tampered with the switch-box under Tracy's seat, but the driver explained that he had merely tightened a loose connection. Killian then called across the man who had given his name as George Mason and his profession as switch inspector on the subway.

"I'd like your help, Mason," he said. "Is there enough voltage in that switch-box to electrocute a man?"

"Not unless there was a contact from the third rail," was the reply.

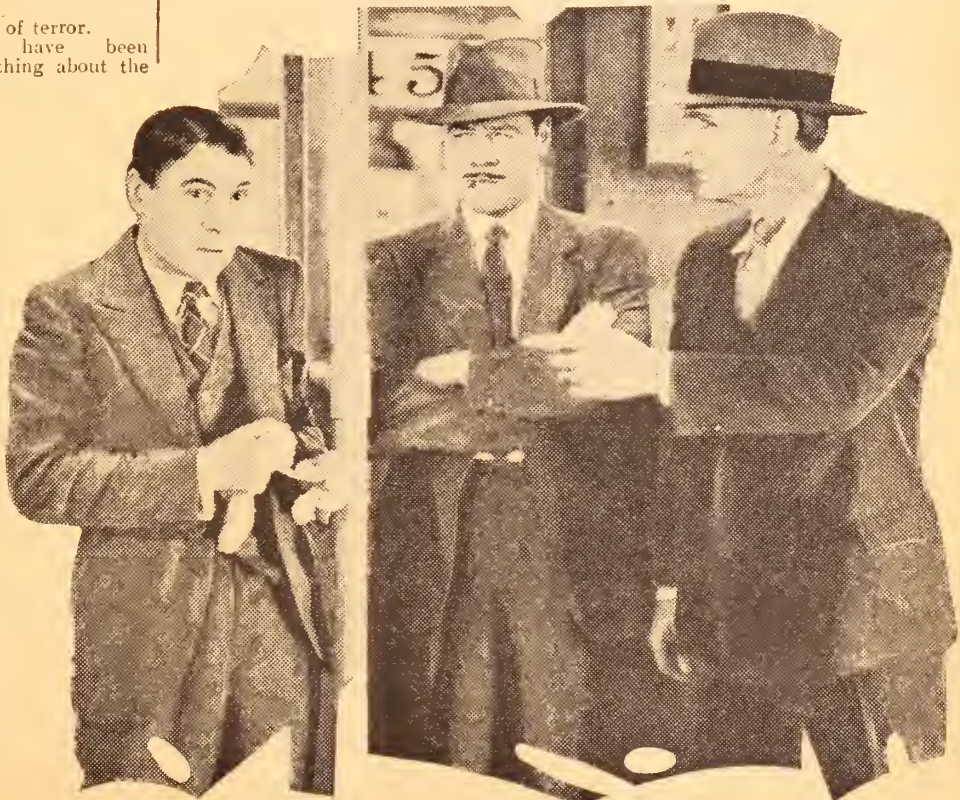
"Then enough voltage to electrocute a man sitting there would have to come from direct contact with that outside rail?" said Killian. "Yet the only connection is outside, the shoe underneath the car making the only contact. All right, but would it be possible to run a wire from that shoe up the outside of the car and in through the window?"

Mason's thin face wore a thoughtful expression. He admitted the feasibility of Killian's theory, and Kearney was sent down to the track to investigate, only to return with the information that there was no such wire in evidence.

It was at this moment that one of the attendants who had borne Tracy's body from the car returned to the platform and, on being admitted to the train, handed Killian a wallet.

"It belonged to the dead man," he explained. "The doctor said to turn it over to you."

Killian opened the wallet. It contained a watch which the doctor must have stuffed inside it, and, after studying the timepiece for a moment, Killian turned to Dale Tracy.



"No, no," Stevens babbled. "I didn't kill him. I had no gun. I couldn't kill anyone!"

"What business was your husband in when he went into the brokerage?" he asked, a queer note in his voice.

"He was employed by the subway," Dale answered, "as a dispatcher."

"I see," Killian faced George Mason again. "Listen," he went on, "would it be possible to drop a wire from that open window there and touch the third rail?"

Mason shrugged.

"That's only one chance in a million," he replied. "You see, the third rail is covered most of the way."

"Nevertheless, Tracy was electrocuted, and the man who committed the crime used a wire," declared Killian. "Hey, motorman, take us back to Fourteenth Street, and no stops on the way."

The train was started, and Killian made his way to where the tremulous Herman Stevens was standing.

"Just what did Borden say during that quarrel at the office?" he demanded.

"Well, I can't remember exactly," Stevens whimpered. "But after he'd accused Tracy of ill-treating Mrs. Tracy he said something about his former wife. And then he—he threatened Tracy with violence."

Killian looked keenly interested.

"Oh, so Tracy had a former wife, did he?" he murmured.

"Yes," put in Borden. "I only learned to-day that she was destitute, and in hospital. Tracy was a cad, and he'd have served Dale the same way. He forced his first wife to break with him on account of his treatment, and Dale would have had to break with him, too, sooner or later."

Killian pursed his lips.

"Stevens," he said, turning to the clerk again, "I want you to tell me exactly how the electrocution happened. Come through with it. You know how it was arranged. That's why you ran and hid."

"No, no," Stevens whined. "Honestly, I didn't know anything. I thought he was just shot. I felt his body stiffen up after the gun went off."

"You're lying. The body stiffened before the shot!"

A look of panic crossed Stevens' face as he realized he had blundered.

"How long before?" rasped Killian, gripping him. "Answer, will you? Was it before Borden got up and gave his seat to Mrs. Mullins?"

"Yes," Stevens faltered, "I think so—just before that."

"Did you see Borden fooling with any wires after he came into the car?" Killian demanded. "Did you see anybody with any wire? Did you have any?"

"No!" Stevens panted.

"Search him, Kearney," Killian ordered.

"Now, inspector?" asked Kearney. "Right, chief."

But no wire was forthcoming. Only a leather case containing a certificate of stock that the clerk had purchased.

Killian regarded this certificate.

"I want to know your salary, Stevens," he said, "and if you've any family."

"I get forty dollars a week," the clerk muttered, "and I've got a wife and four kids."

"Which makes it pretty tough to save, I guess," drawled Killian. "Yet you were able to buy three hundred dollars' worth of stock. Where did you get the money?"

"I—I borrowed it from Tracy," Stevens answered evasively.

"You mean you stole it," jerked Killian, fancying he had found a new

motive for the slaying. "And Tracy found out about it. Didn't he?"

"Yes, but it was only three hundred dollars. Tracy was playing with the same stock. He went down on it the same as me, but what he lost was fifty thousand dollars of the firm's money."

Borden started forward.

"He did, did he?" he said. "He was playing the market, was he, with my money as well as his own? Thanks for the information, Stevens—"

He was interrupted by a commotion at the other end of the car, whence two boys came running with a pair of gloves. Curious gloves they were, for on examining them, Killian discovered that they were lined with rubber, and that a copper disc was fastened to each palm—the shape and size of the burn on Tracy's wrists!

Killian's astute brain grappled with a theory. These gloves, lined as they were with rubber, would make it possible to seize a live wire without receiving a shock.

He showed the gloves to Borden.

"You were once an electrical engineer," he said. "If I made a connection between these two copper discs with a wire and then grabbed a live wire with one gloved hand and somebody's wrist with the other. Do you follow me?"

"The man you touched would be killed under the proper conditions," declared Borden. "I mean, if the current were strong enough and if the man were 'grounded.'"

"The current from the third rail would be strong enough," Killian stated. "And if the victim were seated with his feet in a pool of water—would that constitute a ground?"

Borden admitted that the circuit would thereby be completed, and Killian pointed to a pool of water in front of the seat where Tracy had died.

"It's been raining all day," he said. "And there's the pool of water from a dripping umbrella. Would you mind trying these gloves on, Borden?"

Borden obeyed, and looked relieved when they proved several sizes too small for him. But Killian seemed dissatisfied.

"Where did you get the current, Borden?" he asked sharply.

"I didn't do it!" Borden protested hotly. "You see for yourself the gloves don't fit me. And even if I had done it I wouldn't have been fool enough to shoot the man on the top of it."

"I'll admit the shot was accidental," Killian granted. "But the fight may have been a clever trick to draw attention from an accomplice, we'll say Stevens."

He wheeled on the trembling clerk, and ordering Kearney to hold him, obtained a piece of string in lieu of wire. This he slipped under Stevens' coat, and then he forced him to thrust his hands into the rubber gloves and grasp the ends of the cord.

"Pretty smart, weren't you?" Killian jerked. "To pick out a rainy night and let your umbrella drip a pool of water around Tracy's feet to make the 'ground' you needed."

"Here's an umbrella here," called the voice of Mrs. Cotton. "Lying under the seat that man Stevens occupied."

"I didn't do it!" screamed Stevens.

"I tell you, I didn't—" "You killed Tracy!" Killian rapped out. "Where'd you get the current? Come clean, Stevens. Was it Borden who hired you to do it? Talk, will

you? I've got enough evidence to send you to the chair!"

"I didn't do it," Stevens moaned.

"Then tell me who did," Killian threatened, "or it's the chair for you."

A sob escaped Stevens.

"Wait," he whimpered. "Wait. I'll—I'll tell—"

Killian leaned forward attentively. Tugging at his collar Stevens tried to speak. But ere he could utter a single word a hand touched the switch that operated the lights in the car.

For the second time that day the train was plunged in darkness, and in the gloom there arose a sudden scuffle, punctuated by the crash of a shot.

The Killer.

It was the guard who turned up the lights again and revealed a scene that was to be imprinted on the memories of all in the car.

Stevens was dead, with a bullet in his back. The gun that had killed him was Kearney's, the unseen slayer having lifted it from the detective's pocket and then flung it to the floor. Nor was that all, for Killian discovered a length of wire that had been planted on his own person.

There was no doubt in Killian's mind that it was the wire which had been used in the electrocution of Tracy.

"Listen, folks," he said grimly, "there's been two murders in this car, and Stevens was shot because he knew who did the first one. Now I'm going to find out the killer. Kearney, tell the motorman to take us straight to Times Square without a stop, and while we're headed there have the passengers seated as they were before Tracy was electrocuted."

Kearney obeyed, but looked uncomfortable when he was told to take the seat Stevens had occupied.

"Now," said Killian, "we'll assume for the moment that Stevens was the man who had the gloves on."

"Pardon me, inspector?" Mrs. Cotton interposed, "but that Mr. Stevens didn't wear gloves. I remember distinctly, because he had such thin nervous hands."

"But I recollect seeing a man who did wear gloves," exclaimed Mrs. Mullins. "He was standing right in front of Tracy—not for long, though he was there when the lights failed just outside Times Square station. Then he sort of stumbled, and after that he went away. I don't know that I'd recognise him again, for I didn't specially look at him."

Killian's eyes narrowed thoughtfully. "Thank you, Mrs. Mullins," he said, and then he began to don the rubber gloves with the discs, after which he made a contact with the wire that had been mysteriously planted on him.

"Mason," he said, turning and facing the switch inspector, "would you mind taking Tracy's place?"

"Surely," Mason agreed, and sat down, the spreading pool of water at his feet.

"I know it's not very pleasant, swapping places with a dead man," said Killian. "But it will only be for a few moments."

"Approach!" Times Square, Sherlock Holmes," came the voice of the disgruntled motorman from the control cabin.

"All right," answered Killian. "Go ahead—very slowly. Now, Mrs. Mullins, the man with the gloves was standing right here. Then the train

(Continued on page 27.)

A girl and a brave cowpuncher have to fight with brawn and brain to escape from the attack of a band of Western bad-men. Starring Charles Delaney and Virginia Brown Faire.

El Jacinto.

ENOCH CRABB had seen many curious things since he had first started in partnership with James Rankin at Rancho Jacinto. But never in his life had he seen anything so curious as that which attracted his attention on his return from the corral they were busily getting ready for a new herd.

Cowboys are wont to use any kind of garb that is different from that of their fellow-workers. But no cowboy ever went so far as to display brilliantly-marked riding chaps, gorgeously-but-toned revolver-belt, thin city shoes, and gauntlets so long that they reached nearly to the elbow.

James Rankin laughed heartily as he answered his partner's question.

"That is my nephew, Oswald."

"The name suits the dress!" grunted Crabb, and sneered. "You've got a fine big holster, son. How about your gun?"

"Oh, I've got a gun all right!" said Oswald, and dived his fingers deep into the holster to pick out a tiny revolver, the sight of which made Crabb roar afresh.

It was a neat little weapon, with a wonderful pearl butt that would have pleased the most fastidious woman in the world. Martha, Rankin's daughter, coming in at that moment, looked at it and joined in the laughter.

"What's that, Oswald?" she asked.

"Just for my protection," said Oswald loftily. "I understand a man wants a gun in these parts."

"A gun is sure handy," said Rankin. "But—well—I should call that a peashooter. However, drop it in your holster, Oswald. Martha is going to take you for a run round whilst I talk business with my partner."

Still smiling, the hardy girl of the plains led her cousin out of the ranch towards the horse corral, and it was some minutes after they had gone before Crabb got the sneer off his face and announced himself as being ready for business.

"Martha would just about eat him up in a scrap, Rankin," he observed, as he sat down.

"Sure she would. He's just a harmless city feller—guess he reckons cowboy outfit is the proper thing to wear out here, and bought his from a theatre property store!" laughed Rankin.

"Well, how's the corral?"

"All ready," replied Crabb. "Say, when does that herd come into Corral City from Bar W, Rankin? Is it to-morrow, or the next day?"

"To-morrow. The last I heard of them was that they were within a few miles of the town, and they had not lost a single animal. Pretty smart punchers, I guess." Rankin shook his head slowly from side to side, and frowned. "Crabb, I'm real anxious about the journey from Corral City to El Jacinto."

"Anxious! Why?"

"Well, it's a pretty trail with an ugly name, as you know. Three outfits have lost their stuff coming through—and one man who went on the lonesome trail, taking in his own money, never came back. I know that as we have lost nothing that—that—well, they are saying that we have a hand in the game."

"Punk!" snapped Crabb. "However, I tell you what we will do. We will have the Bar W herd checked in at Corral City, and I'll come back and report. Then I'll take all the boys over



every man-jack on the ranch, and bring 'em in myself. How's that?"

"That sounds O.K. to me, Crabb!" assented Rankin. "You'd better leave to-night."

It was just as well that Rankin did not see the contemptuous, curious sneer that curled at the corners of Crabb's lips when once he had passed out of the ranch-house and closed the door behind him. It might have made Rankin a little more anxious than he was.

Crabb started out within a very few minutes of his suggestion being agreed to by his partner, and in due course arrived in Corral City.

He strolled into the saloon, and was surprised when news was instantly forthcoming that the punchers from Bar W had arrived, and were even then checking in one of the great corrals of which the town boasted.

"Gee! But they're sure slick punchers!" said Crabb, in amazement.

"Guess so! I saw them handle their herd, and, believe me, pard, that herd was just like a troupe of well-trained beasts. They walked in just as those cowpunchers wanted them—and here they come."

Crabb turned curiously to the door, just as four men entered.

They were a pretty motley crowd. One of them, rather a grim-faced, short man of the stature that spells immense strength, was in front of three others. The four of them were covered in dirt and dust from head to foot, and their unwashed, unshaven faces told clearly of the long journey they had accomplished.

"Say, which of you is foreman?" asked Crabb. "You look four pretty mangy cowboys, but I suppose one of you was in charge of the herd?"

"You said it, mister—and I'm the one," said the leader quietly. "My name is Judd Rascomb, and I'm foreman of Bar W. My pals—Tenderfoot, Gila Red, and Sweetheart. Quick with their tongues, but quicker with their guns. I reckon your herd is safe in the corral—and we ain't lost a single animal on the three-hundred-mile trail!"

"That's sure smart work, Rascomb. Have a drink, and then I'll talk to you."

"Who are you?" asked Judd pertinently.

"I'm Rankin's partner from El Jacinto. Say, I'm going back to report that you have checked in. Suppose you follow me on when you have had a rest?"

"Suits me plenty!" said Judd.

So that was settled—so far as Judd Rascomb knew.

What he did not know was that Crabb, when he left Corral City for El Jacinto, chose the difficult Canyon Jacinto as his trail home.

It was not without reason. The canyon trail was the place where Crabb knew where to find the Man with the White Sombrero. But, as a matter of strict fact, it was the mysterious man who found Crabb.

Rankin's partner was riding up towards the gorge when a voice hailed him—a silky-toned voice that, somehow or other, always made Crabb loosen his gun in its holster.

"Hallo, Crabb! In a hurry?"

Crabb pulled up with a jerk, to find himself face to face with a small, pleasant-faced man upon whose head was a white sombrero.

"I hoped to see you—the herd is in. Listen—I've got to hit the trail plenty hard to get in and back again. And—we're in luck's way. I'm going back now, and it won't be difficult for me to persuade Rankin to let me take in the bank roll to the express office, where I should pay in to release the cattle. You look out for me. I'll ride the Canyon Jacinto trail—I guess you can hold me up for the bank roll. Later, you can rustle the cattle, so we get it both ways. O.K.?"

"A very pretty little plot, my friend," said the stranger, with a faint smile. "And who is going to look after you?" "Don't be a gump!" snapped Crabb. "We're partners, ain't we?" "Sure—we're partners, my friend. We share troubles just the same as pleasures—eh? It's a good job I'm as good a shot as you, my friend, for I should not like to be in the shadow!"

Crabb looked at the stranger grimly. He knew exactly what was meant by that remark.

He swung his horse to the trail and rode off savagely, leaving the stranger to stare after him, still with that pleasant smile at the corners of his lips.

Judd's Way!

DOWN in the Cowpuncher's Rest in Corral City, Judd Rascomb looked thoughtfully at his men.

"Say, boys, I've a sort o' hunch to ride in to El Jacinto ahead of you," he said. "You fellows are nearly all in, and I reckon your hosses ain't quite so good as mine."

"You mean you didn't sort o' take to the Crabb feller," said Gila Red coolly. "Well, he got me, too, Judd. What you says goes."

Judd nodded his thanks.

"I'm gonna ride ahead, boys, and you follow me on," he said. "There's a story or two I've been picking up from the boys around here. Crabb and Rankin are suspected of not being too clean on the line—there's some rustling going on, and they don't seem to drop in for any, like their neighbours. And, seeing that we have come three hundred miles without losing a beast, we may as well see that nobody loses our pay-roll. Got me?"

The others nodded.

"If you don't get through, we might?" murmured Gila Red.

It was Judd's turn to nod. But he smiled quite cheerily, whereas his men were distinctly on the grim side.

"Well, I'm off, boys—see you later!" he said breezily.

Judd's horse was certainly a fine creature. It had the stocky appearance of most range horses, but its legs were thinner and more muscled than the majority. Its head, too, was finer

drawn, and suggested an intelligence well above the ordinary.

Judd set him going at a gentle trot, remembering that there were thirty miles to be covered, and, once he had cleared his mind of the stories he had heard from "the boys" around Corral City, he had plenty of time in which to study the ground he was travelling.

Miles of the trail were through a lonely desert, in which there was little or no undergrowth, and no signs of the woods which were so plentiful down Bar W way. Ahead of the desert was Canyon Jacinto, and it was not until he had come to the fork roads, which admitted riders either to the canyon or to the lower pass, that Judd showed any signs of hesitation.

He did not know the trail. An examination of the ground revealed that a fairly equal number of travellers had gone either way—there was apparently very little to choose between the trails, so far as distance went.

"I guess we'll take the lower trail, boy!" he said aloud. "We ain't in no particular hurry, I guess, and we shall know whether or not this is the way back for us when we bring in that bank-roll."

He turned his horse into the pass, the Jacinto Canyon rising magnificently at his side. Here the bushes were numerous, and some of them were tall enough to hide a mounted man and his horse. They made Judd remember again the stories of the mysterious happenings that occurred in the pass, and his keen eyes once again assumed an alertness peculiar to lonely riders of the plains.

He had got just about into the middle of the pass, when something white, moving amidst the bushes, caught his eye.

In an instant he had pulled up his horse and his hand dropped to his gun. He watched, every nerve tense.

For the first minute nothing happened, and then he caught sight of a white sombrero, moving rapidly behind a cluster of bushes.

"We're bein' watched, boy," muttered Judd. "Seems as though some of those stories were right. If that feller was an open sort of guy he would ride out and pass the time of the day. Seein' as he don't, we can take it that he ain't no open guy. Reckon he won't be alone, either. Well, we'll give them something to do."

Spur and knee got to work on his mount's side, and in a flash he had left the trail and was charging up the side of the gorge. He brought his voice into play, to encourage his horse to the terrific effort necessary to mount the side, for it was more like a steep cliff than anything else.

He did not once look behind to see whether or not he was being followed, and no shot came shrieking through the air in his direction. He gave all his attention to keep those four hoofs digging at the gorge side, turning the horse from its course only when it was absolutely necessary.

The plucky beast was panting for breath when at last it staggered on to the top of the gorge, but Judd, thinking more grimly now of the fact that a bank-roll would be coming through in the course of the next few hours, set off at a hard gallop over the crest of the hill, and joined the trail that led to El Jacinto.

In the meantime, Crabb had arrived back at the ranch. Rankin was in the house, and he looked up in some considerable surprise when Crabb entered his room without the preliminary knock. "Gee—you've sure been slick, part-

ner," said Rankin in surprise. "Anything happened?"

"The herd has been checked in at Corral City," explained Crabb, and even to Rankin his voice sounded particularly hard. "I had a word with Judd Rascomb, the foreman of Bar W, who brought in the herd. He's a purty good cowboy, that. Never lost a beast on the whole of the three-hundred-mile trail. But he's anxious about his money."

"Anxious? What do you mean? We're good enough to pay for what we order, ain't we?" demanded Rankin angrily.

"Sure enough, partner. He's evidently heard stories of what sometimes happens to outfits travelling between here and the city, and he thinks my suggestion that I take in the money alone is quite a good one."

"Well, that ain't a bad notion, either!" said Rankin. "One might get through, even if there are bandits about—Hallo, Martha!"

Martha came in at that moment, and, although her father greeted her cheerily enough, it was easy for her to see that her company was not very welcome at that time. But she had news to give, and she gave it.

"I met the sheriff a few minutes back, father," she said. "He asked me to tell you that Boston the Bandit has escaped, and you'd better warn the boys to keep their eyes open if they are moving cattle."

Rankin looked up, startled, toward Crabb—and that worthy drew in his lips in a manner that suggested more contempt than fear.

"Boston the Bandit won't come around these parts," he said shortly. "There are too many who know him."

Rankin looked troubled. Boston the Bandit was a gentleman of the plains, in spite of the fact that he had an unenviable record. He used cunning to trap his victims, instead of blowing holes in them and getting whatever they had. True, one rider who had passed through the territory he worked had never come back, but there was no definite proof that Boston the Bandit had held him up.

Rankin did not open his lips until Martha had passed out of the room.

"Say, Crabb," he said slowly. "Don't you think a crowd of the boys had better take in that bank-roll?"

"A crowd would attract any bandits there were about," growled Crabb, as if he pitied his partner's lack of intelligence. "One man would stand a much better chance of getting through. I'll go myself."

"All right—you'd better pack the dollar-bills into separate pouches, and stick them inside your saddle-bags," said Rankin. "I'll be mighty glad when that payment is made into the express office at Corral City. Crabb, and I don't care who knows it!"

Crabb could not quite keep from his eyes the keen delight he felt at the easy manner in which Rankin had fallen in with his suggestion, but much of that delight went when there came a tap at the door, and it opened to admit Judd Rascomb.

"Can I come in, folks?" he asked coolly. "I'm Judd Rascomb, foreman of Bar W."

"Come in, by all means," said Rankin, and shook hands heartily with the newcomer. "You're sure welcome to my house, Rascomb."

"Thanks."

"We were just arranging for Crabb to take the money into Corral City express office," went on Rankin. "He

thinks, and I agree, that one rider would stand a good chance of getting through O.K., but that a bunch might attract attention of any bandits who might be around the trail."

"Sure, that's right—only there'll be two on the trail," said Rascomb coolly. "I'm gonna take that money in myself!"

"You're not!" almost hissed Crabb, and his eyes glared furiously at the calm, if decidedly bedraggled, cowboy.

"That's funny—I reckon I am!" said Judd, in that same quiet strain. "You see, you ain't got what we call a plenty clean name. I brought in that herd without losing a beast, and I just ain't gonna have that bank roll lifted. Complete the job—that's my way, gents!"

To add to Crabb's discomfiture, Rankin showed a warm inclination to fall in with that plan in preference to the one to which he had already agreed—and Rankin had a share in the business.

"Why, if there are any bandits around they'll go for a stranger a mighty sight quicker than they would me—and I am well known all down the trail from here to Corral City!" exclaimed Crabb angrily. "You are sure asking for trouble, Rascomb!"

Rascomb laughed easily. "I've got three good fellers coming in the mornin'," he explained coolly. "They're gonna stop here until I get a message in that I am safe in with that bank roll. If they don't get that message they'll sure find the excuse they want to show how they can shoot. They're real slick guys, them fellers, although they don't look it!"

Crabb was biting his lips with baffled rage, and his eyes were gleaming at the cool Rascomb as though he would like to draw a gun and shoot him there and then. But, with Rankin there, he had to avoid showing any decidedly strong preference for taking the trail alone.

"All right," he agreed. "We'll ride together in the morning. I'll get the money packed, and the dust in the saddle-bags."

And he went out without another glance at Judd Rascomb.

"You'll spend the night here at my house?" asked Rankin.

"No, sir—not me. I'm spending the night beside my horse," replied Rascomb quickly. "I'm gonna give him a mighty good rub down—and get a tub for myself. Thanks all the same—suffering snakes—what's this?"

It was Oswald, coming in with Martha, that made him break off with that gasp of amazement.

"Oh, I didn't know you had a stranger with you, father," laughed Martha. "I saw Mr. Crabb go, and—"

"I was just asking Mr. Rascomb—this is my daughter, Mr. Rascomb—and my nephew Oswald up from the city," said Rankin, making the introductions. "I was asking Mr. Rascomb to spend the night here—strangers are always

welcome to shelter under my roof. But he prefers to spend the night with his horse."

"But you must have come a long way, Mr. Rascomb—a bed would rest you more than a bundle of straw!" put in Martha.

Judd Rascomb laughed. There was something decidedly more attractive about the offer of hospitality now that it came from Martha Rankin. She was pretty. Moreover, it would be impossible to associate her with any of the stories that were blackening the name of her father and Crabb.

"Thanks—I'll change my mind and stop," he said suddenly. "But, say, Oswald, what's that pea-shooter you've got there?"

"It isn't a pea-shooter—it fires bullets!" replied Oswald indignantly. "And it's mighty pretty, too!"

"Much too pretty for a regular cowboy!" said Rascomb, with a disarming smile. "Say, you'd better have one of my guns, and I'll take that pip as a souvenir of my visit here."

He held out one of his own big guns as he spoke and Oswald hesitated only a fraction of a second. A regular cowboy should have a regular, big gun, and this was his chance to get one. With a seriousness that nearly had Rankin and Martha in fits of laughter the exchange was made.

The rest of the evening Judd spent with Martha Rankin, and, judging by her expression, she found Judd Rascomb just as interesting a person as he very obviously found her. Oswald was out of the way, swaggering amongst the ranch hands, displaying the butt of his gun in its huge holster.

Rankin retired early, and there was a serene quietness about the place that suggested anything but that, in one particular room, there sat a man who was planning a robbery which must inevitably mean the shooting of Judd Rascomb.

Treachery!

DAWN the next morning saw Gila Red, Tenderfoot and Sweetheart riding into El Jacinto, where Judd Rascomb received them with far more pleasure than did Crabb.

"All fixed up O.K., boys," said Rascomb, in the presence of both Rankin and Crabb. "I'm riding in with Crabb here, taking half the dough with me, whilst he carries the other half. When I get in Corral City I'll send you a message—and that message will be that the two of us have got in. If only one of us gets in I reckon you'll start hunting up the lost rider."

"Shootin' up, you means," said Sweetheart, and gave his guns a slap that sent a shiver down Crabb's spine. "Well, come on—let's get going, Rascomb!" Crabb said curtly, after a while. "I've got the bills packed in two envelopes—one for you and one for me. I'll take the saddle-bags—"

"I'm taking the saddle-bags!" put in Judd calmly. "Well, see you later, boys!"

"There'll be heck to play if you don't!" grunted Sweetheart.

"Miss Rankin—I guess I'm coming back this way." Judd turned to the girl and spoke quietly. "I sort o' enjoyed last evening so much that I'm hungry for lots more of them!"

She just nodded, but there was something more than a hostess' dutiful wish for his pleasant journey and a safe return when she bade him good-bye.

She was still looking down the trail when the riders had become but black blobs in the distance. She was feeling, only too keenly, the tense air that was over the ranch—and the sight of Judd's three cowboys did not lessen that feeling. They were so grim, so bedraggled and unkempt after their long journey, and they moved about in the manner of men who expect to be attacked every second.

Down through the desert Judd Rascomb was thinking of her. It was a



"I'm taking the saddle-bags!" put in Judd calmly.

nity that his mind was so occupied, for it made Crabb's task so much easier.

"Well, here we come to the fork, Rascomb," said Crabb easily. "I'll take the lower pass, and you get through the Jacinto Canyon. I reckon we'll meet at the fork on the other side. Pleasant journey!"

"Thanks," said Judd indifferently, but suddenly started and pulled himself into an alertness that was just too late.

He was staring down the muzzle of Crabb's gun.

"Get your hands away from your gun, Rascomb!" snarled Crabb. "I'm taking in this money myself!"

Rascomb bit his lip in helpless rage. Crabb was fixing him with a glare that meant grim business.

"Thought you'd get down the Canyon with your half, did you?" grinned Crabb. "I'll have your gun; keep your hands up or I'll blow holes in you as big as silver dollars. And I'll take the saddle-bags, Mr. Foreman Rascomb. Now get moving towards the Canyon trail, and keep moving!"

Rascomb, apparently resigning himself to his fate, dropped his hands. But his right hand, farthest away from Crabb, dropped straight into the apparently empty holster. In a flash the tiny revolver he had taken from Oswald in exchange for one of his own guns glittered for a split second in the sun, and from it came a tiny report that would have made him laugh at a time less serious than this.

But if the report was tiny, the bullet was effective. It went straight through the fleshy part of Crabb's revolver hand, and his gun dropped from his nerveless fingers.

"Never thought of that pea-shooter, did you?" grated Judd, and he snatched at the gun which Crabb had taken from him but a few seconds before. "I'll have your envelope now, Crabb. And I'll take the saddle-bags again!"

"You ain't getting away with this, Rascomb!" panted Crabb.

"You get down the lower pass, and when you meet up with my boys, tell 'em I'll be getting that message through all O.K., and mighty soon now!"

He was laughing derisively as with a wave of his hand he spurred his horse into a gallop and darted down the Canyon trail.

Crabb started along the other trail, sucking at his wounded wrist as he rode. But he did not get far before there was a movement in the bushes at the fork trails, and a white sombrero showed for a second and disappeared.

It was just luck that made Judd Rascomb turn his head at that precise second. He saw nothing of Crabb, who was hidden by the bushes, but he saw the white sombrero.

"Suffering snakes, that guy was sure handy to see the parting!" muttered Judd, and jerked his horse hard upon its haunches. "Boy, I dunno that this is a healthy trail for you and me. We're going up the gorge again. Get going, boy!"

His ride up the rocky wall of the canyon was something he would never forget. His horse did everything except the one fatal thing—slip up and break his neck. He staggered, swayed, dug frantically at times for a foothold, but somehow or other always managed to put another few yards between them and the man in the white sombrero.

Judd knew now that there was reason enough for the stories of the mysterious happenings in the passes between Corral City and El Jacinto, but what he did not know was what was happening down below him whilst he made a daring,

frantic ride for the top of the Canyon Jacinto.

Crabb got to know quickly enough, for he had not ridden half a mile before he was aware that he was being chased by a rider who was certainly not Judd Rascomb.

It was the man with the white sombrero, and his hail brought the wounded Crabb to a quick halt, for he could not have hoped to have ridden a hard race to escape.

The mystery man dismounted at Crabb's side and jerked both his guns into a handy position for action. The expression on his face was grim, even though his eyes were showing a certain amount of amusement.

"I saw the cowpuncher get the money back, my friend," said the stranger very quietly. "I thought my partner was a pretty slick guy, but it appears he is nothing more than a muddler. Bah! He handled you as if you were a child!"

"He got the drop on me. I tell you, if you hurry you'll get him in the pass!" snarled Crabb.

"You'll not get him in the pass; he's ridden up the rocky wall of the canyon, and up there he will take some getting out. I suppose, my friend, that you were not thinking of double-crossing me?"

"Double-crossing you? Don't be a fool!" growled Crabb, but he avoided the steady stare of the other's eyes in spite of the vehemence of his answer.

"You told me you were riding the Canyon Jacinto trail with the bank-roll. Instead, you hold up our young friend and send him with nothing through the Canyon Jacinto, whilst you were taking the other pass. It is suspicious, my friend—very suspicious!"

"Oh, shucks! You're talking through your neck!" growled Crabb.

"I have scattered my men, Crabb, and they are surrounding the end of the canyon where this pass meets. They will shoot anybody who comes out of it. You had better return through the desert," said the stranger, ignoring Crabb's bitter remarks.

"And you pick up the bank-roll?" sneered Crabb.

"And I pick up the bank-roll," agreed the stranger calmly. "That is better than picking up you, my friend."

"But listen hyer. If I go back alone and no message gets through from Judd Rascomb, his mangy pals are goin' gunning!" ejaculated Crabb in sudden alarm. "I—"

"You're a clever man, Crabb, a very clever man, except when it comes to meeting up with a real he-man like Rascomb," cut in the other, and with a sudden jerk of his gun he blew a hole in the centre of Crabb's water can. "The nearest place for a fill-up, my friend, is El Jacinto. Get moving. I am displeased with the trouble to which you have put me. Get moving, before I start saving those mangy cowboys a chance of going gunning!"

Crabb obeyed, there was nothing for it, but his thoughts were in a turmoil of unpleasantness as he set his horse at a gallop for the desert.

He was riding on to the first stretch of the desert before he became aware that hoofs were thundering upon the sunbaked ground not far away from him, and fresh alarm leapt into his heart as he saw that the riders were the sheriff and two of his men.

But as quickly as there came alarm there came relief. His eyes glinted as he spurred his horse towards the sheriff.

"Hi! Sheriff!" he shouted. "I've been held up and robbed!"

The sheriff jerked his horse up and waited for the now eager Crabb to come up. But there was very little sympathy in the sheriff's eyes. He did not like Crabb, and in consequence paid a little more heed to the rumours involving his and Rankin's names than might otherwise have been the case.

"Well, what happened?" he demanded shortly.

"I was taking in a bank-roll with Judd Rascomb, foreman of Bar W, from which we've taken over a big herd," explained Crabb breathlessly. "He shot me through the wrist. Look at it!"

"Looks more like a bee sting!" grunted the sheriff.

"It's a bullet right enough. I've got it, suppose I ought to know!" growled Crabb, stung into a retort. "He was joined by a man with a white sombrero. They've gone up into the mountain, and I reckon if you send your man round the pass and cut them off they'll fight."

"That means trouble; we shan't escape altogether," murmured the sheriff, with a thoughtful stare towards the towering mountains.

"Then shoot 'em out. They've got revolvers, but you can get rifles," said Crabb. "I'll tell you, they've got a bank-roll belonging to Rankin and me. You've got to shoot 'em out!"

The sheriff did not reply. He drew his gun instead and sent three shots up into the air as a signal to his posse, which was scattered over the fringe of the desert.

"I see Judd Rascomb also shot a hole in your water can," he observed, whilst he awaited the coming of his men.

"Sure he did," agreed Crabb. The sheriff merely nodded, and looked round keenly to see that his men were riding in to him from all directions. But it was from the front that the most startling rider came—a rider the sight of whom nearly sent Crabb into a fit.

It was a rider with a great white sombrero!

Crabb fairly panted for breath, and his hands went down in a panic for his guns. But his holsters were empty.

"That's the man with the white sombrero—shoot him down before he gets the drop on the whole bunch of us—I ain't got a gun!" he gasped.

"I ain't shooting no man until I has to," said the sheriff. "Looks to me, by the way he's swaying in his saddle, that he's been hurt. Keep your guns handy, boys, but don't shoot unless he starts monkey—"

"It's Slim!" exclaimed one of the men. "Hi, Slim! Where did you get that bonnet?"

"I'm all tied up, you gump! Come and cut these darned ropes!" hooted Slim, who was one of the sheriff's posse.

There was considerable laughter whilst the rider was freed from the ropes, but they had to wait for Slim's explanation until he had finished telling the world exactly what he thought of a certain person.

"I ain't seen him before, but I'm just longing to see him again!" he grunted. "I am goin' to sock that guy in the jaw! Roped me, he did, as I rode in at your signal, sheriff, and put his sombrero on my head—just to give some of you some gun play, as he put it!"

"It was Judd Rascomb's pal!" said Crabb with emphasis.

"I don't know about that—Rascomb wasn't with him," said Slim. "I saw that guy last night at the ranch house, and I saw him this morning talking to his cowpunchers. No—Judd Rascomb weren't there. It was the mystery galoot of the passes!"

"Anyway," said Crabb, growing a little more desperate in his desire to get the bandit well into the sheriff's net. "The man with the white sombrero was with Rascomb, because they both held me up!"

The sheriff again did not reply. He was looking up towards the mountains with a thoughtful stare upon his face.

"They'll have to stick up there—and the sun ain't too kind to them as has to cross the mountain. Slim—get some of the boys around the other side, and they'll stop any escape that way. I'll shoot 'em out if necessary, but I reckon it would be better to let 'em stay up there until thirst drives 'em down with their hands reachin' fer the skies. Get going!"

"O.K., sheriff."

"You come on back to the ranch with me, Crabb. I want to talk with Rankin."

On the Mountain Top!

JUDD RASCOMB rode up the mountain side with anxiety beginning to tear at his heart. He had twenty thousand dollars in his shirt and saddle bags—and those dollars had got to be taken over the top of the mountain, down the other side, and to the express office in Corral City if it was the last thing he ever did.

But he knew that he was face to face with the most difficult task he had ever been set. If, as he now suspected more than ever, Crabb was in league with the Man in the White Sombrero, it was certain that the whole range would be guarded by their men.

His greatest hope was that if he could get into a position from which he could shoot on either side of him without being got at from the rear, Gila Red, Tenderfoot and Sweetheart would come out hunting for him. They were reliable fellows, great gunners, and even if they came against the bandits, they would get back for the sheriff and his posse, return to the fight, and thus get at him.

It was the white sombrero that played the greatest part in that mountain drama.

Once he had got to the mountain top, and had hidden his horse behind some sheltering boulders, Judd slipped from the saddle and had a good look round.

Below him, clustered into a little black, dot-like cluster, was a gang of men, amongst whom none was really prominent except a man with a white sombrero.

Judd watched them, his guns in his hands, a grim smile at the corners of his lips.

He moved a few inches, and poked his hat over the top of the boulder which was acting as his rear shield. A fraction of a second later a bullet whistled through the air, and up from the valley came the sound of the gun report.

The grim smile became more grim than ever. Already the sun was beginning to scorch his shoulders. His throat was getting dry, his lips becoming hard and like sandpaper to his tongue, and his eyes blurred by the fierceness of the glare.

He watched the party on the plain below, and saw them scatter around the mountain, whilst a number of them spread themselves out at the foot of the mountain. Two of them mounted their horses and rode at a hand gallop across the desert, and disappeared in a cloud of dust in the distance. That was a move Judd could not understand.

"Might be going for rifles," he muttered. "I can hold 'em off so long as they keep to their guns, but rifles—Judd, my son, if they start up with

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rifles before Gila Red and the others get anxious and come out around here, you're for a bit of lead!"

It was in his mind in a flash that even if the rifles did not get him out of his little fortress, the sun was going to make things equally unpleasant. He reflected, grimly, that one thing he would have to do was drive his horse down, for he was not going to have the gallant beast suffering the agonies of thirst if he could help it.

For hours he laid up there amidst the sheltering boulders, now and again sending a warning shot whistling down into the valley to show that he was very much on the look-out. Once or twice a bullet spattered against the boulders in a manner that confirmed his suspicions that he was not the only one who was on the watch!

His throat was more than parched an hour before sundown. It was positively cracking, so dry was it. His head was aching, his hands were feeling swollen and burning with the exposure to the glaring rays of the sun—but the fingers around his triggers were steady enough.

It was nature that beat him in the long run. His spirit kept him going until he became so sleepy that the heavy lids dropped over his eyes and he fell into a doze.

For five minutes he lay as still as though he were part of the massive mountain top, his head below cover of a great boulder and between his outstretched arms.

Then there came an interruption he did not see. It was from a man who crawled cautiously forward until he could reach out and silently draw away the saddle-bags. They were pushed back behind the newcomer, who then started the more difficult task of getting his hand into Judd's shirt to remove the envelopes containing the dollars.

It was only the slightest touch that his fingers made upon Judd's chest—but it brought Judd back to life with startling suddenness—and his two guns bearing upon the stranger.

"Leave those saddle-bags!" he snapped out, but his eyes were dizzy from the glare of the sun.

"You may have them, my friend," said the stranger. "I have just peeped into them. You have more money in your shirt."

"And it is stopping there if I have to blow holes in you as big as dollars!" growled Judd.

"That would do you no good, my friend. I am in just the same position as you. Perhaps, if we get through here, you may be inclined to pass over a share of that money. Look!"

He held his hand cautiously over the boulder, and a second later brought it back quickly as a bullet crashed against the boulder within an inch of it.

"You see," he explained, with a smile. "I also am wanted."

Judd nodded, and lowered his guns again.

"Those bandits have sure got us tied up here, stranger!" he said, and wondered what made him think the stranger's smile was sarcastic. "Say, now that there are two of us, what about one keeping a watch and the other taking a bit of sleep?"

"Suits me plenty!" agreed the other.

The stranger had reason to be positively grateful for that suggestion. He knew that the men who fired up at them at the slightest sign of a hand, foot or head were the sheriff's men—it would be quite useful to him to have Judd's watchful eyes on their possible approach whilst he himself had a sleep.

So, turn and turn about, they watched ceaselessly through the short night, grateful for the fact that there was no

burning sun to add to their difficulties, but longing for the dawn to relieve them of the necessity of constantly straining their eyes.

It was just after dawn that Judd's horse gave a sudden, warning whinny—and in a flash Judd was peering cautiously over the boulders down towards the valley.

Two men were coming up the trail—one with a rifle, and the other with a big white sombrero on his head. Two flashing shots from Judd's guns sent the men scattering back—without the rifle or the hat. They reposed upon the trail, with a bullet-hole in the hat and the blue barrel of the rifle broken and useless.

"They have no need to come for us, my friend," said the stranger, with a grim smile. "The sun will crack us as surely as any belt of bullets. Pleasant thought, is it not?"

"I have some friends on the other side of that gang," said Judd hopefully. "They'll sure be out after me before the day has gone through. And then, mister, helieve me, there'll be some scatterin' by those bandits below!"

And once again, to save drying up their throats and tongues more than they already were dry, they relapsed into a watchful silence.

Down in the valley the sheriff and Crabb, with Rankin, watched from the moment dawn showed up the mountain top. Crabb had a rifle, and only the presence of the sheriff stopped him taking aim on the two little blobs that occasionally offered him a mark.

"There's to be no shooting if we can help it—the sun will get 'em down before midday!" the sheriff had said.

Crabb was furious. He wanted nothing better than that dead men should be brought down the trail. Both the man who had sent Slim in, roped and with his own white sombrero, and Judd Rascomb would spill a few beans if they came down alive.

On the other hand, the sheriff was distinctly curious.

"I just can't make out, Crabb," he said, without taking his eyes from the mountain top, "how you came to have a hole in your wrist from a bullet as big as a pea, and a hole in your water-cann which was made by a forty-five."

That question was not to be answered then. Two shots broke upon the stillness of the air, and the sheriff jumped. He jumped again as an answering two shots came from the mountain top.

But those that flew downwards did not damage. Those that had swept upwards had found a billet.

It was not Judd who suffered. It was the stranger, who had crawled to the rear boulders to see how they were covered on the pass, who stopped those bullets.

He crawled back to Judd, gasping: "They've got me, my friend!" he muttered.

Judd just looked at him. He could do nothing then—there was not a drop of water between them. But he winced at the thought of what would be the situation a few hours later, when the sun, already warm and rising, was at its height.

Brought Down.

THREE horsemen thundered up to the sheriff an hour after dawn. They were Gila Red, Tenderfoot and Sweetheart, and they looked up the mountain trail in a vain effort to catch sight of their foreman. They had scorned the idea of Judd having held up Crabb, but it certainly seemed funny that Judd was still up there—and shoot-

"Say, I reckons that if I walks up that trail, sheriff, Judd will recognise me and not shoot!" said Gila Red. "Better still—if Sweetheart and Tenderfoot come with me, he'll recognise all three of us. Judd Rascomb ain't no bandit—he won't shoot his own pals!"

The sheriff hesitated, and Crabb hung on to the law man's answer with far more eagerness than he hoped he was showing.

"I think that's a likely plan, boys," said the sheriff quietly. "If you are ready to take the risk—"

"Risk?" Gila Red sneered. "There ain't no risk, sheriff. Judd won't shoot me up, for one!"

"None of us!" added Tenderfoot and Sweetheart together, and as if an order had been given, they dropped from their saddles and started the walk up the trail.

The sheriff moved up with them, keeping on to the sheltering boulders as much as possible—and it was when they had mounted two hundred feet of the trail that they were joined by Martha.

Her pretty face expressed her anxiety. It might have been because her father was amidst the men below, but it might also have been because Judd Rascomb was up there on the mountain-top.

Suddenly a gun flashed out from one of the posse, who was watching from a hiding-place on their right—and a shriek went up from Martha that echoed far across the valley.

"Oh, don't shoot him—don't shoot him!" she cried.

The effect was amazing. Judd Rascomb's form appeared at its full height upon the top of the mountain, his hands held high above his head.

He had recognised Martha's voice, and the fact that this party was Rankin's or the sheriff's, and not the bandits was instantly impressed upon him.

Crabb, from the rear, knew that the game was up. Without an instant's hesitation he raised his rifle, took a quick aim, and pulled the trigger.

Martha shrieked again, and Gila Red turned round savagely.

"You blamed dolt!" he snarled. "He had his hands reachin' fer the skies!"

"I thought he was dropping them for his guns!" muttered Crabb. "I ain't taking no risks with that bandit—I have had one bullet!"

"If you've done him in, there's another follerin' him to the happy huntin' grounds mighty quick!" grated Tenderfoot. "That's you, mister—so get your prayers back to mind!"

They fairly flashed up the trail, the Bar W men well in the lead, with Martha ahead of the others.

The sight that met their eyes was not a pleasant one. Judd was lying on the ground, a tiny trickle of red flowing down the side of his face. Another man was lying on his side, groaning.

Martha rushed to Judd, with Gila and Tenderfoot at her side. The sheriff moved to the stranger, with Crabb standing just behind him, hoping against hope that no word would come from those lips. Judd could not do him nearly so much damage—there was a good chance of his being able to explain away any accusations from Rascomb.

But the dreaded words came. "Who are you, stranger?" asked the sheriff, as he gently turned the man over on to his back, and got his arms under the shoulders to raise him.

"Me? Me?" said the other dully. "Oh—you're the sheriff! Gee! I don't think you're going to have much on me, sheriff. I'm Boston the Bandit!"

"Boston!"
The man nodded.

"When I have passed in, sheriff, have a look round and pick up my partner, Crabb!" he went on, his voice growing very soft and dim. "He double-crossed me. You will find that the saddle-bags contain only strips of paper and sand; there is no gold-dust or notes. He's got them. Judd Rascomb is all O.K., sheriff. You've just got to pick up Crabb, even though it is I, Boston the Bandit, who asks you. He is a yellow-spined rat!"

Crabb was frantic. He took one fleeting glimpse at Judd's pals, who were already getting their foreman back to life. He took another glance at the sheriff, who shot him one grim glance before again turning to Boston the Bandit.

In a flash Crabb stumbled over to Gila Red and snatched at the gun in his belt. A split second later he had grabbed at Martha and dragged her to him.

"Stay where you are, you bunch!" he said, between his teeth. "Shoot—and you shoot the girl! Stay where you are!"

"Put down that gun, Crabb!" snapped the sheriff.

"I'll put it down when I've got a horse and can make for the border!" sneered Crabb.

And he started to move backwards down the trail, using Martha as a shield, and Gila Red's gun poking straight at the rest of them.

Judd Rascomb rose as Crabb moved, and followed him down the trail. But he had very faint hopes of being able to do anything, for Crabb had the drop on them. He would shoot if one of them moved a hand towards a gun.

But help came from a totally unexpected quarter.

Oswald, arriving after having been thrown from his horse—which necessitated a long and careful dusting of his gorgeous raiment—saw what was happening, and took out the big revolver Judd had given him in exchange for the "pea-shooter."

He grasped the butt with two hands, not at all sure what was going to happen, levelled it at Crabb, shut his eyes hard, and pulled the trigger.

The shock of the explosion sent him backwards. It made a thoroughly startled Crabb turn in amazement and despair. And it gave Judd Rascomb just sufficient time to take a short run and a flying leap at Crabb's gun arm, bend it down, and twist it behind his back.

"That's where Oswald plays a man's part," chuckled Judd. "You may as well pack in, Crabb! You're for the sheriff!"

Crabb tried to fight; it was useless and hopeless. Big as he was, he was as putty in Judd's grip. In a matter of only seconds he was standing, a prisoner, panting and gasping with fear.

"Boston lied," he almost moaned.

"Sure, that's why you tried to get away!" snapped the sheriff. "Take him down, boys! Comin', Rankin?"

"Sure. But I'd like to know if this foreman is looking for a partnership," said Rankin. "I shall want another now that Crabb is going!"

"A partnership?" Judd laughed, as he turned his gleaming eyes to Martha.

"Sure, I'm looking for a partnership, mister!"

And they wondered why Martha suddenly turned and ran down the trail.

But they ceased to wonder when Judd Rascomb ran after her, caught up with her, and pushed his arm gently around her, shoulders.

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"HEROES of the FLAMES"



READ THIS FIRST.

While en route with his comrades to the scene of a fire, Bob Darrow, of the San Francisco Brigade, saves the life of a boy who falls in front of one of the monster engines.

Later he calls on James Madison, head of a chemical company, to whom he puts up an idea for a patent fire-extinguisher. Madison is not interested, and Bob leaves disappointed, after meeting Dan Mitchell, a shady promoter who is befriending Madison for his own ends.

That afternoon Bob rescues June Madison from a fire in her father's office, then learns that the boy he had saved from the wheels of the fire-engine was Madison's son, Jackie.

In gratitude, Madison helps Bob to perfect his invention, the Darrow Fire-Bomb. But Dan Mitchell is anxious to sell Madison an extinguisher of his own, and to discredit Bob he sends a hireling to "doctor" the fireman's invention with a deadly explosive.

The ruse fails to shake Madison's faith, particularly as Bob agrees to drive a car that Madison is sponsoring in a big road race. Bob wins the event, with Pat Heeley, a fellow fireman, as mechanic. But the machine has been tampered with by one of Mitchell's hirelings, and crashes just beyond the finishing-line.

Now Read On.

The Casualties.

THE smouldering wreckage of the Brown Special racing-car lay on its side near the fencing of the track, and as the dust raised by the crash cleared away the figures of Bob Darrow and Pat Heeley were disclosed. They had been flung from the machine and were stretched out a few

EPISODE 5.

"THE AVALANCHE."

yards from it, neither of them showing the least sign of life as the masses of spectators in the stands gazed down at them in awe and horror.

In all that vast crowd, however, none was more moved by the catastrophe than June or her father. Nor was anyone more secretly elated than Dan Mitchell, whose conviction that Bob Darrow was dead detracted from his chagrin at the Brown Special's triumph in the race.

"Yes," he repeated to James Madison, "your car was first across the line. You won all right, but you killed Darrow to do it."

Madison was standing with bowed head, but suddenly he roused himself and strode for the gangway that led to the track. Pale and trembling, June followed him, and Dan Mitchell brought up the rear.

Already a party of police-officers, track-attendants and Pressmen were running towards the scene of the disaster, but the first to reach the spot was the official medical officer of the Speedway. Sinking to his knees beside Bob's prone form he made a cursory examination.

"Is he hurt badly?" a policeman asked.

The doctor shook his head. "No," he answered, to the relief of those who heard him. "He's all right. Just stunned, that's all. He's lucky, though."

Some of those who had dashed on to the track had made for Pat, and now they called to the medical officer urgently.

"Hey, doctor, come over here. - It looks like this fella is hurt plenty."

The doctor hurried across to Pat, and was running his hands over him when a stretcher arrived, and it was as the medical officer was giving instructions for the injured Irishman to be lifted on to the stretcher that Mitchell and the Madisons gained the track.

James Madison pushed his way towards Bob, and June stumbled after him. They sank down beside the fireman and raised his head.

"Bob!" June cried distractedly. "Oh, Bob! Are you hurt?"

His eyes were closed. His blackened face looked deathly pale under the grime and oil that streaked it. With an agony of terror in her expression, June turned to a police-officer close by. "Is he dead?" she whispered.

The doctor returned at that moment, having rendered first-aid to Pat Heeley, and as he heard June's words he glanced down at her with a reassuring smile.

"No, he isn't dead, Miss Madison," he put in. "He isn't even hurt. Just stunned, that's all. Got the wind knocked out of him. Hallo, he seems to be coming round!"

He was right, for with a half-stifled groan Bob raised himself a little higher. Next second he found himself gazing up at familiar faces.

"Mr. Madison," he breathed, and then: "June-June!"

"You won, Bob!" June told him with a hysterical catch in her voice. "You won!"

Bob propped himself on his elbow with an effort. A look of anxiety had appeared in his eyes all at once.

"Pat!" he exclaimed. "Where's Pat? Is he—is he hurt?"

"Get him into the ambulance, boys," he heard someone say just then, and

struggling round, he saw the Irishman being carried across the track.

The doctor laid a hand on Bob's arm. "Don't worry," he told him. "Your friend will be all right."

"Is he badly hurt, doctor?" asked June's father.

"A dislocated shoulder-blade, I think," the medical man replied, "but he'll soon mend. His kind take a lot of killing," he added with a twinkle in his eye.

Bob was now trying to rise, and willing hands helped him to his feet. He swayed a little, so that June and her father clutched him anxiously.

"You ought to lie down for a spell," June pleaded. "You've had a bad shake-up, Bob."

"No, I'll be okay," Bob answered gamely, and managed to steady himself. June's father gripped him by the arm.

"Darrow," he said gratefully, "you were magnificent. The Brown Special's victory will make motoring history, and, incidentally, a fortune for me. As for that ten thousand dollar bet I made with Dan Mitchell, it's yours. You've earned every cent of it."

Bob scarcely seemed to be listening.

"I've got to get to the hospital and find out just how seriously Pat has been injured," he faltered. "If he's badly hurt, the race hasn't been worth winning."

"That's a fine thought, Darrow," Madison declared. "We'll all go and see that he's taken care of. I'll get my car out of the parking ground."

He hurried off, leaving Bob with June. Dan Mitchell remained, too, a silent figure standing with lips compressed into a thin, vicious line.

The Face at the Window.

A CAR drew up outside the imposing iron gates that opened on to the drive of the Madison home. A figure stepped out of the automobile and slipped stealthily through the gateway to plunge into the dense masses of shrubbery that covered the grounds.

It was the burly figure of the ruffianly Spike Beldon, Dan Mitchell's henchman.

Night had fallen an hour previously, a night without stars or moon, and the gloom favoured Spike as he advanced towards the house. Creeping through the bushes, he made his objective a light which gleamed in the sitting-room window, and, after a cautious approach, he reached the sill.

The sound of music came from beyond the window, and as Spike raised his head warily and peered into the room he saw June Madison's profile.

She was sitting at a piano, and her fingers were running delicately and skillfully over the keys. Beside her stood Bob Darrow, and he was listening to her playing with keen appreciation.

June brought the melody to its conclusion and turned to Bob smilingly. Crouching by the window, Spike Beldon ducked down at once, but, lifting his head again a moment later, he observed that the girl seemed too engrossed in her companion to notice any eaves-dropper.

"You played that exquisitely, June," Bob was saying. "Thank you."

"I always strive to please," June told him, with a whimsical curtsy. "Have you any other favourites?"

"Plenty," he rejoined, "but it would take you the whole evening to play them all, and you must be tired, anyway. Let's talk."

She nodded.

"Yes, let's talk," she said. "Let's talk about the race you won. Oh, Bob," she added fervently, "you've no idea

how I felt when I saw you open your eyes after you'd been hurt."

"I guess it was my lucky day," he murmured. "By all theories, Pat and I should have been killed."

"It was my lucky day, too," June mused. "If you hadn't come in first with the Brown Special I'd have been on my way to the altar now—and all because of a mad, reckless promise."

There was a moment's silence, and then June spoke again.

"If Dan Mitchell had won that ten thousand dollars," she said, "he was going to buy an engagement ring."

"Yes," Bob answered. "And maybe that's why I was so determined he wouldn't win the bet."

June lowered her glance.

"Well, he didn't win it," she said softly. "Dad won the wager, and made over the ten thousand to you. What are you going to buy with it?"

Bob started. Could she mean that, if he chose to make her a present of an engagement ring, she would accept him? He could see no other significance in her words, and was overjoyed to put that conception on them. But at the same time he felt tremendously embarrassed, for, like a good many men of proven courage, he fairly flinched from a proposal of marriage.

"Well," he stammered, "I thought—I thought that—that if your father—"

"My father likes you, Bob," June coaxed.

"Yes, he seems to, doesn't he?" Bob agreed. "Of course, I didn't want to take that ten thousand, but, since he insisted, I split it with Pat, and—"

"Yes, Bob?"

"Well, you know your father has been having a new laboratory fitted out in his warehouse," Bob continued. "It's complete now, and I've got enough money to carry on with my experiments."

June's face fell.

"Oh, experiments!" she reiterated.

"Why, yes—experiments on my fire-extinguisher," he explained. "You see, the chemicals I bought were ruined that day I discovered they'd been tampered with. You remember—the day we were to have tried out the fire-bombs on that old shed in your father's grounds."

"I remember, Bob," June told him.

"Those chemicals are pretty costly," Bob went on, "but with the cash your father gave me I can get hold of some more. Now Thursday's my day off at the Fire Department, and I'm going to take the formula for my extinguisher to the warehouse laboratory then."

June looked away.

"And experiment, of course," she said.

"Yes," he replied, "and if everything turns out the way I hope it will, there's something—I'm going to tell you. At least—something I'm going to ask you."

Their eyes met.

"Can't you ask me now?" she urged, and then, with a slight flush, glanced away again.

With the movement her gaze travelled to the window, and suddenly a scream broke from her lips. Bob jerked round, but was too late to see the figure of the man who darted from the sill and took to his heels through the shrubbery.

"June—what is it?" Bob demanded.

"A face!" she gasped. "A man's face at the window!"

Bob waited to hear no more, but, crossing the room in a few swift strides, swung himself over the sill and dropped to the grounds. Somewhere ahead of him he heard the thrashing of foliage as the interloper charged through the shrubbery, and he set off in full pursuit, running at the top of his speed.

Not once did he sight the fugitive in

the gloom, but he knew he was heading for the gateway at the end of the drive, and he dashed in the same direction—only to reach it as Spike Beldon scrambled into the waiting car and drove off.

Bob came to a baffled standstill, unable even to obtain a glimpse of the auto's number plate, and he returned to the house empty-handed. When he showed up in the sitting-room again it was to find that June had been joined by her father, who had heard her cry.

"I saw a man's face at the window," June was saying. "Bob chased him."

"Did you know the man?" her father asked, and June shook her head.

"No," she answered. "It wasn't anyone I'd ever seen before. It was a mean, crafty face."

"The fellow got clear away," said Bob, entering at that juncture. "He had a car parked in the middle of the road. I didn't even get a good look at him."

Madison pursed his lips.

"Darrow," he announced emphatically, "someone is after your formula."

"Yes," Bob rejoined, "someone who probably thinks I'm still carrying on my experiments here. But I complete my work on Thursday, Mr. Madison, and then—"

Spike Receives His Orders.

IN the office where he affected to carry on business as a genuine promoter, Dan Mitchell outlined a fresh plan of action to his hireling Beldon.

"Never mind about June Madison, Spike," he said, as Beldon introduced the girl's name into the conversation. "I'll take care of her. All you've got to do is to get Darrow."

Spike settled himself on the edge of Mitchell's desk.

"I can get him," he drawled. "Thursday night—at the new laboratory in the Madison warehouse."

Mitchell nodded.

"And he'll have the formula with him, you say? Good—that's what I want. Listen, Spike, I'm trying new tactics. Once I can lay my hands on Darrow's extinguisher and get Darrow himself out of the way, I can put our own patent over on Madison. And as for June—well, I know how to bring her round." And he smiled complacently.

Spike Beldon slid from the corner of the desk and gave vent to a scuffling laugh.

"You think you do," he retorted. "But I'm telling you that June Madison is nuts about this gny Darrow, and you ain't got a chance."

He turned away mockingly, and was lighting the stub of a cigarette that hung from the corner of his mouth when Mitchell jerked to his feet and gripped him by the arm.

"Listen, Spike," he snapped, swinging him round. "If June Madison—"

Whatever he had intended to say was left unsaid, for suddenly he checked himself and glanced at the door of his office. Against the glass panel of it he saw a woman's shadow, and, signing to Spike to remain silent, he moved to the door on tip-toe and unexpectedly wrenched it open.

A flashily-dressed girl stumbled across the threshold, and Mitchell caught her viciously by the wrists as she recovered her balance.

"Trixie Farrell, huh?" he snarled. "Spying on me, huh?"

The woman's dark eyes blazed ominously. A few months before, she had been a favourite of Mitchell's. But she had reason to believe that he was putting her to one side, and the snatch of

conversation that had just reached her ears seemed to confirm her suspicions.

"No," she told him, "I wasn't spying! I came here to see you. But I heard what you said about June Madison!" she added fiercely. "And if you think you can give me the gate for another dame—"

"Shut up and come in here!" Mitchell interrupted, and, pulling her into the office, he slammed the door.

He glared at her for a moment and then turned to Spike Beldon.

"All right," he jerked, "get after that formula. Take Butch and Merlin with you, and don't make any blunders."

"Okay, Mitch," Spike answered, and took his leave.

As he departed, Mitchell faced Trixie again. His resentment towards her had cooled somewhat, and he decided that it would be wise to appease her. She was a woman of temperament, and consequently dangerous, and he was shrewd enough to realise that it would not be policy to antagonise someone who knew so much concerning his affairs.

"Now, listen, Honey," he appealed, "I'm not interested in June Madison, not in the way you think, anyhow. She's only a means to get at her father's money, and if we lay hands on Darrow's formula to-night—I'll never see her again."

"But you told Spike—"

Mitchell interrupted her. "Bah," he explained, "I don't tell Spike Beldon everything. Now you run along and I'll see you to-night." And he took her in his arms and kissed her.

"All right, Dan," Trixie Farrell murmured. "To-night, then."

He led her to the door, said 'good-bye' to her and retraced his steps to his desk. As he reached it he at once took up the telephone and spoke into the mouth-piece.

"Give me Bayside 7710," he called.

He did not guess that Trixie had not altogether been deceived by his lies, and that on an afterthought she had paused outside the door.

"Hallo," he went on, "Bayside 7710? Oh, is that you, June?"

A pause, and then:

"I'm coming over to see you, June," Mitchell continued. "I've something very important to tell you. I know you'll be interested."

Standing outside the office door, listening to the charm in his voice, Trixie Farrell clenched her hands furiously. For an instant her impulse was to confront Mitchell again and create a 'scene', but it was an impulse that she quelled, and with a brooding expression on her face she made her way to the lift.

When Dan Mitchell left the premises there was no sign of her, and his mind was completely at ease as he hailed a taxi and gave the Madisons' address. He arrived at the palatial home on the outskirts of the city twenty minutes later, and a maid showed him into a room where June was sitting at a bureau.

"Oh, hallo, Dan," she greeted him, as he pulled up a chair beside her.

"Good evening, June," Mitchell returned. "Gee! You're looking lovelier than ever."

"You always were good at flattery, Dan," June reproached. "But what was it you wanted to see me about?"

He leaned forward and took her hands, but with a whimsical little smile she drew them free.

"June," he said, "I want to tell you how much I think of you—because I believe that you once cared for me."

"Oh, dad and I have always re-

garded you as a very good friend, Dan," June told him.

"But you might have looked on me as something more than a friend if this fortune-hunting fireman hadn't come between us," Mitchell retorted bitterly.

June resented the words, but kept her feelings under control.

"Now, Dan," she said, "that isn't nice—"

She was interrupted by the ringing of a 'phone bell, and, cutting short the conversation, reached for the instrument.

"Pardon me, Dan," she murmured. Then, lifting the receiver: "Hallo—? Yes, this is Mr. Madison's home—No. Mr. Darrow is not here. Who wants to speak to him?"

It was a woman's voice at the other end of the wire, and the woman was Trixie Farrell.

"Never mind who I am, sister," she told June, her lip curling viciously as she spoke into the mouth-piece. "Just tell that sap fireman there's a gang after his formula—and they're going to lay for him to-night. Do you get me?"

June's face had paled. "Wait!" she exclaimed. "Don't ring off—" But even as she uttered the words she heard the click of the receiver as the other woman replaced it on its hook.

"She's gone!" breathed June, turning to Dan Mitchell.

"She?" he echoed. "What do you mean, June? What's the matter? You look as if you'd heard the voice of a ghost or something."

June faltered out an explanation. "It was some woman, calling from a public 'phone-hooth," she panted. "She said a gang was going to attack Bob. I've got to warn him!" And she picked up the receiver again.

"Hallo, hallo—Operator—"

Mitchell's face had hardened. A woman—giving away his plans. Trixie Farrell!

But this was no moment to rage inwardly against betrayal. In a few seconds June would be in touch with

Bob Darrow, and Mitchell had to do some fast thinking, or his scheme must fail.

The 'phone-wire ran past his foot, and, with June crouching over the mouth-piece with her back to him, he entangled the cord around his shoe and snapped the connection with a single wrench.

"Hallo, operator— Operator—"

June crammed down the receiver and scrambled to her feet.

"The 'phone's dead!" she gasped. "Listen, Dan, Bob is at the warehouse with dad. I've got to get to them!"

She wheeled and ran from the room. Mitchell, snatching his hat, hurried after her, but he did not make up to her until she was out on the drive, where her roadster was standing.

"June!" he shouted, as he saw her climbing into the car. "Wait, June. There's nothing you can do down there."

But June did not heed him.

"Hurry, if you're coming!" she cried, pressing the self-starter and stepping on the clutch-pedal.

Mitchell bundled himself into the car as it swept forward along the drive.

The Attack.

TRAVELLING from his City office to the warehouse where the new laboratory had been fitted up, James Madison found Bob Darrow already installed there.

"Hallo, Darrow!" said Madison, as he entered the lab.

"Evening, Mr. Madison," Bob rejoined, holding up a vial into which he had just poured some liquid. "I've just finished mixing up a small quantity of my extinguisher, following the directions of the formula there." And he indicated a document lying on a bench near by.

"Fine!" said Madison. "Then we're all set for the test?"

"Yes," Bob answered, "and I'm going to prove to you, right here in this room, that this small amount of the



His eyes were closed. His blackened face looked deathly pale under the grime and oil that streaked it.

mixture I've invented will put out a pretty fair-sized fire."

Laying down the vial he walked to the far end of the laboratory and returned with a large sheet of tin which he placed in the middle of the floor. On this metal base he then proceeded to build a formidable beacon out of quantities of wastepaper and inflammable rubbish.

"You're sure it's safe to start a fire as big as that in this old warehouse, Bob?" Madison asked doubtfully.

"Safe?" Bob echoed. "Of course it's safe. If I didn't think it was safe I wouldn't do it. I hate fires."

And he grinned amusedly.

Alone in the old warehouse, Bob and Madison completed the preparations for the experiment. At least, they imagined they were alone, but from behind the door of a cupboard in a dim corner of the laboratory three pairs of eyes were watching every movement, and three ruffianly intruders awaiting their opportunity to launch a surprise rush.

"There, Mr. Madison," said Bob at length, "I'll set light to this heap of rubbish now and show you why I think the experiment is perfectly safe. For I guarantee my extinguisher will quench it at once."

Stooping, he struck a match and held it to the pile. Flames began to rise from it, coiling rapidly towards the lofty ceiling.

"That ought to make a pretty good blaze," Bob commented, as he drew back to give the fire time to reach its height.

Sixty seconds passed. The pile of rubbish in the middle of the floor was fairly in the grip of the flames now, flames that writhed up in a fierce, lurid column.

Compelled to retreat from the blast of heat that smote him Madison glanced at Bob anxiously.

"If your extinguisher quells that fire," he declared, "there won't be any doubt as to its effectiveness."

Bob reached for the vial on the bench.

"And this is all I'm going to use," he reminded Madison. "Something less than a pint of the mixture. Now for it!"

He lifted the vial, but as he was in the very act of raising it above his head a shout from Madison arrested him. He spun round and saw that the older man was staring towards the far end of the laboratory, and, following the direction of his startled gaze, he discerned Spike Beldon and his associates slinking from the cupboard where they had been concealed.

The thugs rushed forward the instant they knew that their victims had taken the alarm, and before he could put himself on the defensive a smashing blow to the face drove Bob into the wall.

The vial dropped from his hand with a crash, and its precious contents spilled over the floor ten paces from the inferno on which Bob had intended to throw them.

But the vial and fire-extinguishing chemicals had ceased to be of prime importance to Bob. Recovering, he flung himself at the rogue who had struck him, and with a terrific uppercut knocked him flying into the midst of the blazing rubbish.

Flaming scraps of paper were littered over the floor. The crook, squealing in a panic, picked himself up and stumbled clear of the beacon with hair singed and clothes scorched.

Meanwhile Spike Beldon had pounced on Bob and was grappling with him

savagely, while the third man tackled Madison.

Madison struck out gamely, but he was past the days when he might have been a formidable proposition in a scuffle. He managed to land a punch that rattled his assailant, but the man came back at him and launched a vicious attack that battered Madison to the floor.

Madison attempted to rise, but the thug lifted his boot and drove it with stunning force against the older man's temple, and with a groan Madison sank again.

The man who had felled him whipped round to lend his comrades a hand, and he speedily realised that his help was needed. For at that moment Bob swung Beldon up in his strong arms and hurled him down with a shock that knocked the breath out of his burly form.

The rogue who had been thrown into the fire now received the brunt of Bob's counter-attack, and was staggered by the fury of it.

"Butch!" he panted. "Get into him, Butch!"

"Okay, Merlin!" Madison's attacker rapped out, and with the words he leapt at Bob pantherishly and tackled him from the rear.

A whirling mix-up ensued, and, locked with his adversaries, Bob reeled back and forth across the laboratory. Sometimes they trampled through the flaming rubbish that had been piled in the middle of the floor, and burning litter was scattered in all directions. Sometimes they crashed heavily into the benches, bringing down costly apparatus in their mêlée and shattering it to fragments.

Butch worked for a trip that would throw the fireman on his back, but was himself swept off his balance and dashed to the floor. Blundering over the prostrate ruffian's body, Bob now broke Merlin's hold, thrust him at arm's-length, and then slammed his fist to the scoundrel's mouth.

Merlin shot backward and hit a tall cupboard set against the wall. The cupboard rocked and swayed as he rebounded from it, then tipped forward on to the beacon in the middle of the floor.

Its doors swung open as it fell, and from its shelves bottles rained down by the score. The smash of wood and the splintering of glass was drowned in the roar of an explosion as a heavy jar shattered itself to pieces and poured a gallon of deadly chemicals into the blaze.

The flash of the report blinded Bob for the instant, but as the scene partially cleared he caught a sudden glimpse of Spike Beldon clutching at a paper on one of the benches. The formula for the Darrow fire-bomb, Bob realised, and with a shout he jumped at the crook and wrested the document from his grasp.

"So that's what you're after," he flung at the three thugs, thrusting the paper into an inside pocket as he backed on the defensive again. "Well, come and get it!"

Butch and Merlin had struggled to their feet, and as Spike was joined by them he led a concerted rush, a rush that was half-checked as a gust of flame intervened. The chemicals that had been spilled from the cupboard were responsible for it, and it was now clear that in a very few minutes the whole laboratory would be ablaze.

The crooks continued their rush, but not with the intention of tackling Bob. Escape was their chief anxiety now, and

they flung themselves at Bob only because he happened to stand in their way.

Bob stopped Beldon with a right to the mouth, but Merlin closed with him, and, while they were at grips, Butch dodged to the rear and drove his fist with all his force at the back of the young fireman's neck.

Bob's legs seemed to give, and he sagged to the floor in a senseless heap, and as the cowardly blow felled him the crooks darted from the laboratory.

Debris!

DRIVING at reckless speed towards the docks, where her father's warehouse was situated, June suddenly heard the clang of fire-bells behind her.

Both she and Mitchell turned their heads and saw the giant scarlet engines hurtling into view. Traffic pulled into the gutter at the imperious clamour of their approach, and, swinging aside into a cross-street, June realised that they were the wagons from District Station Number Five, to which Bob was attached.

She steered back into the main thoroughfare when they had passed, and resumed her journey to the Madison warehouse at top speed. It was only when she was in sight of it that she realised the warehouse was the very building to which the Brigade had been called.

The building was in flames. Coils of fire were breaking through its roof and rolling from the windows of its upper floors. A stab of terror seemed to pierce June as she remembered that the laboratory was on the top storey, where the blaze was fiercest.

June pulled up her car on the fringe of a crowd that had gathered to watch the firemen train the hoses on the burning warehouse. Descending from the auto, she began to elbow her way through the mob, and Mitchell was on the point of following her when he saw a man standing on a street-corner.

The man was Spike Beldon, and Spike was beckoning to him frantically. Changing his course, Mitchell hastened towards him.

"They're in there—both of them!" Spike panted, as the promoter joined him.

Mitchell scowled. "Who?" he rapped out. "What are you babbling about, man?"

"Madison and Darrow," Spike blurted. "We got into a fight with 'em, an' they're both knocked out. A fire started in the laboratory, an' they're lyin' up there—the two of them."

Mitchell looked at the blazing warehouse, and his face became a shade paler.

"Come on," he said, gripping Beldon by the arm, "let's get out of here."

They turned and slipped away. Meanwhile, under the directions of Battalion Chief Wilson, the firemen of District Station Number Five were pouring hundreds of gallons of water on to the blaze, the powerful jets from the hoses hissing upward and falling like a deluge into the heart of the inferno.

At that very moment, Bob Darrow was recovering consciousness to find himself surrounded by flames, the heat from which was beating intolerably against his face and hands. Yet his first thought as he struggled to his feet was not of himself, but of June's father, and he called the older man by name.

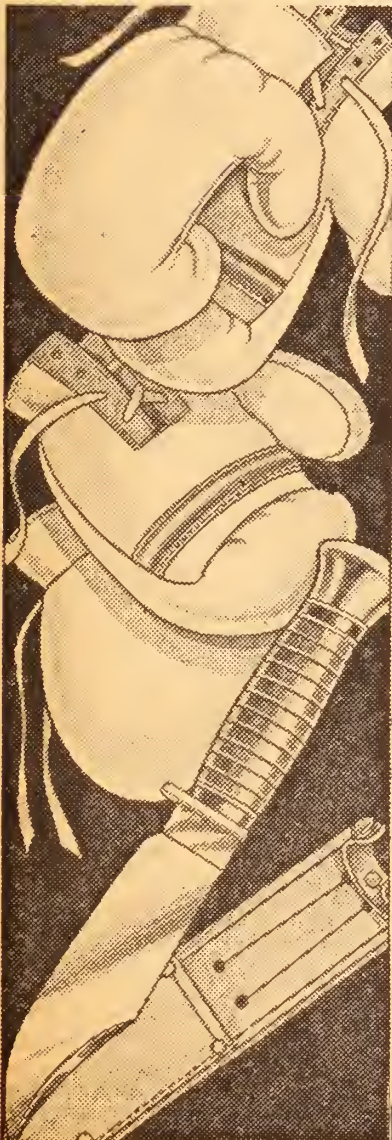
"Madison!" he shouted hoarsely. "Madison—where are you?"

There was no response, but all at once he made out a figure lying near a bench that had not yet been seized by the fire. It was the senseless form

(Continued on page 27.)

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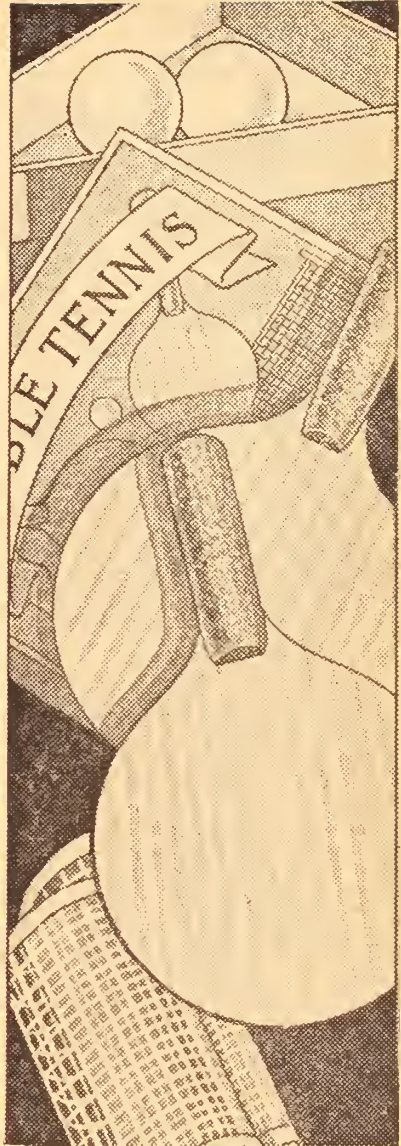


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"THE FLYING FOOL."

(Continued from page 10.)

"What are ground signals?" asked Morella.

The fog was very thick as the official led them on to the gallery. On the ground below gleamed lights that formed the letter "T."

"Those signals are placed according to the wind. A plane must land against the wind. The pilot will see that letter and know that the top of the 'T' indicates the direction of the wind. He can land down the 'T' with safety. If he tried with the wind there would be a serious accident."

Bored Marlow strolled back into the observatory and he heard something that made his face go livid.

"Vincent Floyd. Vincent Floyd. Two thousand feet and needing bearings. Think somewhere over aerodrome, but fog-banks obscure visibility—"

There was more, but Marlow scarcely heeded. Floyd had escaped by some miracle, and was about to land. They had wasted two precious hours in this cursed aerodrome, and now his enemy was on his heels. He glanced at the regulators for the ground signals, and a fiendish scheme flashed to his nimble brain.

Morella was still out on the gallery, and as the woman turned to come back to the observatory, Marlow acted. Swiftly he changed the landing signals.

"Morella, I can't stay another minute." His tone was forceful. "Thanks so much for showing us round. Morella, we must go."

He almost dragged the girl down the spiral stairs into the aerodrome.

"I won't be rushed like this!" cried the outraged Morella. "I want to speak to Jim Lancer."

"Well, I must be off," was Marlow's answer. "I'll ring you up later. Sorry, but I must go."

Outside was his high-powered racing Bentley. The drone of an aeroplane sounded above as he drove fiercely on to the main road.

Floyd did every trick he had ever learnt to avoid the murderous attack of the pursuing plane. A sudden dive and then a climb upwards, a daring loop, a breath-catching spin, and always zigzagging to avoid the ominous machine-gun.

Their nearest escape was when bullets smashed some of his instruments, and would have got the pilot if he hadn't ducked. At last the clouds hid them from sight, and Sid decided to land.

"Floyd's got away—darn him!" he told his two passengers—Bill and the Doctor. "We've got to warn the boss or our number's up. I'm going low, as I'm pretty certain we're nearing Croydon."

And the first pilot to see the ground-lights was Sid.

There was an appalling crash when the machine was carried against the walls of the aerodrome. An explosion, and then lurid tongues of flame. There was never a chance of saving those three men.

The changing of the landing signals had been discovered some minutes after Marlow had sped away, but too late to prevent the catastrophe.

Retribution.

VINCENT FLOYD and Marion made a safe landing.

"Someone's had a crash," were Vincent's first words, pointing towards the flames.

"The ground signals were altered, Mister Floyd," explained a mechanic. "A Mister Marlow was being shown round the aerodrome, and they think he changed them by accident."

"Accident my foot!" rasped Vincent. "He got my message that I wanted to land, and played his last card. Is Marlow here now?"

"Drove off in a powerful Bentley," was the reply. "I believe Mister Lancer is in touch with the police."

"Marion"—Vincent clambered back into his machine—"find Jim and tell him what you know. He'll make for the coast—I wonder which way?"

"Deal and Dover," opined the mechanic. "The fog has lifted from most of Kent as the wind is due west."

"Ring the Yard at once and have every port watched," cried Vincent. "That's in case I don't spot our man. Is he driving a big two-seater Bentley?" The mechanic nodded. "I know the car. Swing the prop—I must be off."

"Oh, do take care, Vincent—dear!" yelled Marion as the engine woke to life.

His answer was a wave of the hand, and soon he vanished into the foggy murk.

Soon Vincent was through the fog and able to look down at the countryside. The light was fading, but objects still stood out clearly. If Marlow were making for Dover he would work round the outskirts of London and then on to the wide main road, or he could work south to Tunbridge Wells and thence to Ashford and Folkestone. Floyd decided to make straight for Dover and to scour all the main roads for his quarry.

And on the road from Folkestone to Dover Floyd espied a speeding car. Quickly he gained and peered earthwards. It was a Bentley, and travelling at an incredible speed.

Vincent came down to two hundred feet and roared along behind the Bentley. Michael Marlow turned, and realised what the plane meant.

For once in his life Marlow lost his head. He felt the hangman's rope round his neck, and his one desire was to escape from a relentless enemy—an enemy who seemed to possess a dozen lives.

On two wheels he slithered the great car round difficult corners, but never could he shake off the pursuing plane.

Mad with fear, Marlow tried to take a corner at reckless speed, and lost control. The Bentley shot over the banking and tore over the grass with Marlow trying to regain control.

At this part of the road the cliff is but a hundred yards from the road. Vincent saw Marlow make an effort to get out of the car, but too late.

The Bentley shot over the cliff like a streak of light, and as the car turned over and over, Vincent Floyd shut his eyes. A dull crash and then a puff of smoke—on the rocks below the chalk cliffs was a blazing wreck.

Vincent made a perfect landing on the cliff. He went forward to peer down at the blazing car. Not a chance of Marlow escaping alive. A violent and a swift death.

The persistent sounds of a motor-horn made Vincent get to his feet. A car was bumping over the grass. Jim Lancer was driving, and by his side was Marion Lee.

"Chasing after you for miles," cried Jim. "Folkestone put us wise. What's happened, Vincent?"

"Fius."

The detective told them of Marlow's end. The three stared down at the burning car.

"I'll run along to Dover and handle this smash," Lancer had noticed the interest that his pal was taking in the girl. "Would you care for me to 'phone Mor—"

"No, thanks," quickly spoke Vincent. "Marion can fly back to London with me. Are you game, dear?" He put an arm round her. "I'd like to have you with me always."

"That suits me," Marion smiled up at him. "But first I must make a confession. I'm not quite all that I seem to be. You see, I joined up with Marlow for a special reason." From a pocket she produced a badge. "This belonged to Hirst." Then, to his surprise, she produced another Pinkerton badge. "This is mine—I was sent to find Hirst."

"You little wonder woman!" Vincent hugged her close, then frowned as Jim Lancer laughed. "Let's beat it, lass. Give me a swing, Jim, and then go and handle those Dover folk."

Somehow Marion managed to squeeze in beside Vincent. A wave of their hands and the machine soared gracefully towards the heavens. (By permission of British International Pictures, starring Henry Kendall, Benita Hume, and Wallace Geoffrey.)

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October 3rd, 1931.

"SUBWAY EXPRESS."

(Continued from page 14.)

gave a lurch and he fell forward, like this." And he imitated a stumble. "No, no," said Mrs. Mullins, "one of his hands kind of slipped through the open window, like he had clutched at the framework and missed. The other arm was hanging down. Yes, that's right. Now—now he fell forward."

"Oh, like this," exclaimed Killian, and pitched towards Mason as if to clutch his wrist.

"Don't!" Mason screamed the word. His voice, so assured a moment before, rang shrill with terror.

"Don't touch me! Look out!" "Kearney, stop the car," Killian snapped. "Pull the emergency!"

The train squealed to a standstill. "Now we've got somewhere," drawled Killian. "There's an outside connection that you're afraid of, Mason—that's why you cried out the way you did. Kearney, take a look along the track."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Mason panted, his face deathly-white.

Killian made no answer, and stood waiting while the central doors were opened for Kearney. They closed behind the detective, and then re-opened again to admit him a minute or two later. As Kearney climbed into the car with an air of excitement One-Round Dolan, Kansas City Terror, made a stampede for the exit, only to be forced back.

"Where d'yuh think you're goin'?" Kearney roared.

"I gotta fight," Dolan pleaded. Kearney's fist took him neatly in the jaw and threw him back into his seat insensible.

"It's on the posts, inspector," announced Kearney. "The posts in the tunnel between the up-line an' the down. A wire runnin' from the third rail, up one of the pillars to the height o' that window and then along three others. Four in all—I counted 'em."

Killian fixed Mason with a steely eye. "A live wire carrying the current along four posts on a level with the window, eh?" he said. "You weren't taking any chances, Mason, were you? I suppose, by the way, that only a subway employe would have access to those posts?"

"You think that pins the crime on to me?" sneered Mason.

"Not that alone," answered Killian. "You made a slight mistake when you said you didn't know Edward Tracy. On this watch of his there's an inscription that shows it was presented by former associates of the subway. There are six names engraved, and yours happens to be one of them. Put these gloves on him and see if they fit."

"Don't bother," said Mason thickly. "They fit all right."

He was handcuffed. Then, at Killian's command, Kearney ordered the motor-man to head for 72nd Street.

Meanwhile, Killian was demanding details from Mason.

"Did Borden hire you to kill Tracy?" he demanded.

Mason shook his head.

"No, Tracy did the hiring," he rejoined startlingly. "Yes, Tracy. He came to me a month ago with the plan all worked out, and offered me \$10,000."

"But—"

"Wait a minute," said Mason. "Just as we reached the posts where I was to do the job the lights went out, and I got Tracy by mistake. I'd meant to get off at 72nd Street and go back to get the wire down, before anything was discovered. But the fight started and the shot ruined everything—"

The train ran alongside the platform of Seventy-Second, and Killian allowed the passengers to alight.

"You can go, too, Borden," he said, "and take Mrs. Tracy with you. Good luck to you both," he added sincerely.

When the crowd had departed Killian turned to his prisoner, who still sat in the seat Tracy had occupied.

"Mason," he asked, "how did a fellow of your intelligence get the wrong man in the dark?"

"That's one of the things I'll keep to myself," Mason answered through clenched teeth.

"Mason," Killian persisted, "between you and me, did you ever know the former Mrs. Tracy—the one that got the rough deal? Were you ever—perhaps—in love with her?"

Mason smiled.

"Between you and me," he said, "that's none of your business."

Killian smiled, too. He knew that his surmise was correct, and all was clear to him now.

Tracy, defaulting to the tune of fifty thousand dollars, and seeing a chance of making a hundred thousand in insurance, had gone to Mason with his dastardly proposal to kill Borden, and had blackmailed Stevens into playing a minor part with the dripping umbrella.

Mason must have pretended to agree, all along seeing his chance of squaring accounts with Tracy. And so these three men—Tracy, Mason, Stevens—had awaited the first wet night.

The wire had been rigged. All was in readiness. To-night, Stevens' umbrella had dripped rain-water—rain-water that had spread in a wide pool about the feet of Tracy and Borden—a pool harmless enough in itself, but a deadly "ground" to the one who was to receive the contact of the copper disc.

Mason had seen to it that that one was Tracy, not Borden.

"Let's go, Mason," said Killian. "The wagon will be waiting."

(By permission of United Artists Film Corporation and Columbia Pictures, Ltd., starring Jack Holt.)

"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

(Continued from page 24.)

of Madison, and, lifting him with an effort, Bob managed to revive him a little.

The blaze seemed to have swept towards the door and thence to other parts of the building, and now, with one arm supporting Madison, Bob had to fight his way through a dense swathe of flame. He never knew how he and his companion gained the head of the stairs that led to the floor below, but he did know that a huge fragment of burning roof fell at their heels and peppered them with hot sparks.

They reeled down slight after flight of stairs. On the lower floors there was less danger from fire, but suffocating volumes of smoke filled the entire building and tortured their lungs as they inhaled it. Nor were they by any means beyond the risk of sudden and awful death, for once a mass of flaring timber hurtled past them and crashed into the depths of the staircase well.

They reached the ground floor at last, and, staggering to a door, let themselves out into the street. Madison was at the end of his tether, and with a moan collapsed, but Bob caught him as he fell and, hoisting him over his shoulder, tottered to the sidewalk.

A cry went up the moment the two men were seen, and it was a cry which June lent her voice. Next second she was running towards them.

"Daddy!" she called thankfully. "Bob!"

Bob swayed uncertainly, and in that same moment June chanced to lift her glance. Next second a scream broke from her lips as she saw a huge section of the warehouse wall bulge outward through the masses of smoke and flame that capped the building.

With the thunder of a landslide a hundred tons of debris broke from the doomed structure, an avalanche of blackened masonry and blazing timber that hurtled into the street immediately where Bob and June were standing.

(To be continued in another breath-taking episode next week. By permission of Universal Pictures Ltd., starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.)

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"SCREEN STORIES."

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October 3rd, 1931.



(Continued from page 2.)

pear next in "Baby Face Killer," and will follow that with "Man Hunt," a story by Bret Harte.

An Expensive Snore.

Ever heard of a snore costing four hundred pounds? There is one film company in Hollywood which had its day's expenses increased by this figure. Making a talkie is always an expensive thing, for, in addition to the high salaries of the artistes, the director, his assistants and a small army of experts in every department, there are a hundred and one other items which find their way on to the expense sheet each day before the studio can finally say "goodbye" to a production.

Among these extra items are always delays of one kind or another which mount up the cost of a picture that is scheduled to be finished by a certain date. Unwanted sounds, for example, which reach the microphone, despite all precautions, and so get recorded, have to be traced and stopped so that another re-take of the spoilt scene can be made.

The snore which cost four hundred pounds was one of these unwanted sounds. Curiously enough it had not been noticed until the film had been "run over" in the company's private theatre. Then it became necessary to take the particular scene again. Inquiries had also to be made as to who had made the offending snore.

Then after hours of inquiries, it was discovered that a carpenter had fallen asleep amid some rafters. His snoring had cost the company a tidy sum.

Dix Too Tired to Think.

For once in his film acting career Richard Dix had to admit himself beaten. This happened during the making of "Cimarron." Its dialogue on one occasion proved too much for him. He and the company had been working on a scene from early morning, and delay after delay had interrupted the filming.

There had been camera difficulties, unwanted noises which had to be traced and constant re-takes. This went on till late in the afternoon, with Dix already physically tired and brain fagged by a week of hard work. At last, when everything seemed straight, he came forward before the microphone to make his big speech in the trial.

Then he found he could not remember all his lines. Three times he tried, but it was no use. Finally, he tore off his wig, smeared his make-up and said:

"Well, boys, I guess I am beaten today. We must try again to-morrow."

Sounds for the Talkies.

Nowadays it is hard to believe all you hear in the talkies. For in all the sound departments of Hollywood's studios there are strange looking gadgets for imitating various sounds.

Canaries, for example, may sometimes sing before the microphone, but there is, of course, the bother of getting them to do so when required. So the sound expert prefers to get the same notes from a wooden box with a key protruding from the side. He merely has to turn the key and the imitation of canaries singing is perfect.

Does the director want to record the pounding of horses' hoofs? Well, this can be done by rubber plungers working on a wooden board. A cau with a resin string produces a dog's bark. The sound of footsteps can be imitated by hinged sticks being slapped together. Other sticks imitate a slap in the face. The roar of a speeding train can be created by turning the crank of a large box.

If the recording is to be that of the smashing of glass in a window, the twist of a crank in a different box will give the exact sound. There are heaps of other ways, however, in which sounds can be produced.

There are, for example, instruments to imitate cathedral chimes, mooing of cows, crying of babies, the snarl of wild

beasts and many other sounds. At the same time it must not be thought that only imitations are used. Whenever possible real sound effects are recorded and filed under different headings in the sound library.

When Hollywood had a recent thunder-storm, technicians succeeded in recording a genuine peal of thunder. On other occasional weeks have been spent in New York harbour recording ships' sirens and different dock sounds.

Wallace Beery as Naval Aviator

Wallace Beery, who is an aviator in real life, will appear as an aviator in the navy in his new picture, "Hell's Divers." Beery holds a full transport licence, which is proof of his skill as an airman.

One of the most delicate tasks in connection with the making of this picture was the sending of a huge naval aeroplane carrier through the locks on the Panama Canal. The vessel had to pass through with barely six inches to spare. With the co-operation of the American Navy Department, the aeroplane carrier was converted into a gigantic sound studio specially for the occasion, so that the big "punch" scenes could be filmed with realism.

Lucky Fido.

Lew Ayres sincerely believes in the old saying "A man's best friend is his dog." Some months ago the popular Universal star found a full-blooded mongrel wandering disconsolately near his home, and looking as though life did not seem worth living. Lew took the mongrel in, gave it the first good meal it had had for days, and nursed it through a bad case of distemper. The dog was christened Fido.

Recently Lew left for location on the Sacramento River, which is being used as a "double" for the Mississippi in his new picture "Heaven on Earth." In a letter he received while he was there Lew was told that Fido was pining for his master. Lew himself felt a bit lonely about the time the letter arrived, and so he telegraphed to Universal to pick up the dog and send him to Sacramento post-haste.

The studio complied, and Fido arrived at the Hotel Sacramento in all his puppy splendour. The canine was added to the cast of "Heaven on Earth," and will be seen trotting proudly along the river front beside his idolised master.

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"UP FOR MURDER."**

Complete Film Stories in This Issue.

Boys' **CINEMA** 2^D

No. 617.

EVERY TUESDAY.

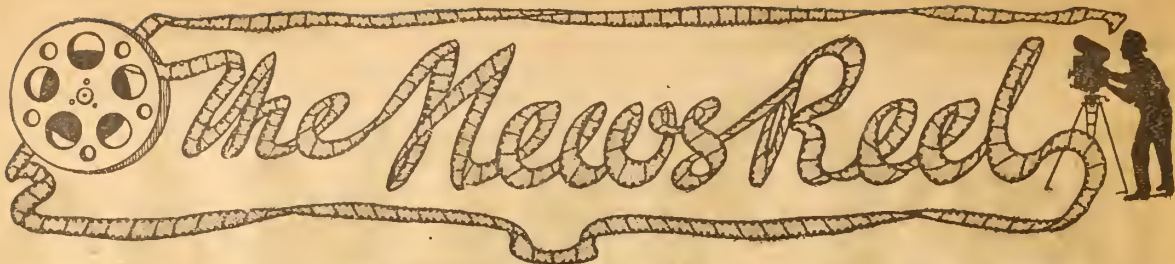
OCTOBER 10th, 1931.



*The Hilarious
Adventures
of a Circus
Miracle
Man.*

Robert Woolsey in //
EVERYTHING'S ROSIE

The illustration depicts a man in a top hat and glasses, sitting on a bench with a young girl. The man is wearing a patterned suit and has his hand to his chin. The girl is sitting next to him, looking thoughtful. The background is a simple outdoor setting.



The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"Everything's Rosie."

Dr. J. Dockweiler Droop, Robert Woolsey; Rosie, Anita Louise; Billy Lowe, John Darrow; Mrs. Lowe, Florence Roberts; Mr. Lowe, Frank Beal; Adolf Oberdorf, Alfred James; Miss Van Dorn, Lita Chevret; Sheriff, Hopkins, Clifford Dempsey.

"Up For Murder."

Robert Marshall, Lew Ayres; Myra Deane, Genevieve Tobin; Mrs. Marshall, Dorothy Peterson; William Winter, Purnell Pratt; Charlie Collins, Frank McHugh; Reginald Herk, Richard Tucker; Frank Smithson, Frederick Burt.

Films for Scottish Schools.

Here is something that may be of special interest to Scottish readers. The Edinburgh Education Committee has, following the example of the Middlesex Education authorities, been considering the introduction in schools of suitable talking pictures.

Among the subjects submitted for the committee's consideration are the "Secrets of Nature" studies, including zoological and botanical talks such as "The Daily Dozen at the Zoo," "The Frog," "The Flight Machine," introducing slow-motion pictures of birds in flight as compared with aeroplanes, and "Peas and Cues," which is the life story of a green pea plant. Geography is also represented by "Cyprus," a study of the island, and "The Benguela Railway," showing activity in Africa.

Valet for Pete.

If Pete the Pup, canine member of Hal Roach's Our Gang, seems more immaculately groomed nowadays, his vanity and the efforts of a French beauty specialist are responsible. He now has a "dog valet" who gives him his morning bath, bathes his eyes in a boric solution, keeps his eyebrows in trim, brushes his coat, and manicures his nails. Fortunately Pete does not shave!

Yes—We Have No Vegetables.

Buster Keaton's new picture, "East Side," was being made at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios, and a hundred children were taking part in one of the crowd scenes. They were supposed to be "toughs" from New York's Bowery. The youngsters were energetically engaged in a street battle for which the projectiles were two tens of vegetables. It was the intention of the studio officials to salvage as many of the vegetables as was possible and send them to a charity home.

But when that battle was finished there weren't any vegetables left. The whole of them had been used with such force and frequency that only bits remained, and the wonder is that none of the youthful combatants bore any marks of injury.

October 10th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S THREE COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



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A young police officer undertakes to rid the town of gangsters. A gripping tale of action and thrills, starring Edmund Breese and Catherine Dale Owen.

"THE MALTESE FALCON."

Filled with precious jewels, this ancient statuette of a bird brought evil on all connected with it. A strange and gruesome thriller, starring Bebe Daniels and Ricardo Cortez.

ALSO

The seventh episode of our thrilling serial :
"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

Old Schooner in British Film.

One of the most interesting features of "McGlusky—the Sea Rover," a new British International picture, is the use of an old three-masted barquentine, the only one now sailing under the British flag. The search for a schooner of this type occupied several weeks, and eventually one was located in Cornwall. The old barquentine had only just arrived in port, battered by seas, and

with most of her sails torn almost to ribbons as the result of a strenuous fight with raging gales in the North Sea. Her safe passage home is a tribute to the wonderful skill of the old shipbuilders whose "wooden walls" proved such an excellent bulwark against the attacks of England's enemies in the past.

Not the least interesting "ornament" on board the old ship is Capt. Deacon, a real ear-ringed old sea-dog who has sailed the seas for fifty-one years. Capt. Deacon himself will not be seen in the film, but it will bear his influence to some extent, for he has been retained in an advisory capacity. He was torpedoed three times during the War, and on the old windjammer are still to be seen the holes through which the guns were trained at submarines, for she was used as a "Q" ship. During the production of the film she will go into action once more.

Hoot Gibson's Rodeo.

I mentioned some time ago on this page that Hoot Gibson was holding a rodeo on his ranch. The affair proved a big success, and was attended by thirty thousand people, among whom were many famous stars, including Reginald Denny, Nick Stuart, Russell Gleason, Lew Cody, and that old screen favourite, William S. Hart.

As may be guessed, many of the events were too good to be missed for the screen, and some of the most exciting of them, such as bronco-busting and steer bulldogging, have been incorporated in Hoot Gibson's new picture, "Wild Horses." Hoot, you will find, proves himself just as finished and thrilling a horseman as ever. "Sketcher Bill," who also took part in the rodeo, is certain to draw again numerous laughs with his comedy antics.

People With "Nerve."

The average picturegoer is content with worrying his or her favourite with nothing worse than a written request for an autograph or a photograph. This, after all, is what all artists expect, and the requests are, whenever possible, granted. But there is in Hollywood a small percentage of individuals who are, to say the least, somewhat brazen in their attitude towards film celebrities.

"These people," remarked one star recently, "apparently imagine that the few pence or shillings they spend at the cinema gives them sort of right on the personal attentions of each and every star. They don't worry about a star's natural desire for privacy."

There are several stories told in the film city to illustrate this. There is one, for example, relating to Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford.

"We didn't mind," said Doug., "when people peeped through the front gates of Pickfair, or even came in and took pictures of the house. But when we woke up one Sunday morning and

(Continued on page 28.)

"Doc" Droop had stood in many market places—without a licence—selling quack medicines, when a little waif named Rosie insisted upon being adopted. Years afterwards, when a lover for Rosie had appeared on the scene, Doc was charged with theft and thrust into jail, while Rosie was bundled into a home. But Doc was resourceful, and in the end everything became rosy—for Rosie.

"Everything's Rosie!"



Starring
ROBERT WOOLSEY
and **ANITA LOUISE.**

Warned Off!

THE year was 1916, the month was May, and it was carnival week in the little town of Burlington. On a piece of waste ground less than a mile from the heart of Main Street, a fair had sprung up, mushroom fashion, in a single night, complete with roundabouts, swings, coconut shies, and all manner of side shows. And the air was filled with the sound of many voices, the whirring of machinery, the blare of a massive steam organ.

On the tail of a gaudily painted van Dr. Aloysius Smith was holding up a bottle and holding forth concerning the virtues of its contents to a little group of townspeople and farmhands.

"Believe me my friends, after one bottle of this tonic all kinds of aches and pains disappear. It builds the muscles, tones the system, stimulates the appetite."

He glared down at two yokels who were devouring sandwiches out of a paper bag with a snacking of lips which irritated, and he went on, with heavy scorn:

"Remember that, my friends—it stimulates the appetite."

Dr. Aloysius Smith had stood in market-places and on fair grounds for several years, lauding his tonic and endeavouring to sell it, but his manner was bullying rather than persuasive; he looked anything but a doctor, and his patter was dull.

"Let's go over and listen to the other fellow," suggested one of the yokels in a loud voice. "He's a lot funnier than this one."

"Sure, Tom—come on!" was the ready response from a full mouth, and the

two sauntered off to the portable stand of Dr. J. Dockweiler Droop, just beyond a tiny platform on which an alleged Hawaiian girl was dancing an alleged native dance.

Dr. Aloysius Smith watched them depart, saw most of his other listeners follow them, and scowled across at his tall, red-headed rival, who was dressed conspicuously in a frock-coat suit, with check trousers and a grey top hat, and who beamed at his growing audience through a pair of tortoise-shell-rimmed spectacles.

Another man approached the van of Dr. Aloysius Smith—a short and heavily-built individual, sombrely dressed in black.

"Here you are, brother," said the doctor, competing with the steam organ to make himself heard, and offering the bottle he held in his hand. "Just a dollar for a bottle of eternal health!"

The man in black looked up from beneath bushy brows and with a single movement of his right hand flipped back the lapel of his coat, displaying beneath it a little shield in German silver.

"Let me see your licence!" he barked.

Dr. Aloysius Smith put the bottle down in a case amongst other bottles and groped in his pockets.

"Why, certainly, sheriff," he said, producing a sheet of blue paper and reaching down with it over the side of the van. "I'm a strict observer of the law."

The sheriff examined the licence, nodded, and handed it back.

"Okay," he said gruffly, and was turning away when the doctor called him back.

"I want to tell you something,

sheriff," said he confidentially. "Here am I trying to make an honest living, and you let a guy like that one over there, that ain't even connected with the carnival, peddle a lot o' phoney bologna that he calls medicine."

"What do you mean?" demanded the sheriff.

"I mean that ant-eater," cried Dr. Aloysius Smith indignantly, and he pointed in the direction of Dr. J. Dockweiler Droop, who by this time was almost completely surrounded by an amused crowd.

"He never buys a licence—he just follows us around, grabbing all the gravy, selling something he calls a health builder that should be used for rat poison!"

"Is that so?" said the sheriff, tugging at a particularly scrubby moustache. "Well, I'll just anble over and have a look at him. Maybe we can do something about it."

Dr. J. Dockweiler Droop carried his wares in a suitcase, and the suitcase was opened out on a little folding trestle one could carry under the arm without inconvenience. The sheriff drew near without ostentation.

"It's Dreko, folks—Dreko," announced the doctor, waving a cigar. "Don't forget the name, folks, don't forget the name!" He took a puff at the cigar and beckoned. "Gather in a little closer, folks," he urged. "You mustn't block the sidewalk."

"Haw, haw!" laughed a man derisively.

"What a train announcer you'd make, sir," observed the doctor pleasantly. "Folks, Dreko, the wonder tonic, has saved many people

from a feeble old age, and an early marriage. Why, I've been taking it for years, and I'm growing younger every day! As a matter of fact, if I take it much longer, I wouldn't be surprised to see my name in the birth notices."

There was a general laugh. Dr. J. Dockweiler Droop certainly had a sense of humour, and he knew how to put over his little jokes.

"Haw, haw!" jeered the nuisance again. But the "Doc," as he called himself, was equal to the occasion. Addressing a fair and fat woman in the friendliest possible manner, he said:

"Lady, you can stay, but the jackass has got to go."

The "jackass" went, considerably crushed.

"Now, friends," said the Doc confidentially, "I want to advise you. This is the greatest remedy in the world for sore throats and for hoarseness." His voice became husky and faded almost to a painful whisper. "Folks, it has no equal for hoarseness. Folks, if you ever—" His voice seemed to desert him completely. "Folks—" he croaked with an effort, then drew the cork of the bottle he was displaying and gulped down some of its crimson contents.

His eyes widened delightedly, and he lifted up his voice once more, clear, musical, triumphant.

"It cures hoarseness, folks," he declared, "just like that! It cures it! It also restores personality and cures nerves. Why, friends, my own wife was so nervous that she would scream if I kissed her. Yes, and two years ago, folks, it was an effort for me to stagger two feet. Now, thanks to Dreko, you'd be surprised how I can walk!"

The crowd laughed, but the laugh died away as the sheriff stepped forward and displayed his shield to the red-headed vendor of medicine.

"Let's see you take a walk—a long one!"

Doc stared at the shield, made a wry face, re-corked the bottle and laid it amongst the other bottles in the suitcase.

"Do I understand, sir," he said sadly, "that you are addressing me? Addressing one of the Dockweiler Droops of Virginia—to say nothing of Europe and all points East?"

"I'll give you," said the sheriff grimly, "ten minutes to get out of this town."

The Doc took a puff at his cigar, closed the suitcase, gave his top hat a pat, and said in pained surprise:

"You'll give me ten minutes to get out of town? Why, sir, I've sold my medicine in some of the finest burghs in this world, and never has a sheriff given me less than twenty minutes to get out of town!"

There were chuckles from the crowd, but the sheriff said significantly:

"So there have been other sheriffs in your life, eh? I smell a rat!"

"Don't get personal, sheriff, don't get personal," urged Doc; and, folding the little trestle and tucking it under his left arm, he picked up the suitcase and walked briskly from the fair ground.

A Persistent Waif.

ON his way out of the town, Doc passed through several rather mean streets. On the corner of one there stood a drinking saloon of a low type, and as he approached it he heard a child crying and a woman scolding. He quickened his pace, turned the corner, and came upon a

slatternly creature, railing at a little blue-eyed girl.

"You little brat, you!" cried the hag. "Shut up! Will you shut up. You've never done anything else but squall! I'd like to knock the head off you!"

Doc stared at the woman, then looked down at the ragged little mite. Her face and hands were dirty, her clothes were ragged, but she was pretty in spite of her dirt, and she was hugging a dilapidated doll.

"Hi, hi, hi!" reproved Doc. "Lay off that Simon Legree stuff!"

"Who are you?" snapped the woman.

"Ah!" said Doc mysteriously. "You'd be surprised if you knew! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, abusing your little daughter like that."

"She ain't my kid," retorted the woman. "I didn't ask nobody to leave her in my front yard!"

"You don't mean to tell me you've got a front yard?"

He went down on his knees before the child, who ceased her crying to regard him with round eyes.

"What's your name, my good woman?" he inquired gently.

"My name's Rosie," was the reply.

"Rosie? Gosh, what a pretty name! Rosie!"

"I call her Rosie," put in the woman, "because I found her under a rose bush."

"You ought to be tickled to death you weren't found under a eucalyptus," said Doc to the girl, with a grin, and addressed the woman again. "Who does she belong to?"

"I don't know," replied the slattern ungraciously. "I found her one morning about a year ago—naked and squallin', and she's been squallin' ever since. I've tried to give her to somebody about a dozen times, but no such luck. S'pose you take her?"

"Me?" exclaimed Doc, rising to his feet and dusting his knees. "Oh, no, thanks! No, not me—not me!"

He dived a hand into a pocket and brought out a note.

"Here's ten dollars," he said. "Suppose you feed her up—clean her up—dress her up—but don't beat her up! Listen, if I hear of your abusing her again, I'll have the law on you."

But the woman did not hear. She had snatched at the note and was looking at it with disgust.

"Why, this is only a dollar!" she complained.

Doc patted the child's golden-brown head and picked up his suitcase.

"You're quite right," he nodded, "but surely my credit's good for nine dollars."

He tipped his hat and walked slowly on; but the woman immediately dived into the saloon, and the little girl followed him, hugging the doll.

Presently a grimy little hand plucked at one of the tails of his grey frock-coat, and he stopped short and looked down at the solemn-faced mite.

"Don't follow me," he said in some alarm. "I'm not your mamma."

He moved on again, but Rosie followed, still clinging to his coat-tail. All the way down the street she followed him and round another corner, and there he stopped again, sat down on the kerb, and motioned to her to sit beside him.

"Now, look here, my good woman," he said whimsically, "you can't get away with a thing like this on me. I know your type—you gold digger!" And he patted her affectionately on the shoulder.

Immediately she flung her little arms round his neck and kissed him.

"Uh-huh!" growled Doc. "So that's your little game, is it? Think you'll sue me for breach of promise and make me pay, eh? But you've got no letters, and I defy you! Here, take this!" He kissed her. "And this!" He kissed her again. "And remember, you've got nothing on me whatsoever, and if you continue to follow me, I'll box your little ears!"

She sat there clutching the doll, her elbow on her knee, her chin in her hand. Not more than three years old, Doc decided, but the sadness in her eyes recorded months of unhappiness. Doc, biting on his cigar, rested his own chin in his hand and considered the problem of what to do with the waif.

"I'm going away," he said finally. "Right away—and right now! You're not to follow me, young woman. Understand?"

Rosie nodded gravely, and kissed him again. He rose, took up his suitcase, and stepped slowly across the roadway. But Rosie caught up with him before he reached the opposite pavement, and once more she held on to a tail of his coat.

"You heard what I said—I shall spank you," he said warningly, but without looking down.

"I don't mind if you do spank me," said Rosie.

Doc was not out of Burlington within ten minutes of leaving the fair-ground, but in less than half an hour he had left the little town behind and was walking the dusty high road that led to the larger town of Champlain. And Rosie walked beside him, holding on to his coat-tail.

But after darkness had fallen he carried her, as well as the suitcase.

After Fifteen Years.

FIFTEEN years later, in the present year of grace and general unrest, Doc and Rosie were strolling about a fair ground in the Pennsylvania town of Arcadia. They had arrived overnight in a horse-drawn covered van which was their home.

It was early in the morning and the fair was not yet ready for the general public. Booths were being erected; side-shows of all sorts were being arranged for opening time, and a steam-organ was wheezily grinding out the appropriate tune of "Sweet Rosie O'Grady."

Pegs were being hammered into the ground to support the tents; a vendor of balloons was inflating his wares with the aid of a cycle pump, and Rosie, now a beautiful girl of eighteen or thereabouts, was holding on to a tail of Doc's smartly-cut grey morning coat.

In the intervening years business had flourished with Dr. J. Dockweiler Droop. He had added to his enterprises, and recently he had abandoned the selling of tonics and other nostrums to embrace the more profitable occupation of telling fortunes, disguised as an Indian seer. Through all the years Rosie had been his constant companion, his mascot—and the only living creature in the world upon whom to lavish his affection.

He had fed her, washed her, clothed her, educated her, till she had grown old enough to attend to her own personal affairs. He had devoted every spare cent to her upbringing, and she had grown into a young woman of whom secretly he was very proud.

"Now, look here, Rosie, old woman," he said in that whimsical way of his as they strolled together. "You can't

get away with anything on me. Tell me, did you clean your teeth this morning?"

She showed him two rows of perfect teeth, dazzlingly white.

"Back ones, too?"

She opened her mouth still wider.

"Good!" said he, having inspected the molars.

"Did you clean yours?" demanded Rosie, who had reached the age when she considered it her duty to look after her benefactor.

"Why, the very idea!" he growled.

"Certainly I cleaned my teeth!"

"Let me see!"

He blinked at her through his horn-rimmed glasses and groped in his pocket for a eigar.

"You mind your own business, will you?" he said sharply. "And let me look at those ears."

She presented her little ears for his inspection.

"Okay?" she inquired archly.

"They ought to be. I've been working on them for about fifteen years!"

"Tell me, Doc," said Rosie seriously,

"is your headache all gone?"

"Yep—all gone. You're a great little nurse, Rosie. By the way, what was that medicine you gave me last night, anyway?"

They had reached their van, which was really a glorified caravan. It was standing beside a newly-erected tent, while Evelyn, the somewhat scraggy brown mare which had drawn it all the way from Clymer to its present resting-place, was nibbling the turf on the other side of the tent.

"I don't know," confessed Rosie. "I found it in the bottom of that old trunk you've been carrying round. According to the label it's called Dreko."

"Dreko?" exclaimed Doc, wincing and making a wry face. "You gave me Dreko? What are you trying to do—poison me?"

Rosie climbed up to the tail of the van, which was hanging horizontally on its chains, and thrusting a hand through the narrow dooway, produced an ancient and battered doll.

"I found this at the bottom of that old trunk, too," she said.

"Where did it come from?"

Doc forgot all about the Dreko he had been induced to swallow.

"Don't you remember?" he said, sitting on the tail of the van and looking up at her graceful figure. "Gosh, that's funny! You mean to say you don't remember?"

"No."

He took the doll from her and regarded it critically.

"Rosie," he said solemnly, "you were holding this close to your heart, the day I found you."

"And you've been holding me close to yours ever since—haven't you, doc?" she whispered.

He smiled slowly and handed her back the doll.

"You put that right back where you found it," he directed. "Put it right back where you found it! And it's

time for you to practice. Get that violin out!"

"I don't want to practise," she pouted.

"Get that violin out and start to work!"

She vanished into the van, and he threw away the stub of his cigar and produced a new one, which he was lighting when she reappeared, carrying a violin and a bow.

"Fiddle while aroma burns," he jested, and puffed luxuriously while she played execrably on the instrument.

He listened and puffed for several minutes, suffering anguish.

"Rosie," he said, waving her to silence, "if you keep that up I'll have you on the concert platform—in about a hundred-and-eight years!"

She laughed merrily, played a few more notes, then stopped to inquire:

"Why did you make me learn to play the violin?"

"I didn't," he replied. "I haven't! You don't! But I couldn't afford a piano!"

She looked after him as he slid from the tail of the van and made his way over to the brown mare, to which he raised his hat gravely and said:

"Morning, Evelyn—morning! Did you sleep okay?"

Evelyn left off munching grass to rub her nose against a long, lean face.

"That's fine!" declared Doc. "You know, I've got to look out for you, old lass. Lately you've only been doing twelve miles on a gallon of oats!"

Within sight of the van—and of Evelyn—Dr. Aloysius Smith was holding up a bottle and practising his patter with only a coconut-shy man, who had known him for years, as his audience.

"Remember that, my friends. It stimulates the appetite!"

"What's the matter?" inquired the coconut-shy man. "You seem dead off form to me."

"Guess I've lost my punch," admitted Aloysius gloomily. "I can't even hold 'em for five minutes any more!"

"Wait till Doc Droop gets set up down there! He'll show 'em how it's done!"

"He's come off my line o' business long ago, and I got no grouch on him now," declared Aloysius confidentially,

"but that guy is a mystery to me. He never pays for a licence, always gets the money, and never has a cent."

"Spends it all on that kid!"

Aloysius Smith nodded.

"You know, that's the one decent thing about that drifter," he remarked, almost reverently. "He's been father, mother, and everything else to that girl."

"I'll say he ain't a bad guy," testified the coconut-shy man, and he glanced with warm sympathy at Doc, who had shed his coat, and was preparing his show for opening time, talking the while to Rosie, who had arrayed herself in a gipsy costume of gay colours, and was swinging her shapely legs from the tail of the van.

"Tell me more about your folks, Doc," she said eagerly. "It's so interesting."

"Well," responded Doc, hanging on the side of the van a huge card showing the signs of the Zodiac, "as you know, my uncle—he's the King of Spain."

"Yesterday," protested Rosie, "you told me he was the King of Siam!"

"That's another uncle," explained Doc glibly. "The big, tall, dark one."

"Doc," said Rosie gravely, "why don't you go to Europe and be a prince or something?"

Doc, busy with the ropes of the tent he had erected, made a face as though the idea did not appeal.

"Well, I don't know," he observed. "As I said to my brother Benedictine—he's a prince, honey, he's a prince—I said: 'Look here, Ben, there's no sense both of us hanging around the palace. One of us has got to go out and get a job.' So we went and talked it over with my cousin. He's a count."

"Count what?" inquired Rosie curiously.

"Well, I don't know that he can count anything, but he suggested that we flip a coin. I won, but I went."



Without the slightest ceremony, Doc plunged his hand into a pocket of the white waistcoat and fished out a cheap watch.

"Doc, if you were to go back and be a king, what would that make me?"

He dropped a rope to go straight over to her, and he took one of her little hands in his.

"Listen, honey," he said, with unwonted seriousness, "regardless of what I am, you're a queen—my little queen. Here, there, or anywhere!"

He became suddenly business-like. "Haven't sold any medicine at any fairs for quite a while," he said. "How does this town look to you for a little tonic?"

Rosie glanced up at a sign on the van beside the narrow door:

"Criminologists and the Police
Continually Want Me."

"The clerk at the hotel," she said. "I told me that there were three medicine men in gaol already."

"What about this?" suggested Doc, producing from a box a sign:

"Dr. Droops, Oculist."

"Have to have a licence—and that costs five dollars."

"That's out!" He tossed the sign back in the box. "Hair straightener?" he inquired.

"Not enough coloured people in town."

He held up another card, inscribed:

"Mind Reading. Fortunes Told.
Your Problems Solved."

"Okay," nodded Rosie. "Tell their fortunes. That's all right."

"Fortunes it shall be, child. There's millions in it—millions!"

Always an optimist, Dr. J. Dockweiler droop! The card was hung in a prominent position, and Doc became busy preparing for the public, while Rosie vanished into the van.

A Good Beginning.

THAT morning the sheriff of Arcadia, a slightly bald and very bulky man, called at a house on the outskirts of the town, almost large enough to be described as a mansion.

His object was to discuss various matters pertaining to law and order with Mr. James William Lowe, a councillor and a man of considerable standing in the community. But Mrs. Lowe, a woman of self-importance, diverted the conversation the moment she entered the drawing-room.

"Sheriff Hopkins," she said impressively, "I promised the members of our Social Improvement League that this carnival would operate only under our supervision. I insist that you keep the carnival in order. There must be no gambling or fakers permitted on the grounds."

"Very good, Mrs. Lowe," bowed the sheriff.

"They must be driven from the town, these fakers and quacks."

"Oh, come now, mother," protested Mr. Lowe mildly. "we mustn't be too hard on them."

"I'll handle this in my own way, father," insisted his wife. "We must protect our young folks."

Mr. Lowe looked at the sheriff, and the sheriff looked at Mr. Lowe. The sheriff shrugged his broad shoulders.

On a chesterfield near the grand piano a black-haired girl who was obviously aware that she was good-looking was powdering her little nose, and beside her lounged the son of the house, a tall young man with an unaffected manner, intelligent brown eyes, and a light-hearted nature.

The girl was Madeline van Dern, and it was her ambition to marry Billy Lowe. She looked across at his mother, and she said impishly:

October 10th, 1931.

"Especially if the term 'young folks' happens to include Billy Lowe, the rising young lawyer."

"Thank you," responded Billy, with a mock bow, "but I assure you that I am quite capable of taking care of myself."

"That will do, Billy," said his mother austerely, and turned to the sheriff again. "We rely on you," she told him, "to rid the carnival of its undesirable elements."

The sheriff nodded and picked up his hat. Mr. Lowe and his wife accompanied the official to the front door, while Billy, leaning down over Madeline, said laughingly:

"Let's run down and see this carnival, shall we, before mother takes all the fun out of it?"

"Carnivals," scoffed Madeline, "are for children. I'm not in the least interested."

"Okay. Then I'll drop you off at your house on my way there."

"Thanks, but I'll stay here. I want to talk to your mother."

"I'm off, then," he informed her. "Bye!" And he disappeared to get out his two-seater, in which he made for the fair-ground.

By this time Doc, from the end of his van, was addressing a crowd that increased in size every minute, while Rosie, in her gipsy costume, stood beside him.

"Now, folks," boomed Doc, "we're just starting—just commencing. Come up a little closer, we mustn't block the sidewalk."

The crowd squeezed forward.

"That's fine," approved Doc. "And now, ladies and gentlemen, behold the eighth and ninth wonders of the world! The professor sees the past and the future, identifies articles, calls your full name, solves your troubles, also repairs motor-cycles. Ha, ha! Pardon me, that was last week!"

"And now, folks, for a demonstration you will never forget. The young lady will blindfold herself, and I will then select from among you articles at random, and with the aid of mental telepathy and thought-waves I will transfer the information to the blindfolded mademoiselle. Are you ready?"

He handed Rosie a black handkerchief which she tied round her head, covering her eyes, while he stepped down amongst the interested onlookers.

Rosie announced that she was ready, and he reached out a hand and touched a gold pin projecting from a hideous tie worn by a sniggering man badly in need of a shave.

"I have my hand on an article here, mademoiselle," he announced. "What is it? Don't let it stick you."

"It's a pin," said Rosie.

"A pin," said Doc. "But I haven't collared it."

"It's a tie-pin," said Rosie.

"Right!" cried Doc. "The young lady is right. She's always right!"

Doc was, as usual, smoking a cigar. He sniffed the air, in which he detected an offensive aroma. An ugly little man, with a white waistcoat and a remarkably seraggy neck, was smoking a perfectly dreadful cigar in his immediate vicinity. Without the slightest ceremony Doc plunged his hand into a pocket of the white waistcoat and fished out a cheap watch.

"Another article, mademoiselle," he said loudly, "and I ask you to name it."

Rosie hesitated, raised her hands.

"Watch out, and you can't go wrong!"

"It's a watch," decided Rosie.

"Right! The young lady is right! She's always right!"

Puffing at his cigar, he restored the watch and moved away to an enormous man from whose waistcoat pocket he removed a pencil. Rosie, with his artful aid, decided that it was a fountain-pen, whereat Doc winced.

"Come, come," he exclaimed impatiently, "get this right. Do you have to be led?"

"It's a pencil."

There came a burst of applause, and Doc proceeded from one onlooker to another, selecting in turn some candy from a small girl and an umbrella from a fat woman.

"And now, folks," he said, after satisfactory answers had been given to his leading questions by his blindfolded accomplice, "that's just a slight idea of what you can expect on the inside. I shall now step into the big tent and prepare myself for the strenuous ordeal that lies before me."

He disappeared into the newly-erected tent to invest himself in the garments of an Indian seer, complete with turban and a pair of spectacles set in square frames, while Rosie removed the handkerchief from her eyes and endeavoured to coax people to have their fortunes told.

It was not long before she escorted into the tent a credulous-looking person who had former written all over his clothes, and who carried in his hand a low-crowned bowler-hat.

"Professor," said Rosie softly, "here's a gentleman who wants to have his hand read."

Doc looked at the man—and looked into the hat. On its band had been written in ink: "Sam Hall, Rockford."

"Come right in and take a seat," welcomed Doc. "How are things in Rockford?"

Sam Hall gaped, and seemed half-inclined to run away, but Rosie propelled him to a chair facing a small portable table, and Doc, in his robes, sat down on the other side of it. An upturned metal urn was on the table, and on the urn was a crystal. Rosie disappeared to round up other clients.

"That's right, sit down, Mr. Hall," said Doc pleasantly. "Or may I call you Sam?"

"Well I'll be darned!" gasped Sam Hall. "I was never in this town up to about an hour ago, and here you know my name and where I come from."

"A mere bagatelle," declared Doc, airily waving his cigar. "And what is it that's troubling you, Sam?"

It appeared that the farmer was in love with two women, one not very good-looking, but the richest woman in Rockford, the other very poor but very beautiful, and the question was, which should he marry.

"Why, you marry the good-looking girl that is very poor, of course," Doc told him promptly, and pushed across to him a pencil and a notepad.

"What do you want me to write?" inquired Sam Hall.

"The name and address of the other girl. That will be two dollars, please."

The Sheriff Intrudes.

THE client, patient, or customer who followed Sam Hall was a particularly harassed-looking man, who blinked at the charts on the canvas walls of the tent, blinked at Doc, and nervously announced that his name was Oberdorf—Adolf Oberdorf.

To the noise of a hurdy-gurdy which an Italian had begun to grind outside the tent, Doc said sympathetically:

"You're having troubles, Mr. Oberdorf?"

He gazed intently into the crystal.

"Don't tell me, Mr. Oberdorf—don't tell me," he said. "I seem to see a lot of—a lot of—"

"Jewellery?" inquired the victim hopefully.

"That's it! You're in the jewellery business, and business is bad. But it won't be for long. It's bound to pick up. You know, there may be a man in to see you before the day is over. He—he'll have a proposition for you, perhaps, and you mustn't turn it down. You must *not* turn it down."

He stared into the crystal. The light in the tent was feeble; the robes and the turban and the square-rimmed glasses almost completely disguised Doc, who was a quick thinker. The conversation that followed fascinated middle-aged Adolf Oberdorf, and completely convinced him of Doc's uncanny power of foretelling the future. Incidentally, it provided the artful seer with quite a lot of useful information—for which he charged.

Outside the tent, Rosie was still endeavouring to attract custom, but the crowd had drifted away. There had been rain overnight, and there were puddles in the rough roadway beside which the van and the tent were pitched. A two-seater car came careering into the fair-ground, swerved to avoid the hurdy-gurdy man, and splashed into a puddle.

Up from the wheels splashed a quantity of muddy water, and Rosie, who had just picked up her violin to attract customers with a tune, received most of it over her person. Her pretty face was spattered with mud, the short sleeves of the white blouse beneath her zouave were smothered, and her bare arms received most of the residue.

"Oh!" she cried in dismay.

The two-seater stopped abruptly with a grinding of brakes, and a tall young man sprang down from it and stood before her in concern.

"I'm awfully sorry," he apologised, producing a large white handkerchief.

"Is that all you've got to do?" inquired Rosie angrily. "Just go around splashing muddy water all over everybody!"

"Oh, I don't go around splashing mud on everybody," he said penitently. "I just splashed on you."

"Oh! So you saved all your mud for me, did you?"

"Yes—no. Oh, I didn't mean that! Won't you please let me help you? I'm dreadfully sorry."

He proceeded to wipe the mud from her face while she stood looking up at him. Billy Lowe, as already recorded, was a tall young man, with intelligent brown eyes. He was rather handsome into the bargain, and Rosie decided that she liked his humorous face and his friendly smile.

"I never realised," he said, with frank admiration as he plied the handkerchief, "that mud could be so becoming to a girl."

"What?" exclaimed Rosie.

"That is, I—I realise how pretty you would be without the mud. That is, I mean—well, you—you're pretty. That's what I mean."

No girl is deaf to a compliment honestly bestowed. Rosie smiled and seated herself on the tail of the van, and Billy persisted with the cleansing operations till her face was free from mud and his handkerchief was fit only for the washtub.

"There you are!" said he at last.

"Do you know I could sue you for a new dress?" inquired Rosie, but without resentment.

"Great!" cried Billy. "I'll be your attorney! I'm studying to be a lawyer, you know. What a case! Miss—er—Droop versus Mud."

"What?" said Rosie, to whom this legal terminology was almost double-dutch.

"There's an awful lot of mud in our town, isn't there?"

"Well," she murmured, considering the point, "yes, there is. But we've been in muddier towns before—and their mud wasn't nearly as nice as the mud here."

"And you do forgive me?" he asked hopefully.

"I don't know," she told him doubtfully. "I'll have to ask the professor. He sees and knows all."

Billy seemed surprised.

"And where is this marvel of a man?" he inquired. "In there?" And he pointed to the tent.

She nodded.

"He's busy at present," she said "so we mustn't trouble him."

They did not trouble Doc. Instead, they sat together on the tail-board of the van, and, much to the neglect of business, they talked—as young people always will talk.

But business was progressing quite satisfactorily inside the tent despite Rosie's inattention thereto. Adolf Oberdorf departed, but a singularly fat woman in a patterned muslin frock made her way into the tent immediately that perturbed jeweller emerged from it. The bills outside had lured her into the seer's dim presence.

"Is this the place where you have your fortune told?" she inquired bashfully.

Doc assured her that it was, and, giggling nervously, she sat down in the chair he offered her.

"Oh, professor," she simpered, "I—I'm all hot and bothered!"

"You may be hot," said he calmly, "but you'll never be bothered. What's your name, my good woman? What's your name?"

"Olive," she told him.

"Olive, eh? Give me your palm, Olive! Give me your palm."

He took her hand in his, and appeared to examine it thoughtfully.

"'Tis a beautiful hand," he purred. "Beautiful! And what do you call that thing there?"

"It's a wart."

"Oh! So that's a wart, eh?"

"Yes, professor. And is it true that you can get rid of a wart by burying a cat?"

"Certainly—if the wart's on the out. How old are you, my good woman?"

"I have just passed my twentieth birthday."

Doc bit hard on his cigar and rolled it from one end of his mouth to the other. The woman was obviously forty, at least.

"You must have passed it coming

"Well, professor," said the fat woman with a self-conscious snigger, "I'm just seventeen!"



back," he remarked calmly. "I see here that you want to get married."

"Professor, you're uncanny! Am I going to be married and live in a big house?"

"You'll need one! I shall have to gaze in the crystal for that. Pardon me!"

He stared into the crystal, still holding her plump hand in his.

"Ah!" he said dreamily. "Yes. Ah! 'Tis evening time. Your husband comes home from a hard day's work. It's a big house, but he's a little husband. He reaches the gate. He whistles for the dog—and you come running out! Ah, the crystal clouds! I can tell you no more without knowing your exact age within thirty or forty years."

"Well, professor," said the fat woman, with a self-conscious snigger, "I'm just seventeen."

"In that case," observed Doc, "I'm going to be born next Friday!"

He looked at the crystal again.

"I see a little church," he declared. "The altar! I hear the wedding bells. I see—"

"And shall I be happy?"

"To answer that question," said Doc, with a grimace, "I shall have to go into a double trance, and I only do that once a week on account of the strain on my nerves. The strain will amount to exactly two dollars and eighty-five cents."

"Oh, but that's very reasonable," cried the woman delightedly. "I should so love to see you in a double trance!"

"I'm a bear in a double trance," declared Doc, and he closed his eyes and swayed from side to side and backwards and forwards in his chair, uttering strange sounds.

The sounds became stranger and stranger, the swaying became almost violent, and the fat woman shrank back in alarm.

"Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh!" groaned Doc—and was totally unaware of the fact that the flap of the tent had been raised, and Sheriff Hopkins had stepped from the sunshine into the gloom. "I see it all—I see it all! The stars above—the stars above tell me that you're going to take a long trip."

The woman had risen to her feet. The sheriff waved her away with an arm, and she tottered from the tent. Doc, his eyes still closed, continued.

"Yes," he chanted, "a long trip. The stars tell me so."

"What does *this* star tell you?" rasped the sheriff, and Doc opened his eyes, to find himself staring at a little star of german silver beneath the lapel of the sheriff's coat. He gulped and rose.

"That star," said he dolefully, "tells me that I'm going to take a long trip. I am now packing, sheriff—now packing."

"Have you got a licence?" demanded the sheriff, tugging at his ginger moustache.

"Licence?" echoed Doc. "What kind of a licence?"

"You must have a licence to tell fortunes in this town."

"How am I supposed to know that?" complained Doc. "I'm no mind reader."

The sheriff smiled grimly.

"Come on," he said. "I'll give you twenty minutes to get out of this town."

Doc shed his robe, took off his turban and his square-rimmed spectacles, and depositing the crystal on the ground, closed the folding table. The sheriff jerked his thumb in the direction of the tent-flap, and together they stepped out into the sunshine.

Doc blinked. Rosie was sitting on the tail-flap of the van beside an attractive

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and clean-shaven young man, and both were swinging their legs.

"Don't forget," said Billy, "I'll see you to-night. Remember—that's an appointment!"

"And remember you promised to have your fortune told," Rosie reminded him.

"Okay," said Billy joyously, and went and clambered into his two-seater.

The sheriff, who had failed to note these things, turned officiously to Doc, who had stopped short.

"Understand," he said brusquely, "I give you ten minutes to leave this town. If you're here at the end of that time, it's the gaol-house for you!"

Evelyn, the brown mare, lifted up her head and neighed complainingly, while the sheriff stalked off to seek for other frauds and fakers. Rosie came running over to Doc, just as he was about to coax Evelyn between the shafts of the van.

"What ever's the matter now?" she cried.

"There are two people I hate in this world," responded Doc, "and both of them are sheriffs!"

"Are we leaving town?" she asked quickly.

"In ten minutes," he nodded. "I don't know what I'm going to do with that other eight."

Much to his astonishment she reached her hands up to his shoulders and, clinging to them, exclaimed:

"I wish we could have stayed a little longer. I get so tired of moving around from pillar to post, and never knowing where we're going to be next."

It was the very first time she had ever complained against their fate, and he, being an observant person, immediately linked her protest with the astonishing spectacle he had witnessed on leaving the tent which he must now strike with the utmost dispatch.

"But, honey," he reproved, "that's our life—always on the go. New faces, new places—excitement—adventure. Why, it's in our blood! Why, honey, the world is our home."

She looked out of the fair-ground into the street it adjoined, and he followed her gaze with his eyes. She was looking at the shops and houses with a wistful air.

"Home!" she whispered. "Gee, what I'd give for a home!"

She sighed, let go of him, and looked up into his face.

"It's selfish of me, I suppose," she sighed.

"Selfish?" he echoed. "You selfish? Say, how do you get that way, honey?" And his arms embraced her, held her close.

"Gee, Doc," she remarked, mainly to the spotted bow against which her head was nestling, "you've got a great gift of the gab—you can sell anything! Why don't you settle down in some little town?"

"What little town?" he inquired.

"This little town."

A New Line of Action.

THE tent was dismantled in less than five minutes, the canvas was stowed in the van, the poles were tied to the roof. With the paraphernalia of his calling packed away in trunks, Doc and Rosie sat on the trunks, side by side. The sheriff had disappeared.

Doc, gazing thoughtfully at the shops beyond the fair-ground, said abruptly:

"Everything's rosy—we'll stay."

Evelyn was harnessed between the shafts of the van, the trunks and cases were bundled on board, and the pair left the fair-ground with their posses-

sions. But instead of driving out of Arcadia, as the sheriff had ordered, they proceeded to the Union Hotel, where an ostler attended to the van and a porter attended to the luggage.

Ten minutes later Doc and Rosie walked side by side along Main Street, and paused before the premises of Adolf Oberdorf, jeweller.

"We are now in the jewellery business," proclaimed Doc. "You know, it's funny, Rosie, but I told this old man's fortune a while ago. He's having trouble with his affairs. I told him he might expect me, but I was thinking I'd have to pawn this ring again."

He indicated a signet-ring on the little finger of his left hand, a ring which had often proved a friend in need during their wanderings. "But now," he went on, "I've got a different idea."

"You don't know a thing about the jewellery business," said Rosie.

"Don't I? Honey, there's millions in it—millions! Wait for me, I'll be back in a minute."

He plunged into the shop. There were no customers in it, but Oberdorf himself was standing behind the counter, and his face brightened considerably. Here, possibly, was the visitor the fortune-teller had predicted!

Doc talked, and Oberdorf listened not merely readily, but almost greedily. The jeweller was persuaded that what his store needed was young blood, a live wire, someone to stimulate business—in other words, Doc! And in the end Doc's proffered services were accepted. He examined the books; he examined the show-cases and their contents.

"We'll have a sale," he decided. "That's it—we'll have an auction sale."

"Do you know anything about auctions?" inquired Oberdorf dubiously.

"Do I know anything about auctions!" exclaimed Doc. "Why, my dear man, do you know that my uncle, the King of Spain, would never think of buying a crown unless I passed it! Jewellery, auctions—oh, just wait and see what I can do for you!"

It was arranged that the auction should take place the next day, and Doc swept Rosie back to the hotel and went off to fix up details such as the printing of bills and the posting thereof.

Incidentally he acquired the services of four men, through a labour bureau, who were told to meet him at Oberdorf's establishment at seven o'clock that evening.

Rosie, elated at the prospect of staying indefinitely in Arcadia, kept her appointment with Billy Lowe, while her guardian interviewed the men. He had acquired an auctioneer's hammer in the town, and with this instrument he waved the four men into seats.

They were not a prepossessing quartet, but he decided that they would do for his purpose. He took down their names—Quinn, Young, Shill, and Willis.

"Now, boys," he said, "I think we ought to have a little rehearsal of what we're going to do to-morrow. At the present moment bills are being stuck all over the town; to-morrow afternoon there is going to be an auction sale on these premises. Hence the bills, and hence your presence."

"What's an auction?" inquired Young, eyeing a large safe which bore the jeweller's name.

Doc laughed.

"I can see right now that I'm going to have a lot of trouble with you," he remarked. "An auction is a sale at which the most important thing is to keep raising the price by bidding. Raising the price will be your job."

What about your pay? How much do you expect?"

"Two dollars," said Young promptly. "Three dollars," said Shill.

Down came the hammer with a bang on the counter.

"Sold for three dollars!" boomed Doc. "And now you have the whole principle of an auction sale. But there's one thing you've got to remember." He waved his inevitable cigar. "When I hold this in my right hand, that means bid, but when I hold it in my left hand that means stop bidding."

"Which is your right hand?" asked Quinn.

Doc gazed at him disgustedly, and explained.

"Take a good look at each other," he pursued, "so you'll know one another to-morrow, because if anyone comes in who's a stranger to you, and starts to bid—why, you keep your mouths shut, because that will be somebody with cash."

There was further discussion, after which the four rose to go. But on his way to the shop door Quinn furtively tried the dial of the big safe, and out on the pavement he said in a low voice to Willis:

"It's a cinch. I could open it with a tin-opener!"

"Better wait till they get the dough in from the auction," suggested Willis.

Shill and Young were already beyond earshot. In spite of their appearance they were comparatively honest men.

"Don't want them around, either," said Quinn, with a jerk of his thumb in the direction of the two receding figures. "Guess the auction won't be over till after the banks are shut, so we'll do the job late at night."

Madeline Pays a Visit.

ROSIE was installed behind a counter in the back room of the jewellery store next morning as cashier, while Doc and Oberdorf made final arrangements for the auction. By three o'clock in the afternoon a crowd of satisfactory dimensions had gathered in the shop, and Doc took his stand on a little platform which had been supplied by a local carpenter, and waved his hammer.

"Here we are, folks! Here we are!" he said cheerfully, puffing at a long cigar. "All ready to go!"

Oberdorf handed up to him an oval leather case.

"Now the first article," he boomed, opening the case and taking out a pair of hair-brushes, "is—or are—a beautiful set of military hair-brushes. Folks, these military hair-brushes have gone through three wars without a scratch!"

He leaned down over a man who was wearing a cap.

"Could I interest you in these brushes?" he asked.

The man pulled off his cap, revealing a totally bald head, and there was a burst of laughter.

"My mistake—my mistake," said Doc hurriedly. "Anybody else?"

Young started the bidding at a dollar, and a real customer offered two dollars. Shill made it three dollars, and the customer made it four. Doc removed his cigar from his mouth with his left hand, and the military hair-brushes were sold.

"Now just step into the back room," said Doc. "The young lady there will take your money and wrap up your articles."

Rosie had been provided with paper, string, and other essentials in the back room, and there was a way out from it into a side street. The purchaser passed

into her presence, but having paid for the brushes and had them made into a neat little parcel, returned to the sale. Doc was endeavouring to sell what he described as "a beautiful solid gold-plated guaranteed timekeeper."

"Folks," he said, in that amusing way of his, "I had considerable trouble getting this watch in Switzerland. They gave me the case one month and the works the next month. Look at it, men—look at it! It would run eight days without winding—goodness knows how long it would run if you wound it!"

The watch was sold for four dollars fifty cents, but in his exuberance Doc brought the hammer down on the purchaser's head instead of on the table beside him.

The sale continued, with the help of the four paid bidders and Doc's patter. Adolf Oberdorf beamed.

Billy Lowe, who had seen announcements of the auction all over the town, and who had heard about it from Rosie's lips, paid a visit to the establishment, but entered at the side door because he wanted to talk to the golden-brown haired girl.

"I'm glad to see you," she told him. "but if you haven't come to buy anything, you really mustn't stay."

Billy leaned over the counter, picked up a pen she had been using, and wrote on a piece of packing-paper which lay there. "I love you."

Rosie saw and was thrilled, but affected not to see.

"Listen," she said, "during business hours only business conversation."

"Well," responded Billy, gazing ardently into her blue eyes. "this is business. I want you to promise to

come and meet mother and dad on Friday night."

"If Doc says it's okay——" began Rosie.

"I'll ask him now."

"No, he's too busy—you'll have to wait."

"But you *must* come," insisted Billy. "Friday night is going to be my big night. It's my birthday, and, besides, I'm going to——"

"You're going to get right out of here and let me do my work. Good-bye!"

Billy ambled away into the shop and mingled with the crowd. Doc had just announced that every afternoon of that week an auction sale would be held, and some genuine art object would be disposed of at a very low price to advertise the establishment. On this particular afternoon an oil-painting had been selected, and he stepped down from the platform to stand before a shrouded picture on the wall.

"An old masterpiece," he declared. "I think it's by Michael Angelo, but I couldn't get him on the phone to verify it. The title is 'Grandma at her work.'"

He pulled a cord, causing two little curtains to glide back from the painting, which was of an old dame at a spinning-wheel.

The picture was sold for three dollars—one dollar more than it was worth. And then an engagement-ring was offered for sale, and Billy acquired it.

Other rings followed: clocks, necklaces, bracelets, bangles. Doc, with his persuasive manner and his four accomplices, did wonders with the stock, but through the half-open door leading into the back room Quinn watched Rosie out



Doc, gazing thoughtfully at the shops beyond the fair-ground, said abruptly, "Everything's rosy—we'll stay!"

of the tail of his eye every time she went to the safe.

Madeline van Dern, elegantly dressed, with a costly fur collar round her slim neck, stepped into the back room from the side street and sailed up to the counter, where she studied Rosie critically.

"The sale seems to be a big success," she said pleasantly. "You're Rosie, of course?"

"Yes," said Rosie. "Did you want to buy something?"

"Oh, no, I just came down to find Billy."

"I think he's in the shop," said Rosie, not without a pang of jealousy. "Shall I find him for you?"

"No, I'll find him. He's expecting me. Oh, by the way, he says you're coming to our party on Friday night."

"He did invite us," admitted Rosie. "It's his birthday, isn't it?"

Madeline nodded, and became aware of the words in Billy's handwriting on the packing-paper: "I love you."

"But that's not the real reason for his party," she said. "I rather imagines he intends to announce our

Rosie started as the beautiful visitor broke off abruptly.

"Do you mean——" she began faintly.

"Oh, everyone knows that Billy and I are——"

A bottle of ink was standing beside the packing-paper and a pen was in it. Rosie, in her agitation, upset the bottle, and the ink was spilled all over the words Billy had written. Madeline laughed and walked away, but after she had gone it was with tears in her eyes that Rosie mopped up the ink and dealt with a bandy-legged man who had just acquired an alarm clock.

She saw no more of Billy that day. He was swept off by Madeline before the sale was over, and though he telephoned to the hotel in the evening, asking Rosie to meet him, she declined to do so, pleading that ancient excuse—a headache.

It was on a Tuesday that this series of auction sales began, and from day to day they continued, greatly to the profit of Adolf Oberdorf, and not without profit to the man who had suggested and conducted them. Quinn and Willis decided to postpone their projected attack upon the safe till the Friday night.

On the Wednesday Billy saw Rosie, but only in the presence of Doc, who readily agreed to accept the invitation to the party. On the Thursday Billy haunted the hack room, despite Rosie's protests, and did his best to make love to her, while she took money, gave change, and packed parcels.

She did not mention Madeline to him; she was far too proud to do that; but whenever he picked up her pen she swept every bit of paper out of his reach—a circumstance which puzzled him and led him to the erroneous conclusion that she did not welcome his attentions.

By this time Doc had become quite a figure in the town. The sheriff had no idea that he was the man he had ordered to depart, and Mrs. Lowe had heard so much about him that she made quite a point of his promised presence at the party.

To a Mrs. Craig she said over the telephone:

"Yes, we're entertaining Mr. Droop. Of course you've heard that he is of the nobility?"

"I'll be delighted to come," responded Mrs. Craig. "I understand that his uncle is the King of Czecho-Slovakia!"

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Mrs. North, similiarly informed, replied gushingly:

"That's very kind of you, Mrs. Lowe. Mr. Oberdorf tells me that Mr. Droop's uncle is the King of Lithuania!"

Oh, Doc!

At the Party.

FRIDAY came; and the series of auction sales wound up in a blaze of profit. In his bed-room at the Union Hotel Doc arrayed himself in his ceremonial (and rather ancient) dress clothes, to say nothing of a white waistcoat. He then proceeded to play with three sections of walnut-shell and a pea, talking aloud as he manipulated them.

"One, two, three, folks. It's a game called the three musketeers. Three little shells and one little pea. Now we place the shell over the little pea, so! Wo make a few forward passes, so! Hocus, pocus, ice-cream soda—where is the little pea? Under here? No! Under this one? No! Now where is that little— Ah, here we are!"

It was a trick he had practised at many fairs, to the complete befogment of yokels and others who had staked money on the particular shell beneath which they believed the pea to have found a resting-place. Always out to make money, Doc believed that this little trick would amuse the guests at the Lowes' party—and add considerably to the cash in his own pockets.

Having assured himself that he was as adept at the trick as of yore, he put away the shells and the pea and crossed a corridor to knock on Rosie's door.

She was looking particularly sweet in a frock of printed silk when he entered the room.

"Ah, there you are, kitten—there you are!" he said fondly. "How does the old master look, eh? How does he look?"

"You look swell," she declared, after inspecting him.

"And you look sweller," he informed her. "Do you know that's the best seven dollar dress in the whole town? Honey, we're going to knock 'em dead at that party to-night!"

"I don't think I'm going," she said to his surprise. "I've changed my mind."

"You've changed— What did you go and do a thing like that for? Let me look at you! Uh-huh—just as I thought! You're tired—that's what's the matter with you. This party is just what you need. We'll have a lot of fun."

He fished out the shells and the pea and began to toy with them on her bed.

"I'm taking the three musketeers along," he informed her.

"Oh, Doc," she exclaimed in dismay, "but you can't do that! I won't let you."

"You won't let me, eh? Shucks! You've got to stop picking on me, d'you hear? I'm going to have my bit of fun."

Rosie had made up her mind not to go, but the sight of the "three musketeers" and Doc's determination to exploit them at a social function caused her to change her mind again. At all costs she must try to prevent him from cheating Billy's people and their friends.

So Doc and Rosie arrived at the house that was almost a mansion soon after eight o'clock, and Doc hammered on the door as became (more or less) one whose relatives were supposed to wear crowns.

Mr. Lowe himself opened the door because he happened to be in the hall and near it.

"Jeeves," said Doc, assuming a grand manner, "kindly tell Mr. Lowe that we're here, will you?"

"I am Mr. Lowe," said that gentleman, closing the door.

"Oh!" murmured Doc, all unabashed. "Well, this is Rosie, Mr. Lowe."

Mr. Lowe responded that he was charmed to meet Rosie, and then Billy came bounding towards them, greeting Rosie delightedly.

"You two young people run away and amuse yourselves while I show Mr. Droop around," suggested Mr. Lowe. And Doc, pinching his ward's cheek, chimed in:

"Yes, honey, you just run along and have a good time, while he shows me up—I mean shows me round."

Rosie departed, somewhat reluctantly, with Billy. Mr. Lowe led Doc into the drawing-room and introduced him to Mrs. Lowe, who was there with a number of guests.

"So you're Billy's mother," said Doc.

"Yes, thank you," said Mrs. Lowe graciously.

"Don't thank me, don't thank me," he laughed, waving his cigar.

He was introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Smith, to Miss West, to Judge Wall, and to others. He had a little quip for each of them that caused laughter. The grand piano was reached, and from it he took up an exquisite vase.

"Here's a pretty thing," he remarked.

"Pretty!"

"Oh, that," enthused Mr. Lowe, "is my pride and joy. That vase is a genuine Suryantes—it's worth a thousand dollars."

"Its value lies in the fact that there are only two of them in the world," supplemented Mrs. Lowe.

"Only two of 'em, eh?" said Doc, and pretended to drop the vase, but neatly caught it before it could reach the floor—though not before Mr. and Mrs. Lowe had cried out in alarm.

"I never muff 'em—I never muff 'em," declared Doc. "I knew it must be valuable because you called it a 'vawse.' Anything less than a thousand dollars in value would be called a 'varse'!"

He was introduced to others—and to cocktails. With a little group around him he gave a toast.

"You know," said a Mrs. Raymond, "we feel flattered, having a real nobleman in our midst."

"Nobleman?" echoed Doc in surprise. "Oh, yes, but keep that dark, won't you?"

"To think that we are talking to a real knight!" breathed Mrs. North.

"Yeah," drawled Doc, "but don't let the nights worry you—it's the morning after. And, oh, how I suffer!"

"Did they make you a Knight of the Bath?" inquired Mrs. Raymond.

"They wanted to," said Doc gravely, "but I wanted my Saturday night to myself."

They all laughed at that sally, and Doc proceeded to crack more jokes—and to drink more cocktails.

Billy and Rosie had wandered away to the stairs and were sitting on them and talking when Madeline bore jealously down on them and swept Rosie off to show her around, as she expressed it.

"You won't see her again till dinner," she said to Billy. "Come on, dear. I want you to meet these people."

Billy, being left high and dry, sought his mother, who had just left her guests to have a word with the butler.

"Well," he asked anxiously, "what do you think of them, eh?"

"He's a little eccentric, I think," decided Mrs. Lowe, "but she seems rather sweet. I've been studying her."

"Gee, but it's nice of you to say that, mother!" he cried. "It means a lot to me"

She shook her head at him, but smiled.

"You mustn't be too hasty, Billy," she said. "Look—you see this ring? There's a legend in our family that the youngest bride always wears this, and when you decide to marry I will signify my approval of your choice by taking it off my finger and giving it to your sweetheart. But be very sure, Billy."

"Gee, mother, you're a peach!" he exclaimed. And just then the curtains over the dining-room doorway were thrown back, and the butler announced loudly: "Dinner is served!"

"The Three Musketeers."

At the long dining-table Doc sat between Judge Wall and white-haired Mrs. Raymond, and he kept the table in a roar. Rosie was marched to a chair by Madeline, who sat beside her till Billy insisted on Madeline moving up so that he could sit between the two girls.

Exactly what had transpired between these two Billy could only conjecture, but Rosie seemed quiet, almost sad.

Something was said which Judge Wall discredited.

"It all sounds like a myth to me," he declared.

"Myth?" echoed Doc.

"Surely you know what a myth is?" rebuked the judge.

"Oh, yes, I know," responded Doc brightly, "it's a female moth!"

Judge Wall looked annoyed, but everybody else laughed—even a deaf man named Doanes, after the joke had been repeated to him three times.

"What's the matter?" whispered Billy anxiously to Rosie. "You don't seem to be a bit happy."

"I'm having a wonderful time," she assured him. "Everybody is so nice to me, and—"

Madeline, listening alertly, winced. Billy interrupted.

"It's my birthday, you know," he said; and squeezed her hand.

After the sweets had been served the butler marched into the room bearing with great solemnity a massive iced cake, decorated with twenty-one candles. He placed it on the table in front of Billy, and Mrs. Lowe rose to her feet.

"It's Billy's birthday," she said. "He's twenty-one. Who do you want to cut the cake, Billy?"

Billy looked across the table and grinned at Doc.

"Will you do the honours?" he asked.

"Okay, son—okay!" Doc immediately responded, and, pushing back his chair, went round to the cake, receiving a big knife from the butler on his way.

"Here's to the birthday, boy!" he cried, sharpening the knife on a steel. "And here's to little Rosie, the only girl with two birthdays in a year!"

Mrs. Lowe looked up, startled.

"Two birthdays?" she exclaimed.

"Yes," proclaimed Doc, waving the knife. "One on the day she was born, the other on the day I picked her up."

Mrs. Lowe and Judge Wall frowned at one another; Mr. Lowe bit his lip, and Madeline's red lips curled contemptuously. It is to be feared that the rest of the company stared.

"Picked her up?" repeated Mrs. Lowe faintly.

"Remember that, Rosie?" inquired Doc, flushed with cocktails and wine and rather reckless. "You were mighty dirty, but you were cute. You followed me—I didn't follow you. Don't forget that!"

"Fifteen years ago, wasn't it, Doc?" said Rosie quietly. "But you always say I'm a real, grown-up lady now."

"And what a lady!" cried Doc. "The sweetest lady in the world!"

"You'll always say that, Doc?"

"You bet your young life I'll always say it! Well, here's where we attack the cake!"

The cake was cut, the pieces were served, and some of the guests nibbled while others devoured. They were not to know that while they were celebrating Billy's birthday, two ugly crooks named Quinn and Willis were cracking a safe in a certain jewellery establishment, the property of Adolf Oberdorf.

From the dining-room, the guests streamed away to the drawing-room, and there Doc produced his walnut-shells and his pea, displaying them on a small table.

"Here we are, folks," he said in his best fair-ground manner—"here we are! All ready to go—all ready to go! This is a great little game, so step a little

closer, folks—step a little closer, and don't block the sidewalk."

Men and women gathered curiously around him, while Rosie looked on askance.

"I knew you all wanted a little excitement," declared Doc, "so I brought the three musketeers along."

"Well," said Madeline, somewhat superciliously, as she squeezed in between Mrs. Lowe and the exponent of the trick, "how does it work?"

"Oh, very simple—very simple!"

He proceeded to show them all

"Here we have three little shells and one little pea," he said. "We put the little pea under this little shell—so! We make a few forward passes"—suing the action to the words and moving the shells about. "Now you guess where the little pea is!"

Madeline guessed, and guessed wrongly. Judge Wall moved up beside Doc.

"Is it a gambling game?" inquired a girl nervously.

"Gambling?" echoed Doc, as though in pain. "Tut, tut, tut! No, no, no—well, of course, I mean—just to add a little zest to the party, perhaps— But only for small stakes—only for very small stakes."

There was a fumbling in pockets, a searching in handbags.

"Well," said Madeline loudly, "I'll bet two dollars."

Mrs. Raymond cautiously decided to bet fifty cents on Madeline. Others bet more.

Madeline, watching closely as Doc manipulated the shells, selected the middle one—but the pea was not beneath it. In some mysterious fashion it had secreted itself beneath the shell on the right.

"She loses," said Doc regretfully. "It was under there all the time. So I take the money—see?"

Rosie looked sadly away as Doc scooped in the notes and coins; but Billy, pressing forward, cried:

"Sounds exciting. I think I'll try."

He tried—and lost. Madeline tried again and again, while Judge Wall stood with his hand behind his back, grimly looking on.



"Sold for three dollars!" boomed Doc. "And now you have the whole principle of an auction sale!"
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"I've lost ten dollars," announced Madeline. "I think that's enough."

"I don't like to see women gambling," reproved Mrs. Lowe.

"I'll bet five dollars!" cried Billy, and tossed a note of that amount on the table.

"Five dollars," said Doc. "The gentleman bets five dollars. Anyone else care to back his judgment?"

Several sums were forthcoming.

"All right," said Doc. "The money is down. We place the shell over the pea—so! We make a few short forward passes—so! Now then, you guess where the little pea is."

"This one," said Billy—and his guess proved correct.

He collected eleven dollars, all told, and promptly staked ten on another try. His former success prompted even Mrs. Raymond to risk a dollar, while nearly all the others, save the judge, had a flutter.

But this time Billy selected the wrong shell, and Doc acquired the stakes.

"Mr. Droop seems to be doing all right, doesn't he?" remarked Mr. Lowe to Judge Wall.

"I'm positive the man is cheating," said the judge in a low voice.

"Oh, judge, I wouldn't say that," protested Mr. Lowe. "I don't much like this thing in my house, but—"

"Well," growled the judge. "I may be mistaken, but I don't think so."

Turned Out!

THE peanut game continued, and Bill, making efforts to recoup his losses, plunged rather heavily, and continued to lose. Rosie, all the more distressed because the boy was wasting his money, wandered away from the players.

Madeline saw her standing all alone near the doorway and went over to her.

"I was surprised to hear that he is not really your father," she said silkily, but with intended venom.

"He's the only man in the world who really loves me," Rosie retorted.

"After all, that's something," sneered Madeline.

"It's everything!"

Madeline retired hurt, and in the hall Billy encountered her.

"Well, I guess it's not my lucky night," he said somewhat gloomily. "I've lost a hundred and twenty-five dollars."

"Billy, how could you?"

Rosie heard, and moved nearer to the curtain screening the doorway, in order to hear more.

"He says it's because I can't concentrate."

"No wonder!" said Madeline, and then: "Weren't you surprised to hear that she's not his daughter?"

"Not a bit," declared Billy. "She told me that days ago. What difference does it make?"

"She's a little nobody!"

"Please," said Billy earnestly. "She means everything in the world to me—and before the night's out I'm going to ask her to marry me. That is, if she'll have me. She's the sweetest girl I've ever known. No mother, no father, no background—why, she deserves all the credit in the world. And so does he!"

Madeline was horrified, beaten, and crestfallen.

"Well, you've always been a little bit crazy," she said spitefully. "Good luck!"

Listeners do not always hear ill of themselves. Rosie, with a flushed face and shining eyes, ran back to the group of players.

"Anyone else, folks—anyone else?" asked Doc, as she tugged excitedly at his coat-sleeve.

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"Wait a minute, Doc," she cried excitedly. "Wait a minute!"

She raised her hand and her voice. "Billy—Miss Van Dorn—everyone!" she called.

"Anything wrong, kitten—anything wrong?" inquired Doc, as everyone gathered wonderingly round.

"Wrong, of course not!" said she. "Everything's rosy! What do you say—we'll give them all a chance to get even again."

"Eh?"

"Sure we will! What do you say, Doc? We'll make the last bet—double or quits!"

"What a girl! What a girl!" exclaimed Doc, with evident relief. "Double or quits it is, folks. Step right up and call."

Rosie addressed each of the losers in turn, asking what they had lost, and as they named the various sums, Doc pushed notes and coins before them.

"And how much did you lose?" she said to Madeline.

"I lost ten dollars, and that's all I care to lose, thank you," was the icy retort.

"Make it twenty or nothing—your credit is good with Doc."

"Credit is extended," said Doc, and tossed twenty dollars in notes across the table.

"Billy, how much did you lose?"

"I lost a hundred and twenty-five."

"Make it two hundred and fifty, or nothing," urged Rosie. But Mrs. Lowe said rather sternly:

"He'll do nothing of the kind."

"You'll trust him to pay, won't you, Doc," insisted Rosie.

"Well, I don't know about that," said Doc reluctantly. "My motto is—"

"Your motto is that you trust everyone," Rosie interrupted.

"Okay! Everything's rosy with me, too." He pushed the specified sum in front of Billy, and began to move the shells, finally resting one—as it seemed—over the pea.

"Now we're all set," he announced.

"Who is going to guess where the little pea is?"

"I am," declared Rosie firmly.

Doc blinked at her, but surrendered graciously.

"Rosie is going to guess where the little pea is," he said. "Good—good! Go ahead, Rosie."

"It's under there," said Rosie, pointing to the middle shell. "They win, don't they, Doc?"

The urgency in her voice warned him that she wished them to win, but he was unwilling to lose twice as much as he had won, whatever her reason.

"Well, I don't know," he said slowly. "We'll have to see, Rosie," and his hand reached out to the shell.

But down came her little right hand over his, and with her left hand she picked up the shell on the right.

"It isn't under here," she said, and swiftly lifted the shell on the left.

"And it isn't under here. So it's got to be under the middle one, hasn't it, Doc?"

He tried to remove his hand, but she held it down, and for an appreciable space of time they looked at one another, while the judge frowned behind them.

"Yeah, sure," said Doc at last. "That's right—sure. If you say so. Yes, sure."

Rosie removed her hand, but the Doc continued to keep his over the shell. The players picked up their double stakes with alacrity, but Judge Wall suddenly reached down, tore away Doc's hand, and picked up the middle shell.

There was nothing beneath it but the table-cloth, and everyone stared,

"What's the big idea—what's the big idea?" exclaimed Doc indignantly.

"That's what we'd all like to know!" said the judge sternly.

"What does it mean?" faltered Mrs. Lowe, while Rosie shrank back in alarm.

"It means," exploded the judge, "that this man is a cheat—a thief! He came into your house to rob you—that's what it means!"

"But no one's been robbed—everyone is even," cried Rosie.

"I think I begin to understand," said Mrs. Lowe slowly.

"They're two of a kind," stormed the judge. "He came to rob your guests of their money—she came to rob you of your son."

"Now wait a minute—wait a minute," Doc began defensively. But Rosie, disregarding Billy's attempt to take her hand in his, clung to Doc, crying tearfully:

"Take me home, Papa Doc—take me home!"

"Yes, take her home—if you have one," said Mrs. Lowe scornfully. "But leave this house!"

"Now wait a minute," protested Doc. "I think I can explain—"

"You don't need to explain," snapped his hostess. "This town will not tolerate you or your kind. Go!"

"Yes, come on, Doc," whispered Rosie. But Doc went back to the table to pick up his "three musketeers" and the half-consumed cigar he had placed on an ash-tray. Then with an arm about the girl and his head erect, he went out from the room, and, presently, out from the house.

It was not till they had passed from the garden into the road that Doc spoke again. Then he said complainingly:

"Rosie, I still don't understand."

"Of course you don't, you old darling," said Rosie. "But it's all right."

"Well, if you say it's all right with you, honey," he told her, with a final effort at cheerfulness, "it's double all right with me."

The Parting of the Ways.

OUTSIDE the door of her room at the Union Hotel, Doc made yet another effort to fathom Rosie's reason for bringing about his downfall, but she shook her head sadly. She had borne herself bravely enough on the way back, but now she was an abject little figure of misery.

"I'm afraid you'll never understand, Doc," she said. "but it wasn't your fault. I think I want to leave this town. When can we start?"

"Pack your things," he said tenderly. "We're leaving right away, kitten. I never did like this burg, anyway. We'll go."

"You won't!" cried a gruff voice behind them, and they swung round, startled, to see bulky Sheriff Hopkins standing there, while his deputy was mounting the stairs.

"Now what?" demanded Doc.

"You're wanted for robbery," said the sheriff, and the long, lean deputy-sheriff reached the landing and stood waiting.

"Robbery!" gasped Rosie.

"What do you mean?" asked Doc blankly.

"You know what I mean—the Oberdorf store."

"The Oberdorf store been robbed?"

"Yes, it's been robbed," drawled the sheriff menacingly. "Money, jewellery—everything! And you did it!"

"Why, sheriff," cried Rosie, "we've been at the Lowes' house all the evening."

(Continued on page 26.)

A cub reporter accidentally kills his boss during a fierce quarrel and the sentence of the court is—death! Read of a girl's great sacrifice to save him.
Starring Lew Ayres and Genevieve Tobin.



Ambitions.

BROADWAY, New York City, on a summer's morning. Seething with people who jostled shoulder to shoulder, some on shopping expeditions, others, workers in the mighty city, hastening along the broad sidewalks to do some allotted task as quickly as they could.

On all sides a veritable bedlam of sound. The hum of voices, the din of traffic—taxi-cabs, private cars, lorries and trolley-cars all mingling to make the air hideous with a nerve-shattering noise.

And not only in the street was it pandemonium, but in the shops and palatial offices that fringed the Great White Way as well.

One building in particular was in a perfect hubbub, a thirty-storey skyscraper that caught the eye at once with its newness and very modern architecture. Here it was the same day and night—noise, nothing but noise all the time.

The publishing office and printing works of "The World," New York's foremost and leading newspaper, that had recently removed its home from the Bronx to these wonderful new premises

A "quick-fire" paper, fearless of what it published, with a very efficient staff working upon it—a staff that was proud of the paper and ever seeking to advance into better positions upon it.

"One such who was impatiently eager for a lift on "The World" was Bob Marshall, a well-built and handsome youngster with clear blue-grey eyes and a mass of dark curly hair. Bob was little more than the printers' devil, the boy who did all the donkey work, such as running hither and thither on odd jobs, collecting news items for the giant presses, distributing the first copies as they ran from the machines to the various departments for their edification.

Bob's ambition was big—he wanted to "break" from the printing side, to become a member of the editorial staff. News writing was in his blood and the pinnacle for which he aimed was that of reporter.

With the midday edition of the paper "gone to bed," Bob, in shirt sleeves and dirty overalls, took up a position near an elevator window in a small room on the ground floor of the newspaper building. From the basement came the roar of machinery as the presses churned out the news-sheets at record speed, but the youngster was lost to all save his rosy dreams of the future.

He had got to get on—to attain his ambition somehow!

It was as he was thus ruminating that the small, wooden service lift came shooting up from below bringing him back to his present job with a jerk. The lift stopped, and quickly raising the window, he drew out some two score copies of the new edition of "The World," and started on his rounds.

Up the stairs he plodded, going into many of the rooms on the various floors, distributing the specimen copies. The eighth storey eventually reached, the youngster turned in at a door that was marked on its frosted, glass panel: "Chief Editorial Offices."

Here it was all activity and noise. Reporters scattered about the large apartment, pounding typewriters for all they were worth, scribbling with pencils so fast that the points seemed in danger of becoming red-hot.

In the centre of the room stood a massive flat-topped desk literally strewn with type-written pages, cuttings, and other paraphernalia of the newspaper office. Here sat two men of vastly difference appearances. A tall, thin-faced fellow with piercing grey eyes, sparse brown hair that was inclined to be curly, and a determined jaw. A small but straggly moustache adorned his upper lip, a pipe

was in his mouth, and he was in his shirt-sleeves. This man was the editor of "The World," a clever man in his job and greatly respected by his subordinates. Next to him was Mr. Winter, proprietor of the paper, a cynical-looking man, neatly dressed, with hair that was turning grey, brown eyes, and a neatly-trimmed moustache.

The two were evidently in consultation as Bob drifted in and placed a copy of "The World" on the editor's desk, for the latter was pointing something out to the proprietor that had appeared in an earlier edition.

Bob paused, listening, not through any desire to play the eavesdropper, but simply because anything and everything connected with "The World" interested him now that he was set on advancing his position on the paper. News gleaned might stand him in good stead later on.

"By the way, Smithson," Mr. Winter was saying at the moment "did that story of Senator Stanford's death come through?"

The political man in question had been shot at the night before while returning to his home from the theatre. What it was all about was not known, but a reporter had been assigned to the job of discovering the exact details for the paper.

"Al Stanton did his part, boss, and did it darned well." Frank Smithson took a pull at his pipe before continuing. "Yes, we got his story all set up in type, but Stanford's still hanging on. Suppose the old codger's going to die for the evening papers."

William Winter laughed, then caught sight of Bob standing there, and frowned heavily. Instantly the youngster took to his heels and hastened from the room.

The telephone operator was next to receive a copy of "The World," and she gave Bob some candy and passed a

few pleasantries with him. Then again the boy went on his way.

Half an hour later Bob returned to the lower regions of the newspaper buildings. As he came down the wooden stairs into a small room in the basement that adjoined the machine-room, the compositors were streaming out for the dinner hour.

"Hallo, Bob!" called one genial fellow who had a great liking for the boy. "You coming along?"

"No, Dick!" Bob gave him a cheery smile and moved across to a row of clothes pegs where his hat and coat were hanging. "I'm on the dog-watch!"

"Then I hope it keeps fine for you, boy."

A wave of the hand and the compositor was gone, mingling with a crowd of his fellow-workers as they swarmed up the stairs towards the street.

From the pocket of his coat Bob took out a small brown-paper package, then crossed to a rough wooden bench, upon which he sprawled at full length, cupping his head in one hand. When he was on duty during the dinner-hour, minding the machines, it was his wont to perch there, munching the sandwiches that his mother had packed for him, dreaming of the success for which he longed.

But Bob was not left alone with his thoughts for long. Presently the door at the top of the wooden stairs crashed open, and a thick-set young man in the early thirties came staggering down into the room. Charlie Collins, attached to the reporters' staff, clever in his work but possessing a weakness for bootleg whisky and a propensity for borrowing money which he seldom returned.

"How are yuh, kid!" Collins grinned at the boy in a silly kind of way, took from his hip pocket a flask which he uncorked and raised to his lips. A long drink, a grunt of contentment, and then the flask was replaced. "But say, boy, what the dickens you doing down in this damp hole?"

"I work here," Bob told him, and took a bite at the sandwich he held.

"Well, if that isn't too bad." Collins cast a bleary eye around the small room and grunted disgustedly. "Gee, but you'll sure catch your death of cold in this damp place. Still, I suppose you know your own darned business best."

"Don't think I'm here because I like it," Bob shook his head so vigorously that he nearly choked himself with the piece of sandwich that was in his mouth. "I'd give anything to be shot of this hole—to become a reporter. Gee, if only I had the chance I'd—"

"No, no, no." Collins calmly picked up a banana that was included with Bob's lunch, peeled it, and took a good bite, then wagged what was left under the boy's nose. "Don't do that, son—it's a dog's life!"

"I'd like to be a reporter, anyway," Bob smiled.

Collins looked at him curiously, noticed the earnest expression on Bob's face, grinned inanely, then took another bite at the banana.

"Wh-wh-what ever made you wanna write, boy?" he said thickly.

For a moment Bob was silent, gazing vacantly at the wall opposite as he chewed at his meal.

"Oh, when I was a kid—a little girl died, but just before she died she—she pointed out of the window—and she had a beautiful look on her face." Tears were very close to Bob's eyes, for that little girl of whom he spoke had been his playmate at school, and he had been very fond of her. "I guess to most people it was just a gesture of

death—but I thought she pointed to something. I suppose it sounds kind of silly, but ever since then I've wanted to write about it."

Collins was looking very sheepish, for the sadness of the story had penetrated his maudlin brain, touched his heart. But he quickly recovered from the sudden depression that had gripped him, stuffed the last piece of banana in his mouth, then patted Bob's knee.

"No, it ain't silly, kid, it ain't silly. It's poetry—that's what it is—poetry. I wanted to write a play once, but the pencil broke." He grinned inanely, for the fumes of the bootleg whisky had taken a strong grip on his brain. "I never had a chance after that. But I'll see that you get a chance, kid, you'll get a chance—"

He broke off at the sound of a feminine voice, and, glancing round, perceived through a small glass window, set high in the wall, a pretty telephone operator busy at her switchboard. Again he grinned, then turned back to Bob.

"Say, kid," he said eagerly, "you couldn't let me have two dollars till pay day, could you? You see, there's a girl I want to take out, and I'm stony."

Bob smiled good-naturedly and nodded. The two dollars were produced, which was about all the money Bob had at the moment, and they quickly changed hands.

"Thanks," Collins readjusted his hat, which had slipped to the back of his head. "I'll see that you get a chance, kid. A reporter you want to be? Yeah, you'll get your chance all right—you'll get your chance."

And, with another of his inanely grins, he went lurching up the wooden stairs and disappeared.

Bob Writes a Story.

CHARLIE COLLINS was as good as his word. As star reporter on "The World," he was in a position to ask for things and have his requests granted. Mr. Smithson knew it was the only way to retain his services, for many a rival paper would have given almost anything to number Collins among their staff.

So Bob Marshall transferred from the printing side to the editorial offices, and started as sub-reporter at twenty dollars a week. But he was by no means satisfied, for all his assignments were small—he wanted to do big stories—to earn the big salaries that his colleagues earned.

He had been on the editorial side about two weeks, when one particular evening a beautiful girl tapped on the door of Mr. Winter's office, and, in answer to his "Come in," entered that sumptuous apartment, where the proprietor, garbed in evening-dress, was reclining at ease in a deep armchair.

"How were the flowers, Myra?" William Winter was on his feet in a moment, and coming across to the girl he took her hands eagerly in his. "Did I guess right?"

Myra Deane—blonde, pretty as a picture in a gorgeous evening-gown of palest blue—smiled bewitchingly up at him, and the smile had a pleasing effect on the man. For the newspaper proprietor was madly in love with this girl who held the important post of Society Editor on "The World."

"You don't guess, Bill." There was a mischievous twinkle in Myra's blue eyes. "You know very well roses are my favourite flower."

He laughed and kissed her. Almost it seemed that she recoiled from the salutation, but in a moment she was laughing up at him again. He was twenty years her senior, double her own

age, and, girl-like, she felt that this was sufficient barrier between friendship and something far greater. But he was very kind to her—she who was an orphan, and who had only been out of the orphanage little more than a year. He had given her a job and a home, and bestowed presents upon her, had taken her to cinemas, dances and theatres. She felt she owed him so much, and must humour him in consequence.

"Look here, Myra," he said, releasing her hands to light a cigarette. "I wish you'd write me a good yarn about the International Ball to-night. One of those bright stories you used to turn out."

"Slave driver!" Again the mischievous twinkle was in her eyes. "But don't worry, old thing, I'm covering it."

"Good!" he enthused, his eyes sparkling.

She nodded and smiled, then with a cheery wave of the hand she swept from the room. Straight across the passage she went and into the editorial offices, where typewriters pounded at high pressure and pencils sped across paper.

"Say, Frank"—she came up to the editor's desk and touched the big man's arm—"have you found an escort for me yet? For the International Ball, you know."

"But I haven't anybody," Smithson jerked his pipe from his mouth and glanced impatiently up at her. Then he replaced the pipe and let his eyes drift back to the typewritten copy he had been reading. "I thought I told you ten minutes ago that every reporter on the sheet is busy."

"I believe you did, but that doesn't cut any ice. I must have someone. You can't expect me to go alone. Besides, I shall want to dance, and simply must have a partner." The editor grunted and paid her little heed—just went on reading the "copy" for the next edition of "The World."

With a frown, Myra cast her eyes about her, glancing at first one and then another of the reporters busy at their desks. Eventually her gaze came to rest on Bob Marshall, and though his head was bent over his work, and she could not see his face, she knew that he was young and new to the office.

"Well, Frank, what about that young man over there?"

The editor looked up with a snort and followed the direction of her pointing finger.

"Him?" Smithson grinned up at Myra. The sub-reporter. Of course she could have him if she wanted, but the editor was sure she would get bored with such a kid. Still, it was none of his business, and as she nodded her head, he took his pipe from his mouth and belowered: "Hey, you!"

Heads were lifted on all sides of the room, but Smithson beckoned to Bob and the other reporters resumed their work. Wondering what was wanted of him Bob rose to his feet, came over to the editor's desk and stood there respectfully, glancing with ill-concealed admiration at Myra, who smiled reassuringly back at him.

"You got a dress suit, Marshall?" Smithson snapped at the boy.

"No, sir," replied Bob, somewhat puzzled.

"Then get an order from the cashier and go and rent one. And be back here dressed as quickly as you can."

Bob hesitated, scarcely knowing what to do—puzzling over this strange command. The editor waved an impatient hand.

"Don't gape like that—drat you—get moving!" he barked.

"Yes, sir."

Bob caught the smiling eyes of the beautiful girl standing beside the desk, and Myra nodded her head as if to substantiate the editor's instructions. A moment only did the boy pause after that and then went quickly from the room, his brain still pondering upon the editor's strange request.

Bob lost no time in getting the necessary money from the cashier to pay for the hiring of the suit of dress clothes, nor did he waste much time in obtaining the suit itself. Some half an hour later he came back to the office, looking as immaculate as any titled man, complete with top-hat and white gardenia in his button-hole.

Straight to the editor's desk he went, feeling somewhat embarrassed in the unaccustomed clothes, conscious that many of the reporters stopped in their labour to cast curious glances at him.

But Frank Smithson, busily writing, was not aware that the boy stood beside his desk till Bob coughed to draw his attention.

"Well, what the heck you standing there for?" The editor looked up and scowled, then waved an impatient hand towards the door. "Go and see the Society editor, Miss Deane, and for heaven's sake leave me in peace!"

Smithson's eyes went back to his work immediately, and, more mystified than ever, Bob walked from the room, crossed the corridor outside and tapped at a door upon which was inscribed the words "Society Editor." A feminine voice bade him enter, and he opened the door and went in, taking off his top-hat as Myra Deane rose from a chesterfield, where she had been reading a book.

"My, you look splendid!" She surveyed him critically, and became aware of his good looks, the frank expression on his face as he gazed at her in undisguised admiration. Then she found herself blushing, and impatiently shrugged her shoulders. "But we'd better be hurrying. We're going to the International Ball, and you're to be my escort."

Bob's face lit up with pleasurable pride. Here was something he had

never dreamed of—to accompany such a wonderful girl to the biggest social event in the city. The International Ball at the Municipal Auditorium.

It was a grand affair. Everybody who was anybody in New York was there—well-groomed and handsome men—beautifully gowned women; but, to Bob, not one of the ladies present could compare with the girl he escorted, either in looks, charm or in dress. Not that he noticed many of them, because his admiring eyes seldom left Myra's pretty face. It was the same when he was dancing with her—and Bob could dance well—when he was sitting beside her during the brief intervals and when they were partaking of refreshment. His gaze was on her the whole while, drinking in her beauty, watching the gay light that seemed always to dance in her eyes.

Bob had lost his heart to Myra Deane and lost it badly, and he could not have denied it.

The ball over at last, he escorted her back to the office, and was sorry when the time for parting came.

"Well, I must get on with my story," she told him, holding out her hand as they reached the door of her room. "It was a splendid evening. Thanks so much for your trouble. Good-night!"

He took off his hat as he grasped her hand, gazing with adoration into her pretty face, his heart pumping like a sledgehammer within him. For the second time that evening she blushed and shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"No need to thank me," said Bob happily. "It was a pleasure, believe me."

And then she was gone, breaking from his grasp and quickly darting into her room. For several seconds Bob stood there, gazing wistfully at the closed door, then turned slowly and went into the main editorial offices, where, as usual, all was activity and bustle.

His desk reached, he sat down in his chair, cupped his head in his hands, his thoughts dwelling on his wonderful good fortune of that evening. The one girl in the world—charming—exquisite,

He sighed, then suddenly reaching for a sheet of paper, he placed it in his typewriter and began to tap the keys slowly and laboriously. His story of the International Ball.

"I have just come from the International Ball. I escorted the society editor. She was the most beautiful of all among the vast assembly—"

He paused, gazing around the office dreamily as if seeking inspiration, then suddenly continued, praising the girl who had captured his heart, lauding her to the skies.

Half an hour he stuck at the machine, and then Frank Smithson yelled for him. Two or three more words pounded out at record speed, and his story was completed, then he hurried over to the editor, who sent him off to Mr. Winter's apartments with some "copy" for the proprietor's "O.K."

"No need to come back again to-night, kid," Smithson informed him. "That copy'll do first thing in the morning. And, by the way, see that those glad rags are returned—get me?"

Bob nodded and went out. And no sooner had he disappeared than the reporter who occupied the next desk to his was at the boy's typewriter gazing down at the sheet of paper Bob had left there. He was curious to see what the boy had been writing, and as he read it through he whistled and grinned.

Next moment the sheet of paper was out of the machine and the reporter was striding across to Mr. Smithson's desk.

"Found this on my desk, boss," he lied, placing the typewritten sheet before the editor.

As the reporter went on his way, Mr. Smithson took up the sheet, read it through, and chuckled.

"Heck, this is good," he told himself with a trace of excitement in his face. "I'll put it in the paper alongside Myra's story. It'll make darned good reading, or I'm a Dutchman."

And quickly adding at the top in blue pencil, "Cub Reporter Attends International Ball, by Robert Marshall," Smithson passed Bob's "story" on to

"By the way, Smithson," Mr. Winter was saying at that moment, "did that story of Senator Stanford's death come through?"



the printing department to be included in the next issue of "The World."

The Way of a Boy.

NEEDLESS to say, Bob Marshall was astounded when, on coming down to breakfast next morning, he picked up the copy of "The World" which had just been delivered to his home, and saw, staring at him in cold print from the centre column of the front page that which he had written about Myra Deane at the office the previous night.

His mother, who had seen the paper first, looked at him rather curiously as he read it, but made no comment. But she was nevertheless more than a little perturbed that her boy should have been so carried away by a girl to write in that way about her. And her perturbation was added to by the knowledge, gleaned in a talk with a neighbour whose husband worked on "The World," that this girl, Myra Deane, was practically engaged to Mr. Winter, the proprietor of the paper.

What would Winter say if he knew that Bob had lost his heart to the girl as apparently seemed to be the case? Probably would dismiss him from his work in a fit of jealousy. And having no husband, only Bob to support her, Mrs. Marshall felt sad at such a distressing thought.

But the good lady would have felt more ill at ease if she had known that that morning her son sent Myra some flowers, saw her later in the day in her office, and received her congratulations on his write-up of her.

"It was good, but very flattering," the girl told him somewhat shyly.

Bob smiled and felt encouraged. "I didn't expect it would get in the paper. I left it lying about, and I suppose someone spotted it." He gazed at her with longing eyes as she sat at her typewriter, looking round at him. "I suppose it was rather absurd of me writing all that, but so much happened to me last night, I just couldn't let it fade away, so I just wrote it."

"Um-um, but it was nice what you wrote about me." In that moment Myra had forgotten William Winter, his love for her, and how much she owed him for her present substantial position. This boy had come into her life, and she felt that there was no harm in cultivating his acquaintance.

Bob came closer to her, and greatly daring, took hold of her hand.

"Miss Deane—Myra, I meant all I said in that—er—story," he said earnestly.

Again Myra blushed. Flattery she was used to, but there was something in this simple and earnest praise of her that went straight to her heart—made her forget Winter more and more.

"You did?" Her eyes twinkled mischievously. "Well, let me tell you something. I wasn't the most beautiful girl at the ball."

Bob was about to assure her emphatically that she was when a knock at the door interrupted him. But it was only a man from the chief editorial offices, and when he had dumped some papers on Myra's desk he took his departure, though as he went from the room he shot Bob a curious glance.

"Look here," said Bob, as the door closed behind the fellow, "I was wondering—"

Another interruption. This time in the shape of the telephone-bell, which tinkled noisily.

"You wondered—what?" prompted Myra as her hand went out to the receiver of the phone.

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"Well, how about Sunday?"

"Well, how about it?" she said archly.

"Well, I didn't have anything planned." Again Bob felt somewhat nervous, and he fidgeted with the lapel of his jacket. Then as he saw she was smiling amusedly at him, he squared his shoulders and forced a laugh. "I thought we could walk through the park and—"

"Oh, you're inviting me to step out, eh?" She feigned surprise, though his invitation thrilled her inwardly. But when he nodded she affected not to see the motion of his head. Her attention went to the telephone whose bell was still ringing with marked persistence, and, lifting the receiver from its hooks, she clapped it to her ear. "Hallo? Are you there?" she said into the mouthpiece.

A voice, easily recognisable, came over the wire, and what the caller had to say caused the girl to smile faintly.

"You'll be out of town for the weekend?" Cleverly she forced into her voice a tone of disappointment. "Well, what am I supposed to do? Sit at home and twiddle my thumbs? Oh, all right—I'll manage somehow."

Disillusioned, Bob was half-way to the door when Myra hung up the receiver and turned round. So she had a boy friend already? Well, it was no use, then, his trying to foster an acquaintance with her. It was not likely she would turn aside this other fellow for a new and struggling reporter.

"Oh, wait a minute!" Myra smiled bewitchingly as Bob stopped and glanced back at her dubiously. "When was it you wanted me to—er—step out?"

"Sunday," he told her, with sudden renewed eagerness.

"Very well, it's a date, Bob," she cried. "I'll meet you at three at the corner of Twenty-third."

Bob nodded and went away highly elated. How he got through his work between then and the Saturday he hardly knew, for he found himself thinking of the pretty girl every moment of the time. But Sunday came at last, and he met her, looking radiantly beautiful in a pale pink frock and big picture hat.

They went into the park, listened to the band, then roamed around the large zoo adjoining, laughing heartily at the queer antics of some of the animals, thoroughly enjoying every moment of the time. Myra found herself really beginning to take an interest in her companion. She discovered that Bob was so different to all the other men she knew, and especially did this apply to William Winter, who always affected a patronising air whenever he took her out anywhere.

Clear that she was falling for this boy, and she was forced to admit it to herself when he whirled her away to a delightful spot beneath a cluster of trees, and there, on the fresh green grass, laid out the contents of the picnic-basket he had brought with him.

A delightful time, during which they chatted lightheartedly, and only marred when rain came down and sent them scuttling for home.

She took Bob to her apartments to dry his clothes, and he was amazed at the luxurious furnishing of the place. He was in the drawing-room, she in the kitchenette drying his hat and coat over the gas-stove, when, wandering around the room, Bob saw several packages with labels attached to them. "Happy Birthday, Myra—From Dodo," and various other names.

Boblike, he felt that he must give her a present, too, and directly he got home he went to a jar that stood on the dresser in the kitchen and took from it a wad of dollar bills. His and his mother's savings!

Not a qualm did he have that he was taking money that rightly belonged to Mrs. Marshall—all that obsessed him was the thought that he must give the girl, who had completely captured his heart, a present that would be worthy of her.

Bob Hits Out.

"GEE, it's the nicest present I've ever had!"

Myra's eyes shone with real pleasure as she gazed at the magnificent gold bracelet, studded with diamonds that scintillated in the light streaming through the office window.

"I'm glad you like it." Bob felt delighted that she should be so pleased with his birthday gift. "Here, let me put it on for you."

He took the bracelet from her, encircled it round her right wrist, and fastened it there. At that moment, and unbeknown to them, the office door opened and a face peered in. Charlie Collins, in a maudlin state as usual, and looking for someone from whom to borrow a few dollar bills. Perhaps Myra would oblige him, but at sight of the girl with Bob fastening that bracelet around her wrist, he caught in his breath in amazement, and retreated, drawing the door quietly to behind him.

"Oh, Bob, it really is a beauty!" Myra stepped back and admired the bracelet again. "Oh, you are a dear boy! I hardly know how to thank you enough!"

"Don't try." Bob stepped up to her, took her hands in his, gazing deep into her shining eyes. "Look here, Myra. I have so much I want to say to you. Can't I see you later—after work?"

Myra hesitated, for she knew how jealous William Winter would be if he found out about their friendship. But she paused only a moment, then nodded her head as she realised that Winter did not return, as a rule, from a weekend till the Tuesday morning. Safe enough to take a chance.

"Yes, Bob," she said. "Call for me to-night."

He went away in the seventh heaven of delight, but once outside the room someone lurched up to him and caught him by the arm. Bob started, then seeing who it was, he smiled.

"Hard up, old man!" The boy shrugged his shoulders expressively. "It's a fact. I haven't a dollar—"

"It's not that, kid." The reporter blinked around as if to make sure he wouldn't be overheard. "A little bit of sound advice. Go easy, or you'll get yourself in the devil of a jam. Oh, but perhaps you don't know! Well, I'll tell you. That girl—she's Winter's, and—"

Bob shook off Collins' grasp and seized him fiercely by the lapel of his jacket, his face crimsoning with sudden rage. He had heard tales about Winter—how the proprietor of "The World" gadded about with numerous girls, spent his money freely on them, encouraged them to smoke and drink. But Myra—he knew that such a sweet girl could never indulge in such vices.

"You dirty hound!" Bob's voice was raised in the fury that possessed him. "You dare say anything—"

"But it's a fact, kid," the reporter gasped, alarmed at the fierceness of Bob's tone, the light blazing in his eyes. "I know—"

His words broke off in a gasp as Bob suddenly swung up his fist and crashed it clean into his chest just above the heart. For a moment Collins swayed precariously on his feet, then, with an infuriated snort, he launched himself at the boy and grasped him round the neck.

"You'd do that, you darned little fool!" he raved. "Well, by heck, you've only yourself to blame fer what's coming to you!"

Bob struggled furiously to release himself from the other's fierce grip, and together they lurched across the passage, panting heavily with their exertions. Then suddenly the door of the chief editorial offices opened, and Frank Smithson strode out, puffing furiously at his pipe, a heavy frown upon his brows.

"Hey, you two! What the blazes you think you're doing? You hear me? stop this scuffling at once." He flung himself forward as they paid him no heed, grasped them one in each hand, and dragged them apart. Sheepishly they looked at him as he thrust out his jaw pugnaciously. "A nice pair of beauties, I must say! Go on there, now—get back to your work, or, by heavens, I'll sack you!"

Without a word they went, but as they passed into the editorial office Bob shot Collins a furious glance, a glance that was a warning that he should be careful what he said about Myra in the future.

Bob Again Loses His Head.

IT was just after six o'clock, and the day's work was finished. Myra was tidying her desk when suddenly the door of her room opened and, glancing round, she beheld William Winter, a mug expression on his rather handsome face, standing on the threshold.

A surprise return from his week-end, and sight of the man caused her heart to sink, the colour to drain from her face. Of course, he would expect her to go out with him that night, and she had promised to see Bob.

"Surprised to see me, eh?" Winter came over to her and took hold of her arms. She nodded slowly, and he smiled, then kissed her on the cheek. "Couldn't be away from you a moment longer, darling. Just had to come back. Bored with fishing, and simply long for a dance with you. We'll go to the Blue Tavern to-night and—"

"Oh, I can't see you to-night, Bill!" Her heart revolted that he expected her to fall in with his wishes like this. It was always the same. Never did he ask her what she would like to do or what place she would like to visit. It was like being tied to a chain. Well, she would alter all that now. She had promised to see Bob, and though she did not take his affection for her too seriously, she liked his companionship and the change it meant. "You see, I'm going to a concert, and the seats are booked."

But, shrewd that he was, Winter could tell that she was lying; and, what was more, he suspected that she had an engagement with some other fellow. And the very thought made the blood run riot in his veins, caused him to clench his hands fiercely.

"I'll see you to-night at eight, Myra." His voice was command-

ing, and held a trace of menace in it. "Understand?"

She nodded, utterly cowed, knowing that she must obey him or lose the very remunerative post she held on "The World." So, as he went from the room, a smile of infinite satisfaction playing about the corners of his mouth, she dropped disconsolately into her chair and wrote a note to Bob, which she sent to him by express messenger.

It arrived at Bob's home just as the boy was having dinner, and his mother brought it in to him. Wondering who it could be from, he tore open the envelope, took out the folded sheet of paper inside, and opened it out. Then, as he read the brief message written thereon, his jaw dropped, and an expression of vexation came into his good-looking face.

"Dear Bob," ran the message—"I'm sorry, but I can't see you to-night, but will explain everything in the morning. MYRA."

Why couldn't she see him? No sooner did the thought occur than he remembered those words of Collins that had aroused him to fury. "That girl—she's Winter's!"—remembered, too, that as he had left the office that evening he had passed the proprietor of "The World" coming into the building, back earlier than expected from his week-end. Was there any truth in what the reporter had told him, after all? If there was, and Myra was indeed Winter's girl, then that might account for her putting him off this evening!

The bare thought infuriated him. He loved the girl deeply. So much, in fact, that he would have done anything for her just to please her and win her affections. But he knew there could be no rival. He must know just how things stood, whether it was true she was indeed friendly with the boss.

As he rose to his feet, pushing aside his unfinished dinner, he became aware that his mother was standing by the dresser eyeing him curiously, while in her hand she held the jar in which they kept their savings. He guessed what was on her mind, and it added to the anger that already possessed him.

"Well, you needn't look at me as

though I'd stolen it," he growled. "It—it was my money."

"Of course it was yours." She smiled ruefully, replacing the jar on the shelf. "You earned it right enough. But, you see, you used to say it was ours, and naturally—"

"I had to have it," he interrupted impatiently. "I needed it for something important."

He snatched up his hat from where it had been lying on a chair, rammed it on his head. The mother frowned. It was not like Bob to speak to her in this brusque manner, and she guessed that something had disturbed him.

"Why, is anything wrong, Bob?" she asked gently.

"No!" he stormed, his face crimsoning. "I took the money—that's all there is to it!"

"Now, now, don't get angry, son." Mrs. Marshall came over to him, placed a hand soothingly on his arm. "It's all right, of course. The money's nothing. We'll manage somehow."

"Oh, I don't care what happens!"

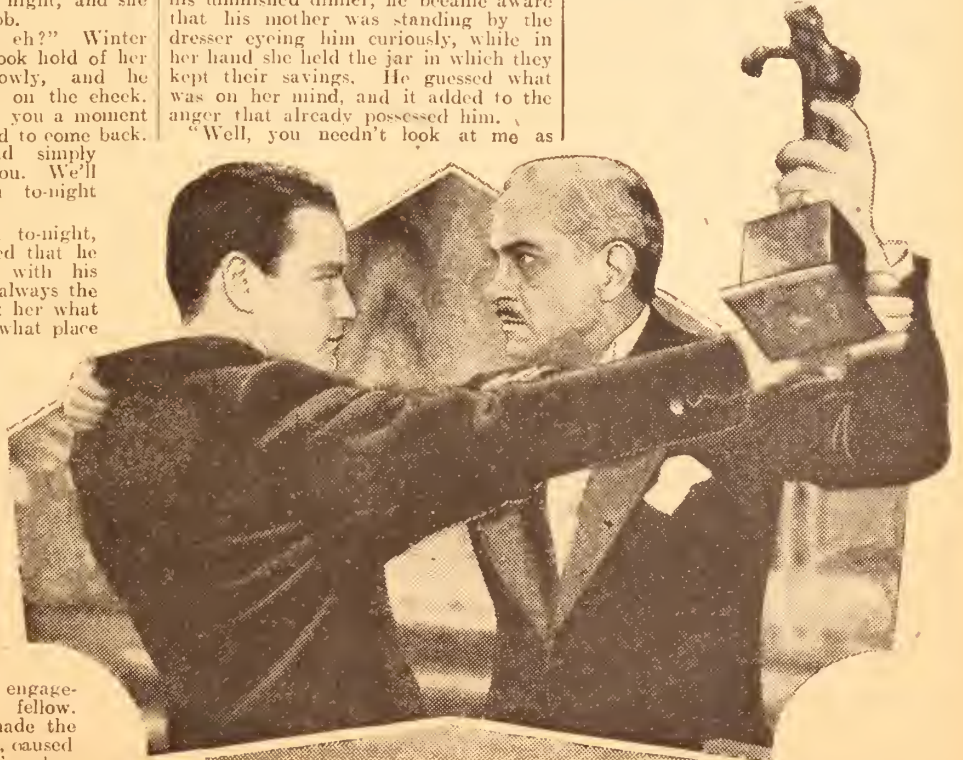
Thoughts that Myra might indeed be Winter's drove him nearly crazy with jealousy. Fiercely he flung off his mother's hand.

"Oh, Bob, don't act like that!" Tears were very near Mrs. Marshall's eyes. Intuition told her what was upsetting him. That girl he had lauded to the skies in the paper. Perhaps he had found out her friendship with Winter. "You've worked hard, so you deserve some fun. But this fascination for that girl's changed you—she's taking you away from me and—"

"That's enough of that!" Bob stormed at her. "Leave her out of this, can't you!"

"But, Bob," protested his mother, "She's not the girl for you. I heard that she's—"

Again he shouted to her that it was none of her business, then made a sudden rush to the door and went out,



Bob caught Winter's wrist as, with murder in his eyes, the newspaper proprietor swung back his arm to launch the heavy missile at the youngster's head.

slamming the door violently behind him. He would see Myra immediately, discover once and for all if it was indeed true that she was Winter's girl.

A Fight that Ended Disastrously.

MYRA herself opened the door in answer to Bob's knocking, and sight of the boy standing on the steps caused her to catch her breath sharply. Nearly eight o'clock, and Winter was due at any moment now to call for her. If he found Bob here there would be a scene, for she knew the jealous disposition of the man. At the least he would sack Bob from his employ—might possibly resort to more violent measures.

"What is it you want, Bob?" she asked agitatedly. "Didn't you get my note?"

"Yes, but I had to see you." As he gazed into her pretty face all the fury ebbed from him, and he felt that nothing could shatter the affection he bore her. But in another moment he remembered what had brought him here—realised that for his own peace of mind he must discover the truth. "Myra, there's something I want to talk to you about. May I come in?"

"Well, I haven't much time," she told him hesitatingly. "So you must make it short and snappy."

Wondering what he could want she closed the door as he stepped into the hall, then led him to her drawing-room. Then it was that Bob noticed the wonderful dress she was wearing, the costly jewels that adorned her neck and hands. Obviously she expected a caller—was going out. Savagely he clenched his fists, for he felt that there was something in what he had heard, after all—that Myra was indeed on friendly terms with their employer.

"You're waiting for someone, aren't you?" he accused her.

She shrugged her shoulders as she dropped into a chair. It was imperative that she get rid of Bob as quickly as was possible, and the only way to do this that she could think of was to deliberately set out to hurt his feelings.

"My dear boy." Her tone was mocking. "You're not seriously cross-examining me, are you?"

"It's Winter, isn't it?" Bob shot at her fiercely.

"Um—am!" Another shrug of the shoulders. Then suddenly she frowned. "But what right have you to put such a question to me?"

Bob faced her squarely, gazing deep into her pools of eyes.

"Because I love you, Myra!" he stated boldly, and would have caught at her hands had she not leaped to her feet at that precise moment.

"You silly boy. You don't know what you're talking about. It's just youthful infatuation. Why, if you never saw me again you'd—" She broke off as the clock on the mantelpiece chimed the hour, and a look of deep concern leaped into her face. She knew now that she loved Bob as much as he did her; knew, too, that it could never be. The last tinkling note of the clock and she caught at the boy's arm. "Bob, you must really go now. I—"

A knock at the front door that caused her face to blanch, followed instantly by footsteps in the passage. Her maid answering the summons. Myra seemed powerless to move—and then the drawing-room door opened and William Winter came in smoking a large cigar.

"Oh, I'm sorry." There was a sneer in his tone and he frowned darkly. "Didn't know you had visitors, Myra."

"It's quite all right, Bill." She

pulled herself together, summoned up a smile. "He—he just came in from the office with some copy. You know each other, don't you? Mr. Winter—Mr. Marshall."

Winter bowed his head mockingly to Bob, who glared at him ferociously. Then the youngster turned to the girl.

"Why, don't you tell him the truth?" he said somewhat fiercely.

"What on earth do you mean, boy?" Winter came up to Bob and thrust out his jaw menacingly. "The truth? What is it?"

Bob paid no heed to Myra's warning glance, the distressed expression that had come into her pretty face.

"Well, I didn't come here from the office," Bob said quietly. "I came because I love Myra, and—"

"Is that so?" Winter laughed sardonically. "Well, then, you'd better be going. It's me Myra loves—you don't stand an earthly."

The air of assurance of the man nettled Bob, aroused the streak of obstinacy in his nature. Somehow, he felt that the girl could not possibly like so cynical and cold-hearted a man as Winter appeared to be. No doubt he was trading on the fact that he was her boss—that she feared he might dismiss her from her post if she did not humour him.

"Myra," Bob turned determinedly to the distracted girl. "Out of the office I'm not taking orders from Mr. Winter. Until you ask me to go I'm not leaving here."

"Then, Bob," Myra quickly began, intending to ask him to leave at once, and so avoid possible trouble, "do, please—"

"You impertinent little rat!" The infuriated words burst from Winter as, livid of face, he suddenly leaped forward, caught at Bob's arm, and swung him round. "What the blazes do you mean? You'll not leave till Myra asks you. Well, let me tell you this is my place and—"

"You lie!" Bob flung at him fiercely, clenching his hands.

"All the same it is my apartment!" sneered the newspaper proprietor. "Miss Deane is not well off, certainly not in a position to run such a place as this. But she's clever, a good Society editor, and as such it is necessary for her to have good rooms. But, Marshall, perhaps next month she will allow you to pay the rent. A bold cavalier. But a whipper-snapper who couldn't—"

He said no more, for, with a cry of rage, Bob whipped up his fist and crashed it clean into the leering face, sending Winter staggering. Right into an inlaid mahogany table the newspaper proprietor crashed, and, as he shot out his hand to save himself from falling, his fingers came into contact with a bronze statue standing on the polished surface of the table.

A terrified scream burst from Myra as she shrank back against the chesterfield, white of face, trembling in every limb. Next second Bob, sensing Winter's intention, flung himself bodily at the man. In the nick of time he caught the other's wrist as, with murder in his eyes, the newspaper proprietor swung back his arm to launch the heavy missile at the youngster's head. And then they were struggling furiously.

The bronze statue went to the floor with a crash, and grasping fiercely at each other they lurched all over the room, each striving to throw the other, while Myra watched with terrified eyes, calling frantically to them to stop.

For two or three minutes the battle

raged, then Bob's foot caught in the thick pile of a rug. Desperately he strove to save himself from falling, but Winter, quick to seize the advantage, wrenched himself free from the boy's clinging embrace, uttering a savage cry of triumph. Next second, and an iron-hard fist thudded to the side of Bob's head, sending him hurtling across the room to crash to the floor beside the window.

"Oh, don't!" screamed Myra imploringly, as Winter rushed down on the fallen boy. "Please don't!"

But Bob was quickly on his feet again, and though dazed from the heavy blow, he was ready as Winter reached him. A clever feint and he dodged the vicious right that was aimed at him, then caught the newspaper proprietor a hefty blow clean between the eyes.

Back went Winter to cannon into the chesterfield and Myra, with a frightened gasp, dodged quickly out of the way. Furiously Bob charged after his man. But Winter parried the blow that was aimed at his head and the two locked again. But late nights and too much wine had taken toll of the newspaper proprietor's stamina and suddenly, Bob, wriggling free from Winter's weakening grasp, whipped up his right and again landed heavily between the other's eyes.

A sobbing gasp ceasing him, Winter went toppling backwards over the chesterfield—then came a thud as he crashed to the floor and the back of his head struck the curb of the fireplace.

"Ooooh!" Horror in her eyes, fearful that he might be badly hurt, Myra ran to the fallen man and dropped to her knees besides him. His eyes were closed, his face white and bleeding. Wildly she caught at his wrist, feeling for the pulse. Just a faint sign of beating—that was all. Supposing he was to die? The dread thought sent an icy chill down her spine and she glanced quickly at Bob, who stood beside the chesterfield, clothes rumpled, hair tousled, breathing heavily from the result of his exertions of the past few minutes. "He's—he's unconscious! I'll take care of him. Go now. Please—please go, for my sake. There mustn't be any scandal. See what I mean? Hurry—oh, hurry!"

Bob pulled himself together instantly. Well he knew what would happen if he stayed there a moment longer and someone happened on the scene. A terrible scandal—with the three of them involved. Besides, he might even be arrested for assault.

A nod to Myra and then he was gone. But scarce had the door closed behind him than the horrified girl saw the inert figure of Winter give a sudden convulsive tremor and then become strangely still.

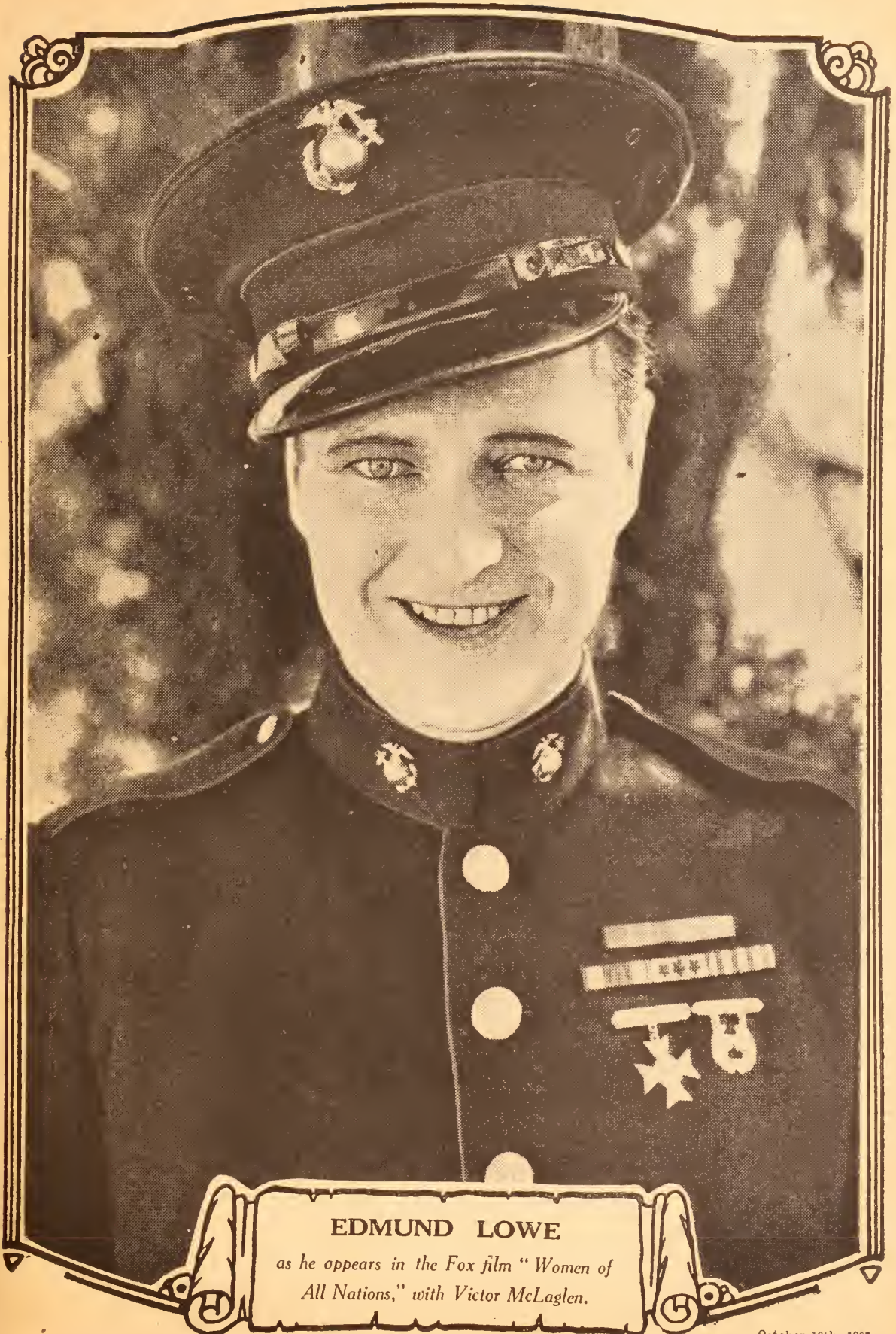
The man was dead!

A while she knelt there stunned. What should she do? What could she do? A scandal simply had to be avoided and above all that boy—Bob Marshall, whom she realised in that terrible moment meant more than life itself to her—Bob must be saved from the consequences of that terrible scene.

At last a thought occurred to her and, jumping to her feet, she rushed to the telephone, called up Frederick Herk, Winter's secretary, and after telling him that the newspaper proprietor was dead, implored him to come straight to her apartments without breathing a word to anyone of what had taken place.

Herk agreed to her frantic request somewhat reluctantly, and with a sigh of relief the distracted girl sank limply into a chair to wait for him.

(Continued on page 20.)



EDMUND LOWE

as he appears in the Fox film "Women of All Nations," with Victor McLaglen.

"UP FOR MURDER."

(Continued from page 18.)

A Way Out.

FREDERICK HERK looked down at the dead body of the man who had been his chief, then picked up the bronze statue from where it had fallen to the floor. For several moments he weighed it in his hand, gazing at it intently, his brows furrowed as if in deep thought.

"Well, it's a good story, Myra." He set the statue down upon the mahogany table, then turned to Myra, who sat watching him from narrowed lids, and slowly shook his head. "But let me tell you this. I said I'm willing to try and hush up this terrible thing, but that yarn of yours isn't good enough for a jury."

"You mean you don't believe it?" Myra said with sinking heart.

"I don't say that—I said I didn't think a jury would." The shrewd secretary smiled grimly. "Think how it would sound. Mr. Winter crosses the room, trips over a rug, stumbles and falls, striking his head against the table. Um—um—not good enough. We've got to find something better than that. Now come, Myra—did you do it?"

"Yes," she lied, realising he did not believe her tale about how Winter had met his death and feeling it would be safer to blame herself than to tell the real truth. Herk might not be so willing to hush up matters if he knew that Bob was the culprit.

"I thought so." But the secretary did not think anything of the kind. It was just his way of getting eventually at the true facts. "Why—and how did you kill him?"

"Why, I—I struck him with that statue!" she told him desperately.

But her tone was not convincing, as Herk was quick to notice.

"Come on, Myra," he coaxed. "Who else was here?"

"I tell you—no one." The girl felt her heart pumping furiously against her ribs. It was obvious that he didn't believe she had done it after all. Did he know of Bob and that they had been friendly? She looked at him as fearlessly as she could. "I did it. Don't you believe me?"

"Myra, listen to me and listen carefully." He came right up to her, grim determination on his set face. "You answer my question truthfully or this thing goes further than you or I—or that boy!"

"How do you know about—?" Myra bit her lip as she realised she had made a false step. Desperately she tried to cover it. "What boy?"

"Oh, that's all right—we'll forget him for the moment." Herk smiled, well-satisfied. That Sunday in the park—he had seen Myra and Bob together. Then there was that absurd "story" the boy had written about the girl. Obvious to him that the two were very friendly. And the signs of a scuffle in this room. More than likely Bob Marshall had been here when Winter had called and a scene had followed. So Herk had reasoned and he knew now it was the truth. "Now, Myra, understand this—we can't afford a scandal. You can't, poor Winter's people can't and above all the paper can't. Now I've got an idea. We've got to get Winter out of here—and back to the office. That's where he died. Get that straight, my girl. He was killed in his office—by an unknown October 10th, 1931.

assailant. I was in an adjacent room, my own office, and— But there's no time to waste. I'll tell you all about it later."

Out in the streets of New York, newsboys were rushing hither and thither yelling of the murder of William Winter, proprietor of "The World." If ever there was a sensation this was it, and the papers sold like hot cakes. People of all classes and descriptions were acquainted with the dead man and all were eager to know just how the unfortunate victim had met his end.

And the police were anxious to know that, too. At that very moment, Detective-inspector Mitchell of the City police was interrogating Frederick Herk up in the dead man's office, where the secretary in the early hours had contrived in his car to bring the body unseen from Myra's apartments.

"And who was the last to see Mr. Winter alive?" the detective asked Herk. "I believe I was," the secretary calmly replied. "You see, Mr. Winter is not usually in his office so late at night. He came down especially to read over his editorial on Farm Relief. Poor Mr. Winter. He was a public benefactor, Mr. Mitchell, and—"

"Quite so." The detective did not want to hear the dead man's good points, for they did not concern him in the least. He was here to discover all he could about the crime—to gather information and clues that might lead to the arrest of the assailant. But there was not much to gain in the newspaper offices, for Herk said he knew very little beyond the fact that as he had sat in his own office adjoining Winter's he had heard the mutter of voices seemingly to come from Winter's room—voices that appeared to be raised in anger. Mitchell knew that he must now continue his investigations elsewhere and so he rose to his feet, jerking his hat well down over his forehead. "Well, Mr. Herk, you can rest assured that the District Attorney's Office will leave no stone unturned to run down this foul assassin. We're up against a brick wall at the moment, but we'll find him never fear."

But as the detective tramped from the room, Herk smiled to himself. He thought it very unlikely that the police would make an arrest with nothing whatever to go on. And as for Bob Marshall—he would be sure to keep well out of the way—would probably flee the country. It was almost certain a scandal would be avoided.

"I Killed Him!"

IT came as a great shock to Reginald Herk when the telephone bell rang that evening and the chief of police, from the other end of the line, told him that a young fellow had given himself up as the murderer of the dead newspaper proprietor. Robert Marshall, employed by "The World," he said he was. Would Mr. Herk come along and identify him?

"He says he murdered Mr. Winter?" Herk groaned to himself as he realised that this meant the crushing of his hopes—that a scandal was now imminent unless— He scarcely dare ask the chief the question: "What—what else does he say?"

"Nothing beyond that he killed the man!"

"I'll be right over, chief!" cried Herk, his face brightening swiftly, and he lunged up the receiver.

There was just a chance that all would be well after all. So long as Bob Marshall did not speak. But it was imperative that he should see the boy at once,

before the police had time to force the truth from him by their dread third degree methods, and warn him to keep silent.

Quickly he called Myra on the telephone, asked her to look into his office at once. Bare seconds later the girl came in, looking at him inquiringly.

"Marshall's confessed." Herk had risen to his feet, and as the girl reeled under the enormity of his words he caught at her arm to steady her. "Now, now, Myra, pull yourself together. So far, we're in luck—he hasn't talked. But I've got to get right down to police headquarters to him as quickly as I can."

"All right." With an effort Myra mastered the fear that gripped her. "I'll go with you."

She turned with the intention of getting her hat and coat, but the secretary quickly drew her back.

"You'll do nothing unless I tell you." There was no mistaking the command in Herk's tone. "You'll stay right here at work and keep your mouth shut. We've gone too far with this—we can't back out now."

"But it's all my fault!" The girl clasped her hands distractedly, tears very near her eyes. "What about Bob—what about him?"

"Oh, don't worry about the boy. I'll save him. I've got to save him." He reached for his hat that lay on a chair, rammed it on his head. "But I can't do it with lawyers, Myra, and I can't do it by telling the truth."

"Well, how then?" the girl asked him anxiously.

"Well, I—I'll have to let the D.A.'s office convict him." Herk smiled wryly as the girl clapped her hands to her face in horror, sharply caught in her breath. "Believe me, Myra, it's our only chance. Afterwards I'll fix it to get him off."

"Are you sure you can do it?" she cried hoarsely.

"Yes—providing you help me and the paper doesn't become involved in a scandal I know we can swing it." He patted her shoulder reassuringly, and felt relieved as a wan smile broke over her pretty face. "Now, come on, Myra, get back to your work and leave it all to me."

She went then, satisfied, and Frederick Herk once more lifted the receiver of the telephone. This time he called up Charlie Collins, at work in the chief editorial offices, and requested his presence. To the maudlin reporter he confided all that had happened, and swore him to silence, then asked him to go along to Bob's home and impress upon the mother that whatever she did she must remain dumb about the whole terrible affair.

"Remember, Collins," Herk said imperatively when the reporter had agreed to undertake the mission. "Mrs. Marshall knows nothing—she doesn't even know where the kid went when he left the house that night. And get this—she doesn't even know Myra Deane."

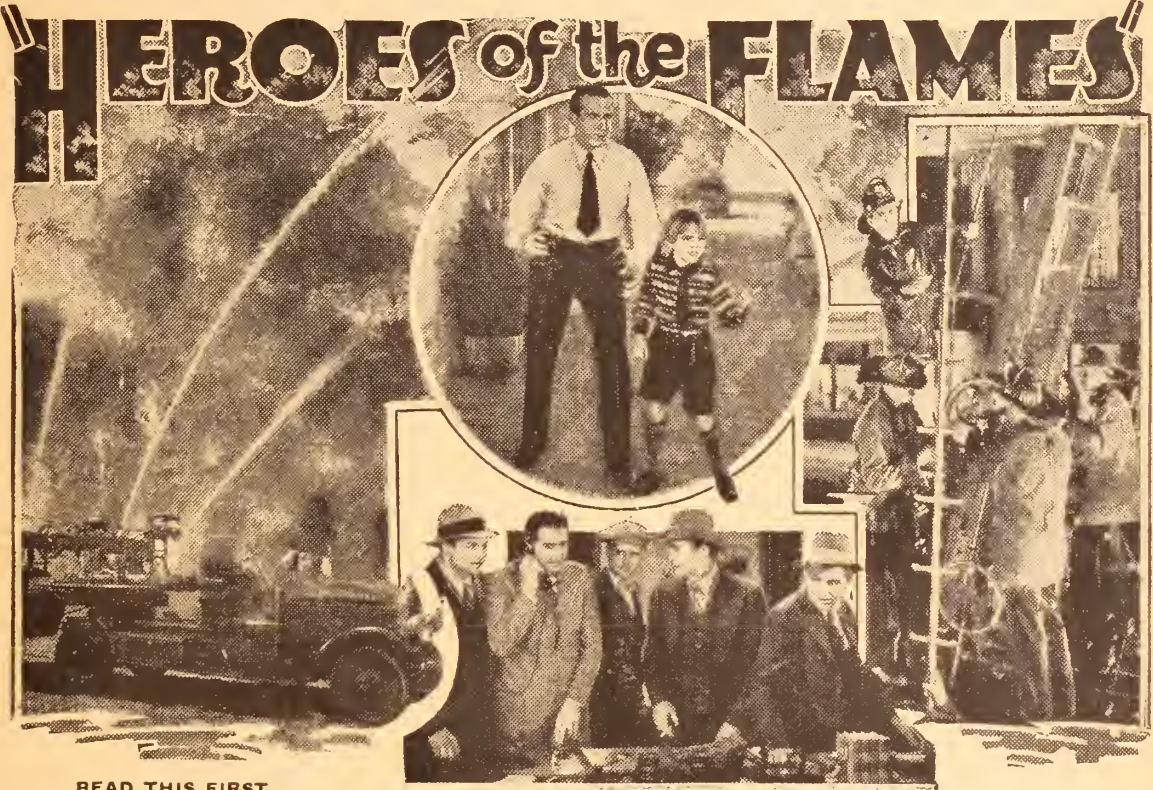
"I understand." The reporter winked knowingly.

"Explain to her," went on the secretary, "that the kid'll have to stand trial—probably be convicted—but that I'll get him off. It's his only chance."

Collins nodded and sped away, and some ten minutes later while he was extracting from Mrs. Marshall a promise that she would not utter a word that might help the police in their investigations, Frederick Herk came into the room at police headquarters where sat Bob, white-faced, tight-lipped, surrounded by half a dozen plain-clothes men, who were putting him through the

(Continued on page 25.)

A fearless young fireman invents a fire-fighting machine, but a fiendish enemy does everything to steal the plans and rob the hero of the girl he worships. A grand serial of breathless suspense and thrilling drama. Starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.



READ THIS FIRST.

While en route with his comrades to the scene of a fire, Bob Darrow, of the San Francisco Brigade, saves the life of a boy who falls in front of one of the monster engines.

Later he calls on James Madison, head of a chemical company, to whom he puts up an idea for a patent fire-extinguisher. Madison is not interested, and Bob leaves disappointed, after meeting Dan Mitchell, a shady promoter who is befriending Madison for his own ends.

That afternoon Bob rescues June Madison from a fire in her father's office, then learns that the boy he had saved from the wheels of the fire-engine was Madison's son, Jackie.

In gratitude, Madison helps Bob to perfect his invention, the Darrow Fire-Bomb.

But Dan Mitchell is anxious to sell Madison an extinguisher of his own, and to discredit Bob he scuds a hireling to "doctor" the fireman's invention with a deadly explosive.

Madison's faith in the invention remains unshaken. He lends Bob his warehouse laboratory and joins him there for an experiment, which is interrupted by Mitchell's hirelings.

A scuffle for possession of Bob's formula results in a fire. Meanwhile, June receives a mysterious warning from Trixie Farrell, a scorned sweetheart of Mitchell's, and reaches the scene with Mitchell in her car as the Brigade arrives.

Bob appears with Madison in his arms.

June rushes forward with a glad cry of thankfulness to help Bob.

But as Bob lays Madison on the sidewalk an avalanche of bricks and flaming debris hurtles down to overwhelm both men!

Now Read On.

EPISODE 6.

"THE JAWS OF DEATH."

Under the Debris.

JUNE MADISON involuntarily sprang back, and to that she probably owed her life. But she gained a vivid and horrible impression of the mass of flaming timber and masonry hurtling down on Bob Darrow.

Bob flung himself forward in a heroic effort to shield the prone form of June's father with his own body, and a moment later the thundering cataract of stone had completely overwhelmed him.

June screamed, and her shriek of despair was echoed by a horrified shout from firemen, police officers and civilians. There was an immediate rush to the spot, Battalion Chief Wilson and the stalwarts of Number Five Station being the first on the scene.

A hose truck stood by the kerb, and this had borne the brunt of the fall of masonry, the debris being piled against the vehicle. June was scrambling over the mass of wreckage when Wilson and his subordinates came up, and was tearing frenziedly at the fragments of stone with her bare hands, regardless of the smouldering pieces of timber that blistered her.

Wilson caught her about the waist and dragged her away.

"Oh, chief," she sobbed distractedly, "dad and Bob Darrow are buried under there! You've got to get them clear!"

Wilson shouted orders to his men, "Get picks and shovels!" he called. "Dig 'em out before the rest of the

building caves in. Quick, boys—there's no time to lose."

The firemen sprang to obey his commands. In the space of a few seconds they were working like Trojans to throw aside the debris, and as it was dragged away a reassuring cry went up, offering June a ray of hope.

"They're under the hose truck! They've missed the bulk of it, anyway!"

A limp figure was pulled from under the battered vehicle. It was the figure of Madison, and he was borne swiftly to the other side of the street. Before the men carrying him could reach the opposite sidewalk, Bob Darrow had been rescued in the same fashion.

The two victims of the collapse were laid down on the pavement, and presently Bob opened his eyes dazedly. He was bruised and burned, but otherwise seemed to have taken no serious hurt.

"Mr. Madison!" he faltered, as he struggled into a sitting posture. "Is he all right?"

It was Battalion Chief Wilson who answered him.

"Yes, Darrow," he assured the young fireman. "He's safe, but he hasn't come round yet. Lucky for the two of you that you were under that fire truck, or you'd both have been crushed to death."

"I saw the crash coming," Bob explained, "and managed to drag him beneath the wagon. Then everything went dark. Something hit us, I suppose?"

"The back-axle snapped and took the pair of you across the head," one of his comrades on the Brigade put in. "That's what laid you out. But, say, Madison's comin' round!"

Bob turned his head, and saw that

June was holding her father in her arms.

"Dad," she said with a hysterical catch in her voice, "oh, dad, I thought you and Bob were killed! Are you badly hurt?"

Madison raised himself with a groan. "I'll soon be all right, dear," he panted. "Thanks to Bob—we got out in time. He carried me from the top floor. But my head feels as if it's splitting."

"The wall caved in," Wilson interposed. "Darrow managed to haul you over a fire truck, but you took a crack over the skull. You'll feel better after a minute or two."

"June," Bob advised, "you'd better take your father home. An experience of this kind isn't exactly a nerve tonic, you know."

June pressed his hand.

"You'd better come along with us, too," she declared. "I imagine a little rest would do your own nerves some good."

"Well, June," Bob retorted with a shaky laugh, "a fireman isn't supposed to have any nerves. And, besides, I'm needed here."

In spite of the fact that Wilson himself urged him to accept June's offer of a lift home, Bob insisted on giving his comrades a hand. So, with the help of a police officer, June supported her father and led him to the automobile in which she and Dan Mitchell had driven to the warehouse.

Mitchell was nowhere to be seen, and June did not wait to look for him, as her father seemed to be suffering severely from shock. Helping him into the car, she took the wheel and started the engine, and a moment afterwards she had turned the auto and was driving towards home.

From a side-street, into which he had darted after encountering his hireling, Spike Beldou, Mitchell saw the car flash by.

"That was June and her father," he jerked. "Well, Madison's safe—which is a good thing. I don't want anything to happen to him while I can make use of him."

"But it wouldn't worry you none if Darrow hasn't got clear, huh?" Spike mentioned with a leer.

Mitchell nodded grimly.

"It would be his hard luck," he rejoined, "and I guess I wouldn't go into mourning for him. But come on—while we're making ourselves scarce, tell me just what happened."

New Plans.

NO later than the following morning, Dan Mitchell had proof that Bob Darrow was very much alive, for, entering the drive of the Madisons' house, on the outskirts of the city, he caught sight of June and the young fireman in a leafy bower not far from the terrace.

It had been Mitchell's intention to call on Madison and express concern for the latter's ordeal of the previous night. But he changed his mind and slipped into the shrubbery of the grounds, working his way round towards the bower where he had seen Bob and June.

Gaining a vantage-point just behind the young couple, he parted the foliage of the bushes and peered at them. June was sitting with her back to him on a swing-seat with a striped awning. Bob was pacing to and fro before her.

"A penny for your thoughts," June murmured.

Bob paused in front of her. He was facing the shrubbery now, but Mitchell

had quickly ducked behind the thickets and remained unseen.

"My thoughts have already cost your father entirely too much," Bob said earnestly.

"Well," June retorted with a smile, "if you'd sit down and pay some attention to me, instead of walking back and forward like a caged bear, you might change your mind about that."

Bob laughed, and settled himself beside her.

"That's better," she observed. "Now listen. When I told dad of the mysterious 'phone warning I'd received from that unknown woman, he felt convinced beyond all doubt that someone was trying to get the formula for your fire-extinguisher."

Bob nodded emphatically. "And that someone is the person who put nitro in the chemicals to ruin that first demonstration I made in the grounds here," he declared.

"Dad is of the same opinion," June told him. "And that's why he wants you to go to his mountain cabin in the Sierras without anyone knowing it. He thinks you'll be safe there from the mysterious agents who are working against you."

"Yes, he suggested the same thing to me," Bob replied. "It was his idea to have Pat Heeley go along with me, but I doubt if Pat will be able to get leave of absence from the Fire Department."

June smiled again. "Don't you worry about that," she said. "Dad usually gets what he goes after, and— Oh, here's dad now!" she exclaimed, as she saw her father approaching from the terrace. "And he looks as though he had good news."

From his place of concealment in the bushes, Dan Mitchell saw Madison walking across the grounds, and he listened attentively as June's father reached the bower and began to speak.

"Well, it's all set," Madison announced heartily. "You're to start immediately, Bob, and Pat is to go with you. Actually, he's ready to leave hospital, and he's none the worse for that crash in the motor-race. But the Fire Department is extending his sick-leave—as a special favour."

"Gee! I'm glad Pat is coming along," Bob said.

"Now didn't I tell you dad usually got what he went after?" June put in laughingly.

"You certainly did," Bob agreed. "and you sure were right."

Madison spoke again. "Well," he declared, "the sooner you make a start the better, Bob, so if you'll come into the house I'll show you how to get to the cabin at Hillsridge."

He led the way towards the terrace, and Mitchell watched them out of sight. Then, completely abandoning his intention of calling at the house, he hurried from the grounds.

In the meantime, Madison had shown Bob into his study. There he opened up a map and laid it on the table, indicating the environs of San Francisco and the route it would be necessary for Bob to take.

"You're to pick Pat up at the hospital," Madison began, as Bob leaned over his shoulder, "then you'll continue on out to the cabin. There's a work-bench there, of course, and all the apparatus you'll need. I do some experimenting there myself occasionally, when I feel like some good, clean mountain air, but can't break away entirely from business interests."

"It's mighty good of you to lend me the place, Mr. Madison," Bob said gratefully.

"Not at all," June's father rejoined.

"Now as to chemical materials, you needn't worry about them. I've already sent a load of stuff up there, so you'll find everything you require."

He fixed his attention on the map, and pointed to a thread of highway running north-east from the city.

"Very well, then," he proceeded. "Here's the road you're to take. You follow it out as far as here, then turn off through the old tunnel. It's a quick cut."

"I know it," Bob said.

"Once through the tunnel," Madison continued, "you swing sharp to your left and carry on for about a mile. After you've travelled a mile, you'll see a cabin—also on the left—with a lone tree in front of it. You can't miss it. Is that all clear to you?"

"Perfectly," Bob answered. "But I don't know how I can ever thank you enough for the trouble and expense you're putting yourself to on my account, Mr. Madison."

June's father laid a hand on his shoulder. "Young man," he retorted, "doesn't it ever occur to you that three members of the Madison family are so much in your debt that no trouble or expense could ever repay you? Jackie—June—myself—we all owe you our lives. So let's hear no more about you never being able to thank me. Here, you'd better take this map. It might be useful."

Five minutes later, Bob was climbing into the small two-seater that he ran when he was off-duty and in civvies. Saying "good-bye" to June and her father, who promised to follow him to the cabin within an hour or two, he drove off on the first stage of his journey to the mountains.

June and her father were true to their word, for immediately after Bob's departure they made preparations for the trip to the Sierras, and when lunch was over the chauffeur brought the sports car round to the front door.

"I won't need you, Sam," Madison told his employee. "June will drive." Then, as the chauffeur went off, he turned to Mrs. Madison, who had followed them out of the house.

"Now don't fret if you hear nothing from us," he said to his wife, "for I don't want anyone to know where we're going."

"I understand," Mrs. Madison rejoined. "I'll lead people to believe that I'm going to join you at Santa Barbara with Jackie."

"And mother," put in June, "I had an engagement with a girl friend—Eleanor Standish. Will you 'phone her and tell her I can't meet her Thursday?"

"I will, my dear," Mrs. Madison assured her. "Good-bye, and take care of yourselves, the two of you."

June settled herself behind the wheel, and, her father beside her, drove through the gates on to the road.

Dan Mitchell's Move.

SHORTLY after Bob Darrow had been directed to the cabin by Madison, Dan Mitchell held a conference with two of his hirelings—Spike Beldou and another back-street thug known as Silk Connolly.

Mitchell was also poring over a map of San Francisco and its environs, and, with Spike and Connolly standing at his side, he traced with a pencil that same route which Madison had outlined to Bob.

"Now you can't go wrong, Spike," he stated. "You follow the mountain road till you pass through the tunnel. Madison's place is just a short distance beyond."

Spike frowned. "Yeah," he muttered. "I ain't worryin' any about findin' the place. But if this bird Pat Heeley is half as tough as Darrow, we ain't gonna have no picnic gettin' that formula."

Mitchell straightened up and glanced at him with contempt.

"Aw, getting cold feet, are you?" he sneered. "Afraid of a guy that's just come out of the hospital. For that's where Heeley's been this last two weeks."

"Say, listen, boss," put in Connolly. "Spike's all right. But Darrow is plenty hard. You ain't never been up against a guy like him."

"All right," snapped Mitchell. "Then take the gang with you if you're afraid to go alone. But I want that formula! Understand?"

Spike stood up. "Sure, Mitch', an' we'll get it for yuh," he answered resolutely. "We'll get Butch and Merlin, an' the four of us'll wipe out those two firemen afore we're through."

Spike and Connolly left the office and entered a roadster parked in the street outside. At a low den near the docks they picked up Butch and Merlin, who had figured in the scuffle at the warehouse when the first and unsuccessful attempt had been made to secure Bob's formula.

Butch and Merlin piled in, and Connolly drove through town and made for the mountain road. Three or four hours later they were in the heart of the Sierras, and, following a trail cut into the side of one of the great, wooded hills, they entered the old tunnel which both Madison and Mitchell had mentioned.

A gang of labourers were working on the tunnel, but, after some slight delay entailed by the operations, Spike and his associates drove on, and a mile beyond they sighted the Madison cabin lying to the left of the road.

They pulled up in the shelter of some

thickets, and climbed from the car. From where they stood they were able to see a two-seater outside the cabin, which nestled in a kind of hollow, and it at once became apparent that Bob and Pat Heeley had only arrived a few minutes before, for the two firemen were busy unloading some luggage from the back of the auto.

"You fellers stay right here," said Spike to his companions. "I'll go down into the hollow and get the low-down on that outfit."

He worked his way through the brush, and, still under cover, paused within a stone's throw of the cabin. In the silence he heard the voices of Bob and Pat quite distinctly.

"Sure and 'tis a foine place ye have here for yer job," Pat was saying in his rich Irish brogue. "It's so quiet ye can hear yersilf think."

Bob laughed. "Well, that's just the way we want it, Pat," he declared. "We'll be able to work much better, and there won't be anyone coming around—disturbing us. It sure is a great spot." And he looked round appreciatively at the dense forests and thickets of brushwood that closed in about the cabin on three sides.

The two firemen passed into the dwelling, and Spike Beldon stole nearer and took up his position at a window from which he commanded a view of the cabin's back room.

Bob and Pat had entered that room. It was fitted up as a laboratory, and, keen to begin work, Bob prepared the necessary apparatus and proceeded to mix the chemicals of his fire-extinguishing invention.

"I'll have a vial ready in no time," Spike heard Bob say, "and then I'll give you a demonstration, Pat."

"Gee, I'm bustin' to see it," the Irishman assured his colleague.

"You'll see it just as soon as I get these ingredients mixed in their correct

proportions," Bob continued, poring over a scrap of paper on which Spike Beldon's eyes fastened eagerly.

Pat picked up the document curiously. "An' this is the formula for your chemical foire-extinguisher, is it?" he inquired. "A little scrap of paper that's worth a million dollars, hegorra! But who the blazes can read it?" he added, staring at the script, which was utterly meaningless to him.

"I can, Pat," Bob answered, juggling with a retort.

Spike Beldon had heard and seen enough. Drawing back from the window, he slipped into the brush and forced his way back to the spot where he had left his companions.

The gangsters looked at him questioningly as he appeared.

"What's the word, Spike?" asked Connolly.

"Darrow's at work in the cabin," Spike said. "Heeley's with him. Darrow aims to make up a vial and give a demonstration with the extinguisher on the spot, to satisfy himself it's the goods. An' he has the formula with him."

"Are there only the two of them?" put in Merlin.

Spike nodded. "Just the two—Heeley and Darrow," he rejoined. "Now listen, I've got a plan to fool 'em an' get what we're after. I want you an' Butch to go ahead, Connolly. Darrow an' Heeley will think you're alone. Merlin an' I will wait long enough for you to tackle 'em, and while you're keepin' 'em busy we'll slip in an' finish the job."

"You want Butch an' me to go down there an' lay into 'em," said Connolly. "Is that it?"

"Sure," Spike told him. "They won't suspect nothin' at first, so walk right up to the cabin friendly-like. That oughta fool 'em plenty, an' when you start rough-housin' 'em they'll be taken by surprise."



The limp figures of Madison and Bob Darrow were pulled from under the battered vehicle.

"I get you; but don't wait too long before you show up with Merlin," Connolly muttered anxiously. "Those two guys might be a handful for us." "We won't be too long," Spike answered testily. "Go on—get busy."

Connolly started for the cabin, jerking his head to Butch to indicate that he should follow. They did not advance by the same route that Spike had taken when he had reconnoitred the hollow, but marched boldly towards their objective, and they were about seventy-five yards from it when Butch suddenly checked.

"Say, Silk," he exclaimed, "it ain't occurred to Spike that I was mixed up in that shindy at the warehouse. Darrow might recognise me if he sees me a-comin', I guess. Let's hit the brush and work round under cover, the way Spike did just now."

"You're right, Butch," Connolly agreed, and they plunged into the thickets.

Meanwhile, standing at the bench in the cabin laboratory, Bob finished work on the sample he was making and poured the liquid into a small vial.

"Sure, an' it looks pretty enough to drink," Pat commented, as he admired the colour of the liquid.

"Yes, but this is not intended for a thirst," Bob replied. "Now we'll go outside and start a good, snappy fire and put it out instantly with just this amount of extinguisher. You know, back at the station the chief laughed at the idea of putting out a blaze with a chemical of this kind," he added, pocketing his formula.

Pat grinned. "I'd laugh at the chief," he observed, "but I wouldn't let him hear me."

They walked out of the cabin, and were immediately seen from the brush by Connolly and Butch, who hesitated a moment and then advanced with extreme caution.

Ignorant of the danger that was closing in on them, Bob and Pat picked upon a dead tree that had been blasted by lightning, and, gathering masses of brushwood, they piled it against the trunk. When he was satisfied with the dimensions of the beacon, Bob set a match to the fuel.

The dry brushwood blazed up almost at once, and Bob drew back. With Pat at his side, he watched the fire from a distance of twenty paces, and in as many seconds lurid tongues of flame were coiling up the dead tree-trunk to a height of fifteen feet.

"Pat," Bob announced, "I'm certainly enthusiastic about this experiment. I know it's going to work."

Pat had become the picture of anxiety, for it seemed to him that the bonfire was assuming a perilous degree of intensity.

"You'd better throw the thing," he urged. "You're goin' to burn the whole place up. Supposin' the woods catch fire!"

"Now don't get scared, Pat," Bob laughed. "I'm going to put out that blaze quicker than a cataract of water. Here goes!"

With the words he hurled the tiny vial at the base of the tree-trunk. There was an explosion that caused Pat to leap away in alarm, and a dense cloud of gas enveloped the bonfire. When the fumes cleared an instant later there was not even a glowing ember to be seen amid the pile of brushwood, and, what was equally remarkable, the explosion had not displaced a single twig.

Pat ran forward in amazement, and October 10th, 1931.

when Bob joined him at the tree-trunk the Irishman was reaching out gingerly to touch the dry vegetation that had been burning so furiously a moment previously.

"It's cold!" he exclaimed. "Bob, your fortune's made!"

"It sure is, Pat," Bob rejoined. "Just imagine what that extinguisher will do to a big fire. Just imagine what—"

He never completed the sentence, for at that instant Butch and Connolly leapt from the brush and pounced on the two firemen.

Connolly assailed Bob, and speedily had cause to regret his choice, for, though taken by surprise, the fireman-inventor soon recovered himself, and with lunched knuckles he proceeded to batter the crook relentlessly.

Butch had met with more success in the initial stages of attack. He was a thick-set, powerful ruffian, and he had hurled himself at Pat Heeley's back and felled him with a terrific blow to the neck.

Pat was flung to the ground, and Butch dropped a-top of him and struck at him savagely as he lay there. But though he had come straight out of hospital, and though he had been half-stunned by that first cowardly punch, the Irishman managed to pull himself together.

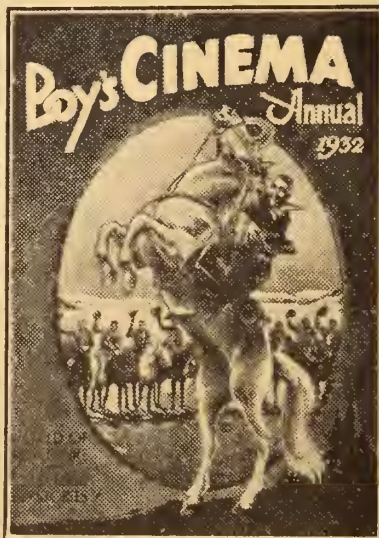
Twisting round, he threw Butch off and then scrambled to his feet. The crook was up with him, and they hit out at each other fiercely, Pat bellowing imprecations in his Irish brogue as he did so.

It gradually dawned on the sturdy Butch that he had met his match in Pat, and was taking a lot of punishment. That some impression had long since been made on Connolly by Bob Darrow, and both gangsters began to wish heartily that Spike and Merlin would show up.

The Blast.

THE foreman in charge of one of the shifts working on the mountain-road tunnel made his way to the superintendent.

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"We've struck solid rock, boss," he said, "and we'll have to blast it out. I've got the men drilling now."

"That means the tunnel will be closed for a while, huh?" the superintendent observed. "All right, I'll tell you what to do. Send a man round to the far end of the tunnel to turn all cars on to the other road."

His instructions were obeyed, and a flagman was despatched to the north-eastern end of the tunnel, the end farthest from San Francisco. Shortly afterwards June Madison and her father appeared in their sports car, but as they were coming from the direction of the city, and as it was too late to turn them on to the loop road, the superintendent let them through. The drilling had not been completed, anyhow, so there was as yet no danger.

"We're widening the tunnel at the other end," he explained to the Madisons after waving them down. "The men are working inside, so kindly drive with care."

June switched on her headlamps and took no risks. The tunnel extended for a distance of over a hundred yards, and only when she was clear of it did she turn out the lights and accelerate to a speed of more than ten miles an hour.

The Madisons were hardly through the tunnel when drilling ceased and the workmen trooped back to the end where the superintendent was standing. A detonating plunger was then made ready to explode the blast that had been laid, but the first attempt failed to produce any effect.

"Something wrong," muttered the man operating the plunger, and, after examining it, he tried it again with the same result.

"Say, get some fuse!" ordered the superintendent impatiently. "We can't wait for that plunger with the dynamite all set. And make sure that flagman's at the other end to stop all traffic."

Speeding along the left fork of the mountain road, the Madisons knew nothing of the details connected with the work on the tunnel. They certainly never imagined that the activities which were in progress there were yet to become bound up in their own interests.

When they were still less than a mile beyond the tunnel they caught a glimpse of the cabin through a break in the thickets, and at the spectacle which met her eyes June pulled up sharply.

"Dad," she gasped, "look down there in the hollow! Bob and Pat fighting with two men!"

She swung off the road and drove straight for the cabin. Approaching it on foot from another angle, Spike Beldon and Merlin saw the sports car coming, and they involuntarily ducked down.

June drew the auto to a standstill close to the scene of the scuffle, which was now almost at an end. For since Spike and Merlin had not come to their assistance, Connolly and Butch had been thoroughly overwhelmed.

Bob and Pat had turned them into a couple of punching-bags, but as June and her father appeared they seized the battered ruffians and shook them as terriers might have shaken a pair of rats.

"What's the trouble, Bob?" asked Madison, descending from the sports car.

"Why, these fellows took us by surprise," Bob explained. "I guess we'll run them down to the sheriff's office and make them tell who is back of it all."

(Continued on page 26.)

"UP FOR MURDER."

(Continued from page 20.)

third degree in an effort to discover why he had committed the crime.

But Bob would not speak. He had given himself up when he had learned that William Winter was dead, and was prepared to pay the penalty, but nothing, not even the cruel questioning of the police, would induce him to drag Myra, the girl he worshipped, into the wretched affair.

"Morning, Maloney." Herk greeted the chief detective with a nod of the head, then sat down in the chair Maloney indicated, and jerked a thumb towards the drooping figure of Bob. "What does he say, eh?"

Maloney grunted in disgust. "Nix. We can't get nothin' out of him except that he killed Winter."

Herk experienced a thrill of satisfaction. If the youngster persisted in that attitude all would be well.

"May I try him, Maloney? He may spill the beans for me." As the detective nodded Herk turned to the boy, who looked at the secretary with defiant eyes. "Marshall, come now, tell me why you killed poor Mr. Winter?"

"I killed him," Bob answered deliberately, "and that's all there is to it!"

Herk could almost have cried with delight at this proof of Bob's determination not to divulge the true facts of the case. Obvious to the secretary it was Myra the boy was thinking of, and that being so he would almost certainly not deny that Winter met his death in the office where his body was found by the police. Best to make sure, though.

"Won't speak, eh?" he said. "Only that you killed him in his office. That it?"

"Yes." Bob looked at Herk curiously, saw the suspicion of a wink, and was glad he had not hesitated in his answer. They were trying to hush up the matter—to save the good names of the newspaper and Myra from being dragged in the dust. Somehow Winter's body must have been smuggled to the office—and at the thought Bob's heart sang in his breast. Now he didn't care a jot what happened to him.

"And is that all you're going to say, kid?" As Bob vigorously nodded his head Detective Maloney turned to Herk with a grim smile playing about the corners of his hard mouth. "There's more behind this affair than meets the eye, Herk. Still, we've got enough on the boy to convict him. At the trial your evidence alone will be sufficient to send him to the chair."

The secretary smiled inwardly as he rose to take his departure. Everything was turning out as he had hoped it would. Myra—the newspaper—both were saved from an everlasting disgrace. It now remained for him to work all he knew to save young Marshall from the inevitable sentence.

At the Eleventh Hour.

THE trial had been short and brief. From the first it was obvious to all that Robert Marshall had deliberately and brutally murdered William Winter, the eminent newspaper proprietor. Herk's evidence was enough to condemn any man, and then, when counsel for the defence cross-examined the prisoner, all he would say was that he had killed the dead man. The jury was unanimous. They found Bob guilty without even retiring to debate among themselves. Sentence was therefore

pronounced, and the boy was taken from the court under armed escort and placed in the condemned cell.

A week passed, but try as he would Herk had been unable to find a way to get the sentence repealed. And Bob's time was drawing near!

A distracted mother tried all she knew to coax her son to speak—to say such words that would at least obtain him a lighter sentence, but he was adamant. He had killed William Winter—that was all he would say. Bravely he awaited his fate, though he looked haggard and a wreck of his former athletic self. Myra, the girl he loved, shouldn't suffer because he feared to die.

But there was another who was well nigh on the verge of collapse as the time drew nigh for the boy to pay the supreme penalty. Myra Deane, who tossed restlessly in her bed at nights, unable to sleep for thinking of his terrible plight, who, during the daytime, went about listlessly, doing no work whatsoever, Bob for ever in her mind. She knew now that she loved the youngster as she could love no other, and writhed that Herk could not find a way to save him.

She could save Bob, of course, but only at the price of besmirching her name!

It was as she was bitterly reflecting thus as she sat in her apartment, smoking and drinking to excess in an effort to soothe her jangled nerves, that Mrs. Marshall was announced. Almost she could have screamed when her maid spoke the mother's name. Obviously Mrs. Marshall suspected something of what had occurred, and had come to threaten her. She would not see the woman. But Mrs. Marshall refused to go, and at last Myra was compelled to allow her to come in.

"Miss Deane." The mother, her face lined with deep sorrow, looked appealingly at the nervous girl as she reached hurriedly for a cigarette and applied a match to it with a hand that trembled. "My poor boy. You know all about him. He's there in that terrible place, his hours numbered, and—"

"Oh, don't—please don't!" Myra dropped her cigarette into an ashtray, the tears rushing to her eyes. "Oh, they told me he'd get off. They promised me he'd get off. His youth—"

"I thought that, too," Mrs. Marshall interrupted in a trembling voice. "But he's so stubborn. I can't do a thing with him. Why, he won't say a word to help us get it changed into a life term. But you—I'm sure that you—"

"V-s, yes!" The tears were trickling freely down Myra's ash white face now. Impulsively she flung an arm about the distraught mother's shoulders—gently squeezed her arm. In that poignant moment a great determination surged into Myra's heart. Bob must not die—she loved him, the mother loved him, and no matter what they said about her she would tell the truth. "Mrs. Marshall, please go—go! Bob will not die! I—I swear to you he will not die!"

Something in the girl's voice, in those eyes swimming with tears, reassured Mrs. Marshall, brought a great happiness surging into her aching heart. A warm pressure of the girl's hand, and she went slowly from the

room, knowing that her visit had not been in vain.

Next morning the most sensational story ever printed by a newspaper appeared in "The World." It was written by Myra Deane, who stated simply and plainly the true facts concerning William Winter's death, and every word of it she afterwards repeated to the Chief of Police.

Obvious now that the newspaper proprietor had met his death during a quarrel, and, in consequence, Bob's sentence was instantly quashed. Some wanted to hold him on a charge of manslaughter, but it was put down in the records of the case that William Winter was "killed in self-defence."

Bob was vindicated—free!

Strangely enough, it was Bob's birthday that day he was released from prison, and Mrs. Marshall spared nothing to celebrate her boy's homecoming. A wonderful spread and a birthday cake, but as the two sat down to the meal a knock came at the door.

The caller was Charlie Collins, and as Bob opened the door to him he staggered drunkenly into the little parlour, almost dropping a small brown-paper package that he carried in his hand.

"Ah, ah, your birthday I see, kid." He grinned inanely as he held out the parcel to Bob. "Here, take it, old son! My birthday present to you!"

Mystified, Bob took the package, and, with his mother watching curiously, he pulled off the string, tore aside the brown-paper covering, revealing a small oblong jewel-case. He recognised the case at once, and, with a pang at his heart, he opened it, with fingers that trembled. Inside was the bracelet he had given Myra, together with a slip of paper, on which a message had been scrawled.

"If this is no longer mine, remember me by it," ran the words. "If I'm still worthy of it, give it to me again."

"MYRA."

Bob let out a great cry of joy. Eyes positively dancing, he quickly stuffed the bracelet in his pocket and snatched at his hat.

"She's waiting for you," grinned Collins, wise to the whole affair.

With another glad cry, Bob slapped the reporter heartily on the back, then turned to Mrs. Marshall, who had read the missive over her son's shoulder.


"Excuse me, mother!" he cried ecstatically. "But I've got a date—with the most wonderful girl in all the world. Be back in a little while."

And before his mother could utter a single word, Bob had dashed from the room as if pursued by a thousand demons.

(By permission of Universal Pictures Ltd., starring Lew Ayres and Genevieve Tobin.)

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October 10th, 1931.

"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

(Continued from page 24.)

Spike Beldon moved forward at that moment, and, hurrying ahead of Merlin, pulled an automatic from his hip-pocket and scrambled down the slope of a long ridge. Pausing when he was seventy or eighty paces from the group near the cabin, he levelled the pistol and sent a bullet among them.

The smash of the shot split the silence startlingly. It was followed by another and another, and leaden slugs began to fly amongst the party in the hollow.

They crouched down, but were still in peril—particularly Bob and Pat, as their captives started to struggle violently in their grasp. Then Madison called out.

"Into the sports car—quickly!" he jerked. "Let's get away from here."

It was the wisest course, for they were completely at the mercy of the armed man on the ridge. So the two firemen abandoned their prisoners, though not before they had laid them out with a couple of well-timed jolts, and scrambled into the spare compartment at the back of the automobile, while Madison took his place beside June again.

The car swung round and headed for the road, whereupon Spike turned and raced back to the auto by which he and his associates had arrived. Merlin followed his example, and it was he who took the wheel.

"Pick up those two down at the cabin!" Spike jerked.

Merlin drove the tourer down into the hollow, where Butch and Connolly were roused. They clambered on to the running-board as the car swept forward in pursuit of the Madisons' two-seater, and by the time the road was reached they had dragged themselves into the back of the auto.

The Madisons' sports car was a hundred-and-fifty yards in front, and was speeding back in the direction of the tunnel. With her foot crammed on the accelerator, June watched the needle pass the fifty-five mark.

Spike opened fire again, and the fugitives crouched down as the bullets whined past their heads. Then Madison pulled something from his pocket and pushed it towards the back seat, which Bob and Pat occupied. It was a revolver that he had brought with him as a precaution.

"Here," he panted, "take this! Hit their tyres if you can!"

Pat seized the weapon, and, twisting round, tried to take aim. He pulled the trigger, and the gun kicked spitefully, the shot missing the tyres completely but ricocheting off one of the wings and grazing Spike Beldon's cheek.

The surface of the road was none too smooth, and straight shooting was impossible. But the fact that the fugitives possessed a gun had a pronounced effect on Beldon and his companions. They had been gaining appreciations on the Madisons' car, but now they kept their distance.

Some way ahead, in the gloom of the tunnel, a labourer was setting a match to a fuse that had been connected with the charge of dynamite. The quartette in the sports car knew nothing of this, however, and June continued to drive at high speed.

Spike Beldon was still blazing at the fugitives with the automatic, and Pat

Heeley was still firing at the touring-car's tyres. The reports punctuated the drone of the engines, the crashes of the revolver vibrating in the ears of the Irishman and his friends, the stabbing retort of Beldon's "gat" sounding like a vicious echo.

The sports car swung round a sharp bend and came in full view of the tunnel-mouth. The flagman stationed there immediately ran forward, waving the danger-signal imperatively.

"Stop that car!" he shouted. June kept her foot on the accelerator. She could not have pulled up even had she wanted to, and with a band of desperate men in full pursuit she had no intention of braking.

The flagman suddenly became frantic as he realised that the girl was coming on in spite of his command to halt.

"Hold that car!" he yelled. "Hold that car, will yuh?"

He sprang aside as the sports car bore down on him. It missed him by inches, and, blanching, he screamed a warning at its occupants.

"Don't go in that tunnel! They're goin' to blast!"

But June did not hear. Certainly she eased up a little, on account of the black darkness before her. But, switching on the lights, she drove into the cavernous mouth—drove into the jaws of death, had she but known it.

The tourer containing Mitchell's hirelings skidded round the bend that June had taken a moment previously. The flagman stationed near the tunnel mouth caught sight of it, and, determined to spare its occupants the fate that must overwhelm the quartette in the sports car, he jumped into the automobile's path.

"Ston!" he bellowed. "They're gonna blast! Take the loop road!"

Merlin paid as much heed to him as June had done, and again the flagman was compelled to leap for safety, but this time he was a second too late.

The running-board of the tourer caught his leg and bowled him over. He was flung down by the roadside and lay still. But he had at least achieved his purpose, for the tourer swerved wildly and rooked across the road towards a tall embankment.

Merlin crammed on the brakes, but it was with a certain amount of violence that the tourer thudded into the steep slope. The crooks were badly rattled by the shock, though the car itself sustained no damage beyond a burst tyre.

Meanwhile, the Madisons' auto was forging through the gloom of the tunnel. The wedge of brilliant light from the powerful headlamps danced spasmodically as the auto bumped over the broken ground, and suddenly the beam picked out a moving spark of fire.

It was the fatal spark that was eating its way along the fuse to the charge of dynamite!

The spark reached the explosive. There was a blinding flash of flame and a deafening roar. A shock of air met the car and stopped it, and from June's lips there came a scream that mingled shrilly with the reverberating echoes of the blast.

Then, with a sound like a thunder-clap, a section of the tunnel caved in. Shattered timbers and masses of rock rained down as walls and roof collapsed, and the car and its occupants were buried under a cataract of debris!

(Don't miss next week's enthralling episode. By permission of the Universal Pictures Ltd., starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.)

"EVERYTHING'S ROSIE."

(Continued from page 12.)

"It's all right, honey," soothed Doc—"it's all right. It's just a joke."

"You think so?" thundered the sheriff. "Well, you tell it to the judge and see if he laughs. Take him along, Sam!"

The deputy grabbed Doc by the arm and tried to drag him to the stairs, but Rosie lunged.

"Don't worry, honey," urged Doc. "I'll be right back in ten minutes. You wait here."

"She will not!" cried the sheriff. "Get your things, young lady—you're coming with me."

"Where are you taking her?" shouted Doc indignantly. "Surely you don't think she had anything to do with it? Why, she's only a child."

"That's just it," was the immediate retort. "She's under age, she's not your daughter, and you're not fit to take care of her. I'm going to put her in the orphanage where she belongs. Take him away."

"Onta orrywa," said Doc cheerfully to Rosie. "I'll be ackba."

"What are you saying to her?" demanded the sheriff.

"Just sayin' good-bye in Chinese," Doc replied. And while the sheriff held Rosie, the deputy marched him off down the stairs and away to the little town gaol, where he was shut in a barred cell with a singularly stupid-looking man in uniform outside it for laeler.

Doc, who was still in his dress clothes and top hat, sat down on a hard bunk and thought.

Half an hour passed, and the guard looked in through the door of iron bars to find that the prisoner was playing on the bunk with three halves of walnut shells and a pea, and talking to himself in this wise:

"Now, you see, Doc, it isn't under there, and it isn't under there. So it's got to be under there. Isn't that right, Dee? Yeah, sure that's right—if you say so. But I still don't understand."

"Ho, what are you doing there?" exclaimed the guard, in astonishment.

"Oh, hullo, hullo!" greeted Doc cheerfully. "You know, I was just hoping you'd come around."

"Who were you talking to?"

"Just having a little chat with the three musketeers."

"Three musketeers! Who are they?"

"Come on in, and I'll introduce you."

But the guard shook his head.

"Nop," he growled. "Us guards ain't allowed to fraternise with the prisoners."

"Well, there's no harm in just coming in here and locking them over," suggested Doc.

The guard was tempted and the guard fell. He unlocked the door of the cell and approached the bunk. Doc manipulated the shells and explained the game.

"I bet a guy could lose his shirt on a stunt like that," said the guard.

"I hope so," cooed Doc. "I mean—that's impossible! You see, the eye is much quicker than the hand. Let's try it! Now the pea goes under the little shell, so—so—so—"

In less than five minutes the guard was doing his best to win money. In less than an hour a uniformed man, whose clothes fitted him none too well, presented himself at the orphanage, demanded to see the matron, and, on being ushered into that dame's pre-

sence, explained that a mistake had been made, and that the sheriff desired a certain Miss Rosie Droop to be taken immediately to his office.

Rosie was produced, and, apart from a slight start, did not betray her rescuer.

"Please tell the sheriff," said the matron, "that we are always glad to co-operate with him in every possible way. Good-night, child!"

Together Doc, in his borrowed plumes, and Rosie in her printed silk frock descended the broad steps of the building to the street. Round a convenient corner stood the van, with scraggy Evelyn between the shafts. Doc had thought of everything.

He helped Rosie up into the front seat, and mounting hastily beside her, picked up the reins and a whip.

"Gee, Doc," exclaimed Rosie in wonderment, "how did you manage it?"

"The three musketeers, honey—the three musketeers," chuckled Doc, flourishing the whip. "Come on, Evelyn—do your stuff!"

The van swept noisily along the narrow street. The law-abiding inhabitants of Arcadia were in bed, it seemed, and the thoroughfares deserted.

In a country lane just outside the town Evelyn was given a rest, while Doc divested into the van and divested himself of the guard's uniform, which he tossed into the roadway.

Once more in the evening clothes over which he had worn the denuded guard's apparel, he whipped Evelyn into fresh activity and lit a cigar.

"Can't you go faster, Doc—faster?" asked Rosie nervously.

"We're doing the best we can, kitten," said Doc, tugging at the reins. "Gosh, if only Evelyn had a free wheel we could coast down this hill!"

The lane stretched steeply downwards, a wooded bank on one side, a deep ravine on the other. But since Evelyn was not fitted with a free wheel, Doc had to apply the brakes.

Two hours afterwards, in the faint light of dawn, a tunnel loomed up ahead—a tunnel, carrying the roadway beneath an aqueduct. At the same moment the shrill honk-honk of a motor-horn sounded behind them.

Rosie looked back round the side of the van.

"Doc," she cried in terror, "there's a car coming. It must be the sheriff!"

"Don't worry, honey—don't worry!" soothed Doc. "When we get through that tunnel we'll be across the county line, and we'll do that in five minutes if Evelyn doesn't blow out a tyre!"

The tunnel was reached just before the pursuing car, and the van plunged into pitch darkness. Doc, wily fellow, guided Evelyn to the left till the hubs of the wheels grazed the wall on that side, and then stopped. The car shot past the stationary vehicle towards the point of light that marked the other end of the tunnel, and after it had disappeared Doc drove slowly out into the daylight and a pleasant landscape.

"We've fooled 'em, honey—we've fooled 'em!" he cried triumphantly.

A spot was reached where the road divided. Doc waved his whip in the direction of an ill-made lane that branched left.

"That's a short cut to Weston," he said. "We'll take it, because a car would leave it."

Evelyn was directed into the lane, but the van had proceeded no more than a mile along it when again the honk-honk of a motor-horn was heard, this time close behind them. Rosie looked back and saw that the driver of the car was waving frantically.

"It—it's Billy!" she cried excitedly. "Billy?" echoed Doc. "Then we'll stop."

He brought Evelyn to a standstill, and the car came on and stopped beside the van. But though Billy was at the wheel of the car, Sheriff Hopkins was beside him.

"Rosie!" cried Billy rapturously, jumping up beside her and taking her in his arms.

But Doc, with a grimace, held out his wrists.

"Okay, sheriff," he said ruefully.

"We'll go quietly."

But the sheriff, laughing quite pleasantly, said:

"We don't want you, Droop; it's all a mistake."

"Yes," chimed in Billy, "it has all been a mistake. It was those two men who worked for you who robbed the store. They've been caught, and they've confessed."

"Two fellows named Quinn and Willis," said the sheriff.

Doc relit his cigar and puffed thoughtfully at it. Rosie laid her face against Billy's shoulder.

"Well, son," said Doc gratefully, "it's mighty nice of you to have gone to all this trouble for us."

"Doc," said Billy solemnly, "I'm in love with Rosie."

"Ah," mused Doc, "at last I think I understand! She loves you, too, eh? Yes, she does! I do understand. Well, what happens when two people love each other?"

"What do you say, Rosie?" asked Billy eagerly.

"She says 'Yes,' of course," decided Doc, his eyes regarding all that he could see of a very flushed face. "We need a good lawyer in the family, anyway."

"Look!" said Billy, producing a ring from his pocket. "Mother sent you this. We'll be married right away, won't we?"

Doc reached over and took the ring. He examined it, approved of it, and held it aloft.

"Folks," he cried in his best fair-ground manner, "what am I offered for this beautiful little ring?"

Rosie sat up and smiled happily at

him. Billy grinned, and the sheriff looked over his shoulder at the trio.

"Sold!" boomed Doc, and, taking Rosie's left hand in his, slipped the ring on her engagement finger. "Sold to little Rosie for one good-bye kiss!"

"Good-bye?" she exclaimed blankly. "But, Doc, aren't you coming to my wedding?"

"No," he said slowly. "No, I don't think I'd better do it. I might be tempted to get the three musketeers out, and then floozy would go the whole works! Besides," he went on with affected gaiety, "you know I'm buying a big three-ring circus next week. I'm going to be awfully busy—awfully busy. But I'll always be around, somewhere close, you know, in case you need me."

"I love you, Doc!" cried Rosie, flinging her arms round his neck.

"Well," said Doc, with emotion he tried to conceal, "I don't exactly hate you."

"Doc," faltered Rosie, "you—you're crying!"

"Who's crying?" He removed her arms from his neck, and, pushing up his spectacles, rubbed his eyes. "Can't a man get a cinder in his eyes if he wants to?" he growled. "Get right out of here! Go on—got right out of here!"

He gave her a little push, and Billy immediately sprang to the ground and lifted her down beside him.

"Be good to her, son."

Billy nodded emphatically, and Doc reached into the van and brought out the dilapidated doll, which he perched on the seat beside him.

"Everything's still rosy with me," he said, picking up the reins. "Come on, Evelyn, let's move! Come on, Evelyn!"

But Evelyn refused to budge. She looked round at Rosie, who was in Billy's arms again, but was gazing wistfully at the man who had been a father to her for so many years. The sheriff, with his hands on his hips, took a step forward.

"Evelyn," said Doc, flicking the mare with the whip, "the sheriff's coming!"

Evelyn immediately bolted.

(By permission of Radio Pictures, Ltd., featuring Robert Woolsey, John Darrow, and Anita Louise.)

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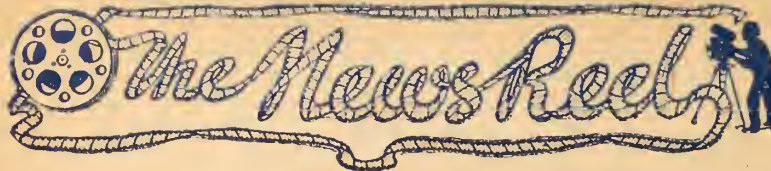


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October 10th, 1931.



(Continued from page 2.)

heard a 'hot dog' vendor selling his wares on our property—well, that was the limit."

Robert Montgomery was having lunch one day in a Hollywood restaurant with his friend, Reginald Denny. A big, husky man in tweeds came up and, though a perfect stranger, said: "Say, Bob" (these people with "nerve" always address the stars by their first names), "what tho dickens are you eating? My folks can't see from where they're sitting."

James Cruze, the director, who has a sense of humour, gave a young couple a free meal one night because their colossal nerve tickled his funny-bone. They arrived, unasked, at his home, and coolly said they had come for dinner, as they had bet their friends that Cruze would feed them. But now they are sadder and wiser. For after dinner, Cruze took them into his library and made them sit for an hour while he sternly read out pages of stuff from a book on etiquette.

Wallace Beery, as everyone knows, is an enthusiastic aviator. Once when he was in San Francisco, the papers gave out the exact time he was to depart for Los Angeles. Fourteen people were clustered about his six-passenger plane when he arrived, and all fourteen were certain that he would give them a free ride. But Wallace, though always good-natured, had already made other arrangements, and there was "nothing doing."

Chariot Race in "Ben-Hur."

Now that "Ben-Hur" with sound is still showing at several cinemas interest has again been aroused in the filming of the chariot race.

Some 20,000 extras, besides a large army of Greco-Romans, were engaged for this particular scene, which was the most difficult task the director, Fred

Nibo, had to face during the whole production. It is easy to imagine the risks that were present with forty-eight horses galloping round the course in the mad seven laps of the great chariot race, and with a hundred and fifty other horses also being used.

The director worked most of the time from a tower, 100 ft. high, his orders being delivered through loud-speakers to every part of the arena and auditorium. Forty-two cameramen were at work, and an aeroplane flew overhead so that "shots" could be taken from above of the enormous crowd.

No sooner had the buglers sounded the final signal than the huge tapestries were flung back and out dashed twelve chariot teams with drivers in gay colours. The sixth lap was the most exciting. Micky Millerick, a famous horseman, driving the Byzantine team of roans, caught the inner rail at the south turn and just behind the Roman team. In the awful crash that followed real shrieks came from the watching crowd, for it seemed certain to those present that someone must be injured, perhaps fatally. But by a miracle no one was killed.

'Cinema Attendant's Invention.

Though seventeen-year-old Francis Bowling works as an attendant in a cinema in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, his mind has been occupied with something else beside pictures. For two years he was busy with a helicopter aeroplane of a new type, which he has just patented. The wings are attached to the motor in the new ship, and may be driven up and down like the side wheels of an old steamboat. He took up work in a cinema theatre for the purpose of obtaining enough money to carry on with his invention.

**DON'T FORGET YOUR
"BOY'S CINEMA" ANNUAL.**

Answers to Questions.

Wally Wales has appeared in the following films, John (Aberdeen): "The Meddling Stranger," "White Pebbles," "The Soda Water Cowboy," "The Desert of the Lost," "Desperate Courage," "Saddle Mates," and a new one, "Red Fork Range." Geno Corrado was born in Florence, Italy. His American films include: "Women's Wares," "The Devil's Skipper," "Prowlers of the Sea," and "The House of Scandals."

Here is the cast of "Four Feathers," L. R. (London, E.): Richard Arlen (Harry Foversham), Fay Wray (Ethne Eustace), Clive Brook (Capt. Durance), William Powell (Lieut. Trench), Theodore von Eltz (Lieut. Castleton), Noah Beery (Slave Trader), Noble Johnson (Ahmed), Harold Hightower (Ali), Phillippe de Lacy (Harry, aged 10), George Fawcett (General Faversham). Norma Shearer was born in Montreal, Canada, on August 10th, 1904; and Richard Barthelmess was born in New York City on May 9th, 1895.

Yes, it was Dorothy Jordan who played opposite Ramon Novarro in "Devil May Care," James (Dalmington). She was at one time in the chorus, and later rose to principal roles in musical comedies. She was born in Clarkesville, Tennessee, and is 5 ft. 2 in. in height, with brown hair and blue eyes. You can write to her care of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, Culver City, California, U.S.A. Remember when writing to American artists to add the name of your country to your address.

You can get photos of Joan Crawford and John Mack Brown at 9d. each from the "Picture Show," Photos Dept., Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, E.C.4, C. R. B. (London, S.W.). Joan Crawford was born on May 23rd, 1904, in San Antonio, Texas, and has auburn hair and hazel eyes. John Mack Brown was born on September 1st, 1904, in Dothan, Alabama, and has black hair and brown eyes. Kay Johnson was born in Mount Vernon, New York. She is 5 ft. 7 in. in height, and has blonde hair and blue eyes.

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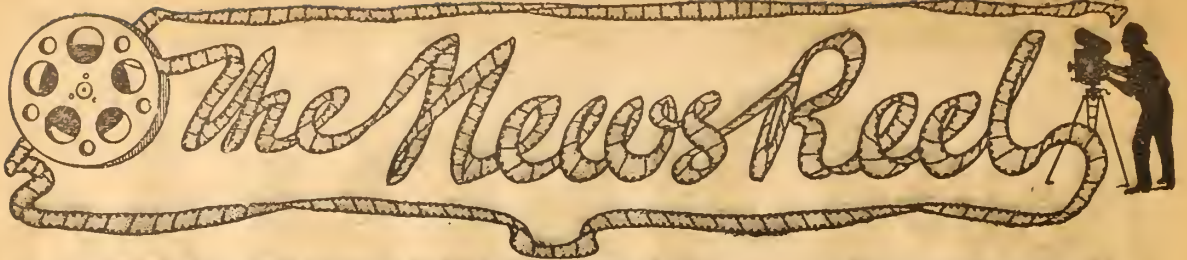
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ADIOS

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The News Reel

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"Adios."

Don Francisco Delfino (El Puma), Richard Barthelmess; David Howard, James Rennie; Rosita Garcia, Mary Astor; Dolores Delfino, Marion Nixon; Peter Harkness, Fred Kohler; Lupe, Barbara Bedford; Don Mariano Delfino, Robert Edson; Juan, Arthur Stone; Concha, Mathilde Comont; Judge Travers, Erville Alderson.

"Defenders of the Law."

Police Commissioner Lang, Edmund Broese; Alice Lang, Catherine Dale Owen; Chief of Police, Joseph Girard; Captain Houston, John Holland; Joe Valot, Robert Gleckler; Number Seventeen, Mac Busch; Detective Muldoon, Philo McCullough; Terone, Paul Panzer.

"The Maltese Falcon."

Ruth Wonderly, Bebe Daniels; Sam Spade, Ricardo Cortez; Gutman, Dudley Digges; Effie, Una Merkel; Lieutenant Dundy, Robert Elliott; Doctor Cairo, Otto Mattiesen; District Attorney, Oscar Apfel; Miles Archer, Walter Long; Wilmer Cook, Dwight Frye; Tom Polhaus, J. Farrell MacDonald; Captain Jacobbi, Agostino Borgato.

"On With the Motley."

When Robert Woolsey, the famous Radio Pictures comedian, takes his cigar from his mouth and utters a side-splitting wisecrack in his next picture, he will be doing it whilst his heart is breaking—more or less.

The fact is that "Rusty" is lost.

Rusty is a little black and tan dog of uncertain breed, but very dear to the hearts of the noted screen comedian and his wife.

Whilst Robert Woolsey and his wife were visiting England recently, Rusty was taken charge of by their maid. When the comedian returned, he heard the sad news that Rusty had disappeared, and at once offered a reward, which up to the moment has been unsuccessful.

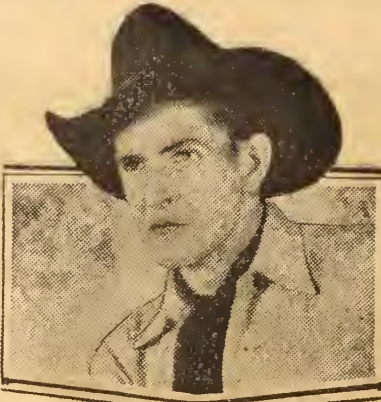
When he starts work on his next picture, "Girl Crazy," it will be "I Pagliacci" brought up to date—unless Rusty is returned in the meantime.

Ken Maynard at a Fiesta.

Mexican ranchers in the hills back of Puento, California, held an impromptu fiesta, celebrating the informal visit of Ken Maynard, Tiffany Western star, and hero of the action-loving Latins.

Ken "dropped in" on the ranchers in an unexpected manner. Flying back from San Diego in his new Stearman plane, the flyer became fog-bound. His gasoline supply ran out while he was still searching for a landing field—Ken landed the plane on a hillside. He walked back to the nearest habitation to look for help in extricating the ship, and when the ranchers had finally cleared a way, preparatory for a take-off October 17th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



BOB STEELE

in

"THE RIDING FOOL."

Action, thrills, romance, and humour in a film showing how a couple of cow-punchers brought a crowd of bandits to justice.

"RODNEY STEPS IN."

A gallant young man sees a beautiful girl being attacked and goes to her rescue, which involves him in many amazing adventures. Starring Richard Cooper and Elizabeth Allan.

"RED FORK RANGE."

Men, horses, and action in a thrilling Western story of white men against red. Starring Wally Wales and Ruth Mix.

ALSO

The eighth episode of our thrilling serial:
"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

in the morning, they put on the informal fiesta.

Ranchers for miles around attended. Dancing, feasting—and the rest of the things that go with a real fiesta—were very much in evidence, and the party continued until the early hours of the morning.

Ken flew back to Los Angeles the following day.

"They're great people," said the star, discussing the ranchers from below the border. "I've never been treated more hospitably in my life, nor felt that any welcome was more sincere than the one those simple-living Mexicans gave me."

A Microphone Masterpiece.

One of the most successful demonstrations of realistic sound recording was recently performed at the First National studios at Burbank, California, during the making of "Too Young to Marry," starring Loretta Young.

The sound in question, which brought a strained expression to the faces of

First National's experts was that of the crunching of celery. Any sound engineer who has had any experience in the recording of this particular noise will admit that its reproduction is one of the most difficult feats known.

According to Nathan Levinson, of the Producer's Recording Department, it is a sound that cannot be duplicated. The difficulty is to record it in such a way as to ensure that the super-sensitive microphone will not register it as though it were a volcanic eruption or a landslide.

The finely adjusted microphone was placed over the dinner-table on the set where Loretta Young, Graut Withers, O. P. Heggie and Emma Dunne were filmed. Only after many tests was the final recording carried out, when the director looked and listened to the result in the private projection-room.

There was no mistaking it. The sound of crunching celery, the stripping of the strings from it and the breaking-off of the leafy top which had so eluded the experts—all was heard perfectly.

Thus celery experts will at once recognise it for the genuine sound, and be intrigued by the comic effect when they hear it in the picture.

Why Raymond Hatton Once Left the Movies.

Raymond Hatton, whose make-up ability ranks only slightly lower than that of the late Lon Chaney, once gave up working for motion pictures because of make-up.

He was wearing a beard during the filming of a picture, some fifteen years ago, and the artificial whiskers caught fire. Hatton's face was horribly burned, and he had to give up work for more than a year. He underwent a painful skin-grafting operation, and during the long recuperative period—actually about a year—he was, of course, unable to take any active part in the doings of the theatre or the screen.

He returned to the films after an unsuccessful attempt to make a living on the stage. Because of the unfortunate accident, he had harboured a prejudice against the cinema, and had resolved that he would never again face the camera. But he was not a sensational success in the travelling stock company which was the only acting job he had been able to obtain, although it was some time before, at the persuasion of his wife, he swallowed his anti-movie prejudice and became one of the famous Keystone Comedy Kops.

His first dramatic part came in "The Whispering Chorus," which Cecil B. De Mille directed, and this was followed by several highly successful comedy rôles. These he alternated later with serious parts, and he now stands as one of the few character actors at home in both kinds of rôle.

He has another important part in "The Challenge," the dramatic Lila Lee-Sidney Blackmer story which is one of First National's early releases.

A fighting romance of the dangerous days following Mexico's ceding of California to the United States, when desperadoes infested the country. Starring Richard Barthelmess and Mary Astor.



Don Francisco Comes Home.

IN the year 1846, the people of California were in a disturbed and anxious situation. War had broken out between Mexico and the United States, and California had been annexed by the Americans. Bitter was the chagrin of the proud Mexicans who had for so long ruled in California, and the rough Americans who poured into the State to take over the government were heartily despised by the haughty dons. Mexico had been beaten in battle, but it was long before the Californians were reconciled to their new rulers.

Don Mariano Delfino, owner of the great estate known as the Rancho de los Coyotes, had realized at length that there was no more hope of driving out the "gringos," as the Americans were called. The estate had been granted to the don's ancestors long years before by the King of Spain, and he did not wish to run the risk of losing his lands by defying the invaders. So he submitted to the authority of the United States, though with anger and sorrow in his heart.

All was excitement one summer day on the Rancho de los Coyotes, for the old don's son was coming home, after four years' absence in the city of Mexico, whither he had gone to complete his education.

A man came riding wildly into the courtyard, shouting and waving his arms excitedly.

"Don Francisco is coming!" he cried. "Go round and call the servants," exclaimed Don Mariano, coming out hastily. "Fetch all of them out here."

The man went off on his errand, and the old don turned to find his daughter Dolores, a beautiful dark-haired young girl, standing beside him.

"Francisco is coming," he said joy-

fully, "and he'll be anxious to see his little sister."

"Yes, father," replied Dolores with a smile; "and even more anxious to see you—and someone else."

"Rosita? Yes, so he will. But he won't like the changes here," said Don Mariano, thinking bitterly of the coming of the Americans. "Still, we won't think of the gringos now. We must give Francisco a royal welcome."

A mile away Francisco Delfino was riding towards the ranch-house, accompanied by Juan, an old servant of his father's, who had gone to Mexico to escort the young man home.

"I'm glad to be back," said Francisco to Juan. "Mexico is a great country, but California is home."

Juan glanced at the tall young man with the keen face and piercing eyes who rode so joyfully at his side, and remembered that Francisco could have no idea of the completely changed conditions in California since the annexation by the United States.

"We don't feel that way since the gringos came," he remarked slowly, "and so you'll find, Don Francisco."

"I'm not thinking of the gringos now," replied Francisco, as they came in sight of the house. He roused his horse to a gallop, and soon drew rein in the courtyard, and dismounted to greet his father and sister.

"Welcome home, Francisco!" exclaimed Don Mariano.

"Welcome, father! Welcome, Dolores!" cried Francisco, embracing the old man affectionately, and then turning to kiss his sister. "How glad I am to be home again at last!"

The servants pressed forward to greet the young master, and the old don ordered the field hands to be called in, for he had arranged a great "fiesta"

that evening to celebrate the safe return of his son.

"I am glad you have come back," said Don Mariano, when the servant had gone. "I have been trying to manage the estate alone, but the task is getting too much for me now, especially since the gringos came."

"I will manage, father," replied the young man. "You can sit and rest now. But you must tell me about these gringos and their ways. Have they been worrying you much?"

"You'll hear quite enough of them soon," said his father; "but not to-day. To-day we are rejoicing over your return, and I don't want to talk about unpleasant things on such a day as this."

"Very well, father," replied Francisco. "You shall tell me about the gringos to-morrow. We won't think about them to-day."

Francisco was mistaken. Even on the joyful day of his return it proved to be impossible to avoid the Americans, for Juan, the old servant, did something that morning which brought the gringos down upon them before the day was out.

Juan had gone to the kitchen, there to talk to Concha, the cook, a lady of very ample proportions.

"Where's my wife, Concha?" asked Juan. "I haven't seen her about."

Concha turned up her eyes, pursed her lips, shook her head, and then looked pityingly at Juan, but she did not speak.

"What d'you mean?" demanded Juan angrily. "Where is she?"

"You'd better ask the American soldiers—the gringos in the camp over towards Los Angeles. She's been very friendly with them since you went away," said Concha meaningly.

Juan went out in a rage, and by ask-

ing one or two of the other servants, he found that Concha had spoken the truth. That afternoon he discovered his wife leaving the American camp. He dragged her to his cottage, and there and then showed her the error of her ways—with a big stick.

"I'll teach you to flirt with these gringos!" shouted Juan, as the stick rose and fell with resounding thwacks. The woman broke away at last, and ran out, sobbing.

"I'll see you punished for this," she cried furiously. "I'm going to the judge—there's law in this country now."

Juan went back to the ranch-house to tell his master of the affair, but Don Mariano was too busily engaged in preparations for the fiesta to take much notice of his servant's story.

The evening came, and a joyous company gathered at the don's house. The house servants and the range-hands were there in their best attire, and many friends had ridden in from neighbouring haciendas to greet the young don. With dancing, music and singing the hours passed, and Francisco went from one group to another, to be accorded everywhere a hearty welcome.

Presently Dolores led up to him a tall slim girl with raven-black hair and long-lashed eyes; a girl whose dazzling beauty outshone every other woman at the fiesta. Even Dolores, pretty though she was, could not but admit to herself that her friend, Rosita Garcia, was the most beautiful girl in southern California. But Dolores had no jealousy in her nature, and the secret wish of her heart was that her brother should one day make the lovely Rosita his wife.

"Here is Rosita," said Dolores to her brother. "She has been at school in Monterey."

"Not always," replied Francisco, with a graceful bow. "I remember you, senorita, when you were a little girl, and the most beautiful in all California, even then."

At that moment there entered the gate a man whose appearance contrasted strangely with that of the gay Mexicans who were enjoying the fiesta. Tall, thin, dressed in black, with an ancient top-hat on his head, Judge Travers was a typical "Uncle Sam" of the old days. He glanced disapprovingly at the revels, but said nothing until a servant asked him what he wanted.

"Tell your master that I must see him," said the American in a commanding voice, and a moment later Don Mariano was annoyed by the appearance of a servant with the message.

"Show him in to my study," said the don reluctantly as he went indoors.

"Good-evening, senor," said Don Mariano, with grave and stately politeness as his visitor entered the room. "I am glad to have the honour of your visit to our fiesta. We are rejoicing because my son has returned safely from his visit to Mexico."

"Say, don," replied the judge sharply, "I didn't come for your fiesta. I have had a serious complaint made to me, and I want to hear the truth of the matter from you."

Don Mariano knew Travers only too well. The judge was notorious throughout the district for his deliberate annoyance of the Mexican inhabitants. He tried to magnify every little peccadillo in which a Mexican was concerned into a serious crime, and the old don always felt himself to be no match for the wily gringo. He must have the help of his son.

"Tell Don Francisco to come here at once," cried the old man.

October 17th, 1931.

Judge Travers.

FRANCISCO had been getting a little tired of the fiesta, and the continual compliments showered upon him, though his old-fashioned courtliness of manner never failed. Then Dolores brought Rosita to him, and the evening forthwith became charged with glamour and romance. His sister soon discreetly slipped away, and Francisco proceeded to improve his opportunity.

"I'm beginning to believe, Rosita, that I've wasted four years of my life," he murmured, as he swung the girl round in a dance.

"Oh, no," smiled Rosita, "you dance so well now that I think you must have had plenty of practice with the ladies in Mexico."

"There are no ladies in Mexico to compare with you, Rosita," cried Francisco, as the dance ended. "You are the most beautiful, the most—"

A servant came up, and stood bowing before him. Francisco, much annoyed, had to cut short his compliments to ask the man what he wanted.

"Don Mariano requests you to come to him immediately, senor."

"Will you wait for me here?" said Francisco to Rosita. "I hope I shall not be long."

"Of course I will wait—for you," replied the girl, with a smile.

Francisco followed the servant to his father's room, and there he found the stern American judge, the first gringo he had seen since his return home.

"I want you to meet Judge Travers," said his father. "Judge, this is my son, the Don Francisco Delfino."

"I'm sure glad to meet you," replied the judge. "And now let's get to business. A woman from your ranch came to me this afternoon at Los Angeles and said that she had been severely beaten by her husband, one of your men."

Francisco looked at his father in astonishment. Don Mariano had thought no more of Juan's story, and his son knew nothing about the affair. The old man turned to the judge.

"Am I to understand that you think you are competent to arrange our treatment of women?" he asked coldly.

"Yes, I do," replied Travers. "You're in the United States now, Don Mariano, and don't you forget it."

"We are in no danger of forgetting it," said the don. "I have heard Juan's story. His wife has been spending most of her time in the camp of the gringos of the American soldiers, and the man has punished her. She is a totally unmoral woman, and she deserved all she got."

"She certainly did!" burst out Francisco fiercely, glaring at the American. "This is not your affair, judge."

"You'll find it is. There's a law to protect women from cowardly attacks, and I'll see that the law is kept."

"As you would if an American thrashed his wife for consorting with Mexicans, I suppose," sneered Francisco.

The shot told, for all three knew perfectly well that in such a case the judge would have done nothing, except to applaud his own countryman. Travers reddened beneath the indignant glare of the young don.

"You've just come from Mexico, I believe," he snarled, "and I reckon you ain't sort of realised that you live in the States now. You call to see me in Los Angeles to-morrow, or—"

Neither the old don nor his son could be bluffed by the implied threat, for even Travers could hardly hold them responsible for what Juan had done.

Still, Don Mariano guessed that his son would not be able to hold back for long a furious outburst of anger against the judge, and he at once devised a plan.

"My son can hardly do that," he said calmly. "He is going north to-morrow to deliver cattle to the Commissioner at Spanish Gulch."

Francisco looked surprisedly at his father, but something appealing in the old man's gaze made him nod his head in assent.

The delivery of the cattle to the Commissioner was a very important matter, as the judge knew well enough. He took up his hat in readiness to leave.

"In that case, Don Mariano, I will say no more to you or your son about the affair, but I must deal with the actual culprit according to law."

"It's lucky for you that you're a guest in this house," began Francisco angrily, but a warning look from his father sent him out. He returned to the fiesta with bitter rage against the gringos in his heart.

"I'm sorry I've been so long," said Francisco, when at length he reached Rosita's side.

"What is the matter, Francisco?" asked the girl, as she looked at the young man's perturbed face. "Has something gone wrong?"

"I'm going north to-morrow," he replied. "My father is sending me to Spanish Gulch, and I think it's to get me out of the way of that gringo, Judge Travers."

"Oh!" gasped Rosita. "That dreadful American! Yes, you must keep out of his way. But—you will return?"

"I must return, if only because of the anxiety in your voice," murmured Francisco tenderly.

At that moment the joyous sounds of the fiesta were hushed as a beautiful tenor voice arose in an old Mexican love song. The crowd listened spellbound, and when the song ceased and the applause had died away, Francisco whispered to Rosita the last words of the song.

"Good-bye, love! That's a warning to waste no time, I think. I'm in love—and you, Rosita?"

"I thought you were going to tell me all about your travels in Mexico," said Rosita, blushing and turning away.

Francisco took the hint, and began to describe the beautiful city of Mexico and its famous lake.

"I remember some delightful summer nights on the lake," he concluded.

"Floating idly along in a canoe to the music of a guitar, with the moon shining overhead."

"Is it always like that?" asked Rosita softly.

"It would be—with you!" replied Francisco, taking her hand in his. The girl did not attempt to draw it away, for she had loved Francisco since they were both children, though she did not intend to tell him so yet.

"Perhaps some day we shall see Mexico—together, Rosita!" breathed the young man eagerly.

"Perhaps we shall," whispered Rosita.

At Spanish Gulch.

VERY early on the next morning Francisco and Dolores went out together, for the young don wished to look round the ranch before he started with the cattle for the north.

As his sister talked of the war, and the conduct of the Americans since the annexation, Francisco grew more and more bitter against the gringos, and began to regret that he had given way to his father's desire to get him out of the way of Judge Travers.

"Look there," cried Dolores presently. "What is that under the tree?"
 "A man—he's hurt, I think," said Francisco. "We'll go and see to him."
 "Why, it's Raymondo, one of father's men," exclaimed Dolores, as they reached the tree. "Are you hurt, Raymondo? What has happened?"

"The gringos, senorita," groaned the man.
 "What did they do to you?" cried Francisco fiercely.

"I was bringing home some cattle last night," gasped Raymondo, "and I met some of the judge's men. They started firing guns to frighten the cattle, and I asked them to stop."

"Well?" queried Francisco eagerly, as the man stopped for breath.

"They laughed, and laid about me with their whips. Then they threw me under this tree. My leg's broken, I think—I can't move."

The man groaned again, and Francisco and his sister knelt down to attend to his injuries.

"Yes, I believe his leg is broken," said the young man, standing up. "I will go for help, and then I am riding to Los Angeles to settle our account with that judge."

"No, no," cried Dolores. "Don't make trouble with him just now, for father's sake. Go with the cattle, as you promised."

"Are we to sit still under an outrage like this?" stormed Francisco.

"I don't say that," said Dolores. "But you don't know enough about things in this country yet to do any good. All the chief gringos here are bad men. One day there will come better Americans, and then we can get justice. I'll see to Raymondo while you start with the cattle. For my sake, Francisco!" she added pleadingly.

"For your sake, little sister," said Francisco, taking her in his arms and kissing her lovingly. "For your sake, I will go as I promised, but—when I come back, let these accursed gringos beware!"

Francisco went away to the north, and some days later he drew rein a mile or two out of the town of Spanish Gulch. He had brought a great herd of cattle so far in safety, cattle to be delivered to Peter Harkness, the American Land Commissioner of North California.

"I want you to hold the cattle here," he called to Pedro, one of his men. "I will ride into the town with Juan, and find where we are to deliver them."

The young don rode into the town, noticing as he went along the street that most of the houses were wooden erections, very roughly built. Presently he came to the saloon, and there he stopped, for a notice on the wall attracted his attention.

"It has been agreed by all Americans here that all foreigners speaking Spanish better get out of this town within three days."

"(Signed) PETER HARKNESS."

Francisco's face flushed with anger as

he read the notice. He dismounted, hitched his horse to a rail, and walked into the saloon, followed by Juan.

"Can you tell me where Senor Harkness is?" he asked the first man he saw.
 "It's a holiday," came the reply. "I reckon he's down town somewhere making a speech. He'll be along soon."

"Well, I'll wait here," said Francisco, going up to the bar to order a drink. Everyone in the saloon stared at the handsome stranger, and presently a girl came up to him.

"Won't you sit here with me, senor?" she asked with a persuasive smile, indicating a table. "My name is Lupe. I want you to meet my friend Carlos."

Carlos, a man with dark hair, obviously a Mexican half-breed, was sitting at the table, and Francisco summed up the couple at a glance. The girl was probably going to try to get him to drink heavily, and then to induce him to play cards with Carlos, who was plainly enough a crook. But the young don was always polite to women of whatever degree, so he bowed, sat down, and ordered drinks.

A loud burst of cheering and laughter in the street brought the whole company to the door to see a ridiculous sight. Up to the saloon rode a burly, florid-faced man, mounted on an exceedingly small donkey. A tumultuous mob accompanied him on either side, screaming with laughter.

The dignified young don, after one disdainful glance, went back again to the table in disgust, accompanied by Lupe and Carlos.

"Who is that—the one on top, I mean?" he asked scornfully.

Carlos grinned, but made no reply. Lupe, with a slight shudder which Francisco did not fail to notice, informed the don that the donkey-rider was the man he had come to meet.

"He's the big man of the town," she said. "That's Peter Harkness, the Land Commissioner."

Harkness got off the donkey at the door of the saloon, and came in. As

soon as he entered the door he saw Lupe standing by Francisco's side, and an angry scowl came over his heavy face at once.

"What are you doing, Lupe?" he shouted harshly, beginning to push through the crowd towards the girl.

Don Francisco glared across at the advancing Commissioner, while Lupe and Carlos, anticipating a row, looked up at the young don anxiously.

"The senorita has done me the honour of asking me to drink with her," he said suavely.

"You greaser—you dirty, low-down greaser," shouted Harkness angrily. "You leave my girl alone, you Mexican scum! I thought I'd run all the greasers out of this town. Take that!"

Raising the whip he carried, he slashed Francisco viciously across the face, raising a long weal down the young man's cheek. Don Francisco instantly knocked Harkness down with a powerful right to the jaw. The American got up again in a flash, and charged like a wild beast, his face furious with wrath. As he came he drew his gun, but the "greaser" was too quick for him.

Francisco wrenched the gun away, hurled it through the window, and forthwith knocked Harkness down again. This time the Commissioner rose more slowly, and called to the crowd of Americans in the saloon to seize the "greaser."

A number of men rushed forward at the call. Francisco, ably seconded by Juan, fought furiously, and several of the "gringos" of Spanish Gulch bore marks of that fight for days afterwards. But the odds were too great, and in five minutes both the Mexicans had been securely roped to posts. Then Harkness came up to them, an evil grin on his face.

"Now, Mr. Greaser," he cried, "take that!"

He hit the helpless Francisco in the face with all his force, and his own followers murmured uneasily at the cowardly blow.

"Say your prayers, you Mexican skunks!" howled Harkness. "I'll give you five minutes, and then we'll decor-ate the nearest tree with both of you."

A stir at the door indicated a new arrival. The crowd made way as a cry



Don Francisco glared across at the advancing commissioner.

of "The sheriff!" arose, and David Howard, sheriff of the county, came up.

Howard was a grave quiet man, dressed in neat black, but every man in the saloon knew that the sheriff was quicker on the draw than any man in Spanish Gulch. The men respected him, too, for his upright character and the fearless way in which he upheld the law. "What you blowing in here for, Howard?" snarled Harkness. "It's my affair."

"It's my affair, too," replied Howard with ominous calm, "so long as I'm sheriff of this county."

"Sure, it is, sheriff!" cried at least half the crowd, for Harkness was not popular at any time, and his cowardly attack on Francisco had alienated the sympathy of many who had no love for "greasers," but cared a great deal for fair play. The commissioner caught Howard's eye, fell back a pace sullenly, and said no more.

"Now, boys, what's all this?" asked the sheriff.

"Well, sheriff," began one of the men. "this stranger was talking to Lupe, and Harkness wouldn't stand for it, and they fought."

"Guns?" questioned Howard, glancing at Francisco's face.

"That was done with a whip," said the man, following the sheriff's glance; "but Harkness drew a gun first. The greaser grabbed it, and pitched it into the street."

"That's enough," said Howard quietly. "Cut these men loose!"

The order was promptly obeyed, and in another moment Francisco and Juan were free.

"I am sorry you have had such rough treatment here, senor," said Howard.

"I owe you a great debt," replied Francisco. "I hope to repay you some day."

He turned to Harkness, who was standing sullenly close at hand.

"I came here to deliver cattle—three thousand head—to Senor Harkness," he said.

"Why didn't you say so?" demanded Harkness. "Why don't you deliver them?"

Francisco walked towards the door. Reaching it, he turned once more to the Land Commissioner.

"I will—deliver them," he said deliberately as he went out.

Francisco Delivers the Cattle.

FRANCISCO rode out of the town silently, followed as silently by Juan. From time to time the faithful retainer glanced at his master's scarred face, and wondered what was passing in the don's mind. He had not long to wait, for when they reached the herd of cattle, Francisco rode round to each of his men, and in a few fiery words explained his scheme of revenge.

At nine o'clock that evening the young don gave a signal. The three thousand cattle had already been gathered into a compact herd, and when Francisco raised his hand the men began to urge the mass of animals forward.

Slowly at first they moved on towards Spanish Gulch. But behind them and on their flanks rode the horsemen, searing the backs of the cattle with their whips, exciting them to madness with their shouts and yells. Soon the pace increased, and with a thunder of thousands of hoofs the herd broke into a trot.

Spanish Gulch came into sight, and the huge mass of animals began to gallop down upon it. Maddened by the whips and the yells, urged on by the furious vaqueros, the cattle plunged down the

slope, bellowing with fear. There was no stopping them now, and Francisco and his men drew aside and watched them go headlong into the street of the little town.

"Well, boys," said Francisco quietly, "Harkness wanted me to deliver the cattle, and I reckon I have delivered them."

In Spanish Gulch all was confusion. A few men caught sight of the great herd bearing down upon them, and they ran wildly through the street, shouting the alarm. It was too late. No human power could have stopped that rush, and before the people of Spanish Gulch had even realized their danger, the three thousand cattle were indeed being "delivered," as Francisco had promised.

The leaders of the herd passed along the street, running wildly and bellowing furiously, though doing little damage, but the pressure of the hundreds behind soon had its effect. There was no room in the street for that vast herd, in the madness of the stampede. Soon cattle were leaping upon wooden platforms outside the houses, charging furiously against every obstacle in their path, snapping stout beams and posts like threads of cotton, and bringing destruction to everything they met.

On and on they came in hundreds, and in a few minutes the wooden houses in the main street of Spanish Gulch had collapsed in ruins. Presently a tongue of fire rose up from one of the wrecked houses, and little by little, the flames spread. It seemed as though the town was doomed to complete destruction, for the fire would complete the ruin the great herd had begun.

Francisco saw a great cloud of dust rise slowly over Spanish Gulch, and heard the sounds of falling houses as the herd went through. A grim smile came over his face as he turned to Juan.

"You are a witness," he said, "that the cattle were delivered. Now, men, come here. I've got something to say."

The men dismounted and gathered round eagerly, and Francisco raised his right hand solemnly.

"From henceforward," he cried loudly, "war on every gringo!"

The men cheered wildly. They had all submitted to the Americans, but they chafed in secret against their conquerors, and the treatment of their young master had brought matters to a head. Each of Francisco's men burned for revenge.

"I am going down now to collect the dollars from Harkness," said Francisco.

"That will be dangerous, senor," protested Juan anxiously. "Take me with you."

"No, Juan," replied Francisco. "There's no danger. They will not expect me, and I'll soon be back. Stay here, all of you."

He rode off into the darkness, and soon came cautiously into Spanish Gulch. The fire had been put out by some of the townfolk, headed by the sheriff, and Francisco, lurking behind a pile of ruins, presently saw David Howard and a few men picking their way among the debris.

"Where's Harkness?" asked Howard, looking round.

"Don't know, sheriff," came the reply in contemptuous tones. "He's been busy saving his skin, I reckon, though his house wasn't in danger, anyway. I expect you'll find him there."

"I'll go along and see," said Howard. "I've sure got a few words to say to him."

The men grinned as they dispersed,

and the sheriff went off alone to the Land Commissioner's house. Francisco followed, and waited outside the house until Howard came out. The sheriff did not stay long, and when he had gone the young don crept up to a window and looked in.

Harkness was angry, for the sheriff had spoken very bluntly to him, and to be told that the ruin of Spanish Gulch was due to his treatment of Francisco had annoyed the bullying Commissioner very much, particularly as the sheriff's words were true.

"Darn that greaser!" he cried aloud. "I wish I had him here!"

"Here is the greaser!" said Francisco, leaping in at the window. "Stick 'em up!"

Harkness had no option but to stick them up, and very angrily he did so, while the young Mexican relieved him of his gun.

"Now I'll have a receipt for those cattle, and I'll have the dollars, too," said Francisco calmly.

"You know I've had no cattle," muttered Harkness sullenly.

"Pardon me, senor," replied Francisco, with the utmost politeness, "but three thousand head were delivered in Spanish Gulch this evening, and I have plenty of witnesses to prove it. The cattle may have passed on beyond the town, but then, you see, you did not tell me exactly where to deliver them. You will give me the receipt and the dollars, if you please, at once."

Harkness sat sullenly silent for a moment, but the gun Francisco held menacingly before him soon sapped his resolution to hold out.

"I'll give you what you want," he growled.

"I think you had better, senor," said Francisco. "If you don't, Spanish Gulch will need a new Land Commissioner to-morrow. You called me a 'greaser.' I am a gentleman of Mexico, and we pay our debts."

Harkness signed a receipt for the cattle, and reluctantly handed over the dollars, growling:

"You'll pay for this," as he did so.

"I have paid, Senor Harkness," said Francisco, touching the livid scar on his face. And a moment later he had vanished into the darkness of the night.

"Now I Shall Be Hunted!"

AT the Rancho de los Coyotes everything went on quietly enough during the absence of Francisco in the north. Judge Travers sought out Juan, only to find that he had gone with the young don, and the American did not carry the matter any further. He had much more important business on hand, and his designs against Don Mariano could well wait until the arrival of the Land Commissioners who were touring California.

Travers had for long cast a covetous eye on the great Rancho de los Coyotes, and with the aid of the Commissioners the unscrupulous judge had determined to eject the old don on some plausible pretext or other, and to seize the land for his own.

Rosita Garcia was still staying at the ranch-house, and one evening she went along to the little chapel to pray, for an uneasy feeling that danger threatened Francisco had come over her. She knelt long before the statue of the Virgin in the quiet chapel, until suddenly she was roused by the sound of footsteps.

Save for the light of a few candles, the chapel was in darkness, and for the moment Rosita could not see who had come in. Then, to her great joy, she

recognised the tall figure of Francisco, and she came forward eagerly to greet him.

"Oh, Francisco, how glad I am to see you again!" she whispered.

"It may be for the last time, Rosita," replied the young man sadly, and the astonished girl suddenly noticed a long scar on Francisco's face, while his manner was unusually grave and stern. "Why, what is wrong?" she asked in alarm. "Have you been wounded?"

"That is the sign of the estimation in which the Americans hold the best blood of Mexico," replied Francisco, in a low, stern voice.

"One of them struck you?" queried Rosita in horror.

"Yes, with a whip, as though I were a dog," said the young man quietly. "But I paid the debt. I've done enough to be an outlaw."

"Oh, Francisco," gasped the girl faintly, "surely you don't mean it!"

"It's true. I have suffered, and not only I. The Americans are cheating our people in the north, taking their lands and goods. I've heard enough. I hoped things would be different, but now I shall be hunted."

Rosita looked at him in speechless horror, for all her delightful dreams of a happy future were shattered by his words.

"I'm not afraid, Rosita mia," cried Francisco, seeing the terror in her face, "and whatever happens—I love you."

"But—but—I'll see you again. Promise me I shall see you again," stammered the girl. "Oh, Francisco, I can't bear it, for I love you, too."

"If you want to see an outlaw, send for me and I will come," said the young man sadly, putting his arms round the trembling girl. "And now—good-bye!"

With a last hurried embrace, he was gone, and Rosita heard the hoof-beats of his horse die away in the distance. She tottered out of the chapel to hear a feeble voice calling her.

"Rosita! What are you doing here,

child?" said Don Mariano, coming up. "I thought I heard something," whispered Rosita, scarcely knowing what she said.

"Francisco has been here," cried the old man wildly. "I didn't see him, but he left the money for the cattle on the table, and a note. Read it!"

Rosita took the piece of paper and read aloud:

"I cannot stand the changed conditions. I am going away."

"I don't understand what it means," said Don Mariano in puzzled tones. "Did you see him anywhere about, Rosita?"

The girl was by this time beyond the power of speech, but she nodded, and the old man questioned her eagerly.

"Where was he going? What did he say? I must know. Tell me."

Dolores came running out to see what was wrong, for the old don had raised his voice almost to a shout in his eagerness, but Rosita burst into a storm of tears, and for some minutes did not reply.

"He told me that—oh, don't ask it!" she gasped at length, and then she fainted in the arms of Dolores.

Though Rosita would not say what dreadful message Francisco had given her, it was not long before Don Mariano and Dolores found out the truth. Not one of the men who had accompanied Francisco to Spanish Gulch came back to the ranch, and soon several of the remaining range hands vanished mysteriously. From neighbouring ranches, too, some of the best men began to disappear, and strange rumours arose in the district.

"Father," said Dolores one morning, "have you heard that the express rider came into Los Angeles yesterday without the mails? He was held up and robbed."

"Yes," remarked Concha, the cook, who happened to overhear, "and they say there's a bandit about who has

sworn to avenge us on the gringos. He took a herd of cattle off that ranch Judge Travers stole from Don Juan, and he held up the stage-coach and made the gringos in it hand over their money. Good luck to him, I say. And down with all gringos!"

Don Mariano and Dolores looked at each other in horror, and when the cook had gone out they turned to Rosita, whose face had gone suddenly white. Her appearance was sufficient for the old don.

"My son," he muttered thickly. "My son! A bandit!"

And from that day forward Don Mariano Delfino was a broken man.

El Puma.

JUDGE TRAVERS walked through the street of the tiny settlement of Pueblo de los Angeles until he reached the Bella Union Hotel. At the door stood a knot of men, who saluted the judge as he came up.

"Is Mr. Howard here yet?" asked Travers.

"He's waiting for you inside, judge," said one of the men. "He's been looking round town this morning."

"I'll tell him that before long we shall have a regular town here," remarked Travers, going in. He found David Howard in the hotel, and greeted him warmly.

"What have you been doing up north, Howard?" asked the judge presently.

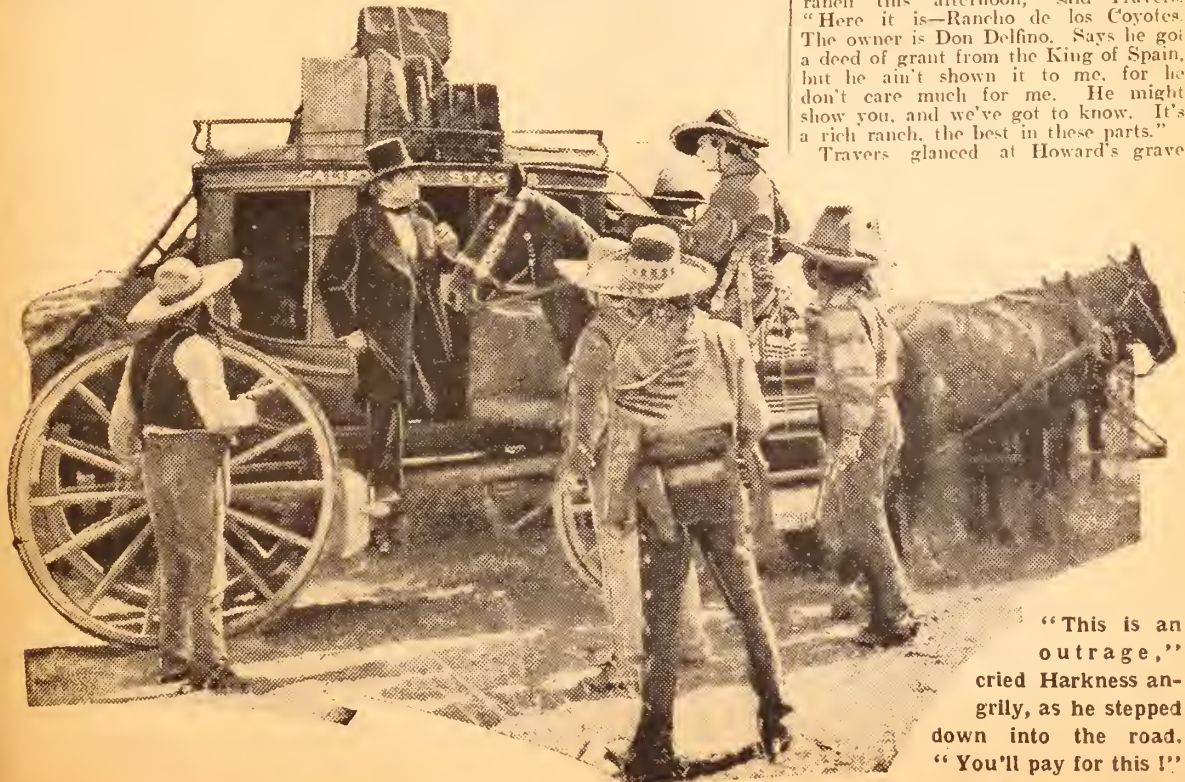
"I was acting as sheriff up at Spanish Gulch until I got orders to come here to help you," replied Howard.

"I'm sure glad you and I will be partners," said Travers. "I'm investigating title-deeds and rights of the Mexicans in these parts, and you're the man to help me, Howard."

Travers got out a big map, and the two men studied it for some time, the judge pointing out to Howard the principal ranches in the neighbourhood.

"You might go out to the largest ranch this afternoon," said Travers. "Here it is—Rancho de los Coyotes. The owner is Don Delfino. Says he got a deed of grant from the King of Spain, but he ain't shown it to me, for he don't care much for me. He might show you, and we've got to know. It's a rich ranch, the best in these parts."

Travers glanced at Howard's grave



"This is an outrage," cried Harkness angrily, as he stepped down into the road. "You'll pay for this!"

face, and decided to say nothing about his designs on the ranch. He felt sure that his new colleague would not stand for anything not strictly just and honourable, and he was perfectly correct.

"You say the don is old," remarked Howard. "Has he any children?"

"Two—a son and a daughter. The son came back from Mexico a while ago. He went north to Spanish Gulch, and I hear his cattle wrecked the town, but maybe you saw something of that. He ain't been heard of since."

"Yes, I saw something of that affair," replied Howard slowly. "Well, judge, I'll go out to the ranch this afternoon."

"Then you can give your report to the Land Commissioners to-night. They're due here this afternoon. Harkness is one of 'em. You know Harkness, of course."

"I know him," said Howard, turning to go. As he turned, a large placard on the wall caught his eye.

"5,000 DOLLARS REWARD."

"The above reward is offered for the capture, dead or alive, of the bandit known as

"EL PUMA."

"What's all this?" asked Howard.

"Ain't you heard of El Puma?" queried the judge. "Some Mexican, I reckon, but no one knows who he is. He's been holding up our people about here for the last month, and got away with it each time. I hope he ain't heard the Land Commissioners are coming to-day."

The judge's hopes were vain. Harkness and the other commissioners were travelling south from Spanish Gulch in the Californian stage-coach, when on a lonely stretch of road a few miles out of Los Angeles a swarm of horsemen suddenly swooped down upon them.

"El Puma!" shrieked the driver, dropping the reins and elevating his hands with lightning speed.

Harkness looked out of the coach window to find himself covered by half a dozen guns.

"Get out, all of you!" ordered a tall, dark young man on horseback, who was obviously the leader of the bandits.

"This is an outrage!" cried Harkness angrily, as he stepped down into the road. "You'll pay for this!"

"So you said before, senor," replied El Puma with ironical politeness. "Give this gentleman special attention," he added, turning to the grinning Juan.

Harkness glared at the bandit chief, but somehow in the excitement of the moment failed to recognise him, though the face of El Puma seemed to be vaguely familiar. The incidents of that day at Spanish Gulch were not very clear in the Land Commissioner's mind, for on that unpleasant occasion he had had more whisky than wit about him.

Juan took a large sack and made the round of the furious gringos, collecting their money and valuables. Harkness was more thoroughly scared than anyone, and all his property, even articles of the slightest value, went into the sack.

"The spoils, El Puma!" cried Juan at last, holding up the well-filled sack.

"Take the horses and the coach," came the sharp order.

A dozen men sprang forward at the words, and the coach was soon on its way to the bandits' hide-out in the mountains.

"What about us?" cried Harkness angrily.

"You will walk," replied El Puma with a smile. "It's only ten miles to Los Angeles, and the weather is fine.

October 17th, 1934.

A walk will do you good. Adios, senores!"

El Puma and his men galloped off down the road towards Los Angeles, and less than an hour afterwards they entered the little town in a body, shouting "Make way for El Puma!" as they swept along the street.

The few Americans in sight fled before the galloping horsemen, who took Los Angeles entirely by surprise. No one had expected that El Puma would be daring enough to raid the town in broad daylight, and the bandits drew rein before the Bella Union Hotel without meeting any check.

The crowd of gringos in the saloon gave back as a mob of Mexicans, all crying "Way for El Puma!" rushed in. Before the astonished Americans had realised what had happened they were covered by the guns of the bandits, and their hands went up. One man only drew his gun, and took aim at El Puma, but Juan was too quick for him. The bandit's pistol barked first, and the gringo slumped to the floor and lay still. "I had to do it," said Juan to his chief. "He'd have had you else."

El Puma nodded, walked to the bar, and called for drinks. The waiters hastily served him, and he gave a toast to his followers:

"Down with the gringos!"

Yells and cheers greeted his words, and then Juan got to work with a sack. There was no more resistance, and before long the Americans in the saloon had been despoiled of all their valuables.

"Finished, Juan?" asked El Puma at length. "Then we'll go."

He turned courteously to the hotel-keeper, who had been spared by Juan.

"I thank you for your hospitality, senor," he remarked. "I gave orders that your goods were not to be touched—except for your excellent wines, which of course we had to try. I think that by now some of my men have fired the town. Ah, yes! I see the smoke. I trust that Los Angeles will not soon forget the visit of El Puma. Adios, senores!"

He took off his sombrero in a sweeping bow, and a moment later the bandits were riding off at a gallop, leaving Los Angeles on fire behind them.

David Howard's New Job.

DAVID HOWARD rode out to the Rancho de los Coyotes that afternoon, and so escaped the raid on Los Angeles. Don Mariano received the American with his usual courtesy, and a few minutes' conversation showed him that here at last was a gringo of a very different character from the grasping adventurers who had annoyed and cheated the Mexicans since the annexation.

"You have a deed of grant from the King of Spain, I am told," said Howard presently.

"Yes, senor," replied the Don, "and I will show it to you with pleasure."

"This gives you an undoubted title to the estate," said Howard, when he had inspected the document. "I shall tell the Commissioners so, and they will not trouble you. Let me advise you to take great care of this deed."

Dolores came in, looking pale and troubled, but still very beautiful to the eyes of David Howard, who had never before seen a girl of her type, a Mexican of an ancient and noble family, with that unmistakable air of good-breeding so impossible to imitate.

At her father's request Dolores showed Howard round the house and the out-buildings, and presently he asked her the question she had all along feared.

"And your brother, senorita—am I to have the honour of meeting him?"

"He is not here," said Dolores as calmly as she could. "He didn't like it here, so he went back to Mexico."

"I think it must have been your brother that I saw at Spanish Gulch," said Howard thoughtfully. "I was ashamed of my countrymen that day, for—"

"Senor Howard," interrupted Dolores hurriedly, "I hope you will be good enough to take me indoors now. My father is becoming very feeble, and I cannot leave him long alone."

"Certainly, senorita," said Howard. "It is time I went back to Los Angeles, too. But may I come again?"

Dolores saw that the young American's eyes were fixed admiringly on her, and she knew that she had made a conquest. He was a gringo, of course, but he seemed to be a gentleman, and some advantage for her brother might come sooner or later from his friendship. So she smiled bewitchingly upon him.

"Of course, senor," she said; "we shall always be pleased to see you."

David Howard rode back to Los Angeles in abstracted mood, thinking of the charming Dolores. Halfway to the town he met the judge, who had been visiting a neighbouring ranch, and they went on together.

Los Angeles was in an uproar. The fire had been put out after several houses had been burned down, and a noisy crowd had then gathered in front of the hotel. Travers and Howard were greeted with cheers as they came up.

"What's going on?" asked the judge. "El Puma has held up the town!" yelled a score of voices.

"He held us up, too," cried Harkness, pushing through the crowd to the judge's side. "Took our money, the coach, and the horses, and left us to walk here. Nice reception for the Commissioners, I must say!"

"Very sorry for all this," said Travers. "It's a pity the troops have gone."

"This business has got to stop!" barked Harkness. "Why don't you form a company of vigilantes and hunt down these bandits?"

"We'll do it!" cried the judge. "And for captain—here's the man! Mr. Howard, will you do it?"

"I'll do it," said Howard, after a pause. "I'll make it my business to hunt down this El Puma, and hang him!"

The crowd cheered, and Howard was at once appointed captain of the vigilantes—or Rangers, as some preferred to call them. He selected his men, and began to scour the district for traces of El Puma. It was a difficult task, for every Mexican in the neighbourhood was on the side of the bandits, and Howard could obtain no information as to El Puma's hide-out. Yet the outlaw was still at work, for the raids and hold-ups continued, in spite of all the Rangers could do.

Several times Howard visited Don Mariano's ranch, but apparently no one there had so much as heard of El Puma. Dolores carefully avoided any mention of the famous bandit, and exerted all her powers of fascination so skillfully that the captain of the Rangers was soon deeply in love with her.

Then to David Howard came a dreadful shock. One day Harkness burst into the room at the hotel as the judge was talking to Howard.

"I know who El Puma is!" shouted Harkness. "I thought I'd seen that greaser who held us up somewhere, and I've been puzzling over it for days. Now I've got it!"

"Well, who is he?" asked the judge eagerly.

"He's the man who brought those cattle to Spanish Gulch, and wrecked

the town," cried Harkness. "And that was—"

"Francisco Delfino!" howled Travers. "I might have guessed it!"

"But the senorita told me her brother had gone back to Mexico," said Howard incredulously. "You must be wrong, Harkness."

"The girl was lying to shield her brother," cried the judge. "Go up to the ranch at once, Howard. Maybe you'll find out something there."

Howard went out slowly, hoping against hope that Harkness was mistaken. Hardly had he gone when Travers turned jubilantly to the Commissioner.

"That's good news, if it's true," said the judge.

"I'm nearly sure," replied Harkness, "though I was a bit—well, excited that day at Spanish Gulch."

"Well, we'll get the old don's ranch now," cried Travers. "The only trouble is that Howard has seen the deed of grant, and he guarantees it as genuine."

"What will he take to come in with us?" asked Harkness.

"You can't bribe Howard," replied the judge. "I haven't dared to whisper a word of all this to him."

"You're right, judge," said Harkness. "We must do the job ourselves. I'll get that deed. I'll get it to-night, and we'll burn it."

"And Howard will hang Francisco sooner or later," remarked the judge.

"The Commissioners will declare the estate to be forfeited, and we'll buy it in for a mere song, eh?"

"Sure!" cried Harkness.

Harkness Uses His Gun.

DAVID HOWARD rode up once more to the Rancho de los Coyotes, where he saw Dolores in the courtyard. The girl still looked pale and worn, but her face lighted up when she saw the young American approaching.

Soon the two were seated at a little table on the veranda. For Dolores had invited Howard to stay for lunch. The girl noticed that the captain of the Rangers seemed to be pre-occupied, as indeed he was, for he did not know how to introduce the topic of El Puma.

"Why do you call us 'gringos'?" asked Howard presently, not that he cared in the least why the word was used, but because he felt that he must say something in response to the girl's gay chatter.

"I don't quite know," replied Dolores. "Some say it's because of a song your soldiers sang, something about a flag."

"A green flag they carried? Yes, I expect that is the reason," said Howard. "I know the song." He began to sing the words in a low voice.

"The green goes over the hill, my boys,
The green goes over the hill."

"That's it," cried Dolores—laughing. "The green goes—gringos! But I won't say the word again if you don't like it."

She smiled charmingly on the young captain, and he

forgot El Puma instantly. Seizing a glass of wine, he stood up.

"I drink to love—and to you!" he cried, his grave face transfigured with eager excitement.

Dolores rose to her feet, looking startled. For many days she had been playing with fire, and now she realised suddenly that the game had become earnest.

"Surely you must know—I love you," said Howard softly. "And you, Dolores, could you be my wife?"

"I can't tell you—I can't!" cried the girl wildly, as the young man came forward. "Don't touch me, don't! Oh, you must go away! Go now!"

"Is it because of your brother, Dolores?" asked Howard gravely. "There is a rumour that he is El Puma. The judge thinks so."

Dolores, without a vestige of colour in her cheeks, faced the captain of the Rangers undauntedly, though she was almost fainting with fear.

"Tell the judge he is in Mexico," she whispered. "Tell him—if you love me—tell him that!"

A footstep sounded behind them, and Rosita Garcia came up, to look in astonishment from one to the other.

"Oh, Rosita, take me in!" cried Dolores wildly, throwing herself into her friend's arms.

"What have you been doing to frighten her so, Senior Howard?" asked Rosita reproachfully. "Come with me, Dolores. What have we to do with any gringo? Go away, Senior Capitan, and leave her to me!"

Howard rode back to Los Angeles in a very unenviable state of mind. He

was sure now that the rumour was true. He was almost sure, too, that Dolores loved him, as he loved her. And he had made it his business to hang her brother!

"Rosita, they suspect the truth," gasped Dolores, when the girls were alone. "Senior Howard said there is a rumour that Francisco is El Puma."

"We must warn him," replied Rosita calmly. "Pedro came down this morning to see the fathers at the mission, and he is still somewhere about. I'll give him a message, and I don't fear that the Rangers will catch him. He's got Francisco's best horse."

Pedro was given a message, and rode off. Some of the Rangers saw him making for the mountains and gave chase, but he easily outdistanced them, and late in the afternoon he arrived safely at the bandit's camp.

"What news, Pedro?" asked El Puma, as his follower came up.

"I saw the fathers and gave them the money you sent," replied Pedro. "I told them a friend had sent it. Then I saw the Senorita Garcia, and she gave me a message for you." Pedro dropped his voice to a whisper before he went on. "She wants to see you to-night."

Francisco well knew that he was taking his life in his hands to venture near the ranch, but he had promised to go if Rosita sent for him, so when darkness fell he took Juan and some of his best men and set off.

Rosita spent the whole evening in the chapel, praying for her lover's safety. The hour grew late, and at last she rose from her knees, for she had heard the



"My father is dead—murdered," he said bitterly. "With his dying breath he asked me to give you this—"

sound of a galloping horse. A moment later Francisco came in.

"Why did you scud for me, Rosita?" he asked, as they embraced.

"To warn you. They suspect who you are, for Captain Howard of the Rangers told Dolores to-day. You can't go on like this, Francisco. Think of your father and your sister. He seems quite an old man now, and Dolores is like a white ghost."

"And you, Rosita?" asked Francisco gently.

"Yes, think of me, too. I can't go on in fear all the time. If I were only with you—take me away with you, now, to-night!"

"I wish I could, Rosita," said Francisco, "but there's a price on my head."

"Rosita, Rosita!" called Dolores from the house.

"I suppose I must go now," said the girl. "If you want me, send for me."

One passionate embrace, one last word, and El Puma vanished into the night, while Rosita went into the house. Two minutes later a man rode up very quietly, and crept furtively towards the door. It was Harkness, bent on stealing the deed of grant. He was still at the foot of the steps when the door opened and Don Mariano appeared.

"Is that you, Francisco?" cried the old man eagerly.

"I'm Harkness, the Land Commissioner," came the reply "and in the name of the Government I demand that deed of grant."

"What!" cried the don. "Senor Howard told me—"

"Darn Howard!" growled Harkness. "Give me that deed, or—"

Harkness raised his gun threateningly, but Don Mariano, old and feeble though he was, showed no sign of fear. "Gomez! Diego!" he cried. "Help! A thief!"

Harkness lost his head, and did what he had not the least intention of doing when he set out. He pressed the trigger of his gun, and the old don fell just as two or three servants came running up. The Land Commissioner ran for his horse, and galloped like a madman down the road that Francisco had taken a few minutes before.

El Puma had just met Juan, whom he had left on guard, when there came the sound of a shot. The bandits drew rein and listened. A minute later Harkness rode furiously past, spurring desperately, and not even noticing El Puma and Juan.

"That was Harkness," said Francisco. "I'm going back to see who fired that shot."

The two men returned to the ranch-house, and found everything there in wild confusion. The old don had been carried in, and lay on a bed, dying, while Dolores, Rosita and the servants wept around him.

"Is that you, Francisco?" said Don Mariano feebly as his son entered.

Francisco stooped over the bed and kissed the old man's forehead. Then he stood upright, his brow dark and his eyes burning with an expression that made the onlookers shudder.

"Who did this?" he asked in a low, stern voice.

"I heard someone. I thought it was you!" gasped the dying man. "It was Harkness, and he came to steal the deed. See if it is still safe in the chest."

Francisco went to an old chest in the corner, and after a moment's search he found the deed and brought it to his father.

"Ah, it's safe," muttered the don. "Now, Francisco, see that this deed is October 17th, 1931."

given into the hands of the Senor Capitan Howard. Dolores will need protection, and you cannot give it. I trust the Senor Howard, and he loves your sister."

"Oh, father!" sobbed Dolores, "Don't talk so much. You must lie still and rest."

"I am dying, child," said the old man, "and I must speak. Francisco, you think you're helping your people, but you're not. You're only creating more distrust. The new order of things is here. It will do—no good—to fight."

The last words came in a faint whisper, and a moment later Don Mariano was dead. Francisco stood looking down on his father's body for a second, and then turned to go out.

"Where are you going?" cried Dolores and Rosita together.

"I'm going to give the grant to Howard," replied Francisco. "Do you love this American, Dolores?"

"I love him better than anyone in the world, except you and father!" cried Dolores, her body shaking with bitter sobs.

"Well, I'm going to see two men," said Francisco quietly. "El Senor Capitan Howard—and one other!"

El Puma's Revenge.

WITH frantic haste Harkness rode into Los Angeles, and found the judge in his room at the Bella Union Hotel.

"Well, did you get it?" asked Travers eagerly.

"No!" gasped Harkness. "I—I shot him—the don, I mean. He came out and called for his men, and I pressed the trigger instinctively. I didn't mean to shoot the old man."

"Is he dead?" queried Travers.

"I think so, and I'm off to Spanish Gulch in the morning to avoid suspicion. And remember we've been playing cards here all the evening."

"Of course we have," replied the judge. "No one saw you, I suppose?"

"Only the old don," said Harkness confidently, for he had not the least idea that El Puma was even then on his track.

Francisco had gone out from the house to find Juan on guard.

"My father has been shot—murdered by Harkness," he said. "Now listen. I've no time for mourning. I'm going to avenge him."

"I'm with you, Don Francisco!" cried Juan savagely.

"No," said Francisco. "While I go to Los Angeles, you will arrange a change of horses for me on the road to the border. Have good horses at Santa Anna and Santa Catalina and San Diego. I'm going back to Mexico."

"Pedro and Felipe are waiting for us up the road," said Juan. "I'll send them on to see to the horses."

"That will do," said Francisco. "Then go to the camp and tell the men. Let each man go quietly to his home. To-night is the end of El Puma."

Juan rode off, and Francisco went down alone into Los Angeles. He found the town in darkness, save for the hotel, where a few convivial spirits were still drinking in the bar, and lights still shined at the upper windows.

El Puma's spies had done him good service, and he knew which rooms were occupied by Howard and Harkness. Leaving his horse tethered outside, he shinned up a pillar, scrambled on to a balcony, and came to Howard's window.

The captain of the Rangers was there, studying a map. David Howard was still torn between love and duty, and, though he seemed to be making notes from the map of all the places in which

it was possible that El Puma might have a hide-out, he was thinking all the time of Dolores Delfino.

A slight noise at the window made Howard look up to see a tall Mexican step into the room.

"El Senor Capitan Howard?" said the newcomer. "I am sorry to intrude, senor, but you did me a service at Spanish Gulch, and I have come to repay it. I am Francisco Delfino."

Howard stared at the young don without replying, and after a pause Francisco spoke again.

"My father is dead—murdered, and I know who shot him," he said bitterly. "With his dying breath he asked me to give you this—the deed of grant to the Rancho de los Coyotes. Will you take charge of it, senor? My sister Dolores—"

"I've heard that Dolores' brother and El Puma are the same man," interrupted Howard, taking the parchment.

"And I've heard that Dolores Delfino loves the Senor Howard," replied Francisco quietly. "That is one of the reasons why El Puma is disbanding his men and leaving for Mexico to-night."

"I have promised the citizens of Los Angeles to hang El Puma," replied Howard; "but I will give Dolores' brother ten minutes to leave the town if he really is going to Mexico."

"Very well, senor," said Francisco. "I agree to that, if you will tell the Senorita Garcia—you know her, I think."

"Yes; I have seen her at the ranch," answered Howard.

"If you will tell her to meet me in Mexico City in a week's time, at the house where I stayed when I was there. My servant Juan will show her where it is."

"I will do that," said Howard; "but I warn you that after the ten minutes I shall gather a posse, and do my best to catch you."

"I thank you for the ten minutes," replied Francisco. "Adios, senor!"

He swung out of the window and disappeared. Howard carefully locked up the deed of grant, took out his watch, and waited for the ten minutes to pass.

Francisco crept cautiously along the balcony to the room which Harkness occupied, and peered in. The room was empty. He slipped down into the street, saw that his horse was ready, and walked boldly into the saloon. There at the bar, with his back to the door, stood Harkness, with the judge and a few other men.

Harkness in a glass opposite saw the reflection of Francisco as he entered, and the Land Commissioner turned instantly. Several other men did the same as a cry of "El Puma!" was raised.

"Yes, senors, El Puma!" cried Francisco, and two guns barked at almost the same moment, as the young don and Harkness both fired. But the Mexicans was a shade quicker, and Harkness slumped against the bar counter, and then slid to the floor, dead, while his bullet passed harmlessly over Francisco's shoulder.

In two strides El Puma was through the door, with bullets splintering the woodwork behind him. Another moment, and he was on his horse, galloping down the street.

David Howard came down, and the men gathered around him.

"He's gone south, captain!" yelled a dozen voices.

In a few minutes Howard was leading a posse of riders southwards. Out of the town they galloped, and away on the trail towards the far-off Mexican border.

(Continued on page 25.)

A young police-officer undertakes to rid the town of a desperate gang of gunmen and racketeers. A gripping story of action and thrills, starring John Holland, Robert Gleckler, Edmund Breese and Catherine Dale Owen.



"This Crime Wave Must Cease!"
ANOTHER shooting affray—man riddled by machine-gun bullets—and have you arrested anyone? No!"

The speaker shot out the last word in a rasping growl. A grey-haired man with a much-lined face. He wore a smart morning-coat, butterfly collar and grey tie, and well-cut pin-stripe trousers. The bright, alert eyes were very angry, and the other two men looked distinctly uncomfortable. No wonder, because the commissioner was in a very bad temper.

On the big desk were a number of newspapers, and the commissioner jabbed his finger dramatically on one headline when he received no answer.

"Look what the Press are saying!" he cried. "What are the police doing? Will this crime wave go on without anything being done? Why doesn't the chief arrest the gang? And a lot more bunk."

The heavily built officer in the blue uniform, with four stripes on his cuff and three stars on his peaked cap and lapels, fingered his thick grey moustache whilst furtively eyeing his superior.

"I wish the Press could be put on the spot," the Chief of Police answered. "They do more harm than good."

The third man was a big, handsome fellow in a suit of blue cloth. Dark hair and moustache, broad of shoulder, and the brown eyes were full of sympathy for his superior. The commissioner had got them both on the mat, but it was the chief who had to take the responsibility. Ted Muldoon was only the head of the detective force, and obeying orders.

"It's not easy when fighting a bunch of rattlesnakes," commented the detective. "They've got money, and there's such a thing as graft. Besides, com-

missioner, the station is very much under full complement."

Commissioner Lang frowned at the detective.

"I know all that, and I don't want to hear it again." He banged his desk. "Something's got to be done—and sharp! I've spoken about this before, and yet things are going from bad to worse. We were under-staffed then, and you know as well as I do that we're likely to remain so for months. New York and Chicago have had a crime wave, and they've taken a lot of our best men, but we are expected to carry on just the same. I leave it to your imagination to guess what sort of criticism I have received from headquarters. I've got to take sterner methods."

The police commissioner had a very great admiration for the chief, Detective Muldoon, and the rest of the police force, but this morning he was almost frantic. For weeks headquarters had been rowing him over the increasing crime wave in Lincoln, and his nerves were frayed to their limit. This morning especially, because the mail had brought another censure and information that was far from encouraging.

"We're doing our best, sir." The chief shook his head. "Hardly a man has had a decent night's sleep for weeks. The main trouble is that the town's scared. The people know that by seeing nothing and saying still little, they'll keep out of trouble. They've no desire to be put on the 'spot,' and one can't blame 'em. Several valuable witnesses have either been plugged or intimidated or bribed. It is also common knowledge that we're considerably under strength."

"Your arguments are sound enough, chief, but they don't help." The commissioner got to his feet and paced

restlessly up and down his room. "I've got to do something"—he paused to give both men a quick, meaning glance—"even to a change of those in command. That may not do a scrap of good, but that'll be the only thing that will pacify headquarters, except the suppression of some of the crooks. Something's got to be done within the next few weeks, or else we'll have changes."

"I see what you mean, sir." The chief had a wife and three children—the prospect of a reduction to captain meant a sad loss of prestige and salary. "A bright look-out, with Joe Valet thinking of making Lincoln his headquarters. Guess New York ought to do something now that gunman is coming here."

"New York has made it so hot for Valet that he's decided to have a change of climate." The lined face of the commissioner twisted in a sarcastic grin. "And New York don't want Valet or his thugs back again, and they knew that if they get rid of the extra police that's what he will do—the same applies to Chicago. I'm not wanting to be hard, chief, but I'm at my wits' end. I keep on giving you time to do something, and nothing is done. You are up against it, but that doesn't help me out, so unless Terone and Valet are arrested or driven from Lincoln, I've got to make changes."

"Valet is darned sight cuter than Terone!" growled Muldoon. "Terone's a half-caste Mexican, and handier with a knife than a gun. Valet's not only slick with a gun, but he's got brains and a gang that stick at nothing."

"Well, sir, I must try to carry out your instructions." The chief shrugged his shoulders in a helpless gesture. "Can you give me a week or so of grace before making these changes?"

"I can." The commissioner softened.

"You're too honest, chief, that's your trouble. You won't arrest anyone unless you think it's your man. So take my tip and arrest on the least suspicion." His voice became alert again. "And now, chief, have you any plans for dealing with this man Valet? He arrives by air to-morrow. Just like a gunman's nerve to make no secret of the fact he is coming to Lincoln."

"Valet's wanted for a killing down in Ohio." The chief's eyes were alight with a desperate chance of making good. "Valet may not know that an old companion, whom he side-lined, has squealed. I happened to get this information this morning, and it's enough for a warrant to arrest. I also want to put Captain Houston on this job."

"Bill Houston." The commissioner gave the chief an inquiring glance. "Any particular reason or scheme?"

Commissioner Lang had a charming daughter—his only child. Alice was twenty and a very great friend of Captain William Houston, and there were rumours that soon they were to be engaged. Houston was a comparative newcomer to Lincoln, having been sent to many stations in the last few years. His fine service had gained him promotion, and the capture of some notorious outlaws on the borders of Southern California had produced a captaincy. Whilst on a much-needed vacation in Los Angeles he had met Alice, who was on a visit to relations, and the two had become fast friends. Maybe Alice had had something to do with Houston being posted to Lincoln when there came a vacancy through illness.

Three months Houston had been in Lincoln, and during that time the chief had come to find in this young man a tower of strength. The few arrests that had been made were due to Houston.

The chief openly praised the young man.

"I'm not saying this to please you, sir, but Houston is a very capable officer. If it weren't for Bill and Muldoon I don't know where we should be. Most of the patrolmen are raw men, and my officers good fellows but not overburdened with brains. Houston fears no one, and he can't be bought. I'd like Bill to have full power to act as he pleases, because I believe bulldog, rough-shod methods will win this fight!"

"Want Bill to fight them all?"

"That lad has strength and a quick wit," was the answer. "With Muldoon's help he can tackle these scum. I shall assist in every way, but there is so much work in the office in regard to smaller cases that I cannot spare all my time to Terone and Valet. I'm sure that Captain Houston is just the lad to handle this sort of job."

"I think you're right, chief," admitted the commissioner. "I've a strong idea that my daughter is with Houston. She's gone slumming, and I made Bill act as a bodyguard. Directly he comes in I'd like to see the lad, and—"

The commissioner held out his hand to the sturdy, erect chief of police. "I trust we have no ill-feeling, but duty is duty, and I am only obeying orders."

"Can't blame you, sir," answered the chief. "Though I wish headquarters would give us a full complement and not expect miracles. I'll send Houston to you as soon as he arrives."

Muldoon and Houston Make Their Plans.

A CLEAN-SHAVEN, broad-shouldered young giant stood bare-headed by the side of a smart two-seater car. Brown eyes smiled down into blue. The driver and owner of the car was a charming, fair-haired young girl; obvious that Alice Lang was very

much attached to the handsome young police officer.

"I'm sorry pop's put you on this new job." A frown creased her smooth forehead. "You must be very careful, Bill."

"Terone and Valet will have to be careful as well," came his laughing reassurance. "These gnyes are pretty yellow if you show a firm hand. Now I must be moving, honey, as I've a conference with Muldoon. If I can't look in after supper I will ring."

With proud eyes Bill Houston watched the girl of his dreams drive away. What a lucky chap he was to be loved by the prettiest and sweetest girl in Lincoln.

Briskly he turned and strode into the station. Duty must come first, and everything must be given up in this battle against the gunmen. Houston loathed gunmen and racketeers.

Detective Muldoon was waiting in Houston's own office, and the two men put their heads together.

"We know all about Terone." Muldoon pushed his soft felt hat to the back of his head. "A nasty little rat, who has several very good burrows and is mighty careful not to take too many risks. All the bootlegging round here is due to Terone, and that guy put on the spot was a would-be rival. The local Press made an awful song about the shooting in order to sell their trashy papers."

"I've seen Terone a score of times," admitted Houston. "But there's not enough to run him for a long stretch. We want that guy for keeps and we must get the evidence. In a way I'm glad this gunman is coming to the town. They may try some big coup, and then we'll get the whole bunch."

"Joe Valet will certainly start something," Muldoon laughed. "I had a slight brush with Joe when I was stationed in Chicago. He's one of those cool and casual sort of men whom you would not think capable of hurting a fly, but, by gosh, he's dangerous! He'll have a man bumped off and never turn a hair. If you serve in Valet's gang you stick if you value your life; start a squeal, and before you've opened your mouth he's got you. I trailed him for a month, and one day he nicked this chip out of my ear, and I got a message next mail to lay off. I was just mad to go after him, but the powers sent me off on a job in another town. I'll be glad to meet Joe again."

"What's Terone doing about Valet?"

"I've made a few inquiries round Conway, and it's common property that they're starting a partnership."

"I'd like to clean up Conway," decided Houston. "That area down by the river is alive with thugs and rafs that want exterminating. So Valet and Terone are becoming partners. How do you think they'll hit it off, Ted?"

"Valet will want to be the boss, Bill," Muldoon was decided. "He'll discuss plans with Terone, but Valet will do the bossing, and if Terone don't like it I'm mighty sure he'll get put in his place—pronto as they say in the West."

"This dope about Valet coming by air—is it genuine?"

"Genuine and reliable, but I don't think Valet will have broadcast the glad tidings. The message to Terone was intercepted, and that's how we know."

"How about a little party of welcome, Ted?"

"That's my idea." Muldoon straightened his shoulders. "If we arrest Valet on arrival we can hold him for that K.L. in Ohio. His Highness can

be sent back to Chicago to await trial and—"

"The commissioner won't pester the poor old chief quite so much," chuckled Houston. "You arrest Valet and any of his gang that are with him, but be sure to go well armed. Better go a dozen strong, because Terone may be at the aerodrome. Bring Valet to my office. Should there look like trouble down at the aerodrome ring me, but otherwise leave me out. Let plain-clothes men try this out—the sight of flatfoots might start a fight."

Memories of the Trenches.

NEXT day a triumphant Ted Muldoon burst into Houston's office.

"Got Joe and the Kid—that's his right-hand man." He threw out his broad chest. "Got 'em both outside. Gee, wasn't Joe surprised to see me. I had hardly any trouble."

"Good for you, Ted," Houston laughed, then asked a question. "How about friend Terone?"

"Was there with all his little bunch. They were all dolled up for the occasion. Reckon Terone had prepared an address of welcome. We lay low when the plane landed and watched the meeting. Joe's face set like a mask when he saw that bunch, and I heard him talk. 'Say, what's the best idea. Reckon with all you guys around must be a sure tip to the cops.'"

"What did Terone say?"

"Looked kinda green," chuckled Muldoon. "Then got boastful and said there was no need to get scared. Joe got riled at that and said he wasn't scared of any cop, but he didn't believe in advertising his whereabouts. Then I gave my lads the tip."

"And you quietly stole up behind." Houston gave a knowing nod. "How did they act?"

"I didn't give Valet much of a chance," Muldoon smiled. "I jabbed a gun in his ribs and the boys covered the Kid and Terone's bunch. 'You're Joe Valet,' I said, 'and I've got a warrant for your arrest.' Both men parked guns, but they made no sign of resistance. Terone's gang, seeing I was a dozen strong, were too scared to try any tricks. Valet only spoke once more to Terone. 'Thanks for your welcome to this city. Maybe you'll be a wise guy some time.' Then Valet fastened those solemn eyes on me and, without a smile, said: 'You're a persistent sort of fool, Ted! How's your car?'"

"A humorist?"

"Yes, but his humour ain't funny." Muldoon shivered. "There was a cold, steely light in Valet's eyes when he said that, and I frankly confess I shall be glad to see him under lock and key. There's a cast in one eye that makes him look malignant. Still, Valet came quietly enough, and we brought him and the Kid straight along to the station. Almost a bit too easy for my liking."

"You seem to have a high respect for this man Valet." Bill Houston gave a sly chuckle. "Guess I'll brace myself for the ordeal. I think you might bring Valet in and let me meet this sinister gunman."

Handcuffed by the wrists, two men were pushed by husky police officers into the room.

Houston had his head bent over his desk as if the arrest of a master-gunner was a minor affair.

Joe Valet fingered his small moustache with his free hand, but otherwise showed no sign of perturbation. It looked as though he were in a mighty



"Get Watson to hospital," Houston ordered. "Valet and the Kid have escaped—they plugged Watson!"

tight corner, but there was no reason to let the cops see that. If he did get free there would be a settlement with that fool Terone for making all that show—he blamed the dago more than anyone.

Idly Valet glanced at the police officer, and then a flicker appeared and was gone. That curly head was familiar, and then Houston looked up.

The two men stared at each other, and slowly in the eyes of each appeared the light of dawning recollection.

"Phil Terry!" Bill Houston jumped to his feet. "What in the name of goodness brings you here? I've often wondered what became of you."

"Howdy, Bill?" drawled the gunman. "When I met my old sparring partner I never expected to find a cop."

"Let's shake to old times," Houston, now that the first surprise had passed, wondered why Terry made no effort to hold out his hand. He pushed his own hand forward in an effort to grip his old friend's hand, and then his eyebrows went up in a question. Houston had seen the handcuffs on the right hand, and now his fingers moved aside a coat-sleeve and saw that the two men were linked together.

"That gets you guessing." The gunman gave a mirthless laugh. "We meet again, but under somewhat unusual circumstances."

Houston shot Muldoon an inquiring glance and read the answer.

"Are you Joe Valet?" he demanded of the man he called Terry.

"That's my monicker."

"So Phil Terry has become Joe Valet, gunman!" Houston was bewildered. "I'll wake up soon and find I'm dreaming."

"What's so strange about it, Bill?" Valet seemed indifferent and a little amused. "I was always a wanderer and adventurer. You knew nothing of my pre-war record, and I didn't shout it round the trenches. The War came when things were getting a bit warm for me, and it was a way out. I did

my part and by luck got through—thanks to you."

"Did the wound affect your brain?" "Badly wounded, you got me to safety," Valet spoke evenly, and the east in his eye seemed more pronounced. "For months I was in hospital, and not fit for much when I was discharged. I went back to the old game and have no regrets."

"I'm sorry, Phil," Houston sighed. "You were always a bloodthirsty soldier. You know you're wanted for a killing in Ohio?"

"So that's come through," Valet pursed his lips and gave the Kid a knowing glance. "That was a bungled slow-down. The guy who died, Bill, won't ever wear wings. I got no compunction about killing squealers—I'm not admitting any hand in this affair, but just stating I'd kill squealers and laugh. Squealers and fools, Bill, I can't abide. I think you're a bit of a fool to have become a flatfoot."

"Opinions differ." Now Houston was smiling. "I'm on the right side of the law."

"You always were that way," Valet gave a scornful laugh. "Remember how I wanted to raid the quartermaster's stores one night and you got so sore? Remember those sardines and other junk that I swore came from home?"

"Yeah, I remember." "Well, you're a fence," Valet showed his white teeth in a grin. "They all came from the quartermaster's store."

"Lucky I didn't ask too many questions," Houston became once more the officer. "Well, Phil or Joe, I've got to put you behind bars. You'll go to Chicago as soon as an escort arrives. Sorry, but not my fault."

Houston gripped the gunman's left hand and there came an answering response.

"Not the first time," said Valet.

"Maybe I'll see you afore I go."

"Sure," Houston nodded to the

officers to show the interview was at an end, then stayed the police as he remembered something. "Phil, do you still cut out silhouettes?"

"Thinking of the one I did of the German prisoner?"

"Yeah, and how darned angry I got when you punched him for not keeping still."

"That's my bad blood," Valet shook his head. "I'm a bad case, Bill. Come and see me if you get a spare minute."

"Maybe you can do another of those silhouettes?" Houston nodded to the officers. "Count on me to come along within an hour."

Joe Valet and the Kid were led away, the officers went, leaving only Detective Muldoon with the young captain.

"That's a queer meeting," ruminated Houston. "I ran away from school to join up—I was fifteen at the time, so you can work out my present age. With the gunners in action I ran across Phil Terry. He was a queer youngster, but quite fearless and wild. His reckless nature must have appealed to me and we became queer friends. He was always before the colonel for some scrape, and many a time I got him out of a jam. He always swore he would lead a reckless life and die as he had lived. Still, Muldoon, I liked him, and I'm danged sorry."

"It's a queer world," was all the detective could think to say.

The Telegram.

THE Kid was a typical underworld type with his broken nose, ugly mouth and small piggy eyes. He was in shirt-sleeves and perspiring freely.

"This is a nasty jam, boss."

"Sure it's a nasty jam," Valet leaned against the stout bars of the cell. "I never thought that fool Terone would act like an advertising agent, nor did I think the cops would have had the nerve to run us. I'd heard Lincoln was quaking in their shoes, but they've got two men who ain't scared in Muldoon and Houston. Muldoon ain't much, but Houston's different."

"Ain't getting soft, are yer, boss?"

"Your brains aren't your strongest

point, Kid," sneered Valet. "I never

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allow feelings to stand in my way. Houston has what you haven't got." He touched his forehead. "And I haven't forgotten what he was like in France. I don't fear much, Kid, but I'm a coward where Houston's concerned. What's more, if he starts out on a thing he's a stickler. If you told Bill to get through two lines of Hunns he would do it somehow."

"What we gonna do?"

"Dunno. That Ohio killing is another thing I didn't aim would come through to the cops yet awhile." Valet peered through the bars. "If I could get away from this place I'd show those cops something."

"Expect Terone ain't sorry." The Kid was somewhat of a pessimist. "He'll be king of the castle again."

"A cheap sap," sneered Valet. "One of those nasty slimy knife-throwers I would enjoy taking for a ride. Shush!" Valet waved a hand to his underling. "Pipe down, Kid; here comes Houston."

William Houston held a slip of paper in his hand, and Valet knew that it was a telegram.

"A code message that's just been intercepted," drawled the police captain. "It purports to come from your mother and was sent care of Terone."

"I still have a mother and she's alive." Valet never flickered an eyelid. "I happen to be rather fond of the old lady. She lives in Chicago and, strange as it may seem, is mighty fond of her black sheep of a son. Actually, Bill, she knows very little of my business. To her I am Phil Terry, shipping clerk. You may have seen me occasionally writing letters in the trenches—they were to my mother. You say she's written to me in code?"

Valet was a clever actor as he looked bewildered.

"That beats me. Like to give me an idea of what she's said?"

"Oh, it sounds reasonable enough," admitted Houston. "But I still think it might be in code."

"Did you ever find me a liar, Bill?" Valet smiled.

"I admit that I never found you out," laughed Houston. "I'll read it to you."

The Kid and Joe Valet were tense with expectancy.

"Sorry you have gone away. Am sending two parcels on to you—"

Houston paused to eye Valet inquiringly.

"One's a new suit of clothes, and I guess the other parcel must be cigars." Valet rubbed his chin. "Can't think of anything else. She's a dear old soul."

"Am sending two parcels on to you at once," Houston went on reading. "Everything all right at home. Wire me your permanent address. Your worried mother."

"Sing-Sing may be my permanent address." Valet gave a quiet chuckle. "Still, it's no good crying over spilt milk. I'm sorry for the old lady." One eye flickered a glance at the Kid. "I hope I'll be here when those two parcels arrive."

"You'll be here until your escort turns up," announced Houston, and passed the message through the bars. "I'm taking your word this is from your mother."

"Thanks, Bill." Valet gave the piece of paper a glance, then carelessly stuffed it in his pocket. "What a fine chance this could be, Bill. In the war you and I were buddies, fighting on the same side, but now we're on opposite sides, yet—" He coughed slightly. "And yet what a clean-up it would be if we still worked together."

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"Meaning?" Houston grinned slightly.

"If you and I went hand-in-hand," spoke Joe Valet. "Like Jack and Jill going up the hill. I on the outside and you on the inside. No one would ever get wise and—"

"That'll be quite enough," interposed Houston. "This place is a police-station, but for the sake of argument we will imagine that your cell is the German lines, and where I stand is the front line of the Allies. Do you get my meaning?"

"Clearly, Bill—we're enemies!—yes!" Houston studied his watch. "I've got work to do. See you again, Valet, before you leave."

The gunman stared thoughtfully after the young officer, then gave a contemptuous snort as he turned to the smiling Kid.

"My name oughta be George Washington," he whispered. "Though I must say I didn't over enjoy that bluff. Houston's kinda different. Can't help admiring a man, Kid, for sticking to his principles, even though they are sheer punk." He took from his pocket the telegram. "Lucky Terone had the sense to tell my lads about this jam—maybe I'll forgive Terone." His smile was benign but sinister. "If we get out of this. If Houston knew what this meant he would have a fit. Hope the boys pick out two good parcels."

"They'll send Leopold and Pop." The Kid rubbed his hands together. "By gar, I'll be glad to get out of this place."

"Not so loud, fool!" rasped Valet. "The walls in here have ears. Come close, we gotta rehearse our plans when those two parcels arrive. Reckon the time to act will be on the way to the railway-station, and we mustn't fail."

"You mean, boss?" The Kid's face was white and drawn.

"You know as well as I do that the shooting in Ohio is enough to send us to the chair." Valet drew his confederate close. "Nothing has got to stop us making our getaway."

The Escape.

CAPTAIN HOUSTON was seated in his office when Detective Muldoon announced that the escort had arrived.

"Here sooner than I expected," commented Houston. "They should go by the four o'clock. I expect you've got through to the railway, Ted?"

"I have, and the escort are now with the prisoners." Ted Muldoon lit a cigarette. "We'll soon have those two off our hands. The police car is outside and everything's set."

"The papers of the escort in order?"

"Sure they were." Muldoon seemed surprised. "What made you ask that question?"

"We've arrested Valet and disposed of him in too easy a style." Houston scowled at his writing-pad. "Joe was a queer card in the war, but he had an uncanny way of achieving whatever he set out to do. This looks like finish for Joe, and yet he doesn't seem a bit perturbed. I've seen him twice in the cells, and he's all smiles and bright chat, as if he were going on a picnic." He gave his friend a hard glance and his voice was serious. "Joe knows that there's a chair at the end of this ride."

"He's a cool hand. No good showing the white feather."

"White feather be darned!" growled Houston. "I know Valet is brave enough, but he's so cool that I'm suspicious."

"What of, Bill?"

"Dunno." Houston ran a pencil through his hair in a worried gesture. "Has the chief had a talk to the escort, explained their responsibility and told them to take no chances?"

"The chief's done all that." Muldoon had never seen his friend and colleague so jumpy. "It's all over bar the shouting."

"Glad you think so. Who's driving the car?"

"Watson. Prisoner and escort in the back. I thought of going with them."

"Ted, I'll go along." Houston pushed his chair back. "I'm going to see our friends off myself. Will you stay around my office till I get back?"

The prisoners and escort were waiting.

"Good-bye, Bill." Valet gave a twisted grin. "Hope Lincoln has a nice time when we're gone. Give my love to Terone."

"I would rather give him a sock on the jaw!" cried the frank-spoken Houston. "Best get moving, boys."

Usually he took stock of the two plain-clothes men. One was a big, heavily-built man with rather too much fat in the wrong parts. Dull but amiable, decided Houston, and passed on to the second man. Sallow, slightly foreign type, silent and reserved—probably the more intelligent of the two. Houston wondered why the police used these half-caste fellows for such important work. Perhaps appearances were deceptive.

Houston did not see the lock that passed between Valet and the dark escort.

"Good-bye, Bill!" cried Valet. "Oh, I'm coming along to the station," grunted Bill, and wondered why Valet looked distinctly annoyed. "Want to see you on the way, Phil."

"Guess I'd have preferred the parting here." The crook seemed perturbed. "Better know me as Joe Valet—that other part of my life is a closed book."

"Have it your own way." Houston motioned the prisoners and escort to get into the car and for Watson to start up the engine. "Don't forget to stand by at the office, Muldoon."

A wave to his detective friend and then the police car glided away, blaring its warning to pedestrians. Houston sat in his seat next to the driver and stared along the road. A quiet section of Lincoln lay ahead. Something made the police officer glance up at the mirror fixed above the windscreen for observing following traffic.

Houston stiffened. Why were the heads of the escort and prisoners so close together? A faint murmur also told him that the four men were whispering to each other. This could only mean one thing—treachery—a frame-up for an escape.

The angle of his head must have been noticed, also his interest in the mirror, because next moment a hand reached forward between the two officers and moved the mirror to an angle that prevented any observance of the actions of those behind.

William Houston had to think and act quickly. The escort were crooks, but how they had managed this business was a mystery, and they were probably armed.

Watson was aware that something was wrong, and glanced sideways at his superior for instructions. Houston made a turning motion with his hand—it meant switch off the engine and slow down.

And, as the driver obeyed, Houston whipped out his gun, but Valet had been expecting some such action. Hands

gripped the police captain's throat, his peaked cap rolled off, and then there was a fearful crash on the base of the skull. The butt end of a revolver had done the deed. Vaguely, Houston heard the sound of a shot, and then knew no more.

When he opened his eyes Houston groaned, because his head ached abominably. He rubbed a spot on which was congealed blood and tried to recover his wits. Where was he? The police officer sat up and stared round. The car was under some trees on a quiet stretch of the road, and his companion was huddled over the wheel.

One glance round confirmed his fears. Valet, the Kid, and the escort were gone.

"Watson!" Houston shook the driver, but there came no response.

A closer glance, and then the youngster started back with a horrified look on his face. They had shot Watson and the officer was dead.

Out of the car he scrambled and glanced up and down the road. In the distance a few pedestrians and a car were approaching. The crooks had got clean away.

Quickly he drew Watson from his seat into the place where he had sat. Better not stop the approaching car as it would be as well to keep the shooting quiet. It would cause a sensation when it leaked out. Houston jumped into the driver's seat and was soon tearing back to headquarters, where a crowd at once collected.

"Get Watson to hospital," Houston ordered. "Valet and the Kid have escaped—they plugged Watson."

In Houston's office was Muldoon and two battered plain-clothes men—the real escort. They had been met on arrival by two supposed officers, and remembered little more till they woke up in a disused barn on the outskirts of Lincoln.

Valet and Terone.

THERE was a part of Lincoln known as the "Steps." It was close to a sluggish, winding river and was a locality best avoided after dark. Every big city has its slum neighbourhood and its doubtful district, and the Steps certainly answered that description. The police patrolled in couples after dark and were always on the alert.

Near the water-front Terone and his gang had several hide-outs, but the police did not know which one. There were secret passages between many of these old houses and crooks could live there like so many moles. The police were trying to get these houses destroyed and condemned, but so far had been unsuccessful.

In one of these houses Joe Valet and Terone met. Valet had been reinforced by five men who had come into the town by car. One of the bogus escort had been one of Terone's gang, and this man guided the gunman to the hide-out.

"Mighty glad to see you among us," Terone was a dark-skinned, oily Mexican

half-caste, and he grinned, showing gleaming teeth. "Guess that get-away was well staged, eh?"

Joe Valet took no notice of the outstretched hand. He just scowled round the bare, dirty house and sniffed disdainfully.

"Gee, this is a hole," he sneered. "Have you guys got to live in this sort of a sink?"

"It's safer, Joe." Terone looked ill at ease at Valet's refusal to shake. The cast in his new partner's eye and the silent, sneering demeanour did not put him at his ease. "The cops know I'm down in the Steps, but they don't know which house. All these four houses are linked up with secret passages."

"Shouldn't broadcast the glad news," sneered Valet, and held out his hand at last. "Wouldn't stand for this sort of dive in Chicago or New York, but you should know Lincoln."

"I hear you bumped off a cop," whined Terone. "That was mighty bad business. They will be round this place like hornets."

"Showed fight and he got it," was the cold, icy reply. "Had to act quickly as there were some cars on the road. The gun had a silencer. The croaking of a cop don't make me waste any sleep—not the first I've had to shoot. What's more, Terone, it will show the town we mean business—be a warning to any folk round these parts who might aim to do some squealing to claim a reward."

"Guess you're right, though I wish you—" Terone saw the steady light in his partner's eyes and changed the subject. "Come right in, Joe, and make yourself at home."

Soon the air of the lounge was full of smoke. Terone's gang and Valet's made about fourteen strong. They lent back in their chairs, and between spasms of talk watched Valet and Terone. The two leaders had had a short conference and decided that for a day or two it would be advisable to lie low.

"How are funds?" Valet had asked.

"Good for a month."

"Then we'll get busy before the week's out," affirmed Valet, and picked up a pair of scissors. "Keep still, Terone, and I'll show you something." He chuckled softly to himself. "I can't sit still and scheme, must be doing something, so I amuse myself with this hobby. Sit still, Terone, like you were in the chair."

"Cut out those funny cracks." Terone jumped nervously, then uncomfortably avoided the other's amused glance. "Better get on with your hobby."

Joe Valet proceeded to cut away at a piece of paper, giving occasional glances at his model, whilst the rest of the gang watched. It was really a marvellous likeness, and Terone's gang were all anxious to have a silhouette. Valet, in good humour after his narrow escape, was in an obliging mood, but at last he tired.

"Business, business." He waved them away and lit a cigarette. "Let's have a look at some of the newspapers. Expect the stop press of the midday papers will be pretty lurid, and I want to read the Society notes and scandal."

"Society notes." Terone screwed up his ugly mouth in a puzzled manner. "What's the big idea?"

Valet bestowed on the dago a sarcastic and contemptuous glance.

"Maybe I'll find something of interest," he explained. "You read these notes about people that are often very usual. Senator Wiggs and family have gone away; the Browns have had a fortune left them, and Miss Angela, the famous heiress, reported engaged to a chauffeur. What do I gather from three such bits of news, Terone?"

"Ask me another."

"If the Wiggs family are away the house is probably empty, and therefore presents possibilities; if the Browns have had a fortune left them I am interested, because I like fortunes and having come into unexpected wealth they may not



"They tricked me here, they threaten to kill me, but I'm not frightened. Come and get them, Bill, I'm at the Steps, near the river—"

know how to look after it, and if Miss Angela falls for a chauffeur I know she might be easy and the chauffeur is probably out for money, easy to bribe, and a lot more. Little things, but I file them away and they come in mighty useful."

"Won't find much in our papers," affirmed Terone.

"You never know," Valet began to read. He scanned four newspapers before his "Ah" aroused instant attention.

"What yer found?" cried Terone.

"It is reported that the engagement of Captain William Houston to Alice, only daughter of Commissioner Lang, is shortly to be announced, and—" He broke off, grinned, and proceeded to cut out the paragraph. "You could have told me that, but you might have had no idea the information was of any value. This bit of Society gossip may be of use and it may not."

"In what way?"

"If we get in a jam," was the answer.

The Raid on the Green Dragon.

WILLIAM HOUSTON frowned at Muldoon, who looked gloomy.

"Combed the place, and we can't find them," the detective cried. "They'll have to come out soon. A week's gone by, and Valet doesn't usually love idleness. The papers and headquarters keep on clamouring for some retaliation, and because we're stuck aren't making things too easy."

"No, they're not," Houston shook his head. "We've got double the force round the Steps, and I'm certain sure both our men are skulking down in that cess-pit. Any news from No. 17?"

"Nope, but she's met Terone several times," Muldoon fingered his small moustache. "She reckons there isn't much love lost between the two men, and Terone sorta hinted to her that there were big things in the wind."

"Let's hope they start something soon!" Houston cried. "I'll be on night duty." The telephone-bell rang. "Hullo, hullo! Who? Oh, yes!" He motioned to Muldoon to take up the other receiver. "Want to come in?"

"No thanks, Bill." It was Valet speaking. "I thought I'd ring up and tell you I was well."

"You bumped off a pal of mine!" Houston's voice was harsh. "I'll get you for that if it takes me a lifetime!"

"Guessed you might be a bit het-up," Valet answered. "But your pal showed fight, and you spotted our game too soon. We had to act quick. Sorry you boys haven't found me yet."

"We will, Jec."

"Maybe I'll be seeing you soon. Give my love to your sweetie."

A harsh laugh, and Valet had rung off.

"Get that exchange and number," rapped Houston, "quick!"

There was a disappointed grin on Muldoon's face when the detective came back.

"That call came through from a sub-station," he snapped. "I guess Valet put through that call by means of those tapping-in machines. Link up with a main wire at any old place, and no means of trailing. Darned nerve about your sweetheart!"

"He's laughing now, but not for long!" Houston clenched a big fist. "I liked that guy once, though he was always cruel, but now I'm flat-out to get him. I'm relying a lot on No. 17."

It was soon after Valet had disconnected the 'phone to the wires that ran October 17th, 1931.

past the house in the Steps when the Kid came hurrying into the room.

"Boss, it's getting mighty warm outside!" he growled. "Take a look-see from the attic."

Terone and Valet saw enough to make one seared and the other angry. Every corner seemed to have a cop or a plain-clothes man.

"Guess that's a signal to get busy," decided Valet on their return. "Besides, I hate living here like a caged rat. What's the swell restaurant in this burg?"

"The Chandos is pretty swell," Terone gave the other an inquiring scrutiny.

"Have you an idea we—" "Yeah, you've said it," Valet paced the room. "To-night is the time as a Saturday should have a full house. Listen, and I'll tell you how I've pulled off these shows before."

For a while the two men talked, with the Kid occasionally making suggestions, then the rest of the gang were sent for and consulted.

"Everyone to be in their places by seven, and the time a quarter past," Valet gave his orders. "You will muster here about six, and I'll give you the once-over."

"What for?" demanded one of Terone's gang.

"Because you for one ain't going!" rasped out the gunman. "You'd look like a broken-down waiter in a dress suit. You others should pass inspection, and don't do any broadcasting. I have my ways of shutting mouths! Get going!"

Diners at the Chandos were somewhat annoyed that they had extras at their tables, men who sat themselves down and glared aggressively round, and looked as if they were little used to dress shirts. The men looked truculent, and most of the diners decided it was wisest to ignore their unwelcome guests. At isolated tables sat men and women.

In a far corner sat a man and a woman. Terone was quite presentable in his clothes, whilst the woman was fashionably gowned. By the way she smiled at the crook, it seemed as if she were much attached to him. Several times she squeezed his hand.

"You look grand to-night!" The crook had consumed considerable wine.

"You're a beautiful woman, Meg," he countered. "I'm terribly thrilled to think that Valet is coming here to-night. Will you introduce me?"

"Shush! Shush!" Terone touched his lips in a warning gesture. "Ain't wise, girl, to mention that name too loud." He looked at his watch. "Five minutes to seven. He'll be here soon."

The woman called Meg poured some more champagne into his glass.

"I hear he's one of these silent, awe-inspiring men," she whispered. "One look and you shrivel up, though that doesn't get past you."

"You bet it doesn't!" Terone boasted. "I'm not seared of any gunman. He couldn't have put this shew over to-night if it hadn't been for me. You're coming away with me, Meg, when we've cleaned up this place. We'll have to lie low for a spell."

"If you make a big haul I'll be with you." She gave him an arch glance. "Will I see his Highness before the fun starts?"

"Not till the half-hour," hissed Terone, gulping down the liquor. "He'll be here any moment, though he may stay around outside to see the coast's clear. A waiter will let Joe in by a side entrance." He pointed towards the main part of the restaurant. "See those two

dames at that table?" He gave a heavy wink. "They're in with us. Gosh, we'll clear a pile! Look at the gems on that woman's neck!"

"Isn't that man over there being a little troublesome?" Meg pointed to a table at which three men and a girl were seated. "Can't you tip that fool to cut out the drink?"

"You're right, kid," growled Terone. "That's that drunken fool, Andy. I'll go and warn the big boob to keep a still tongue. He can bump 'em off later."

Terone staggered away, and directly he was gone Meg darted from her seat towards a big palm near the stairs. Behind was a writing-table and a crinoline doll. It was quiet in this corner. Not far away was a thick velvet hanging that concealed a doorway.

Meg removed the doll, and underneath was a 'phone.

"Police headquarters—at once!" she rapped out. A pause. "Is that headquarters? Put through to Captain Houston." Another pause. "This is No. 17 speaking, Bill. Valet and Terone have got it set for to-night at seven-thirty at the Chandos. Just got the dope from Terone; he's been drinking. You'll get at once—good!"

Meg was back in her chair when Terone staggered back to the table.

"Settled that boob. If he talks again he'll go for a ride in the morning!" he hiccupped drunkenly. "Let's have some more wine. Let's—" He broke off to stare over her shoulder. "Shush! Shush! He's here!"

Meg spun round as the velvet hanging was drawn aside.

There was no smile on Joe Valet's face as he stepped forward.

Terone ran forward to meet his partner.

"Joe, I wanta introduce you to my best girl," he cried. "She's one of us. Not a word to a soul."

"How do you do—No. 17?" Valet's voice was cold and hard. "I was behind that curtain. Unfortunately I didn't have the pleasure of hearing all you said till you gave your number. If I could have shot you in time, I would have done!"

The girl backed away with hand to ashen cheeks. There was murder in the gunman's blazing eyes.

"But, Joe, she's on the level," whined Terone.

"Shut up, you stinking dago!" spat out Terone. "A woman has only got to smile at you and your blab forth all our plans, you dirty, little squealing rat!"

"But, Joe, you don't mean that Meg—"

"Your Meg is a police spy," snarled Valet. "You've spilt the game to a nark. You've betrayed me, my men, and your own bunch of fools into Houston's hands."

Terone could not take his eyes from the steely glare. The fumes of the alcohol were fading and he was beginning to understand. His hand slithered down towards his hip.

"Keep your hand where it is," barked Valet, and drew out a whistle. "There's just a chance I'll win through yet." Three times he blew a shrill blast.

It was the signal to start the raid at once.

But Valet had not known all. Number Seventeen had warned Houston that Valet and Terone were planning a raid and two police cars were standing by. A matter of seconds after getting the warning the cars, crowded with police men, were racing through the half deserted streets.

What a surprise when the diners a

(Continued on page 25.)

Filled with precious jewels, this ancient statuette of a bird brought evil on all connected with it. A strange and gruesome thriller.

"The Maltese Falcon"



The Mystery Woman.

"THERE'S a girl outside to see you, Sam," said Effie, the very confidential secretary of Samuel Spade, private detective. "Name of Ruth Wonderly, and you'll see her. She's a knock-out."

Sam Spade smiled the smile of a charmer, a handsome charmer of the opposite sex who simply could not resist a pretty face.

"Send her in," he drawled. Miss Ruth Wonderly was shown into his sanctum. She was small, but what there was of her—was good. From the slenderness of her ankles to the languorous depths of her blue eyes she radiated appeal, an appeal that was accentuated just now by an air of nervousness and distress.

"Mr. Spade," she said in a low, urgent voice, as soon as they were alone. "could you—I mean, I thought that if you—"

"Perhaps you had better start at the beginning," Sam Spade murmured gently.

"That was in New York," Ruth Wonderly told him. "She met him there—my sister, I mean. And I must get her back home before mother and father return from Europe on the first of the month."

She was interrupted by the appearance of Miss Effie.

"Excuse me, Mr. Spade," the secretary apologized, in the formal tone she employed when clients were around. "Mrs. Archer is on the phone, and wishes to speak with you urgently."

Sam Spade frowned impatiently.

"All right," he muttered, "switch the call through to my room."

The secretary retired to the outer office, and found a man with a traveling-bag standing there.

"Oh, hallo, Mr. Archer," she greeted him, as she replaced the receiver of the telephone that stood on her desk. "Have a good trip?"

Archer had watched her hanging up the phone-receiver with a certain air of suspicion. A big, somewhat taciturn individual, Archer was Sam Spade's partner in the detection of crime, but

of late he had detected something more personal than the ordinary run of cases which came under his attention in the way of business.

"Yes," he said, "I had a good trip. Found out all I wanted to know about the Retford affair. Will you put these on the desk in my room, please?" he added, producing some documents. "And you might get out the other papers dealing with the case, will you?"

Effie walked through to Archer's private sanctum, which adjoined Sam Spade's. The moment she had gone Archer lifted the receiver from the phone on the secretary's table and held it to his ear.

Archer heard the voice of his wife, Iva.

"I love you, Sam," she was saying. "but you sound so cold—"

"Listen," came the voice of Sam. "You've got to be sensible, and do nothing rash. I can't say more just now, as I'm busy with a client."

Archer crammed down the receiver with which he had been eavesdropping. He hesitated for a minute or two, and then with a sour expression on his face, walked to the door of Sam's room and pushed it open.

"Oh, beg pardon," he said curtly, as he saw his colleague's visitor. "I thought you were alone, Sam."

"Come on in, Miles," Sam drawled. "Miss Wonderly, this is my partner, Miles Archer. Miles, Miss Wonderly's sister ran away with a man named Floyd Thursby. It seems to be a clear case of abduction. Miss Wonderly's located Thursby here in San Francisco, but he won't tell her where her sister is, and she wants us to follow Thursby till we find out just where he's hiding the girl. Miss Wonderly tells me she's

going to meet him to-night at her hotel at eight o'clock."

Miss Ruth Wonderly looked at the two anxiously.

"Thursby is dangerous," she said. "He would stop at nothing to save himself, and I—I am afraid—on my sister's account. Mr. Spade, could either you or Mr. Archer handle this matter—personally? I'd be willing to pay

most anything if you would." And she laid a couple of hundred-dollar bills on the desk.

Archer's eyes sparkled. His wife's phone conversation a few minutes before was almost forgotten.

"I'll look after this myself, Miss Wonderly," he declared, and smiled as she thanked him prettily.

Ruth Wonderly took her departure, but the memory of her strangely compelling eyes lingered. There was a silence during which Archer fingered the two hundred-dollar bills—till Sam Spade drew one of them from his hand and pocketed it.

Archer glanced at him. "By the way, Sam," he said, "were there any phone-calls for me?"

"Yes," was the reply. "your wife called. She wanted to know when you were coming home, and said she'd missed you an awful lot."

"Yeah?" mused Archer, with the suggestion of a sneer.

The Passing of Archer.

A BODY lay on the sidewalk in San Francisco's Chinese quarter. The body was Miles Archer, and around it stood a number of police officers, one of them a detective in plain clothes answering to the name of Tom Polhaus.

An ambulance had been sent for, but it had not arrived when a taxi drew up at the kerb. The taxi had conveyed Sam Spade to the scene of the crime, and as the private sleuth stepped out of the cab Polhaus greeted him solemnly.

"I got your message, Tom," Sam stated. "Dead, is he?"

"Yeah," was the answer. "I thought you might want to see the body before we took it away. He was plugged right through the back, the bullet fired so close that the powder burnt his overcoat. Archer didn't have time to draw. His gun was tucked away in his hip-pocket. I guess it's up to you to break the news to the widow, Sam."

Sam inclined his head. "Yes, I guess so," he muttered, and turned away.

A few paces from the spot where Archer lay, a Chinaman stepped out of a doorway and accosted Sam, whose activities had provided him with many strange acquaintances in various walks of life. The Oriental spoke rapidly in his native dialect, and Sam Spade made some rejoinder in the same tongue ere passing on.

Some time later, Sam received visitors at his apartment on Stockton Street. One was Tom Polhaus and the other was the latter's immediate superior in the force, Lieutenant Dundy, who did not share Tom's regard for the private detective.

"Was Archer working on any job to-night, Spade?" Dundy demanded.

"Supposed to be trailing a guy named Thursby," Sam answered laconically. "And if you want to know why, he was trailing Thursby because a client was paying us good old-fashioned American coin to have him trailed."

Dundy eyed him narrowly.

"Do you happen to have a gun around the place, Spade?" he inquired.

"No," Sam told him, with a contemptuous curl of the lip. "Have a look round, and if you find one I'll make you a present of it. Is there anything else you'd like to know?"

"Yeah," snapped Dundy, "and you'll tell me just what I do want to know, or maybe you'll be tellin' it in court. This is murder, Spade, and don't you forget it. Listen—at one o'clock this morning Archer was shot dead. Another man named Floyd Thursby was bumped off in front of his hotel—thirty-five minutes after you left Archer in the alley."

Sam stood up.

"After I left Archer in the alley?" he rapped out. "What have I got to do with all this?"

"I'm followin' up a line of investigation, Spade," Dundy said. "You were in such a hurry to-night that you scarcely stopped to look at your dead partner when you joined Tom Polhaus in Chinatown. And you didn't break the news to Mrs. Archer."

"I called on my secretary and asked her to do it," Sam retorted. "I reckoned she'd handle the job better. As for Archer, what good could I have done stopping to look at him? Would that have brought him back to life? Say, Dundy, now that your fool brain has figured everything out, maybe you'll tell me how I killed Thursby."

"Thursby died before he could name his killer," said Dundy. "I may as well tell you that—if you don't know it already."

Sam made an impatient gesture. "I never saw Thursby—dead or alive," he announced. "Now clear out of here and let me get some sleep."

Followed by Polhaus, Dundy took his leave with the threatening promise that the District Attorney should hear of the affair the first thing in the morning. But Sam did not sleep after the lieutenant's departure, and, early astir, he called at the address of Miss Ruth Wonderly immediately after breakfast.

He found her looking as radiantly beautiful as ever, and as appealing as she had seemed the day before.

"Too bad we couldn't find that little sister of yours," he observed, as she invited him to sit down.

Her face clouded.

"Mr. Spade," she murmured, "I have a terrible confession to make. That story I told you yesterday wasn't true."

"We didn't believe you," he smiled, "but we believed the two hundred dollars. Baby, for that amount of money I'd let you tell me a lie every day."

"You'll go on with the case just the October 17th, 1931.

same, won't you?" Ruth Wonderly pleaded. "You must help me, Mr. Spade. I haven't anyone else. I can't explain things now, but I will later. You see, I—I trusted Thursby, and he betrayed that trust. But I'm depending on you to save me. I know I haven't any right to ask you to help me blindly, but I do ask it of you."

Few men could have resisted the urgent note in her voice, but, impressed as he was by her, Sam Spade was too level-headed by far to enter into any situation on a mere impulse of emotion.

"Tell me about Thursby," he commanded. "Tell me the truth."

"I met Thursby in the Orient," she said. "We came here together from Hong Kong about a week ago. By the time we landed I was afraid I couldn't trust him. That's why I wanted to have him shadowed. He killed Archer—with the gun he always carried in his overcoat pocket."

"You picked a nice playmate," observed Sam.

"The only kind that could help me," Ruth Wonderly answered. "Mr. Spade, I'm in danger of my life. Unless you help me, there can only be one ultimate end for me—death!"

Sam pursed his lips.

"How can I help you?" he retorted, looking at her keenly. "You won't tell me all the facts. Who killed Thursby—his enemies or yours?"

"I—don't—know," she said.

"Oh, you're impossible!" he snapped. "Listen," she appealed, "there's so much that I daren't and can't explain, but you must believe in me. You won't go to the police? You'll keep my name out of it, won't you?"

Sam grinned.

"Baby," he drawled, "I don't have to go to the police. They're all swarming around me like a bunch of bees. But I'll call you when I get some news for you."

He rose and moved to the door. In passing a small table he saw a book lying in its coloured wrapper. The title, which caught his eye, was one destined to recur to him at no very remote date in the future.

"The Story of the Little Black Bird," it read.

Doctor Cairo.

AT his office that night Sam Spade received a caller just as his secretary, Effie, was in the act of leaving. He gave the obvious pseudonym of Doctor Cairo, and proved to be a small man of slightly Asiatic appearance.

It was not until Doctor Cairo had taken a chair that Sam realised the man was covering him with an automatic pistol.

"I am going to search your office, Mr. Spade," he said, "and if you attempt to prevent me I shall certainly shoot you. Will you stand up, please, since I must assure myself that you are unarmed?"

Sam obeyed him, but as the man drew nearer he suddenly struck aside the gun and at the same instant whipped his bunched knuckles to the point of the doctor's jaw. When Cairo came round some sixty seconds later, it was to find Sam smiling down on him.

"I took the liberty of searching you," Sam observed, "and I see you have the address of my apartment. I presume you've been up there already. Come, Friend Doctor, supposing you explain?"

Cairo struggled to his feet.

"I will," he said, nursing his jaw. "In the first place, was there any connection between your partner's death

and the death of the man Thursby—the newspapers seem to hint?"

"Why should there be?" Sam inquired.

"Mr. Spade," said the doctor, "I am not merely curious, but it occurred to me that the two killings might have something to do with a certain ornament I am trying to recover for the rightful owner. On behalf of that owner, I am prepared to pay five thousand dollars for its recovery."

"What kind of an ornament is it?" Sam demanded.

"A statuette," was the answer. "A figure in black enamel about twelve inches high. The black figure, Mr. Spade, of a bird."

Sam statted. In an instant he recalled the title of that book in Ruth Wonderly's apartment.

"Who is its rightful owner, doctor?" he asked.

"I can't tell you that," was the reply. "But I'll put a question to you. Is it in this office?"

Sam shook his head.

"No," he said, "but for five thousand dollars I'd do my best to get it here. But remember—you wouldn't be hiring me out to kill or steal. I'd try to trace and procure the black bird for you in a lawful and honest way."

"At least, with discretion," Cairo murmured. "It is a deal, then, Mr. Spade, and here is my address if you wish to communicate with me. And, by the way, may I have my gun?"

Sam obliged by passing the weapon over, whereupon Doctor Cairo immediately covered him with it.

"I am going to search your office, Mr. Spade," he said. "You see, if the black bird were here, I should like to save the rightful owner that five thousand dollars."

Sam laughed.

"Go ahead," he agreed, and watched Cairo amusedly while the latter made an examination of the premises.

When Cairo had gone, empty-handed, Sam Spade made his way home to his apartment in Stockton Street thoughtfully. He knew himself to be in the thick of a mystery that would take some unravelling, but he did not intend to join hands with the police in the solving of the problem and see Dundy take the credit. He would play the lone hand, and take what risks were coming to him in the venture. That there would be risks in plenty he had no doubt.

Archer slain. The man Thursby slain. And, like a spectre overshadowing their doom, the figure of the black enamel bird—Or was it, rather, the strange spell of Ruth Wonderly's eyes that had dominated their abysmal fate?

Back at his rooms, Sam Spade phoned Ruth Wonderly's apartment, and in less than half an hour she was seated with him in his comfortable lounge.

"I saw your friend Cairo to-night," he told her, and, watching her closely the while, saw that she paled at the words. He had not guessed wrong, then. The man was known to her, and feared by her.

"He offered me five thousand dollars for the black bird," he continued.

She clutched at his arm. "Surely you're not considering it?" she cried. "You promised to help me, and I trusted you."

"Don't let's figure out how much you've trusted me," he retorted scornfully. "I promised to help you, but you didn't say anything about black birds. And five thousand dollars is a lot of money—"

The door-bell rang before he could say more, and, answering it, he found

Dundy and Tom Polhaus in the passage. "Say, what's on your mind besides your hat, Dundy?" Sam asked irritably. "Just this," was the curt reply. "There's a lot of talk going round about you and Archer's wife. It's even said that was why Archer was put on the spot."

"Lieutenant," drawled Sam, "drop around when I'm not so busy—"

He never finished the sentence, for from the lounge there came a sudden scream in Ruth Wonderly's voice. Sam whipped round and dived across the threshold, Dundy and Polhaus stumbling after him—and in the room he had left the private detective saw Ruth and Doctor Cairo face to face.

"What's all this?" growled Dundy. Sam had no intention of allowing the police officers to share the scanty knowledge he had already gained, and he took it upon himself to speak.

"Miss Wonderly," he said. "I'd like you to meet Lieutenant Dundy and Detective-sergeant Polhaus. Miss Wonderly is an operator in my employ. And this gentleman is Doctor Cairo, an old college chum of mine from back East. Miss Wonderly never saw Doctor Cairo before, and when he came into my apartment by the back way, she was naturally frightened, I guess."

"Oh, I was," Ruth Wonderly said quickly. "I'm so glad you aren't a burglar, Doctor Cairo. You will forgive me for striking you, won't you?"

"Most certainly, mademoiselle." Cairo muttered, glad to fall in with the story Sam had told, but flashing an ugly glance at Ruth as he nursed a bruise on his head, inflicted by a paper-weight the girl had snatched up.

Dundy looked the reverse of satisfied.

"Why should your old college chum

come through the back way, Spade?" he wanted to know.

"Why, I have a large sum of money on me," put in Cairo, "and I was afraid of being trailed. I'm not generally timid, but in a strange city one never knows. If I may go with you when you leave, lieutenant, I—I'd feel much safer."

"Rather a brief visit your friend is making, Spade," Dundy remarked to Sam. "And Miss Wonderly—is she also afraid to go home in the dark alone?"

"Miss Wonderly is taking some notes that I haven't finished yet," Sam answered.

Dundy smiled.

"I see," he mused. "In that case we'll leave you to your—conference. Good-night."

The police officers departed, Cairo in their company, and Sam turned to Ruth Wonderly.

"You'd better stay here," he suggested. "I can make a shake-down for myself."

He sank on to a couch, and as she sat beside him he slipped his arm around her.

"Come on, Baby," he urged, "tell me all about that black bird."

"Oh, I'm so tired, Sam," she whispered. "Tired of everything—of myself—of lying—thinking up lies till I don't know a lie from the truth."

She nestled closer. Her compelling loveliness seemed to go to his head like wine, and he drew her nearer and yet nearer, till all at once his mouth closed down on her lips in a long and passionate kiss.

Yet infatuation did not rob him entirely of his wits. If she intended to use him for some deep game of her own, she would not find him a mere blind pawn; and early the following

morning, before she was awake, he put in half an hour at the apartment she had been occupying during her stay in San Francisco.

During that half-hour he ransacked her suite, searching in vain for some clue that would explain all, searching in vain for—the black bird.

Gutman.

"MR. GUTMAN, I presume," said Sam Spade, eyeing the elderly, florid man on whom he had called. "I'm here in answer to the note you sent referring to—the black bird."

"And as—Miss Wonderly's agent?" Gutman inquired with a sly oiliness of manner.

Sam shook his head.

"No," was his reply. "I'm here looking out for myself. But let's talk about the black bird. It must be—pretty valuable?"

"You don't know what it is, eh?" Gutman murmured. "Well then, what do you know, sir, of the Ancient Order of St. John of Jerusalem, afterwards called the Knights of Rhodes?"

"They were Crusaders, weren't they?"

"Right," said Gutman suavely. "And when the Emperor Charles gave the island of Malta to those knights, he made the condition that each year they were to pay him the tribute of—one falcon—in acknowledgment that Malta was still under Spain, as it was then. Now, sir, the wealth of the knights was immeasurable. For years they had taken the riches of the East as spoils of victory."

"Yes?" Sam urged.

"Well," Gutman continued, "the knights wanted to express their gratitude to the emperor. So the bird they sent for the first year's tribute was no



It was Sam who disarmed him and pocketed the gun.

insignificant live bird, but a glorious falcon of gold, encrusted with the finest jewels in their coffers—the finest, largest jewels of Asia. *But it never reached the emperor!* Pirates took the boat on which it was being shipped to Spain. These are historical facts, sir.”

Sam nodded.

“Well?”

“I’ve traced the history of that bird all over Europe, sir,” Gutman declared. “In 1840 it turned up in Paris, its real identity hidden under a coat of enamel. In that disguise it kicked around the gutters of Paris for seventy years, then a Greek found it and discovered its real value.”

Gutman leaned forward in his chair. “His home was raided,” he said softly, “and he was murdered by brigands who did not know what the bird was. So it was lost again—for twenty years. It took me that time to trace it to the home of a Russian, Kemidov, in Constantinople. He refused to sell, so I sent some agents to get it for me. They got it, and—I haven’t got it!” And he added the last words in impassioned accents.

“So it really belongs to Kemidov,” observed Sam.

“You might as well say it belongs to the King of Spain,” cried Gutman. “It doesn’t belong to anyone except by right of possession.”

Sam smiled.

“Then it belongs to Miss Wonderly now?”

“No, sir,” Gutman snapped, “except as my agent. You are sure she has it?”

“I’m not sure of anything,” Sam drawled, “but I might be able to get it at the right price—say, in a couple of days.”

Gutman rubbed his hands.

“Listen, I’ll give you the choice of two propositions,” he said. “Either you take fifty thousand down for it, or, when I sell it, a fourth share in the proceeds—a share that will amount to nothing less than half a million dollars. Yes, my dear sir, for the Maltese Falcon is worth every cent of two million!”

“It’s a deal,” Sam told him. “But how about a thousand on account, just to clinch matters?”

Gutman had parted with the deposit, when a shifty-looking young fellow entered the lounge. Gutman introduced him as Wilmer Cook, and then, learning that there was a caller in the next room, went through to find himself confronted by—Doctor Cairo.

“Get rid of that fellow Spade,” said Cairo. “He hasn’t got the Falcon. You remember Jacobi—Captain Jacobi, of the Paloma? I mentioned, in my report from Hong Kong, that I’d seen the Wonderly girl with him there. Well, I’m now certain of one thing—Ruth Wonderly gave the Falcon to Jacobi in Hong Kong, and asked him to bring it to America while she and Thursby took another boat. The Paloma docks to-night, Gutman, at midnight.”

“But I’ve given Spade a thousand dollars on account—”

“Wilmer can take care of him,” put in Cairo.

Gutman shook his head.

“No,” he said. “No. I have a better way. My technique is not so abrupt as Wilmer’s.”

He returned to the lounge, alone.

“Ah, Mr. Spade,” he said, “you will pardon the interruption. Now let me see, we had finished our discussion, hadn’t we? Well, I think the occasion calls for a drink.”

Half an hour later, Sam Spade recovered from the effects of drugged wine to find himself in the gutter of a back street, minus Gutman’s thousand dollars.

October 17th, 1921.

Jacobi.

SAM SPADE entered his office to find his secretary, Effie, still there.

“Say,” he exclaimed, “it’s after midnight. What are you doing in the office?”

“Well, you asked me to stick around till you came back,” Effie began, and then stopped blankly.

For the outer door had opened, and a seafaring man with the pallor of death on his face had stumbled across the threshold. He was carrying a suit-case, but as he lurched forward his fingers relaxed on the bag’s leather handle, and with a queer, strangled groan he fell to the floor.

Sam dropped on his knees beside him. “Shot in the back,” he muttered, after a brief scrutiny. “Listen, Effie, lock that door. No use phoning for a doctor. He’s dead. Quick, hand that bag of his across.”

She lifted the case, and he examined it. He saw the initials “R. W.” and knew that in some way the fatal spell of Ruth Wonderly had brought this seaman to the same end as Archer and Thursby.

He forced the case open, and a dark object was revealed lying in a bed of straw—the twelve-inch figure of the black-enamelled bird.

“It’s the thing they’re all after,” Sam Spade breathed.

“Oh, Sam,” gasped Effie, “whoever shot that sea-captain will do the same to you. I’m afraid. Get rid of that statuette.”

“Now don’t worry,” Sam told her. “I’m going to take this case and the black bird down to the station and plant it in the left-luggage office, and I’ll slip the baggage-check in an envelope and shove it in the general delivery box at the post office—”

Less than an hour afterwards, with the suit-case deposited and the police informed of the death of one John Jacobi, captain of the Paloma, Sam Spade made his way to his apartment, and on the landing outside the door of his suite came face to face with Ruth Wonderly.

“I’m afraid,” she said. “I think there’s been someone following me.”

He opened the door and motioned her to enter, and as he followed her and switched on the light he found himself in the presence of three men—Gutman, Cairo and Wilmer Cook.

“Well, sir,” observed Gutman with a dangerous smile, “now we’re all here shall we discuss the matter of the Falcon? Of course, you have it, and I am now prepared to offer you ten thousand for it, *in full settlement*. For permit me to remind you that although you have the Falcon, we have you.” And he indicated a gun in Wilmer Cook’s hand.

Ruth Wonderly was standing behind Sam, pale as death. Sam looked at the three men, and then spoke to Gutman.

“There’s an angle to this deal you’ve all overlooked,” he stated. “We’ve got to have a fall guy—a victim to feed the police—somebody they can stick for the murders of Archer, Thursby and Jacobi.”

Gutman laughed grimly.

“You can’t expect us to believe you’re afraid of the police and not able to handle them,” he scoffed. “My dear sir, a fall guy—as you call it—would only lead them to the Falcon. No, we’ll leave well alone.”

“Now get this through your brains, Gutman,” Sam rapped out. “I’m up to the neck in this mess, and the police know it. I’m in business here—remember that—and I’m not staying here to stand the racket while you skip abroad.

We’ve got to have a fall guy, or we’re sunk.”

He beckoned him nearer, and addressing him in an undertone, nodded towards Wilmer Cook, whose face suddenly took on a hunted look as he realised he was the subject of discussion.

“My dear sir,” protested Gutman, “it’s too ridiculous. I feel toward Wilmer exactly as if he were my own son. Besides, what would prevent Wilmer from telling the police about the Falcon and all of us?”

“Oh, we could have him shot for resisting arrest,” explained Sam, watching the effect of his words on Cook. “I’d fix that all right. Remember, Gutman, you can easily pick another son, but there’s only one black bird.”

Gutman coughed. “My foudness for Wilmer,” he murmured slyly, “makes it impossible.”

“Well, what about Cairo?” Sam suggested.

“What about Gutman or Miss Wonderly?” Cairo cried hotly.

Sam shrugged.

“I don’t care who,” he said. “All I insist on is a fall guy, and I’m in a position to insist. You may have the drop on me, but putting a bullet in my hide won’t get you the Falcon.”

“I am giving you ten thousand dollars, though,” said Gutman, handing over that amount in notes.

Sam fingered the bills, then asked Ruth Wonderly to take care of them.

“I want double that,” he declared, “and besides, I can’t get the Falcon till daylight.”

“Daylight,” mused Gutman. “Then I think we had all better stay here and keep one another in sight.”

“Okay,” Sam agreed. “Ruth, in that case you might go through to the kitchen and fix up some coffee and sandwiches.”

The girl moved to obey him, but Gutman stopped her.

“Better leave those dollar-bills,” he observed. “We don’t want any grease spots on them, do we?”

She surrendered them and went out of the room. Gutman proceeded to count them, and then looked up.

“I gave you ten thousand-dollar notes, Spade,” he said. “There are only nine here.”

Sam snatched the money, whipped round and strode into the kitchen. He reappeared a few minutes later.

“She hasn’t got the missing bill,” he snapped. “I’ve convinced myself of that. You pained it, Gutman.” And with a sudden gesture he dipped into the crook’s waistcoat pocket and conjured from it a folded thousand-dollar note, the edge of which had been protruding.

Gutman shrugged.

“I admit it,” he said, discomfited. “I was curious to know what you would do.”

“You liar,” Sam ground out. “You were going to let Miss Wonderly be the fall guy, by making out that she had double-crossed me over the money. Well, I’m deciding right now. The fall guy is going to be Wilmer.”

Wilmer Cook’s face was working Cat-like, he watched Gutman and Cairo move aside and hold a whispered consultation.

“I’ll lay you two to one they’re selling you out, kid,” Sam said to the gunman, with a grin.

Cook sprang to his feet.

“Hang you, Spade,” he shouted fiercely, and jerked his arm forward to shoot. But before he could fire, Gutman, Cairo and Sam leapt on him.

It was Sam who disarmed him and pocketed the gun.

(Continued on page 28.)

A fearless young fireman invents a fire-fighting machine, but a fiendish enemy does everything to steal the plans and rob the hero of the girl he worships. A grand serial of breathless suspense and thrilling drama. Starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.

"HEROES of the FLAMES"



READ THIS FIRST.

While en-route with his comrades to the scene of a fire, Bob Darrow, of the San Francisco Brigade, saves the life of a boy who falls in front of one of the monster engines.

Later he calls on James Madison, head of a chemical company, to whom he puts up an idea for a patent fire-extinguisher. Madison is not interested, and Bob leaves disappointed, after meeting Dan Mitchell, a shady promoter who is befriendng Madison for his own ends.

That afternoon Bob rescues June Madison from a fire in her father's office, then learns that the boy he had saved from the wheels of the fire-engine was Madison's son, Jackie.

In gratitude Madison helps Bob to perfect his invention, the Darrow Fire-Bomb. But Dan Mitchell is anxious to sell Madison an extinguisher of his own, and to discredit Bob he sends a hireling to "doctor" the fireman's invention with a deadly explosive.

Madison's faith in the invention remains unshaken. He sends Bob and another fireman, Pat Healey, to a mountain lodge, where experiments can be resumed. But Mitchell dispatches hirelings to secure Bob's formula.

The Madisons arrive on the scene, and Bob and Pat escape with them by car, the gangsters following. The fugitives enter a tunnel where blasting is in progress, and as an explosion occurs they are overwhelmed by falling rock!

Now Read On.

Prisoner!

A WORKMAN on the loop road had seen all that had passed, and straightway hurried towards the ar end of the tunnel to acquaint the superintendent of the calamity.

Meanwhile, Spike Beldon and his

EPISODE 7.

"FORESTS OF FIRE."

companions descended from their auto.

"Lucky for us we bumped into that embankment," said Spike laconically. "We might have been in that tunnel, too."

"Yeah, I reckon so!" gasped Merlin. "But what do we do now, Spike?"

"You stay and change that burst tyre," was the curt rejoinder. "You an' Silk come with me, Butch. We're goin' in after Darrow."

Followed by Connolly and Butch, he ran towards the tunnel and entered the gloom of it. Thirty paces from the entrance they came upon the Madisons' car, almost completely buried under the fall of rock and timber.

They began to tear at the debris with their bare hands, and all at once Connolly gave an exclamation

"Here's Darrow!" he said.

Spike and Butch scrambled towards the spot where their associate was working.

"Never mind the rest of 'em," Beldon rapped out. "Darrow's the one we want!"

Dirt and timbers were cleared away, and Bob was dragged from the back seat of the sports car. He was senseless, and showed no signs of recovering consciousness as Connolly hoisted him over his shoulder.

"That's it," said Spike Beldon. "Now get him out of here. Quick, before anybody shows up. Take him back to the auto."

The young fireman was carried from the tunnel and bundled into the crooks'

tourer. Merlin had jacked up the car and changed the wheel that had been damaged in the collision with the embankment, and as he completed the task the gangsters piled into the vehicle.

Merlin took the driving-position.

"Where to, Spike?" he demanded. "Back to Madison's cabin," Beldon answered craftily. "That'll be the last place they'll look for him, after what happened."

Merlin backed away from the embankment, turned the car in the width of the road and then stepped on the accelerator. The tourer stormed away with gathering speed, and swept past the spot where it had knocked down the flagman who had attempted to wave it to a stop.

The flagman had escaped with a shaking, and he struggled to his feet as the auto drove by. He watched it out of sight, and it had hardly disappeared round the bend in the mountain road when the superintendent and a crowd of workmen came into view, running round from the far end of the tunnel.

The flagman limped towards them, and as he joined them the superintendent fired a question at him.

"I'm told a car passed you just before the blast," he jerked. "Why didn't you stop it?"

"I tried to, boss," the flagman protested. "But there was a girl at the wheel, an' she ignored the signal. Another car turned the bend a minute afterwards, an' knocked me down. It just drove off."

The superintendent hurried into the tunnel, and his men trooped after him. Reaching the sports car that had been overwhelmed by the blast, they proceeded to dig out the three remaining occupants.

Pat Heeley had come round and was struggling to escape from the debris.

"Help him, boys," the superintendent ordered. "But watch overhead." And he pointed to the roof, from which muck was still falling in small showers, as if threatening another collapse.

Pat was extricated, and, in spite of his bruises, immediately assisted the workmen to locate June and her father. Madison was pulled out in a semi-conscious condition, and then June was dragged clear.

"Aisy, boys—take her aisy!" Pat urged with anxiety, but, though she was dazed, and aching in every limb, June managed to speak reassuringly.

"Oh—I'm all right," she faltered. "But—but where's Bob?"

The superintendent had turned to Madison.

"What was the idea of going past that flag?" he was saying gruffly.

"Were you trying to kill yourselves?"

"Never mind that," June's father retorted, rousing himself with an effort.

"There's another man in that car!"

The workmen turned their attention on the debris once more, only to discover that the fourth occupant of the car had vanished. Pat Heeley and the Madisons received the news of his disappearance with consternation, and were gazing at one another blankly when the flagman approached.

"Say," he observed, "the fellow you're lookin' for must be the same guy that was carried off by those men that were chasing you. I saw 'em pile somebody into their car and drive away."

June looked at her father.

"Daddy!" she panted. "Those men have got Bob! Oh, isn't there anything we can do?"

Madison bit his lip, and then turned all at once to the superintendent of the road gang.

"Perhaps you can help us," he said.

"Have you a telephone here, or a car I can use?"

"I haven't a telephone," was the answer, "but I'll lend you my car. Come on round to the other end of the tunnel."

They followed him, June being helped by two of the workmen, for her hip had been bruised and she was lame. They reached the far end of the tunnel and climbed into the auto the superintendent had been generous enough to offer them.

"We'll drive up to the Mountain Inn," said Madison. "I'll have your car sent down from there, my friend," he added to the superintendent.

At the Cabin.

ARRIVED at their destination in the heart of the mountain forests, Beldon and his companions lifted their prisoner out of the car and bore him into the Madison lodge.

"We'll see if he's got what we're after," said Spike, as the unconscious captive was placed in a chair. "Butch—Merlin—get busy, will yuh?"

Deft hands proceeded to search Bob, and, while he remained insensible, a thorough examination was carried out. But it failed to produce the precious document that the crooks were so anxious to secure.

Spike pursed his lips as Butch and Merlin drew back and looked at him hopelessly.

"The boss'll have a fit if we don't find that formula," he muttered. "He had it with him in this cabin not twenty minutes ago. I saw it with me own eyes through that window."

With a sudden air of resolution he

leaned forward and struck Bob smartly across the cheek, repeating the procedure till the prisoner began to show signs of recovering his wits.

"Come on, snap out of it!" Spike Beldon snarled. "Do you wanna sleep for ever?"

The harsh voice impressed itself on Bob's dawning consciousness. He opened his eyes, stared blankly at his captors for a moment and then, as the memory of all that had happened recurred to him in a flash, sat up with a start.

"June!" he panted, his first and foremost thought being of her. "Where's June? Is she—is she hurt?"

"Never mind about the girl!" Spike ground out. "I want that formula of yours, and I want it right now!"

Bob was still in too weak a state to show fight, and his bruised limbs felt like leaden weights. But no physical injuries could have impaired his iron will, and at Beldon's words his mouth seemed to tighten into a firm line of determination.

"I haven't got it with me," he said doggedly, "and you'll never find out where it is from me."

Spike turned to his associates.

"Keep a hold on him, boys," he ordered. "Don't let him get away! This cabin is wired for a telephone, an' I'm gonna find it and put through a call."

He located the instrument in another room, and, after closing the door to make certain that Bob should not overhear his conversation, he picked up the receiver.

"Hallo, operator," he growled. "Gimme the Mountain Inn, will yuh? No, I don't know the number, but you get it for me an' make it snappy."

There was a pause, and a few seconds later a telephone-bell rang in the annexe of the Mountain Inn, a hotel much frequented by visitors during the holiday season.

The desk-clerk answered it, and heard Spike Beldon's gruff voice.

"Yes, this is the Mountain Inn," the clerk said. "A Mr. Mitchell, sir? Yes, he arrived here an hour ago. Do you wish to speak with him?"

He laid down the receiver and emerged from the 'phone box just as Dan Mitchell came downstairs from his room and entered the hotel annexe.

"Oh, Mr. Mitchell," the clerk hailed him. "You're wanted on the 'phone, sir."

Mitchell thanked him, slipped a coin in his hand and entered the booth. As he lifted the receiver and spoke into the mouthpiece Spike's well-known tones reached his ear.

"Hallo—that you, Mitchell? Say, we didn't make out at all. Darrow hasn't the formula with him, an' Heeley an' the Madisons got smashed up in an accident."

"Accident?" Mitchell exclaimed. "What accident? Was June hurt?"

"I guess not," Spike answered. "But we didn't have much time to look, boss—"

Mitchell cut him short. Through a hotel window near by he had seen a car draw up, and had recognised Heeley, June and her father.

"They've just arrived, Spike," he said, "and they're all right. Now listen, we've got to get that formula, and I've got a plan that ought to work—"

He made certain that the door of the 'phone-box was closed, and then proceeded to outline a cunning scheme, which was received enthusiastically by Beldon. A little later Mitchell left the

'phone-booth and strolled out to the porch to see June limping up the steps with the support of her father and Pat Heeley.

"A good hot bath and a rub down and you'll feel fine," Madison was saying.

"Oh, I'm all right, dad," June assured him. "It's just my hip."

Mitchell hastened forward with feigned surprise and astonishment.

"Why, what's happened?" he exclaimed. "Is there anything I can do, June?"

"No, thank you, Dan," the girl answered him, wincing a little with pain. "I'm all right—really."

"You'd better go on in, dear," her father advised. "But say, Mitchell, what are you doing here? We never expected to run across you in these parts."

"Why, I—well, I have business interests here," Mitchell replied. "Connected with the timber."

"H'm!" Madison murmured. "You never told me you had business interests up here among the mountain forests."

Mitchell eyed him blandly.

"No," he rejoined, "I don't believe I did, now you come to mention it. But what happened? What kind of trouble have you been running into?"

"We had an accident," Madison explained, "and Darrow has disappeared. I stopped on the way to the inn and sent for some rangers to start a search. But come into the hotel and I'll tell you all about it."

Meanwhile, at the cabin from which he had 'phoned Mitchell, Spike Beldon had joined his confederates in the room where Bob was a prisoner.

"Come on, fellers," Spike said briskly. "We'll fix this bird so he's ready to talk. Tie him up to that pillar," he added, pointing to a strong post built as a support to the ceiling. "I reckon he won't tear that down."

Bob was lifted bodily and pinioned to the timber column that Spike had indicated. Then the gangsters drew off, and, lowering his voice so that Bob could not hear a single word, Beldon proceeded to explain the plan that Mitchell had detailed over the telephone.

It was greeted with approval, Connolly being loudest in his praise of it.

"Say, that's a great idea!" he declared.

"It sure is," Spike stated. "Now you get goin', Silk."

Connolly departed after some further whispering and as the door closed behind him Spike walked over to Bob.

"So you don't want to tell us where that formula is, huh?" he sneered.

"No," Bob answered firmly, "and what's more—I don't intend to tell you."

Spike's eyes narrowed. "Maybe we got a way to make yuh tell," he drawled.

Bob met his glance unflinchingly, his lip curling with contempt as he looked at the man.

"Maybe," he retorted in a sarcastic tone.

The Searchers.

A LONE horseman drew rein on a mountain track a few miles from the cabin to which Mitchell's hirelings had carried their prisoner. He was wearing the khaki uniform of a trooper of the California Ranger Service.

Another mounted figure had appeared on the crest of a ridge. He was dressed in the same outfit, and, recognising him

the first horseman lifted his hands to his mouth and hailed him.

"Hey, Tom!" he called. "Down here!"

The man on the ridge answered the two words of command by putting his horse at the stiff slope. He joined the first trooper amid a smother of dust and rubble dislodged by his pony's hoofs.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Chief wants us to go up to the Mountain Inn and report to a Mr. Madison there," was the laconic reply. "I understand we're to look out for a lost man."

They set off together, and reached the Mountain Inn about fifteen minutes later. They found Madison awaiting them on horseback, and in riding kit.

"We have orders to report to you, Mr. Madison," one of the Rangers said.

"Yes, I sent for you gentlemen," Madison answered, and proceeded to relate exactly what had occurred.

"You intend to come with us, sir?" the other trooper inquired, and Madison nodded.

"Yes," he said. "Now I think we'd better pick up the trail at the old tunnel—"

June hurried up at that moment, in company with Dan Mitchell. She, too, had changed into riding kit, and seemed intent on accompanying her father and the Rangers, but Madison would not hear of the proposal.

"No, dear," he told her, "you stay close to the telephone. I'll call you up if there's any good news."

He galloped off with the troopers, and June and Mitchell were left by the horse-corral which was attached to the hotel.

"Now don't feel so badly, June," Mitchell urged as he saw the harassed expression on her pretty face. "They'll find Darrow."

"I wish I could believe that," she said tremulously.

Mitchell pursed his lips. "Well, would you feel any better if I were to ride out in another direction and search?" he offered, a queer light playing in the depths of his eyes.

"Oh, thanks, Dan," she rejoined. "And I'll go with you!"

Mitchell had hoped that she would make that announcement, but he pretended to argue against her accompanying him, knowing that she was wilful enough to disregard all protests.

"Yes," he murmured, "but your father said you were to stay close to the 'phone."

"But he's not here now," June retorted. "And I can take care of myself. Which horse do I ride?" she added to a hotel groom who was standing near by.

The groom helped her into the saddle of a pony, and, Dan Mitchell swinging himself astride another horse, the two of them entered away in a direction opposite to the one which Madison and the Rangers had taken.

They entered dense forest-land, following tortuous tracks that led between tall pines and thickets of brushwood, without the girl realising

Mitchell insinuated his way to the front and

chose the route, and about half an hour had elapsed since their departure from the Mountain Inn when, apparently by chance, he turned into a pathway that led direct to the Madison cabin.

They had proceeded only fifty yards along it when Silk Connolly turned a corner and stepped into full view.

June drew rein abruptly.

"Look," she gasped, "there's one of the men that was in the gang! I recognise him!"

Even as she spoke Silk whipped round and ran back the way he had come, vanishing beyond a bend in the track.

"Perhaps those crooks have Darrow a prisoner near here," Mitchell suggested crisply. "Let's follow him!"

They spurred forward, and, once past the bend, caught sight of their quarry again. But as he dodged around another twist in the track he immediately disappeared from view once more.

"This trail leads directly to our cabin," June panted. "Do you suppose this gang would dare hide Bob there?"

"Judging from what I hear of them," Mitchell answered, "they'd dare anything."

June glanced at him determinedly.

"Well, I'm going to look, anyhow!" she declared.

"Wait, June," Mitchell said, restraining her. "Have you a gun?"

She shook her head, and he took one from his own pocket and handled it with a great show of resolution.

"We may need this," he stated; and then, dismounting, he proceeded to lead his horse along the track.

June followed his example, and a few seconds later they reached the point where they had last seen Silk Connolly. It was as they were turning the corner that two men sprang out on them—one of them the gangster they had been shadowing, the other the burly ruffian known as Butch.

They seized Dan Mitchell, and, though June attempted to go to his assistance, her companion was over-

powered and disarmed after a convincing struggle. Man and girl were then forced towards the cabin, which stood close by, and as they were pushed across the threshold they caught sight of the helpless figure of Bob Darrow, defiantly confronting Spike Beldon and Morlin.

"Bob," June cried, running across to the young fireman, "were you hurt?"

It was Beldon who answered her question.

"No, he wasn't hurt," he mentioned gruffly. "But he will be unless he comes through with what we want, Darrow," he added, "I'm gonna give you just five minutes to think things over, and then it's the works for you."

He made a sign to his confederates, and then walked through to an adjoining room with them—though not before he had exchanged a sly, surreptitious glance with Mitchell. The latter turned to Bob the moment he and June were alone with the fireman-inventor.

"Listen, Darrow," he urged. "It seems pretty clear to me that we're in the hands of desperate men—men who'll stop at nothing to gain their own ends. They want your formula, and the three of us are at their mercy. Surely that formula is not as valuable as our lives?"

"Dan's right, Bob," June interposed. "I'm not afraid on my own account, but I'm scared of what they might do to you if you don't talk. I saw you slip the formula to daddy when we were all in the car. Why don't you tell them so?"

"June, I don't want to drag your father in any danger," Bob protested; but before he could say more the door opened again and Beldon and his associates re-entered the room.

June faced the gangsters and spoke to them curtly.

"I know where the formula is," she told them, "and I'll get it for you if you'll promise to let Bob go free when it's handed over to you."



"Darrow," he said, "I'm gonna give you just five minutes to think things over, and then it's the works for you!"

Spike Beldon pursed his lips. "All right," he said, after a moment's consideration. "But I'll have to send a man along with you. And don't try any tricks, or you'll never see Darrow again. Silky, you'd better go along with her—"

"June," Bob exclaimed, "you can't do this—"

"I have to, Bob," the girl answered querulously. "It's the only way."

Bob tried to reason with her, but was cut short by Beldon.

"Come on, miss," the ruffian said to June, "you're losin' time. And Merlin, you take this guy into the other room."

He indicated Mitchell, who allowed himself to be escorted into an adjoining apartment. Then, in company with Butch, Spike saw Silk and June to the front door and watched them climb into the saddles of the two horses that had carried the girl and Dan Mitchell from the Mountain Hotel.

Spike then retraced his steps to the back room of the cabin. Butch followed on his heels. Mitchell was there with Merlin, and, all pretence at an end, the scoundrelly promoter and his hirelings slipped out through the rear door of the shack.

The two-seater in which Bob and Pat Heeley had originally travelled to the cabin was still outside the dwelling, and, assured that Bob could neither see nor hear him, Mitchell made his way to the auto.

"It looks as if everything is panning out the way I want it to," he said. "Now listen, Spike. I'll take Darrow's car, and drive back at my leisure to the Mountain Hotel. You boys take your own tourer and trail me there. I may need you if there's any hitch in our plans."

"Yeah, but what about Darrow?" Spike demanded.

Mitchell laughed shortly. "The way you've got him tied to that pillar, he'll stay put till you get back," he declared, and, with the words, he climbed into the two-seater and started up the engine.

Meanwhile, at some distance from the cabin, June and Silk Connolly were following the tortuous track that led to the Mountain Hotel, and they had travelled something like a mile when they came to a fork.

Both routes led to their destination, and June glanced at Silk inquiringly. Pausing to light a cigarette, the crook indicated the right-hand branch.

"We'll take *this* trail," he said, as he threw aside the match that he had struck. "It's shorter—and safer."

They cantered on. Behind them the match that Silk had tossed to the ground had dropped amidst a clump of dry undergrowth. It continued to burn, its flame finding fuel in the twigs and foliage.

The undergrowth crackled sinisterly, and the blaze rose higher. Spreading from the clump into which the carelessly flung match had fallen, it enveloped brushwood and tree-stem, and soon a column of smoke was climbing through the topmost boughs of the forest.

Forest Fire.

RIDING through the dense woodland of the mountains, Madison and the two Rangers must have covered a distance of two or three miles when they were startled by a loud voice hailing them in a rich, Irish brogue.

It was the voice of Pat Heeley, and as they turned in the saddle they saw the burly form of Bob Darrow's colleague galloping towards them.

"Why, hallo, Pat!" Madison greeted, as the Irishman came abreast and drew rein. "What are you doing here?"

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"Faith, an' I couldn't wait any longer, Mither Madison," the fireman rejoined. "I had to git me a horse and help foind Bob. Ye see—"

He was interrupted by one of the Rangers, who suddenly laid a hand on his arm.

"Just a minute!" the trooper exclaimed. "Let's get this!" And he pointed to a heliograph that was flashing out a message from a distant hill-top.

"Fire sighted," he spelled out. "Dark Canyon. Working—towards—Mountain Hotel."

The other Ranger turned to Madison. "I'm sorry, sir," he stated. "We've got to go. The search for Darrow will have to be postponed."

The troopers wheeled and began to ride in the direction whence they had come.

"Hey!" Pat Heeley called after them. "Wait a minute, will yez?"

But the Rangers did not heed him, and he looked at Madison in dismay.

"Can ye beat that for luck, sorr?" he declared. "Well, Oi know what Oi'll do, anyway. Oi'll foind Bob meself."

"No, Pat," said Madison, restraining him. "It's no use. We know practically nothing of this country, and we'd better get back to the hotel. June may need us there."

He did not know that at that very moment June was almost within call, still riding alongside Silk Connolly; and it was while Madison and Pat were preparing to retrace their steps to the hotel that June chanced to turn her head and see the dark swirls of smoke rising above the tree-tops.

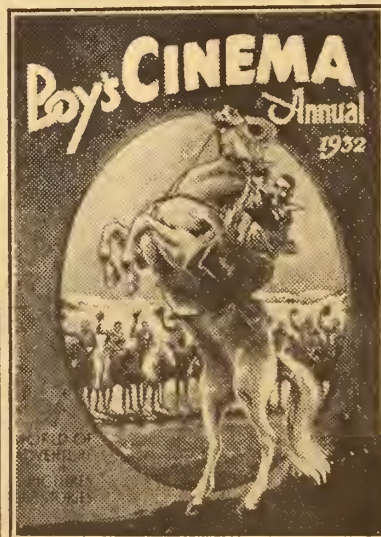
"Look!" she gasped, drawing rein abruptly. "The forest's afire!"

"By gum, you're right!" jerked Connolly. "We'd better get outa here."

"It's burning towards the cabin," June cried, a shrill note of panic in her voice, "and Bob's a prisoner there!"

She attempted to turn her horse, whereupon Silk clutched at her wrist. But with a quick movement she evaded him, and in the same instant she snatched something from his coat-pocket. It was the gun he had wrested from Dan Mitchell in the fake struggle by the cabin, and Connolly recoiled as he found himself covered.

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"You get along down the trail!" June commanded. "I'm going back for Bob!"

"Keep that gat away from me!" Connolly panted. "You gotta come with me!"

"Move on!" June ordered insistently. "Move on, and keep moving—or I'll shoot!"

Connolly's nerve failed him, for the girl seemed in deadly earnest, and with a muttered curse he wheeled and cantered in the direction she had indicated. June immediately clapped her heels to her pony's flanks and galloped back along the route that led to the cabin.

As she rode on at top speed the gloom of the forest glades became tinged with a lurid and sinister glow, and fifteen minutes after parting with Connolly she felt the bitter tang of smoke in her nostrils—smoke that drifted through the thickets in stray wisps, like wreaths of morning mist.

The smoke thickened. Soon it was sweeping about her in wild, dense folds, and soon the fierce heat of flames was beating against her face and hands. A thunder filled her ears, the thunder of a storm of fire that was roaring across the wooded heights and valleys, and her heart sickened as she thought of Bob Darrow, a helpless captive at the mercy of the inferno.

Tongues of flame coiled from the thickets on either side and wrapped themselves about her as she galloped. She heard great trees come crashing down in the depths of the forest as the blaze ate through their trunks. Her pony was in a sweat of terror, but, at the same time, answered gallantly to every touch on the rein.

She came in-sight of a rustic bridge that spanned a deep chasm. She had crossed it some time before with Connolly, but as she saw it now she realised that it was on the very point of collapse, for the entire structure was a mass of flame.

Yet she did not hesitate, and, leaning forward in the saddle, she put her horse at the bridge. The timbers rumbled and groaned under the animal's stride, and fiery splinters sprang hither and thither behind its iron-shod hoofs.

Horse and rider were scarcely on firm ground again when the bridge snapped, and, throwing a dread glance over her shoulder, June saw it hurtle into the dark cleft.

She raced on, with fire and smoke beating against her. She was burned badly about the wrists, but did not heed the pain. Her one thought was of the man who had been left a prisoner in the doomed cabin.

At the Mercy of the Flames.

NOT long after Dan Mitchell had left the vicinity of the cabin in Bob's car, Spike Beldon and his two remaining associates prepared to take the same trail.

They piled into the tourer and drove off, travelling at a slow pace, and they had proceeded only a mile or so when Merlin let out a startled cry.

Merlin was occupying the back seat alone, and, turning, Spike and Butch saw that he was pointing towards the country they had left behind them.

"Forest fire!" Butch breathed in awe. "It's between us and the cabin." Spike jerked. "We've gotta pull outa here. Step on it, Butch!"

Meanwhile, Bob was standing in the cabin with his hands bound to the pillar. At that particular moment he had no suspicion of his danger, but there was a window on his left, and presently, as he stared through it gloomily, he saw smoke rising above the trees and caught the glint of fire in the underbrush.

For an instant he failed to grasp the truth. Then the grim nature of his plight dawned on him. The woods were ablaze, and the terror was closing in on him relentlessly.

He began to struggle with the cords around his wrists, but they had been tied by a man who had intended to give the captive no opportunity of effecting his escape. In vain Bob fought to free himself, and while he maintained his futile efforts he watched the menace of the forest fire draw nearer.

The flames came surging through the thickets and towered amid the trees. Grass and underbush were swiftly burned to cinders, and the lofty pines around the cabin became so many fiery columns. Masses of smoke obscured the glare and found their way through every crevice of the dwelling in which Bob was imprisoned, and his whole body was racked with an agonising cough.

He was still striving to break or loosen the cords that bound him, but he met with no success. They were too strong to sever, too cunningly tied to slacken, and, his strength expended, he leaned weakly against the pillar and gave himself up for lost.

The smoke that had found its way into the cabin was overpowering, and the flames raging outside were already beginning to wrap themselves about the dwelling, the fierce heat of them even penetrating the thick log walls.

Bob made a last despairing attempt to gain his freedom, but it was unavailing, and its only effect was to exhaust him. And then, his aching eyes fixed on the window, he caught sight of a figure approaching through the flames.

It was the figure of a girl in riding-kit, and on horseback. For a moment he thought his imagination was playing some cruel trick on him, but as she galloped nearer he knew that the girl was no illusion.

"June!" he cried involuntarily, though he knew that she could not possibly hear him.

He guessed what had happened—guessed that she had given her escort the slip and dashed back to his rescue when she had realised that the cabin was doomed—and her courage filled him with admiration. He had saved her life more than once, but this time she was to save his, having risked her own in the process.

He watched her as she came riding through the flaming trees and the whirling clouds of smoke. Then all at once a shout of dismay escaped him, for he saw her pony plant one forefoot in a rabbit's scrape, and in another instant the creature had stumbled and fallen.

He came down heavily, and June was thrown clear over his head, to land in a crumpled heap some yards in front of the animal.

The horse scrambled to his feet, but June did not stir. She lay prone in that world of flame, while Bob watched her in an agony of suspense, wondering if she had been badly hurt, wondering if she would recover in time to escape the forest fire. His own plight was forgotten in the anxiety that he felt for her.

He thought he saw her move, but in the same moment his attention was diverted to a gigantic pine-tree that stood not far away.

Its tall trunk was wrapped in fire, and was a red-hot mass near the base. It was tottering, and a cry of horror rang to Bob's lips as it snapped and fell, crashing towards the very spot where June lay.

(To be continued in another breathing episode next week. By permission of Universal Pictures, Ltd., starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.)

"ADIOS."

(Continued from page 10.)

Through the short summer night they rode, and when the dawn came they were still on the right track. They had gained considerably, for Francisco's horse had travelled many miles on the previous day.

So as Howard and his men neared the village of Santa Anna, they saw the fugitive not more than a quarter of a mile in front, and they raised a shout of triumph. Francisco heard the shouting, and urged his tired horse to a final effort. Into the village he swept, and there stood Pedro, holding a great white horse.

Francisco slowed his horse a little as he came level, swung himself to the fresh steed's back, and was off again without a second's delay. The posse galloped past and kept up the chase for a few miles more, continually losing ground. At last all trace of El Puma was lost, and Howard returned to Los Angeles, glad at heart that Dolores' brother had escaped.

El Puma had gone, and his men returned to their homes. Judge Travers found it advisable to return to the north, and under the firm but just rule of David Howard the district round Los Angeles settled down in peace.

A few weeks after Francisco had escaped, Howard called at the Rancho de los Coyotes, and Dolores, dressed in black, and very pale, but more beautiful than ever in the eyes of the young American, came out to meet him.

"I've had a letter from your brother, Dolores," said Howard. "He says he's sorry he led me a wild-goose chase. He had arranged for a change of horses at several villages on the way to the border."

"I'm glad you didn't catch him," smiled the girl.

"So am I," laughed Howard. "Listen to this."

He read aloud from the letter.

"There is nothing between you and Dolores now that I have gone out of your lives. Rosita and I are spending our honeymoon in Mexico City. We are very happy here in Mexico, and I hope that you and my sister will be just as happy in California. Adios!"

"What do you say, Dolores? We can be just as happy, if you are willing to marry—a gringo!"

Dolores looked reproachfully at David Howard, and the next moment she was in his arms, her face buried against his coat.

"David," she whispered softly, "my father is dead, and my brother is far away. I have no one left in the world but you. What does it matter that you are an American, if we love each other?"

And, judging by the way he kissed her, David Howard did not seem to think that it mattered at all.

(By permission of First National Pathé, Ltd., starring Richard Barthelmess and Mary Astor.)

"DEFENDERS OF THE LAW."

(Continued from page 16.)

the Chandos found themselves covered by wicked-looking guns! Greedy hands snatched at necklaces and jewels, whilst fierce voices demanded that the men hand over their money or pay the consequences of refusal.

A pounding of heavy feet and into the restaurant charged the police.

Guns barked, women screamed, and tables were flung over with a crash.

Joe Valet had not moved since he had given the signal, but had kept Terone and the woman covered. If he made the raid before the arrival of the police he intended to take Terone and the woman as his prisoners. With one he could dictate to the police, and the other to checkmate the activities of Terone's men. Or perhaps he aimed to clean-up the swag for himself and shake the dust of Lincoln from his feet.

But all that was changed by the advent of the police. Everything was ruined, half his men and Terone's would be captured or killed, and his own life was endangered. A blind rage gripped him. It was this crawling snake who had betrayed him, and—

His gun spoke once, and with a scream of mortal agony Terone sank to the ground.

With a cry of fear Meg flung herself towards the curtain. The gun spoke again. The woman clawed at the heavy velvet, hung suspended, and then slithered to the ground.

One glance at the chaos in the Chandos and then Valet jumped over the woman's prostrate body and disappeared the way he had come.

It was Houston who first found them. One glance at Terone showed that the crook was dead, but the woman groaned.

"He shot his partner," she whispered gaspingly. "Got wise to me and shot me. He escaped through there—"

"Muldoon!" shouted Houston. "Take two men and comb that passage—reckon you'll be too late."

"Terone got drunk and talked," whispered the wounded spy. "Valet overheard me give the warning, but he didn't shoot till the boys appeared and he knew the hold-up had failed."

"You've done fino work, Meg." Houston had traced the stream of blood. "Thank heaven, he only got you through the shoulder!"

Two of Terone's gang were dead and three were prisoners—all of Valet's men had escaped because their chief had told them about the back way. When escaping they had almost walked on the

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bodies of Terone and Number Seven-teen.

"Valet can't get out of Lincoln," Houston told Muldoon as they took the wounded spy off to hospital. "It won't be long before I get Valet. If it gets out that he shot Terone he'll have a fine bunch of dagoes thirsting for his blood."

Valet Secures a Hostage.

JOE VALET had got back to the hiding-place in the Steps. It was the morning of the next day.

The Kid stared anxiously at his chief. "I don't like it, Joe." His voice was hoarse. "Four of the Terone gang came back with us, but they've gone. Why?"

"Don't ask me riddles!" raved Valet. "They were a worthless bunch of fools. Why the blazes did I ever come to this frowsy town?"

"A pity you plugged Terone," the Kid sighed. "That guy was a poor fish, but these scum are a vengeful lot."

"You reckon they've got wise?" asked Valet, then shrugged his shoulders. "If they try anything I'll settle the whole bunch."

The telephone bell shrilled, and the two men stared at it suspiciously. Only Terone's men and their own knew the number.

The Kid, at a nod from his chief, stepped forward and took off the receiver.

"Yeah, who's that?" He listened for a moment, then placed his hand over the mouthpiece. "Wanna speak to you, Joe. Sounds mighty like Terone's young brother."

Joe Valet took the instrument: "Hallo! What's doing?"

"This is Jack Terone speaking." A voice spoke very clearly. "You shot down my brother at the Chandos, and I thought I would warn you that the partnership is finished. What's more, you're finished. I've got a knife her with your name on it, and there's lead poisoning for some of you dumb gang. Try and get out, then see what's coming to you."

Joe Valet replaced the 'phone. "We're in a nasty jam, Kid." He lit a cigarette and sat down at the table. "Funds are getting low." He took out a pocket-book. "Forty bucks won't go far."

"How about quitting this place?" cried the Kid. "I feel as if I were trapped."

"Houston will have the outskirts well watched." Valet was looking through his papers. "He'll probably have an extra hundred cops under his command after last night's show-down. We're in a jam, but I've been in others, and— His voice trailed away, and the Kid saw the intent way Valet was reading a cutting.

"What's that, Joe?"

"The way out," Valet grinned. "Read it."

A paper cutting announcing the probable engagement of Alice Lang to Captain William Houston.

Alice had driven Bill to headquarters, and after he had kissed her looked at him reproachfully.

"I've scarcely seen you these last few days. I shall be glad when that terrible gunman is captured."

"Won't be long now, sweetheart." He smiled down at the sweet face. "Now you go straight home. The light's fading and I don't like to think of you out at night."

"Oh, I'm safe enough," scoffed Alice. "Try and come round some time this evening."

October 17th 1931

A salute, and for a moment William Houston watched the powerful two-seater speed away. He did not see the shabby touring four-seater car that came round a corner and took the same route.

Four men sat in that car, and their faces were set in grim lines.

Alice was almost home when the car came abreast of her, and when she edged towards the kerb so did the other car.

"What are you men doing?" cried the girl, and tried to accelerate to get clear.

The only answer was the roar of a powerful engine. The girl gave a startled scream as a door opened and a man stood poised on the running-board. She screamed again when the man leapt.

Valet Dictates Terms.

THE police commissioner's office. At the huge mahogany desk sat a bowed, frightened man, whilst the chief, Detective Muldoon and Houston stared at each other in perplexity.

"What's happened to Alice? What's happened to Alice?" wailed Commissioner Lang for the hundredth time. "Where's my darling gone?"

"Perhaps the car went wrong!" weakly suggested the chief.

"Would the car be found half through a hedge," raved the father. "And there's nothing the matter with the car. In spite of smashed and bent wings, it was driven back here. There are a number of parcels in the back, Alice's gloves and yet no sign of my daughter. She's been kidnapped! But by whom?" His face was contorted as he stared at his officers. "Why can't you fools do something? Why can't you find her?"

The outburst was excusable. The commissioner was driven frantic with worry over his only child.

Houston was worried, but he tried to disguise his fears. Could one man have kidnapped Alice? Was the reason ransom? Lang was a popular commissioner, and the perpetrator of such a deed must know that the whole of Lincoln would be roused. The commissioner was not a poor man, yet not sufficiently wealthy to warrant a ransom. Was there some other motive behind this abduction?

"What do you make of this, Houston?" The police chief turned to his subordinate. "The commissioner has no enemies. Might not Miss Lang have hurt herself and received attention from a doctor?"

"The car was found two hours ago and the radiator was still warm." Houston stared before him with gloomy eyes. "Only one man might have done this."

"You mean Valet?" asked the detective.

"I hope to heaven I'm wrong." Houston could not face the agony on the commissioner's face. "Who else—"

The telephone bell made them all jump, so great was the nervous strain.

Commissioner Lang answered the call—perhaps one of the patrols had gained some important clue or even found Alice.

"Is that Commissioner Lang's office?" drawled a voice.

"Yes—speaking."

"Feeling a bit hot-up, aren't you?" came the soft, mocking voice. "Wondering where your dear daughter Alice can have got to."

"Alice! Alice! What do you know about my daughter?"

William Houston grabbed up another instrument, for he knew in a flash who was speaking to the commissioner.

"You've found a deserted car and you

don't know what's happened to her. You needn't bother to look any further, because she's in safe hands. This is Joe Valet talking."

"Valet!" The commissioner turned a haggard face to Houston. "He's got Alice."

"Find out his game, sir," whispered Houston. "Then let me talk to him."

"You say Alice is with you?" The commissioner spoke in a shaky voice. "Are you crazy to have done such a thing? What little chance you had of a light sentence is gone."

"Oh, yeah, I know all that," Valet laughed. "I was due for the hot squat in any case and the abduction of a beautiful young girl don't make matters any worse. Yeah, I'll say she's pretty—I'm looking at her now. Like to know why I've invited her to my abode? I won't waste time, but just tell you. Her life or mine—make your choice!"

"My G— You can't mean—" The commissioner was palsied with fright.

"Let me speak, sir," cried Houston, and took the 'phone from the trembling fingers. "Valet, this is Houston speaking."

"Dear old Bill."

"Cut out the smooth stuff," raged his one-time friend. "If you harm Alice I'll kill you with my own hands."

"You might try," was the answer; "but at the moment that's impossible. Unless the cops are withdrawn from the Steps and I'm allowed to leave this town something may happen to Alice. It is now six o'clock—I give you an hour to decide. In one hour I'll ring up again, and then it's up to you and the commissioner. Perhaps you'd like to decide now—I'll hold on."

The commissioner had taken up the other 'phone. Duty was forgotten in his love for his daughter.

"We've got to let him go," came his agonised cry. "I'll order the withdrawal of the cordon at once. Tell him I'll be responsible that no harm comes to him." He glared at his future son-in-law. "Why waste time—tell Valet he is free!"

"Wait." Houston spoke into the 'phone, and then put his big hand back over the mouthpiece before answering the commissioner. "We must not be too hasty, sir, to give way to Valet. If we give in without a fight headquarters—"

"What the heck do I care about headquarters?" the commissioner almost screamed. "It's my daughter I'm thinking about. You're supposed to be in love with Alice and yet you waste time arguing when every moment is precious."

"I'm as anxious as you, sir." Houston's voice was hoarse. "But there's the chief to be considered and our own reputations. I want to try and get Alice back, because if we give Valet his freedom the Press and the general public will jeer as us for being tricked. We'll play for time, sir—I think I can trust Valet to keep his word."

"But Alice, Alice—" The commissioner glanced from Houston to the other two men, and read their expressions. They were defenders of the law and, though Alice was his daughter, hated the idea of giving way to a crook gunman without a fight. "You're right gentlemen." The commissioner bowed his head. "I mustn't be a coward. We must fight Valet."

"Valet." Houston spoke into the 'phone, "you still hanging on?"

"Yeah—you been trying to trace it call?" came the sneering voice. "You be unlucky because—"

"You're so smart," interrupted Houston. "It's now a quarter-past and I want an hour from now. You see, Valet, you're in a jam, and we reckon your terms rather too excessive."

"Maybe you don't think I've got your dame a prisoner," Valet cried. "Just listen to this." A pause, and then a faint whisper. "Tell 'em you're scared stiff and that when I say you've got an hour to live I mean it."

"Bill, Bill!" Now he could hear Alice. "They tricked me here; they threaten to kill me, but I'm not frightened of them. Come and get them, Bill. I'm at the Steps, near the river."

Her voice trailed away in a scream of pain, and Houston, hands clenched impatiently, heard Valet speak again:

"The little fool nearly got a broken wrist for that. I'll give you an hour. I'm down in the Steps, but you can't find me in that time. In one hour I ring again, and if—" Valet rang off.

William Houston turned eagerly to the commissioner and the chief of police.

"I've got one hour," he cried. "It you've heard nothing from me when Valet rings up again, then let him have his liberty."

The Fight to a Finish.

WILLIAM HOUSTON had no definite plan when he left the commissioner's office. He was terribly anxious for Alice's safety, but mad at the idea of having to give in to a crook, even though that crook had once shared a dug-out with him.

Luck for the first time favoured them for a plain-clothes detective hurried up to them directly Muldoon and himself arrived in the dismal district known as the Steps.

"No trace of Valet," was the report. "Though I picked this up near the river." It was a silhouette. "I remembered what you told me about Valet and wondered if—"

"Done by Valet himself—a silhouette of the Kid, his chief gangster," cried Houston. "Muldoon, will you get back to headquarters and muster the flying squad, also the two armoured cars. Return here at once. You'll find Williams." That was the plain-clothes man. "And he'll report any progress or instructions."

Muldoon went away in the police car. "Now lead me to where you found this silhouette," ordered the captain.

Williams led his superior along several evil-smelling alleys into a narrow street. From the shadows of a wall he indicated three isolated tenement houses and a stretch of waste ground.

"Found the silhouette among rubbish shot on that waste," whispered the detective. "Those three tenements are joined together and honeycombed with passages, but I doubt if there are passages under the road, though there might be one down to that small building over there on the river bank."

"Smart work, Williams, it shan't be overlooked," approved Houston. "Get hold of two men to watch that shed, and get any others to hang around here and keep their eyes skinned. You get back and fetch Muldoon. I'm going to get into these buildings."

Houston drew his sloach hat over his eyes, turned up his collar and when an old car snorted past, gained the other side of the road.

Wooden stairs formed a fire-escape to the building on the extreme right, which appeared to be deserted as the windows were either filthy or broken. There were no lights though the building at the left end had several lighted windows and an air of occupation.

Houston suddenly ran up three steps and then flung himself backwards to the ground.

Crack! A bullet splintered the wood-work of the stairs.

How could he get up those stairs? The problem was solved for him.

A gun spoke twice from the opposite side of the street and there came a yell of pain from above. For a moment Houston was puzzled, then gave a gleeful grunt. Terone's old gang must be on the war-path against Valet for the killing of their chief.

Taking a chance Bill went up the wooden stairs and came to the exit on the first floor. At once a fusillade of shots rang out from both sides of the street, but none came near the police officer. Terone's gang was out for revenge.

Houston tried the door but it was locked. From his pocket came an affair of wire, which opened that door in a trice and without hesitation he entered, but in his hand was his gun.

A murmur of voices and Houston crept forward.

"Stop moaning, you little fool." It was Valet's harsh voice. "I'm going to put a call through to the police headquarters and if they don't draw off the cops something's gonna happen to you."

Houston flattened himself against the wall as he heard someone running towards him. A torch flashed but the beam did not show up the captain. A door opened, a streak of light, and then closed.

"Chief, it ain't the cops—it's Terone's gang," shouted the Kid. "They're on the other side of the road. All this shooting will bring the cops—we're in a proper jam now, chief."

"Oh, cut out the moaning," snarled Valet. "Get back to the roof and turn a machine-gun on any of Terone's gang you see, but lay off shooting cops if you can help it. I'll get through to that old fool of a commissioner and tell him that if he wants to see his daughter alive he'd better get busy."

The Kid reappeared and darted along the passage. Houston edged near the closed door. Quietly he turned the handle and then flung the door open.

"Stick 'em up, Valet," he shouted, and wisely kept well back in the shadows.

Like a flash Valet, who had been holding a telephone receiver, had whipped out a gun and fired. The bullet missed Houston and then the

police officer's gun spoke. A yell of rage and the gun was smashed from Valet's hand.

Alice, with hands to athen cheeks, had backed against a wall.

But Valet was not captured yet. Behind him was an open doorway and like a hare he jumped backwards, and the door was flung shut.

"Stay there, Alice," barked her sweetheart and flung himself against the door. Next moment he was in a lighted room and there at his feet was an open trapdoor. Down a steel ladder Valet was swiftly descending and without hesitation, Houston went after him by sliding down the sides of the ladder. He could have shot Valet, but that was not his way of fighting an unarmed enemy.

Alice, disobeying orders, had crept to the opening and saw the two men fighting on the ladder. Locked together they crashed to the ground, which was a good fifteen feet drop. The girl cried out and closed her eyes in horror.

Outside a battle had been raging, but with the arrival of heavy bodies of police the fight went out of the two gangs. Already Terone's old gang had lost two men killed by the machine-gun, whilst the Kid and two of Valet's men were badly wounded. Muldoon led the police into the tenement houses whilst Williams dealt with the Terone gang.

It was Muldoon who found Alice.

The girl pointed to the trapdoor.

"They went down there," she cried. William Houston, bedraggled, with blood on hands and streaming from a cut on the face, drew himself wearily into the room. Next minute Alice was clasped tight in his arms.

"How about Valet, Bill?" asked Muldoon.

"We fell and lucky for me Valet was underneath." Bill freed a hand and pointed to the trap. "You'll find him—yeah, he's finished—broke his neck—I'm glad."

And whilst Alice cling to her lover and sobbed tears of relief Muldoon and the cops stared down at the still figure of Joe Valet.

"A proper clean-up," muttered the chief-detective. "Guess we'll have some peace round these parts for a spell," he chuckled. "The only excitement will be a wedding."

(By permission of W. and F. Film Service, Ltd., starring John Holland and Robert Gleckler.)

GRAND FILM NOVELS YOU SHOULD NOT MISS!

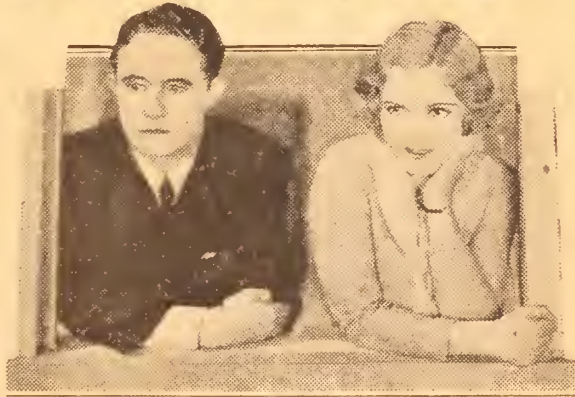
"TOO MANY COOKS."

Albert decided to build a house for himself and Alice Cook, the girl he was going to marry, but the members of her family, her friend, his uncle, and his chum did their utmost to upset everything with the best of intentions.

"HONOUR AMONG LOVERS."

A strong and dramatic tale of a young financier who loved a girl but lost her. Soon the girl found that the man she had married was a weakling. Starring Fredric March and Claudette Colbert.

ALSO
The fourth episode of the splendid serial drama of the sawdust ring, starring Francis X. Bushman, jun., and Alberta Vaughn.
"THE SPELL OF THE CIRCUS."



Bert Wheeler and Dorothy Lee in "Too Many Cooks." Don't miss these splendid yarns in this week's issue of our companion paper,

"SCREEN STORIES."

ON SALE WEDNESDAY. PRICE 2d. October 17th, 1931.

"THE MALTESE FALCON."

(Continued from page 20.)

"Well," he said. "Wilmer's our fall guy." And, as Gutman offered a protest: "There's no argument. You say 'yes' right now, or I'll turn the black bird and the whole gang of you over."

Gutman fingered his chin.

"Well—er—you can have him," he muttered, while Cook leaned limply against the wall.

Sam picked up the telephone, called up Effie, his secretary, apologised for rousing her and asked her to collect the suit case with the black bird.

"Now, Gutman," he said, turning, "let's get the details. Why did Wilmer kill Thursby, and how did he kill Jacobi?"

"Thursby was a notorious gunman," Gutman answered, "and Miss Wonderly's protector. We tried to persuade him to join us. When he refused, Wilmer got him outside his hotel. As for Jacobi, he knew nothing of the Falcon, except as a precious statuette that Miss Wonderly entrusted to him in Hong Kong. You see, he came under the influence of Miss Wonderly's charm, and agreed to bring the Falcon to America while she came on a fast boat. The Falcon went from Thursby to Jacobi, and from Jacobi, at her instructions, to you. Miss Wonderly's admirers have been many, sir, and she has used them all to her advantage."

"And I was next in line, huh?" mused Sam, and it was a subject on which he had ample time to ponder ere Effie showed up with the case.

The moment the secretary had gone, the case was hurriedly opened by Gutman, who then proceeded to scrape the enamel of the black bird with a knife. He had made several incisions in its surface when an expression of the keenest chagrin appeared on his florid face.

"A fake!" he snarled. "This isn't the real Falcon!"

"It's the only one I know about," said Sam Spade, and then, rounding on Ruth Wonderly: "Maybe you can tell them where the real one is," he jerked.

"No," she cried, and seemed sincere enough. "I swear this is the one I got from Kemidov in Constantinople. It's Gutman's fault. He was idiot enough to let Kemidov know the Falcon's value, and the Russian made a duplicate. Kemidov's made fools of us. Oh, what

fools, chasing each other around the world for a lump of lead!"

"Too bad," Gutman murmured. "Oh, by the way, Spade, I'll trouble you for my ten thousand dollars."

"Don't be silly, Gutman," said Sam. "It's your hard luck, not mine."

As he spoke he realised that Gutman was covering him with a wicked-looking pistol. It was Cairo who relieved Sam of the money.

When the crooks had departed, Sam crossed to the 'phone and called up police headquarters. A moment later he was in conversation with Tom Polhaus.

That conversation over, he faced Ruth Wonderly. Never had she looked more appealing, never in his brief acquaintance with her had he had to fight so hard against that spell which had brought those other men to their ruin.

"You and Thursby double-crossed Gutman," he said quietly. "Then you double-crossed Thursby in favour of the more innocent Jacobi. Listen, Baby, don't lie to me. Thursby didn't kill Archer. Archer was not dumb enough to let Thursby catch him in a blind alley with his gun stuck away in his hip and his overcoat buttoned. But Archer went up that alley with you, and you—you shot him in the back! Why—?"

"Oh, Sam, don't talk that way," she pleaded.

"Cut it out," he jerked. "I'll tell you why you killed him—because you figured Thursby would be nailed for the murder, and then you would have the black bird all for yourself. But when you found out Thursby had been shot by Gutman's crowd, you got scared—thought you needed a protector—and came back to me."

She flung her arms around him.

"Sam," she cried, with a break in her voice, "I'd have come back to you anyway. The first time I saw you I knew, somehow, that sooner or later I would come back to you. I want you to believe that—"

The door-bell rang. When Sam answered the summons Polhaus and Lieutenant Dundy crossed the threshold. "Here you are," said Sam, producing an automatic. "The gun Cook used to kill Thursby and Jacobi."

"He's used another one since," Tom Polhaus rejoined grimly. "We acted on your information and went round to Gutman's hotel. We grabbed Cook, but Gutman and Cairo are dead. Cook—shot 'em."

"That ain't all," put in Dundy. "There's another murder to clear up—Archer's."

Sam laughed.

"And you've got it all figured out how I did it, huh?" he said. "Well, I reckon you know Miss Wonderly. She killed Archer—" Perhaps he faltered a little as he made the accusation, but he was not entirely the blind fool that those other men had been. "She was an accomplice of Cairo, Gutman, and Cook—until she double-crossed 'em."

"She's in cell number ten, sir," the matron of the women's prison told Sam Spade, several days after the trial and conviction of Ruth Wonderly.

Sam walked down the long stone corridor till he came to the barred door of the room whence Ruth Wonderly would walk to the gallows. She was sitting on a hard couch with her head between her hands, but looked up as she heard his step.

"You just couldn't keep away from me, could you?" she said, with a defiant trace of mockery in her voice.

He smiled a twisted smile, but deep down within him he felt a pang. In spite of everything he had cared for her, and since her imprisonment he had spent nights as sleepless as hers.

"They've just made me chief investigator for the District Attorney's office," he told her. "I thought you'd like to know, since it was through you I got the job."

"I assure you," she said, "it was a labour of love. Yes, just that, Sam." And suddenly she broke down, sobbing distractedly.

Could it be possible that some corner of her crooked heart had really belonged to him, that in the end she had come to look on him as something other than a pawn to be used as her wiles and cunning should direct, or as the force of circumstances should decree?

When Sam Spade made his way back to the end of the prison corridor he spoke to the matron earnestly.

"I want you to be very nice to that girl in number ten," he said. "Give her anything she wants."

"Very well, Sam. But who will I charge the extras to?"

"Send the bill to the District Attorney's office," he answered. "It's 'okay' it."

"But will that be all right?"

Sam laughed quietly.

"Yes, sir," he declared.

(By permission of Warner Bros. Pictures, Ltd., starring Bebe Daniels and Ricardo Cortez.)

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Boys' Cinema

"RODNEY STEPS IN" and
"RED FORK RANGE."

Complete Film Stories in This Issue.

Boys' CINEMA 2^D

No. 619.

EVERY TUESDAY.

OCTOBER 24th, 1931.

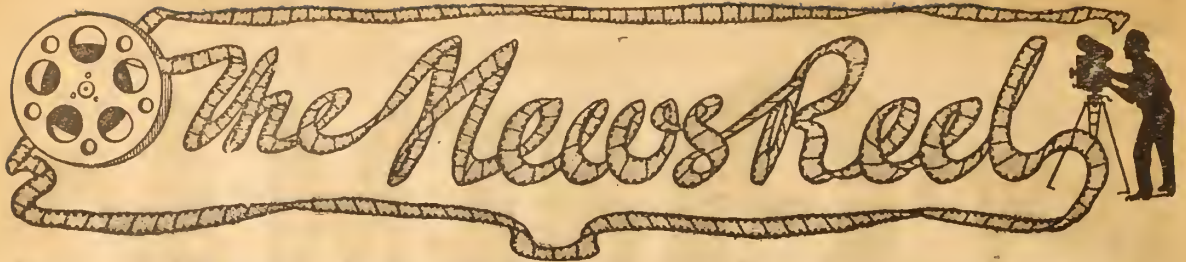
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**The RIDING
FOOL**



The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"The Riding Fool."

Steve Kendall, Bob Steele; Sally Warren, Frances Morris; Juanita, Josephino Velez; Ma Warren, Florence Turner; Bud Warren, Eddie Featherston; Boston Harry, Ted Adams; Nikkos, Al Bridges; Miss Scully, Fern Emmett; Sheriff Anderson, Gordon de Main; Col. Butterfield, Jack Henderson.

"Red Fork Range."

Wally Hamilton, Wally Wales; Ruth Farell, Ruth Mix; Black Bard, Al Ferguson; "Whip" Roden, Bud Osborne; Charles Farell, Lafe McKee; Sergeant O'Flaherty, Will Armstrong; "Apache" Joe, Jim Corey; Chief Barking Fox, Chief Big Tree.

"Rodney Steps In."

Rodney Perch, Richard Cooper; The Masked Lady, Elizabeth Allan; Stephen Dalston, Walter Piers; Tapper, Leo Sheffield; Inspector Grimshaw, John R. Turnbull; Detective Billings, Alexander Field.

The Brave Days of Old.

It is not very often that an extra in pictures is able to cut the figure that Manuel Vegas Canero did during the filming of "Adios," the new drama of California's fighting days.

Canero, an eighty-six-year-old native of Southern California, was of great value to the First National director, Frank Lloyd. Many of the picturesque scenes in "Adios" were made in accordance with the descriptions furnished by this extra, who was one of the two hundred working in the picture.

"Life among the early Californians was very agreeable," declared Canero. "I remember well the bandits, the gringo miners and the stage-coaches that followed rapidly the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill. I was but a child in those days, but things didn't happen so fast as they do to-day. As I grew up I, too, felt the resentment against the ever-encroaching gringo. But that has all passed now. I would rather look back on the old days as I used to know and live them. Our pleasures, too, were organised on a business-like basis. Before the holidays there were committees of eight *fiestejeros*, or feasters, whose duty it was to plan the course of a series of celebrations from rancho to rancho.

"Each feaster had his vaquero—and let me remind you, please, that a vaquero is a man of distinction. The first officers of the State of California, all the men of proud families, were vaqueros. The term literally means 'all-round horsemen.' Actually, a vaquero was one who was sent riding on a mission, and accomplished his purpose despite all hardships.

"Let us say we would start the festivities at the old Santa Monica Rancho. Beforehand, the first feaster's vaquero had ridden up to warn the family of our coming, so that they might make ready the feast and prepare the October 24th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S THREE COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



JAMES HALL

"THE LIGHTNING FLYER."

Owing to his wild life, a rich young man is driven from home. Almost he has made good when tragedy intervenes. A gripping railroad drama.

"THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME."

Paris in the grim days when revolution threatened to break in all its terror and ghastliness. A powerful story centring around the life of Quasimodo, the deformed bellringer of the famous cathedral of Notre Dame. Starring the late Lon Chaney, Patsy Ruth Miller and Norman Kerry.

"MAID TO ORDER."

A gripping detective story of a man's daring plot to unmask a gang of thieves. Starring Julian Eltinge.

ALSO

The ninth episode of our thrilling serial drama,

"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

horses for our next journey. In a day or two we would arrive all on horseback, with the women riding on men's saddles with one knee over the saddlehorn. Generally we would arrange to arrive about four o'clock in the afternoon. After exchanging general greetings, the fiesta would start, and in it would be mixed serenading, dancing, feasting and merry-making, which often lasted until dawn.

"In 1881," Canero continued, "the Californians organised the Vaquero Club in order to perpetuate the old dances and traditions, which were rapidly passing with the picturesque customs. This club still meets regularly—but," he added, with a sad note in his voice, "the old days are gone for ever. Automobiles have ruined the vaqueros."

Many of the interesting and colourful

episodes of the pioneer days described by Canero have been incorporated in the picture. In "Adios," Richard Bartholmess plays a rôle based upon the actual history of Marietta, the notorious Spanish bandit who was the Robin Hood of California.

The "Clapper Boy."

If the "clapper boy" were a seeker after film fame he would have good reason to feel sorely disappointed. For he is the one person in a studio who is filmed hundreds of times for a picture and yet is never seen on the screen.

His face, in fact, is always left on the cutting-room floor. It is there that his film career ends. Yet no picture can be produced without him. Imagine him, if you can, a youth in shirt-sleeves who, unlike the artistes, needs no make-up ere he steps in front of the camera. His emblem of office consists of two long and narrow pieces of wood. These, the "clappers" as they are called, are as necessary to him as the megaphone used to be for different purposes to the director in the old days of silent films.

But now two separate films must be made at the same time, one for sound and one for the picture. Immediately before the artistes are to begin their parts, the "clapper" boy springs forward and quickly opens and snaps together his pieces of wood. Then just as quickly and modestly he retires to allow the artistes to start. His action and sound have, meanwhile, been recorded, and the instant the artistes have finished the "clapper" boy repeats his little performance.

The reason for all this is to enable the film cutters to know afterwards the exact point at which each scene began and finished before the whole is jomed together. The completed film then goes to the cinemas minus the face of the "clapper" boy and his sound.

From Aviation to Films.

One of the new artistes who have been signed on a long term contract by Columbia Pictures is Robert Alden, who created such an impression in "Paramount on Parade" and "Only the Brave."

When Alden left college he became a civil engineer, but soon tired of the life and secured an engagement with a small theatrical company. Then he became interested in aviation and soon earned his pilot's certificate. About seven months ago, however, he had a marvellous escape from death when a broken wing caused him to crash from a height of 3,200 feet.

For several months he lost the power of speech and it seemed as though he would never again be able to take up acting. But skilful medical attention and his own will-power combined to pull him through, with his speech as good as it was before. He is now determined to climb the ladder of success to film stardom.

Action, thrills, romance and humour in a story showing how a dare-devil cowpuncher and a reckless gambler brought a desperate bandit to justice.

THE RIDING FOOL



Starring
BOB STEELE, TED ADAMS
and FRANCES MORRIS.

The Neck-Tie Party.

TWO men stood near the end of the long bar in the saloon at Gulf Centre, Nevada. One was a blond young fellow whose manner seemed peculiarly agitated. The other was a big, swarthy Mexican known as Nikkos, a figure of some notoriety in and around the little Western township.

"Here's to Boston Harry," said Nikkos, raising his glass of mezcal whisky. "Eef he could draw a gun so quick as he draw the ace from his sleeve, then they would not be hanging heem now."

The other clawed at his arm feverishly. He seemed distraught to the point of terror.

"Cut it out, Nick," he pleaded. "Don't talk that way. Cut it out, will yuh?"

Nikkos smiled, and then, lowering his voice, leaned nearer to him.

"Lees'n, Bud Warren," he said, "do you think I would tell anyone I saw you keel Jim Beckworth? Boston Harry Preston, he is no friend of mine, hut do you theenk I would let them string heem up in your place eef I wasn't your partner?"

Bud Warren looked at him piteously. In spite of the Mexican's declaration of loyalty, there was a queer, sinister expression on his dark-skinned features.

"You always claimed you was my friend, Nick," Bud Warren faltered.

"Sure I am your friend," the Mexican rejoined. "So much your friend that I am going to stick weeth you when you take that stage to Poker City." And he looked at Warren slyly. Bud started.

"Who told you I was goin' there?" he jerked, and with that the Mexican's manner seemed to undergo a change. The ambiguous smile vanished from his

countenance, and the scowl that took its place was one of dark menace.

"Don't try to fool me," he warned. "We have been friends too long for you to be playing the lone hand."

"I'll be back," Bud Warren protested. "I just want to go an' see my folks."

"You will be back?" Nikkos echoed. "I am going weeth you, anigo."

At that particular moment a young man who had figured in their conversation was being led forth on horseback to a tract of convenient woodland some distance from Gulf Centre.

He was Boston Harry Preston, gambler by profession, gentleman of fortune by inclination, and, by an unlucky turn in the wheel of Fate, a victim of circumstantial evidence.

He was dressed with the care and expense which men of his calling generally lavished on their personal appearance. A Stetson with a well-turned brim cast a shadow over his thin, good-looking face. The ends of a cravat drooped over his fancy vest. The breeze that sighed across the hill-tops and fanned the mesquite grass of the rolling range stirred the skirts of his immaculate frock coat.

Thus, in sartorial splendour, with his hands bound behind him and a troop of stern-minded citizens riding alongside him as an escort, Boston Harry was conducted to a gallows tree that had already seen yeoman service in its time.

The fatal tree stood near the foot of a ridge, and, arrived beneath its spreading branches, the escort called a halt. A hand then withdrew Boston Harry's Stetson from his head, while another tossed a lariat over one of the stoutest boughs and adjusted the dangling noose around the captive's throat.

Boston Harry looked about him, his

glance scanning the faces of the lynching-party as he made a final appeal.

"I didn't kill Jim Beckworth," he said steadily. "I believe in every man sticking to his own game—and mine is cards."

"You might as well save your breath," one of the escort observed, and, seeing no mercy in the grim looks of those around him, Boston Harry prepared to reconcile himself to his end.

"Oh, Bill," he murmured, addressing a horseman at his side, "take my watch. It's yours. Be sure you wind it regular."

"Thanks!" was the rejoinder, and the time-piece was removed from Boston Harry's waistcoat.

"You've got my gun, Dusty," the condemned gambler said to another of the band. "You can keep it."

"I was goin' to," came the answer.

"And, Bill," Boston Harry continued, "take my bank-roll, will you? And when you get through burying me—kind of decent—see that Juanita gets the money. This is just about going to break her heart," he added with a sigh.

"Break her heart?" someone echoed mockingly. "Ain't you figurin' on Steve Kendall to repair that busted heart?"

Boston Harry turned his head.

"Why, Juanita's in love with me," he retorted hotly, forgetting his plight for the moment as he answered the doubts cast on his sweetheart's sincerity. "She told me so."

"Ah, quit the speech-makin'!" another member of the escort growled. "You're takin' the high-jump, Boston. A killin' is a killin', an' we're takin' the law into our own hands because State justice has a habit o' wastin' a lotta time. An' that's jest what this speech-makin' is doin' right now—wastin' time."

The escort drew aside, and the man with the lariat made certain that the rawhide was fixed firmly to his saddlepeg. Then without a word he looped his reins and struck Boston's pony smartly across the flank.

The gambler's horse leapt forward. The rope sprang taut— And in the same instant a shot crashed out from the ridge.

The rawhide snapped as a bullet sliced it as cleanly as a knife-cut. Galloping on in full career, Boston's pony dashed across the prairie, the gambler erect in the saddle and a length of lariat trailing from his neck. From the lynching-party there came a sudden outcry, and every man in the troop reached for his holster. But before a single six-gun could be drawn a voice arrested them.

"Stick 'em in the air and keep 'em there!"

The men of the lynching-party glanced towards the ridge and saw a lone horseman riding down the slope, a forty-five in each hand. His leather chaps flapped against the thorny clumps of chaparral through which his cow-pony was picking its way. His sombrero, pushed to the back of his head, offered a full view of a bronzed, genial face crowned by a mass of dark, curly hair.

"Steve Kendall!" one of the escort blurted.

Steve Kendall drew nearer. The men of the lynching-party remained motionless. They were ten-to-one, but the newcomer had the drop on them, and they had already had an instance of his straight shooting.

"Throw your guns on the ground one at a time!" Steve ordered as he reined up before them.

The escort obeyed him, and as the last "iron" thudded into the mesquite grass one of their number spoke.

"Have you gone plumb loco, Steve?" he demanded. "You know Boston had it comin' to him."

"Maybe," Steve Kendall retorted. "But he never had a fair trial, an' I reckon the sheriff would be all riled up if he came back to town and found you'd been stringing him."

"Takin' a healthy interest in the law all of a sudden, ain't you?" another of the band sneered. "After the way you an' Boston have been fightin' over that Spanish dame Juanita you oughta thank us for stringin' him up."

Steve's lip curled.

"I don't need any assistance in my love affairs," he observed, and then: "Dusty," he added, "you and Bill ride over here. I'll take Boston's gun, an' likewise the wallet and watch he passed up."

These articles having been obtained, Bill and Dusty were ordered to rejoin their companions, and, after assuring himself that Boston Harry was far on the road to freedom, Steve commanded the lynching-party to face in the opposite direction.

"Turn around," he said, with a flourish of his forty-fives, "and take a nice long look at the scenery."

They wheeled reluctantly, and Steve backed his horse to some distance. Then with a touch of his spurs he rode off at top speed.

The men of the escort dived from their broncs and grabbed their six-guns from the ground. But before a shot could be fired Steve Kendall had vanished over the crest of the ridge.

Juanita.

TAKING the short cut that leads to Yuma across the Gila River Steve Kendall did not draw rein till he sighted an adobe Mexican jacal October 24th, 1931.

standing near a thicket of prickly pear.

He entered the dwelling to find a dark-eyed Spanish girl reclining on a couch, and as she saw him she sprang up with a joyous exclamation.

"Glad to see your little amigo?" he asked her, with a grin, as he caught her in his arms and lifted her off her feet.

"Steve, I 'ave been so lonesome," she told him. "I thought you were not coming back to Juanita. Ah, but I am so full of love for you."

"I always knew you were crazy about me," Steve declared. "That's what I told Boston, only the cuss wouldn't believe me. Oh, by the way, look what I got," he added, reaching inside his shirt with the intention of producing the gambler's wallet and watch.

Before he could bring them forth, however, there was a clapping of hoofs outside the jacal, and a moment later a heavy body blundered against the door. It jerked open to reveal the figure of Boston Harry, his hands still bound, and the sinister rawhide necktie still circling his throat.

"Mi madre!" screamed Juanita.

"He is a ghost!"

Steve grinned.

"You're not afraid of a poor little ghost, are you, Juanita?" he scoffed.

"You're a brave guy when my hands are tied, ain't you?" shouted Boston, glaring at Steve and fairly infuriated at discovering him in Juanita's home.

"Untie his hands, baby," Steve immediately ordered, turning to Juanita, and, as the girl obeyed hesitantly, Boston peeled off his frock coat.

The two men faced each other in the middle of the room where Juanita cowered in a corner. There was a moment of suspense while they circled watchfully, and then Boston sprang.

Steve parried a savage swing and snapped his right to the gambler's jaw. The shock of the punch seemed to sweep Boston's feet from under him, and he plunged backward over a table.

He picked himself up and charged like a maddened steer, breaking through Steve's guard by the sheer impetus of his rush and battering the cowboy against a wall. But Steve fought back at him, and, though he took more than one telling blow, he speedily proved himself the better man.

Boston was the taller, but lacked Steve's physique, a physique hardened by life in the cow-camps. The gambler went down from a terrific jolt to the solar, and rose, only to be floored again. Still he attempted to prolong the battle, but the frequency with which he assumed a horizontal position began to grow monotonous.

Within five minutes he could scarcely stand, but he was tottering forward gamely when he saw Steve withdraw something from inside his shirt. It was a timepiece, the glass of which had been shattered in the course of the conflict, and at sight of it Boston ripped out an exclamation.

"Say, that's my watch!" he cried.

"Where'd you get it?"

"The same place I got the wallet you willed to Juanita," Steve answered. "And here's your gun, too—in case you want to practise shooting a rope or anything!"

Boston's jaw dropped, and at the same time a sheepish expression of gratitude appeared on his face.

"So you're the guy that saved my neck!" he stammered. "Aw, why

didn't you say so sooner, Steve? I wouldn't have given you this lickin'."

"What?" Steve raged. "Say, listen, I only saved you from that rope to let you see I was getting along with Juanita!"

The Mexican girl darted between them. Her eyes were fixed greedily on Boston's wallet.

"Do not believe his lies!" she told the gambler quickly. "He is a coyote—he let me go on thinking you had been hanged. Ah, it is you I care for! I am full of love for you!"

Steve could scarcely believe his ears, and stood gaping at Juanita.

"See, what did I tell you?" Boston observed to the cowboy with a smirk. "They all fall for me." And he kissed Juanita wholeheartedly on the lips.

Juanita returned the kiss and then wheeled on Steve.

"Give him back his money," she ordered fiercely. "Give him back his wallet, or—"

She never finished the sentence, for at that moment a figure stepped through the open doorway. It was the figure of the rascally Nikkos, and in his fist he grasped a six-gun.

"Up with your hands," he drawled mockingly, and as Steve and Boston whipped round: "I hate to see trouble with money, so I will take it from you," he continued.

He held out his palm with an imperious gesture, but Steve ignored it and pushed the wallet into Boston Harry's grasp.

"I'm giving you back your dough," he said to the gambler. "I reckon you know me well enough to believe me when I tell you I didn't mean to keep it, anyway."

Nikkos switched his six-gun on Boston, who was thereupon compelled to relinquish the wallet. Nikkos swiftly transferred it to his pocket, and then jerked his gun towards Steve as the latter attempted to reach for his hip.

"Careful, amigo," the Mexican warned.

Steve's eyes bored into him.

"I knew you were a dirty thief," he ground out, "but I thought you were smart enough to play safe."

"Play safe, eh?" Nikkos chuckled. "That ces good joke." Then his manner changed, and: "Get in that other room, the two of you—pronto! Juanita, open the door for them!"

The girl obeyed, and at the point of the gun Steve and Boston backed into a small, dingy apartment to which the light penetrated only through a narrow slit of a window.

The door was fastened on them, and Nikkos thrust his gun back into its holster and turned to Juanita.

"And now, sweet'art," he said, "who is the best man in the world, eh?"

Mindful of the wallet now in her compatriot's possession, the fickle Juanita sidled towards Nikkos affectionately.

"You are the best man, amigo," she told him. "And I am all full of love for you."

Nikkos grinned a wolfish grin.

"I knew it," he observed, "but to show I am not a thief, I leave you here with your two admirers." And with a taunting laugh that stung her into a fury he turned on his heel.

"Dirty peeg!" the girl flung at him, as she realised that he was proof against her wile. "I hope they catch you and keel you!"

Nikkos paid no heed to her. Pausing at the door of the room in which Steve

and Boston were imprisoned, he called farewell to them.

"Good-bye, boys," he said. "Look out for tight collars, and keep the feet on the ground."

Steve and Boston heard him leave the jacal, mount his horse and ride away, but if the gambler had reason to vow vengeance on him for the theft of the wallet, the cowboy's mind was occupied by another feature of the whole affair. He was thinking of Juanita.

"I am so full of lov' for you," Steve quoted presently, in a bitter tone of voice.

Boston grunted. "Just a sap!" he observed, and Steve nodded gloomily.

"Me, too," he confessed. Boston glanced at him. "Well, who'd you think I meant?" he rapped out.

"You're not calling me a sap!" Steve raved, and next instant he was at Boston's throat.

It was the signal for hostilities to be resumed between them, and in the fury of their mix-up they hurtled across the room and crashed into the frail door. It gave way with a splintering sound, and they were precipitated into the larger apartment, finishing up in a heap at Juanita's feet.

The girl kicked at them viciously and indiscriminately.

"Get out!" she screamed. "Get out of here!" But it was neither her tongue nor the point of her shoe that put an end to the conflict. The drumming of hoofs suddenly caught the ears of the combatants, and, scrambling up, they rushed to the window.

They saw a band of men riding towards the jacal, and as they recognised the lynching-party from Gulf Centre they knew that the posse was headed for Juanita's home in the belief that they would be found there.

Steve and Boston dashed from the jacal and sprang astride their horses. They took different directions, and as they parted Boston Harry threw violent words over his shoulder.

"Just our luck to have them stop a good fight!" he shouted to Steve.

"You can thank them for savin' your

life this time!" the cowboy retorted, clapping spurs to his bronco's flanks and heading for the pear thicket.

Poker City.

THE stage-coach ran into Poker City, the main township in a section a couple of hundred miles to the north of Gulf Centre, and as the lathered team of horses came to a standstill two passengers alighted.

One was a blonde and alluring girl of nineteen. The other was a young man of elegant manners and appearance—none other than Boston Harry, though he had forsaken that name for the pseudonym of Jones.

A man with a sheriff's badge stood near by, and as Boston helped the girl to descend the representative of Law and Order in Poker City touched his hat to her.

"Oh, hallo, Mr. Anderson," the girl greeted him. "Where's mother?"

"Your ma's up in the store, busy servin'," the sheriff told her. "Reckon she'll be powerful glad to see you back, Miss Sally."

He had hardly spoken the words when a little woman came bustling from the store he had indicated. She proved to be the mother of Miss Sally, and, after they had embraced, the girl turned to introduce Boston.

"Mother, I want you to meet Mr. Jones," she said. "We met on the coach, and he has been most kind to me the whole of the trip."

Boston doffed his hat and bowed gallantly.

"I am honoured, madam," he said to the old lady. "I would have known you were her mother, because no one but her mother could be so charming as—Miss Sally."

"Oh, Mr. Jones is a terrible flatterer, mother," Sally mentioned laughingly, "but really amusing if you don't take him too seriously. By the way, I've got a surprise for you."

"Wait till you see the surprise I've got for you," the older woman rejoined, and, leading Sally to the store, she hurried her across the threshold and pointed to a fair-headed young fellow standing near the counter.

He was that same Bud Warren who

had been the particular crony of Nikkos at Gulf Centre. But, whatever his record, he was obviously a welcome figure to Sally.

"Bud!" she exclaimed, recognising her brother. "Oh, Bud, where in the world have you been all these months, and what have you been doing?"

"Oh, knocking around from one place to another," Bud answered evasively.

"He's been back a whole week," his mother put in, "and now that he is back we're going to keep him here."

Bud slipped one arm around Sally's shoulders and one arm around his mother's. "Try to get rid of me," he said fervently.

Meanwhile, back at the coach, Boston Harry was lifting down a suit-case that belonged to Sally Warren, and as he was handling it Sheriff Anderson moved past him and addressed the stage driver.

"Good trip, California?" he inquired.

"Yeah," the driver reported, "but I understand a lone highwayman tried to hold up Mormon Joe with the other coach this afternoon. It happened about an hour before I got to Twin Forks. Joe took a shot at him, and claims he shaved his wrist."

The sheriff pursed his lips, and then turned away thoughtfully. In turning, he caught sight of Boston, whom he had already noticed with the eagle eye of a man who made it his business to scrutinise strangers.

"Stopping long?" he asked Boston casually.

Boston coughed. "Yeah," the driver reported, "but I understand a lone highwayman tried to hold up Mormon Joe with the other coach this afternoon. It happened about an hour before I got to Twin Forks. Joe took a shot at him, and claims he shaved his wrist."

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"Careful, amigo," the Mexican warned.



as he entered the building and saw Bud he stopped dead. But before he could beat a retreat Sally had turned and caught sight of him, and she immediately called him over.

"Oh, Mr. Jones," she said. "Mr. Jones, this is my brother."

Bud Warren's glance shifted to Boston's face, and as he recognised the gambler he blanched to the lips. His expression was one that Boston misapprehended, since he never dreamed that here was the real culprit of that killing for which he had so nearly been lynched.

"Why, I know your brother," the gambler said in the friendliest of tones, though his eyes seemed to hold a threat as they met Bud's. "He never told me he had a sister, though."

"Land sakes," Mrs. Warren exclaimed, "the world's a small place. Fancy you two bein' acquainted."

"Yes," Boston agreed cryptically, "the world's getting so small that you have to keep on the move to avoid bumping into one another."

Then, as the attention of the two womenfolk was diverted by the appearance of a neighbour, he drew Bud Warren aside.

"What's the matter, kid?" he demanded in an undertone. "You looked like a ghost when you first spotted me. I guess you left Gulf Centre before the boys discovered that slight mistake."

"Mistake?" Bud repeated huskily. "You don't think I did that killing, do you?" Boston asked him softly, and Bud shook his head with nervous conviction.

"No, Boston," he faltered, "not a chance."

Boston reached inside his coat and tapped a gun that he wore on a shoulder-sling which the garment concealed.

"There wouldn't be a chance," he warned, "for the fellow that talked too much. But we'll forget all about that, Bud. Let's go and take a drink."

Bud accepted the invitation querulously, but at the first opportunity he parted from Boston and took horse, riding westward from Poker City and pushing into the hills till he reached a gully where the smoke of a camp-fire was rising from the brush.

Sixty seconds later he was face to face with Nikkos.

"I'm glad to see you're all right," he blurted. "I heard Mormon Joe had winged you."

"Eet was a near thing," answered the Mexican, "but eet would not have been so near eef you had been with me."

Bud Warren bit his lip. "I had to be at the store," he protested. "It might have looked suspicious if I hadn't been there when my sister came in off the stage."

"All right," Nikkos muttered, "Only—don't have too many sisters. Lees'en, did you find out when that express money is due?"

"Not yet," Bud rejoined, "but there's somethin' else I've gotta tell you. Boston Harry is in town."

The Mexican's eyes narrowed. "Is that so?" he mused with a crooked smile. "Well, you don't have to worry about beem so long as you are friends with me. And if you want to keep friendly with me," he added darkly, "you won't find any more excuses to let me play lone hand again. You understand?"

Anderson Investigates.

A HORSEMAN rode through the brush and approached the out-buildings of the Bar Circle Ranch, owned by Colonel Butterfield, October 24th, 1931.

He was recognised by one or two of the hands as Sheriff Anderson.

The representative of the law dismounted, tethered his bronc and asked to see Butterfield, who emerged presently from the ranch-house, a small, spare man of about fifty-five.

"Have you put on any new men lately, colonel?" the sheriff asked.

"Yes," was the answer, "a man named Smith started last week, busting broncs. Why do you ask?"

"Never found out anything without askin'," the sheriff rejoined. "Matter o' fact, I'm driftin' around tryin' to pick up the trail of a man who held up the stage Mormon Joe was drivin'. Joe says he clipped him in the arm."

The colonel fingered his chin.

"Well, I'm sorry we're going to have trouble with road agents again," he stated, "but if you're looking for the culprit among my men you're barking up the wrong tree, sheriff."

"Where does this new hand of yours come from?" demanded Anderson.

Butterfield shrugged. "I don't ask any man his pedigree so long as he knows his business," he observed, "and this boy is the ridin'est fool you ever saw. You can take a good look at him now, sheriff, for here he comes with some of the boys."

A bronzed youngster, who sat a horse as if he had been born to the saddle, came galloping from the brush with three or four more of Butterfield's employees. His sombrero, pushed to the back of his head, offered a full view of the genial face of—Steve Kendall.

He swung himself to the ground close to where Butterfield and Anderson were standing, and the colonel beckoned him over.

"Steve, meet the sheriff," he said.

Steve held out his hand, whereupon Anderson immediately observed that his wrist was bandaged. An odd glint appeared in the sheriff's eye.

"Hurt yourself, Smith?" he suggested.

"One of those wild ponies I was riding the other day tried to scrape me off on the fence," Steve explained.

The sheriff looked at him keenly.

"Where you from, Smith?" he asked.

"Plumas County was my last stampin' ground," Steve answered.

Anderson put no further questions for the time being, but, turning to Butterfield, announced that he would have to be making tracks for Poker City.

"I'll come right along with you," the colonel told him. "I ain't been to town in some while."

The hands watched Butterfield mount and ride off in the sheriff's company, and when the colonel was out of earshot one of them spoke with a grin.

"Too bad the colonel has that case of heart trouble," he mentioned.

"Heart trouble?" Steve repeated, looking round. "I'm sorry to hear that. Must be sort of dangerous for a man of his age."

"Sure is," another of the boys declared humorously. "Specially when it's heart trouble over a woman. The colonel's been tryin' to ask the Widow Warren to marry him for the last two years. But he ain't got nerve enough to ask her when he's sober, and when he's liquored up she won't let him."

"He'll be liquored up afore the day's out," someone else put in.

The words were prophetic, for, shortly after dusk, Colonel Butterfield might have been seen tottering from the Poker City saloon, supported by the firm hand of Sheriff Anderson.

"You've had enough, colonel," the sheriff told him sternly, "and you're going right home."

"Now, sheriff, lishen," Colonel Butterfield protested stupidly, "there's a woman in this town—the shweetest li'l woman in the world, an' I gotta shee her. I gotta shee 'er an'—"

"Say, colonel, I've been lookin' for you."

It was the voice of Steve Kendall, alias Smith, and, on recognising him, Butterfield transferred himself from the sheriff's support.

"Steve," he said, "you're just in time. I'm gonna shee Ma Warren. We'll both go an' shee her together. I told her I wouldn't d-drink another drop, an' I gotta ap-ap-apologise for breakin' my promise. You tell her—you tell her it was your fault."

And in spite of Steve's protests the colonel conducted him along to the Warrens' Store, and blundered across the threshold with him into Ma Warren's presence.

There he introduced Steve, but had hardly presented the new hand when Mrs. Warren accused him of being under the influence of alcohol.

The colonel blinked at Steve. "Tell her," he said, and Steve loyally figured out an excuse.

"You see, Mrs. Warren, it was like this," he explained. "The colonel caught a little cold, and the boys thought a little drink would do him good—"

"I've heard that same story every Saturday night," Mrs. Warren interrupted, "but this time he's worse than ever he was. You take him back home and put him to bed, where he belongs."

Sally came round from the back of the counter, and, seeing her for the first time, Steve removed his hat.

"Oh, mother," said Sally, highly amused by Butterfield's latest escapade, "don't you think the colonel had better stay with us to-night?"

"Certainly not!" her mother began; but, after a moment's consideration:

"Oh, well, all right!" she granted. "Come along, then, John Butterfield, I'll take you to the house and put you in the spare room. Sally, you close the store."

"Yes, mother," the girl answered. "Mr. Jones will see me home."

"Er—Smith is the name," said Steve, as Mrs. Warren and the colonel were departing, "and I'll be delighted, miss."

Sally looked at him coldly.

"Good-night—Mr. Smith," she replied.

"I'm waiting for Mr. Jones."

"Oh—" Steve hesitated, and then: "In that case we'll both wait for him," he observed.

"You needn't trouble," she said. Steve grinned.

"Why, it's no trouble," he assured her. "I haven't anything to do."

She flashed an angry glance at him, and, turning on her heel, went behind the counter. But as she was passing along the back of it her elbow caught a pile of canned peaches and scattered them over the floor, and on the instant Steve hurried round to help her pick them up.

It was while he was stooping out of sight behind the counter that Boston Harry came into the shop. He saw only Sally, and doffed his Stetson with fine courtesy.

"Well," he announced, "I'm here on time."

"You couldn't have come any too soon to please me, Mr. Jones," Sally answered, still resentful at Steve's persistence in remaining.

Never suspecting the true meaning of her words, Boston looked at her ardently.

"If I had known it meant that much to you I wouldn't have waited this long," he told her in poetic accents, "counting

each second until I should see you again."

Behind the counter, Steve recognised that unmistakable voice, and with a can of peaches in each hand he rose startlingly into view.

"Well now isn't that just too sweet for words?" he declared. "My name is Smith. Haven't I seen you somewhere before? The last time we met, I believe you were going away in a hurry. It was a farewell party—"

Boston's face portrayed amazement, chagrin and then fury in rapid succession. But Steve maintained his geniality of manner, and, setting down the cans of peaches, placed his hands on the counter with a salesman-like air.

"What can we do for you?" he continued. "How about a nice corn-plaster? We have a store-full of corn-plasters. I know"—on an afterthought—"a necktie. Here's one that would look very nice on you," he added, picking up a rope.

"Will you please stop this nonsense so we can close up the store?" snapped Sally irritably.

Steve laid down the rope.

"Are we ready to go?" he asked. "All right, You can come along, too, Mr. Jones."

"I wish I had your nerve," Boston said through his clenched teeth.

Nikkos.

ONCE again Boston Harry and Steve Kendall were rivals in romance, but this time the girl in the case was more worthy by far than the faithless Juanita, and both men had soon dedicated themselves whole-heartedly to her service.

Nor did Sally seem to look upon either of them with disfavour, for, in spite of a poor beginning, Steve's irrepressible good-humour speedily earned her regard, just as Boston's unflinching politeness and gallantry likewise won her esteem.

Boston had perhaps more opportunity of seeing her than Steve, and one day, while on the trail of a yearling that had wandered from the herd, the cowboy reined up on the edge of a gully and saw Sally and the gambler immediately below him.

Both were on horseback, and they had halted their ponies at the foot of the steep embankment. To the ears of Steve the voice of Boston came distinctly, waxing sonorous in a soulful oration.

"Ever since the first moment I met you on the stage-coach," he was saying, "I knew you were one in a million—"

Steve leaned from the saddle and reached down to pick up a piece of rock. When he looked into the gully again he observed that Boston had carried one hand to his heart and was gazing at Sally devotedly.

"No one," he cried—"no one has ever seen a man fall head-over-heels in love with a girl as I have for you—"

Steve threw the stone with unerring aim, and it struck Boston's bronc smartly on the hindquarters. The ravel of a spur could not have had a more instantaneous effect, for with a bound the animal launched forward, and, taken unawares, its rider described a backward dive through mid-air to land with a thud that raised a cloud of dust.

His horse dashed on at the gallop, and with an exclamation Sally whipped up her pony to give chase and overtake the runaway. Steve at once wheeled sharply and rode along

the rim of the gully, but descended the slope half a mile farther on, and caught Boston's mount as it was dashing past.

He brought the runaway to a standstill and then waited for Sally to come up.

"Thanks, Steve!" she gasped, as he handed the animal's reins to her. "Boston took a fall."

Steve looked at her earnestly.

"That's all right, Sally," he told her. "I'd like to have the chance to do this for you every time I see you riding with Boston. I hope that fall wasn't his last."

"Oh, don't be silly, Steve," Sally answered. "He was kind enough to offer to ride over with me to Mrs. Harris's place. I promised to take some medicine over to her."

"Here he is now," said Steve, indicating a figure that was limping along the gully. Then, as Boston drew nearer:

"Did you enjoy your walk, Mr. Jones?" he inquired innocently. "It seems to me you were on a horse once before when you almost had your neck broken."

"I wonder what made the animal bolt that way," Sally murmured.

"I don't know," growled Boston, "but I'm thinking. What are you doing here, anyway, Steve?"

"Lookin' for a stray calf that hasn't the sense to take care of itself," Steve rejoined, with a grin. "But I'd better come along and take care of you," he added to Sally.

"Mrs. Harris' place is only a mile down the trail," she protested, and, after thanking Boston for seeing her so far on her way, she cantered on.

Boston mounted his horse, and, glaring at Steve, rode from the gully. Steve continued his search for the stray calf, but, also leaving the gully a few minutes later, caught sight of Boston crossing a strip of open ground that

dipped towards an arroyo, and suddenly realised that he was walking his horse with an air of great caution.

Looking in the direction for which the gambler was headed, Steve realised why. Two men were in the arroyo, and seemed to be in close conversation. One of them was Bud Warren and the other—was Nikkos.

Steve changed his course, approaching the arroyo from another angle, but before either he or Boston were in earshot Nikkos and Bud Warren had completed a certain transaction that was occupying their attention.

"Here is your share, amigo," Nikkos said, handing the younger man a bundle of notes. "I am keeping these."

And he stuffed a wad of dollar bills inside his shirt, together with some articles of jewellery that included a necklace with a locket.

"That is fair, eh, my compañero?" he added.

"Yeah, I guess that's fine," Bud Warren answered nervously. "I'll see you later."

He flicked his horse with the rein and galloped off towards Poker City, leaving Nikkos to withdraw his portion of the spoil again and examine it greedily.

He was scrutinising the money and the valuables when he heard a rattle of stones, dislodged by horses' hoofs. Turning sharply, he saw Steve Kendall approaching from one side and Boston Harry from the other.

He made a snatch for his six-gun, but Steve had covered him already.

"Stick 'em up, Nikkos!" the cowboy rapped out.

"I hope you didn't think you'd have this little party all to yourself," he drawled.

Boston spurred close.

"Do you feel as safe as you did the last time I saw you, Nick?" he said.

"What do you want?" snarled



"But Nikkos is the guy you want!" Steve jerked, and on a sudden impulse of rage flung himself at the Mexican.

Nikkos, sticking his loot back into his shirt.

"I've been waiting for a settlement with you ever since you took that roll away from me," Boston answered grimly. "Come through! I want all you've got."

And as the Mexican made no attempt to oblige him, he dived for the money and trinkets that he had seen in the rogue's hand a moment before.

Boston counted the bills and examined the jewellery, which consisted of two or three rings, a watch, and the necklace with the locket.

"This don't cover half of what you took from me," he said, somewhat disappointed. "But it'll do on account. I'll have the rest off you the next time I see you."

He drew back, and Steve spoke again.

"Bud Warren was with you just now, Nikkos," he mentioned. "In the future, stay away from him. I don't think his sister would approve of you. Now, get goin'! Go on—beat it!"

"Remember, I get even with both of you for thees some day," Nikkos said darkly.

"Beat it," Steve repeated, with a significant flourish of his six-gun, and, wheeling, the Mexican rode away.

Steve turned, to see Boston stowing away the money and valuables he had taken from Nikkos in lieu of the bank-roll that the Mexican had stolen at Jupaia's.

"Don't I get anything out of this, Boston?" he demanded.

"Yeah," said Boston, "a bottle of nerve tonic."

Held for Murder.

STEVE rode into town that evening, to find a crowd gathered on the veranda of the Warrens' General Store. The sheriff was present and an air of excitement seemed to prevail.

Steve inquired if anything were amiss.

"Bandits held up the stage the other side of the pass," he was informed. "Ole California, the driver, was killed."

Steve shook his head at the news, and then walked on into the store. Sally was at the counter, and he walked over to her.

"Hello, Sally," he greeted, and then, dropping his glance to her throat: "That's a pretty locket you're wearing," he complimented.

"Boston gave it to me," Sally told him. "I didn't want to take it, but I didn't like to hurt his feelings."

Steve bit his lip.

"Take anything you can get from him," he said gloomily. "Why not?"

"You're jealous, aren't you, Steve?" she murmured.

He shook his head, but she reached across the counter and touched his hand, looking at him with her appealing eyes as she did so. He grinned a sheepish grin, then.

"I guess you called my bluff, Sally," he confessed. "I'm plumb loco-ed with jealousy."

Meanwhile, the group on the veranda had been joined by a small spinster who had been on California's coach when it had been held up.

"I am Miss Scully," she said to Sheriff Anderson, "the passenger who lost the valuable necklace on the stage. Have you captured the bandits yet?"

"No, ma'am," the sheriff replied. "We've scoured the whole country, but ain't found a trace of them hold-up men."

"Hold-up men?" a voice inquired.

It was the voice of Boston Harry, October 24th, 1931.

who had strolled up at that moment, and Miss Scully turned to him.

"They robbed me of the most precious thing I had," she explained. "It was a trinket my mother gave me to wear when I was wedded, but, you see"—regretfully—"I was never wedded."

"I'm terribly sorry," Boston observed politely.

Miss Scully was looking for sympathy, and as yet had found little, since her loss seemed trivial compared to the fate of California.

"I knew you'd be sorry," she said to Boston. "I knew you were a gentleman the minute I set eyes on you. Pity there weren't more gentlemen in this uncivilised place!"

"Er—pardon me," Boston rejoined hurriedly, "I am going into the store."

"I have a purchase or two to make as well," Miss Scully declared, and walked along the veranda with him.

On his way to the door Boston saw Nikkos lounging nearby, and shot an ominous glance at the Mexican. It was a glance that Nikkos returned with an expression of mockery that Boston did not understand just then.

With the little spinster at his side, the gambler entered the store, and Sally's conversation with Steve was interrupted as Miss Scully hurried across to the counter.

"I suppose you've heard about my being robbed?" the spinster announced.

"I want to write home about it at once, and need some stamps. I—"

Then she stopped, and next instant, with a swift snatch and a shrill cry, she seized the necklace that Boston had unsuspectingly presented to Sally.

"My locket!" Miss Scully squealed. "Where did you get it? Young woman, where did you get it? Sheriff!" she added in loud accents. "Sheriff!"

Anderson hurried across the threshold in answer to the commotion. He was followed by an inquisitive crowd, and soon the store was packed, the mob including Nikkos and Bud Warren.

"This young woman had my necklace!" Miss Scully accused. "The necklace that was stolen from me on the stage!"

Sally was standing with a look of bewilderment on her pretty face.

"There's some mistake, sheriff," she said. "The necklace she's talking about was a gift from Mr. Jones here!"

Anderson wheeled and looked directly at Boston, whose face had changed colour. As the sheriff's keen glance fastened on him, the gambler took a step towards Nikkos.

"You tell 'em where I got it!" he rapped out. "Tell 'em I got it off you this afternoon."

Nikkos looked him up and down. His glance was like a taunt.

"I knew you would com' gunning for me, Boston, after I took that girl away from you in Gulf Centre," he observed craftily. "That's why I stick with my friend Bud all time. I do not know where you go this afternoon, but I keep out of your way."

He looked to Bud Warren for corroboration, and the weak-willed youngster nodded quickly.

"That's right," he faltered. "Nikkos was with me when I was deliverin' the mail."

"But Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith were with me up till three o'clock, sheriff," put in Sally.

"And the coach was robbed between four and five," Anderson retorted grimly.

Boston made a gesture of appeal.

"Smith and I aren't murderers, sheriff," he protested, only to be interrupted by Nikkos.

"No," the Mexican sneered. "That is what you told them when they try to hang you in Phumas County, eh? Leesen, sheriff. This man's name is not Jones; it is Boston Harry Preston. An' dees one is Kendall, not Smith. They are partners—Kendall saved Boston's neck at Gulf Centre. Bud Warren, ho tell you the same."

"That's right," Bud said huskily.

"Boston threatened me not to squeal."

Anderson faced the two suspects.

"Kinda fits in, I reckon," ho stated. "A lone bandit tried to hold up the stage last week. Then his friend comes along, and California's outfit is held up by two men."

"But Nikkos is the guy you want!" Steve jerked, and on a sudden impulse of rage he flung himself at the Mexican.

Ho was dragged back by Anderson and several others, and at the same time Boston was made prisoner. The pair of them were being marched from the store when Sally ran after them.

"I believe in you," she cried distractedly. "I believe in you both!"

"I'd like to believe 'em, too, Miss Sally," the sheriff mentioned. "But the evidence is too strong."

Ho strode on, leading the way to the gaol, where Boston and Steve were placed in a cell and left in the care of a warden. There, more or less alone, with their solitary guard occupying a chair in the sheriff's office, the two rivals in romance but partners in misfortune looked at each other hopelessly.

"I'd like to get a shot at Nikkos," said Steve, in a bitter undertone. "And as for Bud Warren—well, it's just too bad Sally has such a skunk for a brother."

Boston nodded.

"We know now that Nikkos held up that stage," ho muttered, "and Bud Warren sure is hand-in-glove with him. Gee! I guess it would break that old lady's heart if she knew the truth about her son."

"And that's why you and I are never going to tell, Boston," Steve rejoined.

There was a spell of silence, which Boston was the first to break.

"Pretty square of Sally to stick to me the way she did," he muscd with satisfaction. "She must think a lot of me."

"Almost as much as you think yourself," snapped Steve, and it looked as if they were to come to blows there and then, when the subject of their rivalry entered the office attached to the cells.

The warden rose to greet her.

"Evening, Miss Sally," he said.

"I've come to see your prisoners," Sally told him. "Mr. Anderson gave me permission."

The warden shrugged.

"It's unusual," he declared, "but if the sheriff said so I guess it's all right. They're in the cell on the left."

Sally made her way to the door behind which Steve and Boston were standing.

"I just locked up the store," she told them through the bars, "and thought I'd look in on you before I went home."

"It's mighty nice of you to come and see me," Boston said enthusiastically.

"I was just tellin' Steve that no matter what the rest might say, you'd never doubt my word."

A troubled expression appeared on the girl's pretty face.

"I know you're both innocent," she murmured, "but if that man Nikkos is the culprit, how could he have been with Bud all this afternoon?"

Steve pursed his lips.

"Don't worry, Sally," ho said, taking it upon himself to answer her question—or, at least, to evade it. "We've got out of worse jams than this before."

Assuring herself with a furtive glance that the warden's back was turned,

Sally held a note through the bars. Boston reached for it, but it was to Steve that she handed it.

"Wait till after I've gone," it read. Steve scanned it, passed it on to Boston, and then glanced at Sally inquiringly. By way of explanation she drew aside a shawl she was wearing and revealed a pair of loaded forty-fives.

Steve took them through the bars cautiously and gave one to Boston, keeping up some trivial conversation as he effected the exchange in order that the warden's suspicions should not be aroused by a spell of silence.

A little later Sally said "good-bye," and, waiting till five minutes had elapsed since her departure, Steve moved close up to the bars again and called to the guard.

"Hey, Bill," he said, "have you got a smoke?"

"Sure," the warden answered, turning his head. Then, rising, he produced a packet of cigarettes and strolled towards the cell door.

As he reached it he found himself covered by a couple of six-guns, one in Steve's hand and one in Boston's.

"I'd hate to see you come to any harm, Bill," Steve mentioned, "but we sure mean business. Open up—an' open up pronto."

The warden reached for a bunch of keys attached to his belt. His hand was not quite steady.

The Two-Gun Garrison.

FROM the windows of their parlour, Sally and her mother watched a crowd that had gathered in the street. Nikkos was addressing the mob, but the two womenfolk could not hear his voice, and they were wondering what was afoot when Colonel Butterfield came into the house.

"What's wrong out there?" Sally asked him quickly.

"For some reason that Mexican seems to be urging them on to a lynching," the colonel stated. "But I fancy it's just a lot of talk."

Ho was wrong, however, for the sinister eloquence of Nikkos had inflamed the minds of his listeners, and the situation was assuming an ugly aspect when Sheriff Anderson appeared on the scene.

"Hold on, there," Anderson said curtly. "I reckon you hombres ought not to start anything around here. I'll see justice done in this town so long as I hold office."

"The law is too slow for us," a man in the crowd growled, and, that sentiment being echoed by others, Nikkos spoke up again.

"If the law is too slow," he declared, "you weel get quick justice if you string up Kendall and Boston Harry pronto."

The sheriff wheeled on him.

"Listen, Nikkos," he ground out. "You're a stranger in Poker City, and I'm warnin' you that if there's any more of this talk I'll put you under lock and key. And that goes for the rest of—"

He never completed the sentence, for at that instant there was a loud outcry. Every head

was immediately turned, and the figures of Steve and Boston were seen to emerge from the gaol and make a dash for an alley-way.

The sheriff plucked out his six-gun, and a dozen other men did the same. A broken volley crashed out, and flame stabbed the gloom, but the fugitives dived into cover with lead zipping viciously at their heels.

"All right, boys!" yelled the sheriff. "Some of you head round to the back of the general store an' cut 'em off!"

It was an astute, tactical move, and effectively blocked the gaol-breakers' one route to freedom. Yet the two were in no mood to surrender, and, caught between two fires, they soon made it clear that they intended to defend themselves to the last cartridge.

Halfway along the alley, Steve darted to a side-window of the Warrens' store.

"Get in here, Boston!" he jerked, flinging up the sash, and the gambler clambered through the aperture, Steve following him swiftly.

They tumbled to the floor and ducked behind the counter. From the street came a regular storm of bullets that raked the interior of the shop, but the solid barrier behind which they were crouching shielded them effectively, and they answered the firing with half a dozen well-directed shots.

By tacit understanding they aimed "wide," meaning to refrain from drawing blood unless they were utterly compelled to do so in self-defence. There was only one man against whom they nursed any hard feelings—and that man was Nikkos.

Those few shots brought about the effect they desired, and checked the crowd's first impulse to rush the store. The men in the street scattered, and those who had worked round to the back of the store were likewise beaten off as Steve and Boston opened up on them through windows in that quarter.

The odds against the two gaol-breakers were overwhelming. Yet they were in

a strong position, and, though it seemed that they must inevitably suffer death or capture in the end, it was equally plain that the affair would not close without several of the attackers biting the dust.

The sheriff held a consultation, in which he expressed his aversion to launching a direct onslaught. He had the entire man-power of the little western township at his back, but hesitated before a course that would mean loss of life.

"I reckon our best plan is to lay siege and wear 'em down without makin' targets of ourselves," he declared. "Somebody call those men round from the back of the store. We'll plant a barricade in the street and blaze off all our artillery at Boston and Kendall. It may make 'em see reason."

His scheme was put into operation, and willing hands dragged furniture and bedding from the houses to erect a formidable breastwork opposite the store. Behind this the attacking-party took up position, and a heavy fire was concentrated on the building in which Steve and Boston had taken refuge.

The six-guns of the two defenders barked in response, and were soon emptied. But, from a shelf close by, Steve and Boston obtained fresh ammunition and, presently exchanging their forty-fives for a couple of Winchester rifles that they discovered on the premises, they settled down for a prolonged duel.

"If they aim to smoke us out," Steve said between his teeth, "we'll let 'em see we can stand a lotta heat."

"Give me the chance to plug Nikkos, and I'll die laughin'!" Boston answered grimly.

The smashing racket of gunplay continued to echo through Poker City, and within the store the acrid drifts of smoke swathed the long counter from behind which the defenders maintained the uneven battle. Lead splintered the windows, and they heard the slugs thud-



"Let me talk to them, sheriff," he appealed. "It may save a lot of lives."

ding into the woodwork or ricocheting off the canned goods with which the premises were stocked, yet neither Steve nor Boston sustained any hurt.

No casualties occurred amongst the besiegers, but one or two men had their hats whipped off their heads, and Nikkos speedily found that he would be specially wise to keep his body under cover.

Twenty minutes after the firing of the first shot, Boston caught Steve by the arm and jerked his thumb towards the rear of the store.

"The sheriff's concentrated his men in the street, and we could beat it through the back door," he suggested. But Steve shook his head.

"Not a chance," he said. "If there were a couple of horses there we could do it, but there ain't. Before we'd gone fifty yards that bunch out there would be after us on broncs."

At that moment, which was marked by a lull in the shooting, the sheriff was holding another conference with those immediately around him.

"This may last for hours," he said, "and we appear to be wastin' a parcel of lead."

"We could starve 'em out, sheriff," someone observed.

Anderson frowned.

"That would take longer," he argued. "They've got enough grub in there to last 'em a month."

"Then why not go in after them?"

"Yeah," the sheriff muttered. "Only— we might be a little short-handed when we were comin' out again. If we leave this barricade they've got the drop on us—fair an' square. Be careful, there!" he added sharply to a man at his side, who had raised himself and been greeted by a warning blast of rifle-fire. "No use takin' unnecessary chances."

Even as he spoke, and while he was still deliberating upon the situation, there was a commotion farther along the street, and as he turned his head he saw a girl running frantically towards the barricade.

"Hold fire!" he shouted, as he recognised her. "Here's Sally Warren!"

With old Colonel Butterfield pounding along on her heels in a vain endeavour to overtake and stop her, Sally sped into the danger zone. The shooting on both sides ceased at once, and Sally reached the sheriff unharmed.

"Sally," Anderson gasped, "you might have got hurt! You can't take risks like that!"

"Oh, sheriff," the girl gasped, "can't you do something to stop the fight?"

There was an expression of wild appeal in her eyes, and Anderson looked at her sternly.

"There's no other way," he told her. "We could never get them to come out of their own accord. The whole thing is your fault, Sally. The warden tells me that you called at the gaol, and must have slipped those guns to them, and I'm telling you the law would have been mighty severe with you if they'd got away."

"But I know they're innocent," Sally cried frantically. "I just know it!"

The sheriff pursed his lips.

"I guess you must care a lot for one of them," he said shrewdly, and, with the tears streaming down her cheeks, Sally answered him in a fervent tone.

"I love him!" she confessed.

Colonel Butterfield came up. He was breathless from his exertions, but managed to find his voice as he dropped on one knee beside the sheriff and Sally.

"I don't know what it is," he faltered, "but something tells me this October 24th, 1921.

is all wrong—something inside of me. I—"

"Ho, there, sheriff! When are you going to go inside? How long we skulk here and let them hold us off, huh?"

It was the voice of Nikkos that had interrupted Colonel Butterfield, and the sheriff looked round to see the Mexican crouching at the far end of the barricade with Bud Warren. Before Anderson could make any rejoinder, however, old Butterfield spoke again.

"Let me talk to them, sheriff," he appealed. "It may save a lot of lives."

"All right," Anderson muttered. "Go ahead."

The colonel lifted his head to the top of the barricade and called out loudly.

"Can you hear me, Steve?" he demanded, and then, as a faint answer reached his ears: "Give yourselves up, you and Boston," he advised. "They're comin' in after you."

"And we're comin' in a shootin'," the sheriff added warningly.

"When you come," was the steady reply, "put Nikkos out in front!"

Nikkos caught the words, and with a snarl he raised himself to fire a challenging shot through the barricade. But even as he was in the act of drawing trigger he saw Bud Warren start to move from his side, and he swung around.

"Where are you going, Bud?" he hissed.

Bud threw an answer over his shoulder, an answer that was querulous and evasive, for the pangs of conscience were harrying his weak temperament and urging him to make a clean breast of everything ere two innocent men suffered for his own follies and the villainy of Nikkos.

"I'm goin' to my sister," he blurted.

A look of mistrust crossed the Mexican's face, and with all eyes fastened on the store he levelled his

gun at Bud Warren's back. In the same instant that Steve and Boston fired at the crown of the greaser's sombrero, which had become visible to them, Nikkos shot his unwilling accomplice between the shoulder-blades.

Bud fell with an agonised sob, and there was an immediate outcry.

"Kendall and Boston have got Bud Warren!" someone shrieked.

Point-Blank Range.

SALLY and Colonel Butterfield were the first to reach the stricken youngster, and in a moment the girl was pillowing her brother's head in her lap.

"Bud!" she cried. "Bud!" But he lay motionless, betraying no sign of life, and a moan escaped her.

"They've killed him," she said distractedly. "Killed him!"

Sheriff Anderson tightened his grip on the butt of his gun. He had been contemplating action for some minutes past, and the shedding of blood resolved him.

"That settles it!" he called to the men about him. "We're going in!"

His voice carried to the two inside the store, and they rose from behind the counter determinedly.

"We've been able to hold them off so far without pluggin' anyone, Boston," Steve said, "but this looks like a show-down."

Boston did not answer, but he followed Steve's example as the latter laid aside his Winchester and replaced it by his six-gun.

"Hold on," Steve exclaimed all at once. "We've got a slim chance yet. If we plant ourselves one on each side of the front door we might slip out when they break in, and if we can grab our horses we might win clear."

"We'll try it," Boston agreed, and then, with a slight break in his voice: "If I don't make it, Steve—good luck!"

He held out his hand to the cowboy—for the first time in a gesture of friendship.

"We're making it together, Boston," Steve told him, and a moment later they had taken up their positions.

The sheriff and his party had risen to their feet, and, pushing aside the barricade, they advanced boldly on the store, covering the last few paces in a rush that brought them to the veranda.

Nikkos did not include himself in that rush, knowing that if he did so Steve and Boston were liable to make certain of him before they were seized. He skulked behind the barricade and watched the attackers hurl themselves against the door, and not till that door had been burst from lock and hinges did he move out into the open.

With the door falling before their onslaught, the sheriff and his followers swarmed into the premises in a body. Six-guns in their fists, they stampeded through the store, peering into the darkness as they blundered in the direction of the counter.

"Come on out," Anderson was shouting. "Wherever you're hiding we've got you now."

At that very instant Steve and Boston slid out through the doorway unobserved—unobserved, at least, by those who were seeking them at the shop.

Just beyond the threshold they came face to face with Nikkos—Nikkos

(Continued on page 25.)

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"RIED FORK Range"



Black Bard.

OVER the trail in a smother of dust dashed the Farrell stage, plying 'twixt Hangtown and Placerville in the gold-bearing frontier territory of Upper California.

Wally Hamilton, driver, was laying on the whip. His motive was not to break the record for the trip, but to save the shipment of precious yellow dust that the coach was carrying. For a hundred yards behind him a band of armed men were riding at full gallop, and the drumming of their horses' hoofs was punctuated with the smashing uproar of their six-guns.

The dust that rolled in dense clouds from under the carriage wheels formed a protective screen for Wally Hamilton. Bullets zipped through that haze, but they were fired at random, and though one ripped a hole in the sleeve of his buckskin tunic, he was still unharmed when another troop of horsemen appeared on the rim of a bluff to the right of the trail.

They were dressed in the dark-blue uniform of the U.S. cavalry, that body of well-drilled men who helped the town marshals of the frontier States to maintain order in the roughneck settlements, and at the same time kept a wary eye on the turbulent Redskin tribes. For in that year of '43 the West was a melting-pot of human passions and racial antagonism—lust of riches branding men's souls with evil, and the hatred of Indian for Paleface burning high.

Wally recognised the soldiery on the bluff as a detachment of dragoons from Hangtown, his destination, and

he had no difficulty in placing the non-commissioned officer in command of them as a sturdy Irish sergeant known as O'Flaherty.

A slow-thinking man was O'Flaherty, with a mind hedged in by the rules and regulations of the Service. But there were occasions when he proved himself a man of action, and the present situation was one of them. At a glance he took in the scene on the prairie below him, and with a stentorian shout he led his troopers down the steep slope of the bluff and charged Wally Hamilton's pursuers.

The gunmen wavered before the impending onslaught of the bluecoats, then swerved with the intention of showing them their heels. But the suddenness of the troopers' appearance had left them with but a slender chance of making their escape, and before their pones were fairly in their stride O'Flaherty and his comrades had come up with them.

Two of the rogues had gained a start on account of having been hindmost in the pursuit of the coach. These two alone effected their getaway, the other three being quickly surrounded by the soldiery.

"Halt, ye spalpeens!" O'Flaherty rapped out threateningly, flourishing a revolver as he uttered the command. "Halt there, or we'll riddle yez wid bullets."

The ruffians obeyed him, and were dragged from the saddle by O'Flaherty's troopers. Meanwhile, Wally Hamilton had drawn his team to a standstill, and was returning on foot to the spot where the crooks had been overtaken.

He singled out one of the scoundrels, a big, scowling individual with a week's growth of stubble on his jowl. "Black Bard, huh?" he jerked, gripping the bandit by the lapels of his jacket. "Well, I reckon the marshal will be powerful glad to make your acquaintance. I understand he's been aimin' to offer you his hospitality for a long time—behind the bars."

O'Flaherty spoke:

"Did I hear yez say this was Black Bard, Wally?" he demanded. "The scoundril that's been murtherin' av innocent folk and stealin' av their money for the last twelvemonth?"

"The same, sergeant!" Wally answered. "And I advise you to keep a close watch on him. He's about as bad a hombre as you could find between here an' Las Vegas, which is sayin' a whole lot. An' he has a habit of breakin' loose from captivity."

"Begorra, he'll not break loose this toime," the Irishman declared. "McDermid"—to one of the troopers—"take him up wid yez on yer saddle. And two more of yez attend to thim other rascals."

Three or four soldiers who had spurred after the other two members of the gang rejoined O'Flaherty's party a few minutes later, and tendered the information that the fugitives had given them the slip among the hills. O'Flaherty was well satisfied with the capture that had been made, however, and he and his troopers followed up the stage-coach with their prisoners as Wally Hamilton drovo on.

The cavalcade reached Hangtown within an hour, and before Black Bard and his accomplices had been handed over to the town marshal the news of their seizure had spread through the settlement.

By the time they had been lodged in gaol, Hangtown was preparing to live up to its name, a body of the more prominent citizens marching upon the marshal's quarters with the intention of demanding summary justice.

They found a couple of soldiers guarding the door leading to the marshal's office and the cells, and one of their number, who took it upon himself to act as spokesman, demanded an audience with the representative of the law. The latter appeared on the threshold a moment afterwards, in company with Wally Hamilton.

The mob's spokesman addressed the marshal.

"Black Bard has terrorised the country from here to Placerville," he declared, "an' there's some of us here that hev' lost friends and kin at the hands o' him and his cutthroat gang. So naturally we don't aim to leave nothing to chance with the coyote, and

we've brung a rope. I reckon you take my meanin', marshal?"

The officer of the law stroked his chin.

"Listen," he said, "Black Bard is all you claim, and I'm not the man to wish him well. But it's for the law and not for us to judge him, and it's for the law to decide on his punishment. At the same time I reckon I can promise you that punishment will be—the death penalty."

"The law is mighty long-winded, though," argued the crowd's spokesman. The marshal shrugged.

"That may be so," he admitted. "But the law is gonna be the bulwark o' this State, and for the sake of every honest man in California it's gotta be upheld. Can't you see that, folks? Supposin' you take justice into your own hands and ignore the proper course o' true justice—what hold is justice gonna have in the West? If well-meanin' citizens defy its principles, how are the seum to be kept under?"

It was plain that the marshal's shrewdly chosen words impressed the mob, and even the hot-headed spokesman saw the wisdom of them. He turned to the crowd and addressed it in a changed tone.

"I guess there's somethin' in what the marshal says," he observed. "An' I'm inclined to think, after all, that it's up to us to let the law take its course in the normal way. C'mon, folks, let's get back to our homes an' mind our own business."

Ho might have been less willing to leave Black Bard and his accomplices to the marshal's care had it been possible for him to overhear a conversation that was in progress in a wooden building across the street—the premises of the Frontier Express Company.

The Getaway.

WHIP RODEN had received callers—secret callers who had stolen in by the back door under cover of the night. They were the two ruffians who had been concerned with Black Bard and his fellow prisoners in the attempted hold-up of the Farrell stage, and who had been lucky enough to make their escape from the troopers.

Whip Roden was proprietor of the Frontier Express Company, running a coach in opposition to the Golden West outfit, owned by Charles Farrell, Wally Hamilton's employer. He was a powerfully-built individual of medium height, with a pair of shifty eyes and a streak of villainy equal to that of Black Bard himself, whom he found useful.

"We came here, Roden," said one of the fugitive gangsters, a bearded scoundrel known as Fresno, "because we figured it 'ud be in yore interests to git Bard outa that gaol."

"You figured right," was Roden's answer, "and I've thought up a hunch already. One of my men has got O'Flaherty out of the way by invitin' him into the saloon for a drink, and the only men left at the gaol are the two soldiers and the marshal. Now, listen—you wait here till Black and the others show up—see? I'll join you all after the town's cooled off. An' don't forget to tell Bard to lie low here an' keep away from the doors, for there's gonna be a rukus when the settlement finds out he's bust free."

"Ef he does bust free," Fresno said doubtfully.

"Aw, it's a cinch," Roden declared, and, opening his coat a little, showed

October 24th, 1931.

Fresno the handles of three six-shooters.

Roden left his quarters a few minutes afterwards and crossed the street to the town marshal's office. The two sentries at the door challenged him, but the marshal happened to be standing on the threshold with old Charles Farrell, and greeted Roden genially.

"Howdy, marshal," Whip Roden returned, and then, to the owner of the Golden West outfit: "Well, Farrell," he said, "I suppose you're lookin' after them relay horses o' yours, an' gettin' them all set for the Hangtown-Placerville run."

He referred to an approaching event that had been organised by the U.S. Government, who were opening up a regular mail service through the frontier territories, and had offered the Hangtown-Placerville contract to the outfit which could cover the distance between the two townships in the shortest space of time. That contract was of considerable value to any private enterprise such as the pair that were involved, and in this case success for the one must mean ruin for the other. Hence there was a spirit of keen rivalry between Roden and Farrell.

"I certainly am keeping those ponies in train, Roden," observed Farrell, "for a whole lot depends on the race."

Roden's smile was almost a sneer. "Yeah, a whole lot," he agreed. "In fact, when that race has been run one of us will be outa business—an' I don't intend that it should be me."

Farrell shrugged, and then, nodding to the marshal, made his way along the street to a building that constituted his home as well as the premises of the Golden West concern. When he had gone Roden turned to the officer of the law.

"Say, marshal," he drawled, "is that right you've got Black Bard and two of his men in the cell back of your office?"

"It is," was the rejoinder. "Sergeant O'Flaherty was out with a troop of the Dragoons late this afternoon and caught 'em red-handed tryin' to hold up Farrell's coach."

"Then I reckon the community's indebted to O'Flaherty," said Roden. "Wonder if I could take a peek at those coyotes, marshal? Black Bard is a hombre I've heard a lot about but never seen."

"Well, this office ain't exactly a peep-show," the marshal told him, "but seein' you're a personal friend o' mine, Whip, I guess it'll be all right for you to step inside."

Roden followed him into the office and across to the iron gate of the cell in which Black Bard and his gangsters had been lodged. The faces of the three rogues lit up as they saw Roden, but by the time he reached the bars their expression betrayed nothing of their thoughts.

"There they are, Whip," the town marshal said. "Make a pretty picture, don't they?"

"They'll look better swingin' from a gallows," Roden announced, and then, after studying the prisoners for a moment in feigned contempt: "Oh, unmarshal," he said, "what I actually dropped in to see you about was that race the government has organised between my outfit and Farrell's. I ain't altogether clear on the terms, an' I'd like to have another look at that paper they sent you."

The marshal nodded.

"Sure," he answered. "I've got it in the desk somewhere."

He moved over to a roll-top at the far side of the room, and, with his back to the ecell, began to search for the document in question.

With the marshal's attention thus diverted, Whip Roden stepped close to the bars and pulled aside the lapel of his coat to reveal the hidden "artillery" he was carrying. On the instant three griny hands reached forth and relieved him of the six-guns. "Wait till I'm outa the way," Roden whispered, and, drawing back, joined the marshal at the desk.

"Here we are," said the officer all at once, producing a paper from a drawer.

The terms of the race were already clear in Roden's mind, but he affected to read them again.

"Thanks, marshal," he drawled at length, handing back the document. "I reckon that's pretty straightforward. Well, I'll be driftin'. So-long." And he strolled out of the office and walked across the street to his own quarters.

Ten minutes later Black Bard pushed the muzzle of a forty-five through the bars of the cell door. The marshal had dropped into the chair before his desk, and was occupied in the writing of a report on the capture of O'Flaherty and his troopers had made. He had never an inkling of his danger until the weapon in Black Bard's hand blazed flame and lead with a smashing report.

The marshal jerked to his feet with a sharp cry of agony, spun around, reached for his hip, but pitched to the floor ere his fingers could close on the butt of his Colt. In the same instant the lock of the cell door was shot to pieces by one of Black Bard's companions, a notorious ruffian with Indian blood in his veins answering to the name of Apache Joe.

The crooks stumbled out of their prison and heard an outcry in the street. Next moment the two sentries appeared on the threshold of the marshal's office, their rifles in their hands. But Black Bard and his satellites had the drop on them, and their guns crashed at point-blank range.

The troopers dropped to the ground, and, running from the office, Black Bard and his men jumped their prone forms. Fifty yards to the right they saw a mob of citizens pouring out of the saloon, with Sergeant O'Flaherty at their head. The crooks' forty-fives stabbed the gloom with blasts of flame, and there was a yell of mingled rage and alarm as two of the crowd bit the dust.

Half-a-dozen revolvers answered the bandits' fusillade, but Black Bard and his men had dived into the shadows, and, the darkness swallowing them, they made a rapid detour and won their way to the back door of Whip Roden's premises.

In the meantime, while Hangtown's streets and environs were being scoured, three or four men dashed into the marshal's office. Wally Hamilton and old Charles Farrell were among these latter, and they waited anxiously while a doctor made a cursory examination of the escaped gangster's victims.

The two soldiers were dead, but the medical man announced that the marshal had a strong chance of living. This last piece of intelligence came as a relief to Wally and Farrell, but nevertheless it was in a gloomy silence that they eventually made their way into the street again.

Farrell was the first to break that silence.

"Wally," he said, "with Black Bard on the rampage again I'm glad my daughter is travelling West with the wagon-train that's due in to-morrow. I wouldn't feel any too easy if she was comin' by coach."

Wally came to a halt.

"I've been thinkin' of Ruth, too, Mr. Farrell," he stated. "I reckon you know what she means to me, and I sure would like to ride out a-ways and meet them prairie schooners. It's three months since she left to visit those relations in the East, and three months is a long time for a fellow to be without someone he's fond of. If I hit the trail to-night I could meet the wagon-train about sun-up, in the Injun country."

"Go to it, boy," said Farrell. "But watch out you don't run into Black Bard," he added solemnly.

The Indian Country.

BEHIND shuttered windows and bolted doors Whip Roden held consultation with Black Bard and the latter's gangsters.

"Bard," he was saying, "Farrell has gotta withdraw from that race for the Government contract and leave the field clear for me. And you can help me to make him withdraw."

"How?" the bandit leader demanded.

"Through Barking Fox, head-chief of the Arapahoes," was the answer. "Listen, Bard, you're pretty thick with that crafty old Redskin, and with a little persuasion an' some bribery I reckon he'd be willin' to let loose his bottled-up hatred o' white men and attack the wagon-train that's due here to-morrow."

"The wagon-train?" Black Bard echoed in bewilderment. "Whaddya want Barkin' Fox an' his braves to cut up a lotta immigrants for?"

Whip Roden smiled a sinister smile.

"Ruth Farrell is travellin' with that train," he said softly. "I want her—alive. I want her brought here, Bard, so I can hold her as a hostage—until such a time as her father agrees to back out of the race."

The renegade outlaws left Roden's premises shortly afterwards, and, climbing the saddles of a bunch of brones tethered in a near-by copse, filed quietly into the black darkness of the night.

They followed the Death Valley trail for a spell, but ere they came to that tragic graveyard of wagon-trains they struck off at the Tonopah Fork and pushed into the Arapaho hunting

grounds of the Indian country. Three hours after leaving Hangtown they were in sight of the fires of the Redskin village that was their destination.

Apache Joe acted as interpreter, his knowledge of Indian dialects and customs standing him in good stead, and over a calumet filled with k'nick-k'neck tobacco the renegades put Roden's proposal to the Arapaho chief.

The Red Man's greed was patent from the glitter which appeared in his sloodark eyes as generous terms were offered him for the part he and his warriors should play, and he was not long in coming to a decision. The instant that decision was made, the Indian village took on a new and grim aspect, braves and squaws joining in a dance of death and rending the air with shrill, piercing yells, while the war drums throbbed an ominous, deep-toned accompaniment.

The uproar overwhelmed a sound that might otherwise have been detected by the savages. It was the sound of hoofbeats as a horseman, speeding through the night, approached the scene—a horseman who drew rein on the slope of a wooded upland and gaped upon the forms of the demon warriors capering through the lurid firelight.

The horseman was Wally Hamilton, and, dismounting, he scanned the village with steely grey eyes that suddenly picked out the figures of Black Bard and his outlaws.

Leaving his horse, he stole down the hillside, and as the clamour of the braves waned a little he heard the voices of Apache Joe and Barking Fox sealing the bargain that had been made. Then, a moment later, he saw the chieftain rise and beckon Black Bard to accompany him to his lodge.

They disappeared within the tepee, and, knowing that he was hazarding his life in the enterprise, Wally glided through a tract of underbrush and scrambled over the trunk of a felled tree lying at the back of the buffalo-skin tent. He was now within arm's

length of the lodge, and, stooping, he distinguished the voices of Barking Fox and Black Bard.

In the council that had been held a minute or two previously the Redskin chief had spoken only in his own tongue, so that his people might understand what was afoot. But he knew a fair amount of English, and he was employing it now in his conversation with Black Bard.

"And what do Black Bard and his followers want with the white girl Farrell?" he asked the outlaw leader.

Wally started violently at the mention of Ruth Farrell's name and leaned closer to make certain of catching the answer.

"That is our business, O Barking Fox," said Black Bard. "The business of Barking Fox is to attack the wagon-train, slayin' and plunderin' at will. But you're on your oath to let us get clear with the white girl, or—no trade."

Wally was unaware of a figure creeping upon him from behind the big tree-trunk. It was the figure of a solitary Red Man who had discovered him eavesdropping at the chief's tepee, and with silent tread and upraised tomahawk the warrior moved nearer and nearer. It was only when the Indian was climbing over the log that the faint scuffling sound of a mocasin sole on the rough bark warned the young stage-driver of his peril.

Wally whipped round in time to see the Redskin springing at him. The glittering edge of the tomahawk swept down, but the white man caught the falling wrist and with his other hand seized the Indian by the throat, strangling the cry that sprang to the brave's lips.

Red Man and Paleface wrestled fiercely, but the muscular young stage-coach driver was more than a match for the savage. He forced the Indian back and back. The tree-log took the painted warrior behind the calves and tripped him. Both men pitched sprawling over the trunk, but Wally was uppermost

As the youngster's head rose into view he swung up the bludgeon.



and with a desperate effort he wrenched the tomahawk from the brave's grasp and struck hard and true.

The Redskin lay still, and Wally rose to his feet and dived into the underbrush again, working his way through the thickets till he gained the strip of woodland where he had left his pony. He swung himself into the saddle and with a pressure of the knees sent the animal forward at the gallop.

The first grey streaks of daybreak that marked the eastern fringe of a vast sea of prairie found him still riding at the top of his horse's speed—riding to warn the wagon-train of the red hordes that were even now filing through the hills on the war-path.

The Attack.

A VETERAN Scout, in buckskin, crossed the rim of an upland with two or three immigrants at his back, and, drawing rein, turned his gaze upon a herd of buffalo that had gathered towards the south-west on the fringe of a vast salt meadow that had the appearance of a field of snow.

The Scout took a feather and held it before him. By this means he divined that the wind was blowing from the right quarter, and would not carry their "scent" to the animals until they were within forty or fifty rods.

"There's our meat, boys," he said—"enough to stock up the wagon-train through the rest of the Injun country."

And he was on the point of giving the word to advance when one of the other men pointed to the crest of a lofty hill a mile or so in their front.

"Look at that horseman," he exclaimed, "ridin' leather-ter-split."

A figure had topped the crown of the hill, and was coming down the slope at full gallop. It was the figure of Wally Hamilton, and before Wally had reached the group from the wagon-train another form had appeared on the skyline behind him, the form of a feathered Indian brave.

"Indians!" Wally gasped, reining in before the veteran Scout and his companions. "Arapahoes on the war-path! They're headed this way, and mean to launch a dawn attack on your wagons."

Even as he spoke the figure on the ridge was joined by others. They lined the crest, painted, half-nude demons, brandishing war-club, tomahawk, bow, and musket, and the wind carried a faint echo of their hideous yells to the ears of the Paleface watchers.

The veteran Scout pulled his horse round with a tug on the rein.

"Back to the wagon-train!" he jerked, and in a moment the hunting party was streaming over the upland to give the alarm.

They sighted the wagons half a mile away, and Wally was one of the first to reach them. As he threw himself out of the saddle he saw the tall, slender figure of a girl with dark brown hair and hazel eyes, and recognised her instantly.

"Ruth!" he cried, gathering her in his arms.

"Oh, Wally," the girl breathed, "it's good to see you! Somehow I thought you might come out and meet the wagon-train. I—"

Then she stopped, for all around her a dreaded shout was ringing.

"The Indians! The Indians are coming! Bring up those wagons! Bunch those cattle! The Indians!"

There were frenzied preparations for the onslaught, the cumbersome prairie-schooners being drawn up and formed into a corral. Ere the last wagon had been pulled in to place the upland to the west had become alive with swift-riding

October 24th, 1931.

fiends, who filled the air with their terrifying death-howls.

The veteran in buckskin who had scouted the wagon-train across the vastnesses of the prairies watched the Redskin charge from the centre of the corral, and when the Indian masses were still several hundred yards distant he caught Wally by the wrist.

"We're outnumbered," he said grimly. "Every man, woman, and child is doomed unless help can get through to us! Son, will you ride for help?"

Wally's lips tightened into a firm line. He knew that he would stand one chance in a hundred, but it was not on account of the risk that he hesitated. He was thinking of Ruth.

"All right, old-timer," he made answer. "I'll ride if you'll guarantee to guard Ruth with your life!"

"While there's a cartridge in my six-gun and a blow in my fist," was the stern rejoinder, and with a word of farewell to Ruth the young stage-driver sprang into the saddle of his horse and dashed through the wagon-line into the open prairie.

He swerved out of the line of the Redskin attack. A couple of braves detached themselves and made after him at full whip, firing as they rode. Wally slipped one foot clear of its stirrup and slid to the flank of his brone, leg crooked over the animal's back. It was a trick he had learned from the Comanches, finest of Indian horsemen, and it served him well.

Drawing his six-gun from its holster, he craned round and fired over his shoulder. The foremost red man flung up his arms and pitched from his mustang. From the other brave's rifle came a vengeful blast of flame, and a bullet snatched off the young white man's sombrero.

Wally fired again and missed. But his third shot thudded into the bronze chest of the Indian and brought him crashing to the ground.

Wally pulled himself back into the saddle and raced on towards the hills. Yet still Wally was not beyond the gauntlet of red man and renegade wrath, for, fairly in the hills, he almost ran headlong into a small troop of Arapahoes, hurrying eastward to join the main body of their tribe in the assault on the wagons.

He avoided them and struck off into a deep canyon. Three of the band doubled back to pursue him, and bullet and arrow whizzed close to him. He blazed at them in return, and one of the warriors tumbled from his mustang, but the other two pushed after him determinedly.

The Kidnapping of Ruth Farrell.

WITH shrill yell and drumming of hoofs, the Indians flashed past the wagons in an ever-closing circle, even as the snake coils itself around its victim.

Bullets and feathered shafts raked the prairie-schooners, and from behind the wagon-wheels volley after volley answered the Redskin fusillade with snashing uproar.

Inside the wagon-corral, the veteran Scout directed operations, and strove to encourage the immigrants to maintain the unequal battle, knowing that no quarter was to be hoped for. Nor were the defenders lacking in courage. From behind the big prairie-schooners the men fired stoically at the whooping savages, and here and there a woman was to be seen standing shoulder to shoulder with the menfolk, finger curled around a trigger.

Such an one was Ruth Farrell, who evaded the vigilance of the Scout in whose care Wally had left her and picked

up a wounded man's revolver to empty it into the Redskin masses.

Every now and then a defender staggered back from the barricades and collapsed, to stain the prairie grass with his blood, and those who still lived offered up a silent prayer that Wally Hamilton had gained Hangtown, and that the soldiers quartered there would reach the scene of battle in time.

The Redskins drew off, but not with the intention of abandoning the conflict—only to muster their forces and launch a second attack, more determined than the first, an onslaught in which a powerful body of them flung themselves from their mustangs and charged the wagon-line on foot.

Next moment a bitter hand-to-hand struggle was in progress at that part of the wagon-line which had borne the brunt of the rush. Revolvers blazed at point-blank range, and clubbed rifles fell with smashing force on feathered heads. But as a warrior fell another took his place, and ever and anon a tomahawk dripped blood.

It was the opportunity that Black Bard and his villainous associates had waited, and, unmoved by the fate of so many of their own colour, the renegades galloped towards the wagons, dismounted on the heels of the Redskins who had broken into the corral and ducked between the prairie-schooners.

They saw Ruth Farrell, the girl whom they were seeking. She was standing with an empty six-gun in her hand, and the veteran who had scouted the wagon-train was near by, ready to keep his promise to Wally Hamilton and protect Ruth to the last cartridge and the last blow.

Apache Joe stepped towards the Scout and diverted his attention for an instant while another of the gang approached the veteran from the rear. Next second a gun-butt crashed down on the Scout's head, and with a low moan he sank to the ground.

Meanwhile, Black Bard had seized Ruth and forced her through the wagon-line. She struggled frantically, but, swinging her off her feet, he planted her in the saddle of his brone and climbed up behind her. He was joined a moment later by his gangsters, and, without hindrance from their Redskin allies, the renegades dashed on the scene.

The Dash to the Rescue.

WALLY'S pony was already wearied by its long ride through the night, yet for some time it kept its lead, and only when Hangtown was in sight did its steps begin to flag.

With the township in view the two Redskins who had pursued Wally did not turn back, but pressed on boldly, gaining on the young stage-driver till they were within seventy or eighty yards, when one of them brought his musket to his shoulder, took steady aim, and pulled the trigger.

There was a flash of flame and a report, and almost simultaneously Wally carried his hand to his head with a sudden gesture and reeled in the saddle. His brain in a whirl, he was nevertheless conscious of an outcry in front of him, as a number of men on the outskirts of Hangtown raised a yell and opened fire on the youngster's pursuers.

The Indians wheeled and made off, but they were destined to pay dearly for their boldness in approaching so close to the town. A shower of lead zipped around them, and two of the bullets thudded home. The Redskins plunged to the dust, one with a slug in

(Continued on page 27.)

A gallant young man sees a beautiful girl being attacked and goes to the rescue, thus becoming involved in many amazing adventures.

RODNEY STEPS IN



Starring
RICHARD
COOPER
and
ELIZABETH
ALLAN.

The Mysterious Masked Lady.

"SHE'S really a remarkable young woman!" murmured Rodney Perch. "Holding up fellows at the point of a pistol in the heart of London and ransacking safes, leaving the cash intact and slipping away. Soft, cultured voice, probably good-looking—"

"As she wears a mask, why do you assume that she's good-looking?" interrupted Stephen Dalston in tones that betrayed exasperation and impatience.

"I'll bet she's good-looking!" retorted Rodney Perch smilingly. "And something tells me that she's no ordinary crook. She—"

"You've got a touch of romance in your make-up, Perch!" broke in Dalston sneeringly. "You've been soaking up some of the nonsense in the papers. Not a soul has seen the features of the mysterious masked lady, as the fool writers call her. She's just a common crook, and she'll soon be laid by the heels. By gad, I wish she'd try to hold me up!"

A savage gleam came into the eyes of Dalston. He was a large-framed, rather fleshy individual with a heavy jowl. Seated in one corner of the Electric Club, he faced Rodney Perch, debonair, youthful, gay and faultlessly dressed. The two men were physical opposites, their one bond of communion being the fact that Dalston, prominent financier, held in trust the securities which yielded the younger man his more than comfortable income.

"Now what would you do supposing she held you up, Dalston?" inquired Rodney, masking a grin.

"I'd be ready for her," boasted Dalston. "I'm not exactly a fool with a revolver, and—"

"My dear fellow," interrupted Rodney, "by all accounts we've read the mysterious masked lady is a fast worker. You would be looking down the muzzle of a nasty thing that could swiftly terminate your flourishing career. A sharp command to elevate your hands and—"

"Rot!" breathed Dalston heavily. "Do you think that female crook would risk the rope? Not she. She has bluffed these cowards. Quite possibly her weapon isn't even loaded. One would only have to grapple with her and her bluff would be called."

"Possibly, Dalston!" murmured Rodney. "You may be right, but, candidly, I shouldn't care to take the risk myself."

"You—an old Rugby International!" cried Dalston scornfully. "Do you mean to tell me that you—"

"Up would go my paws," said Rodney. "It's perfectly true, Dalston, that I was fairly useful at football, but this dame isn't playing football. I don't think I'm a coward, but life is pleasant, although a trifle monotonous at times. I wouldn't risk losing the chance of watching the Yorkshire versus Kent match. That match may decide the Championship."

"I'm not interested in football!" rapped out Dalston.

"It happens to be cricket," corrected Rodney gently.

"Fool games, both of 'em!" snapped Dalston. He rose from his chair.

"Afraid you'll have to excuse me, Perch," he continued. "I've got rather a lot to do—"

"And I must pop off and dress," babbled Rodney. "I'm dining somewhere or other. Well, so long, Dalston. See that the masked lady doesn't pinch my boodle. Working for a living at my

time of life would be very trying—particularly to the poor devil who employed

me. The fair bandit—" "She'll be behind the bars soon," snorted Dalston. "And if I've got anything to do with it she'll be serving a stiff term."

"Can't say I agree with you, Dalston," drawled Rodney as he sauntered to the door. "The mysterious masked lady is giving us all a thrill. And we're badly in want of thrills nowadays. I wish one would come my way. But nothing ever happens to me—"

When the door had closed on Rodney, Stephen Dalston, a scowl on his heavy features, sank back into his chair again. He picked up an evening paper which lay on the table, gazed at the screaming headlines, then, suddenly, tossed it impatiently aside.

For a while he remained plunged in thought. They were not pleasant thoughts. Stephen Dalston, the rich and influential financier, the man whose monied interests covered so many enterprises, was facing a crisis. Things had gone wrong recently. The anticipated "boom" had developed into a slump. Some clever juggling would be necessary to preserve his precious credit.

Dalston felt quite equal to this. He had the utmost confidence in his abilities. It was a comparative trifle that was worrying him. The mysterious masked lady had made her raids on the offices of the various enterprises in which he held a controlling interest. Such a thing could not be pure coincidence. At first he had leaned to this hope, but now he could no longer deceive himself.

This woman knew—what was hidden from all but a select few. She knew his financial secrets. How? It was this constantly-repeated query which furrowed Dalston's brow. The daring raids had followed in swift succession. The safes had been rifled and the contents left intact. It seemed as though some qucer practical joker was at work.

The police were mystified. Stephen Dalston had poured the vials of his contempt upon them, and upon the cowardly fools who had been scared into doing the woman's bidding. All useless. The woman was still at large, the police as mystified as ever.

Stephen Dalston sat in his chair, October 24th, 1931.

thinking hard. Occasionally some club-man entered the room, but Dalston paid no heed to conversational gambits. His frown turned the gossips away. A plan was hatching in his agile mind. He rose and hurriedly left the club. He had formed his resolution. He would dine outside, free from the talk of garrulous bores, and—test the "hunch" that had come to him.

Darkness was falling when Dalston entered the ground floor of some unpretentious offices in one of the by streets off the Strand. Here was harboured another of his many enterprises, and one of the most secret.

Here he could make the test. A quiet street even in the day-time it was, at night, completely deserted. Rarely indeed did a passing wayfarer venture along the ill-lighted and uninviting thoroughfare. There was no caretaker on the premises. The somewhat gloomy building was divided into small offices. Dalston's enterprise was housed on the ground floor, the best offices the ancient house could boast of.

In the back office Dalston switched on the light, unlocked the roll-topped desk and let his gaze rest on the safe that stood in the far corner. He smiled sardonically. Then he whipped a bunch of keys from his pocket. With one of these he opened a bottom drawer in the desk, extracting therefrom a wicked-looking automatic pistol. He slipped the weapon into his pocket.

"Self-defence," he muttered. "That can't be argued away. If I have the chance—"

The words halted on his lips. Stephen Dalston at that moment, wore an expression which would have startled some of his club fellows. He was not regarded as a genial man, but had they seen him just now—

Impatiently he gripped the 'phone. A swift turn of the dial. A few seconds later Dalston was speaking incisively.

"Is that Scotland Yard? Then listen carefully, please. This call comes from No. 11, Well Street, Charing Cross. Ground floor of a block of offices. The mysterious masked bandit may pay this place a visit. Of course she may not. I'm acting upon something more than surmise. You can check the genuineness of this by ringing me back—Gerrard 4035. Yes, I am alone, but I'm taking no chances. My name is Dalston—it's a well-known name in the City. Right."

He replaced the receiver, an unpleasant grin on his full lips. In less than a minute the 'phone tringed and Dalston listened.

"Thanks," he said finally. "Maybe I'm troubling you for nothing. Yes, we'll talk later."

He replaced the receiver, the evil grin still on his lips. Then a soft sound caught his ear. He swung around in his swivel-chair, a gasp from his throat.

"Hand me the weapon in your pocket, Dalston. And hand it quickly. Believe me that nothing would give me greater satisfaction than to put a bullet in your brain. If you value your life act quickly."

He confronted a slim, girlish figure. Through the aperture in her mask came the words of command in tones cultured, feminine, but vibrant with icy determination. Her slender fingers grasped a small, silver-plated automatic, and the barrel was unshakingly directed at Dalston's head.

For a moment the financier gaped at this apparition as though doubting the evidence of his eyesight. Slowly his hand travelled to his pocket.

"You will hand me that revolver

with the muzzle pointed your way," said the masked intruder.

Impotent fury surged through Dalston's being. This girl was holding him up as she had held up the others. He writhed in bitter humiliation at the thought. Yet the savage satisfaction came to him that his "hunch" was right; the police were on their way. If only he could delay her a little.

She took the revolver from his unwilling hand and tossed it expertly into a far corner of the room.

"Now, please open that safe," she whispered tensely.

"I'll be hanged if I will!" burst forth Dalston, half-starting from his chair, his eyes blazing.

"You'll be shot if you don't!" retorted the masked intruder. "Let's understand one another, Dalston. You have 'phoned for the police. I am, therefore, in a hurry. You have pulled out a revolver on me. It lies in this room as evidence. If I shoot you, I think I stand a chance of getting off. Perhaps you understand? Open the safe, Stephen Dalston, and open it quickly."

The tones of her voice sent a chill down his spine. He was no coward, but suddenly it was borne upon him that discretion was the better part of courage.

He fumbled for the bunch of keys, drops of perspiration standing on his brow.

"Quickly," she urged, menace in her tones. "I've warned you, Dalston."

A moment later he was hastening to obey her command. A purple flush dyed his cheeks. Sudden, savage joy sang in his heart. This female crook, this mysterious masked intruder, was a blessing in disguise. Let her rob the safe. Let her get away with its paltry contents.

For an idea had been suddenly born in Dalston's brain, an idea that meant to him a new lease of life and fortune.

Rodney Steps Into It.

WHEN Rodney Perch left the club, he made his way to the luxurious flat he occupied in the region of Knightsbridge, and, a moment later, was conferring with Tapper, his most efficient man servant.

"Any messages, Tapper?" queried Rodney.

"Captain Eekersley 'phoned to ask if you would play bridge to-night," replied Tapper. "He said—"

"You can 'phone him when I've gone and say that I'm engaged," interrupted Rodney. "I'm not in the humour for bridge, Tapper. I want something more exciting. I suppose you can't make a suggestion, Tapper?"

"Not at the moment, sir," answered the faithful servitor deferentially. "I'll think it over, sir. Perhaps something may occur to me."

"I'll prow! about and look for a spot of excitement," declared Rodney, half gloomily. "Things must be happening somewhere. Take the case of this mysterious masked lady, holding up cashiers in the heart of London."

"I've been reading about her, sir," murmured Tapper. "I should say that she's dotty. Robs safes and leaves the loot behind. No sense in that, sir. The police will soon nab her."

"So friend Dalston says," muttered Rodney. "We were talking about her this afternoon. He declares that she would never hold him up. And he was disgusted with me when I told him that I shouldn't argue with a lady holding a pistol to my head."

"And you're right, sir," affirmed Tapper. "You never know what a woman will do with a pistol. She might even aim straight. Better be on the safe side—no pun intended, sir. By the way, may I ask where you intend to promenade for this spot of excitement?"

There was a note of anxiety in Tapper's tones. It was not dictated by the fact that he had a very comfortable job and good wages. Tapper liked his young master.

"I'm not quite sure, Tapper," smiled Rodney. "I shall take a walk near the Thames and cruise round some of the dark, narrow streets."

"Would you think it a liberty if I came along with you?" murmured Tapper. "I'd hang behind, sir, only there if wanted, so to speak."

"I appreciate the suggestion, Tapper," replied his employe, friendliness and gratitude shining from his attractive grey eyes. "But I'm going alone—with my trusty stick. I fear, Tapper, that I shall spend a very dull evening. Nothing ever happens to me."

Rodney walked to his bedroom. He stripped and contemplated his excellent muscles in the long mirror.

"No use for muscles nowadays," he sighed. "I suppose I could make a fairly useful boxer, but I'd be too lazy to train properly. Pity I wasn't made to work for a living."

There was truth in this, more truth than Rodney suspected. The more than comfortable fortune inherited from a wealthy father, plus a streak of indolence, had deprived the world of a likely champion. For Rodney was more than useful at boxing; he had the makings of a great exponent of the noble art.

He dressed in leisurely fashion. Evening clothes were a ritual with him, and it was something to do. He reflected that, if the excitement failed to materialise, as was most likely, he could drop into the Cosmos Club for a dance or two.

It was a warm, pleasant evening. A taxi took him to the Embankment, and he strolled along the side of the Thames. He had lunched rather well that day, and felt that he could wait till late in the evening for another meal. The walk, anyway, would give him an appetite.

The shades of night began to gather. Rodney paused to light a cigarette. A somewhat tough-looking fellow, in company with another, flung a jeering remark at the "toff."

With a glow at his heart Rodney tossed aside the cigarette. Here, at last, was a spot of excitement. In another moment he was confronting the jeering tough.

"I shall have to teach you manners," he said briskly. "There'll be no charge, and your pal can join in if he feels like it."

The tough took a look at Rodney. Quite possibly he was a judge of what might be concealed under faultlessly cut evening clothes. At all events, he grabbed his inhandsome pal by the arm and growled:

"Garn, gov'nor. Can't you take a joke?"

A second afterwards Rodney was alone once more. He took his gold case from his pocket, extracted another cigarette, and sighed:

"Now that did look promising. But no luck again. Nothing ever happens to me."

Rodney took a seat, smoked his cigarette, and contemplated the great river that serves the world's mightiest city. That grey river held the key to

a thousand mysteries. Many a fight to the death had been battled on its murky bosom; many a tragedy enacted. But now it looked as peaceful as a parish pump in the fast gathering darkness.

Rodney sighed again. He was suddenly conscious of a twitch of returning appetite. He would seek some restaurant off the beaten track.

He rose and walked on aimlessly. He left the Embankment and, ultimately, found himself in a netway of narrow streets leading northwards from the river. It was unfamiliar territory to Rodney. He looked around for someone to direct him, but the street in which he stood contained apparently no living soul but himself.

Then suddenly a gasping, half-exulting cry came from his astonished lips. The feeble glimmer of a gas-lamp revealed a man clutching fiercely at the arm of a girl. The two figures stood at the bottom of some stone steps that led to the front door of one of the old buildings.

"A bag-snatcher!" cried Rodney. He gripped his stick and rushed forward. A moment later that very effective weapon had come into violent contact with the bag-snatcher's cranium.

A Wild Ride.

THANK you! You have saved me." The words came gaspingly from the girl's lips. Rodney Perch, startled, a little breathless, gazed at her, noted that she was a most attractive girl, then looked at the prostrate figure at his feet.

"I say, I hope I haven't hurt this fellow too much," he babbled, suddenly and ruefully conscious of the strength of his arm—and the quality of his weapon.

"Come away—come away, quickly," was the girl's response. Her voice was sweet but imperious. She gripped her rescuer by the arm, and a moment later Rodney Perch, dazed, was flying with her up the dark street.

"I say," he gasped. "What—" "There's a taxi," she flung at him tensely. Her slender finger pointed to the vehicle slowly emerging from a side-turning. "Tell the man to drive to Gordon Mansions, Queen's Gate. Hurry. You—we are in danger."

Rodney needed no further bidding. His heart was filled with mingled joy and apprehension. He rushed to obey her command. And the young Cockney taxi-driver, peacefully smoking a cigarette, let it fall from his lips as he confronted the immaculate figure of Rodney, and saw, a second later, the slender figure of his woman companion.

"Gordon Mansions, Queen's Gate," commanded Rodney. "Step on it."

Bill Mullins, whose dream was to race at Brooklands, needed to hear no more. He "stepped on it" with the gay feeling that, at last, something interesting had come his way—something worth while, with a touch of romance.

Fortune favoured Bill as it is alleged to favour the brave. There was little traffic about. He swept into the Strand like a whirlwind, cut across a bus, missing it by a fraction of an inch, and was blissfully unconscious of the driver's pointed remarks, although they could have been heard by a stone-deaf man on the opposite side of the great London artery.

Inside the taxi Rodney again essayed conversation. But the girl, with a smile that dazzled him, answered:

"Wait till we get to the flat. I—I don't feel like talking just now."

"Of course you don't," replied Rodney contritely. "You've been upset. That bag-snatcher must have

scared you. Fancy the fellow working his game in such a neighbourhood! The rascal. But I hope I haven't hurt him too much."

"What—what did you hit him with?" whispered the girl, a suspicion of a shudder in her tones.

"With this stick," confessed Rodney, holding it forth for her inspection. "It's loaded at one end and—"

"You are very strong," interrupted the girl. She gazed at him with a look which both fascinated and baffled Rodney.

"Ye-e-s, I am," admitted Rodney. "And I felt so angry when I saw that brute—"

"I can't say how much I owe to you," she broke in. "But, please, don't let us discuss that now. We're getting near. Will you give this to the man? He deserves it."

Rodney found himself gripping a pound note. He started to object, but the girl silenced him, imperiously yet charmingly.

When Bill Mullins, having cut all taxi records to ribbons, drew up at Gordon Mansions, he clasped two one-pound notes in his delighted hand.

"You drove wonderfully!" cried Rodney.

Bill could only gasp. He saw the two figures rapidly disappear from his view. He examined the notes closely and was satisfied.

"A couple of real toffs!" he murmured. "I don't care wot they've done—they're toffs! If I could only pick up a few more like 'em!"

Unconscious of the tribute they had received, Rodney and the girl made their way to the second floor of the well-equipped mansions. The girl opened the door, closed it carefully, and led the

wondering Rodney into a luxuriously furnished room.

"First of all, I'll get you a drink," she smiled at him.

"That would be awfully nice of you," murmured Rodney. "If—if it's no trouble."

"Not the slightest," she retorted. "Everything is at hand. Will you please sit down? Oh, by the way, are you in a hurry?"

"Not the least little bit," affirmed Rodney enthusiastically. "I can stay as long as you like to put up with me."

"I'm so glad," she murmured, her eyes full upon him. "I owe you an explanation."

"That's easily explained," returned Rodney gaily. "And don't worry about thanking me again. What I did was a mere nothing."

"Are you used to—to knocking men out?" she asked, a strange look in her dark blue eyes.

"Well, I—I've done it before," answered Rodney, a glow at his heart, the words somehow forced from his lips because—because of that look in her eyes.

"I knew it," she said triumphantly. Her smile dazzled him. "Please sit down. I want a long talk with you. I won't be a minute."

She glided into an adjoining room. Rodney sat down. Alone, he murmured to himself:

"Well, I certainly have struck it at last! By Jove, what a story for Tapper! Wonder if he'll believe it?" Then suddenly a chill feeling doused his exultation. He saw again the prostrate figure of the "bag-snatcher," lying prone and—lifeless.

A bead of sweat gathered on Rodney's brow. He wiped it away with a silk handkerchief extracted from his sleeve.



The feeble glimmer of a gas-jet revealed a man clutching fiercely at the arm of a girl.

"I—I wish I hadn't hit that fellow—so hard," he muttered. "I could have knocked him cold with a dig on the mark. Wish I'd thought of it. I wonder—"

He ceased his self-communings. The girl was back in the room. He rose to his feet and took from her dainty hands the silver tray with its load of thirst-quenching implements.

"My maid is asleep," she said, smiling at him. "I told her not to stay up for me. Please help yourself."

"You Are a Crook!"

RODNEY PERCH, his thirst satisfied—or, at least, appeased—a cigarette between his lips, reclining in a luxuriously comfortable chair, in the presence of one whose fascination enveloped him more and more, forgot those qualms.

Rodney was an easy-going person, and the young woman he had been lucky enough to serve was a girl of undeniable charm. A lady, obviously, well born, well educated. So far she had not told him her name, nor asked his own. Their encounter had been so dramatic, Rodney thrilled at the thought. Her voice, soft and musical, an integral part of her charm, flowed to him.

"Do you think we got away safely?"

"Why, yes," replied Rodney, puzzled. "That taxi fellow drove like—like Kaye Don. But why?"

"The time has come to explain matters," interrupted the girl, that touch of sweet imperiousness in her tones. "There's no reason why we shouldn't put all the cards on the table. I know you—"

"You—you know me!" gasped Rodney.

"I don't know your name," smiled the girl. "Perhaps you have more than one. But I know what you are. It doesn't need much discernment. And I'm so glad."

"You—you are so glad," echoed Rodney, wondering if he would suddenly wake up and find he had been dreaming it all.

"I'm glad, because—because, like you, I am a crook," she murmured softly.

The room seemed to spin around. Rodney clutched at the arms of the chair. His lips opened, but no sound came from them.

"I am the mysterious masked lady," she continued. "Thanks to you. I was saved from capture to-night. Crook helps crook. Our meeting was providential."

"You—you are the safe robber!" gasped Rodney.

"The safe inspector," she corrected. "I'm no ordinary robber. I'm after something—but I can't tell even you that. Not yet."

"That—that fellow I knocked out," whispered Rodney huskily, icy fingers clutching at his heart, "he—he—"

"He was Detective-officer Billings," said the girl. "You see, I was running things very close. A bit too close—but for you."

Rodney rose unsteadily to his feet.

"Do you mind if I take another drink?" he babbled.

"Of course," she smiled. "And as many as you like. To-night has made us partners. We'll stick together, won't we?"

Rodney poured himself out a stiff bracer. He gulped it down and turned to meet the entreaty in her eyes.

"We'll stick together," he repeated, those eyes vanquishing abruptly the objections that rose to his lips.

"We must stick together," she said softly yet imperiously. "You came so gallantly to my rescue. You knocked out that man—"

October 24th, 1931.

"A detective!" gasped Rodney. "And I thought he was a bag-snatcher."

"You meant just to knock him out," continued the girl. "You didn't mean to kill him."

A sound came from Rodney's lips—a curious gurgling sound. Instinctively his hand rose and clutched at his neck, as though the tightness of his collar oppressed him.

"You may be a crook, but you are a brave man," whispered the girl. "Brave and wonderfully strong. I—I've never met a man like you."

"And I—I've never met a girl like you," gasped Rodney, and never had he spoken with greater sincerity.

With an impulsive gesture she placed her hand in his. Her eyes dazzled him.

"You—you know how to open a safe?" she whispered.

"Rather," breathed Rodney. He had never opened a safe in his life; but, under the spell of those eyes, he would have avowed his ability to open the Bank of England.

"I knew it," she murmured. "I want your help. So far I have failed, but failure has taught me where I can gain success. We'll open the next safe together."

Rodney dragged himself from the fascination of those sparkling eyes. He came to earth. He released her hand, which he had been holding in a fervent clasp, and stepped back.

"I—I'm afraid that's impossible," he said huskily. "You see, I—I happen to have a special job—"

"You must put that off," she commanded. "I shall make it worth your while. Whether we fail or succeed I shall pay you—"

"I wouldn't dream of taking money from you," cried Rodney indignantly. "I'm not hard up."

"Do you mean that you have done so well that you don't need money?" she demanded.

"That's it," affirmed Rodney delightedly. "I—I've had a lot of—er—good luck lately. In fact, I was thinking of taking a holiday."

"But you have another job in view," she said quickly. "You said so just now."

"Ye-c-s," murmured Rodney confusedly, "but really that—that was more to help a pal. You see, he—he's rather broke, and—"

"Then my money can go to him!" she cried, triumph flooding her tones. "And you can help me. I want your help. Can't you look upon me as a pal?"

"As more than a pal," replied Rodney, lifted from earth again.

"Then you will help me," she whispered, a faint colour in her cheeks. "I knew you would."

"Rely upon me," said the enraptured Rodney. "If I'm any good—"

"You—you're wonderful," she interrupted him. "With you as a partner I can't fail. Sit down, please. Let's go over the whole thing together. There's no time to be lost. And this is no ordinary safe. It's one of the latest. You know the kind?"

"I know the kind," affirmed Rodney, as he sat close by her side.

"But it will be easy for you," she murmured. "Just child's play. How wonderful that I should meet you!"

"Wonderful!" echoed Rodney, taking her hand again.

"Listen to me, please," she whispered, gently withdrawing her white, slender fingers from his clasp. "I want to give you all the details. I

know you'll understand how important it is to hang these together."

"Don't say 'hang,'" interrupted Rodney, shudderingly, his hand shooting again to his neck.

"To have the details right," she corrected herself. "I'm not very familiar with crook language. You must teach me. You see, I'm only an amateur, after all."

"Heaven help the poor cashiers if ever you became a professional," murmured Rodney.

Her laughter was music.

"You are witty as well as wonderful," she cried, admiration in her eyes. "Promise me to make me laugh when we are on the job to-morrow night."

"To-morrow night!" gasped Rodney. "And to-morrow is Friday. I've never opened a safe on Friday."

"Then you're going to put up a new record," she said merrily. "And let me tell you that Friday is my lucky day."

A Lesson in Safe Opening.

THEN you were disappointed, sir? You found no spot of excitement?"

Tapper gazed on the just awakened figure of his young master. A neighbouring clock had struck the hour of ten.

"No, nothing to speak of, Tapper," replied Rodney, rubbing his eyes. He felt an urge to tell Tapper the amazing story of the previous night, but he restrained the impulse. Even the faithful Tapper might find his loyalty unequal to the task of preserving the dark secret.

"Bad luck, sir," babbled Tapper as he let the morning light into the bedroom. "You must have been pretty near the scene of the crime, too."

"The—the crime!" gasped Rodney. He sat bolt upright.

"This bumping off a detective," chattered Tapper. "The papers are full of it. But you'll read the account for yourself, sir. I won't spoil it."

"No, don't spoil it, Tapper," shuddered Rodney. "What—what sort of a morning is it?"

"Cold and drizzly," responded Tapper. "Nasty change in the weather, sir."

"Nasty change," shivered Rodney.

"Well, a good breakfast will make you forget the weather," retorted the voluble manservant. "Nothing like a good breakfast. They say, sir, that even condemned prisoners feel better for it. They always give 'em just what they fancy. The condemned man ate a hearty breakfast. How often you read that, sir. Well, now I'll be getting your breakfast."

Tapper eclipsed himself, and Rodney got up slowly and almost painfully. He gazed at himself in the mirror, then turned his eyes away.

"Excitement," he muttered. "I asked for it and I've got it. And more to come. Lots more. And yesterday I was moaning about being bored."

His dark thoughts switched suddenly to his new partner, his partner in crime. A glow radiated through him. How wonderful she was! The embodiment of charm, courage, resource. And a crook!

"Well, I'm a crook myself," muttered Rodney. "In fact, I'm worse. I'm a—"

"The bath's all ready, sir," sang the voice of Tapper from behind the door.

Rodney jerked himself into activity. Tapper, with all his deference, was a bit of a tyrant in the matter of prompt arrival at the breakfast-table.

Tapper knew what a breakfast should be. And Rodney, usually, showed full appreciation. But this morning—

A quarter of an hour afterwards Tapper found his master looking fixedly into vacancy.

"Why, you've hardly eaten anything, sir," cried the servitor, a pained look on his plump countenance.

"I—P've got no appetite this morning, Tapper," replied Rodney. "I—I'm not feeling well."

"Sort of strung up, sir," muttered Tapper sympathetically.

"Strung up!" gasped Rodney, clutching at his collar. "Don't say that, Tapper."

"A bit nervy, I mean, sir," explained the manservant apologetically.

"I bet you've been reading about the crime. Now you ought to have left that till after breakfast, sir. I make a point of never readin' the paper till—"

"I haven't read about the crime," interrupted Rodney, half hysterically. "I'm not feeling in the mood. Can't you see the bally paper isn't even opened. Use your eyes, Tapper."

"Quite so, sir," murmured the servitor, shooting a puzzled glance at his master. "Excuse my lack of observation, sir. I wish I could tempt you to eat something, sir. I—"

"I don't want to eat anything," groaned Rodney. "It's a good thing to fast now and then, Tapper. The medical men all recommend it. By the way, Tapper, do you happen to know anything about opening safes?"

"Opening safes?" gurgled Tapper.

"I said opening safes," retorted Rodney. "Supposing you had to open a safe, Tapper. You're a very handy fellow. I—I bet you'd do it somehow."

Tapper glowed at the compliment, not undeserved.

"Opening a safe, sir," he replied, "is a matter of delicate manipulation. You twiddle the dial—"

"Twiddle the dial?" echoed Rodney.

"Twiddle the dial," repeated Tapper, his hands illustrating the movement. "You keep on twiddling until—by the way, sir, I am talking of the modern combination lock safe."

"The combination lock safe?" breathed Rodney. "I wonder if—but go on, Tapper. I suppose you weren't by any chance a safe-breaker before—"

"Certainly not, sir," replied Tapper.

"A pity," murmured Rodney. "You seem to know such a lot—"

"Mere general knowledge, sir," replied Tapper. "But to resume. You twiddle the dial carefully, delicately. You listen carefully until you hear—"

The bell tringed. Rodney leaped to his feet.

"Someone at the door, sir," said Tapper solemnly. "Are you in or out?"

"Out," cried Rodney.

A few moments later Tapper returned, gravity imprinted on his plump features.

"It's Inspector Grimshaw from Scotland Yard, sir," he whispered. "Matter of great urgency, he says. I thought it best to say you were in, sir."

"You're right, Tapper," groaned Rodney. "I'm in right enough. The police are fast workers, Tapper. Don't believe anyone who tells you they're not."

"He's waiting in the library, sir," replied the puzzled Tapper. "Says he won't keep you long."

"I'm afraid he's right, Tapper," moaned Rodney. "Good-bye, Tapper. I shall see that you don't suffer."

Before the startled Tapper could gasp an answer to this amazing remark

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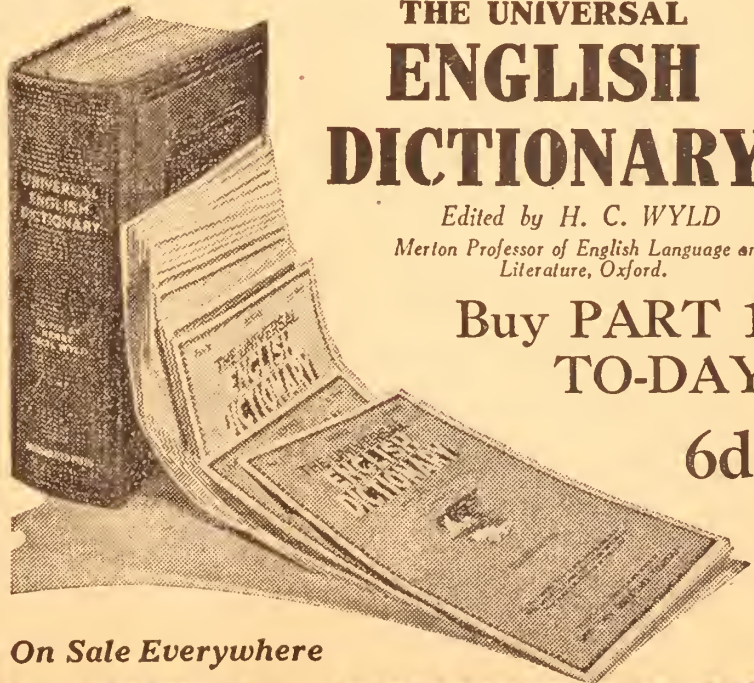
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Rodney slithered from the room. He entered the small library, his hands outstretched, and confronted a stern-faced, heavily built visitor.

"Here I am, inspector," murmured Rodney. "Slip 'em on. I'll go quietly."

Inspector Grimshaw laughed, although his laugh was more like a bark.

"You're good at joking, Mr. Perch," he said, "but I'm afraid you won't feel like joking again when you've heard my news."

"Joke! News!" gasped Rodney. "I'll come straight to the point, Mr. Perch," said the inspector brusquely. "Last night the mysterious masked woman held up Stephen Dalston at the point of a pistol. She forced him to open the safe. She got away with the contents. We were unlucky, Mr. Perch. My colleague, Billings, grabbed her, but she had a confederate near. Billings was knocked out—"

"Murdered!" gasped Rodney. "But, Inspector Grimshaw, I never—"

"Murdered be langed!" interrupted the inspector. "That's the silly yarn that's got in the morning papers. Billings had a nasty crack, but his head is thick. He's all right except—"

The astounded Grimshaw found himself suddenly violently embraced.

"Billings is all right!" shouted Rodney. "Dear old Billings! I can't tell you, inspector, how delighted I am. I'm just crazy—"

"I guess you are crazy, Mr. Perch," yelled the indignant official, violently tearing himself from Rodney's loving clasp. "Do you realise that I've got bad news for you? Listen to me. That girl robbed the safe. And your securities were in that safe, Mr. Perch. The securities Mr. Dalston held in trust for you. Dalston is so prostrate that he has asked me to convey the news to you."

Inspector Grimshaw stepped back, gasping. Rodney Perch was smiling.

"The fellow's an idiot," murmured the inspector to himself. "Or perhaps he doesn't understand."

"I'm afraid this is a very serious business, Mr. Perch," he resumed. "You see, all these securities are very easily negotiated. I mean the robber can soon turn them into cash."

"Don't worry about that, inspector," replied Rodney blithely. "I'll get 'em back."

"You'll get them back!" gasped Grimshaw. "I say, Mr. Perch—"

"I mean that you'll get them back," corrected Rodney hastily. "You and dear old Billings."

"Thanks for the compliment, Mr. Perch," answered the inspector dryly, "but I wouldn't be too hopeful if I were you. We shall do our best. That's the principal reason for my call on you. Dalston suggested that you might—"

Grimshaw broke off, amazement and alarm in his eyes. For Rodney Perch had been suddenly seized by a violent spasm of merriment.

"I—I can't help it, old chap," spluttered Rodney. "It—it's so funny."

"Funny!" yelled the inspector, backing towards the door.

"Dalston," gasped Rodney, "Dalston being held up. I wish I could have seen it. Old Dalston, who bragged that no masked lady would ever—"

The spectacle of the subjugated Dawson, forced to the bidding of the fair "bandit," came so clearly to Rodney's inner vision that he plumped into a chair and rooked in uncontrollable laughter.

Inspector Grimshaw, whose sense of humour at the best of times was barely noticeable, gazed upon Rodney's shaking form frowningly. Then, abruptly, he left the room.

October 24th, 1931.

Inspector Grimshaw at Work.

AT headquarters Grimshaw was in consultation with Billings. The "murdered" detective had made an amazing recovery. He was pale, and under his hat a bandage enwrapped his head. The hospital doctor affirmed that Billings had the thickest skull tabulated in the hospital records.

Grimshaw was annoyed. The newspapers had flung out early editions contradicting the "murder," and, baulked of this sensation, they were poking fun at the Yard.

"Mysterious Masked Lady Baffles the Sleuths Again."

Headlines of this description were splashing the pages. One sarcastic leader writer asked if sufficient use was being made of the women police. And so on.

"So there's no news from that end?" commented Grimshaw.

"Not yet," admitted Billings. "We're still on the job, and—"

"They ought to have found the taxi-driver by now," snapped Grimshaw. "Dalston and Baines saw that cab rushing up the street—"

"But they can't be certain the birds were inside it," objected Billings.

"I'll bet they were," affirmed Grimshaw. "The taxi was speeding like a streak of lightning. Not exactly a normal thing in that quiet neighbourhood, Billings. And Baines is a reliable fellow. We've got to find the driver. Most likely one of the young 'uns. The oldsters would shy at a speed like that. Maybe he's holding back for some reason. Well, we know how to deal with that kind."

"We're not forgetting that," growled Billings. "We've got the dragnet out, and every man on night duty is being put through it. But isn't it likely that the taxi dropped those two birds any old place and—"

"All things are likely," snapped Grimshaw. "Don't waste time, Billings, reciting the obvious. You're having this fellow Perch covered?"

"Parker and Gale are on that," answered Billings. "But what's the idea? The girl pinched Perch's securities. He—"

"He may be just a natural idiot, or he may not," interrupted Grimshaw. "If he's an idiot, then he's about the biggest I've seen yet. When I splashed the news that he'd lost his pile he just laughed."

"Laughed?" gasped Billings.

"Said he'd soon get 'em back," continued Grimshaw. "And a minute or so afterwards he was laughing his head off at what he called the funny picture of Dalston being held up. Just tickled to death."

"Well, he's a cuckoo," growled Billings. "Them young swells with pots of money and not enough brains to come out of the wet—"

"I've met a few young swells in my time, Billings," interrupted Grimshaw. "and some of 'em with no brains you'd notice. But I've never met one till this morning who laughed at being robbed of his pile. I don't think they're made as cuckoo as all that, although I'm willing to live and learn. That's why I got the hunch to have this laughing jackass shadowed."

"And I guess you're right, chief," murmured Billings. There was respect in his tones. He realised that such an idea would never have occurred to him. Grimshaw had the brains, and the fact had been demonstrated more than once. He, Billings, was a bulldog on the trail, but when it came to the think tank—

"I may be right or wrong," was

Grimshaw's rejoinder. "We've got to cover all the points, likely and unlikely. This woman is putting us in the comic section. Holding up one of the chief men in the city. And after he tipped us the office—"

"And that's mighty funny, chief," broke in Billings. "Why should Dalston get the notion that the woman was after him?"

"Because Dalston has got a head-piece," retorted Grimshaw pointedly. "The girl had been holding up cashiers in offices of his various enterprises. Dalston has a finger in a lot of financial pies. The girl drew blank. Dalston surmised that she might try the office in Well Street. And she did—and got away with the loot she'd been after."

"And I had her," groaned Billings.

"But for that guy who cracked me—"

"That was bad luck, Billings," said Grimshaw sympathetically. "No fault of yours. Anyway, you'll know the dame again."

"You bet I'll know her," retorted Billings. "A high-stepper she was and a real good-looker. You'd never think—"

"That's the trouble with women, Billings," murmured his superior. "They look like angels sometimes, and they're worse than a Chicago thug. Remember Silkie Sylvester? Why that woman almost vamped the judge."

"Not sure that she didn't," muttered Billings gruffly. "Anyway, she got off with—"

The tring of the telephone stayed the detective's utterance. Hastily he gripped the receiver, listened, then barked:

"Hold on."

There was excitement in the cold blue eyes of Billings as he passed the receiver to his superior.

"Parker on the wire, chief," he whispered. "He's got news about Perch. Chief, I reckon that hunch of yours—"

With an imperious gesture Grimshaw silenced his subordinate. A moment later he was talking swiftly and earnestly to the "shadow" at the other end of the wire.

The Amateur Cracksmen.

RODNEY PERCH, garbed in a lounge suit, a mask in his pocket reposing alongside a small automatic pistol, sat in the train that, an hour later, was to put him down at Crowborough.

Near that delightfully situated countryside station Rodney was to meet his fair partner in crime. She would be waiting in a car and soon afterwards, under cover of darkness—

Rodney shivered, but the agitation of his athletic frame was not due to physical fear. He was afraid he might bungle the job, despite the fact that he had again most carefully rehearsed the instructions given by the gifted Tapper.

"Last night I knocked out a detective," whispered Rodney to himself, in the solitude of the first-class compartment. "To-night I'm going burbling. And early last evening I was yearning for a spot of excitement."

Rodney exhaled a deep breath. This was only part of all that had happened to him in those crowded hours. He had met the mysterious masked lady—and fallen in love with her.

All too soon the train drew up at Crowborough and Rodney descended—with other passengers. He had his instructions, and he had carefully committed them to memory. Turn to the right on leaving the station. A walk of about four hundred yards would bring him to a narrow road. He was to stroll

(Continued on page 26.)

A fearless young fireman invents a fire-fighting machine, but a fiendish enemy does everything to steal the plans and rob the hero of the girl he worships. A grand serial of breathless suspense and thrilling drama. Starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.

HEROES of the FLAMES



READ THIS FIRST.

While en route with his comrades to the scene of a fire, Bob Darrow, of the San Francisco Brigade, saves the life of a boy who falls in front of one of the monster engines.

Later, he calls on James Madison, head of a chemical company, to whom he puts up an idea for a patent fire-extinguisher. Madison is not interested, and Bob leaves disappointed, after meeting Dan Mitchell, a shady promoter who is befriending Madison for his own ends.

That afternoon Bob rescues June Madison from a fire in her father's office, and learns that the boy he had saved from the wheels of the fire-engine was Madison's son, Jackie.

In gratitude Madison helps Bob to perfect his invention, the Darrow Fire-Bomb. But Dan Mitchell is anxious to sell Madison an extinguisher of his own, and to discredit Bob he sends a hireling to "doctor" the fireman's invention with a deadly explosive.

Madison's faith in the invention remains unshaken. He sends Bob and another fireman, Pat Heeley, to a mountain lodge, where experiments can be resumed. But Mitchell dispatches four of his scoundrelly hirelings to secure Bob's formula.

Bob is made prisoner, and, according to plan, June is also snared. To save Bob she agrees to bring the formula, which is in her father's possession. But a forest fire breaks out, and, eluding her escort, June rides back to the cabin, where Bob has been left alone, securely tied to a post and unable to get free.

Near the cabin June's frightened horse throws her, and in the same instant a blazing tree-trunk falls towards her.

Now Read On.

EPISODE 8.

"BLANK CARTRIDGES."

Through the Blaze.

EVEN as the tree was falling, June rolled aside, and it crashed to the ground only a few feet from her. She struggled up a moment later—to the unutterable relief of Bob, who was staring through the cabin window.

She was bruised and shaken, but limped doggedly towards the log dwelling and pushed her way inside.

"Bob!" she faltered. "Oh, Bob, I thought I might be too late!"

"Get that knife, June!" Bob said, nodding towards a sheathed blade that decorated the wall, and then, as she snatched it and began to sever his bonds: "When I saw your horse fall," he went on, "I thought you were gone. You shouldn't have turned back, dear."

"I had to," she told him, as she cut the last strand. "I couldn't leave you here. But the fire has us hemmed in, Bob. We'll have to travel fast if we're to get out alive!"

They stumbled from the cabin and at once felt the full heat of the deadly blaze in their faces. Flames roared in the forest and crackled through the thickets—fire ran leaping amid the topmost boughs and wrapped themselves around the roof of the dwelling from which man and girl had just emerged. The world seemed an inferno and the heavens a dark, shifting pall. It was true that they were hemmed in, and by a conflagration such as the mountains had never before witnessed.

The pony that had carried June back to the cabin was no longer in sight, for,

panic-stricken, the animal had scrambled to its feet and galloped blindly through the woods. Trusting, therefore, to the speed at which their legs could carry them, Bob and his fair rescuer set off along a narrow track, ugly tongues of flame licking at them as they ran, and burning masses of foliage tumbling all around them.

Meanwhile, in another part of the forest, James Madison and Pat Heeley were pushing on through dense clouds of smoke that were rolling in the direction of the Mountain Hotel, and it was only because the former had a fair idea of his bearings that they ever gained the open.

Arrived at the Mountain Hotel, they dismounted just as Dan Mitchell appeared on the terrace, and, as the latter approached, Madison spoke to him earnestly.

"Oh, Mitchell," he said, "have you seen June around?"

Mitchell frowned. "I'm looking for her myself," he confessed. "I thought she came back to the hotel, but she doesn't appear to be here."

"Came back to the hotel?" Madison echoed in a bewildered tone. "Came back from where, Dan? What do you mean?"

"She insisted on joining in the search for Darrow, and I went with her," Mitchell explained. "We were attacked by a couple of ruffians and they took us to your cabin, where they're holding Darrow—"

Pat Heeley started forward at the mention of Bob's name.

"Darrow?" he exclaimed. "Say—"

"Wait a minute, Pat." It was Madison who interrupted him, and, laying a hand on the Irishman's arm, he faced

Mitchell again. "Tell us just what happened, Dan."

Mitchell proceeded to relate what had occurred.

"Shortly after June left with this gangster," he finished, "I made my escape and hurried back here—only to learn that she hadn't returned."

Madison's face was a ghastly hue. "She may be trapped in that forest fire!" he jerked. "Come on, Pat, we've no time to lose!"

They turned towards their horses, and, remounting, galloped in the direction of the sinister pall of smoke that marked the progress of the blaze. Mitchell watched them out of sight, and was still standing there when a horseman rode up and flung himself to the ground beside the promoter. The horseman was Silk Connolly.

"Well," said Mitchell crisply, "what did you do with the girl? Did Spike pick her up or something?"

"No," Silk answered, "When that fire broke loose she flashed a gun on me and beat it back to the cabin for Darrow."

Mitchell's lip curled. "You're a fine one," he sneered, "to let a girl slip it over on you."

He had hardly spoken when the sound of a car's engine was heard, and a moment later Spike Beldon drove into view with Butch and Merlin.

"Mitchell!" Spike gasped as he brought the car to a standstill in front of the promoter. "We've got to get outa here. At the rate this fire's travellin', it'll beat us to safety."

Mitchell nodded. "You fellows make for the city," he ordered. "I'll follow in my own car. You go with the boys, Silk."

The gangsters drove on without delay, and a minute or two later Dan Mitchell also took the road. About that same time, James Madison and Pat Heeley were riding steadily into the forest blaze and braving the terrors of smoke and flame in a hazardous attempt to locate June and Bob.

Fairly in the heart of the conflagration, they cupped their hands about their lips and shouted the names of the man and the girl whom they were seeking.

"June! Bob! Bob Darrow!" Their cries mingled with the thunder of the forest fire, and for some time their only answer was the echo of their own voices. Then all at once there came a responsive hail in Bob's well-known tones.

Two or three hundred yards away, staggering through the blinding smoke and the scorching flames, with one arm around June's slender form, Bob Darrow had heard those friendly shouts with a sense of tremendous thankfulness.

"June," he said to the girl beside him, "there's help near at hand. Keep up your courage, dear."

He could see that she was near the end of her tether, however, and with a sudden movement he swung her off her feet and carried her in the direction whence the voices of Pat and Madison had seemed to come. A few minutes afterwards he made out their dim figures as they came riding through the smoke, and again he experienced a powerful sensation of relief as he saw that they were on horseback.

Afoot, he and June had stood only the remotest chance of escape, but there was every prospect of eluding the flames once they were in the saddle.

"Thank heavens ye're safe, Bob," Pat Heeley said huskily, as he drew rein. "Come on, me bhoy, I'll take Miss June if ye'll lift her up."

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"You and Mr. Madison are just about in time, Pat, and no more," Bob panted, as he passed the girl up to his comrade. "We were trying to head for the river, but we could never have made it."

With June in Pat's charge, Bob turned to climb astride the horse that Madison was riding, and a moment later both mounts had been spurred into a gallop.

The Armed Guard.

THE forest fire was but a memory, and, quite recovered from her ordeal, June watched Bob Darrow as he stood before a table in a ground-floor room of the Madison home outside San Francisco.

The room had been turned into a temporary laboratory and placed at his disposal, so that he could go ahead with his experiments during the term of special leave that had been granted him by the Fire Department.

June attempted to engage his attention, but he was too engrossed in the technicalities of his work on the scientific fire-extinguisher to notice her efforts to divert him, and at last she felt compelled to make some comment on his neglect of her.

"Do you think it's polite to be so busy when a lady comes to see you?" she inquired.

Bob started and looked round. "Oh, I'm sorry, June," he apologised sheepishly. "But, you know, it wouldn't be fair to your father if I didn't devote every minute to perfecting the Darrow Fire-Bomb. I'm only trying to repay him for his kindness in allowing me to stay here."

"And also for supplying you with a guard to protect you," June added, laughingly. "As if a man like you needed protection. Judging from what I know of you, you're not only capable of taking care of yourself, but of other people as well."

"All the same, June, that guard has kept our unknown enemies away," Bob declared. "There hasn't been a sign of them since he's been on the job. Or perhaps it's because they've heard your father insists on me carrying this artillery," he added smilingly, producing a loaded revolver.

June took the gun and examined it, and she was clutching the formidable weapon in her hands when a man's voice became audible.

Bob and his fair companion turned their heads, and just beyond the open French windows of the room they saw the man whom Madison had engaged as a guard.

"Have a heart, lady," the fellow protested. "You're pointing that gun right at me, and it might go off."

June laughed and handed the revolver back to Bob, who laid it on the table and turned his attention to the apparatus in which he had been mixing the chemical ingredients of the Darrow fire-extinguisher. June immediately slid from a stool on which she had been poised and walked out of the room irritably.

"Well," she said over her shoulder, "since you insist on being so busy, I won't disturb you any longer."

Bob abandoned his work and hurried after her.

"June," he exclaimed, "please don't go. You're not disturbing me—honestly—"

He followed her through the doorway, and the room was left unoccupied. But the armed guard employed by James Madison was still standing by the French windows, and the moment that Bob disappeared after June the man slipped across the threshold and made for the table on which the loaded revolver had been laid.

The guard's subsequent activities might have intrigued Bob Darrow had he been in a position to observe them. As it was no one saw the fellow pick up the revolver, break it open and empty it of its cartridges, for which he substituted half-a-dozen "blanks."

He replaced the gun on the table, stuffed into his pocket the live bullets that he had removed from it, and then stole out on to the terrace again through the open French windows.

Two or three minutes later he was putting through a call to a certain office in the city.

The office was Dan Mitchell's, and, with Spike and his cronies grouped around him, Mitchell answered the telephone in person as the bell rang.

"Hallo, is Mitchell there?" came the voice of the guard at the Madison home.

"Mitchell speaking," the promoter rejoined. "Is that you, Buck? Any news?"

"I'll say so, boss," the guard answered. "Hot news. I just got the chance to lay hold of Darrow's gun while he was outa the room. I ducked in and changed the cartridges."

"What do you mean—changed the cartridges?"

"Why, took out the live ones and planted blanks in the chambers," the guard explained.

Mitchell smiled a twisted smile.

"You've fixed Darrow's gun, huh?" he mused. "All right, Buck. Good work. Now keep your eyes open and be on the look-out to-night. I'll be sending the boys around."

He replaced the receiver and turned to Spike and the other gangsters.

"That's fine," he drawled, rubbing his hands. "You heard what was just said, didn't you—about the cartridges in Darrow's gun?"

"What of it?" Spike inquired dully.

"With Darrow's gun fixed," Dan Mitchell observed, "it certainly shouldn't be very difficult to get that formula we want so badly, should it?"

"Yeah, but what I want to know is this," Spike grumbled. "Why didn't Buck snitch that gat when he had the chance?"

"Yeah," sneered Silk Connolly, "au' let Darrow know that somethin' was goin' to happen, eh? Ah, blow some o' the dust outa them brains o' yours, Spike."

Dan Mitchell spoke again:

"Silk is right," he stated. "I'm not taking any chances this time. Listen, Spike, I got wise just about the time Madison was thinking of planting a guard at his house, and—I got one of my own men on the job."

There was a murmur of appreciation, and Mitchell perched himself on the corner of his desk with an air of self-assurance.

"All right, boys," he went on. "Now, here's the scheme. Two of you are to search Darrow's room while the others lay low—"

The Prowlers.

BOB DARROW and the Madisons had spent the evening playing cribbage and bridge, and, though Bob was very indifferent at the latter game, he had found an excellent partner in Mrs. Madison.

"Dad," exclaimed June, when her father had made a tally of the scoring, "have they really beaten us three out of five rubbers?"

"They certainly have," declared Madison. "I guess they were too strong a combination for us, June."

"Why, it's eleven o'clock," observed Bob, glancing at his wrist-watch. "I didn't realise it was so late, and as I

have to be at work early in the morning I think I'd better say 'good-night.'

"You know the old saying," June murmured smilingly. "'Early to bed and early to rise—'"

"And a very applicable saying under the circumstances," put in her father. "Bob is right. He ought to work fast on his experiments while he can. You know, Bob, we haven't heard or seen anything of those crooks since we've been back, and I'm inclined to think that this guard I've hired has done the trick."

"Either that or this cannon I've been packing," Bob rejoined, producing the revolver that Madison had urged him to carry. "Well, good-night, Mrs. Madison—I promise never to trump your ace again. Good-night, Mr. Madison!"

June accompanied him to the stairs, and lingered for a moment near the banisters.

"Tell me, Bob," she said, "why is it firemen play such excellent cribbage and such awful bridge?"

Bob grinned.

"Oh, that's simple!" he answered. "You have to *think* when you play bridge. Good-night!" he added laughingly, and made his way up to his room.

The Madisons did not immediately retire, but sat up for another three-quarters of an hour, Bob being the subject of their conversation. At the end of that time they decided to turn in, but they were still talking animatedly of their guest when they went upstairs.

"I like that young man's persistence," Madison stated. "If the experiment he's going to make on Thursday turns out successfully he will be worth a fortune."

"Great!" exclaimed June. "I hope it does turn out successfully."

"I'm sure it will," her father rejoined in a confident tone. "He's

certainly worked very, very hard on his invention."

They parted at the top of the stairs, Mr. and Mrs. Madison turning along the landing towards their room, June making for her own, and as their doors closed a clock in the hall solemnly struck the hour of twelve.

At that instant a car was drawing up outside the gates of the Madison home, and four men climbed out of it. They were Spike Beldon, Silk Connolly, Butch and Merlin, and, entering the drive on foot, they took to the shrubbery and worked round to the back of the house, where they were met by the guard in whom Madison placed so much trust.

"All set, Buck?" Beldon whispered hoarsely.

"All set, Spike," was the answer. "The kitchen door's open. Come on!"

Spike turned to his followers.

"Silk, you an' Butch know what to do," he said. "Go ahead!"

"Hey, wait a minute!" growled Silk. "Maybe you know what to do as well as me."

"Aw, there's no danger!" Beldon interrupted impatiently. "Didn't Mitch say Darrow's gun had been fixed? Now get in there, an' don't make any mistake."

Silk and Butch moved towards the kitchen door.

"Darrow's room is the second on the right at the top of the hall stairs," the man Buck told them. "He'll have the formula there. He never lets it outa his sight."

With Butch on his heels Silk passed into the house and stole through the gloom towards the hall. There was a fire burning, and it showed him and his companion the staircase.

They began to climb it. A board creaked under Butch's tread, and Silk shot a malevolent glance at him in the darkness.

"Quiet, will yuh?" he hissed.

"I couldn't help it," was the husky rejoinder. "It was a loose plank under the carpet."

They had paused, but nothing transpired to show that the creaking of the board had been heard, and, their confidence restored, the two rogues proceeded to the landing.

They paused at the door of the first room. Not a sound came from it, and it seemed safe to assume that its occupant—June—was asleep.

"It's the next room," breathed Silk, and led the way to the door of the apartment that had been placed at Bob's disposal.

Bob had not gone to bed immediately on retiring, but had enjoyed a cigarette by the window and lost himself for a while in thoughts of the future. Now, however, he prepared to undress, and drowsily peeled off his coat and vest.

He took a wallet from an inside pocket, and was holding it thoughtfully in his hand when he fancied he heard a foot-fall on the drive outside. He went to the window, which opened on to a balcony, but saw nothing, and, inclined to laugh at himself for being "jumpy," he closed the window and turned towards the dressing-table again.

In turning, his glance came to rest on the handle of the door, and all at once he stiffened. His imagination might have played a trick on him a moment before, but there was no doubting what his eyes beheld now. That handle was slowly and surreptitiously revolving.

For an instant Bob stood rooted to the spot. Then suddenly he stuffed his wallet into his hip-pocket and pulled out the six-chambered gun that Madison had given him.

He tip-toed towards the door and posted himself alongside it, so that in opening it would conceal him from the intruders. Not for a moment did he



"Hold him there while I search for the formula," Connolly hissed.

guess that the weapon in his hand was loaded only with blank cartridges.

The door moved inward inch by inch and swung slowly towards him. It shielded him from Silk's view as the latter stepped across the threshold and peered into the room. Next second Bob gained an impression of the crook's profile, and, believing the man to be alone, he rapped out a command.

"Put up your hands!" he barked.

Silk started and shot his arms towards the ceiling with a prompt and involuntary gesture. Butch was at Connolly's heels, and he flung his burly form at the door and jammed Bob against the wall.

"All right, Silk!" he jerked.

"Hold him there while I search for the formula," Connolly hissed, and, dropping his hands, he ran towards the dressing-table.

But Bob was not so easily held, and with a powerful effort he forced the door outward from the wall and slid free to engage Butch in a desperate hand-to-hand struggle.

They fought for possession of the gun, for although Butch knew that it was only loaded with blanks, he was equally well aware that it would have a mighty unpleasant effect if discharged in his face.

Wrestling savagely, the two of them staggered across the room and tumbled sprawling over the bed. Butch was undermost, but brought up both feet and sent Bob hurtling backward with a terrific lunge, and in the same instant Silk turned from the dressing-table and grabbed the fireman's wrist.

He snatched the revolver from Bob's hand and flung it over his shoulder. The weapon crashed through the window, and there was a tinkling of glass.

Silk and Bob closed with each other, and in the fury of their scuffle they reeled back and forth across the room. But Bob was the stronger, and suddenly he swung the crook off his feet and dashed him with tremendous force against the window through which the gun had been thrown.

The ruffian's flying body hit the pane with a shattering impact, and there was a loud smash as he vanished amidst a wreckage of glass and wood.

Swift footfalls warned Bob that the formidable Butch was coming at him again, and he wheeled in time to meet the rogue's attack with a pile-driving left. It stopped Butch in his tracks, and a crushing right-hander to the point of the jaw hurled him against the wall. But the man could take punishment, and he rushed Bob furiously, breaking down the fireman's guard by the sheer impetus of his charge.

Butch grappled, and the two men stumbled towards the broken window. Still battling fiercely, they tripped and pitched headlong through the aperture, disappearing as Silk had done before them.

On the Balcony.

JUNE sat up in bed, and as she listened attentively a scared expression appeared on her face. Then with a hurried gesture she flung off the blankets and slipped to the floor.

A moment later she had donned a wrap and was hastening from her room to make her way downstairs.

The commotion in the house had also awakened Mr. and Mrs. Madison, and only a few seconds after June was astir her mother and father were likewise preparing to investigate the disturbance.

"What can it be?" Mrs. Madison gaped. "I'm certain it isn't burglars—"

October 24th, 1931.

they would never make such a noise. It sounds more like a scuffle—"

"I don't know what it is," her husband told her grimly, as he pulled on a bath-robe. "But I'll soon find out!"

They stepped out on to the landing, and immediately heard the voice of young Jackie.

"Mother! Mother!" he was calling. "What's the matter?"

"You'd better go to him," Madison said to his wife. "The little fellow's probably badly frightened." And Mrs. Madison made off in the direction of Jackie's room.

Meanwhile, the sound of the fight had reached the ears of Spike, Merlin and Buck, who had remained in the grounds.

"What's that noise, Spike?" said Merlin huskily, as they stood near the kitchen door.

"I don't know," Beldon answered. "But it sounds like a battle. Let's go."

They sprinted round to the front of the house, and as they dashed into view of the balcony they made out the figures of Bob Darrow, Silk Connolly, and Butch. Coming to a standstill, they watched breathlessly the gruelling combat that was in progress thirty feet above their heads.

Silk was lying where he had fallen after plunging through the window. Bob and Butch were grovelling on the floor of the balcony, battering at each other savagely. They rolled over and over as they fought, and then presently they struggled to their feet and lurched apart.

Butch was the first to resume the conflict, and he charged at Bob like a maddened bull. But the young fireman was ready for him, and lifted him clean off his feet with a devastating uppercut.

Butch tumbled over a cane chair and hit his head a resounding thump on the floor of the balcony.

Silk had risen surreptitiously an instant before Butch's fall, and he tried to take Bob unawares from the rear. Bob heard the slither of the man's feet, however, and, wheeling smartly, he

rammed his fist in Connolly's face and bowled him over like a ninopin.

There was still plenty of fight left in Butch, and, scrambling up, he attacked Bob before the latter could put himself on the defensive. A wild, sledge-hammer blow to the temple brought Bob to his knees, and in another instant Butch had laid him flat and was kneeling on his chest.

Out of the corner of his eye Bob saw the gun that Silk had wrested from him earlier in the struggle, and, still believing it contained live cartridges, he flung out his hand towards it.

It was within arm's length, and his fingers closed on the butt. Seizing the weapon, he attempted to level it at his assailant.

Butch clutched his wrist, and threw all his weight into the effort of turning the barrel aside, for it was uncomfortably near his face. But his muscles were flabby in comparison with Bob's, and cracked under the strain.

The gun went off with three successive blasts. No lead left the muzzle, but the jets of flame blistered Butch's jowl so that he cursed with the pain and abandoned his hold of Bob to spring to his feet.

With an oath he lunged at Bob's fist with his boot, and the fingers that gripped the gun-butt took the full impact of that heavy kick.

The revolver spun from the fireman's grasp, slipped through the balcony rails, and dropped to the gravel drive thirty feet below.

Bob stood up and put himself in readiness for action before Butch could overwhelm him with one of his rushes. There was a fierce exchange of blows, and then the two men closed again, each striving for a throw.

Silk Connolly pulled himself to his feet, stood swaying stupidly for a spell, and then marked Butch and Bob. The latter had his back to him, and once more Silk endeavoured to take him unawares.

He darted towards the two men, but tripped over a mat, and the sound of the slight stumble warned Bob. As Silk recovered himself and came on, the fireman suddenly swung himself off his feet and lashed out backward with both legs.

He was grappling with Butch at the same time, and continued to cling to the burly ruffian. Advancing to the attack, Silk took Bob's lunge fairly and squarely in the chest.

As if he had been kicked by a mule, Connolly staggered to the far end of the balcony and collapsed. He had received a good many hard knocks in the course of the affray, and, lying where he had fallen, bruised, breathless, and sorely punished, he decided that he would leave everything in Butch's hands.

At the moment Butch seemed capable of maintaining the struggle alone, for with a herculean effort he bore Bob to the balcony rails and forced him back until he was hanging over them.

Spike, Merlin and Buck were watching from below, and Spike called out excitedly as he saw Butch gaining the advantage.

"Heave him over, Butch!" he jerked. "Give him a tumble, and throw him down here. We'll finish him off if he's got any kick left in him!"

"You're right, Spike," Merlin was saying, when all at once Buck caught him by the arm.

"Look!" he said, and pointed towards the porch.

The front door was being wrenched

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open, and silhouetted in the light that streamed from the hall the gangsters distinguished the figure of June Madison.

"Beat it!"

It was the voice of Spike again, and he made a dash for the corner of the house. Buck and Merliu followed his example and joined him beyond the angle of the building, where he had pulled up, and from this vantage-point the crooks prepared to observe all that ensued.

June came running from the house and paused near the spot where Spike and his associates had been standing a few seconds before. Looking up through the gloom, she saw the figures on the balcony—saw Bob lunging over the rails as the man Butch tried to bundle him into mid-air.

"Bob!" she cried out in alarm. "Bob!"

Bob was scarcely aware of her voice, for at that instant he summed up all his strength in a desperate attempt to gain the upper hand, and it was an attempt that succeeded.

Hurling Butch aside, he sprang after the man, and battered him with both fists. The crook tottered dazedly under a rain of punches, and was knocked flying with a flashing hook to the jaw.

He cannoned against the wall, and stood with his back to it while Bob pounded him mercilessly. It was in vain that the gangster tried to defend himself against the shower of blows that the young fireman launched, for they penetrated his guard and bruised both face and body.

Silk Connolly was crouching near by, and, in spite of his former resolution to keep out of trouble, some latent spark of courage inspired him to go to his comrade's assistance. Dragging himself to his feet, he stumbled towards Bob aggressively.

Bob saw him approaching, landed a final punch that thickened Butch's lips, and snapped a couple of his teeth, then spun to meet the fresh attack.

"I'll flay you, Darrow!" Silk raved hoarsely, and with the words he lashed out at Bob with his right.

Bob swung up his arm, and the blow glanced off. Simultaneously he ripped his own right to Silk's stomach, and with an agonised grunt the gangster wilted.

Bob hit him again, with an uppercut this time, and Silk caved backward. He bumped against the balcony rails with a shock that splintered them, and then sagged to the floor once more.

A sullen growl warned Bob that Butch was not through with fighting, and he turned in time to brace himself against the bear's hug in which the big crook seized him.

From the grounds June saw them blunder across the balcony. They collided with the rails at the very point where Silk had tumbled against them a moment previously, and, splintered as they were, those rails were in no condition to withstand the impact of two powerfully-built men.

There was a resounding crash as the wooden balustrade gave way and fell into the drive. Bob and his assailant plunged after it, both of them still locked in each other's grip.

A scream broke from June's lips as she saw them dive headlong from the balcony.

(To be continued in another thrilling episode next week. By permission of Universal Pictures Ltd., starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.)

"THE RIDING FOOL."

(Continued from page 10.)

striding towards the veranda with the intention of gloating safely over their recapture.

The Mexican's face changed colour as he caught sight of them, and a look of terror darted into his eyes. With a panic-stricken cry he brought up his revolver, but before he could pull the trigger Steve and Boston fired at point-blank range.

Their forty-fives blazed flame and death simultaneously, and a scream burst from the throat of Nikkos as he fell writhing in the last throes.

Steve and Boston dashed past him. Their ponies were tethered to a hitch-rack ten paces distant, and, slipping the reins, they vaulted into the saddle and clattered along the street at full gallop.

Anderson and his party came running from the store. A blast of gunfire rang in the ears of Steve and Boston, but they were crouching over their horses' necks and were unseathed.

The night had swallowed them when Bud Warren opened his eyes to find himself in the arms of his sister. He had not been slain instantaneously, as Sally had at first imagined; but it was clear that he had not much longer to live, and it was only with an effort that he managed to speak.

"I—wanna talk," he whispered. "Nikkos—Nikkos—"

A camp-fire burned in a hollow of the hills, and its glow played upon the brooding faces of the two fugitives from the law.

They shivered, for the warmth afforded by the fire was not sufficient to dispel the chill of the night-breeze that fanned the flames.

Steve Kendall and Boston Harry sat there in silence, each thinking his thoughts. They were thoughts that centred around Sally Warren, and while the light of Western stars twinkled overhead, the two who had been rivals for her hand dwelt on her loveliness and charm.

Boston Harry was the first to break the silence.

"Bud Warren was shot during the siege," he murmured reminiscently, "and by the shout that went up they reckoned it was one of us that plugged him. I wonder—if Sally still believes in us?"

"I wish I knew that, too," Steve answered, and even as he spoke he heard a rustling of foliage behind him.

The sound might have been caused by some small wild creature, but Steve and Boston were keyed up, and both of them reached for their six-shooters and whipped round instantly.

A figure stepped into the firelight. It was the figure of a girl—Sally!

"Boys," she said, and in a moment they had scrambled to their feet and laid aside their guns.

Boston took a step towards her, but it was to Steve that she involuntarily turned, and as he detected the expression in her eyes he knew he would never be more to her than a valued friend—knew that it was Steve for whom she cared.

The gambler drew back, and saw Steve take her hands. But there was no bitterness or envy in Boston's voice when he spoke.

"Well," he said awkwardly, "I guess I'll be going."

Steve and Sally turned towards him, and, disengaging her hands, the girl moved nearer to Boston.

"They won't want you in Plumas County any more, Boston," she told him.

The gambler looked at Steve, and then returned his glance to Sally again.

"Yeah!" he said with a rueful smile. "That's why I'm not goin' there—because they don't want me. They nearly made a mistake once, and I wouldn't like to risk my health around Gulf Centre again."

"But you don't understand, Boston," Sally rejoined. "By now they'll have heard at Gulf Centre that you weren't the man responsible for that killing there—just as they know at Poker City that you and Steve weren't responsible for poor California's."

Both Steve and Boston glanced at her quickly.

"You mean—we've been cleared?" Boston stammered.

When Sally answered him there were tears in her eyes.

"That's just what I do mean," she said. "The man they wanted was my brother—And Nikkos, too—"

Steve slipped an arm around her shoulders.

"We didn't want you to know—about Bud," he told her huskily. "Boston and I—we'd kind of planned to keep it from you."

"Nikkos shot Bud," Sally went on. "But before Bud died he explained everything—about the hold-up—and about the killing in Plumas County. I'm glad—that he lived long enough—to redeem himself and tell the truth."

Boston did not speak, but, in a silence more eloquent than words could have been, he pressed Sally's hands and laid a grasp of comradeship on Steve's shoulder. Then he mounted his horse and rode slowly into the gloom.

(By permission of the Gaumont Film Co., Ltd., starring Bob Steele, Frances Morris and Ted Adams.)



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October 24th, 1931.

"RODNEY STEPS IN."

(Continued from page 20.)

along this road with the care-free air of a man returning to his homestead after a hard day's work. A small Riley car would be coming towards him in the course of a minute or two. The car would slow down—and Rodney would swiftly open the door and take his place beside the fair driver.

All her planning. A wonderful little woman. Rodney felt the tingle of adventure in his veins. He had reached the narrow road, but it looked as deserted as a strip of the desert. Not a car in sight. Had something happened? That morning she had told him—

He breathed a great sigh of relief. He had breasted the small rise and he could see in the distance the lights of an approaching car coming cautiously round the bend. Swiftly he strode on. Nearer and nearer came the car, the headlights dimmed. Then, for a fraction of a second, the lamps flashed full and were almost instantly dimmed again. The car slowed down. There was the faintest sound of the horn.

Rodney walked faster. The car was now but a few yards away and was crawling at a snail's pace. Then it halted altogether.

Another second and Rodney was seated by the side of the fair driver.

"Splendidly done," she murmured.

"Not too bad, was it?" he purred.

"The coast all clear?" she queried softly. "No one following you?"

"Not a soul," replied Rodney, uneasily aware of the fact that he had never troubled to look. "I say, what about a spot of dinner before—"

"Don't be silly!" she reproved him. "We're on business, and we can't take the risk of being seen together. There are no restaurants around here."

"Of course not," murmured Rodney. "I'd forgotten."

"We've got no time to lose," continued his partner. "I suspect that Grimshaw has been trailing us, but we've thrown him off the scent. You're sure no one shadowed you?"

"Sure!" murmured Rodney, striving to put sincerity in his tones.

Trapped!

THE house that stood in its own grounds about six miles from Crowborough, an ideal countryside residence from the view of position and surroundings, was plunged in darkness.

Darkness save for two pin-points of light that came from the flashlamps of two nocturnal visitors who had invaded the comfortable, roony apartment that formed the southern wing of the firs.

A soft whisper in feminine tones, and Rodney Perch, the foremost of the two invaders, crept to the corner of the room. A moment later he was kneeling down, his heart beating fast, his fingers trembling a little.

The safe was before his eyes, or, at least, that portion of it which was illuminated by his flashlamp.

Resolutely he collected all his nerve. He must not fail. He gripped the dial

and slowly, very slowly, he began that twiddling movement which Tapper had so eloquently described and illustrated.

He twiddled—and, holding his breath, he listened.

Never was there a more emphatic response to "twiddling." Suddenly the dark, silent house was flooded with gay jazz music, music loud and lively enough to awaken the parish.

"What have you done?" half-screamed the feminine figure.

"I—I've turned on the wireless!" bawled poor Rodney. Frantically he tugged at the "dial." Ear-splitting sounds smote on his anguished ears—then swift and sudden silence.

Then the room was brightly illuminated. A voice harsh and commanding cried:

"Don't move—either of you—till you're told!"

Blinkingly Rodney looked up. A gasp came from his lips. Facing him was Inspector Grimshaw, and behind Grimshaw stood the triumphant figure of Stephen Dalston.

"Well, this is a surprise, Perch!" grinned the financier. "I never thought you were the masked bandit's accomplice. A pretty dud burglar you are—mistaking the wireless for the safe."

Dalston laughed heartily. Then he turned his gaze to Rodney's fair partner, who was in the grip of Billings.

"Well, that settles your account, young woman!" he chuckled. "Better put the cuffs on both of 'em, inspector."

"That's just what we propose to do," retorted Grimshaw. He advanced towards Rodney grimly.

The heat of the game



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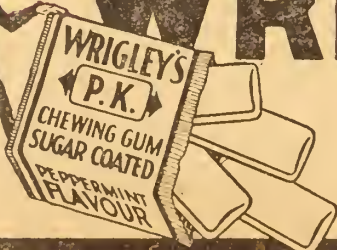
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"One moment, Inspector Grimshaw!" It was the girl's voice, imperious and commanding. She continued:

"I suggest you ask Mr. Dalston to open the safe in the other corner of the room. In that safe I feel sure you will find the securities he alleges were stolen from him."

"Take the woman away!" exploded Dalston. "A common thief—"

"I ain Lady Muriel Goring," interrupted the girl. "This man Dalston ruined my brother by a series of deliberate frauds. My poor brother shot himself in despair. I swore to get even with this scoundrel. Inspector Grimshaw, I ask you to look in that safe. If I am not mistaken you will find there Dalston's private record of these frauds as well as the missing securities."

Inspector Grimshaw let loose a startled exclamation. It was a rare thing for him to do.

Lady Muriel Goring. Yes, it was she. The Society debutante, the daring woman motorist, the young woman who flew her own aeroplane. He had seen her portrait in the papers.

Rodney Perch released a gasping sound.

"Why, I've always wanted to meet you—," he babbled. "I—I—"

"I'm disappointed in you, Rodney Perch," she murmured, her smile entrancing him. "You made my acquaintance under false pretences."

"They came to rob my safe. Do your duty, inspector!"

The words were barked from Dalston's livid lips.

"You are Mr. Perch's trustee!" rapped out Grimshaw. "You held his securities."

"They were stolen!" gasped the other. "Stolen from my safe in Well Street—by that woman!"

Grimshaw shot a searching look at the convulsed features of the speaker. Then, slowly and deliberately, he walked up to the livid financier.

"Let me look at that safe, Dalston!" he said quietly and determinedly.

For a tense moment there was silence. Then Dalston sagged into a chair like a man crumpling from a blow. Billings left the girl and looked towards him.

"The game's up," whispered the financier. "Tough luck. I was making a get-away to-night. She—she's right. The securities are in the safe—and the other things. Here's the key, inspector. I'm making a clean breast of it. Don't forget that."

His voice had changed to a whine. Dalston, the braggart, was cowed and broken. He whimpered as Billings deftly fixed the handcuffs on his wrists.

Inspector Grimshaw turned his eyes from the limp figure of the captured swindler. He directed them to Rodney. "You're a lucky young fellow, Mr. Perch!" he said.

"I am," responded Rodney. He had moved to the girl's side and was clasping her hand. Inspector Grimshaw smiled one of his very rare smiles.

"I wouldn't advise you to go into the safe-breaking game, Mr. Perch," murmured Grimshaw.

"Never again, inspector," answered Rodney fervently. "I'm going to marry and settle down."

"I hope you'll make a better husband than you do a crook," whispered Lady Muriel Goring, moving a little closer to her "partner in crime."

And it may be said that Rodney Perch, so far, has given complete satisfaction.

(By permission of the Fox Film Co., Ltd., starring Richard Cooper and Elizabeth Allan.)

"RED FORK RANGE."
 (Continued from page 14.)

the back of his neck, the other drilled between the shoulder-blades.

Fifteen seconds later Wally Hamilton was falling into the arms of friends. He was half-carried to the veranda of a store-building and propped against it, but as someone was shouting for a doctor he revived with an effort and drew his hand across his temple, where blood was beginning to flow.

"It's nothing!" he panted. "Just creased me—that's all. Don't worry about me. Get the soldiers."

"Here's Sergeant O'Flaherty!" a man in the crowd announced, and as the sturdy Irish soldier approached Wally struggled to his feet.

"Get back to your commanding officer, sergeant," Wally jerked—"fast as you can! Tell him—the Indians are out!"

O'Flaherty sprinted back in the direction whence he had come, and in a space of time that was a credit to the U.S. Cavalry, a bugle was blowing and two squadrons of horse were mustering.

They filed through Hangtown's main street, and as their commanding officer came abreast of the spot where Wally was standing the youngster called for a fresh mount to lead the soldiers to the scene of the Indian attack. A horse was brought him, and, taking his place in the van of the column, he urged the animal into a gallop.

Hangtown was soon left far behind, and the hills swallowed the relief force. They pushed through dark canyons, skirted the Arapaho village from which Barking Fox and his braves had set

forth some hours previously, and finally sighted the gently-sloping upland that masked the spot where the immigrant wagons had been corralled to break the Redskin rush.

At an ever-quickening pace, Wally and the troopers stormed up the hillside, and from the rim of it gazed down upon the closing stages of a desperate hand-to-hand conflict.

The Indians had swarmed through the wagon-lines in overwhelming numbers, and were at grips with the immigrants, and Wally did not care to think of the scene that his gaze might have encountered had he and the troopers been fifteen minutes later. As it was, the Redskins were thrown into a panic at the very sight of the cavalymen, and, abandoning the fight, they fled in all directions.

But the troopers were already thundering down the hillside at the gallop, and they gained the wagon-corral ere the majority of the Arapahocs could make their escape.

Sabre and carbine took heavy toll, the heavy cavalry blades biting deep into flesh and bone, the bullets bringing down those who had managed to put distance between themselves and the relief force.

One of the last to fall was Barking Fox—

Wally had been in the van of the charge, and he had done his share in helping to rout the savages when he saw a familiar figure rise up from the ground. It was the figure of the old Scout, and, throwing himself from his horse's back, Wally seized the veteran by the arm.

"Where's Ruth?" he demanded.

The Scout drew a hand across his brow.

"She was—with me—when the Injuns broke through!" he faltered. "Then someone struck me over the head—laid me out—"

"If it's Ruth Farrell you want, I saw her, mister—," It was the voice of a boy who had been sheltering under the awning of a prairie schooner at the moment of the Arapaho rush. "Some white mea came through the barricade. They took Miss Ruth away with 'em."

Wally clenched his fists. He had no doubt that the white men in question were Black Bard and his renegades.

"Which way did they go?" he rapped out, and, as the lad pointed towards the south-west, he wheeled with the intention of scouring his horse.

"Wait, Wally!" the old Scout appealed. "The soldiers'll help you to search for her. It's suicidal to ride out there alone, with the country full o' scattered bands of Injuns—"

But Wally shook free. He was in no mood to listen to reason, and once in the saddle he spurred in the direction which Black Bard and his men had taken. Nor was he seen again until after nightfall, when he rode disconsolately into Hangtown and was met by Sergeant O'Flaherty and a troop of soldiers.

"Not a trace of her!" Wally said, in answer to the Irishman's query. "I managed to follow tracks for a spell, but lost them in the hills."

The sergeant laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Never mind, me boy," he declared. "To-morrow we'll scour them hills for her, an' if she's anywhere within a fifty moile radius we'll find her."

Wally was not to be consoled, however, and as the troopers cantered off towards their quarters he led his horse morosely to the stables and walked round in the direction of old Charles Farcell's office.

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It was as he was passing the window that he heard voices, and, looking into the room, he saw Farrell and—Apache Joe.

The presence of Black Bard's henchman brought him to an abrupt standstill, and the first words that he heard gave him a clue to the motive behind the renegade's visit.

"I'm here with news o' your daughter, Farrell," the crook was saying. "Take a look at this, will yuh?"

He handed Farrell a note. Its contents, which Wally gathered from the subsequent conversation, read as follows:

"Your daughter is in our hands. If you withdraw unconditionally from the race for the government contract, she will be returned to you unharmed. If you refuse, you will never see her again."

A sharp cry escaped Charles Farrell, and with an impulsive movement he dragged open a drawer in his desk and clutched a six-gun that was lying there. But as the revolver barrel was levelled at his breast Apache Joe scarcely flinched.

"That won't do no good, Farrell," he observed. "That's the surest way of saying good-bye to your daughter for all time."

The forty-five in the old man's grasp wavered. Then, with a groan, he laid the weapon down and looked at Black Bard's emissary hopelessly.

"If I withdraw from that race," he said, "I'm out of business. A ruined man!"

"Ef you run in that race," Apache Joe reminded him, "your daughter will never be seen again—alive. Make up your mind, Farrell, for I gotta take back an answer one way or the other."

Farrell's hands twitched convulsively. "There's only one answer," he said heavily. "I give you my word that I won't enter my coach in the race."

"Then your daughter will be returned to you after the race is run tomorrow mornin'," Apache Joe told him, and made his way to the door.

As the crook emerged from the office Wally ducked back into the shadows. He saw the ruffian stroll along the street, and, resolved not to lose sight of him, began to follow him.

Apache Joe's destination was only fifty yards away—the back door of Whip Roden's premises. From a vantage point twenty or thirty paces distant Wally heard him give three knocks and saw him pass across the

threshold. Then he stole close to the building, and, after making a tour around its walls, climbed noiselessly to the roof and took up his position by a skylight, which he opened two or three inches.

Immediately below him, seated at a table, he discerned Whip Roden. Black Bard and his ruffians were with him, and all eyes were on Apache Joe.

"It didn't take long for Farrell ter see sense," Apache Joe was saying. "The Golden West outfit won't be runnin' between Hangtown an' Placerville to-morrow."

"Good!" put in Black Bard. "Reckon that satisfies yuh, Whip, don't it?"

Roden fingered his chin. "Kind of," he murmured. "But, all the same, I want you to post men along the road, Bard."

"What's the idea, Whip?" Black Bard interrupted. "Farrell was your only rival, an' with him backin' outa the runnin' where's the sense in plantin' the boys along the trail? A down-right waste o' time, I call it, and—"

"I'm takin' no chances," Whip Roden told him. "Farrell's given his word he'll withdraw, but for all that I want the road watched. Understand?"

"What about the Farrell girl?" asked Black Bard. "We ain't gonna leave her here alone, are we?"

"Buzz Bryant can stay an' keep an eye on her," Roden answered, indicating a burly rogue on his right.

"When the contract for the Government mails is in my hands she can be turned over to her father."

He stood up and reached for his hat. His scoundrelly associates rose with him, and all but Bryant filed out of the room. From the roof Wally heard them mounting their horses, and listened to the clapping of the animals' hoofs as they cantered away into the night. Then he quietly pulled back the skylight.

Bryant was taken completely by surprise when Wally dropped into the room, and in a few minutes the stage driver had accounted for him. Yet he might have made more certain of the man, for by the time Wally had descended through a trap-door and discovered Ruth in a dingy cellar, Bryant had recovered his wits.

Seizing a heavy piece of wood that lay near the fireplace, he waited for Wally to ascend. As the youngster's head rose into view he swung up the

bludgeon; but, swift as thought, Wally seized his wrist, and after a desperate scuffle managed to disarm him and make him secure.

Five minutes later Wally was presenting Ruth to her father, who sprang to his feet with an exclamation of joy as he caught sight of the girl.

"Now, listen, Mr. Farrell," said Wally, when father and daughter had embraced. "With Ruth safe home again you can run that race, so—"

The old man laid a hand on his arm. "No, Wally," he interposed, "that's where you make a mistake. You see, I gave my word that I'd withdraw from the race."

Nor would his high sense of honour permit him to break his promise, and it was only Wally Hamilton's astuteness that saved the Golden West outfit.

"Mr. Farrell," he said, "supposing you sold out to me—for one dollar," He grinned. "Yes, one dollar—just to make the deal legal and satisfy that conscience of yours. Then I could enter for the race without interfering with the promise you made."

The following day, at Placerville, Whip Roden received the shock of his life when the Golden West team showed up at the finishing-point ahead of his own outfit, and he was fairly rooted to the spot when the town marshal approached him and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Roden," he said, "you're under arrest. Thanks to Wally Hamilton, Black Bard and his gang have been rounded up, and we've got all the evidence we need to show that you were working hand-in-glove with them. Come on!"

Meanwhile, Wally was receiving the congratulations of Charles Farrell and Ruth.

"Son," the old man declared, "from now on you're half-owner of the Golden West Express Company."

"Half-owner?" Wally reiterated laughingly. "Say, don't forget I bought the whole outfit for a dollar. But, on the level, Mr. Farrell, you can have the outfit back on one condition—that you give your consent to Ruth and I marrying."

"I give you my consent right now," Farrell answered. "And that half-ownership in the company can be my wedding present."

(By permission of the Filmophone Renters, Ltd., starring Wally Wales and Ruth Mix.)

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"Get Out and Stay Out!"

IT was four o'clock in the morning. From the speakeasy there appeared a party of roysterers. There were several girls and a number of young men. One wore a paper cap and a false nose and kept on shouting—obvious that he was far from sober.

With much shouting and blowing of tin trumpets, the overladen car drove away, and the commissionaire rubbed his tired eyes and murmured:

"Thank heaven that bunch have gone home at last! Suppose they'll be here again to-morrow—cuss them!"

But the young gentleman with the false nose did not patronise the speakeasy the following night and the reason was a very good one. He awoke about nine with a fat head and the fact that the telephone was ringing. His father would like to see him, the secretary warned him.

"Ought to have been there at eight-thirty," Jimmy Nelson ruffled his hair and yawned prodigiously. "Gosh, the old man will be stuffy! Better have a cold bath and pull myself together a bit."

At half-past ten Jimmy reached the big building which was the offices of the C.G. & F. Railroad—his father was the president.

"Your father wants to see you." The secretary's snile was not a pleasant one. It implied that behind the door marked "President" lay a lot of trouble.

"I'll go right in." Jim squared his shoulders and beamed at the secretary. "Suppose I'll have to tell him a bed-time story."

Jimmy Nelson was a square-built, clean-shaven youngster of twenty-two. A pleasant, dark-haired young man, whose face looked rather white, and around the eyes were too many dark

October 31st, 1931.

lines. The shoulders seemed a trifle bowed, but this was not from hard work.

James Nelson, president of the railroad, was like his son, but with additional qualities. The same features, but every line was one of determination; the jaw was square, whilst the cheeks had the flush of health and the blue eyes had a steely quality lacking in that of the boy. His age was fifty, his hair was white, but he was far fitter than his son.

When his son entered the office the president did not look up.

"Morning, dad!"

"Morning, son!" The president was writing a cheque. He blotted the wet ink, then raised his eyes. "Suppose you've got the usual headache? You look half baked."

"I did go out with a few friends last night," Jimmy laughed in a somewhat shamefaced manner. "But I wasn't too late. Reckon that game of golf I played took it out of me."

"Oh, a game of golf is terribly strenuous!" The father looked his son up and down. "So tired that you get here two hours after time."

"I'm sorry, dad, but I didn't reckon there would be much doing this morning, and I'm not much good till about eleven. I'm a poor hand at figures—"

"And a darned poor hand for work." There was a rasp to the president's voice. "Take a seat, son, I'm going to talk to you. It may be for the last time."

"The last time, dad?"

"You heard!" The rasp was now a fierce growl. "Sit down and just listen. Try and get what I'm going to say into that thick head of yours. It ain't going to be a pleasant listen. For a year I've given you chance after chance, and you've gone from bad to worse."

"Dad, I can't stand a lecture." Jimmy

got to his feet. "I'll come back and see you later."

"Sit down!" raged his parent—all the muscles on his neck standing out like whipcords. "I want you to learn what I'm going to do."

A hint of impending trouble made the youngster shoot his father a suspicious glance. The old man was very sore this morning.

"You've had education, money, pleasure—everything." The president spoke in a suddenly composed voice.

"And I was fool enough to imagine that after doing all this for you I might hope that you would settle down in the office. Time and again I made excuses for your lateness, afternoons off, long vacations, rowdy parties, and so forth.

During the last six months I've paid over a thousand dollars in road fines and a lot more to various speakeasies where you hit the high spots. The exuberance of youth—I thought you would get over it. You don't; but go from bad to worse. On my desk here are bills for six thousand dollars, a bill of damages for two thousand from a speakeasy where you pushed a waiter down some stairs, and a small item of two bucks from the traffic cops. I told you last time it would be the last, and you swore to make a change."

"But, dad—"

"Shurrnp!" The words came in a snarl. "I've tried to make a man out of you, and I've failed—so far. You've got a strong body, because I know how many trophies you've won for athletics, but now you're tired after a game of golf. You're a dissipated, spineless wreck, and I'm ashamed of you! I've finished with giving you chances. Here is a cheque for a thousand dollars, and it's the last you'll get. I'm through! Does your fuddled head grasp what I mean by that?"

"Well—er—"

"Then let me make it clear." The president gave a harsh, bellowing laugh. "You're fired from this business. You're fired from my home. You're fired as my son. I don't want to see you again. You're a knock-kneed, gutless sop!"

Jimmy Nelson was a shade whiter as he got to his feet. He tried to face his father as the old man stepped from behind the desk.

"Take your cheque." The president grasped the lapels of his son's coat with both hands and almost shook him. "I'm through with you, finished—done! Get out and stay out—and the sooner you go the better!"

No sign of relenting in the harsh eyes. Jimmy knew that at last he had gone too far and it was too late. His father released him, and automatically he took the cheque, scarcely able to believe that a moment ago he had been the son of a millionaire, and now was an outcast.

He looked at the cheque, and the four figures seemed to stand out in letters of fire. The price of his folly! He had been a fool, but he was not the sort to admit that fact. A vision flashed before him when his college shouted and roared his name. If he played football or baseball now he would be whacked in about five minutes. His father had called him a spineless wreck. It was true.

His father speaking over the phone made him raise his head.

"I want the traffic returns on the Eastern Sector." The old man ignored his son as if he were not in the room. "And when you've put that through I want you to take down a few letters. Yes, half an hour's time."

"Guess I'll be going." Something of his lost manhood was coming back to Jim Nelson. "You can keep this." He tossed the cheque on the desk table, but the president paid no heed.

The young-ter hesitated, looked at his father uncertainly, and then walked slowly out of the room, closing the door behind him.

Not till his son had gone did the president glance at the cheque, then he balanced it in his hand, and there was a faint smile—almost of hope—on the rugged features. There were a number of electric buttons on his desk, and he pressed one.

The door opened and a short, thick-set man lounged into the office. He was the company detective.

"Saunders, have that boy of mine trailed. He's just left here feeling a bit sore. I handed him a few home truths, and told him I was through. I want to see if he's got the nous to fight out his own salvation, and I want you to bring me a report of everything that happens to him. I shan't interfere unless he gets absolutely desperate. Get the idea?"

"Leave it to me, chief," was the answer.

When Courtesy Pays.

A LONG line of men were waiting for chance of temporary or permanent employment. South Orkney was a goods station and important junction. Many men were employed as the company also had a big repair works and engine houses.

A nondescript collection of men. Some were big burly fellows, who had been firemen,

whilst some were weedy youths who wanted jobs as clerks in the offices, whilst others were just hangers-on. A month ago Jim Nelson might have looked conspicuous in his smart clothes, but they were smart no longer. They were fairly clean but threadbare, whilst his hat showed the ravages of the weather.

In a month Jim reckoned he had wandered half over the Northern States, and now he was back to within a hundred miles of his home town of Boston. In his pocket was enough for one more meal. He had learnt the art of stealing free rides on freight trains, and had roughed it. One or two odd jobs had come his way, but somehow the idea of working on a railway had appealed most. He had worked for a fortnight as a fireman on a mineral train running backwards and forwards from a mine until an aggressive foreman had made Jim seek work elsewhere.

Curiously enough, Jim was not unhappy. He grumbled and grizzled to himself, yet he knew this outdoor, hard life had brought back his strength. If they wanted him to play football now, he wouldn't have been a failure. He laughed to himself at another thought. What would his fine friends say if they could see him now? One bitter pill had been swallowed a week after leaving home. He had run across a man to whom he had often lent money and taken to many gay evenings. The man was with a girl who had often had her arms round Jim's neck. He knew her now as a gold-digger. They had ignored him—passed him by.

The clugging of a small car awoke his interest. A two-seater of somewhat ancient appearance had stopped before

the wooden hut where the out-of-works waited to interview the yard master.

A pretty, rosy-checked young girl climbed out. Though her clothes were plain and serviceable they fitted the youthful figure to perfection. Home-made, but well-made! A sporting check serge with a small black hat, the outfit suited the dark-haired young woman. The pleasant expression made Jim smile. This girl would make a fellow a jolly good pal.

The girl gathered up in her arms about a dozen small parcels of all shapes and sizes. One slipped and nearly fell. The girl tried to make the pile more secure and made matters worse, because two small parcels rolled to the muddy ground.

The girl retrieved them quickly and flicked off the mud. Again she gathered them all together in her arms, whereupon one began to slide at the top of the pile. She made a vain effort to balance the parcel but it would not stay and rolled out of her arms to the ground.

It was more than Jim could bear. He left his place in the long line and hurried forward. He did not notice the line instantly close up after him.

The heap of parcels were wobbling precariously when Jim got to the girl's side. He retrieved the small parcel.

"If you'll stand still I'll arrange them for you." He raised his hat.

"Oh, thanks so much." The girl flashed him a look of thanks, and in her glance she summed up this young man very quickly.

"Let me just alter that bulky little chap." Jim moved one packet and substituted another. "This one on top, and now I think you're all right. Can I open a door or do anything else?"



"I'm through with you, finished—done!" The President almost shook him.
"Get out—and stay out!"

"Yes, that one 'Yard Master' on it," was her answer. "Thanks so much for helping me. One of those parcels is dad's lunch."

Jim smiled in response and opened the door. With a friendly glance from her blue eyes the girl disappeared. Jim closed the door and hurried back to the line of waiting men. His place was filled.

Jim tried to get back, but the man who had closed up was a surly, big-chested ruffian.

"End of the line!" he growled.

"But I was in front of you," protested Jim.

"Yeah, and you quitted the line," was the answer. "That means you go back to the end."

Several of the men waiting laughed discordantly, and Jim glared round.

"I only left the line to help that lady," he complained. "You've no right to take my place."

"Is that so?" grinned the ruffian. "You just try and get back and see what happens to you."

"I'm not scared of you, you big stiff!" cried the boy. "Are you standing away or am I going to paste you?"

The fellow weighed about fourteen stone or more, whilst Jim could not have been more than eleven, but it was destined that there should be no fight.

"Come on, you dolled-up worm," the heavy-weight began, and then became silent.

The door marked "Yard Master" had opened and a clean-shaven, grey-haired man had stepped out. Instantly the whole line stiffened and endeavoured to look very earnest. He wore a battered felt hat, a cardigan pulled over his waist, and grey serge trousers, but for all his clothes there was an air of command in the sharp eyes and alert expression.

"I'll see the men wanting work," he called in a pleasant voice. "I don't want any shoving or hustling. One at a time—in order."

Jim felt he would only jeopardise his chance and every one else's if he started to brawl. With a vicious look at the triumphant bully he was forced to go right to the end of the line. Not much chance of getting a job at South Orkney.

From behind the yard master appeared the girl Jim had helped. She scanned the line almost eagerly; then came down the few steps and pointed to the end.

"Hi—you!" The yard master was calling to Jim.

The youngster removed his hat and hurried forward, whilst the waiting line scowled.

"He's going to click," murmured the man in front of the bully. "And all through helping that dame. Gosh, some guys have all the luck!"

"Yes, sir?" Jim stood as if on parade. The yard master looked the athletic figure over and nodded.

"He helped me just now," whispered the girl. "I think he wants a job, dad."

"What can you do, lad?"

"Anything, sir. Don't mind what it is," stated Jim. "Last job was as fireman and cleaner on an engine carrying ore from a mine."

"Fit?" The yard master went on when the youngster nodded. "Any references?"

"None, sir. I've only recently started working. The last was my first job."

The yard master decided that here was a gentleman's son down on his luck. He had helped his daughter, and that was good enough to give the lad a trial.

"Take you on for a week," the yard master decided. "Up to you if you want to stay longer."

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"You bet I do, sir," cried Jim, and his eyes stared frankly and admiringly at the girl, who blushed a little as she smiled at him.

A Fight and Promotion.

IT is seldom that a person goes through life without making some enemies. No matter how pleasant a person may be, there will be someone who will dislike him; envy or jealousy may be the cause. Jim Nelson had been very popular at college, and, in spite of the fact that he was a cut above the employees at South Orkney, he soon became fast friends with drivers, cleaners, engineers, and general staff. Of these friends, two were of great importance. Naturally the lady should be mentioned first.

Jimmy had thanked Rose for getting him a chance to make good, and it was curious how often they seemed to be running into each other. His work was that of a cleaner, but he did his task so well that the Yard-Master frankly told Rose that the new hand was a grand fellow! At the end of the second week Rose gave Jimmy some of her home-made ginger-bread. She had been taking some to her father, met Jimmy, and, of course, they had to talk. The third Sunday, Jimmy and his male friend were asked to tea.

Tom Summers was a goods foreman, and had been able to give Jimmy plenty of sound advice. They had sat next to each other in the mess-room, and had got talking. Tom was also a great friend of Rose's, so it is not surprising to find the two lads being invited up to the Rogers' neat bungalow, almost on the edge of the station, to a high tea. As Tom told another pal, it was a "case" between Rose and Jimmy.

But there was one person who did not like Jimmy. Durkin was chief foreman, and was disliked by most people. A tall, fierce-looking man, with scowling eyebrows and a bullying, blustering nature. He revelled in ordering people about and making them uncomfortable. His age was about thirty-six, and his features were of a type that some call handsome, though Tom always reckoned the foreman's eyes were too small. Tom did not like his superior, and warned Jim against him.

"Steer clear of Durkin," he had warned his new friend. "A sour, suspicious chap, with a streak of the brute in his make-up. He's a hard worker, and therefore old man Rogers reckons Durkin is okay. If he tries to razz you, keep your tongue in your mouth and your temper under control."

Sound advice, because three days later the foreman came into the engine-sheds during breakfast rest, calmly took the wooden box that Jim had arranged against a counter, and pushed the youngster's mess-can carelessly away. It fell to the ground, and Jimmy, coming back from a vain effort to remove some of the dirt from his hands and face with a greasy rag, saw, and would have argued the point if Tom had not laid a warning hand on his shoulder.

Durkin had scowled at the two.

"What's the matter with you two?" he had growled at them. "You with the check-cap!" This was Jimmy. "Get outside, and see if there is any news of that down goods."

"Go!" whispered Tom, and reluctantly Jimmy obeyed.

Jim would have liked to have punched the foreman's head, but he realised when he had cooled down what that would have meant. The loss of a job, and no further chance of seeing Rose. No wonder he came to like Tom almost as a brother.

A month passed, and one night the two chums and Rose went to the pictures. Jim chucked to himself as he sat in the medium-priced seats, and thought of the times when he had flung money about like water. Once his hand touched Rose's hand, and even in the darkness he became aware of her smile. Next week they went to the pictures alone, and held hands like two school-children. Tom had refused to come, pretending that the picture wasn't the sort he liked.

The growing friendship between Rose and Jimmy irritated Durkin. It was his boast that he had only to smile at a dame and she would almost eat out of his hand. A wizened, comic little driver brought the matter to a head.

"You say you're slick with the dames," he sneered. "You ain't dore much of the Rounco act with Rogers' daughter. She's a high-stepper, and I don't reckon she'd even look at you."

"What yer mean?"

"She's goofy on that new hand. The guy what got raised to fireman a week ago. The guy what spends five evenings a week a-sweatin' over books and papers so he can get promotion. Fine chap he looks, and Rose ain't half taken up with him."

"Spineless cove!" contemptuously snorted the foreman. "Wears la-de-da clothes, and is always washing his hands. Probably been one of these society crooks—confidence stuff—and is now lying low."

"That ain't Jim Benson," stoutly averred the driver, who loved to get a dig at the foreman. "He's class, but that don't say he's crooked."

"I'll bet you three things!" The foreman puffed out his chest. "One, that his name ain't Benson; second, that he's yellin'; and third, that I could cut him out with that Rogers kid as easy as flyin'."

"I'm skinned this month," grinned the driver, "but I can take that bet to a dollar!"

That very afternoon Durkin tried to win the money.

The man was full of conceit about himself. Rose was on her way to her father's office, and she was hoping that she might see some sign of Jim, who knew that about this time she brought her father some tea.

Rose had never liked the foreman very much. He was too sure of himself; nothing he didn't know, and always yelling his orders in a domineering, hectoring fashion that she thought bordered on the side of tyranny. As her father thought quite a lot of Durkin, she had never said anything against the man.

Therefore she summoned a smile when she came along past some carriages to meet the foreman face to face.

"Good afternoon, Miss Rogers." The foreman grinned, doffed his slouch-hat, and opened the attack. "Suppose you know you're trespassing?"

"Trespassing, Mr. Durkin?" The girl was puzzled. "I don't understand."

"This is the sector that I'm in charge of." The big man laughed. "I reckon I shall have to exact a forfeit."

"A forfeit?"

"I can't condone the offence," cried the schemer. "You haven't got my permission, so I must exact toll. It won't be a very heavy penalty."

"Oh, I'm glad of that," Rose laughed nervously. The foreman was behaving strangely, and she did not like the mocking glint in his eyes. "What kind of toll?"

"Just a little kiss," laughed Durkin. "You dare to try, and I'll box your ears!" flared up the girl. "Are you mad, or have you been drinking?"

The contempt and disdain in the girl's flashing eyes roused the man's anger. He'd kiss this girl and conquer her by sheer will-power. Some of these proud, haughty young women didn't know how to appreciate a fine man like himself. Previous to the encounter he had been sampling some smuggled hooch, and his bullying nature was roused.

With open arms, the foreman advanced on the girl, and she shrank back against a carriage. There was horror as well as anger now in the pretty eyes.

"Leave me alone, you drunken brute!" she stormed. "I'll call my father! He'll fire you!"

"Come here, you little spitfire!" cried the foreman, and swept her into a bear-like hug.

Jim had been working so hard and patiently that the yard master had given instructions for the lad to be tested and tried out as a driver of an engine.

He first became aware of a group of cleaners and other men grouped together, and it was obvious from their laughter and gesticulations that they were watching something. Naturally, Jim looked in the same direction. Some coaches stood in his way, and it was behind these coaches that a lot of dust seemed to be kicked up.

The youngster guided his engine further along the track and then he could look round the end of the box. An anticipatory smile twitched his lips, because he expected to see something amusing, such as a fight or a coach on fire. But when he saw Rose struggling in the arms of the foreman he gave a snort of rage and leaped down from the cab.

Steel-like fingers gripped the foreman by the throat and the brute at once relaxed his grip of the girl, who staggered back with a sob of relief.

Durkin was livid with rage when he saw his opponent was Jim. Now he would smash this kid to pulp for his

interference; but he did not get the chance.

As Durkin drew back his arm to whip a punch to Jim's face the younger man flashed in with a hard left that knocked the bully's head back, and before he could recover a painful right landed like lightning on his unshaven jaw. It was more surprise than damage that toppled the big man backwards, that and a trip over a railway line.

In a flash he was on his feet, and again that left and right landed before his own wild lunges were anywhere near the boy.

Again Durkin fell back, tripped over a loose sleeper and crashed on top of a rail.

Rose ran to Jim, who put his arm protectively round her shoulders.

"Get up!" ordered Jim. "And say you're sorry."

For a moment Durkin hesitated.

"You go to blazes!" he cried.

Rose clutched at Jim.

"Let him go!" she begged. "He's been drinking."

"Don't you try making any mischief," Durkin blustered, "or I'll make it hot for everybody round these parts! I was only teasing the little fool."

"You'd better get back to your job!" Jim snapped out. "Try tricks like that again and I'll smash you!"

Without a word Durkin slunk away, but he looked up like a tiger at bay when a yell of laughter rang out. His hands became crooked and his teeth showed in a vicious snarl. Wildly he ran towards the grinning railwaymen; they did not wait.

"Durkin could cause trouble," Rose told Jim. "Father's very busy, and if he had to fire Durkin now it would be awkward. Let's say nothing about it. A man of his type doesn't know what he's doing when he gets some of that smuggled spirit into him."

"Have it your own way," Jim was not pleased. "I hate telling tales out

of school, but I don't like a skunk like that remaining around. Durkin's a dangerous man. A bully and a mystery; you ought to hear what Tom thinks of him. Well, Rose, we'll say nothing; but next time I see anything I go straight to your old man."

The Census Collector.

JAMES NELSON, SEN., sat in his office, and before him was a pile of accounts and a cheque-book. Standing by the side of the desk was the railroad detective.

"When he got that job I wrote off one heavy account," the president was chuckling. "When he got promotion to fireman I wrote off several more; but wasn't I cheered when I heard about promotion to engineman. Reckon I'll pay off the lot and give the boy a clean sheet."

"Well, chief, I guess you ought to know something." The detective rubbed his chin. "Maybe it won't be such good news. There's a gal."

"Jim carrying on with some girl?" Instantly the president turned into a war-horse. "What kind of a girl?"

"Daughter of the yard master," was the answer. "Of course, she isn't his sort, chief, and I thought—"

"Never mind what you thought. What is she like?"

"She's a good-looker and seems a nice sort of girl." The detective pursed his lips. "But it did occur to me that she might have recognised your son and be thinking of the future."

"You're right. What's her name?"

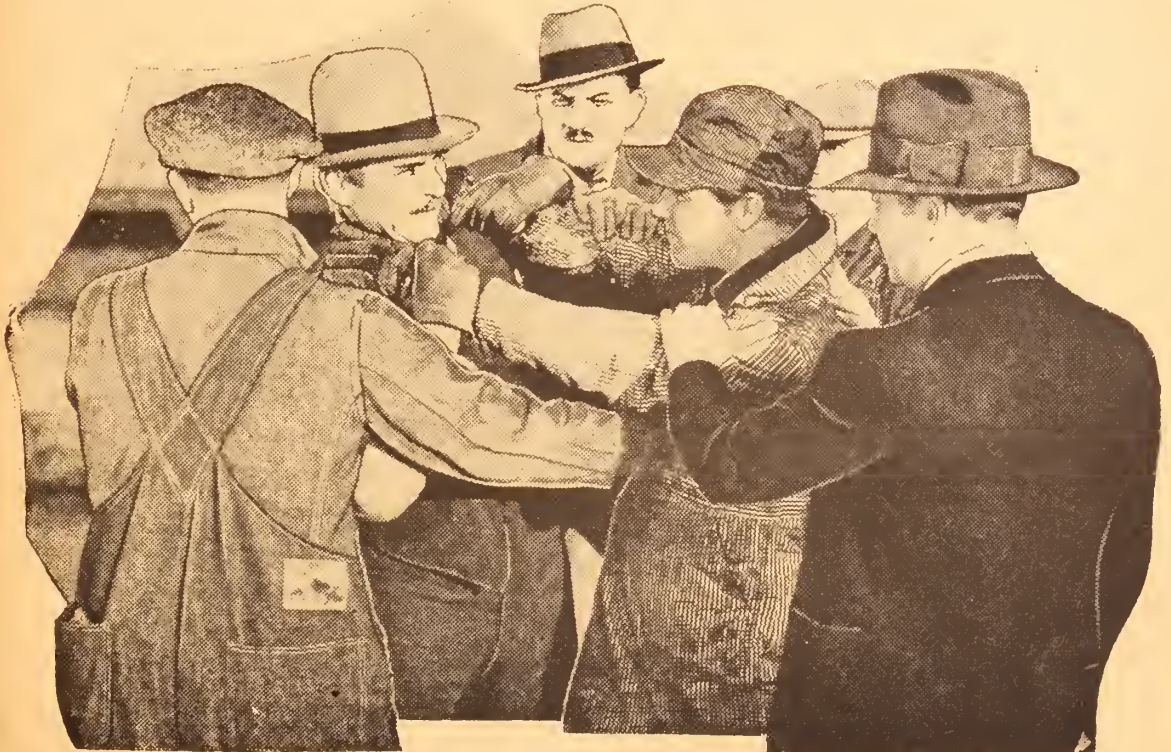
"Rose Rogers, chief."

"Rogers—Rogers! Not Rocky Rogers?" the president demanded.

"Thin, clean-shaven, hard-jawed, determined sort of a man, piercing eyes and slightly bowed shoulders?"

"Sounds like him, chief."

"Rocky and I were buddies together," the president mused. "He went to Canada and for years we kept in touch, but when I got on the board I offered



Jim had Durkin by the throat. . . .

him a job. The proud old fool said he could make his way without any favours. I'll lay every cent I've got up's Rocky, and the old dog has joined up with my railroad and made good. Kinda surprise him when I go to South Orkney. I'll go right away." He pressed on several buttons. "I'll have a special and go north and I'll take an eye-ful of this girl."

Rose was busy cooking when there came a knock at the front door. None too pleased to be interrupted, the girl answered the summons and found herself smiling at a tall, white-haired, kindly-looking old man.

"Might I come in for a moment?" the president requested. "I'm a census-taker for the railway, and maybe you can help me."

"You're a census-taker?" The girl invited him to enter. "Why, they only did that a few months ago."

"Yeah, I thought they did it badly, so I"—he laughed hurriedly—"so I've got the job of doing it again. Comfortable place you've got here. Your name is Rogers, isn't it?"

"Yes; Rose Rogers."

The president observed a picture of a young man.

"Your brother, I suppose?"

"Something more than a brother." The girl spoke in a whisper, her eyes turned towards the picture. How surprised she would have been if she had seen the census-taker raise his eyebrows and finger his lips—her expression had been noted.

"A handsome-looking young man," opined Mr. Nelson. "Don't you think the eyes are a little too close, and—?" He saw the battle-light. "No, perhaps you're right. Still, the jaw might be a little firmer."

"You should have seen him lay out someone who got fresh with me the other day," snapped Rose. "If he were here now you wouldn't say his jaw was weak. Any questions I can answer?"

"I like a girl who stands up for her man." James Nelson nodded his approval. "I apologise for even suggesting the chin was weak. Now I look at the picture again I see my mistake, and"—he sniffed—"surely that smell—gingerbread?"

"Oh, oh, and it's burning!" Rose fled to the kitchen.

James Nelson followed her and watched deft fingers removing a cake from the oven. He licked his lips.

"Haven't tasted gingerbread for years," he commented. "Mother always used three eggs."

"This has two. Three's too rich," answered the girl. "Like to try a bit?"

James Nelson tried two bits, and when he left took a third portion in his handkerchief.

"Rocky's daughter is just the girl for Jim," were his thoughts. "If I weren't so fat I could do a war-dance."

Not till the nice old man had gone did Rose give a gasp. Why, he hadn't asked a single question about the census. Another thing that perplexed her was that his face seemed vaguely familiar. Perhaps father would be able to explain the mystery.

MURDER!

TOM SUMMERS seemed moody and distracted as he lounged against a stack of heavy packing-cases. Jimmy, seated on another and munching some bread and cheese, studied his friend.

"What's worrying you, Tom?"

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"Letter from the yard master. Can't blame him for it."

"Old Rogers not complaining, is he?"

"Complaining! Gee, you oughta read his letter!" Tom gave his friend a glance. "And if I knew who the skunk was, I'd wring his neck!"

"Wring whose neck?" Jim was puzzled. "I don't get the hang of the trouble. Not anything to with that thieving, is it?"

"You've hit it on the head, Jim," sighed the goods foreman. "I've told you that goods have been vamoosing into thin air. Well, I ain't said a lot about it, as I hate moaning, and I've tried to trace the thefts myself. Not a bit of luck. The guy what does the trick must be well informed. Last week from my yard two bales of cotton, two huge cases of tinned goods, and a case containing six very expensive shot-guns vanished. To-day's Wednesday, and, so far, the loss amounts to four bales of mixed goods, a packing-case full of expensive china, a portable outboard motor, and several other items!"

"Gosh, Tom, why didn't you tell me before?"

"Wanted to get the skunk myself, and I hate making a lot of fuss." Tom scowled. "Three nights last week and two this I haven't gone to bed, but not a sign. The chief is naturally riding the high horse, and says that if this pilfering doesn't stop, something's going to happen. Can't blame the old man for getting riled, because it sure looks as if I ain't taking proper precautions. If I don't get this guy mighty soon I look like going out on my ear!"

"Tom, I'm going to help you in this business," cried Jim. "I'll keep my eyes open, and to-night I'll do a prowling round the yard."

"That's mighty good of you, pal." Tom looked up as a whistle shrilled.

"Hallo, time to get back to work! You're shunting this morning?"

"Yes, and I'm hoping to be out on the open road before long," Jim grinned. "Now, you're not to worry, old chap; we'll get this crook and his gang. See you mid-day."

Tom went about his business and chance took him, some two hours later, to a quiet sector of the yard. A goods train was parked on a side line, and Tom knew it was due out that afternoon. A perplexed frown creased his forehead, because he could see through the bogeys the wheels of a motor-lorry. Evidently someone was loading or unloading!

Quietly Tom ran over several sets of lines until he had reached the freight car on the other side of which was the lorry. The hum of voices came to the listener, and then his teeth showed in a triumphant gleam as he heard something heavy being moved. A pause, and then, by peering beneath the car, Tom saw the lorry jolt and creak—something heavy had been dumped on to it.

Tom reached up and ever so slowly worked open the sliding doors of the freight car and peered in. On the motor-lorry, which he could see, owing to the other doors being wide open, were various bales and packing-cases, whilst the freight car was half empty. Two men were arranging the goods on the open lorry, another was at the driver's seat, and supervising the loading was Durkin.

So that skunk Durkin—the bully and blusterer—was the thief!

Tom was so mad that he could hardly think. The yard-foreman, whom the old man trusted, was nothing more nor less than a dirty sneak-thief! Tom's fingers itched to get a throttle-hold on the scoundrel.

He was so enraged that he started to crawl under the car; but he had sense

enough to know that Durkin and his bunch would hear him, knock him stiff and make a get-away. To run round the freight train meant a journey past two more cars. Best to do that and watch the gang, whilst endeavouring to attract someone's attention to fetch assistance.

But Tom, as he closed the sliding doors, made sufficient noise to attract the sharp ears of Durkin.

"What was that?" hissed the crook foreman, and at once leaped into the freight car. Cautiously he pulled back the doors and saw the figure of Tom. "Hades, a sneaking spy! Boys, Tom Summers has got wise to our game!"

The foreman leaped out of the van.

"I've got to try and get Summers," he shouted.

Jim Nelson had just finished shunting a number of trucks and had just banked up the fires to await further instructions. He was leaning out of the cab, dreaming and smiling to himself, thinking of Rose, and the fact that she had confessed her love for him.

The dreamy look left his eyes as they registered someone waving a red handkerchief. He peered under shaded hand. He saw an engineless freight train and, running along the lines, someone waving a red handkerchief, or so. It was Tom Summers. He waved his cap and Tom stopped running to point excitedly at the goods train.

"By gar, Tom's rumbled something!" Jim guessed the truth and jumped to the starting-lever.

The big engine quivered and then moved forward with gathering speed.

Durkin came to a panting stop when he got a clear view of the yard. His bloodshot eyes saw the engine moving down the next set of lines and Tom Summers waving and gesticulating. Desperately Durkin glanced round for his best way of escape, and his eyes gleamed with a fiendish light as he saw a hand-lever that controlled some catch-points. If he pushed the lever back it would change the points, thus diverting the oncoming engine on to the same track as the freight train.

His idea was to cause confusion and stop Tom Summers from getting at them before a get-away could be carried out with success.

To think was to act, and Durkin dragged over the lever. Little did he guess the terrible result of this deed!

Jim had disappeared into the cab as Durkin changed the lever, and therefore did not notice the altered points at first glance. He saw Tom scurry across the lines, with the evident intention of attacking Durkin. His hand was prepared to set the brakes, when his eyes nearly bulged out of his head.

Before him were the points, and he saw that his engine would be switched on to the same line as the freighter. He had not bothered about these points before, because they were not supposed to be touched.

Tom had one foot over the side line that joined the two sets when the whistle from Jim's engine made him look round. He misunderstood the signal as being one of encouragement to attack Durkin. Tom knew the points and expected Jim's engine to remain on the other set of rails.

A screeching of brakes made Tom turn and realise his danger. He would have got clear if he had not caught his foot and fallen.

Next moment the giant engine seemed to be upon him. A scream of mortal anguish, and then silence.

Jim had seen the whole tragedy, and when he had brought his engine to a stop, stood on the footplate, with arms over his eyes, slowly rocking to and fro.

That scream had paralysed him into a sort of coma.

Suddenly blind, murderous rage dispersed the coma, and Jim jerked his arms from his eyes. Just before the engine had run Tom down he had seen the lever and how close it was to Durkin. The foreman stood as if rooted to the spot, staring with horrified gaze at the still figure beneath the wheels. Jim leaped from the cab.

The yell of agony and the scream of the brakes had been heard. Men came running from sheds, and saw an engine almost on top of a freight train; some with keener sight saw the figure under the wheels and scented a tragedy. From all parts they ran towards the scene.

Jim had got Durkin by the throat, and so fierce was his rage that the other looters had not the courage to interfere. Vainly the foreman struggled to break away, but, in the nick of time, railway-men pulled Jim off.

"He's murdered Tom! Murdered Tom!" babbled Jim. "Let me kill him! Let me kill him!"

They dragged him away—Jim was almost foaming at the mouth. Then someone saw the lorry and the three thieves, who had been staring as if hypnotised. An angry mob seized them and made them prisoners.

Two Fathers and a Heart-broken Girl.

JAMES NELSON, president of the C.G. & F. Railroad, paced the comfortable sitting-room of the Rogers' shack. The yard-master looked gloomy and worried. It was two days after the death of Tom Summers.

To meet again after all this time—and at once tragedy had set in! James Nelson had gone to the yard-master's office, and the two old friends were talking over old times when the accident had happened. Then Rogers had learnt the true name of the lad who loved his daughter.

"It's a terrible business."

Rocky Rogers spoke at last.

"It's enough to unnerve the strongest of men. I thought for a little while that Jim had gone off his head. It took about six men to hold him down. All the rest of that day he babbled and raved, yelling the name of Durkin and trying to fight an imaginary person. Doc got him off with a sleeping draught at last, and you know what the boy was like when he recovered his wits."

"Yeah, I know," muttered James Nelson. "He can't get over the fact that Tom Summers is dead. He feels he's killed his best friend and—"

He turned for consolation to his old buddy. "Do you think his nerve has gone for good, Rocky?"

"He surely took on in a dreadful fashion," confessed Rocky. "Wouldn't see Rose, because he said he was tainted with blood, and acted so queerly that I advised my girl not to go to him. The only chance seemed to get him right away."

"So you detailed him for Three Beeches?" The president nodded his head with approval. "Guess you did the right thing, Rocky. I wondered if I did right in keeping to the background?"

"After what happened

with Rose—yes," answered Rocky. "He would have edged away and said there was blood between him and you. Three Beeches is a quiet spot up in the hills. We have a cabin there, because a sector of several miles has two sets of tracks, where goods and 'slows' can be switched off the main track to let through expresses. He swore he could never handle an engine again; but time is a marvellous healer, James, and the strong air up there will put him on better terms with himself."

"He won't do anything crazy up there?" the president asked.

"Oh, he's sensible enough now, but can't get out of his mind the terrible end of Tom Summers." Rocky put his arm round the president. "I've got a suggestion. I like that boy of yours and so does Rose. I haven't seen her upset many times, but she's almost off her head. I'll fetch her in, James."

Rose was white-faced, and her pretty eyes showed signs of tears. Her father drew her into his arms.

"There, there, my dear," he comforted the girl.

"Can't we do something, daddy?"

"Yeah, I've got a suggestion." Rocky gave a smile as he saw the eager light in the president's eyes. "You've got your own train down here. That sector's pretty clear after eleven to-night. I've got a heavy goods going through, and after that the main line will be free for nigh on four hours. Soon after the freight pulls out, you might pull out as well."

"You mean go and see Jim?" cried the president. "That's a swell idea!"

"And maybe Rose might like to go with you," hinted the yard-master.

"You two might work a genuine cure." "Will you come with me, Rose?" asked the president, and her answer was to leave her father and hold out both hands to him.

What was the prisoner in his solitary cell doing? He was slashing at the wall with a long-bladed knife, and already had chipped away a mass of old and rotten mortar to expose portions of a stone slab.

That morning Durkin had been sentenced to four years, and in the morning he would be removed to the State Penitentiary.

The rascally foreman knew what the inside of a prison was like. He blamed what had befallen him on the shoulders of Jim Nelson. What the blazes did the fool want to kill Tom Summers for, and why should he have to suffer? Crazy reasoning, but Durkin was half mad, and he thirsted for vengeance.

To-morrow they would take him away, so if he wanted to escape, now was his only chance. The dagger hidden in his clothes had not been found, and a few probes with the point showed him a way to use it. If he could dig away the mortar he would get to stone slabs, and if the cement between the slabs could be chipped away he could push out a hole and crawl to freedom.

At last the mortar had been removed and a stone slab loosened. A hard thrust and the slab toppled backwards. Durkin was aware that his cell backed on to a refuse heap and would be unwatched. Not many moments later he stood up outside the gaol and stretched his arms.

Free! Free! His teeth came together in a vicious grimace as he thought of



Jim snatched away the telephone just as Durkin tried to break the flex.

Jim Nelson. He would get that young fool and then aim north for the border.

Durkin crept into a railwaymen's shelter and stole a soft felt hat. With the hat pulled down over his eyes, he made his way to the railway. From a cleaner whom he recognised as a new hand, Durkin learnt of Jim's post up in the hills.

With clenched fists and bloodlust in his heart, the ex-foreman set out to tramp the six miles up to Three Beeches.

The Runaway Trucks.

JIM NELSON sat in his lonely cabin. There was a strained, tense look about the youngster. Every now and again he would get up and pace the cabin or walk out on to the veranda round the signal-box. The stars twinkled in the sky, and a moon was edging above the pines. How peaceful, and yet Jim was far from feeling at rest. No wonder where he looked he seemed to see the blood-stained body of his friend.

"I shall go mad—mad!" He pressed his knuckles to his forehead.

It was with relief that he heard the telephone summon him.

Old Pudge doing duty at a box two miles down the grade was reporting a heavy freight train on the way. Jim set his signals and fell again to pacing up and down. Now and again he seemed to shiver and a queer light appeared in his eyes. Was he going mad? Perhaps this was all some hideous nightmare—

A wheezing, grunting chug warned him that the "goods" was approaching, and he went out on to the veranda. He felt better at seeing signs of human life, the fireman and driver standing in the glow of an open fire-box, and the rumbling thud of the heavy freighter as it cranked and groaned past the box.

The men waved to Jim and he waved back, but when the train had disappeared round a bend all the misery and anguish returned. In the darkness he seemed to see grinning, mocking faces. An engine madly rushing towards a man, who waved his arms in despair, and screamed in terror as the engine mowed him down.

Jim cleared the train to the box two-and-a-half miles farther on, at the top of the grade. Then he tried a smoke, but that had no effect. A magazine drove him crazy, because the first picture he looked at was an engine running some person down. He flung the paper from him.

A call came from South Orkney that a special had left the junction.

He was sitting with bowed head when the telephone-bell brought another message. The freight train was passing the summit. Nothing more for hours to relieve the monotony.

Along the line a figure was stalking. In the darkness the man's eyes seemed to blaze.

The signal-box at last. Cautiously he climbed the wooden steps and grinned as he saw Jim Nelson sitting by a table with his head on his hands.

Durkin had come for his revenge.

Anderson, in charge of the summit signal-box, was smoking his pipe and reading yesterday's paper when a rumbling roar made him jump to his feet. What in the name of heck was that row?

Out on to the veranda he charged. A red light was moving rapidly towards him. What could it mean? He understood when three freight trucks rumbled past his cabin. The goods train had broken in halves—and the three heavy bogies were sliding back towards

October 31st, 1931.

Three Beeches. At once Anderson remembered the special train he had been signalled about.

He darted to the 'phone to warn Three Beeches about the trucks. There was no answer to his frantic calls.

Fighting with a Madman.

JIM NELSON had covered his eyes with his hands, but that did not help. Even though he closed his eyes his brain weaved terrible pictures, with Tom Summers grimaicing through them.

The shutting of a door disturbed Jim, and he took a hand from his eyes. What was that? The spirit of Tom Summers came to mock him?

A sneering laugh, and Jim spun round, with ashen cheeks. But it was not the ghost of Tom Summers that stood there, but the evil, snarling Durkin. The man's hands were crooked, and his lips were drawn back, showing the broken teeth clenched in fierce hate.

Jim was spell-bound, unable to move as he watched the man, with bated breath, coming towards him.

"I'm gonna smash you to a pulp!" leered Durkin. "Kill you! And I'm gonna leave your body on the line, so that no one will know who did the killing!"

Durkin for the time was out of his mind, and had only one idea—to kill.

Slowly Jim stood up, but he was un-

conscious of the act. Though he recognised Durkin, his mind was a nightmare. This was all part of a dreadful dream! In a moment Tom Summers would appear, and would see Durkin murder him.

As Jim shrank back, Durkin mistook the action for fear, and laughed crazily. He strode forward and drove his fist into Jim Nelson's face, and the youngster crashed to the floor. Durkin yelled with laughter. He would smash Nelson, and then throw the body on the lines! Why bother to use a knife?

But that blow acted as a tonic to Jim. The blow had hurt him, and so had the fall to the ground. This was no nightmare! He had been knocked down! He opened his eyes and glared into Durkin's evilly grinning face.

"I escaped!" shouted the maniac. "You thought I was safe behind prison bars, but I got free because I had sworn to kill you!"

Jim leapt to his feet. Before Durkin could reach him, the youngster's fist had landed to the jaw.

"Take that, you murdering skunk!"

Durkin saw that Nelson was going to make a fight for it. Perhaps he had better use the knife, after all! Directly the knife appeared, Jim shot out a straight kick with his right foot, and, with a yell of pain, Durkin's fingers opened and the knife flew through the air, to bury itself in the wall. Like two tigers, the men faced each other and then sprang.

Backwards and forwards they rocked, a table crashed over, and they rolled to the floor. First Durkin was on top, trying to batter Jim's head against the boards; then Jim would wriggle his man over, and they would try to crush the breath from each other's bodies.

They got to their feet and swapped punches. By now their clothes were half torn from their backs. Their chests rose and fell under the intensity of the struggle. Durkin raised a chair above his head and rushed at Jim, but the youngster ducked and banged his fist into the others' ribs. The chair smashed against the door of the signal-box. Jim sprang at Durkin. They clinched, and once more crashed to the floor.

Then the telephone-bell began to ring—and ring—and ring!

Desperately Jim struggled with Durkin, who seemed possessed of the strength of a demon. Every foul trick possible did he try. With his fingers he clawed at Jim's eyes and tried to seize the youngster by the hair, when only by hard jabs to the ribs could Jim break free.

Jim snatched away and saved the telephone just as Durkin tried to break the flex, but he could not attempt to get the message, as Durkin was on him again in a flash.

All the while the bell kept ringing, and Jim knew that a call at this time meant something terribly urgent.

Durkin had both eyes badly pumelled and his body was sore, but Jim had not escaped unscathed. A vicious kick had seemed to smash his right ankle, and he could hardly stand, whilst Durkin's claws had caused his left cheek to bleed. No word was spoken between the two fighters: they panted and grunted under the exertion of this titanic battle.

Jim knew he must get his man by boxing, for Durkin knew too many dirty tricks. He landed a heavy punch to the jaw and right above the heart, but Durkin just shook his head and fought on.

All the while the telephone-bell kept up its insistent ringing.

Jim was flung back by a lucky right-

(Continued on page 27.)

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The Festival of the Fools.

THE fifteenth century with Paris in the throes of internal strife. Troublesome times indeed, for the throne of King Louis XI was threatened with extinction, while members of the nobility of the city moved about in danger of their lives.

"Down with the aristocrats!" The cry had gone forth among the people, and it needed but the semblance of a flame to set fire to the grim torches of revolution.

The trouble had started with the shortage of money brought about by pitiless taxation. Soon the Parisians found themselves in rags and tatters, slowly starving on account of their inability to afford food that was at high prices. And for this parlous state of affairs the king and the cursed aristocrats were to blame. Self alone counted with them—so long as they had money and fine clothes, wine with their dainty dishes, and generally led a gay life it did not matter a hang what happened to those outside their avaricious world.

Discontent therefore rapidly merged into bitter hatred against the oppressors, though on the day of the Festival of the Fools, an annual event of great importance in Paris, no one would have thought that revolution was so near to knocking at the door.

The market square, with the famous Cathedral of Notre Dame as its background, was seething with a riotous and jolly throng. Some with masks covering their faces, others in fancy dress made for the most part with paper—all singing at the top note of their voices and dancing with great abandon.

A stir among the masses when the king came driving through the square—stopped his carriage to frown on them

with displeasure and to pass a word of disapproval to his chamberlain.

The singing stopped as did the dancing, and angry mutterings ran around the dense crowd. But the king did not bat an eyelid, and no hostile move was made. For all his arrogance, his extravagance and dissipation King Louis XI was a brave and courageous man, and he appeared frequently in the streets despite the disturbing rumours of pending revolution that reached him from time to time.

For two or three minutes he eyed his dissatisfied subjects levelly, a sncer on his lips, then motioned to the royal driver with a superior wave of the hand. His carriage, rumbling away over the cobblestones of the square, was the signal of a renewal of the festivities of the day, and in another moment the air was hideous with ribald laughter and lusty song as the people again flung themselves into the gay spirit of carnival.

And so it went on while afternoon merged into evening, then with the approach of dusk there sounded above the wild revelry the ringing of the giant bell of Notre Dame. Almost time now for the ceremony that would mark the end of the festivities for yet another year—none other than crowning the ugliest man in Paris "King of the Fools."

An outstanding event, yet there were two of the multitude that thronged the square at that moment who were not interested in that function in the least. One was a tall, evil-looking ruffian dressed almost in rags with a straggly beard and side-whiskers and cruel, sinis-

ter grey eyes. Clopin, robber, vagrant, murderer, recognised king of the underworld and the throne's most dangerous enemy. Clopin it was who was for ever urging the populace to unleash the hounds of revolution.

He was on the steps of the cathedral, lounging against one of the stately pillars, a sneer on his thin, cruel lips, scorn flashing from his eyes as he gazed down upon the revellers, when suddenly he felt a touch on his arm. A startled oath escaping him he swung round, his grimy hand going to the haft of the knife that was concealed beneath the folds of the ragged cloak he wore.

"You, Jehan!" Clopin let his hand fall to his side as he recognised the other, but not for a moment did the fierce expression leave his face. "You gave me quite a fright, curse you. What in hades do you want?"

"Nothing, my friend," came the smooth answer. "But how fares the revolutionary cause? When do you strike?"

"Sooner than you may expect!" Clopin shot him a shrewd glance. Well he knew the evil nature of Jehan, unworthy brother of Dom Claude, the arch-deacon of Notre Dame. But he could not fathom whether the man was for or against the revolutionists. It was quite possible he was a spy, for he was always keen to glean information concerning the movement, yet knowing him for what he was, a heavy drinker and gambler and a clever thief into the bargain, Clopin felt sure he could not be

a royalist. "Yes, Jehan, the time is almost at hand, then heaven help all those who are against us!"

A glance at the arch-deacon's brother that held as much meaning as did the tone of his voice, then Clopin drew his cloak closer about him and strode away. For several seconds Jehan watched the tall figure shouldering a way through the roystering crowd, then as the ringing of the bell high up in the tower of the cathedral suddenly ceased, he swung on his heels and made off, a crafty light in his evil eyes that showed he was planning some fell scheme.

Deafening cheers arose on the air now, and with one accord the revellers turned eager eyes upwards to where a small figure could be seen on the topmost balcony of the cathedral. Quasimodo, the bell-ringer of Notre Dame, a pathetic little figure though repulsive to the eye.

Poor Quasimodo! The fates had not been kind to him, for he was a hunchback, was blind in one eye, and almost deaf. In addition to which he had a deformed nose, was knock-kneed, had but a few stumps of teeth in his head, and possessed the brain of a child. But for all his terrible deformity he had a heart of gold, though he would do anything he was told to do not knowing if it were right or wrong.

The ugliest man in Paris, and he had been crowned as such at the Festival of the Fools for years now!

To the accompaniment of wild cheering, Quasimodo leaned over the stone balustrade at the top of Notre Dame, dancing about like some delighted child and pulling hideous faces at the roystering crowd in the square below.

"Come on down, Quasimodo! We want to crown you!"

As the cry was taken up with much fervour, the hunchback swung himself over the balustrade, and with amazing agility and without any apparent regard for his own safety he came shinning down the face of the cathedral, seeking handholds and footholds where he could among the massive stonework.

The ground reached in safety, he was immediately pounced on by some dozen men, and there on the steps of the cathedral a gilded cardboard crown was rammed upon his head, and then he was marched around the square on the shoulders of two powerful fellows while the mob laughed and cheered with great gusto.

But at last he was let down, grinning happily in an absurd kind of way, and he joined in the singing and shouting, pushing his way hither and thither among the seething crowd.

He came presently to one end of the square where a cluster of people was gathered. From beyond the ring they formed came the sound of a tambourine and the liquid notes of a girl's voice raised in song. Though he could hear nothing of what was going on, Quasimodo's curiosity was aroused and he pushed his way through the crowd and came to the inner edge of the circle.

On the instant his ugly face lit up as he gazed with his one sound eye at the vision of loveliness who was entertaining the crowd with a song and dance, the tambourine in her hand her only accompaniment. A slip of a girl little more than eighteen, bare-footed, with dancing china-blue eyes and golden-brown hair that hung in masses about her shapely shoulders. Esmeralda, ward of the rascally Clopin, who had kidnapped her in the streets when she was barely out of the cradle and who forced her to work in this way to bring money to his greedy pockets.

As she came to the end of her song and dance the audience applauded her

vociferously, and none more so than Quasimodo. In his enthusiasm the little hunchback hopped about excitedly, clapping his gnarled hands and uttering gurgling sounds at the back of his throat.

A wonderful girl—this Esmeralda whom he had only seen once before. He felt he wanted to make her acquaintance, and with this object in view he shuffled towards her. It was at that moment that Esmeralda, bowing to the plaudits, caught sight of him and the grotesque figure he cut caused her to recoil involuntarily and to utter a cry of fear.

"Very, very good, my dear." The hunchback grinned as he confronted her. In a vague kind of way he wondered why she shrank from him, and he placed his hand on her arm to reassure her as an inkling of the truth penetrated his dull brain. "But you are scared of me. Now, now, I won't hurt you—not I."

But the twisted grin on his face, the laughter of the watching crowd, completely unnerved Esmeralda and, with a frightened cry, she flung off Quasimodo's hand and ran into a nearby tent which she used as a place of rest in the intervals between her entertaining.

Next second those who had watched her act had shuffled away to rejoin the waning festivities of that memorable day, and they swept Quasimodo along with them.

A Sinister Plot.

THE next night while Clopin was addressing a full muster of his revolutionary followers, pouring vindictive words against the king into their ears and telling them that it was absolutely necessary to the success of their cause that they should strike without further delay, Jehan, the brother of the arch-deacon of Notre Dame, confronted Quasimodo as the hunchback came out of the cathedral on his way to buy himself some food.

"Quasimodo, I want you to help me." Jehan glanced about him to make sure that he would not be overheard. Then he took hold of the hunchback's arm and bent very close to his ear. "There's a girl—Esmeralda, the ward of that rascal Clopin—that I want to take away from this terrible city before the trouble starts. You know what I mean—the talk of revolution. I should hate to see anything happen to her, so I've decided to take on the task of protecting her. I'm better fitted to do that than anyone, and I'm sure my brother, the arch-deacon, would wish it thus."

Artful Jehan. He had long since coveted the beautiful Esmeralda, but knew that he stood not a chance of winning her affections by fair court, so he had determined to kidnap her, to take her right away from Paris, and then to force her to marry him. But he must have help. Quasimodo was just the man to assist him—a simple, guileless fellow, but Jehan was wise to tell the hunchback that his scheme would meet with the arch-deacon's approval. A crafty way to obtain Quasimodo's co-operation, for the rascal was aware of the wonderful faith the hunchback had in Dom Claude's judgment.

"A kindly thought and very wise." The hunchback grinned up at Jehan as he nodded his head with approval. "You want me to help kidnap her? You don't think she would go of her own free-will?"

"I most certainly don't," Jehan replied. "You see, she's very grateful

to Clopin for all he's done for her, and wouldn't dream of deserting him even at the price of her own life. A wonderful girl, Quasimodo, and very loyal even to that brute."

"Very well, I'll help you," said Quasimodo, a trace of excitement in his voice.

"Good, then let us hasten. Esmeralda will be along soon to buy Clopin's supper. She gets it every night for him from Michel's place."

At the moment that Jehan and Quasimodo moved stealthily across the darkened square, Clopin, surrounded by his revolutionary followers in the underground cellar of a tumbledown warehouse that backed on to the River Seine, paused in his traitorous oratory to cast suspicious eyes on a short, dark-haired man who sat not a dozen yards from him. Where had he seen that face before? A moment's thought, and then it came to him. A man he had once seen riding with the king. A spy!

With a bound Clopin was upon the fellow and he caught his arm in a grip of steel while his followers gazed at him in open-mouthed amazement, wondering what could be wrong.

"Ah, ha, a spy!" Clopin's teeth bared in an ugly smile and viciously he shook his captive. "You know what we do to spies, fellow?"

The victim bravely squared his shoulders. Useless to deny the accusation, for he remembered now how Clopin had looked at him searchingly that day he had ridden with the king and the carriage had passed close to the revolutionary leader. No doubt at all that Clopin had recognised him.

"I don't, my dear Clopin." Gringoire, poet and singer to King Louis XI, smiled defiantly at his captor. "But this I do know. You dare not harm me, for you'd have the king's guard about your ears before you knew where you were!"

"Oh, oh, so you think I'm scared of the soldiery, do you? Well, I'll show you I'm not, you dirty knave!" His face blazing with fierce rage, Clopin flung up his free arm to enjoin silence, then ran his eyes around the motley throng gathered about him. "Citizens, hark you! This man is a spy! I recognise him as one in the king's pay. A spy and a dirty aristocrat who must be punished forthwith. Now, citizens, what form shall that punishment take?"

Wild shouts and ugly threats ripped the air while fiercely blazing eyes were directed at the prisoner. Almost it seemed that a concerted rush would be made and Gringoire torn limb from limb.

"Best string him up!" came in a vicious shout from one grey-bearded man. "Hang the dirty rat!"

"Ay, hang him! Hang him!"

The cry was taken up, and it echoed eerily in the confined space of the cellar, causing Gringoire to shudder violently, brave man though he undoubtedly was. A sign from Clopin and three husky ruffians caught hold of the victim and dragged him to where stood an improvised gibbet which Clopin had recently had erected in readiness for prisoners when the grim business of revolution started in earnest.

Already a rope had been produced by Clopin's right-hand man and slung over the cross-piece of wood at the top of the rough structure. A noose was made at one end of the rope and dropped over Gringoire's head, the while the revolutionaries hurled vicious oaths and threats at the white-faced prisoner.

"Right, string the rat up!" commanded Clopin, stepping forward with a diabolical grin on his sinister face when all was ready. "And may his cursed bones rot!"

Loud laughter as Clopin's lieutenant began to pull on the rope—and then came an unexpected interruption.

"You brutes! Let him alone! Let him alone!" Esmeralda, white of face, came thrusting her way wildly through the mob. Bravely she confronted Clopin, her tiny hands clenching and unclenching at her sides. "Order those men to release that poor fellow at once. You hear me, Clopin?"

Clopin grinned nastily and thrust her roughly aside. But the girl was not to be denied. Quickly she seized his arm and raised her voice so that it could be heard above the angry mutterings and the jeers of his fanatical followers.

"Clopin, you let him go at once, or by the saints I swear you'll pay for it!" Esmeralda's face was grimly set, determination blazed in the depths of her wondrous eyes. "Yes, I mean it. My guardian though you may be, I'll expose your revolutionary schemes to the King immediately if you carry on with this vile business. You understand?"

Clopin's glinting eyes bore into the girl's, but she met the fierce look unflinchingly. Well she knew that the scoundrel worshipped her and would hesitate to harm her even though she threatened him thus. And it was upon this knowledge she was banking to force his hand now.

"Very well, Esmeralda, have it your own way." He smiled somewhat ruefully and shrugged his massive shoulders. Then he swung round on his chief lieutenant, who had paused in his gruesome task. "Desist, Jean, and release the knave. Then see him to the street; but whatever you do kick him hard before you let him go."

"But the man's a spy—he must hang!" protested a cross-eyed fellow standing at Clopin's elbow. "Don't let the girl overrule you!"

His words were taken up by all present in the cellar, but Clopin turned on them fiercely, his hand clasped around the hilt of the knife that was concealed beneath his cloak.

"Dogs, you would defy me, eh?" he shouted vehemently. "Well, I say the fellow is to be released, and my word goes. Now what do you say to that?"

Silence. All were aware of Clopin's tremendous power and all feared him. Not a dissentient voice now, and their leader smiled with satisfaction.

Moments later and Griegoire was released, and as he was hustled from the dank cellar he cast a grateful glance at Esmeralda. As he disappeared in the grip of Jean and two other evil ruffians, Clopin turned to his followers again. A further half-hour's speech to them, then he dismissed them to their homes.

"My supper, Esmeralda." He tossed the girl a coin as they passed out of the warehouse together. "The usual, and see you're not long in getting it."

She nodded and hurried away, making in the direction of the market-place. Down tortuous alleyways and mean streets, and then suddenly there slid from the shadows of a dilapidated house two men who seized her roughly by the arms.

"Let me go, canaille! Let me go!" She struggled to free herself, but in vain. Slowly she was dragged along the street by the powerful hands that gripped her. Her heart racing madly, frightened high out of her wits, she renewed her struggles and almost succeeded in breaking free. And then she caught sight of one of her abductors—saw he was the deformed and grotesque little man who had grinned at her so strangely the previous night when she had been dancing in the square, and yelled again in the panic that instantly seized her.

"Let me go, you beast! Help, help! Oh, help!"

The sudden clatter of horses' hoofs on cobblestones, a clatter that swiftly grew louder. Quickly Jehan released his grip on the half-fainting girl, his face growing white as he realised the dread punishment that would be meted out if he were caught trying to abduct this girl. For kidnapping was a serious offence in France in those grim and terrible days.

"Quick, Quasimodo, we must away!" he hissed in the hunchback's ear. "Riders coming—perhaps the soldiery. Make haste or it'll go hard with us!"

But deaf as he was, Quasimodo did not hear the warning, and as Jehan slid quickly into the shadows he continued to struggle with the girl. Bare seconds later two figures in gleaming armour swept on to the scene, and one of them instantly leaped from his superb white horse and gripped the hunchback in fingers of steel.

"Bind that knave and hold him for the King's justice, Francois!" Phœbus de Chateaupers, captain of the King's Guard, urged his horse close to the

dazed Esmeralda, leaned over sideways in the saddle, caught her about the waist and swung her up in front of him. "All's well, mams'elle, you're safe now. But methinks it was fortunate for you that we happened along this way. Trying to kidnap you, eh?"

She nodded her head, gazing into the handsome face of her rescuer with unconcealed admiration. And for his part Phœbus looked at her covetously, his heart pounding madly against his ribs. A dream of a girl, he told himself, one he would be proud to win for his own. "I will see you safely to your home." A pause while he watched Quasimodo pinioned and led away trailing behind Francois' horse at the end of a rope, then he bent his mouth close to Esmeralda's ear. "Where to, fair maiden?"

Esmeralda's courage had now returned, and she smiled at him.

"Oh, see me to the market-place," she told him. "I can soon get to my home from there."

He nodded and rode away, with Esmeralda seated in front of him, but the market-place reached, he would not let her go till she had taken wine with him in a small tavern. While in the place he learned much about her, and though he discovered that she was the ward of Clopin, recognised in Court circles as the King's most dangerous enemy, the knowledge in no way damped the ardent love for her that had so swiftly surged up in his breast.

Thus romance was born, and Phœbus de Chateaupers, bold soldier of the King, was determined to win the fair Esmeralda for his bride.

A Terrible Punishment.

A BIG crowd was gathered in the market-place to witness the punishment of Quasimodo, who had been sentenced to be whipped in public for two turus of the hour-glass on a charge of attempted abduction.

The court findings, were read as the hunchback was fettered to the whipping-stone and the clothes ripped from his back. At last all was ready, and the first cruel blow was struck with all the



He gazed with his one sound eye at the vision of loveliness who was entertaining the crowd with song and dance.

power of the giant who wielded the many-thonged whip.

A whimper of pain from the victim as he writhed under the lash, while the watching crowd laughed and jeered at him.

Again the thongs whipped across the bare back, then again and again and with each savage cut Quasimodo uttered a painful gasp, his one sound eye rolling wildly in its socket.

The punishment went on, cruel and relentless, while the sand in the hour-glass slowly drained from the top receptacle into the bottom one. Then the glass was turned and the whipping continued, the victim being jeered and ridiculed by the watching crowd each time he yelped and wilted under the inhuman punishment.

But at last it ended, and Quasimodo was left a limp and almost unconscious figure, back bleeding profusely, his tongue lolling in his parched mouth, his one eye goggling hideously.

"Water! Water!" he croaked pathetically. "For the love of the saints please give me water!"

It happened that at that moment Esmeralda was passing through the square. A pitcher was in her hand, for she was on her way to buy Clopin a measure of wine from the nearby tavern. At sound of the hunchback's pleading voice she glanced his way, and sight of him sagging there touched her tender little heart.

One of the men who had tried to kidnap her and as she now knew the bell-ringer of Notre Dame. He had been punished enough—more than enough, to her way of thinking. And it was cruel to leave him like that, a pitiable, almost broken, object, his throat obviously burning for the want of water.

In a second the girl was at the fountain that stood on one side of the square, and quickly filling the pitcher with the clear cool water she hastened to the whipping-stone.

"Here." She held the vessel to Quasimodo's foam-flecked lips, and the tears started to her eyes as she saw the broken and bleeding flesh of his back, the ugly red weals that showed there. "Tis water, you poor man. Drink it and you'll soon feel better."

He quaffed it greedily, the while he looked at her with deep gratitude in his eye. Then when he had drained the pitcher to the last drop she untied his bonds.

"The saints preserve you, girl." Quasimodo lifted his face heavenwards and uttered a silent prayer, but in his heart was fierce hatred for Jehan, whom he considered wholly responsible for his terrible plight.

Why had not the man come forward and owned to the truth, told the court the reason why they had tried to kidnap the girl? Surely if it was to save her from the terrible outcome of revolution the judge would have taken a lenient view of the affair. Dull-witted though he was, the hunchback had a vague idea that Jehan's plans had not been honourable after all, and the thought had the effect of working up within him the red fires of bitter hate. But when he lowered his gaze and looked at the girl again, the expression of his face was soft, while a wan smile flickered around the corners of his twisted mouth.

"You will never regret your kindness to a poor broken man, *maim'selle*." He shook his head to lend emphasis to his words. "I am your slave for ever. If ever you need help I will give it you—"

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will lay down my worthless life if the need arises."

She smiled at him through her tears and gently ruffled his mop of matted hair.

"Thank you," she said simply, and then was gone.

An Ugly Scene.

IN the week that followed Esmeralda saw much of Phœbus de Chateaufers, and in consequence their love for each other grew more and more. But when the gallant young officer suggested marriage the girl put him off, for she was fearful that if she were to marry the man it would invoke her guardian's wrath.

So the two young people had to be content, for the time being, at least, to remain just lovers, though the position greatly nettled Phœbus.

Then one night he persuaded the girl to attend a party at his house, and he bought her a wonderful new-patterned silk dress for her to wear at the function.

Little did the two dream, as they danced together in the spacious and marvellously-furnished ball-room, that Clopin was wise to their courtship—knew from a report received from one of his spies that this night Esmeralda was at Phœbus' house, that the rascal was even then planning to raid the place for the purpose of dragging the girl away from the society of the cursed aristocrats.

A thunderous knocking on the massive front door, then a hoarse voice raised in fury was the first warning of trouble to those in the ball-room. The dance that was in progress instantly stopped, and Phœbus swept Esmeralda protectively into his arms as he saw that the girl was trembling, that her pretty face had gone deathly white.

"Mon dieu, it's my guardian—Clopin!" she gasped tremulously. "He's found out about us. He—he'll kill you, Phœbus. Oh, I know he will, for he hates all aristocrats like poison."

There came the voice of Phœbus' retainer, who was doing his utmost to persuade Clopin and his followers to go peaceably away. But his words were drowned in an ugly menacing roar, and next second there was a crash in the hall outside that told of the front door being thrust violently back on its hinges.

A stamping of heavy feet and loud angry voices, further crashings indicative of chairs and suits of armour being bowled over, then in at the ball-room door came Clopin followed by a horde of his dirty and fierce-faced followers.

"What is the meaning of this unseemly intrusion?" Bravely Phœbus stepped forward, his hand on the jewelled hilt of his sword, and barred Clopin's path.

Clopin glared at him ferociously and snatched out the knife from beneath the folds of his cloak.

"It means, you dirty aristocrat," the rascal hissed from between bared teeth, "that we've come to take Esmeralda away from all this pomp and show—back to where she belongs. Mix with scum like you? Why, I'll see her dead first!"

"Then let me tell you you'll do no such thing, Clopin." Phœbus smiled grimly as he took a firmer grip on his sword. "If Esmeralda wishes to remain here it is no concern of yours. After all, she's only your ward."

"You'd defy me, would you?" rasped Clopin, and took a step nearer the gallant captain.

"Not only that, but I'll call out the

guard and have you flung into gaol for daring to defile my house," Phœbus answered coolly.

"Cut out his arrogant heart, Clopin!" came the hoarse voice of one of Clopin's most ardent supporters.

"That's right!" shouted another fiercely. "It'll show the cursed aristocrats what they may expect from the people who are sucked dry by them. Tax us right and left—laugh that we starve. The dogs—death to them!"

Angry mutterings and threats arose, and the members of Phœbus' household together with their guests started back in alarm. But Phœbus bravely stood his ground, and he whipped out his sword as Clopin, his lips curling in an ugly snarl, came ever nearer him.

"Oh, stop! Stop!" Fearful of bloodshed that at that fearsome moment seemed so imminent, Esmeralda ran forward and thrust herself between the two angry men. Pleading eyes looked up into Clopin's blazing ones. "I meant no harm in coming here, really I didn't, Clopin—and I'm sure these people mean no ill towards you. But I'll come away with you at once, Clopin, if only you'll promise not to do them any harm."

A triumphant and sinister grin spread across the revolutionary leader's ugly face, and he snatched at Esmeralda's wrist. Next second and he turned back to Phœbus, whose face was working with fury on account of the humiliation he had suffered, and openly sneered at him.

"Tis lucky the girl pleads for you, aristocrat," he spat out, "or by now you'd be worth little more than dead meat. But take warning. Don't you dare entice my girl into your company again, or by the powers I'll split your hide!"

He turned about heedless of the wild urgings of his followers to "kill the cursed aristocrats," yelled to them to follow him, then dragged Esmeralda towards the door. Almost sullenly the motley crowd obeyed, muttering discontentedly among themselves as they filed from the house.

Straight to the underground meeting place they followed Clopin, and once there their leader decided them for their stupidity in trying to cause trouble when their numbers were so few. He harangued with them—did they consider the time now ripe to strike their blow for freedom and justice? In his opinion the hour was at hand. They should at once arouse the whole populace, and, armed, set forth to destroy their oppressors.

But there were some who were fearful of the consequences of such a drastic action—whose anger had not yet been fully aroused by Clopin's fiery tongue, and the dissentient voices caused their leader to realise that it was wisdom to wait a few more days before igniting the dread fires of grim revolution. The doubtful ones must be entirely won over to the cause.

Sentenced to Death.

IN secret Esmeralda and Phœbus carried on their courtship, but they were never seen together in the streets. It was their wont to meet some distance down the river, and after spending a joyous hour together they parted from each other there.

But if Clopin did not know of the secret trysting place, Jehan did, and the knowledge that the two young people were greatly attached to each other caused his evil heart to flame with bitter jealousy. How to shatter the romance—to win the girl he coveted for himself? The thought possessed him

day and night, but he could find no way to attain his fell ambition.

He felt he could kill them both. But one day his chance came. One of Clopin's followers had seen Esmeralda going off in the direction of the river, and the girl's guardian had promptly taxed her on the matter, for he had wondered where she had gone the last few nights. She had told him that she had been dancing and singing outside a tavern there, but though he had appeared to be satisfied when she had handed him some money she had tried to save, telling him that that was what she had earned at her new pitch, she somehow felt he did not believe her.

The meeting place must be changed forthwith. Chancing to meet Gringoire, whom she had learned was attached to Phœbus' regiment, Esmeralda sent an urgent message to her lover by him. Would Phœbus meet her in the churchyard of Notre Dame instead of by the river that night?

He came in his bright, smart uniform at the usual time, just as the sun was sinking in the west, and there on a wooden seat in the churchyard she told him the reason why she had changed their trysting place.

"Oh, well, it's best to be cautious, dear." He squeezed the small hands affectionately. "We don't want to have that rascal Clopin down on us if we can possibly avoid it. He's on the look-out as it is for the least chance to stir up strife in the city. A terrible man."

But danger did threaten them nevertheless. Jehan had seen them sitting there, and the jealousy in his mean soul flamed to a terrible rage. A knife was beneath the folds of his cloak, and as his hand sought the hilt, a murderous gleam came into his crafty brown eyes.

He despaired of ever winning the fair Esmeralda. It was too evident from the way they sat with their heads close together, chatting so very confidentially, that the girl would never dream of giving up Phœbus in favour of him. Revenge was all he could hope for now.

Slowly he wormed his way towards them, came stealthily up behind the unsuspecting young couple. The rays of the setting sun glistened on the knife as he whipped it suddenly from under his cloak and brought it down in a vicious thrust.

A gasp of pain from Phœbus as the blade plunged into his side and was quickly withdrawn. Down he slid from the seat to the ground, and as Esmeralda sprang up with a cry of alarm, Jehan dropped his knife and scuttled away as fast as his legs would carry him.

"Phœbus! Phœbus! What is it? What is the matter, dear?" Esmeralda dropped to her knees beside the fallen man. Then she saw the trickle of blood coming from his side, and, her face draining of all colour, she clapped her hand to her mouth in horror. "Help! Help! Oh, quick! Help!"

In a moment or two a crowd had gathered, and among them was an officer of Phœbus' own regiment. A glance at the unconscious man, the wound in his side, then Maurice Le Grande saw the knife that lay by the seat. One grim look he shot at the girl, whom he had seen at his brother officer's party that eventful night, then he gave quick orders to a private soldier who came dashing up at that very moment.

"Fetch a stretcher!" he roared. "Be quick, man!"

As the private ran off the officer dropped to his knees and rendered first aid to the wounded man, staunching

the flow of blood as best he could with a large pocket handkerchief.

Moments later and the stretcher arrived, borne by four sturdy soldiers, and Phœbus was carried away to his home, there to be tended to by a doctor who had been hastily summoned. A bad flesh wound, but the gallant young officer would quickly recover—such was the medico's verdict.

Meanwhile Esmeralda, despite vigorous and tearful denials, had been placed under arrest for attempting the life of an officer of the King's Guard. The blood-stained knife, lying by the seat, seemed conclusive evidence to Maurice Le Grande of the girl's guilt. He remembered the scene at Phœbus' house when Clopin and his fanatics had forced themselves in and taken the girl away with them. Perhaps that scoundrelly revolutionist had persuaded the girl to commit this crime. It seemed very likely, and poor Esmeralda could offer no defence other than to swear she was not guilty. Jehan had escaped as quickly and as stealthily as he had appeared, and neither the girl nor Phœbus had seen him.

She was brought to trial, and again vigorously protested her innocence. But the court would have none of it. She was the ward of a traitor to the king, and, even as Maurice suspected, so did the relentless justices believe that that was sufficient to warrant her committing this foul and unpardonable deed.

But she must be made to confess to the crime!

Poor Esmeralda! She was flung into the inquisition chamber and ruthlessly tortured, and to escape the terrible pain she endured she at last admitted to stabbing Phœbus.

Back before the court she heard her

fate, and as the judge pronounced that she be "put to death" she fell in a swoon. When she awakened to consciousness she found herself in a grim and forbidding cell into which filtered very little light.

Several days she remained there, a complete mental wreck, white-faced, hollow-eyed, unable to sleep or eat the bread and water that was set before her from time to time. And always she thought of Phœbus—the love she knew he had borne her alone keeping her from entirely slipping into the throes of madness. Was he alive or dead? Not a word reached her that he was well on the road to recovery and had been asking for her.

Then, the day before that fixed for her execution, she received a visitor. A tall man in ecclesiastical dress, Jehan, wearing his brother's clothes so that he might gain access to the girl on the pretext of giving her the comfort of the Church in these her last hours.

"Esmeralda, I was horrified to learn of this terrible misfortune that has befallen you." He came across to the girl and tried to take her in his arms as the cell door closed on him. But she shrank from him, as she had done so many times in the past when he had tried to make love to her. "Now, now, my dear, don't be so very silly! I am here as your friend—your one and only friend. I want to help you—to have you set free. But in return you must be nice to me."

"Meaning?" she inquired listlessly.

"That if you will promise to marry me I will get my brother, the arch-deacon, to plead for you. He alone can exert any influence over the king in such a matter as this. Now what do you say?"



"Oh, oh, you'd fetch her, would you?" Quasimodo shook his fist under Clopin's jaw. "I kill you if you so much as try to get the girl!"

"That I'd rather die first—innocent though I am—than marry a man I do not love," she told him bravely.

"Very well"—Jehan's lips curled in baffled fury—"then die, and to Hades with you, you little fool!"

Another moment and he was gone, and the door of the cell, slamming behind him, sounded like a death-knell in the ears of the distracted girl.

The Hunchback to the Rescue.

THOUSANDS of people were gathered in the market-place to witness the execution of Esmeralda. Some had come out of morbid curiosity, treating the grim affair as something of a spectacle, but the majority present were there to make a violent demonstration against what they considered was a foul and tyrannical miscarriage of justice on the part of the king and his aristocratic judges.

The bell of Notre Dame tolled mournfully, though for what poor wretch's doom he sounded, Quasimodo, the hunchback, did not know.

The minutes slipped by, then suddenly there came the sound of cart-wheels rumbling over the rough cobblestones of the road, and there hove into view Esmeralda shackled to the lumbering vehicle in which she rode, and guarded by some two hundred mounted soldiers of the king.

Angry murmurings arose as the girl was dragged from the cart, forced to the steps of the magnificent cathedral, there to pay penitence for the crime for which she was to be punished. But no move was made, for the prisoner's guard was far too strong for the crowd to show any hostility.

His duty of ringing the bell for the execution finished, Quasimodo made his way to the balcony at the top of the cathedral and from there peered curiously down into the square. A girl! Then his sound eye rolled wildly in its socket and he caught in his breath sharply as he recognised her. Esmeralda—the girl Jehan had persuaded him to help kidnap that night—the girl he had sworn to befriend when she had taken compassion on him and had given him water after the cruel flogging he had been subjected to.

She to be punished for some crime! But surely the girl, obviously of a gentle and kind disposition, could never be guilty of even harming a fly! The thing was impossible. A grave injustice was being done.

The bare thought made Quasimodo's blood boil, and in an instant a daring plan had formed itself in his usually dull brain. Next moment he had swung himself over the stone balustrade of the balcony and was shining down the face of the cathedral with far more speed and agility than he had displayed that night he had been crowned king of the fools.

The ground reached in safety, he swept down on Esmeralda like some grotesque bird of prey and swiftly gathered her in his arms.

"Be not afraid, my pretty one," he shot at her as she gave a frightened gasp. "It is I, your friend, Quasimodo. I'm here to save you from these carrion."

He was on the point of swinging round when, with angry shouts, two or three of the soldiers who had been standing on the cathedral steps guarding the girl leaped at him. As the first reached him, Quasimodo gave an inano grin, quickly shot up his foot, and, catcling the man in the pit of the stomach, sent him flying backwards with a painful gasp. The second he treated likewise, October 31st, 1931.

and as the fellow went staggering he crashed into the third member of the King's Guard, and together the two collapsed in a heap, the breath knocked clean from their bodies.

And then the hunchback, with Esmeralda in his arms, was racing for the massive door of the cathedral, in the threshold of which stood Don Claude, the archdeacon.

"Sire, we must save this girl!" Quasimodo shot the archdeacon a pleading glance as he dodged past him, now hotly pursued by some score of the King's Guard. "She's innocent—I know she is!"

Don Claude's lips set grimly, for he was well acquainted with the girl and knew that she was the last person who would do anything punishable by death. As the soldiers dashed up he held up his arm, barring their way.

"Back, back!" he commanded sternly. "The Church gives the girl sanctuary—you cannot defile this holy place, king's soldiers though you may be."

They fell back uncertainly, till an officer of their regiment came on the scene and ordered them away. He knew that what Don Claude said was right—that if the archdeacon took Esmeralda into the holy precincts of Notre Dame they were powerless to lay hands on her till such time as she ventured forth again.

For the moment, at least, poor, distracted Esmeralda was saved from a terrible fate and a grave miscarriage of justice.

A Grim Fight for Esmeralda.

IN the days that followed Esmeralda lived at the very top of Notre Dame in a small niche that Quasimodo was wont to use as his own quarters. The hunchback gave up his all to her, sleeping on the cold stone of the balcony outside, and he provided her with clothes and food, tending her as if she were some new-born baby.

But trouble threatened. Clopin, though thankful that Esmeralda had been saved from the scaffold, was desirous of having the girl back with him, and one night he went to the cathedral, determined to bring her away. He found Don Claude at the door, and the archdeacon barred his path as he tried to step into the place.

"Well, Clopin, what is it you want?" Don Claude inquired in his soft, gentle voice.

"You know well enough!" Clopin

growled, an ugly gleam in his sinister eyes. "I want Esmeralda, my ward—and, by the powers, I'll have her or——"

"And I say you won't have her, Clopin!" Quasimodo, in the act of lighting the candles in the cathedral, one of his daily tasks, had heard the rascal's voice and had quickly hurried to the door. His one eye rolling hideously, he faced the other defiantly. "If she leaves here without a pardon she'll be taken by the soldiers again. Besides, you're not a fit person to look after her. She's——"

"Why, you ugly canaille!" Clopin made a threatening step towards the hunchback, but again Don Claude barred his way. Sinister eyes glared at the archdeacon. "The girl—are you going to give her up, Don Claude, or must I go in and fetch her?"

"Oh, oh, you'd fetch her, would you?" Quasimodo lumbered forward and shook his fist under Clopin's jaw. "I kill you if you so much as try to get the girl!"

"Now, now, Quasimodo!" The peace-loving archdeacon placed a restraining hand on the hunchback's arm. "No good can come of losing your temper. Clopin knows well enough that evil overtakes all those who dare defile the church."

Don Claude glanced at Clopin's fury-distorted face, and in his fine grey eyes was a light that made the rascal shrink back in alarm. Superstitious as he was, Clopin took to heart the archdeacon's words and in another moment he swung on his heel and strode rapidly away.

But the evil Jehan, lurking in the shadows near by, had heard every word that had passed between the three, and a fell scheme for lining his pockets had leaped into his sinister mind. Why not urge Clopin to make a mass attack on Notre Dame to secure Esmeralda? During the turmoil that ensued he could loot the treasure vaults, get away with all the silver and gold ornaments they contained, and sell them at a good price.

At once he went after the rascally revolutionist, and the sinister words he poured into Clopin's ears resulted in that arch villain returning to Notre Dame in the region of midnight at the head of some three hundred armed followers, many of whom bore flaming torches. Getting no answer to his thunderous knocking on the closed door, Clopin ordered that the door be broken down. Instantly cudgels smashed against the richly carved panels, but they made no impression upon the stout wood, and the crowd began to stamp and curse in baffled fury.

"Get axes—get something that'll act as a battering-ram!" raged Clopin, not to be thwarted in his determination to storm the cathedral and get Esmeralda away.

Wild cheers from the crowd as some fifty of them rushed away to secure these formidable weapons, then the cudgels again attacked the door.

Meanwhile, in the cathedral, Don Claude, Quasimodo, and Esmeralda had heard the sounds of Clopin's onslaught, and, while the girl crouched fearfully upon her bed, feeling that the fracas must concern her, the archdeacon and the hunchback peered forth from windows to discover that the revolutionist and his followers were making a mass attack on the cathedral door. The reason for this sacrilege was obvious to both. They were after the girl they protected.

And then Quasimodo saw a lone figure, in the glare of the revolutionists' torches, standing at some distance from

(Continued on page 28.)

SUCCESS OF THE

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"Maid to Order"



Just After Midnight.

A SMALL motor-boat nosed its way slowly and cautiously towards a flight of waterside stairs not a mile away from that southernmost extreme of New York—Battery Point.

Its engine had been stopped some distance out, and it drifted in silently. There was a reason for this. As a rule a cop was on duty at the small wharf to which the stairs led, and it was important that his suspicions should not be roused.

As the boat bumped gently against the coconut fibre ropes hanging over the side of the wharf, two shadows crept out from the darkness of a near-by warehouse. They went to the head of the stairs and looked down at the craft below.

"That you, Joe?" said a voice. "Yes," came the reply from the boat. "I've got three tins for you this time. Wait a minute and I'll come up and give them to you."

The two shadows on the wharf looked about them furtively, and satisfied themselves that they were not observed. Meanwhile, down in the boat, a man in oilskins and sou'-wester opened a small locker and produced three round tins, on the sides of which was the wording:

**"Tiger Brand"
High-Grade Coffee.**

He tucked them under his arm, and slowly mounted the stone steps by the side of the craft. Halfway up he paused and muttered to the men waiting above:

"Is it all clear?"

"Yes. Come on up." The man in oilskins continued his journey and presently stood on the wharf by the side of the two others. One of these latter glanced at his watch.

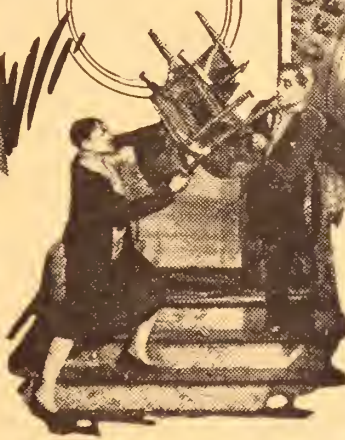
"You're in good time," he said. "Two minutes after twelve."

The man in oilskins grunted. "There's a devil of a wind blowing across the mouth of Hudson River," he said. "I wonder I made it. Anyway, here are the tins. Cash out, and I'll be getting along."

The tins changed hands, and the soft rustle of Treasury notes being counted was the only sound in the silence that followed.

Finally the man in oilskins tucked a wad of money into his pocket and turned away. He went down the stairs again, climbed into the boat, and quietly gave orders for the engine to be started.

Starring
**JULIAN
ELTINGE**



The two men on the wharf did not wait to watch the boat put off. They turned also, and slipped softly along the wharf to where a car was standing. They climbed into it; there was a metallic hum as the self-starter was pressed, and the vehicle shot forward out of the dock area, swung left round a sharp corner and headed north through the dingy streets of Lower Manhattan.

The car had proceeded for about half a mile when the man sitting by the side of the driver turned and looked through the back window. As he did so, he grew rigid.

"Step on it!" he said in a tense whisper. "We've got a police tender behind!"

"Curse it!" growled the driver. "They could catch us, whatever we did. I ought to have brought the fast car." He paused to negotiate another turn. "Is it still trailing us?"

"Yes."

The driver pressed the accelerator to the floorboards, and began to twist and turn through the narrow streets desperately, hoping to shake the pursuers off. He was unsuccessful. The two headlights of the car following reappeared in his driving-mirror with irritating persistency.

"Shorty," said the driver.

"Yes?"

"Those cops don't know who we are. If they did they'd run us down. What they reckon to do is to follow us to the club, and then make a raid. They know something—more than they should. See?"

"Well?"

"We daren't let them get a line on us. We've got to fight it out. How many rods did you bring with you?"

"Two."

"And how many cops are there?"

"Four. It's only an open tourer."

"All right. Let them have it when I stop!"

The car sped on. Suddenly it swung

round hard into a narrow street, with the pursuing car twenty yards behind, and slid to a stop in the middle of the roadway. Its two occupants clambered out quickly, and took cover behind the radiator.

With a squeal of tyres, the police car rounded the corner also, and its driver jammed on his brakes as he saw the other vehicle ahead.

As he came to a halt, two vivid stabs of flame pierced the darkness. The windscreen of the police car shattered, and a cry of pain mingled with the noise of the explosions.

In a second the street was deafened by the sound of battle. The two crooks blazed away steadily, carefully checking on each other so that their weapons would not be empty simultaneously.

The firing from the police car stopped suddenly, but almost at the same moment the air was rent by the shriek of whistles.

"Back into the car, Shorty!" yelled the crook driver. "We've got to make a break for it."

The crooks dived into the front seat, and the car shot forward once more. The driver leaned forward and switched off his lights as he plunged into the purlieus of that maze of streets which led north to the Bowery. In ten seconds the crooks were lost—no pursuer could hope to catch them.

Meanwhile, at the scene of the street battle, police arrived in large numbers, and a belated cordon was thrown around the district. A quarter of an hour afterwards, Detective Scranton, of Headquarters, arrived and started to ask questions of the senior officer present.

"What damage was done?"

"Four Revenue officers killed. Stiff with lead, all of them."

"Tommy guns?"

"No; ordinary pistols. I heard the shooting, but couldn't get here in time."

Detective Scranton nodded briefly and started wandering towards the derelict police car, looking about him shrewdly. Suddenly he stopped and bent down.

"That's funny!" he said. "A tin of coffee pierced by a bullet!"

Ground coffee was lying in the roadway, and he ran his fingers through it thoughtfully. As he did so he felt something hard slip between his thumb and the side of his palm—something that

shone like white fire in the light of a street lamp.

"Great heavens!" he cried. "A diamond!"

He tipped more of the coffee out of the tin, and with it came several more stones—blue, like ice, and harder than steel, and already the cause of four deaths.

He straightened himself up thoughtfully, dragging the diamonds into his pocket as he did so, and stood in the middle of the roadway for several seconds, deep in thought. Then he turned as a uniformed officer approached him hesitatingly.

"Well, what is it?"

"One of those four men, Seranton—well, you'd better come and look for yourself."

Seranton looked sharply at the other, then walked to the bullet-riddled car. He gazed at the faces of the dead men slowly.

"Gosh!" he muttered. "Tim!"

He turned away brokenly, shivering as though the night air was cold, and started back with dragging footsteps to his office at Police Headquarters.

Find the "Lady."

DETECTIVE SCRANTON was attached to that somewhat grim and merciless body of men known as the "Homicide Squad." His job was that of investigating murder, and a grimmer, more thorough man could not be found for it.

He paced his severely-furnished office back at Headquarters for a full hour after his return, his furrowed forehead and his firm lips combining in a stern expression that boded the murderers no good. From the crooks' point of view, they could not have picked upon a worse police squad for their massacre, for one of the dead officers was Seranton's own brother.

As he paced, Seranton's fists were clenched, and beads of perspiration stood out upon his brow. Suddenly, as though his mind was made up, he swung round on his heel and made his way to the office of his chief, Captain Randall.

He did not trouble to knock. He just slammed open the door and walked in, kicking the door shut behind him.

"Four of our men murdered two hours back," he said without any preliminaries.

"I know, Seranton," replied Chief Randall. "One was young Tim, too. I'm darned sorry about that. Anything I can do?"

Seranton dropped into a chair opposite his chief and surveyed the round, spectacled face thoughtfully. His eyes were narrowed, and there was a glint in them that made Captain Randall glad he was a friend and not an enemy.

"I've got a line on the job," said Seranton, speaking slowly and choosing every word with care. "I found a coffee tin down where the job was done, and it had diamonds hidden inside it. Does that suggest anything to you?"

"Diamonds, eh?" Randall puckered his brow for a minute. "You mean McGuire?"

"I do," said Seranton. "Jim McGuire has been edging diamonds on to the market for a long time now, and nobody knows where he gets them from. About three days ago the Customs department sent us a report that smuggling was going on through one of the coastal docks in Lower Manhattan, and the murdered officers were sent along to see what it was about. The Customs didn't know for certain what was happening, but it's

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evident that they had good suspicions. Anyway, four of our men were killed in a street battle, and a tin of coffee concealing diamonds was found afterwards. Put two and two together, and it doesn't make anything else except four."

"I see," muttered the chief.

"We don't know for certain that McGuire did it—not enough to bring him before a jury, anyway," Seranton went on. "That's what we've got to find out."

The chief nodded.

"Good!" he said. "Go right ahead. Pick the best men you can find, and have McGuire's club combed out. I'll give you a free hand."

Seranton made no movement to show that he had heard. He was still thinking. Essentially a man of action, he realised that here was a case in which, if he rushed in, he would spoil everything.

"It's no use," he said after a while.

"Every one of McGuire's men know me. As soon as I put in an appearance they'd guess what was on, and I'd never get to the bottom of the job. And I'm going to, chief, by heaven, I'm going to!" His jaw set in grim determination. "We've got to get someone new down here, someone who has never been in New York before."

There was a knock, and a man entered, carrying a telegram. He laid it before the chief and departed again.

The chief picked the envelope up and tore it open. Then he uttered a startled exclamation.

"It's from Scotland Yard," he said.

"Read it."

Seranton took the grey cable form and read:

"Chief of Police, New York. Loti Lorraine, Int. No. G 6283, arrested charge smuggling diamonds. Do you know anything about her?"

"COMMISSIONER, London."

"Loti Lorraine," said Seranton thoughtfully. "Just a minute."

He pressed a bell and a messenger appeared. He was sent away for the docket concerning this Loti Lorraine, and returned with it in a few minutes.

Seranton opened it and glanced through the contents.

"No, we've got nothing against her," he said quietly. "But here's some of the information I want. She paid a visit to New York a couple of years ago, and she was seen constantly in the company of Dan Kernan. We've got Dan and his gang in the big house now, but it was McGuire who took over his club. Let me see now, wasn't McGuire and his crowd up the river round about that time?"

"He was," replied the chief.

"Then he doesn't know Loti Lorraine," Seranton jumped up from his chair and began pacing the office. Suddenly he stopped opposite to the chief, his face alight with eagerness. "Chief, will you send a wire to London asking them to keep the fact of Loti's arrest out of the papers?"

"Sure," replied the chief. "But I don't see—"

"That's all right," Seranton went on quickly. "If everything works out as I want it, I'm going to fix McGuire good and proper. He's going to meet Loti Lorraine for the first time in his life."

The chief at once protested.

"Look here, Seranton, I know your brother's been bumped off, but you've got to draw the line somewhere. I won't have a woman mixed up in this. It's too dangerous."

"No woman is going to be mixed up in it," said Seranton. "I'm going to get an old pal of mine, Julian Eltinge, to get right inside McGuire's haunt as Loti Lorraine. He's a female impersonator on the halls, and when he gets into skirts his own mother gets muddled."

"It's impossible," objected the chief. "No man can kid people along like that."

"Can't he? You just watch," said Seranton, and there was an eager expression on his face. "Oh, boy, you just watch!"

At McGuire's.

IT was just a week later, and Jim McGuire was sitting in his luxurious apartment above the Arab night-club, a tooth-pick in one hand and a lighted cigarette in the other, awaiting the arrival of the renowned Loti Lorraine. A soft felt hat was perched on the back of his head, and his harsh yellow face bore an expression of pleasant anticipation.

Two of his "boys" were with him—Shorty and Harry. Shorty had "class," which meant that he wore spats and the nattiest of gents' suitings, well-creased down the trouser, and well spread at the lapel. A slight, hair-line moustache adorned his upper lip, and when he smiled he exposed a row of perfectly even white teeth.

Harry was not so natty. He was broad-shouldered and thick-set, with a round and very smooth face and a bulge just under his left arm where he carried his shoulder holster. His particular ambition in life was for neater and slicker bumping-off.

McGuire put in some deft work with his tooth-pick, his eyes roving shrewdly over his "boys." Finally he shifted a little in his chair and spoke.

"I want you guys to behave properly when Miss Lorraine arrives," he said. "None of the usual hot-mamma stuff."

"Sure," replied Shorty amiably. "But seeing she's French, shouldn't we call her mam'selle?"

"Shut up, and listen to me!" growled McGuire. He never had liked Shorty's superior manners, they gave him, to use his own expression, a pain in the neck. "Seeing she's one of us, she's going to live here. I've arranged to put her in the apartment on the left wing, and you two will keep away from there. See?"

"Sure," said Shorty again. "I see." McGuire shifted in his chair once more, and plied the tooth-pick again. It helped him to think.

"By the way," he said to Shorty, "what about the police car we shot up a week back? Any news?"

"Naw," Shorty replied. "One of the cops tipped me off. We got young Seranton, brother of the homicide dick, and I reckoned there might be trouble from that quarter. But no such thing. Seranton himself is keeping to Headquarters, and he's still working on that other killing that the Times Square outfit pulled. Seems to think the same outfit did our job."

"Else they know something and are scared of you, McGuire," said Harry. McGuire's chest swelled out an extra couple of inches, and the evil gleam of blood-lust appeared in his eyes.

"I guess that's it," he said, doing his best to sound modest about it. "They realise by now that I'll stand for no interference. Any cop that tries to get me goes for a ride—I don't care who he is."

Harry and Shorty nodded in admiring agreement, knowing that it was

always best to humour him. McGuire had a fierce temper, and when it was roused by opposition he was apt to cut loose with a gun.

McGuire was still brooding over what he was going to do to all cops who tried to get one, when one of the waiters from the club downstairs knocked on the door.

"Come in," called McGuire.

The waiter thrust his head into the room.

"Lady to see you below," he announced. "Says she's Miss Lorraine."

"Fine!" McGuire shot a triumphant glance at Shorty. "Miss Lorraine, Shorty. She said so herself." He turned back to the waiter. "Show her straight up here."

"Right, boss," replied the waiter, and withdrew.

The three gangsters waited eagerly. Meanwhile, sitting in the vestibule downstairs was Julian Eltinge, trying hard not to perspire under a blonde wig and a pair of tightly-laced corsets that hid his manly figure. He wore a tightly-fitting black toque edged with white on his head and a brocade coat with a white ermine collar that had set him back several thousand dollars in Paris the previous year. His ankles were encased in perfectly-fitting silk stockings, and his feet were pinched into an elegantly-pointed Court shoe several sizes too small for him.

The waiter who had taken Julian's newly-assumed name returned and told him that McGuire would see him at once. Julian promptly rose and followed.

As he went he felt a sudden apprehension. McGuire was a noted killer—what would he do if he discovered that Julian was a man and not Loti Lorraine?

The apprehension did not last, however. Julian recollected that he had deceived even Detective Scranton. In his feminine garb he had gone boldly to Police Headquarters and had presented himself to Scranton's clerk, saying that he had some important news about a crime that had recently been committed. Scranton fell for it, and did not know it was Julian until Julian spoke in his natural voice.

If Scranton, knowing him by sight, could not penetrate the disguise, McGuire, not knowing him, must be completely deceived.

The waiter halted before a door and knocked. The summons to come in was heard from behind it, and he threw it open.

"Miss Loti Lorraine," he announced.

Julian walked into the room.

McGuire rose to his feet and turned around. Frank admiration appeared in his eyes. He gazed appraisingly at the crimson lips, the perfect complexion that Julian had obtained from a box, and the obviously expensive clothes, and grinned a welcome.

"Come right along, Miss Lor-

raine, and meet the boys," he said. "My name is McGuire, and these are Shorty and Harry."

Julian conjured up one of his most devastating smiles.

"How do you do?" he said in his best mezzo-soprano voice. Hurriedly, as though so much male beauty dazed him, he pulled out his compact and carefully powdered his nose. As he did so he glanced over the three men swiftly, and promptly hit upon Shorty as the one most likely to tell him all he wanted to find out. "I've heard so much about you all," he went on with a dazzling smile. "Especially you, Mr. Shorty."

Shorty turned away, blushing.

McGuire made an impatient gesture. "Keep the social stuff until later," he said shortly. "You'd better come with me, Miss Lorraine. I'll show you to your apartment first, and then we can talk business. By the way, where is your luggage?"

"Down below, Mr. McGuire," replied Julian. "Three trunks, a travelling wardrobe, and a hatbox."

McGuire nodded.

"Shorty, have Miss Lorraine's boxes sent right up to her room at once. Come along, Miss Lorraine; I'll get you settled down."

Julian meekly followed him, but as he was on the point of leaving the room he paused by the doorway and turned his head towards Shorty. He smiled invitingly, and his left eye gave the slightest of twitches.

Shorty blushed again and started to draw patterns on the carpet with the point of his bespatted shoe.

Julian continued on his way, and on his face was the faintest suggestion of a grin. The rounding-up of the McGuire gang had started in earnest.

"Loti" Gets Busy.

TEN days passed, and during that time Julian kept his eyes open, but learnt very little.

For one thing, he had to play his part carefully, and he knew that one of the first things a woman does when arriving in New York is to make a round of the shops. This he did with every appearance of enjoyment, the result being that he was out most of the day and did not have the opportunity of keeping McGuire and the boys under close observation. The only time he came in contact with the gang was in the club downstairs in the evenings, and McGuire was not such a fool as to have anything on view in a public place.

During all this time Shorty was showing signs of falling completely into Julian's net. Believing him to be a woman, Shorty's natty little soul was stirred to its depths, particularly as McGuire did not appear to be particularly interested for once.

At the end of the ten days, while Julian was in his room attiring himself in one of his most ravishing evening gowns, he heard a knock on the door. He hastily finished fastening his gown, and called:

"Come in!"

The door opened and McGuire entered. Julian gave him a bright glance, and was about to turn back to his dressing-table when he caught sight of someone coming in behind the gangster.

It was a girl. She was dressed in white, had had golden hair and deep blue eyes. Julian caught his breath sharply, convinced that he had never seen anyone quite so lovely.

As he stared he became aware that the girl was looking at him curiously, and hurriedly turned away.



Sent his right smashing to the side of McGuire's jaw.

McGuire spoke.

"I want to introduce Joyee Carlyle to you, Miss Lorraine," he said. "Joyce, this is Miss Loti Lorraine."

Joyce smiled and held out her hand, advancing into the room.

"How do you do, Miss Lorraine," she said, and her eyes seemed to be alternately dancing with fun and clouding with anxiety.

"Joyce is one of us," McGuire explained before Julian could return her greeting. "I hope you two get on well together."

He went out, closing the door behind him.

Julian stood by his dressing-table uncertainly, wondering what to say or do next. A sudden complication had arisen which altered the whole atmosphere of his job.

At the very first meeting—from the very first moment he had set eyes on Joyee Carlyle—he was in love!

Joyce, meanwhile, looked at him uncertainly. Julian began to feel uncomfortable. Did she know the real Loti Lorraine? If so, she would realise that he—Julian—was not Loti. Then what would happen?

Julian tensed himself for what might happen next, watching her as a cat watches a mouse.

Joyce advanced towards him slowly and stared into his eyes. Finally she said:

"Don't you think you ought to explain?"

"Explain? Explain what?" Julian recovered his poise and managed to get into his feminine voice a hint of surprise. "I don't think I understand."

Joyce opened her lips to speak again, but changed her mind. Suddenly, as though she had been living under a strain that had become too much for her, she buried her face in her hands.

"Oh, why did I come back here—to this horrible place, and these horrible people?" she cried.

Julian was staggered. Her quick breakdown had taken him completely unawares. He was shaken out of his pose.

Quickly he went to her side, and put an arm round her shoulders.

"Please don't cry!" he begged. "I don't know what it is that's wrong, but I dare say I can put it right for you if only you'll tell me all about it."

Joyce started back from him in alarm, forgetting her tear-stained face.

"You're a man—" she began.

Julian clapped his hand over her mouth, silently cursing that he had forgotten to speak in his feminine voice.

"Ssh!" he warned. "If McGuire hears you, he'll come looking for me with a gun."

Joyce hastily dabbed at her face with a tiny wisp of a handkerchief, still watching Julian.

"I—I don't understand," she faltered.

"Then I'll explain in a minute," said Julian. "But first tell me—why did you cry just now?"

A tiny frown appeared on her brow, and the corners of her mouth drooped again.

"I'm afraid," she whispered.

"Who of?"

"McGuire. He knows something about my father—something that would get my father into awful trouble—and I am to be the price of his silence. He wants me to join him here—help him run the club—and afterwards he wants to marry me." Joyce clenched her hands in a paroxysm of desperation. "But I won't! I swear I won't! I'll kill myself first!"

Julian nodded with satisfaction. This was good news to him.

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"Would it help you at all if he was put away in gaol for a few years—or even sent to the electric chair?" he ventured.

She looked at him with eyes that were immediately grateful.

"You can do that?" she asked eagerly. "Oh, I do hope you can! I do hope you can!"

Julian laughed, as though a great load had been lifted from his mind. Whoever this mysterious Joyee Carlyle was, he was quite satisfied that she was to be trusted.

"Leave everything to me and I'll do my best," he said reassuringly. "And now go down to the café as though nothing had happened. I'll follow in a little while."

She nodded obediently, and removed the final traces of tears from her face. Slowly she walked to the door, but before she reached it she turned.

"Who are you?" she asked. "What is your name?"

"Julian Eltinge," he replied.

"I've heard of you somewhere," she said musingly. "Won't you show me what you look like?"

Julian hesitated. Then he realised that there was no object in holding any of his secrets from her. He reached up and took off the blonde wig that concealed his smooth, dark hair.

"There you are," he said. "That's me at my worst."

She looked at him critically, her head on one side, and finally smiled at him.

"I knew you were a man right from the first," she said. "Do you know how?"

"No. Tell me."

"Well, when you first saw me, there was a look in your eyes—" She broke off in confusion. "You see," she went on, "a woman doesn't generally fall in love with one of her own sex, does she? And—oh, what am I saying?"

The door suddenly slammed behind her. Julian stood looking at it for a whole minute, his mind dazed. Then he woke up.

"By gosh!" he muttered joyfully.

"By gosh! I've got something to say to that girl when I'm through with McGuire. And it won't be long now!"

McGuire Has a Visitor.

THE following night McGuire was sitting in his office, going through his accounts. There was a look of self-satisfaction on his face, for his figures showed that he was doing well. The Arab night club was paying handsome profits, and the last consignment of diamonds had sold fairly well. Therefore he could afford to look with equanimity on the fact that he had lost a few of the stones during the recent battle with the police car.

There was a knock on the door, and a waiter entered. McGuire looked up from his writing.

"Well—what do you want?"

"Lady outside to see you, Mr. McGuire," said the waiter. "She wouldn't give her name, but she's all burnt up about something."

"Who is she?" McGuire, with his usual caution when anything unusual occurred, asked the question quickly.

"I don't know. She's been sitting in the café since dinner, watching Miss Lorraine."

McGuire thought for a minute. An unknown woman wanted to see him, eh? Some old flame of his, he supposed—and jealous of Loti Lorraine, too!

His eyes narrowed. He was not in the habit of being chased around by anyone, and whoever this woman was, she had better be told so quickly.

"All right," he said. "Send her in." The waiter departed, and during the time that he was gone McGuire took the

opportunity of opening a drawer in his desk and slipping a heavy automatic into his pocket.

The door opened once more, and the unknown woman entered. Her dark eyes were blazing angrily. She was dressed in evening kit, and McGuire, watching her closely, saw that she was trembling with suppressed emotion.

"Are you Jim McGuire?" she demanded, stopping a bare two paces away, her arms folded.

McGuire felt a twinge of inward surprise. She spoke with a foreign accent, and had all the outward semblances of a typical Frenchwoman.

"That is my name," he replied.

"Then what do you mean by letting a woman masquerade here as me?" she flamed.

McGuire looked at her in sheer astonishment.

"I don't quite understand you," he said. "Who are you, anyway?"

"You don't know me?" The woman stamped her foot impatiently. "Fool! Dolt! I am Loti Lorraine!"

McGuire started as though a rival gangster had shot him, and stared at her speechlessly. Loti Lorraine! The woman must be completely mad. Loti Lorraine was outside in the café.

"You'd better try something else," he said ironically. "Miss Lorraine is an old friend of mine."

The excitable Frenchwoman almost danced round the room in sheer exasperation.

"She is, eh?" she almost screamed.

"Oh, you're mad! Listen and I will explain myself. I was arrested about two weeks ago in England for smuggling diamonds and was finally released because the police there could not get enough evidence against me. During that time I knew that a big consignment of stones was on its way here, so I came across on the first boat I could catch."

"Diamonds!" exclaimed McGuire, a suspicion dawning upon him that something was wrong somewhere. "Can you prove this?"

"Can I prove it?" She uttered an expression of contemptuous scorn. "Do I not tell you I am Loti Lorraine? Here—" She pulled a paper out of her handbag and unfolded it. "Read that! It is a consignment note for the largest haul of precious stones I have ever sent you, and it is on its way here now. To-night, at eleven o'clock, an aeroplane will pick it up from a small boat standing out to sea, and will bring it straight here. The gems will be dropped on the roof of this building in response to a signal light that I arranged before I left Europe. Now will you believe what I say?"

McGuire stood there stunned, not knowing what to do. He was convinced all right. This was the genuine Loti Lorraine. She must be, to know so much about the ramifications of the international diamond smuggling plans.

But if this was Loti, who was the other woman?

He remembered what Loti Lorraine—the woman before him now—had just said about being in the hands of the English police. He knew enough about police methods to realise that upon Loti's arrest they would at once get in touch with New York to see if the police there knew anything about her.

"By gosh!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Scranton! That other woman is a police spy!"

He turned to Loti Lorraine.

"Wait here!" he said. "I will see to everything!"

He crossed to the door and flung it open.

"Harry!" he called.

"Here, boss," came the voice of Harry from outside.

"Come in here. I want you."

Harry came in, and closed the door behind him. He saw from the expression on McGuire's face that something was wrong, and a gleam came into his eye. When McGuire got brisk, it generally meant another bumping off.

"Get hold of that Lorraine woman," said McGuire quickly, "and take her to her room. I want her deader than cold mutton inside ten minutes. Get me?"

Harry staggered back a pace. This was all too sudden for his slow brain to grasp all at once.

"Aw, now look here, boss, we all like little Loti," he protested. "What's she done, anyway?"

"Don't ask questions. Do as I say," snapped McGuire. "She's a police spy."

Harry wasted no more words. He hitched his shoulder holster forward a little so that it could be more easily reached, and charged through the door.

McGuire turned back to Loti Lorraine. "Find your way up to the roof, and get that light fixed," he said. "I'll send my own electrician up to you—he'll do anything you say. Hurry!"

Loti, infected by the briskness of McGuire's actions, hurried off. McGuire followed her to the door, and went down the passage outside until he came to the café. He looked round until he had located Joyce Carlyle, who was sitting at a table some distance away with Shorty and the fake Loti, with Harry standing close by talking to them.

McGuire beckoned to Joyce, and she rose and went to him.

"I want to talk to you a minute," McGuire said. "Come with me to my office."

Mystified, Joyce obeyed. When they reached the office McGuire cautiously closed the door.

"We've got to skip to-night," he said. "And you're coming with us, so get your things packed and have them in the car inside ten minutes."

Joyce went white. She sensed danger.

"I—I don't understand," she faltered. "Why are we going, and where to?"

"The police are on our trail," said McGuire. "That darned woman we know as Loti Lorraine was nothing more than a police spy. Harry's going to fix her good and proper, and—"

He broke off, seeing the expression on her face. "Hallo, what's wrong?"

Joyce said nothing. She turned suddenly and made a rush for the door, intent upon getting to Julian and warning him.

But McGuire gave her no chance. In two quick strides he overtook her, and hauled her back.

"What's the big idea?" he demanded.

"Where are you going?"

"Let me go!" she cried. "Let me go!"

"Do I look like a fool?" said McGuire. "There's something about this I don't quite like, and I'm going to keep you safe until I find out what it is."

He dragged her across the office to a door on the other side, and thrust her through it.

"You'll stay in there until I come for you," he said, and made to close the door.

"McGuire! McGuire!" she cried desperately. "Don't let Harry loose with his gun! I'll go away with you—anything—but don't let—"

The door slammed hard, and McGuire turned the key. Then he swung round, and started across the office on his way to the roof. As he went, his hand rested for a moment on the bulge which con-

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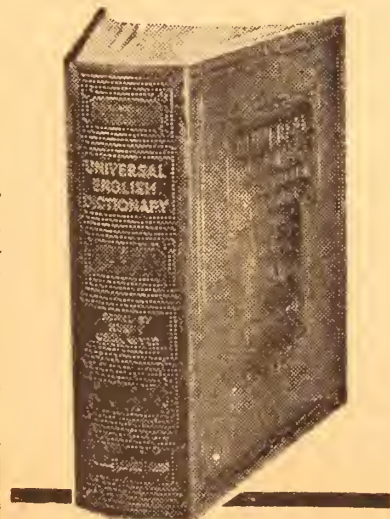
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cealed his gun, and an evil grin covered his face. He was thinking of a scheme whereby he could get the new consignment of gems entirely for himself! For once, seeing that he had to fly, it was not worth his while to split the proceeds amongst the boys.

Out in the passage leading to the café, he paused and stopped a passing waiter.

"Tell Shorty to get the car out and have it at the back entrance," he said briefly. "I'll be with him in half an hour."

"Right, boss," replied the waiter.

Then McGuire, satisfied that all his plans were laid, entered the lift that would take him to where the real Loti Lorraine was preparing to signal the aeroplane.

A Bumping-Off Party.

MEANWHILE, Julian was sitting in the café, idly sipping a cocktail and listening to the orchestra. Twice already Shorty had tried to grab his hand, and he was having a difficult task to prevent himself from bursting out laughing.

Joyce's departure troubled him a little, but he did not have a great deal of time to think about it. Events had taken a new turn—Harry the notorious bumper-off, was taking an unusual interest in him, still believing him to be Loti Lorraine.

Harry threw out a few hints that if they were alone they would have quite a lot to talk about, and Julian realised that the chance he had waited for so long had come. If only he could make Harry tell him all he wanted to know—

He looked up at Harry, and replied with a come-lither look. Julian deliberately produced his compact, powdered his nose and touched up his lips. Then he rose to his feet.

"Well, I think I'll go to bed," he said. "I feel terribly tired."

Harry immediately became suspiciously attentive.

"I'd like to see you to your door," he said artlessly. "May I?"

Julian bestowed on him his most fascinating smile.

"Of course," he replied. "I'd like you to."

They went together to the lift, and it shot upwards to the floor on which Julian had his room. With the utmost politeness, Harry stood aside to let Julian leave the lift first, and then followed him closely.

Julian came to a halt outside his door, and half turned.

"Coming in, Harry?" he murmured. "We've never had a chance to become acquainted yet, have we?"

"Sure, I'll come in! I was hoping you'd ask me," he replied truthfully.

Julian opened the door and walked into the room, Harry close to his heels.

Then he realised that something was seriously wrong. He heard the click of the lock behind him.

He did not turn. Instinct told him that Harry the killer had been attentive that evening for a set purpose, and during that moment when he heard the key turned he knew why. McGuire had found out something.

In effect, this was to be a bumping-off party.

Julian kept his nerve. Still keeping up his rôle as a woman, he said nervously:

"You shouldn't have locked the door, you know. It might be misunderstood."

"It won't be misunderstood by anybody," came Harry's grim reply.

Julian emitted a little cry of fright, and turned. What he saw made him

(Continued on page 25).

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HEROES of the FLAMES



READ THIS FIRST.

While en route with his comrades to the scene of a fire, Bob Darrow, of the San Francisco Brigade, saves the life of a boy who falls in front of one of the monster engines.

Later he calls on James Madison, head of a chemical company, to whom he puts up an idea for a patent fire-extinguisher. Madison is not interested, and Bob leaves disappointed, after meeting Dan Mitchell, a shady promoter who is befriending Madison for his own ends.

That afternoon Bob rescues June Madison from a fire in her father's office, then learns that the boy he had saved from the wheels of the fire-engine was Madison's son, Jackie.

In gratitude Madison helps Bob to perfect his invention, the Darrow Fire-Bomb. But Dan Mitchell is anxious to sell Madison an extinguisher of his own, and to discredit Bob he sends a hireling to "doctor" the fireman's invention with a deadly explosive.

Madison's faith in the invention remains unshaken. He allows Bob to continue his experiments at his home, and, at the instigation of Mitchell, gangsters close in on the house to secure the formula of the extinguisher.

Bob is armed, but the cartridges in his revolver have been cunningly substituted by blanks. Two of the crooks tackle him. One is accounted for, but, struggling fiercely, Bob and the other plunge from a high balcony to the grounds!

Now Read On.

Flight.

BOB was unlucky enough to be undermost as he and the rascally Butch fell from the balcony, and the shock with which he struck the ground rendered the young fireman senseless. October 31st, 1931.

EPISODE 9.

"The House of Terror."

June immediately ran to where he lay, but before she could sink to her knees beside him Spike Beldon and his companions darted into view.

They saw their chance of seizing Bob, and wasted no time in putting that project into action. With a sudden rush they swept June aside, and, while Spike helped the groaning Butch to his feet, Buck and Merlin lifted Bob between them.

"Come on," Spike ordered curtly, "get Darrow to the car."

June attempted to intervene, but she was pushed away with a violence that sent her staggering. At that same moment Silk Connolly lowered himself from the balcony, and, dropping into the grounds, joined the other gangsters as they were making tracks for the auto beyond the gates.

From the house came James Madison, appearing on the scene just as June discovered, near by, the revolver that had fallen from Bob Darrow's grasp a few minutes previously.

"Daddy, they've taken Bob away!" the girl panted as her father reached the spot where she was standing.

"Give me that gun, dear," Madison jerked, and, snatching the revolver from her hand, he levelled it at the hindmost of the fleeing crooks.

He could see them quite distinctly, and the range was only thirty or forty paces. He fired off two shots, and the dual smash of the reports echoed through the night. But the fugitives sped on unharmed.

"Missed with both shots," Madison

ground out laconically, and his tone betrayed astonishment, for he had always prided himself on being a useful marksman.

Then he broke open the gun, and slid a cartridge into his palm to examine it, and his first glance at the bullet confirmed a vague suspicion that had occurred to him.

"This weapon has been tampered with," he declared. "I loaded it myself, but the cartridges I just fired off were blanks. Who could have substituted them for the live bullets?"

It was a question that Spike Beldon and his companions could have answered, but at that instant they were piling into the waiting car with their captive. Merlin took the wheel, and before the auto's door had been slammed and shut he was driving along the road that led to the city centre.

The crooks headed west, and soon the lights of town were shining into the car's interior as it travelled at high speed through the streets.

"Has Darrow come round yet?" Spike Beldon asked all at once.

"No," came the answer in Silk Connolly's voice. "How about searchin' him for that formula?"

"Wait till we get to the dive," Spike rejoined.

Now when he had informed Spike that Bob Darrow was unconscious Connolly had been mistaken, for, though he was still suffering from the shock of his fall from the balcony, the kidnaped fireman had recovered his wits shortly after he had been dumped in the car. And by the time the auto came to a standstill in a mean back street, Bob had effectively disposed of that document which his captors were so anxious to secure.

It was two o'clock in the morning

when the ruffians gained their destination, and, after a preliminary glance up and down the street, Spike gave the word that the coast was clear. Bob was carried swiftly across the sidewalk into a dingy house, and, while Spike, Butch and Connolly climbed to a room on the second floor, Merlin and Buck dragged the prisoner down a flight of wooden stairs to a cellar.

They flung him roughly to the floor, and proceeded to make a search of him. Bob cautiously opened his eyes and looked at them sidelong as they examined some papers that they had discovered in his wallet, and then he lowered his lids again as they turned their attention on him once more.

"Here it is," said Merlin all at once, as he pulled something from Bob's pocket. "It's the formula—written out in code!"

"What a brain you've got," Buck retorted with sarcasm. "That's a Chinese laundry slip, you poor sap!"

Meanwhile, Spike and the others were awaiting the results of the search in the room upstairs, and when Buck and Merlin appeared with the news that the formula was certainly not on Bob's person their faces fell.

"That's queer," Spike muttered. "I thought he always carried it around. Well, I'll report to Mitchell. You boys stay here."

Butch spoke, in a voice that seemed pent-up with agitation.

"Listen, Spike," he said. "Couldn't we take Darrow some place else? I don't like this house. A guy named Grogan was shot up here by the cops one night, and they say his ghost has haunted the dump ever since."

"Ah, cut that dope!" scoffed Beldon. "I've heard that tale, and it's nothing but a lotta boloney."

Leaving the house, Spike made his way to Dan Mitchell's office, and, though it was early morning, he found his employer there, eager to learn the outcome of the raid on the Madisons' home.

"Nothing doin', boss," Beldon told him. "Wherever that formula is, Darrow ain't get it on him."

Mitchell cursed under his breath, and then, after a minute's thought—

"All right," he said. "I'll go and see what I can find at the Madison's, and you—Say"—this with a sudden air of hopefulness—"sav, it's just possible that the formula is in Darrow's locker at the fire-station!"

"Huh, a fat chance I've got of searchin' that locker," Spike retorted, "with all them smoke-eaters there!"

"But maybe they wouldn't be there," Mitchell retorted. "There's such a thing as a false alarm, Spike. Now you get busy."

Spike departed; and some time later, after an early breakfast, Mitchell drove to the Madisons' home. As he entered the gates he saw June preparing to climb into her own sports automobile, and he affected surprise and concern when she informed him of all that had occurred the previous night.

"Have the police

found any clues?" he asked, when she told him that her father had notified the authorities.

"No," June answered; "but I'm going to try myself. I know what those men look like, and so does Pat Heeley, Bob's chum in the Fire Department. I'm going to ask him to help me."

She started up her car and said good-bye, and Mitchell passed on into the house, where he presented himself to Madison.

"This is terrible about Darrow," he declared. "I suppose the ruffians got away with his formula?"

"I'm afraid so," was the rejoinder. "I've just been through the things in the room Bob was occupying, and it's not there."

This was precisely the information that Dan Mitchell wished to obtain, and, after some further conversation, he left the house.

On the Trail.

ACTING on Mitchell's instructions, Spike Beldon smashed the glass of an alarm in the territory of District Number Five's station, and then drove to that same fire-house at top speed.

Only a minute or two after the giant engines and escapes had swept out of the station in answer to the fake call, Spike drew up at the kerb. But unfortunately for him, his arrival synchronised with that of June Madison, who was bound for the same destination with the intention of seeking out Pat Heeley.

June saw Beldon from the other side of the street, and, recognising him instantly, steered her car into a side-street. Unseen herself, she watched him from the corner and saw him enter the fire-station surreptitiously, to reappear empty-handed.

Spike climbed into his car again and made off, never suspecting that he was now being trailed. For June did not miss the opportunity that chance had cast in her way, and, once more behind

the wheel of her roadster, she followed the crook to that sinister house where he had left his companions.

The house had once been a tenement, though it had long since been abandoned to vermin and decay until Spike and his associates had found a use for it. Into this questionable building June stealthily made her way after Beldon had crossed the threshold, and, hearing her quarry on the stairs, she proceeded to climb them also.

Spike entered the room where his companions were waiting for him. They had been playing cards, but looked up from their game as he appeared.

"Nothing found yet," Spike told them gloomily. "Well, the chief'll be here to-night, and he'll settle with Darrow. Is there any news?"

"No," was the answer. "Darrow's still locked in the cellar."

June had by this time reached the landing on which the crooks' lair was situated, and she was approaching the door of the room when something scuttled past her feet. It was a fat, loathsome rat, and from June's lips broke an involuntary cry, a cry that she stifled too late.

From the room into which Beldon had passed a moment before there came an exclamation, and, with terror in her heart, June sped back down the stairs and strank into a dim corner.

She heard a door open, and the gangsters emerged. Then the awestruck voice of Butch became audible. "It's Grogan's ghost, fellers!"

Even as he spoke, there was a furious hammering in the depths of the tenement; but if the sound convinced Butch that his phantom was on the prowl, Spike and the others held a very different view.

"That's Darrow tryin' to bust outa the cellar," snarled Spike. "Let's go down an' quieten him."

June acted promptly as she distinguished those words, and, knowing where Bob was to be found, but realising



Bob cautiously opened his eyes and looked at them sidelong as they examined some papers that they had discovered in his wallet.

that there was not a second to be lost if she were to rescue him, she flung caution to the winds and made a dash for the basement steps.

There was an immediate hue and cry, but June gained the cellar before the crooks could descend to the ground floor. Unlocking the solid door of Bob's place of captivity, she threw it open and stumbled into the fireman's arms as he was on the point of swinging up a broken chair-leg.

"June!" he cried, dropping the improvised bludgeon as he recognised her. "They're coming down the stairs, Bob!" she panted. "Quick—we've got to get out of here!"

Almost before she finished the sentence she knew that the one way of escape was barred to them, for, stampeding down the steps that led to the basement, the crooks swarmed into the cellar in a body.

There were no windows to the cellar, and no light penetrated from outside. But, some time previously, Bob had turned on the electric switch, and a powerful bulb now illuminated the place.

In the very first moment of attack that light was extinguished, with disastrous consequences that were not at first apparent.

The first to hurl himself at Bob was Merlin, and, seizing the rogue in his powerful arms, the fireman swept him off his feet and flung him headlong at his companions. Merlin clutched blindly as he dived backward through space, and his hand gripped the lamp that hung from the low ceiling, tearing down both bulb and wire and plunging the cellar into darkness.

The accident fused the electric light system and, behind the wainscoting, unseen threads of metal carried the spectre of fire through the tenement. But, oblivious of the peril, the crooks closed in on the dim-seen figure of their victim.

Bob fought back at them savagely, and speedily discovered that the odds against him were not so desperately overwhelming as they at first seemed. For the ruffians impeded one another, and the darkness, while it lasted, was actually an advantage in Bob's favour.

It was not long, however, before vicious tongues of flame were beginning to rise near the cellar steps, and in the space of a few minutes the basement seemed a death-trap.

Bob lashed out at his assailants the more fiercely, and with a sudden irresistible rush he scattered them to right and left and gained the doorway. June was cowering near by, and, grasping her hand, he hurried her out of the cellar.

Flames beat in their faces as they climbed the basement steps, and a thick pall of smoke closed over them. From the cellar rose an angry outcry as the crooks started in pursuit.

Bob and June reached the floor above, only to discover that the blaze was a hundred times more devastating than it had been in the basement. They blundered on, but were not quite certain which way they should turn for the street door, and while they hesitated Spike and his men intervened between them and the direct way of escape.

Still grasping June's hand, Bob dashed for the stairs that led to the next storey. The gangsters followed—all with the exception of Butch, who fled the tenement convinced that some supernatural force had started the fire.

Flames seemed to be raging on every floor, but the crooks continued the pursuit determinedly, and they were on the fugitives' very heels when Bob turned at bay. He hit Merlin, the first man, full in the jaw, and Merlin plunged back

into a belt of fire, throwing his companions into confusion as he did so.

The pursuit was checked for a moment, and Bob and June sped on up the stairs. But the crooks quickly resumed the chase, and three flights had been climbed before the danger of their situation drove them down again in a helter-skelter rush for the street.

Bob did not choose to descend after them. He was in his shirtsleeves, and had no coat to throw over June, whose steps were already beginning to falter. The fire seemed worse, moreover, on the floors that they had left below them.

"We've got to get to the roof," Bob coughed out. "It's our only chance!"

They made for the top landing. Even there the blaze raged menacingly, though it was less intense than on the other storeys, and flames were coiling around Bob as he lifted June through a scuttle in the ceiling and then clambered after her.

He had hoped that they might make their getaway across the roofs, but as he looked about him he saw that the deserted tenement stood isolated. There seemed no way of escape, and he was trying to fight down a feeling of despair when the familiar clang of fire-bells reached his ears.

He strode to the parapet, and, peering down into the street through the flames and smoke that were pouring from the tenement windows, he saw a big scarlet engine swinging into view. It was followed by another truck, and another, and in a few seconds the hoses were being turned on to the burning building. But the escapes were not yet in sight, and it was plain to Bob that the roof of the tenement was due to cave in at any minute.

Then suddenly his glance came to rest on a number of telephone cables running from the tenement to a building across the street, and in a moment an idea was suggested to him.

"There's our way out, June!" he cried, pointing. "Give me your hands!"

She recoiled from the daring project, but he drew her arms about his neck and bound her wrists around him with a handkerchief. Next instant he had gripped the cables and was swinging himself out across the street.

Far below, the pavements were lined with crowds of anxious spectators, who watched Bob and the girl in an agony of suspense, and all at once the tension fairly became nerve-racking as it was seen that the cross-arm to which the telephone cables were attached was breaking off under the strain.

A jerk warned Bob of this new terror. He turned his head and saw that the cross-arm was coming asunder from the post on the tenement roof, and he swung farther out along the cables, in the hope of reaching the building opposite before the support was completely torn away by the strain laid upon it.

But he and June were still swaying above the heads of the crowd in the street when the cross-arm was dragged from its fastenings, and a hoarse cry rose from hundreds of throats as man and girl hurtled down through space.

Morgan's Point.

IT was to Bob's comrades of the fire department that June and her companion owed their lives. For a few seconds before the cross-arm snapped, Pat Heeley and several of the other men dashed into the middle of the street with a safety-net.

Plunging through mid-air, Bob and June were caught in the net and hurried to the sidewalk, where they were set on their feet. June's hands were then un-

tied, and as she seemed to be suffering from shock she was packed into a taxi and driven home, Bob electing to remain on the spot and help extinguish one of the worst fires the city had seen.

June felt considerably more composed when she reached home, and, locating her father in his study with Dan Mitchell, she soon related all that had happened.

Her father listened to her with awe, Mitchell with secret chagrin, though he managed to conceal the sentiment pretty effectively.

"And what about the formula?" Mitchell asked when the girl had finished her story.

"I don't know," June answered, with a frown. "Things happened so quickly that I didn't get a chance to ask Bob."

Eager to learn the answer to the question that was foremost in his mind, Mitchell made some excuse and left the house, driving straight to his office, to find that Spike and the rest of the gang were awaiting him there. He was not long in discovering that the coveted formula was still beyond his grasp.

"A fine bunch of tripe you are!" he accused his hirelings. "One girl walks in on you, and upsets all my plans!"

"Now hold on, Mitch," Spike argued. "It wasn't the girl that beat us; it was the fire. And Darrow didn't have the formula, anyhow."

"Use your head!" snapped Mitchell. "He had the formula when you started, but he didn't have it when you arrived. You thought he was unconscious in that car, but he was smart enough to fool a lot of half-wits like you! Where is the car?"

"It's at Morgan's Point now," growled Spike.

Mitchell eyed him keenly. "All right," he said. "You and the boys drive out there. Butch, you go up to Madison's place, watch points there, and report at once if you hear or see anything that might help us."

At that precise moment, just lately returned from the tenement fire, Bob Darrow was taking Pat Heeley and Battalion Chief Wilson into his confidence regarding the whereabouts of his formula, and his conversation was one that would have convinced Mitchell his suspicions were correct.

"When these fellows had me in that car," Bob said as he stood before his chief's desk at the station, "they thought I was unconscious. But before they had a chance to search me I slipped the formula behind one of the seat cushions. Now, it seems to me I remember hearing one of the gang mentioning that the car would have to be taken to some garage under a water-tower at Morgan's Point, after they'd finished with it, and hidden there so that they wouldn't be traced by it. That's where I mean to go right now."

"Can't Oi be after going wid him, chief?" Pat Heeley interposed. "Oi'm off duty now, and Oi've got me old motor-bike. Oi can droive it now wid-out hittin' annything."

Wilson smiled. "All right, Pat," he agreed. "Bob may need you. But I think he'd better do the driving. By the way, Bob, I'll ring Madison for you and tell him your plans."

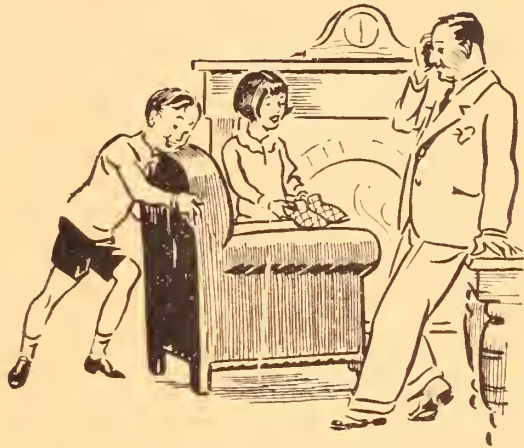
James Madison entered his study to find June sitting at his desk.

"I'm going down to police head-quarters, my dear," he said, "and I'm going to take your sports car. The

(Continued on page 24.)

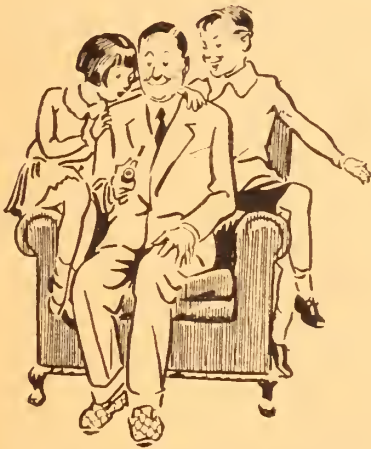
CUPBOARD LOVE

A NOVEMBER IDYLL



*When it's early in November
And the Kiddies lie in wait
For you coming home from business
Growing anxious if you're late*

*When your chair is by the fire
And your slippers warm as toast
And there seems a competition
As to who can serve you most*



*When you wonder where the catch is
As to every whim they've pandered
They murmur "It's November fifth
And the fireworks must be....."*

What do YOU think?

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"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

(Continued from page 22.)

hand-brake on my roadster seems to be out of order."

He went out of the house, and June heard him start up her auto and drive off. He could not have been gone for more than a few minutes when the 'phone bell rang, and as she picked up the receiver she heard the voice of Battalion Chief Wilson.

"Oh, hallo, chief!" she called. "No, dad isn't in. Oh, yes, about Bob. Morgan's Point, you say? Bob's going there."

She chanced to raise her glance, and with the movement saw a man's reflection in a mirror on the wall. He was standing on the threshold of a pair of french windows, listening attentively to all she said, and as she recognised him as the rascally Butch she slammed down the receiver, wrenched open a drawer in the desk and snatched a revolver that was lying there.

"What are you doing here?" she rapped out, wheeling round.

Butch took one look at the gun and then fled. Running to the french windows, June saw him sprint along the drive and clamber into a car outside the gates. On the spur of the moment she darted to her father's roadster, which stood near the front door of the house, and in another second or two she was speeding in pursuit of the gangster.

The chase that ensued was one that covered a distance of two or three miles, and June quickly realised that her quarry was travelling in the direction of Morgan's Point. It seemed imperative to her then that he must be prevented from warning any of his associates of Bob's intention, and with this object in view, June did her utmost to overtake him.

Her father's roadster was considerably faster than the auto Butch was driving, and, drawing ahead of him on a lonely stretch of road, she swerved precariously into his track. To avoid a crash the gangster wrenched his car aside, and in an instant it had driven its bonnet into a steep embankment that flanked the trail.

June carried on, and by the time Butch had crawled from his auto she was out of sight. The gangster's machine was crippled, and he had resigned himself to a long walk when another car came into view.

It was travelling from the city, and it contained Spike and the rest of the gang. Butch waved them down, and as they came abreast he hurriedly explained what had happened.

"That Madison Jane ran me off the road," he snarled. "Wrecked my car an' nearly wrecked me. I heard her answer a 'phone call at her house, an' it seems Darrow is headed for Morgan's Point."

"Get in here, Butch," jerked Spike Beldon. "We'll have to hurry."

Meanwhile, a mile down the road, June was approaching a fork. She was uncertain of the route to Morgan's Point, and chose the left-hand branch, and she had proceeded some distance along it before she realised that she was on the wrong trail.

Bringing the car to a standstill she turned and drove back towards the fork.

October 31st, 1931.

praying that she might yet be able to warn Bob that he was in danger.

Into the Depths.

REACHING the garage under the water-tower at Morgan's Point, the crooks drove round to the back of the structure and scrambled out of their car.

"Well, I don't see any tracks," said Spike, after scrutinising the immediate vicinity. "Darrow ain't here yet. Come on, let's get in that garage and search the auto we used last night."

They filed into the building and proceeded to ransack the car that stood inside, and it was as he was dragging out the upholstery in the back of the automobile that Silk Connolly gave vent to a triumphant exclamation.

"Hey, fellers," he announced, "I've got it! Here it is!"

And he produced a paper that was covered with chemical symbols.

"It's Greek to me," said Spike, taking it from him and examining it.

"Yeah, but it's the formula all right," declared Merlin, who could boast of some education. "I took chemistry at the school I went to when I was a kid, an' even though I couldn't tell you what they mean now, I recognise some of them ciphers. Spike, you can get in touch with Mitchell an'—"

He did not finish the sentence, for at that moment the unmistakable sound of a motor-bike's engine was heard. The machine was brought to a halt outside the garage, and, with a significant look at his companions, Spike suddenly threw open the door.

The gangsters saw Bob Darrow and Pat Heely climbing from the bike, and made a concerted rush at the two firemen. It was an attack that took the newcomers completely by surprise, but though they were driven across the road at the outset they speedily asserted their fighting qualities.

Silk Connolly and Buck had launched themselves on Pat, but they learned to their cost that he was more than a match for them, and though they landed one or two early blows, the

Irishman levelled Buck with a terrific swing and then gave Silk his undivided attention in hurricane style.

In the meantime, Bob was tackling Spike, Merlin and Butch with devastating effect. Spike he laid low with a smashing right-cross that swept the gang-leader off his balance and hurled him to the ground where he seemed content to remain. Merlin was hammered into a dazed condition by a slashing attack that finally bundled him into a ditch by the roadside.

Butch proved a tougher handful, and, in the instant of Merlin's fall scored with a dastardly blow that caught Bob behind the ear and knocked him staggering. But Bob recovered in time to swing around and meet the formidable rush with which his adversary followed up his success.

He checked that rush with a stiff left, and the two men fought toe to toe, with Bob gradually taking the offensive. A sledgehammer drive to the ribs winded the big gangster, and a smart clip across the point of the jaw rattled him badly. He was floundering backward in an ignominious retreat when Spike Beldon struggled to his feet, reluctantly summing up enough courage to tackle Bob again.

Bob diverted his attention from Butch and slammed his right to the point of Spike's chin, and Dan Mitchell's henchman tumbled to the dust once more.

But the brief interlude had given Butch a chance to redeem himself, and he launched a fresh onslaught on Bob. This time the young fireman sidestepped, and as his man blundered past he ripped a punch to his heavy jaw.

It was at this juncture that June Madison appeared on the scene, and, drawing up close to where Bob was standing, she pulled on the hand-brake. The ratchet that should have held it fast was ineffective, but in her agitated frame of mind she did not notice the circumstance, and her father's reason for using her car completely slipped her memory.

She climbed out of the roadster as Butch spun around and made another rush at Bob. Bob hit the gangster with a force that battered him against the door of the car, and under the impact of the man's bulk it swung violently on its hinges and struck June on the temple.

She sank to the ground with a little moan, and in a moment Bob was beside her.

"June!" he panted, lifting her anxiously in his arms. "June, you should never have come here!"

She made no answer, and he realised that the collision with the door had stunned her. Then he saw Butch approaching him once more, and, bundling the girl into the roadster, he closed the door and wheeled to face his assailant.

Butch grappled with him, and, locked in a fierce struggle, the two men staggered towards the back of the car where, with a sudden herculean effort Bob swung his man clear of his feet and flung him away.

The burly ruffian struck the roadster and, standing as it did on a slight incline, with the ratchet of its hand-brake failing to hold fast, it needed only the single shock to set the automobile in motion.

It rolled forward, and, before Bob realised that it was on the move, it was running to the brow of a steep hill.

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where the road dipped to the rim of a high bluff overlooking a reach of the deep, broad river.

Butch lumbered towards Bob, but, with a hoarse cry, the fireman lashed out with his right and bowled him over. Then he jumped the gangster's prone form and ran forward a few paces, in the direction that the runaway car was taking.

He stopped. The automobile had gone over the brow of the hill and was gathering speed. He could never hope to overtake it on foot, and a hundred yards ahead the road came to a blind end on the very edge of the bluff!

There was only one chance of coming up with it—astride Pat Heeley's motor-bike—and, his face ghastly pale, Bob sprang to the machine, dragged it from its stand and kicked the starter. Next second he was in the saddle and driving at full throttle in pursuit of the roadster.

The roar of the bike's engine drew Pat Heeley's attention from his battle with Silk, and, leaving the battered crook to sag against the wall of the garage, the Irishman turned to see Bob disappearing over the brow of the hill. Connolly took the opportunity to pull himself together and attempt an attack from the rear, but Pat was warned by the shuffle of his feet, and spun round to deliver an upper-cut that floored the ruffian.

The fight no longer interested the Irishman, and he ran to the crest of the hill. The gangsters did not follow him, but, climbing to their feet, stood in a sorry group by the roadside.

Pat gained the brow of the hill and stopped in his tracks. He saw the runaway car heading for the end of the bluff and the edge of the bluff, and he saw his friend racing after it in a neck-or-nothing bid to overhaul it.

"Glory be!" he gasped. And then, at the top of his voice: "Bob!" he yelled. "Stop, Bob! Ye'll go over!"

Bob did not hear him, for the screaming engine of the motor-bike shut out every other sound. Nor would Bob have heeded Pat had the Irishman's distracted shout reached his ears.

He was making up on the car, but the edge of the bluff was very near by now, and he could see the sheen of deep water far down beyond it. There seemed to be not the remotest possibility of drawing abreast of the roadster and saving June from the fatal plunge to doom, yet he kept the throttle wide open.

The automobile was just ahead of him now, and all at once he discerned a movement in the front of the car. June was stirring, and slowly she struggled to a sitting posture and drew her hand across her forehead dazedly. Then she was on the brink of the cliff immediately before her, and the river away below.

A look of horror crossed her face, and then a shriek she clutched at the door. Then as her fingers closed on the handle the roadster hurtled over the edge of the bluff and dived through mid-air with impetus that snatched the girl's path away and turned her sick.

A moment later the motor-bike had slowed it, carrying Bob down, down, towards the chill bosom of the waters.

There was a double splash as roadster and bike struck the surface and vanished under a welter of foam!

to be concluded next week. By permission of the Universal Pictures, Ltd., bring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.)

"MAID TO ORDER."
(Continued from page 19.)

bring into use every ounce of self-control. In Harry's hand was a gun, and it was pointed straight at Julian's head!

Julian thought quickly, and realised that unless he did something at once his chances of doing anything at all were gone. Harry was no longer the awkward, smiling simp that he had been in the café, but an ice-cold maniac, filled with the desire to kill.

Julian shrank back as though scared out of his wits.

"Oh, put it away!" he cried. "It frightens me!"

Harry advanced, his whole demeanour one of gloating. It mattered nothing that he was going to kill someone whom he believed to be a woman. On the contrary, the fact that he had apparently inspired so much fear flattered his vanity.

He jammed the gun hard against Julian's stomach, and grinned.

"Say your prayers, sister," he said. "I'll give you twenty seconds."

That last speech of his was his undoing. Julian, letting out a fake sob, sank to his knees, thus bringing the gun within easy reach.

He clenched his fist, and lashed out at Harry's hand. His knuckles caught the gunman's wrist squarely, and Harry let out a howl of pain as his weapon exploded harmlessly and sailed across the room.

Julian got to his feet, and looked about hurriedly for a weapon. He saw only one—a weapon that has been used by women from time immemorial.

It was an umbrella!

Julian grabbed it, and swung it upwards as Harry rushed in. Crash! It landed neatly on the top of his head, sending him staggering backwards with tears in his eyes.

Julian took another swipe. The handle of the umbrella caught Harry behind the ear this time, and the gangster went backwards across the bed with a roar of pain.

"And now what's it all about?" asked Julian politely. "Why the gun?" He advanced menacingly, the umbrella held high, when Harry did not speak. "Want some more?"

"No, no!" said Harry quickly. "I'll tell you. McGuire said you were a police spy, and was to be bumped off."

"He did, did he?" snorted Julian. "That means I've got to fix the whole lot of you single-handed." He looked at Harry sternly. "Come here, Harry."

Harry slowly rose from the bed.

"Say," he said sullenly, "you're pretty fierce for a woman, aren't you?"

"I ain't that," said Julian. "But it needn't worry you any more."

He planted a straight left clean on Harry's jaw, and followed it up with a right that had all his weight behind it. Harry gulped, staggered backwards, and dropped to the floor.

"That'll keep you asleep for a bit," muttered Julian gleefully. "Now for the rest of the bunch!"

In the Café.

THE clock on Times Building struck the hour of eleven as the distant drone of an aeroplane was heard in the sky. Loti Lorraine, waiting on the roof of the Arab night club, a powerful reflector-lamp by her side, strained her eyes to see if she could locate it.

The drone got louder until it was practically overhead. Quickly she uncovered her lamp, flashing the aviator above an agreed signal—three long beams and two short.

The aeroplane dived low towards the roof, almost skimming the tops of the chimneys. As it zoomed overhead there was a metallic thud from close by the door that led to the building below.

Loti Lorraine was about to leave the lamp, when the door suddenly opened and McGuire appeared. He looked down, and saw lying at his feet a bundle. It had burst open, clearly displaying its contents—gems and costly jewellery of every description.

He bent down and grabbed hold of it. His act was so furtive, and so completely a departure from the agreed plan, that Loti realised she was being double-crossed.

"Put that down, McGuire!" she shrieked.

McGuire laughed, and straightened himself. The next moment there was a crash as the door from the roof was slammed and bolted from the inside.

Loti Lorraine was a prisoner!

McGuire charged down the first flight of stairs to the lift, got into it, and flashed still further downwards to the café floor. He swung the gates back, and so reached the café itself.

The place was deserted. Julian had seen to that—he did not want any of the gang to slip through his fingers in the crowds.

McGuire paused uncertainly in the middle of the floor, still clutching the bundle of gems. Suddenly a voice behind him said:

"Looking for me, McGuire?"

McGuire spun round, to find himself face to face with the fake Loti Lorraine. Only this time the fake Loti did not speak in that soft mezzo-soprano, but in the tone of a very healthy and robust male—namely, Julian.

With a snarl of rage, McGuire swung up the heavy bundle of gems and aimed it full at Julian's face.

Julian was not taken unawares. He dodged and rushed in, sending McGuire sprawling backwards over a chair.

McGuire recovered quickly, and picked the chair up. He raised it above his head, and stood there threateningly.

Julian did not falter. He charged in again, this time snatching another chair from the floor as he ran. He braced his

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October 31st, 1931.

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arms for the stock, and met McGuire's weapon squarely with his own.

For a few moments the two fighters stood there glaring at each other. Julian's wig had come off, and McGuire was no longer under any false impressions as to the kind of antagonist he was up against.

At last Julian spoke.

"I'm going to smash you to pieces, McGuire," he said distinctly. "And I'll tell you why. You had the infernal nerve to lock Miss Carlyle up. Well, I found her, and now she's on her way for the cops. Moreover, she knows enough to have you put away for murder. So get busy—you've got precious little time left."

He flung his chair away, and got a grip on McGuire's. With a quick jerk he broke McGuire's grip, and sent the second chair spinning after the first.

"Now, McGuire," he said, and leapt back.

McGuire hurled himself on his opponent in a tempest of fury. Julian dodged swiftly, feeling the rush of air as McGuire's fists lashed past his head.

He jerked himself half-round, and as he did so, sent his right smashing to the side of McGuire's jaw. McGuire's features contracted in a spasm of pain, and he staggered backwards, stunned.

Julian gave him no chance to recover. He leapt in again, and sent home another stinging blow to the gangster's jaw. McGuire let up a shout, tottered for a few seconds, and then dropped to the floor with a crash.

Julian sprang on him, and felt in his pockets. As he did so, he heard a slight sound behind him.

"Hi, what's the big idea?" came the voice of Shorty. "What have you been doing to Miss Lorraine, McGuire?"

Julian straightened himself, McGuire's gun in his hand.

"Find out for yourself, Shorty," he said, and Shorty's eyes almost started from his head as he saw his beloved, a man's cropped head in the place of the blonde waves, leveling a gun unwaveringly at his waistcoat.

"Gor!" he said elegantly, raising his hands above his head. "And you was the one I reckoned would be my sweetie!"

Five minutes later McGuire began to show signs of life. Julian kicked him into wakefulness, and made him get to his feet.

At that moment the doors burst open and Detective Seranton came in, followed by a dozen police officers. The cops took charge of the two crooks, and went away to collect Harry and Loti Lorraine.

Seranton turned to Julian when he had finished giving his instructions.

"Good work, Julian!" he said admiringly. "Only you could have done it. I—"

He broke off. Julian was half-way across the café floor, talking to Joyce in a low but earnest voice. He had just asked her a question, and she hesitated over her answer.

"Go on—say 'yes,'" implored Julian. "I won't take anything else, and if you dare tell me that all I can be is a sister to you—"

Detective Seranton delicately turned away as Joyce suddenly laughed, and Julian swept her into his arms.

(By permission of the Sterling Film Co., Ltd., starring Julian Eltinge as Julian Eltinge; Jane Reid as Joyce Carlyle; Georgie Stone as Shorty; Betty Boyd as Loti Lorraine; Jack Richardson as Jim McGuire; Al Hill as Harry; Kernan Gripps as Detective Seranton; Charles Giblin as Captain Randall.)

October 31st, 1931.

The News Reels

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

He Bit.

Bert Wheeler tried this wisecrack on his partner, Robert Woolsey.

"Had an awful time with Amos last night," Bert remarked.

"You mean Amos 'n' Andy?" asked Woolsey interested.

"No, a mosquito."

An Undersea Drama.

The most interesting of Elstree's nine stages the other week was undoubtedly that on which Capt. Walter Summers and his assistants were filming the B.I.P. picture "Submarine."

A huge square had been cut of the middle of this particular "set" to permit the construction of a tank. In it lay a portion of a submarine filled with levers and dials that had been specially lent for the film by the Admiralty. The interest of the scene was capped by the thrilling spectacle of the submarine crew making frantic and real efforts to escape when more than fourteen tons of water began flooding the vessel.

Everyone got soaking wet, including the director and cameramen. Chief Petty Officer Willis, hero of the Poseidon, was also there giving directions. The exterior scenes were taken at Portsmouth, where a real submarine was used.

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Don't miss this splendid issue of our companion paper

"SCREEN STORIES."

ON SALE WEDNESDAY.

PRICE 2d.

"The Hunchback of Notre Dame."

(Continued from page 14.)

the raving mob. Gringoire—and in an instant the hunchback scrambled out of the window, and went climbing down the cathedral, edging his way to the left of the mighty structure, so as to avoid the insurgents clamouring around the door below.

"Gringoire!" Quasimodo was panting heavily as he came up to the man, and there was an acute pain in his chest. Strong as he was, the hunchback's heart was none too sound, and the least exertion had the effect of weakening it still more. "See those devils—Clopin and his scum. They're after Esmeralda, and they'll get her if we can't get help. Will you—"

"I understand—you want me to get out the soldiers?" Gringoire quickly interrupted. "I'll do it, never fear. But 'tis strange that I should happen along to-night. As a matter of fact, Phœbus De Chateaupers is at last fit and well again, and only this evening did he hear that the fair Esmeralda had been sentenced to death for the attempt made on his life. He had imagined she had gone away and left him. My, but wasn't he mad when he heard the truth! She never stabbed him—Phœbus swears to that. Said someone must have crept up behind them—someone who bore him a grudge. Anyhow, he's secured for the girl the king's pardon—that was why I came along—to tell Dom Claude. But enough of this. If I don't hasten those scurvy knaves will break a way into the cathedral and get the girl. Farewell, Quasimodo; rely upon me to get out the King's Guard."

As he sped away the hunchback went back to the cathedral, gaining admittance in the same way as he had left it.

Up he climbed to the very top of the magnificent building, where Esmeralda still crouched, terror-stricken, on her bed.

"Be not afraid, Esmeralda," he comforted her. "It's Clopin and his dogs. They're trying to force their way into Notre Dame to get at you. But they'll not succeed. Oh, dear no. I've sent for the King's Guard—and Phœbus De Chateaupers will be here in—"

"Phœbus!" The girl caught in her breath, an eager light shining in her eyes. "Is he well again then?"

"Not only that," grinned the hunchback, "but he's secured your pardon. Told the King that it wasn't you who attempted his life, and he's mad to thin they suspected you. Unfortunately he's only just heard about it, and—"

He broke off as a mighty thud drifted up from below, and shuffled out to the stone balcony. As he peered over the balustrade—saw the huge trunk of tree which some score of Clopin's revolutionists were using as a battering-ram against the cathedral door, something seemed to snap in his brain, leaving him a raging maniac.

Back he stamped to warn Esmeralda that the threatened danger was now very real, and as he came into her improvised bedchamber he stopped in she alarm. Jehan was there, struggling with the girl—Jehan, who had raided the treasure vaults and, having stowed so priceless gold and silver candlestick and other tokens in a sack, had come here with the intention of again trying to persuade Esmeralda to marry him.

(Continued on page 28.)

"THE LIGHTNING FLYER."

(Continued from page 8.)

handed swing, and, landing against the signal-box door, burst it open and fell on to the top of the wooden steps. Durkin leapt in to finish the fight, but Jim brought up his left leg, caught Durkin in the waist, and, exerting all his strength and utilising the forward rush of the madman, managed to lift him over his head. Durkin crashed against the wooden rails, smashed them, and fell headlong to the ground fifteen feet below.

A groan, and no sound but the rasping telephone-bell.

The fight was finished. Jim was so exhausted that he just wanted to lie there and sleep, but the bell kept his senses from failing. With an effort, he turned on his side and then to his knees. His head was buzzing, and he felt on the verge of collapse, yet he knew he must answer the call.

An effort to stand up brought a moan of agony. His right ankle hurt terribly, and every bone in his body was sore. Clutching at the sides of the cabin, Jim crawled to the phone and raised the receiver off the hook.

"Hullo!" His voice was no more than a croak.

"Good G— Where have you been?" a voice answered hoarsely. "The freight has broken in half—three trucks are hurtling down the line—the special coming up will smash into them—and unless you derail them a fearful accident must occur! There's not a moment to lose!"

Doom Threatens the Special.

JIM was so dazed and exhausted that his brain seemed incapable of functioning. Derail the freight truck! But how could he do that? There was a special apparatus to be put on the lines. But where was it? If he found it, could he lift it?

The fighting spirit that had caused his father to rise from the shops to the presidency of a huge railroad came to his aid. He clenched his teeth and told himself that he must find the derailing gear and set it in place.

Under some sacking he found a metal

instrument, two foot in length by almost a foot in height, and it was terribly heavy. It was a block of metal with a huge groove in the centre and a slot underneath. The underneath portion fitted over the rail, causing the top groove to rest plumb with the rail. The wheel that entered the groove must be diverted, impossible to jump over the obstacle because the angle and depth of this groove was specially constructed—it had been tried and tested hundreds of times.

Somehow Jim dragged the cumbersome article to the top of the steps, nearly toppled over when he reached for the smashed rail, then, with a last effort, pushed it down the steps.

What was that noise? He stared down the incline and saw a red glow in the distance. The special? Jim, muttering fervent prayers for strength, staggered down the wooden steps. The noise was the rumble of the runaway trucks, the red glow the lamp on the last truck, now the first—since the trucks were running backwards.

Exerting what remained of his strength he swayed down the incline. On the right was a sheer drop of many thousands of feet, and to derail the trucks by the signal-box might only cause a wreck into which the express would charge.

The derailing apparatus was across the rail, and then fear gripped Jim afresh. The express would know nothing of the danger and might get so close that the derailing would come too late. The express must be made to slow—but how?

Like a drunken, lame man Jim returned to the signal-box. Thank heaven, a sound lamp was still hooked to the wall. With shaking fingers he lit the wick and closed the shutter.

The clatter of the approaching trucks sounded like thunder—they could not be more than six hundred yards away. Past the derailing metal limped Jim, drawing his red lamp above his head, whilst useless, croaking words came from his parched lips.

The express seemed, to his distorted vision, to be almost on him and rushing up the incline at a terrific speed.

Then the ankle gave out and Jim slumped to the ground. He lay where he had fallen.

The driver of the special was leaning over the side of his engine cab. He saw

the red light and yelled to the fireman.

"Danger ahead!"

But even though the red light suddenly wavered and vanished, the driver was a man of caution and was taking no chances. The brakes were violently jammed on, and Rose, talking earnestly to the president, was flung into his arms.

"Something wrong," shouted James Nelson. He pushed the girl away and hurried to the window.

The moon came over the pines and he gasped as round the bend ahead of them he distinguished the oncoming trucks. The express had almost come to a standstill.

"We've got to jump for it!" yelled the president, and grabbed at Rose, who had come to his side.

But as he spoke a strange thing happened. The leading truck seemed to shoot straight up in the air and turn. A crashing, rumbling roar of destruction, and then the three trucks leapt from the track and like black shadows disappeared down the precipice.

James Nelson and Rose stood there with palpitating hearts. A terrible smashing, grinding noise told them of the trucks sliding and banging together in chaos down the steep sides of the mountains, smashing trees, loosening rocks and battering themselves to pulp before reaching the bottom of the ravine.

But these two were not concerned with the wreckage. What had been happening in the signal-box, and how had Jim fared?

When Jim opened his eyes a lamp was shining on him, and he blinked up into the anxious eyes of his father and Rose. A faint smile twisted his lips.

"Durkin—back there—freight train coupling broke—nearly too late—I'm feeling fine—" He lapsed off into oblivion.

"He'll do," the president grunted. "For the love of Mike, stand back, girl, or you'll get that dress all gory!"

"Who cares?" cried Rose, and cradled Jim's head on her lap. "He's my man!" Whereat the unconscious Jim smiled in his dreams.

(By permission of the W. & F. Film Service, Ltd., starring James Hall as Jim Nelson; Dorothy Sebastian as Rose Rogers; Walter Merrill as Tom Summers; Robert Homans as Mr. Nelson; Albert J. Smith as Durkin; Ethan Allen as Rocky Rogers.)

FIREWORK DAY.

HOW AND WHERE THE BIG BANGS ARE MADE.

WHERE do fireworks come from, boys? I never thought about it at all until I visited a certain big factory at Huddersfield and saw "Standard" fireworks actually being made.

From Land's End to John o' Groats, November 5th spells fun and fireworks to every boy in the British Isles. It is the day above all others when squibs and rockets are let off without hindrance, and the "man in blue" is obligingly blind and deaf to the doings of youthful disturbers of the peace.

To provide one night's entertainment, the entire staff of several large firms in different parts of England are kept busy throughout the year. The Standard Fireworks firm in Yorkshire—the county in which Guy Fawkes was born—employs over four hundred people all the year round, and it has depots in London, Manchester, Newcastle, Cardiff, and Southampton which bear a strong likeness to munition works.

No one seems to know who was the actual inventor of fireworks—some say they began with the Romans, and others think that the Chinese had a good deal to do with their origin. Bonfires have been used as a signal of rejoicing from the earliest days, but a bonfire is a tame affair compared with the startling effects obtained from the fireworks of to-day.

A knowledge of saltpetre, gunpowder, and other inflammable substances was brought to England by the Crusaders from the East, and the chemists of that time evidently made some successful experiments with these materials in the years that followed, for a firework display was given at the wedding of King Henry VII, and one of the features of the celebration was a red firework dragon which spouted flames.

Dragons seem to have been popular in England in those times. A firework display given on the occasion of another Royal wedding—that of the daughter of

King James—illustrated the story of St. George and the Dragon. It was performed by Army gunners, and was dangerous business even for these men, as their knowledge of the explosives they were handling must have been very incomplete.

Provided that the fireworks come from a reputable maker, such as Standard Fireworks, Limited, and that the instructions accompanying them are carefully followed, a modern firework display is exciting enough for anyone without being in the least dangerous. Remember, though, that you can hardly blame the make if trouble results from holding a firework labelled "Not to be held in the hand." The head of the Standard Firework firm made that very plain.

He also told me he calculates that about half a million of money is spent every year on Guy Fawkes Day on the purchase of fireworks, and you can imagine what a great deal this means, especially as the great majority of fireworks sold are the cheap varieties, ranging in price from one halfpenny to sixpence.

If you want the best fireworks, boys, insist on the "Standard" brand!

October 21st, 1921.

"The Hunchback of Notre Dame."

(Continued from page 26.)

But the girl would have none of the rascal and was now striving desperately to keep him at a distance as he tried to take her in his arms and kiss her.

"Leave me alone, you canaille!" she screamed in terror. "Leave me alone! Oh, help! Help!"

With a bellow of rage, Quasimodo suddenly flung himself forward, clutched fiercely at Jehan's throat and bore him backwards over Esmeralda's bed. No heed of Jehan's wild cries and pleadings did he take—a red mist was before the hunchback's rolling eye—in his brain the wild urge to revenge himself for the thrashing he had had for helping this man in his fell attempt to kidnap Esmeralda that fatal night.

His fingers pressed savagely on the whimpering man's windpipe, while Esmeralda crouched back in terror, covering her eyes with her hands to shut out the grim sight.

Eyes bloodshot and goggling hideously in their sockets, Jehan made one last vain effort for his life. But the hunchback's grip was relentless, and a moment later the rascal gave a choking sob and went strangely limp.

The sound of splintering wood came up from below, and with a sudden cry of rage, Quasimodo released his grip on his victim's throat and hobbled out to the balcony. Esmeralda, fear clutching at her heart, face white as chalk, followed him, and she shuddered as she saw him dancing in his mad fury, first on one leg and then on the other, as he peered over the stone balustrade.

The cathedral door was giving now under the sustained blows of the battering-ram and the axes of the mob below.

Where were the soldiers? Quasimodo cursed that they should be so long delayed.

But Clopin and his dogs should not get into the cathedral without paying a heavy price. A wild chuckle burst from

the hunchback's lips as he cast his staring eye on the large blocks of masonry a little further along the balcony and on the two large melting-pots beyond them. Almost he blessed the fact that the cathedral was under repairs—these huge blocks of stone, which were to replace slabs that were crumbling with age, and the lead in the melting-pots would make formidable weapons to turn against the invaders.

In another moment Quasimodo had seized one of the huge blocks, and, though it called for tremendous strength, he somehow got it to the balustrade and thrust it over. Down it went, crushing some half-dozen or so of the clamouring men around the cathedral door, causing others to cry out in alarm at this sudden and unexpected blow that had been dealt them.

Block after block hurtled down upon the insurgents, and always they took their toll; then, cackling hideously, Quasimodo lit the brushwood that was set beneath the two melting-pots, while Esmeralda watched him with horrified amazement, quite unable to move or utter a word of protest.

Again the hunchback resorted to flinging blocks of stone down on Clopin and his followers, and the missiles greatly hampered the attack on the door. But, urged on by their leader, the revolutionists swarmed forward after each fall of masonry and smashed their weapons on the splintering wood.

Then, just as the stout oak door crashed inward, Quasimodo tilted the melting-pots above and a stream of molten lead swished over the balcony, poured through embrasures in the balustrade and descended on the howling crowd below.

Wild shrieks and moans as the molten lead engulfed the revolutionists—and the terrible weapon claimed as one of its victims none other than Clopin himself.

Up on the balcony Quasimodo danced with fiendish glee as he peered down and saw the havoc he had wrought—then the sound of thundering hoofs set him cheering wildly. The King's Guard at last!

"You're saved, my pretty! You're saved!" The hunchback turned to Esmeralda as Phœbus, at the head of

his regiment, galloped into the market square to engage instantly the disorganised revolutionists in a grim but one-sided battle. "Yonder comes Phœbus De Chateaupers with his fine soldiers. They'll soon settle with the rest of those dirty knaves!"

A sudden shooting pain in his chest caused Quasimodo to wince. The strenuous exertions of the past twenty minutes had greatly sapped his strength, had strained that already weakened heart. But the hunchback paid it very little heed. He shuffled away, a twisted grin on his ugly face, and a few minutes later he came to the rope that tolled the giant bell of Notre Dame. As he grasped it, another and more excruciating pain shot through him, causing him to stagger.

But only for a moment did he hesitate—he must sound the bell as a signal of the defeat of the revolutionists. A vigorous pull and the toll of the bell drowned all sounds of the battle waging down below.

For a minute or two Quasimodo dragged on the rope, his efforts ever growing weaker, then again a sharp pain stabbed his heart and he staggered drunkenly. Flat on his back he crashed, his face contorted with pain, his breath hissing in between his teeth in short gasps. A second later his body gave a convulsive shudder and then was still.

And there on the cold stone, Dom Claude and the reunited lovers, Phœbus and Esmeralda, found him when they came along to see the reason for the tolling of the bell.

Quasimodo's hoart had given out—only had the hunchback of Notre Dame tolled the bell in defeat of the revolutionists, but he had sounded his own dirge as well.

(By permission of Universal Pictures, Ltd., starring the late Lon Chaney as Quasimodo; Patsy Ruth Miller as Esmeralda; Norman Kerry as Phœbus De Chateaupers; Nigel De Brulier as Dom Claude; Brandon Hurst as Jehan; Ernest Torrence as Clopin; Tully Marshall as King Louis XI; Raymond Hatton as Gringoire.)

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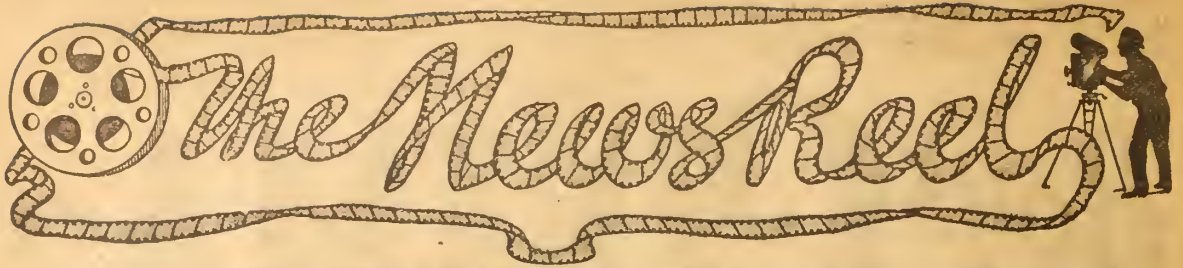
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The
SKY
RAIDERS



The News Reel

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"The Sky Raiders."

Bob Rogers, Lloyd Hughes; Grace Devine, Marceline Day; Willard, Wheeler Oakman; Kelley, Walter Miller; Jimmy Devine, Emerson Treacy; Bradford, Ed le Saint; Pete Johnson, Kit Guard; Lefty, Ashley Buck; Hansen, Jerome K. Jerome; Louie, William H. O'Brien; Blondy, Jay Eaton; Sergeant, Dick Rush.

"Lasca of the Rio Grande."

Jose Santa Cruz, Leo Carillo; Ranger Miles Kincaid, John Mack Brown; Lasca, Dorothy Burgess; Crabapple Thompson, Slim Summer-ville; Jehoshaphat Smith, Frank Campeau.

"Heroes of the Flames."

Bob Darrow, Tim McCoy; June Madison, Marion Shockley; Mrs. Madison, Grace Cunard; Jackie Madison, Bobby Nelson; Dan Mitchell, Gayno Whitman; Pat Heeley, Monte Montague.

Pastimes Between Scenes.

Stranger than the proverbial uses of adversity are the pastimes and pursuits by which screen players, between scenes or waits on a sound stage, seek recreation.

For instance, Lupe Velez may be seen cracking a large bull whip between scenes at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios. She handles it like a veteran. It is both exercise and recreation for her, she says. She learned the trick from Douglas Fairbanks when she appeared in "The Gaucho" with him.

Lawrence Tibbett, opera and film star, likes to get a piece of rope from the stage hands and practice twirling it in cowboy fashion. He learned this as a boy, when he used to ride on his uncle's ranch. Tibbett was an expert cow-puncher long before anyone dreamed he was destined to become a famous baritone.

Buster Keaton, between scenes, likes to pick up any bit of machinery lying around the stage and put it together or take it apart. He has a natural aptitude for mechanics, and in fact holds a government licence as a marine engineer. As a youth, he used to serve as engineer on a Great Lakes steamer between variety engagements.

Clark Gable likes to work cross-word puzzles, or mechanical puzzles of any kind, and has infinite patience in solving them. John Gilbert reads between scenes, and so does Conrad Nagel.

Wallace Beery loves to wander about the set and play practical jokes—particularly on Cliff Edwards if the latter is available as a victim.

Joan Crawford always has a gramophone on the set where she is working, and during any wait plays records. She is intensely fond of music.

William Haines has a violinist and pianist—the regular old time "set orchestra" on his stages. Of course, they can't play "inspirational" music

November 7th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S THREE COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



CHARLES DELANEY

— IN —

"HELL BENT FOR 'FRISCO."

A young reporter plays a lone hand to solve the shooting of a young bank director on a track. Gangsters try to take him for a ride, but he foils them, securing a big scoop for his newspaper and the girl of his dreams.

"TRANSATLANTIC."

On a liner bound for England a tense drama is enacted. How a crook, for the sake of a girl, played a straight game. Starring Edmund Lowe and Lois Moran.

"TRAPPED."

A gripping drama of how the Police cunningly tricked two rascally crooks. Another true story from the notebook of William J. Burns of the U.S. Secret Service.

as was done in the days of silent pictures, but they play for him between scenes. He says it not only rests his nerves but actually helps him to concentrate and remember his lines.

Behind the Scenes.

More than once when watching the production of films at Elstree, Welwyn Garden City, and elsewhere, I have wondered what some of those who think film acting is all "honey" would say if they could but peep behind the scenes.

They would certainly look in vain for that glamour which grips so many people when the finished picture is being viewed in the comfort of a cinema. Within the studio you find yourself instead in an atmosphere which is both uninviting and unreal. Lofty bare walls surround you; entanglements of cables lying on the floors are apt to trip you if you do not mind your step; studio paraphernalia of all kinds are anywhere and everywhere.

There can be no attempt at tidiness where almost everything as well as every-

one must be on the move. Carpenters are busy on half-finished "sets"; electricians are being told where and how to arrange their lights; the director is advising the artistes what to do. All this hub-bub must cease, of course, directly the whistle blows announcing that filming is to begin.

But even then the acting is by no means as simple and as straightforward as appears on the screen. The artistes may have already rehearsed their parts on the "set" a dozen times. Yet again and again a re-take is demanded. It is not only the director who may have faults to find, but the sound engineer, too. The artistes may feel weary and bored to death, but neither the camera nor the microphone must be allowed to record their real feelings. They have to keep on with the same thing until everything is O.K.

Meanwhile, there are other artistes who are not doing anything at the moment. They may have to stand about for hours in their make-up waiting for minor parts that may take no more than a few minutes to act. And this sort of thing goes on day after day from early morning till, often, 9 or 10 at night. But in the finished picture you see only the glory and the glamour that appears to surround film life.

Acting and Influenza.

Acting, if you will believe Leslie Howard, is like influenza—you can never tell when it will seize you and lay you low!

Howard was a peaceful and prosaic bank clerk in London until he was picked up in the maelstrom of the World War and thrown into the trenches, where he remained until demobilisation sent him back to "Blighty."

"I didn't know what to do or where to go," he related. "I was bewildered. All about were men looking for jobs they had forgotten how to hold. In the midst of this mad turmoil I was stricken with acting and dashed into an agent's office. There I sat for weeks and weeks, finally landing a small part in a provincial "Peg o' My Heart" touring company.

"Why I chose acting I do not know. But, like a bad attack of the 'flu, I couldn't shake it off. I knew I should be back in London at a bank office, but the acting germ had me, and I stayed through the most miserable of experiences. That I happened to succeed was mere chance."

Howard, known for his performance in "Outward Bound," "Berkeley Square," and other dramatic stage hits, is regarded as one of the outstanding men on the English or American stages. He was persuaded to join films by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer while playing a theatre engagement in Los Angeles, and played in "Never the Twain Shall Meet" and "A Free Soul."

His latest rôle is with Marion Davies in "Daughter of Luxury."

Secret drinking loses a young pilot his job and he becomes an outcast. A gang of crooks try to make use of him for daring robberies, but he fights them to regain his manhood and the girl he loves. Starring Lloyd Hughes and Marceline Day.



The Crash.

ONE evening in early autumn an aeroplane was flying high over the mountains of Southern California on its way to Mexico. Starting from a great airport near Los Angeles some hours before in bright sunshine, it had now run into mists hanging over the mountains, and every moment the fog seemed to grow thicker.

In the plane were two men. Bob Rogers, a tall, dark young fellow, reputed to be the best pilot employed at the airport, was at the controls. His friend, Jimmy Devine, sat beside him, listening to wireless messages which came through from headquarters from time to time. Jimmy was somewhat the younger of the two, of slighter build, and not so experienced as Bob, yet quite capable of taking charge of the aeroplane in any ordinary circumstances.

"Fog increasing over the Ridge Route," said Jimmy presently. "That's the last message."

"I've flown in worse fogs than this," growled Bob. "Tell 'em we're okay."

Something in Bob's tone made Jimmy glance at him thoughtfully, but he sent the message as his friend gave it.

"Devine speaking. We're going okay!"

Jimmy looked again at Bob. For some time he had been suspicious that something was wrong with his friend, and now, seeing the settled look of gloom on Bob's face, he made up his mind to speak.

"What's wrong, Bob?" he asked.

Bob Rogers did not reply. His whole attention seemed to be concentrated on the controls, but a frown spread over his face at Jimmy's question.

"Didn't I see you talking to Grace before we started?" asked Jimmy.

"Have you two had a quarrel?"

Grace was Jimmy's sister, and Bob

Rogers was in love with her, as Jimmy well knew. From the expression of the pilot's face as his friend asked the question, it was quite obvious that Jimmy had guessed the reason for Bob's ill-humour.

"We have, if you must know!" snarled Bob fiercely. "And now suppose you mind your own business."

"I reckon this is my business," retorted Jimmy angrily. "You quarrelled over the same thing, as usual, of course. Why don't you leave the stuff alone, Bob? You'll ruin your career if you keep on drinking at the rate you have been doing."

"Shut your trap!" howled Bob, all the more angry because he knew that Jimmy had spoken the exact truth. "I've had enough of it from your sister, and I'm not taking any sermons from you."

Jimmy did not reply, for at that moment came another wireless message from the airport.

"Thicker fog ahead," he announced ruefully, after listening to the report.

"Here, take over," growled Bob, as though he had not heard a word of the message. "I'm going to have a drink."

"Not now, Bob!" exclaimed Jimmy in astonished tones. "You can't mean it. You know I ain't had any experience of flying in a fog."

"Take the controls, I tell you!" snarled Bob. "I'm in command on this trip, and you'll do as I tell you!"

Seeing no help for it, Jimmy gave way and slipped into the pilot's seat, while Bob went into the small cabin just behind, found a bottle and glass, and began to drink.

Headquarters called again, and Jimmy answered:

"We're still on our course. Fog? Yes, getting worse, but we're going right on."

Jimmy Devine had replied confidently enough, but as time went on he found more and more difficulty in keeping on the course. The fog bothered him a great deal, and as it became thicker and thicker he became confused, and began to fumble uneasily with the controls.

Suddenly the aeroplane tilted into a steep dive, Jimmy wrenched desperately at the levers, but his nerve had gone, and he failed to force the machine out of the dive. Down they went, ever more and more steeply, and Jimmy screamed in frenzied accents for his friend.

"Bob, we're out of control! Bob! Bob!"

Bob Rogers crawled out of the cabin, roused at last by the sensation of the falling plane. He was far too late. Before he could grasp the controls the inevitable crash had come. With a tremendous impact the unfortunate craft came down at the edge of a wood on the mountain side, and from the crumpled wreckage there rose almost at once a flicker of flame.

It seemed impossible that the occupants of the machine could have survived such a crash, and yet a moment after the plane came to the ground a figure crawled from beneath it. Bob Rogers staggered to his feet, moved away a few paces uncertainly, and gazed stupidly at the wreckage. The shock had sobered him, but he was dazed, and a minute or two passed before he realised that there was no sign of Jimmy Devine.

The flames rose higher, and Bob suddenly rushed back to the wrecked plane to search for his friend. A still form lay in the midst of the heap of splintered metal, and Bob, with a great effort, succeeded in pulling Jimmy out.

Meanwhile, repeated calls from headquarters had obtained no reply from the aeroplane, and at last the operator

turned to Mr. Willard, the manager of the airport, who had just come in.

"I'm afraid there's something wrong, sir," he remarked. "Last thing I heard was a sort of scream, 'We're out of control!' I can't get them now. I'm afraid they've crashed."

"I can hardly think that," said Willard. "Rogers is one of the best pilots we have. Still, if you can't get an answer, I'll send out another plane to look for them."

A few minutes later a fast machine took off, and flew out over the Ridge Route. A strong wind had by this time cleared the fog from the mountain slopes, and in less than two hours the plane reached the scene of the crash. Creeping above the wreckage, the pilot was about to make a landing when his observer touched him on the shoulder.

"Look over there!" he cried, pointing to some low ground at the base of the mountain.

The pilot looked, and saw, some three miles away, a man stumbling slowly along, carrying an inert form across his shoulders. Soon the rescuers had landed close alongside Bob Rogers, who had carried Jimmy a long distance, seeking in vain for some place where he could obtain help.

Swiftly the plane returned to the airport, carrying both the injured men. Bob Rogers was not badly hurt. Save for a few cuts and bruises, he was little the worse for the crash; but he knew that Jimmy Devine had not come off so easily.

Jimmy Devine had not recovered consciousness, and when the doctor saw him it was evident that the young pilot's condition was very serious indeed.

"You had better send for his relatives at once," said the doctor gravely, when he had concluded his examination of Jimmy's injuries.

The manager rang up Grace Devine, telling her little beyond that her brother had met with a slight accident, and soon the girl came along in some alarm. Outside the door of the hospital ward she saw Bob Rogers, who was standing there uneasily, waiting for news.

"Thank Heaven you're safe, Bob!" she exclaimed. "Where's Jimmy? Is he much hurt?"

"He's in there," muttered Bob, and when Grace saw the haunting look of fear in his face she guessed at once that her brother must be seriously injured. She rushed at once into the ward, and after a moment Bob followed her slowly.

An anxious group surrounded Jimmy Devine's bed as Bob crept in to stand at the foot. The doctor was bending over the injured pilot, while Grace had seated herself on the bed, with Willard, the manager, standing behind her. Bradford, the assistant manager, had also come in.

"How is he, doctor?" asked Grace in a whisper. "I want to know the truth." "There's not much hope, I'm afraid," replied the doctor very gravely. "I am not even sure that he will regain consciousness."

A minute or two later, however, Jimmy opened his eyes.

"Guess I'm through, doc," he muttered feebly; and then, closing his eyes again, he lay still.

Bob Rogers cast one agonised glance at his friend; but the doctor signed to all of them to go out, and outside the door Willard tackled the unfortunate pilot at once.

"What's happened, Rogers? Who was at the controls when you crashed?"

"I had charge of the ship, hadn't I?" growled Bob.

"If'n! And is that all you have to say?"

"Yes," replied Bob shortly.

"I can guess what happened," com-

mented the manager. "Drunk again, eh? Well, Rogers, you've been warned before. This time you're through. We shall not need your services again, and your licence will be cancelled."

The manager turned to walk away, while Bob Rogers stumbled out, disgraced and without a job, his mind in a whirl. But, uppermost in his thoughts was the terrible idea that his friend Jimmy Devine lay at death's door, and that Jimmy was dying through his fault.

Bob walked dazedly across the flying field towards the planes, and as he went another pilot, Pete Johnson by name, came up to him.

"Say, I don't believe you crashed into that mountain, Bob," said Pete. "Was Jimmy steering?"

Bob made no reply. He walked up to an old aeroplane, examined it, and got in.

"Where are you going, Bob?" asked Pete in astonishment.

"Don't know where I'm going," said Bob shortly, and a few minutes later he was high in the air, flying away towards the south.

A Leap for Life.

IT was a week or so later that Bob Rogers walked slowly along the street of a small town in the north of Mexico. His eyes were bent upon the ground, his face was haggard, and he had the appearance of a man brooding continually over dark thoughts. How he had reached Mexico he hardly knew. Without any prospect of a job, and with hardly any money left, he had come to the end, he thought.

"I'll go in here and have a drink!" he muttered to himself as he passed a saloon. "Then I'll go and end it, somehow."

He turned into the saloon, grim thoughts of suicide in his mind. Suddenly, to Bob's great surprise, a voice hailed him in English. He glanced towards the bar, where he saw several Americans, one of whom he recognised as a man named Kelley, once a pilot at the airport.

"Hallo, Rogers! What are you doing down here?" cried Kelley.

"Nothing particular, Kelley," replied Bob. "I didn't know you had fetched up in Mexico, either."

"I heard some talk of you getting into a jam," remarked Kelley. "Come and have a drink. I've got a job for you, I reckon. I happen to want a good pilot just now."

"Want me to pilot a plane, do you?" asked Bob, accepting the drink.

"Sure! I want you to pilot a plane up north," replied Kelley. "You can earn real money at this job. Are you interested?"

Bob Rogers hesitated, for Kelley had not the best of reputations, and he had left the airport some months before in suspicious circumstances. Moreover, the four men who were with him were shifty-looking individuals to whom the young pilot took an instant dislike. Still, Bob knew nothing certain to Kelley's discredit, and a job of some sort he must get.

"Okay, I'm on!" said Bob at length.

"When do you want to start?" "Early to-morrow morning," replied Kelley. "Come over now and I'll show you my plane."

The next morning found Bob Rogers seated once more at the controls of an aeroplane, flying steadily towards the north. Kelley had told him nothing of the object of the journey, beyond that he wished to make for Los Angeles, but as Bob glanced from time to time at his employer and the men with him, he

felt very doubtful as to whether their business was of a legitimate kind. Presently he overheard some words which made him still more doubtful.

"Think we shall be in time?" said one of the men to Kelley.

"I guess so," replied Kelley. "The express leaves this afternoon at one o'clock. We shall do it easily enough."

"The pilot will have a gun, I suppose," remarked another man.

"Ain't we got guns?" growled Kelley.

"Time to tell that fellow, ain't it?" said a third man, a thin, wiry-looking individual known as "Louie."

"Not yet," muttered Kelley angrily in a low tone.

"What have you got to tell me?" asked Bob, turning round to the men.

"Nothing special—yet," replied Kelley, somewhat confused.

"He'll have to know, Kelley," snarled Louie, "and you might as well tell him now, or I will. We're after the dollars in the express plane that leaves the airport to-day, an' we're goin' to get 'em, too. You join in with us, an' get your share, Rogers."

"Going to join us, Rogers?" asked Kelley, as Bob made no reply. "There's money in this job, as I told you, and you ain't going to earn much money any other way, since that jam you got into. What d'you say?"

Still Bob Rogers did not speak, and the crooks felt the plane swinging round again towards the south. Instantly Kelley and his gang rose to their feet, their faces glaring angrily, while each man felt for his gun.

"No, you don't!" howled Kelley, springing upon Bob and plucking him from the pilot's seat. "Take care of him, boys."

Kelley seized the controls and turned the plane once more towards the airport, while Bob Rogers, helpless in the grip of the four angry crooks, was thrown roughly into a corner of the cabin. Louie, gun in hand, kept a wary eye upon him, and Bob lay quiet, thinking hard.

"Keep still!" growled Louie. "I'll fill you with lead if you don't."

"A better way would be to drop him overboard," remarked "Blondy," another of the crooks. "I reckon it would be a fine sight to see a fellow drop six thousand feet."

"We're over the town!" cried Kelley presently, and the gangsters turned their attention for a moment from their captive. Beneath them lay the airport, and their eager gaze was at once focused on the flying field, where stood a large aeroplane round which a number of men were gathered.

Bob Rogers saw his opportunity in a flash. As he lay still in the corner of the cabin, he had observed a parachute on the other side, and near it a small door. The moment Louie turned his head, Bob sprang to his feet, and in one stride he had seized the parachute. The next second he had hurled himself through the door, and before the astonished crooks had realised what he was doing, Bob Rogers was hurtling down to earth.

He had taken a chance with the parachute, and even as he pulled the ring he wondered whether the folds above him would open, or whether Blondy would have his wish, and see a fellow drop like a stone for six thousand feet. The parachute opened, and Bob's furious downward flight changed to a gentle glide earthwards.

"He's jumped for it!" howled Louie angrily. "Swing her down, Kelley, and I'll take a shot at him."

"Talk sense!" sneered Kelley. "If you do that, you'll give the game away."

"He'll give us away if he gets to the field!" shouted Louie wildly, fidgeting impatiently with his gun.

"He'll be too late, I reckon," said another of the crooks, Hansen by name, peering out. "The express is ready to start."

A strong wind helped the parachute towards the flying field, and Bob Rogers came gently to earth a few hundred yards from the express, just as the mechanics drew back for it to start.

Disentangling himself from the clinging folds of the parachute, Bob rose to his feet and ran at full speed for the field, shouting as he went. The group around the express caught sight of him, and stared in astonishment at the hurrying figure.

"Stop! Stop!" yelled Bob. "Danger!" "Wait a moment," said Mr. Bradford to the pilot of the express. "I must see what that fellow means."

"It's Bob Rogers!" cried a dozen voices as the ex-pilot ran up.

"What's the matter, Rogers?" asked Bradford as Bob reached his side.

"Why, that 'plane up there!" gasped Bob. "There's a gang of crooks in it, and they plan to follow the express and steal the dollars."

"How do you know that?" demanded Bradford suspiciously.

"I was in the 'plane with 'em," said Bob, "but I didn't know what they were after until ten minutes ago. Then I took a chance on the parachute, and jumped."

"I saw someone jump from that 'plane, sir," remarked a mechanic, turning to Bradford eagerly.

"They're going off!" cried another mechanic, looking up at the strange 'plane.

It was true enough. Through their glasses the crooks had watched Rogers run up to the express, and they knew then that the game was up. Kelley turned the aeroplane, and headed away for the south, while the other gangsters commented bitterly on his management of the affair.

"We've sure said a lot, Kelley," remarked Louie finally, "but we ain't said

as much as the boss will. I sure don't envy you when you meet him!"

And Kelley cursing his unlucky idea of enlisting the services of Bob Rogers, was too much cast down even to answer.

The New Mechanic.

"WELL, boss, it wasn't our fault," said Kelley plaintively. "We didn't guess the guy was going to jump."

"I'd have plugged him before he reached ground, only Kelley stopped me," grumbled Louie.

"Yes, that's it. You're all too fast with your guns and not fast enough with your brains," growled the tall, good-looking man to whom these remarks were addressed as he glared angrily from one to the other.

Kelley had not taken the 'plane very far after his failure to intercept the express. He had left it in the gang's secret hiding-place, not many miles from the air port, and now, the next morning, the crooks had assembled in their apartment on the outskirts of the town. The boss had come to meet them, very angry at their failure on the previous day, and, as Louie had guessed, Kelley heard some caustic comments on his bad management of the affair.

"What could we have done but make a get-away?" wailed Kelley.

"That's not the point," thundered the boss. "I gave you all the information, and you've no more brains than to come right over the town. You knew when the express was leaving, and you knew the way it was going. Why didn't you wait for it along the route?"

"Didn't think of it," muttered Kelley.

"As I said. No brains," came the sneering reply. "And anyone but a fool would have found out if Rogers would stand in with us before bringing him along. Why did you have him to pilot the 'plane, anyway?"

"He's a better pilot than any of us," replied Kelley.

"No doubt," said the boss, "but you were a fool to bring him, all the same. Now get this. Next time I'll do the thinking, and you'll do exactly what I tell you."

"Wish I'd plugged that guy,"

mourned Louie from a corner, and the boss instantly turned on him in fierce anger.

"There'll be no killing," he cried. "There's too much at stake to take such risks!"

"Okay, boss," muttered Louie sullenly, "but surely you ain't goin' to let that guy Rogers get away with it like this?"

"No," replied the boss. "I'm putting Rogers where I can get him when I want him. You'll see."

"Where is he now?" asked Kelley.

"That's my business," came the sharp retort, and the boss of the gang went out without saying anything as to Bob's whereabouts, an omission which afterwards caused the crooks considerable trouble.

Bob Rogers was still at the airport. He told his story in full to Mr. Bradford, who went off to report to the manager, asking Bob to wait.

"Are you out of a job, Rogers?" asked Bradford when he came back.

"Guess I am," replied Bob ruefully. "I thought I'd got one with Kelley before I know he was a crook, but —"

"How would you like to work here as a mechanic?" interrupted Bradford. "I've asked Mr. Willard, and he agrees."

"Thank you, Mr. Bradford," said Bob slowly. "I'll think it over."

Bob Rogers presently walked across the flying fields, wondering whether Jimmy Devine was still alive. He had not dared to ask Mr. Bradford, for he felt almost sure that the reply would be that his friend was dead. And, if so, how could Bob accept a job as mechanic at the airport, where he would certainly meet Grace Devine again?

Presently someone hailed him. "Why, if it ain't Bob Rogers! Glad to see you, Bob. How are you?"

"Hallo, Pete," said Bob, recognising the pilot who had seen him fly off in despair on the day of the crash.

"Have you come back to see Jimmy?" asked Pete.

"To see—Jimmy?" gasped Bob, staring at the speaker in mingled astonishment and hope. "Then he isn't—he isn't—"



"How is he, doctor?" asked Grace, in a whisper. "I want to know the truth."

"Of course not!" cried Pete cheerfully. "He's almost well now. Didn't you know?"

"No, I hadn't heard," said Boh, "but I'm sure glad to hear he's better." "He's in that office over there," remarked Pete, pointing to the other side of the field. "You go right over and see him."

Bob Rogers walked joyfully across to the office, his natural cheery self once more. His gloom had vanished as though it had never existed, and he walked eagerly in to find his friend. Sure enough, Jimmy Devine was there, looking a little shaky and pale, but otherwise none the worse for the accident.

"Thank Heaven you're better, Jimmy!" cried Bob as he came in. "I'd never have forgiven myself if you hadn't pulled round."

"Nonsense, Boh!" said Jimmy. "I'm okay now, and, anyway, I let the ship crash, not you. I was sorry you went away. What are you doing now?"

"Bradford says I can come back as a mechanic if I like," replied Bob.

"It would be a bad break after being the crack pilot, but I reckon you'd better do it," said Jimmy thoughtfully, putting his hand on Bob's shoulder. "You see, you've got to make good, and then you'll get back your pilot's licence after a time."

"I told him I'd think it over," remarked Boh.

"You accept, Bob," urged Jimmy earnestly. "I want you here, and—well, Grace will be here soon. She'll tell you what she wants herself."

A car drew up outside as he spoke. "There she is. Go and bring her in," said Jimmy, hiding a smile as Bob got up, looking very dubious.

He went out slowly, wondering what sort of a greeting he was likely to get, but he soon discovered that there was no need for worry.

"Hallo, Bob!" cried Grace brightly. "I heard you had come back. You're looking well. Tell me where you've been and why you went away."

"Listen, Grace," said Bob earnestly. "I took a chance with Jimmy, and I thought you wouldn't want to see me again, so I went off to Mexico out of the way."

"I'm glad you've had the pluck to come back again," replied Grace, and she smiled to herself as Bob's face flushed red. "Now you've come back you're going to stay, of course."

"Yes," said Bob hastily, making up his mind to accept the job as mechanic. "I'm going on as a mechanic, and I'm going to work to get my licence back. And I'll make you a promise, Grace. I'm through with the drink from now on."

"Oh, Bob," cried Grace joyfully, "that's the best news I've heard since they told me Jimmy would get better!"

They moved towards the door, and as they reached it the manager came out. Bob had not seen him since the day of the crash, and the harsh manner in which Willard had dismissed him still rankled in his mind.

The manager glanced at Grace and Bob, and a flicker of annoyance passed over his face. His voice sounded cordial enough, however, as he spoke.

"Hallo, Rogers, you're quite a stranger!"

"Always will be—with some people," replied Boh coolly, passing on with the girl to rejoin Jimmy in the office.

"Have you taken any 'planes out yet, Jimmy?" asked Bob after a while.

"I've had one or two short flights," replied his friend. "I think they'll be sending me on a longer trip next week if the doctor will pass me for it."

November 7th, 1931.

Presently Bob went off to the flying field to find Mr. Bradford.

"Is that mechanic's job still open?" he asked when he met the assistant-manager.

"Sure, Rogers," came the reply. "You can take it right now."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Bradford," cried Bob. "I will."

And Bob Rogers, the new mechanic, ran off to the aeroplane sheds to get on with the job.

Captured.

A FEW evenings later, as Bob Rogers was leaving the flying field after a hard day's work, he happened to pass near a 'plane at rest upon the ground not far from the shed in which he was employed. Two men stood just behind the machine, talking, and Bob glanced casually at them as he went by. It was getting dark, but there was light enough for the new mechanic to recognise the men.

"That's Kelley," muttered Bob, instantly drawing back behind the 'plane. "What's he hanging around here for, I wonder?"

The men had, apparently, not noticed Bob, and they went on talking quietly.

"The express goes in the morning, you say?" asked Kelley eagerly.

"Sure, at ten o'clock," replied the other man, who was one of the mechanics employed at the flying field.

"We'd better get on to the boss, then, and see what he thinks about trying again. Maybe we'll have better luck this time. Come on, let's beat it!"

The two men made off, and Bob Rogers, after a moment's pause, followed them, convinced that the crooks were once again planning to rob the express. He wondered what to do, for Willard and Bradford had both gone home, he thought, and yet somehow he must get in touch with one or the other, or with the police, and that without delay. As he reached the road, a car drew up, and he saw Grace Devine at the wheel. Jimmy was at her side, and he sprang out to hail Bob cheerfully.

"Hallo, Bob! I'm just going to look over the express. I'm taking her off in the morning. Stay and talk to Grace. I'll see you presently."

"Just a minute, Jimmy," cried Bob. "I've got something important to tell you."

"Presently," replied Jimmy, running off, and Bob had perforce to turn to Grace. For a moment he was tempted to tell her what he had heard Kelley say, but he reflected that the news would rouse her fears for the safety of her brother, and he decided to say nothing until he had seen the manager or the police.

"Have you got your new pilot's licence yet, Bob?" asked Grace eagerly.

"No, not yet," replied Bob. "I don't expect to get it for some while."

"I hope you soon will," said Grace earnestly. "How do you like working as a mechanic?"

"It's a good job—a man's job, and I like it well enough," answered Bob. "I'd sooner be flying, though, any day."

Bob Rogers, talking to the girl he loved, had no eyes for anyone but her. He failed to observe that Kelley and his companions had stopped a little way down the road. Nor did he notice that a tall man had come up, and that all three were regarding him curiously. Presently the newcomer whispered to Kelley, and the crook started up a car, and slid away down the road.

"You'll soon be flying again, Bob," said Grace, "but after that crash I don't know—I think I'd almost rather you

stayed on the ground, even though you were only a mechanic."

"Do you care so much for me?" whispered Bob. "Listen, Grace, I want to tell you something. I—"

"Good evening, Miss Devine," said a voice, and the two young people started as Willard suddenly appeared at the side of the car. The manager smiled at Grace, but completely ignored her companion, and the girl replied very coldly: "Good evening, Mr. Willard. You quite startled us, coming up quietly like that."

"I called at your house," said the manager, "and I was told you had come along here. I wanted to remind you of that dance this evening. You said you might perhaps do me the honour of allowing me to take you. May I hope you will come?"

"I am sorry, Mr. Willard," replied Grace in her iciest tones, for she was much annoyed at the interruption of what promised to be a most interesting conversation with Bob. "I am very busy to-night. I'll come some other night, perhaps."

"Good-night, Grace," said Bob Rogers suddenly, walking off.

"Oh, Bob, please!" called the girl. "Come back, I want you to wait for Jimmy."

Bob Rogers did not return, for at the sight of Willard an unreasoning jealousy had flared up in him. He had never liked the manager, and Willard's obvious admiration of Grace Devine annoyed him beyond measure.

"I won't tell that fellow about Kelley," he muttered. "I'll find Bradford and tell him."

Getting into a small car which one of the pilots had lent him, Bob drove off down the road towards the town. A quarter of a mile away he passed another car which was moving slowly along, but he took no notice of it. He was already ashamed of the abrupt way in which he had left Grace, and he slackened speed, almost inclined to return and apologise for his behaviour.

"Hey, Rogers, stop!" came a menacing voice just behind him. Bob looked round in surprise, and saw the car which he had just passed. In it was Kelley, gun in hand, and Bob instantly stepped on the gas. A bullet sang past his head as his car rushed on, with the gangsters in full chase. Try as he would, Bob could not shake off the crooks, and their car kept close behind him.

"That's done it, sure!" groaned Bob a moment later, for a bullet crashed into his back tyre, which collapsed with a hissing of escaping air. The car slowed down and the gangsters drew alongside in triumph.

Bob saw that escape was out of the question, for he was on a lonely stretch of road, and there was no one in sight. He pulled up, and the crooks were soon at the side of his car.

"So you've been spying around on us, have you, Rogers?" cried Kelley angrily.

"Lucky I happened to spot you talking to that girl. Think you can stop us again, do you?"

"It doesn't take much to stop a guy like you," replied Bob contemptuously.

"You'll find you can't stop us this time," growled Kelley. "Out with him, boys, and we'll take him to our place right now, and tie him up."

"You'd better let me put a bullet through him," came the plaintive voice of Louie, who stood behind Bob, gun in hand, evidently itching to pull the trigger.

"None of that, Louie," growled Kelley. "The boss said no shooting, and what he says goes."

"Boss? What boss?" cried Bob in surprise, for he had imagined Kelley to be the leader of the gang.

"You shut your mouth!" snarled Kelley. "Get him out, boys."

Louie jammed his gun into Bob's back, and though the young airman had heard Kelley forbid his follower to shoot, he did not feel any too certain that the gangster would obey. He attempted no resistance, and the crooks forced him into their car. Kelley drove rapidly down the road, and soon reached the gang's apartment on the outskirts of the town.

"We've got him, boys!" cried Kelley jubilantly as he pushed his captive into a room on the first floor of the house. The other members of the gang were already there, and they smiled significantly as they looked at Bob.

"What d'you mean to do with the guy, now you've got him?" asked Blondy, toying carelessly with an automatic.

"He can stay here until we come back from that little trip of ours to-morrow, I reckon," said Kelley, "but I'll ask the boss first."

"We are going to-morrow, then?" asked another of the gang, an unpleasant-looking individual known as "Lefty."

"Sure we are, if the boss says so, and I think he will," replied Kelley.

"So you're going to try again, are you?" remarked Boh quietly.

"Very slick bit of thinking, that," sneered Kelley. "If we go to-morrow we shall not have the pleasure of your company. We're leaving here in ten minutes, and there's only five of us going."

"Five!" said Bob, looking round at the scowling gangsters. "You're reckoning to leave me here alone, eh?"

"Why not?" asked Kelley. "You don't think you can bust out of here, do you? Hansen used to be a sailor, and he'll tie you up to rights."

"Sure, Kelley," remarked Hansen. "You leave that to me." At that moment the telephone bell rang.

"Watch Rogers, boys," ordered Kelley. "That's the boss calling. I'll just tell him the news."

"Say, Kelley," cried Louie eagerly, "just ask the boss if I can shoot this guy Rogers? I reckon we'll be safer if I do."

The Police Take a Hand.

KELLEY walked across the room to answer the telephone call, and Bob wondered whether he might now get some clue to the identity of the mysterious "boss." But, as he almost expected, Kelley was too cunning to mention any name.

"That you, boss?" said the crook. "Yes, we've got him safe enough. What shall we do with him? Louie wants— Okay, boss, okay, I'll see he doesn't. Tie him up? Hansen will see to that, and we'll be along in a few minutes."

Kelley hung up the receiver, and turned to Louie with a grin.

"The boss guessed what you wanted to do, Louie," he remarked, "and he said some things about you that I won't repeat. You're not to use your gun on Rogers—or anyone else, if it comes to that. Not without orders from the boss, anyway. Got that?"

"I've got it," said Louie sulkily. "Don't quite know why I carry a gun—it ain't ever used."

Bob Rogers had stood quietly all this time, but as Kelley and Louie were talking he sprang suddenly into swift action. Leaping straight at Blondy, who happened to be nearest, he sent the crook down with a flush hit to the jaw. As the gangster fell, Bob grabbed his gun and, with a swift jerk of the wrist, he sent it hurtling through the window into the street below.

Louie's automatic instantly covered Bob, but Kelley sprang forward and

pushed down his follower's arm before he could press the trigger.

"No shooting, you young fool!" he shouted.

"I'm going to plug him, Kelley!" yelled Louie. "Lemme go!"

"The cops will be here in a minute," cried Kelley furiously. "Did you see that gun go through the window? On him, boys!"

Kelley hurled himself at Bob, but staggered back as the young airman's fist connected with his chin. Hansen and Lefty sprang at Bob from the other side, the former grabbing him round the waist, while Lefty ran into Bob's right, which took him on the nose. Lefty sat down and took no interest in the proceedings for some moments, but Blondy rose to his feet and joined in the fray, eager to revenge that crack on the jaw.

Louie had reluctantly put away his gun, and he hovered on the outskirts of the fight, seeking for some chance to help. The centre of the floor was a whirling mass of struggling men for the next two minutes, but at length Bob broke loose, hurling Kelley and Hansen right and left. The young airman ran for the door, but he had not taken three strides before he fell over Louie's foot, opportunely placed in his way by the wily gangster.

Bob Rogers went down, and Louie fell on top of him. Before Bob could extricate himself from the crook's grasp, the rest of the gang swooped upon him, and in another moment he was securely held, while Hansen got to work with a rope.

When he had seen that Bob was firmly tied up, Kelley stepped over to the window and looked out.

"Quick, boys!" he cried. "I can see two cops prowling along the street."

In another moment Bob Rogers, so tightly roped that he could move neither hand nor foot, had been securely gagged and thrust roughly into a cupboard at the back of the room. Having thus disposed of the young airman, the



"No shooting, you young fool!" he shouted.

gangsters grouped themselves round the piano, all but Lefty, who had retired to the bath-room to administer first aid to his injured nose. He came back after a few minutes, somewhat recovered, to be greeted with amused grins by his companions.

Blondy, who fancied himself as a musician, seated himself at the piano and began to play, and soon the gangsters, led by Hansen, were roaring the chorus of a sea-shanty as tunefully as they could. They were interrupted by a thunderous knock at the door. Louie went to open it, and saw, as he expected, two policemen.

The cops came in and looked around. The gangsters gazed silently at them, trying to assume as innocent and peaceful an appearance as they could. Blondy began to play soft music, but the policemen were not to be taken in.

"Just a little musical evening, I see," remarked one of them, a sergeant, in a genial tone. "Very nice, I must say, only you sang that shanty a bit too loud, I reckon."

"Maybe we did," said Louie, "but

"That your gun?" barked the sergeant, producing the weapon which Bob had thrown out of the window.

"No, sir, I never saw it before," replied Louie in well-acted surprise.

"Any of you nightingales own that gun?" asked the sergeant, with a piercing glance at the crooks.

"No, sir," cried the gangsters in chorus, shaking their heads indignantly at the notion that any gun could possibly belong to them.

"That gun was thrown out of this apartment," remarked the sergeant in a significant tone. "I found it in the street right now, so quit your kidding. It belongs to one of you guys, and I'm asking you what the game is."

"Thrown out of our apartment?" exclaimed Kelley, rather over-acting in indignant astonishment. "You must sure have made a mistake, sergeant. We ain't had guns on this building this long while."

"Says you!" sneered the cop, swiftly producing his automatic. "Put 'em up, an' keep 'em up! Mike," he added to the man with him, "you take a look round."

"Here's a window smashed," said Mike, after a look round the room. "That's where the gun went through, sergeant."

"Of course," remarked the sergeant. "I'm taking this bunch down to the station, and they can explain this business to the captain. Get their guns off 'em, Mike, and make it slipper. I'm in a hurry!"

All five crooks still had their hands above their heads as Mike came forward to search for their guns. He did not get them, for as soon as the policemen had entered, Hansen had posted himself conveniently near the electric light switch. Now he stumbled backwards and with a swift movement put the room in darkness.

Without a second's hesitation the five crooks dived headlong for the door, stooping low as they went. The cops fired at random into the darkness, and Kelley, who was last, felt a bullet sear his wrist as he rushed out. The others were not touched, and they tore down the stairs with the police at their heels. Into their car they tumbled, and Blondy started her up just as the sergeant reached the pavement. In another second they were beyond the reach of the policemen, who fired a shot or two after them, but without effect.

"Well, Mike," said the sergeant, "they've beaten us this time, but I'll have 'em yet."

"Sure, sergeant," remarked Mike

loyally, though he was by no means sure in his own mind. "What do we do now? Shall I go and search that apartment?"

For a moment Bob's fate trembled in the balance. For a moment the carefully laid plot of the crooks to rob the express seemed likely to be foiled. The sergeant hesitated, half-turned to go back to the house, and then appeared to make up his mind not to return.

"You go and tell the landlady to lock up the apartment," he said. "I'm going down to the station to tell the captain, and we'll get on the track of those guys. You come down after me."

"Okay, chief," replied Mike, going back to the door. He gave the message to the landlady, saw her lock up the apartment, warned her not to allow anyone to enter until the police returned, and then followed the sergeant to the station.

Meanwhile, Bob Rogers lay helpless in the cupboard, unable to move and completely exhausted after his fierce struggle with the crooks. He heard the voices of the gangsters raised in song, then a sudden silence, and finally the sound of guns. He began to hope that the police were taking a hand in the game, thinking that perhaps the automatic he had thrown out of the window had been found by a cop.

Desperately he strove to make some noise which might attract attention to his plight, but in vain. Hansen had done his work too well, and Bob could not utter a sound, could not even drum with his heels on the floor, so thoroughly had the ex-sailor trussed him up.

The sound of the guns died away, and silence succeeded. Bob strained his ears to listen, hoping against hope that the police would search the rooms. No sound came, and gradually Bob's hopes faded, and he began to give way to despair.

Through the long hours of the night the young airman lay where the crooks had thrown him. Once or twice at first he tried to wriggle himself loose from the ropes, but he presently gave up the attempt as hopeless. His thoughts were very bitter as the night wore on. The express was due to leave in a few hours, the gangsters had planned to rob it, and he was powerless to help. Bob had foiled Kelley's first attempt, but it did not seem likely that he could stop the crook this time.

And Jimmy Devine, his friend, was to be the pilot of the express!

Too Late!

AN hour before the express was due to leave the airport on the following day, a solitary plane glided down and made a landing on a field some five miles out of the town. As the machine came to rest in the middle of the field, a car drew up on a road near by, and a tall dark man got out of it. Walking across to the plane, he saw Kelley leaning out.

"I've just been talking to Louie on the 'phone," he said to Kelley. "He says Rogers is still in the apartment, safe enough. The police didn't go back last night."

"That's okay, boss," replied Kelley, with a sigh of satisfaction. "I was afraid they might go in and search around when we left."

"The fools wasted their time trying to get on your track instead," said the boss contemptuously. "You can wait here for half an hour. I'll go back to the town and get another report from Louie. If I don't return you'll know it's okay, and you can take off. You will wait for the express at the edge of the desert, and force it down. No shooting of the pilot, remember! Get the

dollars, and then make for the rendezvous. I'll meet you there."

"I get you, boss," said Kelley. "We'll do as you say this time."

On the flying-field a few miles away another plane was waiting, almost ready to start. Jimmy Devine stood by the side of the great express, talking to his sister Grace, while a crowd of mechanics and officials waited near at hand. Just before ten o'clock Mr. Bradford came up, and Jimmy climbed into the cockpit.

"Good-bye, Jimmy," said Bradford, "and watch your step. I don't mind telling you there is a very valuable cargo on board this time."

"Good-bye, Mr. Bradford," cried Jimmy Devine cheerfully. "I'll sure be careful. Good-bye, Grace! Okay, boys, get her going."

A mechanic began to swing the propeller, and soon the express was gliding over the level stretch of ground towards the end of the field. She rose into the air and was soon a mere dot in the sky far away to the east.

"Well, he's away right enough," remarked Bradford. "No sign of pirates this time, so far as I can see. That reminds me! Where's Rogers this morning? Has anyone seen him?"

No one could give any news of Bob, and presently Bradford walked back to his office, puzzled and somewhat annoyed at the non-appearance of his new mechanic.

Bob Rogers still lay in the cupboard at the gang's apartment, while Louie prowled about in the street outside the house, keeping watch on the door.

A policeman came strolling along the pavement, and Louie shrank back into the doorway. The officer passed by apparently without noticing the crook, and Louie breathed again as he saw the cop go down a side turning. The gangster came out into the street again, and walked up and down for a minute or two. He looked at his watch, saw that it was time for the express to start, and thought with relief that his job as guard would soon be over.

"Put 'em up!" said a voice behind him. Louie jumped, and his hands went instinctively above his head as he turned to find himself gazing at the cop's automatic. The policeman had crept noiselessly up behind him, and Louie found himself fairly caught.

"You're one of the gang that ran out on us last night, ain't you?" asked the policeman.

Louie preserved a dignified silence, and the cop proceeded to relieve him of his gun, and then to handcuff him.

"You come along down to the station," continued the policeman genially. "I want you to meet our sergeant again. You had a few words with him last night, and I reckon he'll be very pleased to see you this morning. And he's a nice fellow—you'll like him when you really get to know him."

Louie did not share the policeman's enthusiasm at the idea of meeting the sergeant, but with a gun jabbing in his side he was helpless, and reluctantly he began to walk down the street, just as two men approached the house from opposite directions. One of the newcomers was the sergeant himself, the other a Chinaman carrying a vacuum cleaner.

"Why, here is the sergeant," said Louie's captor joyfully. "Say, sergeant, I've got one of 'em."

"You sure have, Mike," replied the sergeant, surveying the shrinking Louie attentively. "This is the guy who opened the door to me last night."

"He said he hadn't got a gun then," chuckled Mike. "He's found one since, and here it is."

He held up the six-shooter he had taken from Louie, and the sergeant took it with a chuckle of amusement, which died away as he saw the Chinaman walk up to the door of the house.

"What do you want in there?" he asked the Oriental sharply.

"Me go to clean carpets, sir," answered the man blandly.

"Knock at the door then," said the sergeant. The Chinaman obeyed, and the landlady appeared. She confirmed the man's statement, and the policeman was satisfied.

"Okay, go in then," said the sergeant. "I'll take this guy down to the station. The captain will want to ask him some questions, I reckon. You wait outside, Mike, and I'll be back in a few minutes."

The Chinaman went into the house, and a few moments later he was busy cleaning the carpet in the gang's apartment. Suddenly he stopped, and a look of surprise, not unmingled with fear, came over his face. He had heard a dull knocking somewhere in the room.

He left the vacuum cleaner, half-turned to run away, but seemed to regain his courage and began to investigate. The knocking continued, and soon he discovered that it came from a cupboard at the back of the room. Cautiously he pulled at the door, which opened outwards, and forthwith Bob Rogers rolled on the floor at his feet.

A little while before Bob had managed, after painful efforts, to wriggle himself into such a position that his head rested against the door of the cupboard. When he heard that someone had at last come into the room, he began to knock the door time after time with the back of his head, and to his great joy he soon found that help was at hand.

The Chinaman gazed open-mouthed for a second at the helpless Bob, and then bolted out of the room and down the stairs into the street. Mike was just outside the door, and the sergeant with Louie was still in sight down the street.

"You come, you come!" gasped the Chinaman to Mike. "Me found man in cupboard—man tied up. You come quick."

"Hey, sergeant!" yelled Mike at the top of his voice.

The sergeant heard and turned round. A few minutes later the two policemen stood with Louie in the apartment, looking in astonishment at Bob Rogers. Kneeling down by the helpless man, the sergeant unfastened the gag, cut the ropes, and helped Bob to his feet.

"That's one of the gang," muttered Bob huskily as he saw Louie, who stood near, with Mike gripping his arm.

"Did he help to put you in there?" asked the sergeant.

"Sure he did," said Bob. "But what's the time, sergeant? I haven't the least idea."

"It's a few minutes past ten," replied the policeman, somewhat surprised by the

urgent note in Bob's voice. "Why d'you ask?"

"Quick, lemme get at that 'phone!" cried Bob, hobbling painfully across the room. He called up the flying-field, and began to ask rapid questions.

"Has the express ship gone? What? You don't know! You'll do—what? You'll ask Mr. Willard? You'll—"

Bob Rogers threw down the receiver in disgust, muttering by no means complimentary remarks about the girl who had answered his call.

"Can you get me a car, sergeant?" he cried. "I must get down to the airport at once. There's a plot to rob the express, and I must warn them."

"Come down to the station, Mr. Rogers," replied the sergeant, who had recognised Bob. "I'll get our fastest car and go with you."

A few minutes later Bob Rogers and the sergeant were making for the flying-field at the utmost speed of the swift police-car. In a quarter of an hour they drew up at the airport.

"The express!" cried Bob, scrambling out and seizing a mechanic by the arm.

"Has it gone yet?"

"Gone? Why, yes, it left at ten o'clock," replied the man.

"Who piloted it?" asked Bob anxiously. "Was it Jimmy Devine?"

"Of course," came the reply. "If you want Jimmy, you're sure enough too late."

The Robbery of the Express.

BOB ROGERS was much too late to stop the express ship from leaving the airport, but he missed the departure of a smaller 'plane by only a few minutes. Had he but known who were the occupants of the second machine, he would have been just as eager to prevent that from starting, too.

Willard, the manager of the airport, was not on the ground to see the express take off, but he came up imme-

diately afterwards and spoke to Grace, who was gazing up into the air, still watching the ship her brother was piloting.

"Good-morning, Miss Devine," remarked the manager. "I'm glad your brother has got safely away. And now, how about that little trip you promised to take in my 'plane? It's a perfect morning for flying. Shall we go now?"

"Thank you, Mr. Willard," replied Grace coolly. "I don't care very much about going up to-day."

"Not just for a few minutes?" asked Willard, trying to keep within bounds his intense eagerness that the girl should come. "I wouldn't keep you up long—say a quarter of an hour. Come and look at my ship, anyway."

Grace walked over to look at the manager's private 'plane. It was a beautiful machine, the fastest ship at the airport, and the girl's resolve not to go up began to weaken as she gazed at it.

"Well, Mr. Willard"—she hesitated—"if you promise not to go very far—"

"Sure we won't go very far," said Willard, concealing his satisfaction. "Get in, Miss Devine, and I'll just take you for a short trip around."

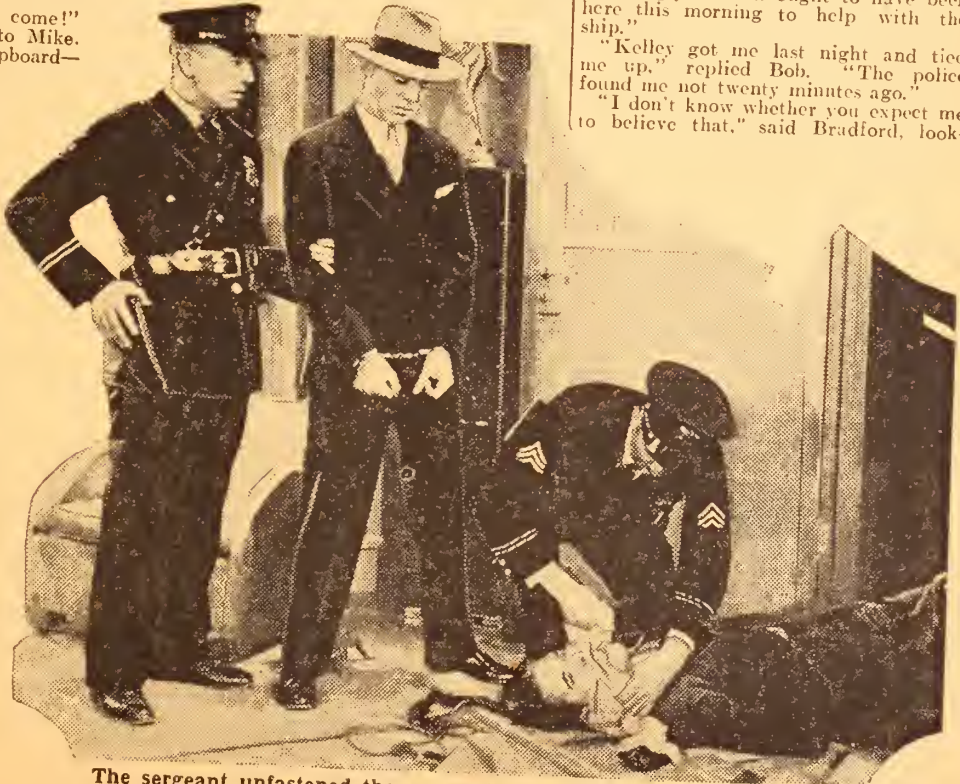
Grace climbed into the manager's 'plane, and Willard followed. Just as the police car carrying Bob Rogers came rushing along the road to the gate, the machine rose into the air and flew swiftly away in the direction of the express. Bob took no notice of it, for all his thoughts were centred on the danger to the express ship. He went across to the office, walking stiffly, for he had not yet recovered from the effects of the long night spent in the gang's apartment.

"Those crooks are after the express ship, Mr. Bradford!" he cried, as he met the assistant manager at the door.

"Where have you been, Rogers?" asked Bradford, staring at him unbelievably. "You ought to have been here this morning to help with the ship."

"Kelley got me last night and tied me up," replied Bob. "The police found me not twenty minutes ago."

"I don't know whether you expect me to believe that," said Bradford, look-



The sergeant unfastened the gag and cut the ropes that bound Bob.

ing oddly at Bob's wild appearance and torn attire. "I reckon you're dreaming. There are no gangsters in this town that I know of—you told me that lot of Kelley's came from Mexico."

"I tell you Kelley's after the express!" shouted Bob. "You're wasting time arguing with me!"

"He's right enough, Mr. Bradford," said the police-sergeant who had accompanied Bob into the office. "I found him roped up and gagged in an apartment just outside this town. We raided the place last night, but the gang ran out on us, and I didn't go back to look over the rooms until this morning. I sure made a mistake there. We got one of the guys this morning and we'll make him talk, but I guess you'd better do something about that express."

"Sorry I doubted you, Bob," said Bradford in tones of regret. "What had we better do?"

"Is that 'plane ready to start?" asked Bob, pointing out a small machine that stood not far away. Bradford nodded, and Bob at once went out and climbed into the cockpit.

"I'm reckoning to go along to help Jimmy if I can," cried Bob leaning out to speak to Bradford, who had followed him. "I should 'phone army headquarters, Mr. Bradford, I think, and get a government 'plane sent along after the express. Kelley has got a machine-gun, and Jimmy won't be able to cope with that."

Bob was away in another minute, and the assistant manager went back to his office. He informed the nearest army airport of the danger which threatened the express, and soon he had the satisfaction of hearing that a great fighting 'plane was ready to start on the track of the raiders. Hardly had this news come through than a messenger ran in.

"Message from the express ship, sir," he said, handing a slip of paper to Bradford.

"H'm! Rogers was right, I see," muttered Bradford as he read the message, in which Jimmy Devine stated that a strange machine was following and forcing him down. "When did this come through?"

"Just now, sir," replied the messenger. "The operator sent me straight to you with it."

"You should have taken it to Mr. Willard first, if he's back," remarked Bradford slowly. "He ought to know about this."

"Mr. Willard isn't back yet, sir," said the man.

"Well, let him know when he comes," said Bradford, "and tell the operator to send along any further messages from Devine straight away."

No other message came from Jimmy Devine, for the express ship was indeed in trouble. As soon as Jimmy reached the edge of the great desert of Arizona the air raiders swooped down upon him. Flying high overhead at first, Kelley gradually swung his 'plane lower and lower above the express, until Jimmy at last became aware that the strange machine was deliberately endeavouring to force him down. He got off a wireless message to the airport, but it soon became evident to him that his position was very grave.

Try as he would, he could neither distance the bandit 'plane nor rise above it. Kelley's machine was much faster than the express, and the sky raiders were before long successful in their attempt to force Jimmy to the earth.

Down to the ground at length came the express, and Jimmy climbed out, only to find that the gangsters had been quicker. As he looked round he found

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himself covered by Kelley and three other crooks, and reluctantly he raised his hands above his head.

"You keep reaching for the sky and you'll be okay, Devine," growled Kelley. "We ain't aiming to do you any damage so long as we get the dollars. Get busy, boys. I'll take care of this guy."

Hansen, Blondy and Lefty got very busy at once, and they began to transfer the packages of notes from the express to their own 'plane, while Jimmy looked helplessly on, glancing now and then at the sky in the faint hope that his hasty message would bring help in time.

"You needn't look up there," sneered Kelley. "I'll tell you there ain't a chance of anyone interfering with us even if you did get off a call for help."

A few minutes later the robbery of the express was completed. Blondy broke a gas-line on the great machine so that Jimmy could not possibly take off again until he had repaired the damage, and soon the bandit 'plane soared up into the air on its way to the rendezvous across the desert where the boss had promised to meet the gang.

The pilot of the robbed express watched the raiders until their ship was almost out of sight in the eastern sky. Then he turned to look back to the west, for he knew that sooner or later help would come. Far above, almost overhead, he noticed a small 'plane travelling very swiftly. He focused his glasses upon it, hoping to see it swoop down to his relief.

"Looks like Willard's ship," he muttered. "Why doesn't he come down?"

The small 'plane passed on towards the east, and Jimmy watched it for a few minutes, extremely puzzled. Then he turned with a start, for behind him he heard a familiar sound. Coming swiftly towards him was another machine, which glided down until it was flying but a few feet above the ground. As it neared him Jimmy saw that Bob Rogers was leaning out, eager for news.

"They've got the dollars, Bob," yelled Jimmy at the top of his voice, "and they've gone that way."

He pointed out the direction the bandits had taken, and Bob nodded his head in comprehension. His engine roared out again, and at full speed the young airman followed hard on the track of the sky raiders.

The Boss of the Gang.

BOB ROGERS flew on over the desert, but as mile after mile of the monotonous, arid land passed beneath him without a sound of human life, he began to fear he would not discover the bandits' hide-out so easily as he had hoped to do.

At last, far in the distance on the farther edge of the desert, he observed a small house. As he came nearer he saw two aeroplanes at rest on the ground just in front of the building, and he felt sure that he had at length traced the gangsters, to their rendezvous.

Shutting off his engine lest the crooks should become aware of his approach, he made a long glide down and landed skilfully a few hundred yards from the house, just behind a ridge of rock which concealed his machine from view. Here he got out and moved cautiously up to the two 'planes, noticing with satisfaction that as yet the gangsters had not apparently observed his coming.

One 'plane he instantly recognised as the machine used by the gang on their first attempt to rob the express, but at the sight of the other he stopped short in astonishment, for he knew that ship,

(Continued on page 26.)

A tempestuous dancing girl, a half-breed rustler, and a Texas Ranger. A tale of a cattle stampede and a girl's brave sacrifice.



"Lasca of the RIO GRANDE"



Starring
JOHN MACK BROWN
and
DOROTHY BURGESS.

The Fiesta.

THE cantina at Tres Vacas was so full that many of the merry-makers had overflowed into the wide main street of the little border town. Every kind of vehicle along the banks of the Rio Grande del Norte, that half civilised, half baked cattle-raising country, had lumbered into Tres Vacas for the coming fiesta; a procession of navigable buckboards, democrat wagons, "one-hoss" shays; almost anything that went, continued to pour in its human load of senors, señoritas, and sun-burned cowboys from the plains, the mountains, and the riverside villages.

It was the beginning of summer, the longest days and the shortest nights—a brief respite from toil before life became too lively for one to even think of fiestas!

The first fine shades of evening were falling, giving excuse for the cantina to light up its many brightly coloured lamps. Dancing and dicing and drinking, the three D's dear to the hearts of these happy-go-lucky folk, were in full swing.

The landlord was busy serving customers, laughing and jesting with them whilst the little gaily-uniformed orchestra thrummed and piped brisk tunes for the twinkling feet of a lithe, dark-eyed, red-lipped slip of a girl who danced with abandon on the polished floor in the smoke-clouded lounge of the cantina.

She danced alone, her mop of deep black curls flying out from her shapely head much in the same way as her silken skirts flew out as she spun and twisted and twirled herself around, keeping time with the haunting melody. She danced with every part of her; eyes, hands, feet—humming the tune as she moved in perfect rhythm.

At the conclusion of her performance loud "bravas!" and tremendous clapping of hands followed. Shouts for an encore made the lamps lung in the high roof quiver; but she shook her head impudently and decisively as, after curtseying many times, she ran lightly off the floor and up the stairway leading to the rooms above.

An unshaven, loose-jointed, untidy old fellow of doubtful age still kept up his raucous shoutings.

"Lasca! I want Lasca!" he hooted, banging his great top-booted feet on the floor and clapping none too clean hands.

She stopped half-way up the stairs to blow a kiss to him, whereupon the old lad's face broke into a beatific grin. He turned to his neighbour at the table.

"If it wasn't for Jose, I reckon I'd have a chance with that gal," he stated. "She sure knows a good thing when she sees it."

"Jeho Smith's been lookin' around for you, Crab," grunted the other. "He seems kinder peeved about you."

"Jeho? H'm!" The old fellow's grin faded. "They let him out of gaol early, huh?"

"He's done six months," came the slow voice. "It was what you told the sheriff that got him gaoled, so he says. I dunno nothing about it."

"Reckon I'll be movin' along," decided Crabapple Thompson. "I got my li'l donkey outside waitin' for me. 'Night!"

As he lounged out of the saloon into the open, his watery eyes became aware of a black-shirted, black-breeched, strapping young fellow talking with a round-shouldered old man whose features were hidden under his flopping broad-brimmed ruin of a hat. Crabapple nodded to himself.

"I'll suttinly git along home," he muttered. "Jehoshaphat's talking business to Ranger Kincaid, which ain't so good for me!" Still muttering, he shambled round to the stables, pushing his way through the throng of excited, chattering patrons of the Fiesta until he came to an ancient, half-asleep donkey tethered against a rail.

"Why, Rosie—did you think I was forgettin' yer?" asked Crabapple, producing a flat glass bottle from a capacious hip-pocket. "Ketch hold!" He drew out the cork and pushed the

bottle-neck into the donkey's mouth. Rosie woke up promptly and took in a gulp that half-emptied the flask.

"Say, what yer doin'?" Crab jerked the bottle away. "Father's got to have some, ain't he?" He wiped the bottle-neck and helped himself to a swig which disposed of the rest of the spirituous contents.

He untied Rosie and led her away with unsteady, hasty steps into the night of Tres Vacas.

Meantime, the round-shouldered Jehoshaphat Smith was unburdening himself to Ranger Miles Kincaid.

"If he'd a-kept his big mouth shut, I'd 'a' got off!" he declared for about the fifth time. "But that's the worst of Crab—he ain't got no discretion. There's a time to talk an' a place to talk; but when you're up at the sheriff's office you oughter fancy you was in church, an' listen to the preacher without saying nothing but 'Amen.'"

"Sure!" agreed Kincaid, his pleasant, clean-shaven face smiling in acquiescence. "I've come over from El Paso to-night to see things don't get out of hand. I'll have to be looking round, Jeho. Good-bye for now."

"I've promised myself to cut his ear when we meet—" But Jehoshaphat Smith found himself speaking to the air. Ranger Kincaid, with long, easy strides, was pacing through the crowd, nodding here and sniling there as he recognised various senors and señoritas of his acquaintance.

Suddenly a fusillade of gun-shots punctured the happy laughter and shrill cries of the motley crowd—which scattered in all directions as a band of horsemen came galloping down the street.

They were a magnificently appparelled little company, all rigged out in their best velvet short coats embroidered with gold; their flat-brimmed felt hats also braided with gold lace and loosely tied.

under their chins with corded silk ropes, their bell-bottomed long velvet trousers tight fitting over their hips—holsters with six-shooters carried under their brilliantly scarlet sashes; snowy shirts with soft white collars caught together neatly by still more scarlet ties.

Their bronzed faces, cleanly shaved save for the tiniest line of moustache, were alight with eager life; their lips, wreathed in grins, half-savage, half-mocking, were widely parted, revealing their flashing white teeth.

Kincaid stood aside to watch them wheel and curvet on their small horses as they came tearing down on the cantina. Their leader, a thick-set, handsome fellow, snatched off his velvet hat and waved it high.

"Viva, senores! Muy bueno!" he shouted as he leapt from his mount.

His fellows, a round dozen, sprang from their saddles with similar shouts of greeting and goodwill. They rushed headlong into the saloon.

The Token.

LASCA had changed her dress and was about to give another performance. She was attired now as a young Mexican, trousered and trim, and looking even more charming. Her wild tresses were bound around with a gaily-coloured scarf; her Zouave coatee was lavish with gold lacings and froggings. She paused as the newcomers came tearing into the lounge, clattering their high-heeled boots on the polished floor.

"Buenos dias, Lasea!" cried the leader of the gang, flinging away his hat and seizing her around the waist. "Diablo, how good it is to see you again!"

"Ah, Jose, my small eagle!" She gave herself to his wild embrace. "So you return to me, yes? Almost I think you are dead!"

"I am much alive. I have plenty dollars—" crowed the young fellow. "I make plenty money with my cattle—you shall see how I spend it! Senor landlord, this way!" he shouted to the smiling host. "I invite all to join in a cup with Jose Santa Cruz, the wealthy, the fortunate! Cigarillos all round with me, if you please!"

Loud cheerings greeted this invitation as he threw a gold-embroidered purse on the table nearest him. The delighted landlord took it up, shook it—made a wide gesture with both hands after he had dropped it down with a clink on the table.

"Caramba, it is heavy!" he chuckled. "Don Jose, I fly to perform your esteemed order. Muchas gracias!"

Jose joined in the drinks and cigars that followed. Most of them accepted the long, thin black cigars, even some of the women. The girls clapped their hands and blew kisses to him when they lifted their glasses of iced fruit drinks to their lips; the cowboys, the senors, the townsfolk toasted him over and over again. Jose, highly pleased with himself, bowed right and left. The orchestra struck up a languorous air, and soon the floor was crowded with waltzing couples.

"It is many days you leave me, Jose," whispered Lasea as their feet moved over the floor.

"I have the business," he answered. "I buy many cattle. A new rancho, chiquita! You are very beautiful, very smiling—I do not believe that you miss me, no?"

"Always I miss you, Jose," she murmured.

He danced her away to a quiet corner and seated himself in a high rush-bottomed chair while she perched herself on the arm of it. He put his arm about her

waist and drew her face down to his. They kissed, unseen and unnoticed by anyone, save old Crabapple Thompson who had come back to the cantina, attracted by the noise of the new arrivals.

The old fellow shook his head. Lasca would blow him no more kisses until Santa Cruz departed.

"Now, listen, amigo," said Jose. "Allow me to withhold my arm for a moment. Be careful you do not fall into my lap—" Lasca, with an arch glance, steadied herself. "What is it that you have there?" He touched with light fingers the hilt of a small dagger projecting from her sash. "It is for my heart, yes?"

"Never would I hurt thee, Jose," she murmured fondly. "If anyone should hurt thee, my heart would beat no more."

"Gracias!" he laughed. "That is very good to hear. Now I will show to you the ring which I have had fashioned for the finger of the girl who is true and faithful to her vows—" He felt in the inside pocket of his magnificent velvet and gold coat and brought out a small box. Hastily shaking it open, he took out a ring set with flashing stones.

"Oh, Jose!" breathed the girl, enraptured. "It is for me, yes?"

"For the true friend of Jose Santa Cruz," he stated significantly. "There are nine diamonds, count them. Honour and faith sparkling from each facet! There is a legend concerning these stones; I get them from an Indiano, a great thief—" His laughter rang out. "Also a liar, beyond all doubt. But we shall believe the story, you and me, querida. While you keep this ring, nine times you love and die."

"Die?" she broke in, her pretty face clouding. "I do not wish it. I am young—not for me the ending of happiness and life."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Who can read the future?" he asked. "Not me!" Again he laughed loudly. "Take it, amigo mia—it is for you to prove the story false or true, as you will." He pushed the ring gently down over the third finger of her left hand. "Now you belong to me, Lasca," he concluded, standing up. "Let us finish our dance."

While they were on the floor, gyrating to the tinkling music of guitars, drums, and piano, a loutish fellow sitting at a side table watched them with squinting eyes. He had been drinking heavily before Jose had come in, now the extra free drinks had completely muddled him. He grinned at Lasca when her face was turned his way, but she only curled her lips in scorn.

"Now we rest a little," stated Santa Cruz. "I have ridden a long way from my rancho, and I wish to play the cards with some of the senors."

"But, Jose—"

"One must make himself agreeable to the senors, if one is a trader," interrupted her lover. "One must not be always with the senoritas."

"I will dance with another if you leave me," threatened the girl. "There are many who will be glad—" Her lips parted and her eyes darkened. "Perhaps, when you have done with your senors, you shall find me gone." "You are pledged to me, querida!" he chuckled carelessly.

With a bow he left her and pushed his way to where a party were busy at a game of poker. Lasca stood staring after him, her frowns deepening.

The squinting fellow took his chance, and, getting up, came lurching across to her.

"Sen-rita—dانش—" he muttered thickly, putting an arm about her. At once she leapt free, her quick temper flaring.

"How dare you!" she shrilled at him. "Don't I tell you always never to touch me, you peeg gringo!"

"Lasca, I'm friend!" he argued. "Respectable man. Marry you. Make good husband."

She snapped her fingers under his nose and thrust at him with both hands so violently that he fell backwards on to the floor. As she flounced out of the cantina, laughter and applause followed her, but she was too angry to care.

Jose glanced up from his seat at the card table.

"It is Lasca amusing herself," said one of the players. "She has knocked him down!"

Santa Cruz shrugged his padded shoulders and smiled in a knowing way.

"She needs a master—yes," he commented. "Presently she find one," he added with a sly little chuckle.

Lasca, with a blow of her fist, banged open the swing shutter doors of the side entrance to the saloon with such violence that one of them swung into the tall young fellow just entering. He started back; then, as he noted the flushed face, the stormy eyes of the girl, he checked an angry word and raised his ten-ounce sombrero.

"Senorita," he drawled, "excuse me if I annoy you!"

"You?" she retorted. "I think nothing of Americanos! For me they do not exist!"

"So?"

"So!" She stamped her foot; then, as he still stood in her path, she put out a hand to push him away.

"I was going to ask you for a dance," the young fellow invited, hat in hand.

She regarded him haughtily, taking in the black shirt, the smart black breeches, the painted Texas riding-boots. She raised her eyes to his serious, clean cut face, with its steady grey eyes, square chin, faintly smiling mouth. He wasn't precisely handsome, but there was a likeable air about him.

Yes, he would serve very well. She would dance with this stranger and show Jose that he was not the only man in the world.

"I am sorry if I hurt you with the door," she apologised. "For the moment I was enraged."

"Not with me, I guess?" he told her. "You know who I am? Ranger Miles Kincaid, of the Texas Constabulary. I'm here to keep the peace."

"I will dance with the senor"—she suddenly beamed at him as she laid her hand on his arm—"but the senor must not tread upon my feet with the great boots."

Kincaid had scarcely noticed her attire, so interested was he in those large, dark eyes half-hidden under their sweeping long lashes. She danced like an inspiration, and he was no duffer at waltzing, despite his clumsy boots with their wheeled spurs. They swayed dreamily together as the little orchestra droned out the melody; Lasea's hand rested against the strong shoulder of the Ranger, and a strange peace came into her wild little heart.

But Jose was soon on his feet. His sweetheart was dancing with one of the hated Rangers! One of those whom he had reason to dread secretly. They were so inquisitive, so interfering. He kept within the law, almost, on his rancho and elsewhere; but almost isn't quite, as he knew!

He was within his rights, however, in objecting to Lasca resting her head on the fellow's shoulder! He suddenly drew the filigreed pistol from his hip and

fired high into the palm-thatched room, disturbing the dust and the many spiders.

The music stopped dead. All eyes were turned towards Jose—some inquiringly, some terrified. The landlord ran to him.

"What is it, Jose?" he asked. "Please to calm yourself! At the Fiesta all is meant to be happy."

"I wish to give an order," said Santa Cruz. "You are so dull I cannot make you hear." He strode towards Kincaid, who was still holding the girl. "Senor, you will drink with me!" he cried. "It is the first time we meet. Meanwhile"—with a rough hand on Lasca's shoulder, he pulled her away from her partner. "The senorita forgets she is promised to me."

Kincaid eyed him coolly.

"The senorita can change her mind, I suppose?" he inquired.

Jose recovered his usual half-sneering smile. He became very polite and suave, but insistent.

"The senor will honour the house by emptying a glass with me," he repeated his invitation.

The Ranger turned to Lasca.

"What do you wish, senorita?" he asked her.

"Me; I care nothing"—she shrugged—"the dance is ended." She made Kincaid a mocking little bow. "Buenos dias!" She turned sharply away and stalked off the dance-floor.

Jose took not the slightest notice of her behaviour, but laid a persuasive hand on Kincaid's arm.

"You will drink with me?" he said.

"This is three times I ask you."

The Ranger nodded, dropping his arm so that Jose's touch fell from him. They moved to the bar, where the Mexican snapped out an order for a "white rum," a fiery, sweet drink. He glanced towards Kincaid.

"That'll suit me," he drawled.

"The senor is not aware of the rule when one is betrothed?" came Jose's smooth question. "The senorita, in such a case, asks usually for permission

to dance with anyone other than her affianced. It is not so for the Americanos, possibly?"

"American girls are free," Kincaid stated. He took up the small glass and nodded curtly towards Santa Cruz. "Here's to freedom!"

A scowl clouded Jose's face, but he shook it away.

"To freedom, senor!" he agreed, raising his glass. "You come to enjoy yourself at the fiesta?"

"I hope so," answered Kincaid.

The Accident.

LASCA was in a thoroughly bad humour. Generally she had it all her own way at the Cantina—she was the star turn, everyone applauded and paid court to her.

Now, no one seemed to care! Jose was the star—with his drinks all round and his cigars. As for the ring he had given her, likely as not it was as flashy and cheap as himself!

She had taken a sudden violent fancy to the Ranger, and she knew that he had taken more than a fancy to her. He was strong, and he had power over these wild people, and he was somebody new. She hurried down the street, not caring where she was going and taking little heed of those she passed or overtook.

The grinning stares of the men were an insult. They stared because she was dressed as a boy, the fools! She, Lasca of the Rio Grande, dressed as she chose.

A lumping great fellow stood in her path. It was the Americano who had molested her in the cantina; he was stretching out his long arms so that she should not pass by. He leered foolishly at her glance of scorn.

"Now I got you!" he chuckled. "I'm gonna dance with you—see?"

"Stand away from me!" she flamed at him.

But he made a sudden grab at her and his long arms enfolded her instantly struggling figure. Despite all her scratches, kicks and blows, he began to move with her in a clumsy dance over

the rough roadway. Maddened by the humiliation of it, Lasca got at her dagger and struck blindly at him.

"You peeg! Let me go!"

He tried to snatch at the weapon and, losing his balance, fell sideways. Her dagger buried itself in his breast; a loud groaning sound came from him as Lasca, horrified, fought free of him.

A crowd gathered on the instant, thrusting each other aside and shouting excitedly. One of the town vigilantes pushed his way through and lifted the victim's head to his knee. His piercing yell for a stretcher was taken up by the crowd, who commenced to run hither and thither like a bunch of frightened mavericks.

Kincaid came running out of the cantina.

"There's a fellow killed," a youth told him importantly. "I seen them fighting together. A little chap, no more'n a boy, done it. Got his knife out and struck the big 'un right in the heart!"

The grave faces of the vigilantes as they carried the still body to the rough cart that served Tres Vacas as an ambulance confirmed the story.

"There he goes!" shouted one of the crowd, pointing up the street. "The little feller with no hat! Gee, he's jumped on Jose's boss! Getting astride of him, see? Who's goin' to ketch him now?"

Kincaid ran like the wind, while the horse, taken so violently, bucked viciously before settling down to a gallop. Just as the mettlesome beast began to race, Kincaid's .45, snatched from his belt, spoke crisply. The bullet reached its billet, and the escaping culprit reeled in the saddle, to fall sideways into the road.

At once the crowd poured that way, clustering round the horse and rider. When it was seen that it was Lasca, clutching at her shoulder and muttering to herself, a veritable hubbub broke out.

"Let me pass!"

Kincaid's voice and badge carried weight. They made a lane for him to pass through. He came to the girl and lifted her in his arms like a feather.

"Lasca!" he gasped. "You?"



"The senor is not aware of the rule when one is betrothed?" came Jose's smooth question.

Her face was dead white, and her eyes were closed. She moaned as he carried her to the cantina. There he ran with her up the stairs to her room, calling sharply:

"Get a doctor, one of you! Quickly as you can!"

He had laid her on the bed just as Jose Santa Cruz came bursting in. The two men regarded each other.

"You shoot her—yes?"

The Mexican's lips curled.

"I did." Kincaid's words seemed forced out of his dry mouth. "I didn't know it was a girl. I guess she's not hurt so very much."

"You fight with women?" Jose's face was livid. "It is very brave of you! But maybe presently you fight with a man."

Kincaid nodded.

"I shan't run away," he stated. "First of all we'll have the doctor to her."

A quietish old fellow came in carrying the little bag without which no doctor seems complete. He went straight to the bed and bared the girl's shoulder. She winced at his touch, and her eyelids lifted their dark fringes.

"Don't be alarmed," spoke the doctor. "You are not much hurt. A flesh wound only—a mere scratch. It was the sudden fall which knocked you out."

"The horse—is he dead?" came her question.

"He's hitched up at the rail," spoke Kincaid, who had moved to the window.

The doctor dressed the wound with deft fingers and put her blood-flecked blouse comfortably about her.

"Rest until the shock passes," he ordered; then came across to the Ranger.

"The fellow who insulted her is in a bad way," he whispered. "I don't think he can live. What are you going to do?"

"Take her to El Paso as soon as she gets off the bed," answered Kincaid. "It's my duty."

Jose had crept near and had overheard.

"You take her to prison, yes?" he sneered. "Let me remind you, senior, it is a long way to El Paso!"

"She's got to stand her trial," said Kincaid curtly, at which Jose's hand slid towards his hip and came to rest on the butt of his gun.

"No more shooting," warned the doctor. "The girl has a good defence." He looked Jose full in the eyes. "If you're her friend, you'd best let her go. There's more danger here for her than at El Paso. The Americano has many friends at Tres Vacas."

"I go with the senior policeman," came Lasca's voice from the bed. "I am a wicked girl; it is right I should be locked up."

She met Jose's savage frowns with a little flick of one eyelid.

"As you will, seniorita," said Jose, smooth as silk.

He came to Kincaid and regarded him fixedly, as though choosing fitting words.

But suddenly he snapped his fingers and went away in silence.

Kincaid shrugged his broad shoulders, unconcerned. He moved to Lasca.

"I'll expect you to leave here in ten minutes' time," he said. "I'll get the horses and outfit together. We'll be travelling over the mesa best part of the night."

"I go with you, senior," she murmured. "It is right. I am a wicked girl. But that one make me enraged."

"You get enraged too easily, my girl," said the Ranger dryly. "That's the big trouble with you."

November 7th, 1931.

"Promise Never To See That Fellow Again!"

KINCAID pitched camp when about ten miles from Tres Vacas, nearly a clump of trees and a little waterfall under cover of the hills. He rigged a rough tent and lit a fire, Lasca sitting on a flattened stone, watching him covertly.

The moon was high in the heavens, and the dry, scrubby mesa looked beautiful under the silver light. Faint scurrings and whinnings of small animals and night birds reached her ever-listening ears from time to time.

She hoped that Jose would ride out and rescue her. Then she didn't wish it. She wanted to go with the big Ranger and be put into prison, yes! She had stabbed the Americano, and it was right she should be punished.

All the same, it would be fine to be rescued. Jose and the big Ranger would fight for her, which would be very exciting. Perhaps Jose would be hurt. She twisted the ring on her finger with its nine white stones, honour and truth in every facet! Nine times she would love and die while she wore it!

That was absurd! How could one die nine times, unless one were a cat?

"Want any food?"

Kincaid's drawl broke into her thoughts.

"Me? No. I will not eat."

"Suit yourself," he answered.

He had taken a pan from his "outfit," and was mixing up a doughlike mass, stirring it deftly. This cake he began to fry over the fire he had lighted.

It smelled savoury enough, and Lasca got up from her seat.

"Me, I help you," she offered in a subdued voice. "You have tied the horses safe, yes?"

"To yon tree," he replied, pointing through the gleaming night. "Thinking of running off while I'm asleep?"

"Only if you let me go, Miles," she told him, her dark eyes trying to read his.

"That's not very likely," he smiled. "You've got my name all right," he added.

"You tell it me," she said. "Also it is painted on the tent."

He gave her a tin plateful of the fried cake, then seated himself next to her, eating out of the pan with his fingers. Lasca forked over the cake and ate a little, then suddenly flung down the tin plate in a fit of temper.

"It is burnt!" she complained.

"A little," agreed Kincaid placidly. "But there's nothing else."

"I go to sleep in the tent," she announced. "I am tired of you."

"That's all right, Lasca," came his drawl. "I'll sleep out here and see the wild dogs and coyotes don't get either of us."

She made an angry little noise at him as she went towards the small, so-called tent. Miles went on eating, using his fingers as before.

"All Gringos are peegs!" she cried. "Yes!"

He took no heed of her, and she came back to him, putting a little hand on his shoulder.

"I am sorry, Miles. Forgive me."

"That's all right," he answered.

She stayed a moment, her hand on his shoulder. Then, swiftly, she stooped and brushed his hair with her lips. Then, like a shadow, she slid from him into the tent while Kincaid sat there silent and thoughtful.

Later, he peeped in at her lying snuggled up in the tent on the blankets he had spread.

"Sleeps like a little kid," he muttered.

"I s'pose I got to take her to gaol?"

He filled his pipe and lit up, walking backwards and forwards like a sentry under the pale stars and white moon.

He went to sleep just before daybreak, lying on the hard ground. He dreamed about her, queer rushing distorted dreams that had no beginning nor end, no kind of meaning, except that her dark eyes were always on him, reproachfully pleading. In the morning he awoke to find her busy trying to get him a kind of breakfast over the kindled fire.

He sat up and watched her awhile. "Tell me just how it happened, kid," he said presently.

"Ah, Miles, you wake up?" she beamed at him. "How you sleep! Easily I could have run away—" She brought him a pannikin of coffee and a hunk of bread. "How it happen, you ask? Truly I do not know. He always follow me, that one. Many times I say to him—if you please, do not touch me! I do not like to be touched—" She drew herself up proudly. "Me, I am a seniorita of the Rio Grande, but now so poor that I must dance for a living at the cantina."

"A rough life, Lasca," he put in, sipping his coffee.

She sighed.

"I make money there to keep myself," she said. "And they respect me, yes, because they know I am a seniorita. But that fellow—he is always peeg with me. In the streets, before every one, he snatch at me and make me to dance. Ah, I could scream with rage to be made a laughter for the crowd!" Her dark eyes flashed. "So, without thinking, I draw my little knife—" She shuddered. "And, in the struggle, we fall, and the dagger sticks itself into him. That is all."

Kincaid rose to his feet.

"See here, kid—if I let you go, I'll get into big trouble at El Paso. You'll get into big trouble, if I take you there. They won't listen to your story."

"It is true, Miles—all true!" He nodded.

"I'll make a bargain with you and I'll take what's coming to me," he declared. "I'll let you go, if you'll promise never to see that dago again."

"Santa Cruz?" she asked, in a queer little voice.

"Jose Santa Cruz. He's no good to anybody. I've got things about Jose that one day we'll have to fix on him," said Kincaid. "You promise?"

"I promise, Miles."

"Get on your horse and—hop it," he told her. "I'm a fool, maybe. Maybe I'm not."

Lasca stared at him as if unable to credit her ears. Then, with a laugh, she ran to the tethered horses. The Ranger followed her with slow steps, his face deadly serious. He was taking a tremendous risk, but he wanted to believe in Lasca, who had bewitched him with those dark eyes of hers.

A few minutes later she turned in her saddle to wave her hand. He watched her out of sight as she cantered back along the dusty trail to Tres Vacas. Then he packed up and went on his way to El Paso, to make a report that would probably mean the end of his career.

The chief sat at his desk, drumming with his fingers on the hard wood. Standing opposite him, erect and stiff, was Kincaid.

"You deliberately let her go?" asked the stern-faced man at the desk.

"Yes."

"It's a bad business, Miles," said the other, rising. "I'll have to report to

Denton Headquarters. Meantime, you're under arrest." He came round to Kincaid and unpinned the badge from under the lapel of the black shirt. "I hate doing this," he stated. "You're one of my best men, and I've never had reason before to doubt your integrity and loyalty to the force. But it must be done—go straight to the detention-room and remain there."

"It's just, chief," spoke Kincaid. "I've nothing more to say."

"I shall do my utmost for you, Miles," went on the stern voice. "But it'll mean disrating, I fear. And I shall not have a decision from Denton for a month at least."

Kincaid saluted; then marched out of the superintendent's office at El Paso without another word.

Crab and Jeho Have a Word to Say.

THE fiesta had lasted for three days. Tres Vacas did not seem able to get back into working mood. The weather was fine and hot, too hot for one to think of labour and everyday affairs. Jose was still spending his money, and there were plenty of amusing things going on.

The Americano who had asked for trouble was making some kind of recovery, and Lasca had been forgiven by the easy-going folk of the border, most of whom had interests, relatives, and friends both in the States and out of it.

Kincaid heard little or nothing. He lived in the detention-room practically all of his time, gloomy and morose. The guards were decent fellows; sorry for him, but regarding him as a fool for having so thrown away his chances.

On the afternoon of the fourth day of the festivities, two of the liveliest rioters left the little village on their mules and came trooping into El Paso at dusk. One of them was an overhatted old wreck of a man, half-bearded and none too clean, the other was a sad-looking person with his right ear tied up in a cotton-wool bandage.

Later on, they presented themselves at the superintendent's office.

"We wanna see Ranger Kincaid," stated the earless man. "Important business. You give him our names, see?"

The guard looked them over. "If it isn't old Crab!" he cried. "What you been doing with your face, huh?"

"Ask him," replied Crabapple Thompson, jerking his thumb in the direction of his companion.

"I hed to cut his ear," explained Jehoshaphat Smith apologetically.

"I thought you were such cronies?" questioned the guard.

"It's a private matter," said Crab. "Seems that Jeho made a sorter promise to the saints to cut my ear off becase I had to give evidence agin him—see? Well, you can't go agin a vow of that kind if you're religious, same as me and Jeho. What about seeing Kincaid, Peter?"

"I'll take you to him," the guard agreed. "But you mustn't stay more than ten minutes. He's under arrest."

The two old scarecrows were ushered into Kincaid's room with its barred windows and heavily bolted door. He started up with a very pleased smile as they came shuffling in.

"Thought all my friends had deserted me," he said, gripping their rough old hands in turn.

Jeho shook his head at him. "We ain't thet sort, Miles," he answered. "No, sir. We come to tell you something you oughter know. Never mind looking at Crab—he got what was coming to him, and, maybe,

he'll grow a new ear one of these days—"

He glanced round the bare room with the open door outside which Peter the guard was on duty. "Say, can't we have a word with you quiet?" he whispered.

Kincaid pushed to the door, whereupon Jeho Smith motioned him to come closer.

"Thet gal fooled you, Miles," he rumbled in a low voice. "She played it on you, boy. She's back at the Cantina, thick as mud with thet there Santa Cruz."

Kincaid's face set hard. "She broke her solemn word to me?" he ground out.

"She done thet," put in Crabapple. "Some folks ain't got no religion! D'you think I wanted Jeho to cut my ear? No, sir. But when he tole me how things was fixed between him and me, well—I just stood up to it! But thet gal—mind you, I like her, Miles. I can't help it. All the same, I got to tell you Jeho's speaking gospel."

Kincaid had scarcely listened. His eyes had gone a cold grey, his lips were thin lines. He had sacrificed himself in vain; Lasca was false and utterly heartless.

"I'd like to—to strangle her!" he muttered.

"Listen here, boy," whispered Jeho cautiously. "Me and Crab reckon it's all Jose's fault. He's got a holt over Lasca. Give her a magical ring or some such tomfoolery. What we figure is to get you outer here, so's you can take her away from where she won't never do any good."

"Escape?" questioned Kincaid, his face changing. "I suppose that would finish me—". His forehead puckered itself, his lean fingers clenched hard.

"You're done for here," coaxed old Crab. "You'll have to resign and start again somewheres. I got a bit of a farm where you can lie low till the racket's died down."

"But how escape?" Kincaid asked irritably. "It's good of you fellows, but—"

"The chief here will be glad if you hoo it," broke in Crab. "You know he will. He likes you and he'll hate having to take away your badge." Kincaid winced. "I'm right, ain't I? Well, now, I'll call Peter in here and push him sudden like over Jeho, who'll be crouching jest behind him. Then we pounce on poor old Peter, not to

In the evening came another visitor to Kincaid's prison— Lasca herself.



hurt him, but jest to gag his mouth and tie him inside of this here sack what I've brought with me. Then we'll all three hustle out of the office quicker'n lightning. We've hired a boss for you, so's you can make good running."

Kineaid gripped his hand hard.

"Right! I'll do it!"

Jeho sidled towards the barred window and pretended to be gazing outward. Crab opened the heavily made door.

"Peter, old pard," he called, "I want yet a minute."

The guard came in carrying his carbine at the slope.

"I was going to tell you time's up, anyways," he said. "What's the big news, Crab?"

"You come here, Peter." Crab put a persuasive hand on his arm and got him to turn away from Jeho, who promptly dropped on all fours just behind the unsuspecting guard. "I hate doing it, Peter," went on Crab as he gave a sudden vicious push at Peter's breast. "I surely do!"

The guard, taken by complete surprise, gave a gasp and staggered back, tripped backwards over Jeho, and found himself pinned down by the two hardy old lads in less than a second. Ere he could call out they had him gagged and tied up in the sack. They plumped him, kicking and plunging, on Kineaid's bed.

"Come on!" whispered Crab hoarsely. The three slid out of the room and were out of the office almost as he spoke. The very audacity of the rescue brought about its success.

They hurried to where they had tethered their mules, together with the stocky horse which they had hired.

"You hop it, Miles," said Jeho. "Me and Crab will just fade away, see? Here's a gun for yer." He thrust a .45 into Kineaid's hand.

Kineaid rode hard and fast. He was dimly aware of pursuit, but this died away as he raced towards Tres Vecas. Crab and Jeho evidently had drawn the chase to themselves.

He had no exact plans beyond recapturing Lasca. Whether he should take her then to El Paso a prisoner, and surrender both her and himself to the Rangers, he could not decide. One thing at a time.

He reached the little border town at midnight, to find it still en fête. The cantina was brilliantly lit up, and the clatter and music issuing forth gave him an idea. He would steal in from the back, watch for Lasca and seize her suddenly under cover of his gun. Then run out with her into the darkness and get away on a horse. There were several hitched to the rails, drooping their heads as they patiently waited for their owners merry-making in the gay cantina.

"It is My Honour to Kill Him!"

KINEAID had little difficulty in taking up a post just behind the half-drawn curtains which cut off the lounge from the kitchens. In the shadows he waited, peering in on the motley throng of dancers and drinkers at the tables. He saw Lasca, dressed in a white flounced dress, dancing in the arms of Jose, laughing and whispering as they moved riotously to the air of a quick fox-trot. Her coal black hair flew out as she whirled with her grinning partner, her bare arms were about his neck, her face brushing his. The orchestra were singing as they drummed and fiddled out the lively melody.

"I'll ne'er forget the night we met!" they sang. "Your lips met mine—"

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moment divine! Down by the Rio Grande!"

Kineaid's lips moved in a mocking smile.

"When shadows fall—mem'ries recall that hour on the Rio Grande!"

He drew his .45 and held it down by his side. The music ended, and Jose led Lasca to a seat. His boasting voice rang out above the applause.

"That hour on the Rio Grande!" he shouted. "When you fooled the clever Ranger, Lasca! Tell them again how you twisted him round your little finger; how you make him the breakfast and—make him the promise you never mean to keep!"

"Ah, but no!" she said, when many voices called to her. "It is not kind. He is gone; he is in prison, poor fellow! One does not laugh then at him."

"Tell them, Lasca," spoke Jose masterfully. "I like to hear the story again and again!"

She climbed up on to the little platform, whereupon the orchestra moved away a little to give her room. Kineaid suddenly jumped in upon her from behind, his gun covering Santa Cruz.

"Tell how he came back and carried you away, Lasca!" cried Kineaid. His free arm went round her waist. "Hands up, all of you; I kill the first man who doesn't!"

"Let me go!" But Lasca, strangely, did not struggle. Instead she rather helped him to pull her step by step backwards to the half-drawn curtains. Santa Cruz was staring as if he could not believe his eyes; in the crowd some put up their hands, while the others gasped stupidly.

Only when Kineaid and the girl had vanished from their sight did those in the cantina seem to wake up.

Santa Cruz yelled, "Per Dios!" and made a rush for the platform, stumbling in his haste. He got up, his face hideous with baffled rage as he charged out into the night. One or two followed him, but the rest went on with their dancing, the orchestra having instantly struck into a tango. It was Jose's affair—no one else's.

Kineaid was already in the saddle with Lasca across his lap. She made no effort to escape. She clung to him in a queer, frightened way, her eyes half closed, her breath coming and going quickly. Jose fired blindly at them, but his aim was uncertain—he feared to hit the girl. With a derisive yell Kineaid spurred his horse and dashed into the faintly luminous night.

The Mexican gazed after them, muttering to himself. Then he ran back into the cantina, calling, "Pedro! Gonzalez! Tomasso—all of you, come here!" His men clustered round him. "We fetch her back!" ordered Santa Cruz with a snarling mouth. "Yes! Follow me, they go down to the river. Hurry to your horses!"

"We kill him, yes?" asked a flashy young half-caste, but Jose smiled in a hateful way.

"It is my honour to kill him, Pedro!" he answered fiercely.

The fugitives made good progress once clear of the town. They reached the banks of the Rio Grande del Norte and pounded northward along the track. No words had come from Lasca; she simply held on to Kineaid loosely, making no struggle.

Under the dim high stars they journeyed at a steady pace until the lights of Tres Vecas were lost in the rising valley mists. Then Kineaid steered his mount up the banks towards higher ground and drew rein by a clump of trees which masked a rocky fissure in the hills. He steadied the

horse and listened intently. Only the calls of night birds and animals of the wild broke the silence.

"We'll camp here," he stated. "Sorry I've no tent. You must sleep under the sky." He put her off the horse and leapt down.

"Do not stay, Miles," she whispered. "Let us go on. You take me to El Paso, yes?"

"To prison," he answered grimly. "You don't fool me this time!"

She came close to him, shivering a little. "Do not stay," she urged again. "They catch us—then there is bad work. Jose never forgave me. Also, he keel you."

"Maybe I'll shoot first," said Kineaid. He tethered the panting horse and began to search about for some crevice or cranny in the rocks where the girl would be sheltered from the night dews. He took off the silk handkerchief about his neck and put it about her shoulders.

"You do not hate me, Miles?" she asked. "No?"

"Don't talk," he told her gruffly.

"Jose will not come alone," she whispered. "Please to go on, Miles. I am not tired."

"You want to get to gaol, I guess?" he growled at her. "It isn't so amusing, being locked up on bread and water." He took her cold hand in his and drew her nearer to the rocks. "We're safe here—"

Even as he spoke there came the beating of hoofs on the track.

They listened in dead silence. Faintly the sound of voices carried to them.

"They'll never find us," murmured Kineaid. "Unless you call out—"

Lasca made no answer.

Their pursuers had halted. Lights flashed dimly down by the riverside; they were searching for horse tracks. For a long time nothing happened and Kineaid began to think that all danger had passed. Then, startlingly, out of the near darkness, came Jose's smooth voice:

"Do not move, Ranger, if you please. You are covered from all sides."

He stepped out of the night, a gun held steadily in his hand.

"You forget the white dress, Ranger," he said very politely. "It shows so plain—it is a pity, yes?"

Kineaid jumped at him and bore him to the ground, the gun going off harmlessly. For a few instants they fought madly together; then Jose's men closed in on them and tore Kineaid away. Despite all his struggles, they overpowered him and tied his hands behind his back.

"Now we go to my rancho," said Jose, who had been dusting down his fine clothes. "I think we enjoy ourselves there, perhaps? Come, Lasca—do not be afraid any more. With me you are safe."

Kineaid awoke next morning Jose's prisoner in a kind of harness-room attached to the low rambling building which served the Mexican for headquarters. All night the lowing of cows and the bellowing of steers had broken in on his fitful slumbers.

The small open cross-barred window gave him a view of the wild pasture lands surrounding the adobe ranch; cattle in what seemed countless hundreds were moving about the huge fields, cropping the sunbaked grass and complaining continuously of the lack of water.

In the sky, great clouds had blown along from the west during the night, threatening rain at last.

(Continued on page 25.)

A mysterious death—a nephew accused of the crime—a girl reporter's fight to prove his innocence. A true story taken from the notebook of William J. Burns of the U.S. Secret Service.



"The Black Widow"



The Rifled Safe.

"THERE are times," said the eminent American detective, a man whose uncanny exploits in crime detection may well be classed with those of Sherlock Holmes, "when one sympathises, and sympathises most deeply, with those who have to administer justice. There are times when I thank my lucky stars that my place in life is the detection of crime, rather than the punishment of the offender."

He meant every word of it, and for very good reason. These stories, of which "The Black Widow" is the first, are real, true-to-life narratives from his case-book. They may seem, as we term it, far-fetched. They may appear to be too uncanny to be true. But true they are, every word of them. And in their very truth lies their undoubted fascination.

The majority of these stories prove up to the hilt how tragically easy it is for justice to err; how possible it is for a precious human life to be sacrificed on the altar of "evidence."

It seemed so clear, on the face of it. Murder—then robbery. No confusion, nothing to indicate that anything in the nature of a struggle had taken place. Just the tiny, open door—a porthole in miniature—of that circular wall-safe in the study. And at the feet of the detectives, the body of William Ramsey, stabbed to the heart. Cold-blooded, to say the least. Ramsey must have been taken entirely unawares. Not a rumple on the carpet. On the face of the dead man no agonised expression that might have told of a last bold bid for his very life!

A tap at the door of his bed-room had aroused no response. A harder rap, and then, thoroughly alarmed—for Ramsey invariably awakened with the regularity of a clock—the housekeeper turned the handle of the door and entered. The bed had not been slept in!

With unnameable fear at her heart,

the distraught woman had gone to each room in turn, fearing she knew not what. And then, the morning sun streaming through the study windows, the electric lamps still burning palely, there lay her master, face downwards on the study floor.

An eccentric bachelor, long retired from business, William Ramsey was reputed by his neighbours in the select New York suburb to be worth a couple of million dollars. A tall, thin, spare man of studious disposition, he had made a fortune during a Wall Street boom, and having made his pile, was fortunate enough to be in a position to keep it, a feat which few who succumb to the lure of "easy money" are able to accomplish.

Having achieved his object, Ramsey settled down to the evening of his days, his interests centred upon his books and his garden, his aversion to visitors notorious. His days were mapped out with old-maidish precision, his meals served to the second, his trim establishment a tribute to the efficiency of his housekeeper and the taste of its owner. And even with his tragic death, apparently by violence, not a rumple on that lovely Persian carpet!

A woman of resource, the summoning of doctor and police was a matter of moments.

Came the flop-flop of carpet slippers, and shyly hesitant, the sturdy, middle-aged woman glanced again at all that remained of her master, brushed her hand wearily across her forehead, and faced her questioners.

"Who lives in the house besides yourself?" inquired the detective.

"Mr. Ramsey's nephew, Jack."

"Any idea where he is now?"

"Not the least, sir."

"When did you last see young Mr. Ramsey?"

"It would be, I imagine, about eleven o'clock last night."

"How is it you are so certain about the time?"

"Well, sir, I brought in Mr. Ramsey's coffee, as I always do. They were both in the room at the time, and I remember that they seemed to be having a fierce argument. Young Mr. Jack Ramsey seemed to be 'laying down the law.' He had a knife in his hand, and seemed so excited that I was only able to catch a word or so here and there. As soon as I came into the room with the coffee, they ceased their arguing."

"Any special remark that you recall?"

"Yes, I do remember that Master Jack, very excited, pleaded to his uncle: 'Uncle, give me the money now. I must have it!'"

"You're perfectly certain that you are not imagining this?"

"Of course, sir. Fifteen minutes or so later, I saw Master Jack hurrying out of the house, and that was the last I saw of him."

"And you think that Jack Ramsey killed his uncle?"

"I think nothing, sir!" replied the housekeeper, with grim finality. "And if you've no objection, sir, I'll get on with my work."

"Very well. But we'll probably be wanting you again."

"I'm here if you want me," she replied. And the carpet slippers resumed their flop-flopping, and the house-

keeper busied herself with her kitchen duties, shedding a tear or so for her dead master, for Ramsey was a generous, if irascible employer.

"Clear as mud," observed the detective to his colleague. "Simple as eating pie. Here's young Ramsey in difficulties, begging the uncle for a loan, emphasising his necessity with the knife in his hand. Here's the uncle determined that the nephew shan't have a penny. The quarrel, the knife-thrust, the open safe, and Jack Ramsey running from the house as if Old Nick were after him. And disappearing completely! Perfectly plain, 'my dear Watson,' plain as the cigar you've half-chewed in your excitement." His colleague lit up the half-mangled smoke!

"Seems to me," remarked his colleague, scrutinising the handle of the safe with a magnifying glass, "that these young people, with all their sense, are not so smart as they imagine. How any fellow in his senses can imagine that he'll get away with a crime like this, knowing the efficiency of the American police system, is beyond understanding. Well, he's for it!"

The police photographer was called in, and in the blinding glare of the magnesium flash, a photograph of the undisturbed remains of the unfortunate man was secured. With machine-like precision, the detective telephoned the bank concerning Ramsey's recent withdrawals, learned that a somewhat large sum had been withdrawn fairly recently, and jotted down the numbers of notes of the larger denominations.

"Well, little nephew," mused the detective's assistant, "these bank-note numbers are as good as a bloodhound."

The American newspapers joined in the hue and cry. The wireless was enlisted, the ports were searched for the fugitive from justice, and detailed descriptions adorned the notice-boards of every police station throughout America and Canada. Then, as so often happens to be the case, the interest of the public became fastened upon matters of more immediate interest, and the unsolved murder of Mr. Ramsey was relegated to the limbo of murders that seem to baffle solution.

The Nephew Who Disappeared.

A MONTH had passed, with Jack Ramsey far from the haunts of men, feeling very like a monarch in these deserted Canadian pinewoods, whither he had speeded those few weeks ago. Here, in these silent fastnesses, far from the distracting turmoil of the American cities, a man might call his soul his own, retain his manhood, discover happiness in the fight for his daily bread. If only his uncle hadn't shown such obstinacy, there might have been more sweetness, more satisfaction, in this thing that he had done. And then, one fine, bright morning, when young Ramsey began to realise that life was surely worth the living, a plain-clothes officer tapped him on the shoulder!

"For what?" he repeated, hoping that he had not heard aright.

"For the murder of your uncle, just four weeks ago. And robbery."

"Surely you've seen the papers?" persisted the officer. "They're full of it. There's your portrait, too, in most of them. Seems to me the folk hereabout are pretty blind not to have discovered the resemblance weeks ago."

"As a matter of fact," replied Ramsey, "I haven't seen a paper, or a neighbour, for weeks. We're right out of touch here. And in any case, as my stay was only temporary, there's been no reason for me to make friends."

"That's as may be," was the reply. "Anyhow, you're going back with me. And at once! Don't bother to pack. You'll hardly be needing luggage where you're bound for," he added significantly.

"But you're mad, man! I've a perfect answer to everything. It's ridiculous! Why on earth should I murder my uncle, who's proved—"

"Listen, Ramsey," said the officer kindly, "it'd be better for you to say nothing, just for the present. Better to get along and face the music. If you're innocent—why, there's such a thing as justice. But if you're guilty—well," he drawled, "there's justice also."

There was a rustle in court, a buzz of suppressed excitement when, an officer on either side of him, Jack Ramsey faced his accusers.

Three newspaper reporters were busily jotting down their impressions as Ramsey cast a rapid glance around the tiny court, as if attempting to sense its reactions towards him. His glance rested upon the three reporters with something akin to anger, but the glint in his eyes vanished when those same eyes met the sympathetic glance of a girl reporter. Slim, neat, grey-eyed, alert, she met his glance with a smile, a smile that heartened him, reminded him of that bright morning not so very long ago, when life had seemed particularly worth the living. And now—life seemed a very tenuous thing indeed.

A crisp, cold voice recalled the prisoner to realities.

"Now, Ramsey, this is your chance to tell your story. Why don't you do the right thing, and confess? It's clear as anything. You murder your uncle, you rob him, you disappear to the backwoods of Canada without a word to anyone, and—here you are, thanks to the law!"

"Confess?" he replied, in tones in which no attempt was made to conceal his opinion of its absurdity. "I've nothing to confess."

"Then perhaps you can explain your sudden disappearance and your calculated silence all this time?"

"My uncle," said Ramsey, "gave me the money that you suggest I have stolen, to purchase some timber land in Canada for him, and I rushed away at the very last moment in order not to miss my train connections."

"Sounds pretty plausible," was the comment. "But, if, as you say, you are innocent, why have you been in hiding all this time?"

"Hiding? Why, I've already told you! I was up in the timber country, out of touch with the world, until your man came with his ridiculous story and brought me here. God alone knows why."



At the feet of the detectives lay the body of William Ramsey, stabbed to the heart.

My uncle and I were the very best of friends. He'd always been good to me, ever since I was so high. Why, then, should I kill the best friend I ever had?"

"That will do. We'll keep you here—for a bit."

"Keep me here?" Young Ramsey seemed stunned at the news. Surely this thing was a nightmare! "You'll let me have legal assistance, I suppose?"

"Surely," answered the District Attorney

"And, at the same time, I'm going to find my uncle's murderer. He didn't have an enemy in the world."

"One thing at a time!" replied the Attorney coldly. "You can arrange to have legal assistance. As to discovering your uncle's murderer, you can safely leave that to the American police. You surely appreciate the position?" he added significantly.

Ramsey was being led away, when a remark of the girl reporter reached his astonished and grateful ears.

"Somehow," she was saying to her colleague, "I believe Jack Ramsey's story."

"Oh, you do, do you?" came the cynical reply of a colleague. "And you believe in Santa Claus, too. I suppose!"

"Maybe I do. But I know enough about circumstantial evidence to realise that there's a mighty big chance of the law making an error here."

"What is it that's caught you fancy, Gertrude?" was the unkind comment. "Is it the young gentleman's nice blue eyes, or can it be—"

"Shut up, Jim, you're impossible!"

"Or jealous!" Jim retorted.

The Verdict of the Court.

THE days dragged on. Jack Ramsey, chafing at inaction, suffered the tortures of the damned. Then came the bombshell.

"I have discovered," stated the coroner, "that the knife-wound did not kill Mr. Ramsey!"

"Ridiculous!" said the authorities.

"Ridiculous or not, there it is.

My autopsy discloses that Ramsey died from a mysterious unknown poison. I have endeavoured to discover just what that poison is, but so far without success. It seems to me to bear some resemblance to the poison with which some of the pygmy Africans tip their arrows, the source of which varies considerably. In some cases it is extracted from a rare plant and causes death within a few seconds of being used. In other instances the poison is said to be of animal origin and is just as swift in its action."

The judge made no attempt to conceal his impatience.

"The court is obliged to you," he observed, "for your interesting observations upon exotic poisons, but I personally feel that those observations are beside the point."

"I bow to your decision," replied the coroner, who thereupon left the witness-stand, his composure ruffled and his dignity offended.

Knife or poison, the

scales seemed weighted against Jack Ramsey. The evidence in his own favour was of the slenderest, and of all the thousands of fellow-humans who followed the case with breathless interest, there was but one who retained untarnished faith in Jack Ramsey's innocence. The hours passed slowly along, and it seemed to the girl reporter, as she sat there noting down the evidence against him, that every tick of the clock was bringing the unfortunate lad nearer eternity. A little prayer escaped her—she who had hitherto scoffed at prayer—that Ramsey might be found innocent of the monstrous crime of which he stood accused, a crime of which this fine, keen-eyed fellow was surely not capable—not if she knew a real man when she saw one!

"Guilty?" echoed the girl, when the jury had brought in its verdict. "How anybody in their senses could give such a verdict is beyond me! It's unjust—terribly unjust!"

"Silence in court!" thundered the usher.

"What's the matter?" inquired the girl's gum-chewing colleague. "If murder trials upset you, tell the news editor you want to be quit of 'em in future. Better have a rest," he suggested.

"No, thanks," came the steady answer. "I'm all right."

The reporter sniggered, but looked startled when the girl gripped his arm.

"But I'll tell you this, my friend," she said, uttering her words with slow deliberation, "if it's the last act of my life I'll prove him to be innocent."

"Don't be foolish, Gertrude. It will take all the king's horses and all the king's men to reverse the decision that has demanded the life of Jack Ramsey. You're on the wrong track. I'll bet he'll pay the full penalty—as why shouldn't he?"

"We'll see," was her final reply, as, thrusting notebook into satchel, the girl strode away, her head full of plans to

free this stranger from the awful fate that encompassed him.

The Girl Reporter Shows Her Hand.

"MR. RAMSEY." The wan-faced prisoner came to the door of his cell to meet the calm, grey eyes of the girl reporter. "Well," he asked, "is there anything new?"

The girl shook her head.

"Not yet. But listen, I've got a real, honest-to-goodness brain-wave. Guess what it is?"

"I haven't an idea. But I do know this: You've been wonderfully kind to me, a stranger almost without a friend in the world. You've been a real angel, but I don't think anything in the world can help me now. I'm afraid it's too late."

"You haven't heard me yet," she pleaded. "I'm going to get a famous detective to help us, someone who seems to have worked miracles in the past. He's succeeded where others have come up against a blank wall. I'm sure that if anyone's going to find a way out of this terrible business it is he."

"If there were time, I'd tell you some of the things he has done, the mysteries he's unravelled, the innocent folk he's released, snatched from the very jaws of death. He's uncanny. He has a sort of sixth sense that he places to wonderful uses. And he's going to set you free, if it costs every cent I've got in the world."

"Mr. Ramsey," she went on, with a catch in her voice, "You're not guilty of this terrible crime, are you?"

"I swear to you I am innocent! But what matter? It's too late. There's nothing in the world can save me now. But listen. I'm not short of funds, and I'll only consent to this new man taking up the bare chance of my case if I am responsible for the cost."

She touched his hand reassuringly through the iron bars, and he returned to his rough couch, a new, strange hope



"Is there anything new?" asked the wan-faced prisoner.

in his heart, hope born of the assurance of this keen grey-eyed girl, who seemed so certain of his ultimate freedom.

The Coffee Mill.

WILLIAM HAYDON, for such was the name of the famous detective, had searched the Ramsey home from top to bottom. He was a thin, wizened man with the appearance of an under-nourished clerk, and yet he possessed the brain of a super-man. Nothing missed his eagle eye as he assembled such data as might help him in this case.

"I've missed something," he kept on saying to himself. "I've noted everything in this place, and yet I'm sure I've overlooked some very important factor."

He sent for the housekeeper and questioned her again, but learned nothing of value.

The girl-reporter who had persuaded him to take up the case was with him, and after the detective had shuffled off on another hunt for clues she turned impulsively to the woman.

"Tell me you think young Mr. Ramsay is innocent. Do you believe in your heart he could have committed this wicked crime?"

"Suppose I do think him innocent," the woman answered stubbornly. "Even so, there's nothing in the world I can do to help him. The facts are too plain. Master Jack has had every chance to dispute those facts. I saw him and his uncle quarrelling. I know the money disappeared. I saw Mr. Jack rushing away from the house that night. Aren't they facts that have to be faced—and answered?"

Before the girl was able to protest, a voice came to her from the pantry.

"Miss Clark! Miss Clark! Come in at once. There's something here that wants looking into!"

The voice of the detective seemed a blend of hope and excitement.

The two women hurried towards the sound of his voice—it came from the kitchen.

"Tell me," said the detective to the housekeeper, pointing to a coffee-grinder fastened to the wall, "who in this house drinks coffee?"

"No one, sir, but the late Mr. Ramsey. He had his coffee freshly ground here each day."

"Ah!" he said, turning triumphantly to the girl. "I think I have made a startling discovery."

"Oh, tell me, please!" begged Miss Clark. "Quickly, quickly!"

"Well, have you ever heard of that deadly spider that is known as the black widow?"

"Never."

"Well, I believe I have the solution of the mysterious unknown poison that killed Ramsey."

Very excitedly the girl replied:

"How? What?"

Then she followed the detective's pointing finger.

"Do you see that spider-web up there, almost immediately over the coffee-grinder?"

"Yes, I see it."

"Well, I noticed a moment ago a black spider, such as I told you of, darting into that web to kill one of the house spiders."

"Look," he said, "there's another, almost on the edge of the coffee-grinder. Why, there must be a regular nest of them!"

"Yes," said the girl; "but how can you connect this spider, or nest of black spiders, with the death of Mr. Ramsey?"

"I wouldn't swear to it, but it seems to me that one of these black widow spiders must have dropped into the coffee machine."

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"How can we prove it?"

"In the only possible way. Tell you what we'll do. We'll capture one of the spiders, take it to the analyst, together with some of the coffee, and compare it with the poison which is said to have caused Ramsey death."

"But how on earth could the spiders have got into the house?" The girl was puzzled.

"Well, miss, maybe I could explain that," cried the housekeeper. "The master was very fond of curios and stuff that I thought rubbish. You've seen all those old knives, bows and arrows, head-dresses and images in the library—they're from some long-dead Indian race. One time he had some snakes that came from their country and other pests, and I told the master I wouldn't stay in the same house with the creatures. And I remember now that he did say something about a collection of spiders what were dreadfully poisonous, but when he sent the pests to some museum I forgot all about the matter. Could some of them have escaped, Mr. Haydon?"

"More than likely." The detective stared at the web. "Our next task is to catch one of them. We must take every precaution."

As the housekeeper was much too scared it resolved on the detective and the girl. With the aid of a pencil and a matchbox the man endeavoured to secure a spider, whilst the girl assisted with a duster.

The spiders had bodies half an inch in length, whilst the hairy legs made them nearly two inches overall. Before they had seemed rather ordinary, but now that they were being attacked they moved with great speed, and often turned as if to fight.

There they hung, things of ill-omen, repulsive in appearance, insects such as one dreams of, but never hopes to see. Hideous things they were. Even the hard-bitten detective, inured to many a strange experience in many a corner of the world, could scarce repress a shudder as these dark forms darted about in their flimsy eyrie.

"Ugh!" he muttered, and the housekeeper hid her ruddy face behind a voluminous apron!

Suddenly the detective heard a little, stifled scream.

"What's the matter?" he demanded as the girl's face was twisted with pain. "I think one of the spiders bit me," she managed to smile. "But it's nothing very much."

The detective would have assisted her, but with a determined smile the girl discouraged his help.

"It's all right," she said. "Maybe I imagined it. But we haven't much time. Do, please, let's hurry!"

With all possible speed, a specimen of the black widow safely enclosed in a box, the pair made their way to the office of the coroner's analyst.

Impatiently the detective awaited the expert's verdict, the while the girl drowsed on a seat near at hand.

"Sleepy?" he asked the girl-reporter. "Very—I feel almost ill. The very sight of those horrible things seems to have upset me. They're unnatural!"

"You'll be better when you're in the air again. We shan't be long now."

"It's done!" said the chemist, at length, after interminable business with his hissing retorts.

"These poisons are identical. There is no question in my mind now, but that this is what caused Ramsey's death."

"You mean," said the girl weakly, "that the black widow and not Jack Ramsey was responsible?"

"I do, young lady. And I'll stake my professional reputation upon it."

The girl's face was illuminated with a smile of real happiness. Then, practical as ever, she came down to earth again.

"Tell me quickly, what time is it?"

"It's just two a.m."

"Then," whipped out the girl-reporter, emerging suddenly from her drowsiness, "we haven't a second to spare. The execution of poor Ramsey is at six. We must reach the governor at any cost. One precious human life is at stake."

Without a moment's loss, detective, Miss Clark, analyst, and Ramsey's lawyer made for the prison, covering the miles with a fine disregard for speed limits, routed the governor from his bed, placed before him the new and startling facts which the analyst had disclosed, and begged him, in the name of justice, to rescind the order for Ramsey's execution.

"From what you have heard," said the lawyer, "you should be able to realise just what happened. The coffee was poisoned, unintentionally, of course. When Mr. Ramsey drank that coffee and absorbed the poison, he toppled over unconscious on to the knife. But the poison was the real cause of Ramsey's death."

The governor listened, but to their intense dismay, was apparently unconvinced. Routed out as he had been from a comfortable bed, he seemed unable to grasp fully the significance of the discovery.

"I'm sorry," he said, in a voice as cold as death itself, "but I'll have to allow the law to take its course."

"But, governor," pleaded the lawyer, hardly crediting the evidence of his ears, "can't you see that—"

His words were interrupted by the strange appearance of Miss Clark. Rising with difficulty, she attempted to stagger across the floor, then collapsed all in a heap.

"What's wrong?" flew to the lips of them all, as they surveyed the prostrate, unconscious girl.

"Did this young lady come into contact with the poison?" rapped out the analyst.

"Not that I know of," said the detective, then gave a gasp of dismay. "She thought one of the spiders bit her when we were capturing a specimen. But she made so little of it that I imagined she was mistaken. Do you think the spider injected poison into her?"

"Well," came the reply, "she shows the same symptoms of poisoning as the late Mr. Ramsey."

"Then for Heaven's sake let us do something for her!" The detective faced the governor. "Guess it's up to you, sir, to do something now. Do you want further evidence? We've got to get this girl to hospital, and you would be advised to stay the execution of young Ramsey."

The governor realised that here was evidence of a startling character. The girl was undoubtedly very ill, and she was displaying, as he knew, all the symptoms of the dead man.

In a few seconds he was speaking to the warden.

"Stay the execution of Jack Ramsey. Evidence has just been put before me that is so convincing that it must be inquired into before the law takes its course. Frankly I think there has been a terrible mistake. See that Ramsey is treated with every consideration. Yes, you can tell him that he can hope for the best."

(Continued on page 28.)

A fearless young fireman invents a fire-fighting machine, but a fiendish enemy does everything to steal the plans and rob the hero of the girl he worships. A grand serial of breathless suspense and thrilling drama. Starring Tim McCoy and Marion Shockley.

"HEROES of the FLAMES"



A Fight for Life.

A YELL of horror escaped Pat Heeley as he watched car and motor-bike plunge over the bluff into the depths of the river. Then, from his vantage point, he saw a head rise through the whirl of water that marked the spot where the two machines had disappeared.

The head was Bob's, and with bated breath Pat watched him dive again and again below the surface, obviously searching for June Madison. Nor was the search in vain, for at last, when hope of discovering her alive was almost abandoned, Bob came to the top with the girl's limp figure in his arms.

She was unconscious, perhaps dead, and she remained inert as Bob kicked out for the shore. Swimming on his back, and supporting her by the shoulders with a light but secure grasp, he gained the river's edge after a grim battle with the strong current and staggered on to firm ground with her.

Meanwhile Pat was not idle, for the instant he perceived Bob wading ashore he turned to scan the vicinity for some habitation, and as he caught sight of a bungalow two or three hundred yards away he made for it at the double.

As far as Pat was concerned, Spike Belton and his rough-necks were forgotten. Indeed, they were no longer in sight, for, with the coveted formula in their possession, they had quickly made themselves scarce when the fight with Bob and his Irish chum had been so tragically interrupted.

Pat raced on to the bungalow. An elderly woman was sitting in the porch, and as he came up the Irishman quickly explained the situation and asked if he could make a 'phone-call, and just thirty seconds later he was in touch with the station-house of Number Five District, San Francisco.

EPISODE 10.

"A Flaming Death."

"Hallo!" he panted. "Oh, is that you, Jerry? Pat Heeley talkin'. Send out a rescue car, will yez? Morgan's Point. Drowning case. Hurry up wid yez—"

The call made, Pat made for the shore and helped Bob to carry June to the bungalow, the elderly woman showing them into a spacious and airy room.

"They're sendin' a rescue car from the foire station, Bob," Pat said as June was being laid on the floor. "Do ye think she's gonna pull through?"

"She's in a bad way," Bob answered, his voice trembling with emotion. "Her heart doesn't seem to be beating—"

He dropped on his knees and began to work her arms to and fro, hoping against hope that she would revive. In the meantime Pat made for the 'phone again—this time to call up June's father.

A maid answered the 'phone, and, asking Pat to hang on, passed through to a library where James Madison was engaged in conversation with Dan Mitchell.

"A Mr. Heeley?" Madison repeated as the maid gave him the message. And then to Mitchell: "Maybe Pat has some news about the formula," he added. "You'll excuse me, won't you?"

He hurried to the telephone, and as he spoke into the mouthpiece Pat's voice came to him through the receiver.

"Misther Madison," the Irishman stammered, "Oi—Oi think ye'd better jump into yer car an' droive out to Morgan's Point. Ye see, June's a little bit hurt—"

"What! What's that, Pat? June hurt—"

"Oh, just a little bit, Mr. Madison," Pat said hastily; but Madison sensed that he was trying to hide the gravity of the situation, and he was in an agony of suspense when he informed Mitchell of what had happened.

"My car's outside," Mitchell declared, eager to learn the full facts and to discover the fate of the formula. "I'll get you there in no time."

At that same moment the rescue van from the fire station was passing the gates of the Madison home en route to Morgan's Point, and, fast as Mitchell travelled, the ambulance reached the riverside bungalow some time before the automobile.

Pat Heeley met the occupants of the rescue car at the door and hurried them into the room where June lay, still apparently lifeless in spite of Bob's desperate attempts to revive her.

"Is she breathing at all?" one of the newcomers asked.

"I can't tell, Riley," Bob answered hoarsely. "I'm not sure."

"We'd better give her the respirator," Riley announced; and, to the fireman who had accompanied him: "Turn her right over, Mac," he said.

Bob stood by while the life-saving apparatus was made ready, and, as he awaited the result of the rescue men's efforts, the anxiety he experienced was almost unendurable.

"It's all right, Bob," Pat Heeley kept telling him. "She'll come out of it. She'll pull through."

Pat's confidence was justified, for, after what seemed an eternity, Riley gave an exclamation of satisfaction.

"She's coming round," he stated, and with that Bob stumbled forward and again dropped on his knees beside June.

"Bob?" she whispered as she turned her eyes full upon him.

"Oh, June, thank Heaven you're safe," Bob breathed. "I thought I'd lost you, dear. If anything ever happened to you—"

He did not finish the sentence, for Riley tapped him on the shoulder.

"Say, Bob," he advised, "put her on that couch and get a lot of blankets around her. Keep her warm. And Pat, you can give me a report on how this happened."

"Never mind the report now, Riley," Pat rejoined. "I'll give it to ye at the station."

He walked out to the rescue car with the two firemen, Riley and Mae, and as he was talking to them the car containing Mitchell and Madison drew up alongside.

"Where's June?" Madison panted as he caught sight of the Irishman.

"In the house, Mr. Madison," Pat answered cheerfully. "An' she's come out of it fine."

Followed by Dan Mitchell, Madison entered the bungalow and crossed the threshold of the room where June had been the cause of so many anxious moments.

"Here she is, Mr. Madison," Bob greeted him. "She's all right now, I guess."

"June!" the scientist cried, visibly relieved, but still showing signs of agitation. "June, how did this happen?"

It was Bob who explained, and when he had related all that had occurred there was a spell of silence, which Mitchell was the first to break.

"And this gang that attacked you," he said, trying to subdue any intonation of the voice that might betray his hunger for information. "I hope they didn't get what they were after."

"They did," Bob answered curtly. "I'm afraid they got clear away with my formula. I mean to make sure, of course, but I haven't the slightest doubt that it's in their possession."

James Madison pursed his lips. "If it is, Bob," he declared, "we'll get it back. I tell you we'll hound down this gang—and the man who is responsible for their cowardly attacks. For I'm convinced that there's some big brain working behind the scenes in this affair."

Standing in the background, Mitchell looked from one to the other narrowly, but when he spoke it was to mask his guilt with an offer of assistance.

"If I can be of any help, Darrow," he observed, "you can count on me as well."

"Much obliged, I'm sure," Bob returned. "But in the meantime I'm chiefly concerned about June, and I think we ought to get her home as soon as possible. You see, her safety means more to me than all the formulas in the world."

The Double-Cross.

SPIKE BELDON and his fellow gangsters were gathered in a lofty apartment on the top floor of a dockland tenement, within sight and sound of the shipping in Frisco's harbour waters.

"We've done all the dirty work," Spike was saying, "an' we're entitled to a bigger cut-out than Mitchell agreed to give us when he hired us. So if he wants that formula, he's gotta come across with some real money."

There was a murmur of approval from the others.

"It's okay with us, Spike," put in Silk Connolly, "if you reckon you can get away with it."

"We'll get away with it all right," Spike announced with confidence. "I got in touch with Mitchell an' told him

November 7th, 1931.

where he could find us, and he oughta be here pretty soon. An' believe me, he'll come across."

The gang was not quite complete until the burly Butch came through from a back room, where he had been sponging a pair of trousers with petrol from a two-gallon can. He cut a somewhat comical figure, standing in his underwear, but listened earnestly as the situation was explained to him, and he was voicing his appreciation of Spike's suggestion when Connolly interrupted him.

"Here comes Mitchell now," he blurted, peering from the window. "What'll we do, Spike?"

"Now don't get panicky," Beldon snapped, as he saw that the gangsters betrayed immediate signs of uneasiness in spite of the resolution they had shown a moment before. "All we gotta do is keep cool and sit tight, and we'll get exactly what we want for this formula."

The rogues nodded, and assumed an air of leisurely indifference.

"I'll finish cleanin' my pants in the kitchen," said Butch, retiring to the other room, and he had hardly disappeared beyond the threshold when Mitchell showed up.

Spike and his associates greeted him casually, and Mitchell eyed them with an eagerness that he could not conceal.

"Well," he said, "where is it?" Silk Connolly was the first to make any rejoinder.

"Where's what?" he inquired innocently. "What are you talkin' about?"

"Darrow's formula," Mitchell retorted impatiently.

"Darrow's formula?" It was Spike who addressed him now. "We didn't say we had any formula, did we?"

"Now listen, Spike," Mitchell rapped out. "Don't try and pull any funny stuff on me. I know you've got it, for I've seen Darrow and the Madisons. With that formula in my hands, I can put the fire-bomb on the market in place of that phoney extinguisher I once tried to palm off on Madison, and I can clean up a fortune. Darrow hasn't had a chance to take out a patent on it yet, and—"

"Wait a minute, Mitchell," Spike interrupted. "What do we get out of all this?"

Mitchell's glance seemed to bore into him. If he had not suspected it an instant before, he knew now that his hirelings were trying to hold out on him.

"You know what you're getting out of it," he grated. "That was fixed when you agreed to tie up with me. I warn you, Spike—and the rest of you, too—don't try any tricks on me! I want that formula—and I'm going to get it!"

"You can't scare us, Mitchell," sneered Spike. "We got the formula all right, but we had to fight for it while you were takin' it easy. So me an' the boys have decided that, if you want it, you've gotta pay—an' pay plenty."

Mitchell's face was livid with passion. "Aw, so that's your gag, huh?" he blazed; and then, rounding on the other gangsters in the room: "You fellers get out of here!" he ordered harshly. "Spike and I will settle this alone."

The rogues hesitated, but, at a mute signal from Spike, they obeyed Mitchell and filed out on to the landing, closing the door behind them.

Mitchell controlled his anger. "Well," he said softly, "before we decide how much I'm going to pay, I'd like to be sure that you've got that formula, Spike."

Spike laughed. "I've got the formula all right," he stated, producing a folded sheet of paper.

Mitchell snatched at it, but, with a rapidity that baffled the promoter, Spike thrust it back into his pocket, and almost at the same instant he had Mitchell covered by a wicked-looking automatic.

"Not so fast!" he snarled. "I said if you wanted that formula you'd have to pay!"

Mitchell had raised his hands. Indubitably he was seething with rage and chagrin, but the gun was an argument against any immediate violence, and he saw that he would have to use strategy. "All right, Spike," he said, with a shrug that seemed to imply defeat.

He reached for the inside pocket where he kept his wallet, and, grinning a crooked grin of satisfaction, Spike momentarily allowed himself to be taken off his guard.

Mitchell was quick to seize his chance. With a sudden rush he crowded Beldon across the room and clutched the gun, and next moment the two men were involved in a savage struggle for possession of the weapon.

In the kitchen, where he had retired to sponge his trousers, Butch had abandoned his task a few seconds before to hear what passed between Spike and the promoter. The can of petrol was in his grasp, minus the screw-stopper, and the instant he became aware of the scuffle in the next room he whipped round with the intention of setting down the two-gallon tin and going to Spike's rescue.

He was in the very act of wheeling when the gun in Beldon's hand went off with a crash, and a slug of lead burst through the kitchen door and missed Butch by a hair's breadth. He sprang away with a shout, even as a second and a third random bullet ripped their way through the panelling.

The last shot clipped the petrol-can, and Butch uttered a yelp as he let it fall from his grasp. The tin spilled its contents over the floor, and formed a spreading pool around a lighted oil-stove standing in a corner, and suddenly there was a blinding flash of blue flame as the fumes exploded.

Panic-stricken and bewildered, Butch stumbled aside. Only when a rug caught fire did he recognise the peril of the situation, and he made a tentative attempt to stamp the flames underfoot, but the linoleum was ablaze as well and, still clad in his underwear, Butch was in no condition to fight a conflagration.

He lost his nerve and made his escape via a side-exit that opened on to the landing, and as he ran out of the apartment he saw the rest of the gang gathered near the head of the staircase.

"What's goin' on in there?" Connolly demanded. "Does Spike need—"

"Beat it!" Butch interrupted hoarsely. "The dump is burnin', an' in another five minutes there'll be an army o' firemen round here—an' cops, too!"

There was an immediate stampede for the stairs. Meanwhile Spike Beldon and Mitchell were battling furiously, and not even the swifter approach of fire could check them in their life-and-death struggle. The flames roared in the kitchen, enveloped everything in their greedy coils and writhed through into the front room, destroying the communicating door and seizing carpet and furniture in their lurid grip. Still the two men fought on, as the blaze waxed fiercer around them.

Rocking back and forth through smoke and flames, stumbling, cursing, wrestling, they seemed scarcely aware of their danger. The gun remained in Spike's grasp, but Mitchell managed to keep its muzzle turned aside, and at intervals a

bullet pierced the inferno that was raging about the figures of the two men. Only when the last cartridge had been fired harmlessly into the floor was the weapon abandoned, Spike letting it fall from his fingers.

The crooks were evenly matched, and there was every prospect of the struggle being prolonged until the room actually became untenable. Even now the flames had risen to the ceiling and were eating away plaster and timbers.

With a sudden supreme effort Mitchell threw Spike backward, then sprang after the gangster as he was tottering off his balance. Spike dived over a table and plunged senseless into a whirling chaos of smoke and fire, and with an exultant shout Mitchell started towards his prone form to relieve the thug of the precious document he was carrying.

Before he could reach Spike, a section of the roof collapsed, and a smouldering beam struck Mitchell a glancing blow on the head. He sank with a groan.

The Call.

BOB and Pat Heeley were lounging in the entrance of the Fire-House when a car drew up near by, and as they glanced towards the auto they saw June and her father emerge from it.

"Hallo, Bob," June greeted, "I thought I'd surprise you. I knew you'd be worried about me—wondering if that cold plunge had had any bad effects—so here I am to prove to you that I'm perfectly all right."

"I was worried, dear," Bob confessed. "But, say, now that you and your father are here how would you like to look over the station?"

"Oh, I'd love it," June declared, but before Bob could make good the invitation the alarm-bell pealed loudly and insistently through the entire building.

Bob and Pat seemed to stiffen, and the former spoke to June and her father laconically.

"That's a run for us," he jerked. "See you later!" And next moment he and Pat were sprinting for their fire-jackets and helmets.

Well within the regulation time the chief's car swept out of the fire-house into the street, and it was followed by the big engines and escapes of the Flame-Fighting Squad.

As the last one stormed past the spot where June was standing the girl turned to her father excitedly.

"Dad," she exclaimed, "let's follow the fire-trucks and see where the blaze is!"

They scrambled into the auto and drove after the red giants that were clanging through the city streets, and they were on the scene of the fire just after the first

nose was turned on the burning building.

It was the tenement in which Beldon and Mitchell had come to grips, and all at once the head and shoulders of Mitchell were observed in the window of the top-floor room where he had been fighting. The man seemed at the last gasp, and could only drag himself to the aperture and utter a single shout for help ere sinking back in a stupor again.

Bob, Pat Heeley, and several other men were already preparing to enter the building, and, while his comrades searched the other floors for casualties, Bob raced up to the top story. He had to fight his way through a sea of flame, but at last he located the apartment in which Mitchell had been seen, and, forcing an entry, he discovered him amidst the debris and lifted him to his feet.

At that instant Pat Heeley and the other firemen were hurrying from the building to report that the second floor was threatening collapse, and Battalion Chief Wilson had received this grim intelligence when the figure of Bob Darrow appeared in the top-story window where Mitchell had previously been discerned.

"Below there!" he hailed. "Get ready with the life-net."

Bob was supporting the form of Mitchell in his arms, and as he saw a number of his comrades rush across the street with a safety-net he helped the promoter to the sill.

Mitchell was conscious now, but he was dazed and badly frightened, and Bob had to take grip of him as he crouched on the window-ledge.

"Remember, Mitchell," he said, "when you jump throw your feet ahead of you and land on your back!"

Mitchell was sufficiently in possession of his wits to turn sick with dread at the prospect of the plunge through space. But he knew it was his one

chance of escaping death, and, clenching his teeth, he sprang from the sill.

The hurtling flight through mid-air took his breath away, and terror seized him like a cold chill. Then he struck the net and lay gasping in it.

Strong hands set him on his feet, and he stumbled to the other side of the street, where he was for the time being forgotten. For Bob Darrow was now the object of everyone's concern, and, while the hoses were streaming on the burning tenement, Pat Heeley raised his voice.

"Hey, Bob," he yelled, "you gotta come down roight away! Chief's orders."

"There's another man in here!" Bob shouted back, and disappeared from the window.

Bob had seen the body of Spike Beldon lying on the floor of the blazing room, and had already recognised him for an old and unwelcome acquaintance. But, though he had every excuse for abandoning the ruffian to his well-deserved fate, he had no intention of doing so, and he stumbled through the flames to where the gangster was huddled.

The man's eyes were open, and he was propped on one elbow. But as Bob stooped over him he slipped back in a faint, and he was a dead weight when the young fireman pulled him on to his back.

It was too hazardous to drop the senseless rogue to the life-net, and there was nothing for it but to carry him down the stairs. Taking a firm grip on his burden, Bob started for the door.

It had swung to, but he dragged it open. A mass of scorching flame swept in from the landing and enveloped Bob, burning his hands and face, and the smoke that he swallowed tortured his lungs. But he struggled on through the inferno and reached the head of the staircase.



The unconscious thug was slung over Bob's shoulder.

He descended the first flight laboriously, and had hardly reached the lower landing when there was a collapse from above. Flaming timber fell in showers, and the corner of a heavy beam struck him on the shoulder, almost falling him.

Tottering momentarily, he managed to regain his balance, however, and blundered down towards the ground level.

That descent was as hazardous as any he had ever experienced, but he gained the side-walk without serious mishap, and a shout of relief went up as he was sighted by those in the street.

He staggered towards some crates that had been removed from a store and carried to a place of safety, and here he laid Spike Beldon.

He had hardly lowered the gangster to the pavement when he was joined by the Madisons and Battalion Chief Wilson.

"Are you all right, Bob?" James Madison and the chief asked in one breath.

"Sure, I'm all right," Bob coughed. "I'll feel a lot better when I get some of this smoke out of my windpipe, though."

"Oh, Bob," June sobbed, "when I saw you up at that window I thought I'd faint, and when you turned back into the room I couldn't believe you'd ever get clear."

Wilson laughed.

"You're not going to lose him so easily as that, Miss June," he observed. "Bob's got to eat a lot of smoke yet before he's through."

A surgeon and a couple of police officers had approached, and, while Bob was assuring June that he was in perfect trim, the medical officer made a quick examination of Spike Beldon.

The man had suffered injuries to the head during a collapse of the ceiling, and he showed no signs of recovering consciousness during the time that the surgeon took to bandage him.

"This fellow's in a bad way," the doctor said, looking up all at once. "Some debris must have fallen on him, and he's swallowed a lot of smoke besides. He doesn't seem to be taking much interest in anything at the moment, I guess."

Bob turned at the medical man's words. Dan Mitchell's presence in the tenement with Spike Beldon was a circumstance that had set him thinking, and he now saw an opportunity of unravelling the problem that had baffled him for so long.

"Chief," he said to Wilson, "I want to keep my hands on this man, for I think he can lead me to the real head of the gang that's been working against me."

"By all means, Bob," Wilson rejoined. "Do exactly as you think fit. I'll put you on sick leave."

"Thanks," Bob murmured, and then he turned to the medical officer who had examined Beldon.

"Say, doc," he urged, "will you do me a favour and let this fellow think he's badly hurt when he recovers? I want him to imagine he's due to attend his own funeral. I want to throw a scare into him."

The surgeon demurred.

"I'm afraid that's one favour I can't do," he began. "You see, it's a pretty big scare to give a man—"

"Ah, don't waste any soft feelings on that guy, doc!" It was the voice of one of the police officers who interrupted him. "He's a notorious hard case that hangs out in this neighbourhood. One of the worst things that hasn't yet been roped in."

"And I have a special reason for putting my request," put in Bob. "It November 7th, 1931.

would take too long to tell you the whole story, doc, but this man has been concerned in one or two ugly attacks on me. At the same time, I'm convinced he's been hired by someone else, and I want to find out the name of the man he's working for. If he thinks he's passing out, he's likely to talk—at least, I'm hoping so."

"Say, that's a good idea," declared the other police officer appreciatively, "and I'd like to see this bird in gaol, anyhow."

Satisfied that he need waste no sentiment on Spike Beldon, the doctor agreed to Bob's suggestion.

"All right," he said, "when he comes round I'll make him think he's ready for the coroner."

It was arranged that Beldon should be taken to the Madisons' home, and, while June and her father hurried on to their car, Wilson and the police officer lifted the crook from the ground.

The unconscious thug was slung over Bob's shoulder, and the fireman started along the sidewalk with his inert burden.

From a street corner hard by a man watched his progress. The man was Dan Mitchell, and Mitchell was staring after Bob intently when he felt a touch on his arm, and whipped round to discover Silk Connolly at his elbow.

"Say," Connolly jerked, "what are they gonna do with Spike? D'you think he'll squeal, Mitch?"

"Shut up!" Dan Mitchell rejoined harshly. "And listen—keep your eyes and ears open. Follow 'em, and let me know at the office if Spike is made to talk."

"Say," Connolly began truculently, "I don't see why I should do—"

"It's for your own safety as well as mine," Mitchell interrupted in a heated tone. "Get busy, will you? Get busy!"

The Confession.

WHEN Spike Beldon recovered consciousness it was to find himself lying in a chair with a group of people about him. The group included Bob Darrow, the Madisons, a couple of police officers, and the surgeon.

The latter spoke as the crook opened his eyes, and Spike did not see the significant look that passed between the medical man and the rest of the company. He only heard the doctor's ominous words.

"I'm afraid he's a hopeless case. A man can't possibly survive those injuries."

Spike blanched. Could it be possible that he was the subject of conversation?

He raised his bandaged head and met the doctor's solemn glance.

"Take it easy, my friend," the medical man advised. "You can help us by answering a question or two. There don't seem to be any papers of identity on you, and we'd like to know who we should notify if—well, if you don't pull through."

Spike was white to the lips.

"Doc," he moaned, "am I—am I really as bad as that?"

It was Bob who answered him.

"I guess so," he told the crook. "Why don't you come clean before it's too late? Who's been behind all these attempts to get my formula? Who's your boss?"

Spike moistened his lips.

"I'll tell yuh, Darrow," he faltered. "I ain't got nothin' against yuh. The guy that hired me an' the boys was—was Dan Mitchell."

"I thought so," Bob ground out. "When I found the pair of you in that tenement room to-day I guessed as much, but I wanted to be sure. And where's the formula?"

"Mitchell took it off me just before you showed up," Spike answered. "Then he sorta stumped down alongside me, an' that's the last thing I know— for I fainted off—"

The words were scarcely uttered when there was a commotion in the hall, and a moment afterwards Pat Heeley burst into the room.

"Bob," he gasped, "I've just seen one o' them gangsters beatin' it through the grounds. Oi got leave from the chief to come here after the foire, an' Oi was walkin' along the droive when Oi got a squint at the spalpeen skulkin' by the Frinch windows."

"He must have been listening," Bob rapped out, "and he'll warn Mitchell. What we've got to do is to make straight for Mitchell's office. Doc, you and Mr. Madison hold Spike. You two officers come with Pat and me. And Spike," he added, a twinkle in his eye, "cheer up, will you? You're going to live to do a long stretch in the penitentiary."

He wheeled and made for the door, and as he entered the hall he found that June, as well as Pat and the two police officers, was following him.

"I'm going, too, Bob," the girl declared resolutely.

Bob was about to protest when he realised that Spike Beldon was on the point of giving utterance to his feelings, the truth having dawned on him.

"Yes, maybe you'd better come with us, June," the young fireman said with a grin. "I believe Spike's getting ready to use some bad language."

The party left the house and climbed into a touring-car in which the police officers had driven to the house. At that same instant Silk Connolly was starting the engine of an automobile beyond the gates of the drive.

Connolly drove cityward at the top speed of his car, and, losing the other vehicle amid the traffic of San Francisco's crowded streets, he swung into a side-turning and pulled up outside a phone-box.

A few seconds later a bell rang in Dan Mitchell's down-town office, and Mitchell was about to cross to the telephone when his secretary came through from another room.

"I'll answer that call if you like, Mr. Mitchell," she offered.

The promoter scowled at her.

"Who asked you to stay here?" he demanded irritably. "Get your hat and coat and go home. You understand? Get out of here."

The girl departed, and Mitchell picked up the receiver of the phone.

"Hallo," he called. "No—Mitchell's not here— Oh, is that you, Silk? Well, why in the name of Creation didn't you say so? I'm busy here—getting ready to burn my private papers. I may have to make a quick getaway if things go wrong."

"You'll have to make your getaway all right," came the voice of Silk. "Spike has spilled the works, Mitch. Darrow's wise, and he's on his way now—with the cops."

Mitchell crammed the receiver on to its hook and turned towards the waste paper basket, which was packed with documents.

"Spike spilled the works, huh?" he ground out. "The dirty double-crosser—"

He struck a match and held it to the papers in the basket. They blazed up almost at once, and, pausing only to light a cigarette from the beacon, Mitchell reached for his hat and slipped out of the office.

He took the lift to the ground floor, and, emerging on to the sidewalk,

(Continued on page 25.)

"LASCA OF THE RIO GRANDE."

(Continued from page 16.)

"A blanketed Indian brought a rough breakfast. Kincaid told him:

"I must speak with your master."

The fellow shook his hair-braided head and departed. Heavy bolts were shot into their staples—hour after hour went by; the prisoner standing by the tiny look-out window, watching and waiting.

At last came a sign from his gaoler. A smooth, oily-looking dago unbarred the door and peered in.

"The Senor Santa Cruz presents compliments to the Senor Ranger," he grinned. "There is to be a wedding this evening." He grinned still more evilly at Kincaid. "To-morrow the Senor Santa Cruz will entertain the Senor Ranger," he ended, making a gesture as if putting a rope about his neck.

For a mad moment Kincaid had thoughts of springing out on this smirking fellow and overpowering him, then fighting his way out. But he controlled his rage; Lasca had to be brought to El Paso and delivered into custody. Then would come Jose's turn.

He listened to the dago without moving a muscle of his set face.

In the early evening came another visitor—Lasca herself. She was admitted by the burly bearded cowpuncher outside with whom she seemed to be on friendly footing.

"Miles, my poor friend," she murmured. "Jose has sent for a padre. We are to be married this evening." She drew her long cloak round about her, as if she were cold, as she tipped to where he stood stonily regarding her. "You shall escape from here while Jose and the rest are busy with the wedding. I have given money to Gonzalez, who is on guard outside the door, and when there is a good chance he will unlock the door very quiet and go away. Then you go."

"Is it a trap?" he asked brutally. "A good chance for me to be shot in the back as I run?"

"But how can you think so of me?" she reproached him, her eyes full of tears. "Me, I hate them all—even Jose. One time I think him very fine, very wonderful. Then you come, Miles, and I see no one else."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It is true, Miles," she said passionately. "See, I throw away the ring Jose give me." She plucked the shining ring from her finger and threw it out of the little cross-barred window. "Forgive me, Miles—forget me!" she cried wildly, as she ran from the prison chamber.

Outside, below the window, Jose stood listening. He had followed her unseen and unsuspected. He picked up the mis-stoned ring, smiling softly to himself as he put it into his pocket. Like a cat he crept away.

He called Pedro to him when again in his own room.

"Listen, my little Pedro," he ordered. "The Senor Ranger is a runaway from the office of the Chief Ranger at El Paso. We capture him last night because we are always on the side of the law, yes?"

"Yes," agreed Pedro, watching for a hint.

"It would be correct for you to shoot him down, if he try to get away from here," went on Jose.

(Continued on page 27.)

"HEROES OF THE FLAMES."

(Continued from page 24.)

crossed to a roadster standing at the kerb. The scoundrelly promoter entered it, took his place behind the steering wheel and pressed the self-starter, and as the auto was moving forward he saw in his side-mirror the reflection of another car swinging into the street.

It was the touter that contained Bob Darrow and his party, and with an oath Mitchell jammed his foot on the accelerator.

The chase that followed was maintained at break-neck pace, Mitchell driving recklessly through the busy streets, and the pursuing touter storming in his trail. Half a dozen times one or the other of the two autos was within an ace of being piled up on the kerb, but without serious misadventure they raced on through the city till the less populous environs were reached.

Mitchell was heading for the coast road, and once he gained it he fairly gave his roadster "the gas." But if they had been unable to make up on him amid the traffic of the city, the police officers soon showed that their touring car was capable of overtaking the fugitive on the open highway.

Its speed exceeded the other auto's by a clear ten miles an hour, and the distance between the two cars was steadily reduced. In the space of a few minutes they were racing abreast.

Bob was occupying the back of the police car with June, and now, though the girl tried to restrain him, he swung open the door and stepped out on to the running-board. For a moment he braced himself, and in that moment heard June's voice, shrill with alarm.

"Bob, you'll be killed! Don't, Bob!" But he disregarded the warning, and with a sudden plunge he threw himself from the police car to Mitchell's roadster. He tumbled over the side of the crook's machine, and in another instant was struggling to reach the controls.

Mitchell tried to strike at him with one fist, but Bob's fingers closed on the hand-brake and he wrenched on it with all his might, counteracting the acceleration. The roadster slackened pace considerably, and the police car immediately forged ahead and swerved into its path, forcing Mitchell to bring his machine to a standstill.

The crook dived from the auto and attempted to run for it, but Bob sprang after him and seized him. There was a sharp scuffle, which ended in Mitchell finding himself a prisoner in Bob's powerful grasp, and police officers came along at the double.

"Keep hold of him, boys," Bob said, handing his captive over to the representatives of the law.

Mitchell began to struggle, and he proved a handful for the police officers till Pat Heeley lent his assistance.

"Aisy, there e, or it's a punch in the snoot O'll be givin' yez!"

Mitchell was dragged into the police car, from

which June had by this time descended, and, while the rascally promoter was held powerless in the grip of Pat and the officers, Bob searched him rapidly. From an inside pocket in the crook's jacket he produced a wallet, and it was as he opened this that he found what he wanted—a sheet of paper on which a number of chemical symbols had been written out.

"This is my formula," Bob announced, "and I'd like you officers to testify that I found it on this man's person."

"We'll do that all right, Fireman," one of the officers answered.

"Okay," said Bob. "You'd better take him along, then. I'll be down at headquarters to prefer charges against him later."

A pair of manacles were slipped over Mitchell's wrists, and, resigned to his fate, he sunk sullenly into a corner of the car. One of the police officers settled himself beside him, and the other took the wheel.

"Say, Darrow," the man behind the steering-column drawled, "why wait till later to prefer those charges? There's room in this car for us all—at a squeeze."

"No," Bob replied. "I think Miss Madison and I will travel back in Mitchell's outfit. You can drive for us, Pat."

Bob and June turned towards the other car, and Pat winked at the police officers.

"He'd rather have a squeeze in the roadster," the Irishman said with a grin. "An' can ye blame him when ye look at the colleen he's with?"

The officers laughed, and drove off with their scowling prisoner. Pat then made his way to the roadster, and by the time he had taken his place at the wheel Bob and June had already installed themselves in the back of the vehicle.

"Don't be in too much of a hurry, Pat," Bob stated. "Remember, I'm still officially on sick-leave."

"It's sick ye are," declared Pat, "the both av ye. Love-sick, O'd call it." And, laughing, he started up the car.

Pat was discreet, and he kept his face towards the road ahead, but he could not help seeing, in the side-mirror, a reflection of Bob and June drawing nearer to each other, and presently he saw Bob stoop to her lips and kiss her tenderly.

Pat gave vent to a dreamy sigh.

"It must be wonderful to be in love," he murmured; and then he twisted the side-mirror to another angle, so that it reflected only the empty highway behind the lovers.

THE END.

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November 7th, 1931.

"THE SKY RAIDERS."

(Continued from page 10.)

too. It was the manager's private 'plane, and uneasy suspicious as to the real identity of the mysterious boss of the gang crossed Bob's mind as he crawled noiselessly up to the house.

A few moments later those suspicions were fully confirmed. Bob crept up to a side window, stooping low, for he had heard voices within the building.

"Well, boss, you can't say we've not done the job good and proper this time," remarked a voice that Bob instantly recognised as Kelley's.

"Sure I can't, Kelley," came the reply. "I take back all I said before. You've managed the affair very well this time."

"I thought so when I saw the 'plane," muttered Bob to himself, for the voice was that of Willard, the manager of the airport.

Vaguely suspicious though he had been of Willard, it came as a shock to Bob Rogers to find that the manager was actually in league with the crooks, but the young airman was about to receive a much greater shock, a surprise that almost caused him to betray his presence to the gang.

Moving quietly from the window, Bob crept round to the door, for he had noticed that it was not quite closed. Though he had been able to hear the crooks talking from his first position, he could not see them, and he hoped to have better luck at the doorway. Peering cautiously round, he saw the gang at a table in the middle of the room, a table strewn with currency notes. The gangsters appeared to be busy in counting out the spoils.

"By the way," said Kelley presently, "where are you and the girl planning out to make your future home?"

"Some place in Europe," replied Willard, "and if you take my advice you'll get to Europe as soon as you can, all of you."

Bob Rogers could not repress a start of astonishment and dismay as the manager spoke, for though the name of the girl had not been mentioned, the young pilot felt certain that Willard and Kelley had referred to Grace Devine. Instinctively, Bob seemed to realise in that moment that the girl he loved was somewhere in the house, in the power of the gang.

"What's that?" cried Willard, who had heard a sound outside the door as Bob gave his involuntary start of surprise.

The crooks turned to gaze at the door, listening intently. Bob had instantly drawn back, and they did not see him, but Kelley rose to his feet to investigate. Drawing his gun, he rushed to the door and looked out.

"Okay, boss!" he said. "No one there—only a dog scratching about."

Bob Rogers was only a few yards away, round a corner of the house, but as luck would have it a mongrel dog happened to come prowling along just at that moment, and Kelley naturally assumed that the animal had made the slight noise the crooks had heard.

Kelley turned back into the house, and as soon as he had disappeared from view, Bob ran quickly across to the bandit 'plane and climbed into it. A few minutes later Kelley again came out, and walked over towards the ship, for Willard had ordered him to see that the machines were ready to resume the journey.

As the gangster climbed into the November 7th, 1931.

'plane he got the surprise of his life. A terrific uppercut from a powerful fist rattled every tooth in his head, and he went backwards to the ground and lay still. Bob Rogers instantly jumped out, bringing with him a length of rope. In two minutes Kelley was bound and gagged, and Bob threw him, none too gently, into a neighbouring ditch.

Five minutes afterwards Willard came out of the house, dragging Grace Devine with him and followed by his men, who were carrying the packages of notes. Bob Rogers had, meanwhile, donned Kelley's flying kit, and was apparently very busy with the 'planes. He saw the manager pulling Grace along, and burned to fly at his throat, but he had formed his plan, and he restrained himself from any attack on Willard at the moment.

"Kelley," cried Willard, failing to recognise Bob in his disguise, "you will come with me and the girl. The others will take the small 'plane and follow. You had better pilot it, Blondy."

It was not surprising that Willard had taken Bob Rogers to be Kelley, for the young airman was much about the same height and build as the crook. He had drawn the goggles over his eyes, and he kept his face turned away from the manager as much as he could. Without a word he climbed into the cockpit of the bandit 'plane, and Willard was just forcing Grace to follow when a sharp exclamation from Blondy attracted his attention.

"We've got a broken gas-line, Mr. Willard!" cried the crook in dismay.

Bob Rogers smiled to himself, for he had managed to break a gas-line on the manager's 'plane a minute before the gang came out of the house.

"What!" roared Willard angrily. "How long will it take to repair?"

"An hour, maybe, perhaps more," replied Blondy ruefully.

A humming sound, faint at first, but growing louder every moment, caused the crooks to look up. High in the air a few miles away a great Army fighting 'plane was sweeping rapidly down upon them.

"Quick!" screamed Willard. "In with you!"

He pushed Grace Devine into the 'plane, climbed in himself, and howled furiously to the man he thought to be Kelley.

"Get her going, quick!" he cried, forgetting all about the rest of the gang in his anxiety to escape with Grace before the Government ship came up.

Bob Rogers hesitated for a second whether or not to reveal himself there and then. If he did, there would probably be a fight in the presence of Grace, for the other crooks were standing near, each man holding a gun. Bob knew that he could get Willard, but the others would most likely get him, so he decided to take off and fly back to the airport.

The Army 'plane was almost overhead as Bob Rogers left the ground, and in a few minutes the young pilot felt that he had made a grave mistake. For the Government machine, ignoring the disabled aeroplane and the crooks standing by it, swung round instantly after him. Bob realised with dismay that the bandit 'plane was known, and that he was being chased.

And at any moment the machine-guns of the Army ship might open fire!

The Rescue of Grace Devine.

THE officer in command of the Army airport had lost no time in sending out one of his best machines in charge of a young lieutenant reputed to be the most daring and skilful pilot on the Government flying field. Exulting at the prospect of a fight with the sky

raiders, the lieutenant took off, and flew at his utmost speed for the desert of Arizona.

Jimmy Devine, still waiting by the disabled express half an hour after Bob Rogers had passed, saw the Army 'plane approaching, and presently it glided down and landed almost alongside the express.

"Are you Devine?" asked the lieutenant, leaning out to speak to Jimmy. "Have they got away with it?"

"Yes, they got the dollars more than half an hour ago," replied Jimmy ruefully. "You're too late, lieutenant."

"You jump in," came the reply. "I'll show you whether I'm too late! I'm going to get those guys somehow. Tell me which way they went and what their machine is like."

Jimmy Devine climbed into the Army ship, and he described the bandit 'plane to the officer as they went along. The lieutenant took his machine thousands of feet in the air, and, relinquishing the controls to a sergeant, he began to survey the country carefully through powerful glasses as they neared the confines of the desert.

"See that?" he cried presently, handing the glasses to Jimmy, who put down his own and picked up the officer's more powerful pair. Looking in the direction the lieutenant had pointed out, Jimmy saw, far away to the right, a small house with two tiny objects on the ground in front of it.

The lieutenant took charge of the ship again, and soon he was swinging her rapidly down upon the house which he had noticed, while Jimmy still kept his glasses focused upon it.

"Yes, that's the 'plane, I'm sure, the larger one," cried Jimmy as they approached. "There are some men by it now. Quick! They're going up—"

"My orders are to take those fellows dead or alive, and I'm going to do it," said the lieutenant grimly. "If they go up, we must follow and shoot the 'plane down. Are those machine-guns ready for action there?"

"All ready, sir!" cried the men eagerly as the ship swept on.

Jimmy Devine looked down excitedly as they swooped lower and lower. He noticed an aeroplane which he thought to be one of these from the airport, partly hidden behind a ridge of rock, and he guessed that Bob Rogers had left it there. His friend he could not see, and little did he imagine that Bob, in the guise of Kelley, was piloting the bandit 'plane. Still less did he think that his sister Grace, too, was there, for he had, of course, not the slightest idea that Willard had kidnapped her that morning.

"They've got off," said Jimmy. "or some of 'em have. The larger 'plane is up."

"You sure that's the machine, Devine?" asked the officer.

"Yes, sir," replied Jimmy formally. "The other machine appears to be disabled—one of 'em is working on it now."

"We'll come back for that, then," remarked the lieutenant, as he swung round in chase of the 'plane which Bob Rogers was piloting.

And Bob was in a terrible quandary. Too late he realised that he ought to have revealed himself, at all risks, or to have delayed Willard somehow until the Army 'plane had arrived. He was already a thousand feet up before he saw that it was impossible for him to fly back to the airport as he had hoped to do. The machine he was piloting was not good enough, and the Army 'plane was catching up.

(Continued on page 28.)

"LASCA OF THE RIO GRANDE."

(Continued from page 25.)

Pedro nodded:

"I understand you, Jose. I know well what is to be done."

The Stampede.

THE oncoming storm had darkened the country of the Rio Grande, and Kincaid could see that lights were already reflecting from the roofs of the rancho. He tried the door softly once or twice, but ever found it barred against him. Presently, a voice was heard calling: "Gonzalez, come this way a moment! You are wanted."

A minute later Kincaid tried the door a third time. It had been unbolted; it opened—he was free!

Warily, and suspecting a plot, he stepped outside. The rancho seemed busy enough within, but there was no one on guard, no one about the gardens. Ahead of him was a low stone wall, protecting the flower beds from the browsing cattle; beyond it stretched the arid pastures and the clouded hills. Kincaid crouched low as he ran for the wall.

He reached it and vaulted over—into the ambush prepared for him by Pedro. Shots rang out on either side; Kincaid dropped as if hit, and three fellows rushed upon him. He rose on the instant to meet them; a smashing uppercut from his clenched fist knocking Pedro flat on his back. Then, right and left, he dealt with the others—one clean cut between the eyes, but the second managed to grapple and close with him. They rolled over and over until Kincaid, well used to mob fighting, got the fellow's head between his hands, when he soon bumped the cowpuncher into silence.

Then he ran again, this time towards an outbuilt stable, only just pausing to pick up the writhing Pedro's carbine. Kincaid had almost made the shelter when a single shot rang out, and with a stifled cry he stumbled and fell as if dead.

For a few tense moments he lay there. A girl came to an upper window of the rancho, glanced out, then climbed on to the sill. With a flying rush she leapt into the gardens, coming to ground on all fours with a little scream of fear. As she scrambled to her feet and began to run towards Kincaid, a blanketed Indian stole from the outbuilding, tomahawk upraised.

He was preparing to smash down his weapon on that seemingly helpless figure when a sudden mighty upward kick from Kincaid hurled him sideways. Then Kincaid was upon him, wrenching the tomahawk from those frantically clutching fingers. The girl heard the terrible weapon thud upon the Indian's head and a scream came from her.

Kincaid had given her scarcely a glance. He ran to the stable and flung himself on a horse. When the girl reached the stable he was already galloping for the hills, but she wasted no breath in calling after him. With a spring she leapt on to the bare back of another horse; then, with little heels pressed against the animal's smooth flanks, started hotly in pursuit.

Heavy drops of rain descended from the lowering clouds, a thin wind began to whine down the hills. As the two raced away from the now thoroughly alarmed rancho a vivid flash of lightning forked the skyline. Loud rumbling thunder followed, echoing and re-echoing through the valleys of the Rio

Grande. The browsing lowing herds of cattle raised frightened heads and began to stir, pressing against each other as they crowded unsteadily down from the hills.

Out from the rancho came Jose with some of his fellows. When he saw the flying figure of Lasca heading wildly after Kincaid, a cry broke from his lips, high above the cannonading of the storm. Lightning flashed and zig-zagged as if the elements mocked him; rain swept in torrents with the wind, now blowing a hurricane.

"To horse! To horse!" shrieked Santa Cruz. His fellows hurried to obey him, but Kincaid and the girl were well down the valley ere the pursuit could become dangerous to them. They raced in desperation, Lasca seeking to catch up with him, while he spurred his mount along the straight stretch for the river bed.

Above them the cattle were massing on the hills, crowding each other and bellowing with fear. The storm, with all its pent-up electric energies so suddenly loosened, filled the beasts with terror. They herded together; jostling and charging each other—then one of them in the forefront, an old bull, began to run.

At once all the herd was moving, gathering terrific momentum as they swept down from the heights, under the blinding rain, in their serried scores. An earth-shaking roll of thunder was lost in the crashing of their hoofs as they charged across the plains, utterly beyond all control.

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Lasca caught up with Kincaid, who had, at last, become aware of her.

"Miles," she panted as her horse raced beside his "You are hurt, yes?"

His face was deathly white, and, as he reined in his mount with his left hand and arm, his right hand seemed to hang uselessly from his shoulder.

"That fellow got me," he called to her. "The Indian. Don't worry about me, I'll manage." He gave her a side-long look. "You coming with me, Lasca? I shall have to take you to El Paso."

"I come with you, Miles," she shouted back to him through the sheeting rain. "I love you, Miles." Her voice changed suddenly, piteously. "Miles, Miles—see them! The steers are mad! They are coming down at us—"

He saw, too late, that they were right in the path of the frantic, maddened cattle. Herd upon herd, hundreds crowded together, were rushing down in blind panic from the hills. Lost to everything but fear, they charged onwards, over-running and smashing everything in their path.

Kincaid yelled to her to race before the oncoming black mass, in the hope of outpacing them. For a few minutes their horses led the cattle, then Kincaid's mount caught its foot in a hole, stumbled, and flung its rider like a stone from a catapult. The Ranger crashed to earth beside the rolling horse.

Lasca never hesitated. She reined in her mount, sprang from its bare back, and, as the maddened steers smashed down upon them, flung herself upon Kincaid, covering him with herself as best she could.

Jose, following them, saw the cattle sweep over them and rush onward. His face went white as chalk, a terrible cry came from his lips. His men reined in behind the stampede, glancing at each other.

Already the tearing wind had driven the storm onwards. The clouds were breaking, the rain had ceased. Ahead, a dark moving mass, the steers moved heavily towards the river, their lowings sounding more faintly as their terrors ended. Already some of them were falling away from the rest and cropping the saturated grass with greedy relish.

Santa Cruz led the way to where Lasca and Kincaid were lying; the horse had borne the worst of the charge and lay there broken and dead. The Mexican dismounted and lifted Lasca tenderly from the body of Kincaid. He laid her upon the horse rug which one of his men had silently placed upon the steaming ground.

He stood up and took off his gay broad-brimmed hat with its gold lace. His eyes were dry and burning; his lips moved without speech. One by one, his men took off their hats, staring awkwardly at each other. Then one of them fetched another rug from his horse and with it covered the piteous figure of the girl from sight.

Kincaid stirred a little, groaningly. Santa Cruz made a sign to his men.

"Lift him up," he ordered. "Carefully—carefully! She gave her life for him." His voice broke. "Take him to El Paso." He forced himself to say: "Tell the Senor Chief of the Rangers that I send him, me, Jose Santa Cruz, of the Rio Grande, with my compliments sincere." He waved them away; then knelt with bowed head beside that hidden, pitiful form:

"Lasca!" he called vainly. "Oh, my beloved—do not leave me so all alone!" (By permission of Universal Pictures, Ltd., starring Leo Carillo, John Mack Brown, and Dorothy Burgess.)

November 7th, 1931.

"THE SKY RAIDERS."

(Continued from page 26.)

Bob Rogers decided to land as soon as he saw a suitable spot, but the lieutenant of the government machine gave him no time. Convinced by Jimmy's assurance that the bandit 'plane was trying to escape, the officer ordered his men to open fire at once.

A burst of machine-gun fire came, and bullets tore through the cabin where Bob, Grace and Willard sat, without, as it happened, hitting any of them.

"Lie down, Grace!" shouted Bob Rogers, tearing off the goggles, and revealing herself to the astonished gaze of his companions.

Grace Devine, amazed as she was to realise that Bob was actually in the 'plane with her, obeyed without a word. She lay flat on the floor of the cabin, while Willard drew his gun, his fear of the machine-gun bullets overcome for the moment by the unexpected sight of the young airman.

"So it's you, is it?" he growled angrily, covering Bob. "Take—"

Another hail of bullets swept through the 'plane, tearing holes in the wings, damaging the propeller, and splintering the cabin. Willard slumped to the floor even as his finger pressed the trigger, and there he lay still, riddled through and through by the deadly burst of fire, while his bullet went wide of Bob's head.

Circling round the supposed sky raiders, the government machine kept up the attack, and Bob saw that there was only one chance left. Both he and Grace had miraculously escaped so far, but the next burst of fire would probably get one of them, and, moreover, the 'plane was already badly damaged.

"Crawl along to that parachute, Grace," he cried. "I can't control the 'plane any longer—she's a wreck, and we'll have to try the parachute."

"There's just about room for the two of us on the bar," gasped Bob, as the girl began hurriedly to get out the parachute. "Let's hurry. She's going!"

Just as the battered machine dipped into a nose-dive, Bob and Grace threw themselves out. They fell like stones for fifty feet, but Bob pulled the ring of the parachute at the right moment, and the

silken folds above spread out safely. Down they floated gently earthwards, while the men in the Army 'plane, still circling above, watched in astonishment.

"What's that?" cried the lieutenant. "Good Heavens, one of them is a woman! Say, Devine, you've sure made a mistake about that ship."

He pointed to the bandit 'plane, now spinning downwards to earth, where it crashed a moment later into a splintered heap of wreckage.

Jimmy Devine's face drained of all colour as he looked at the parachute through his glasses.

"It's my sister—and Bob Rogers!" he gasped. "Thank Heaven they're going down safely. I can't understand it, sir. That was certainly the 'plane the crooks had when they robbed the express."

"We'll go down and see," remarked the lieutenant. "Then I must go back and clean up that house. We left some of the guys there."

Meanwhile, Grace was telling Bob the story of Willard's treachery.

"He said he would take me up for just a quarter of an hour," she concluded, "but he brought me out here, and threatened to make me go with him to Europe."

"Don't think about it any more, Grace dear," said Bob gently. "Look out now. We're nearly down."

They braced themselves for the coming shock, and soon they touched earth, the white folds of the parachute falling over them as they rolled on the ground.

"Are you hurt, Grace?" asked Bob anxiously, sitting up and beginning to disentangle himself and the girl from the parachute.

"Not a bit, Bob. Are you?" cried Grace, as his arm went round her shoulders.

"Of course not," said Bob. "I'm okay, and now—"

"Now where do we go next?" interrupted Grace.

"Where do you want to go?" asked the young pilot.

"Anywhere—with you!" came the girl's soft reply, as Bob's lips met hers in a long kiss.

Two hundred feet above, the lieutenant barked an order to the sergeant who had taken over the controls.

"Up again and back to that house," he cried.

"I'm going to leave those two alone

for a while," he added, turning to Jimmy with a grin. "I guess they don't want any guys butting in just now."

"Sure they don't," chuckled Jimmy. "I'll say they've got all the company they want for the next hour or two. Well, I came with you to find those Sky Raiders, and I reckon I've found something else, too."

"Yeah!" smiled the lieutenant. "A brother-in-law! Invite me to the wedding, Devine!"

"We sure will," came Jimmy's laughing reply.

(By permission of the Ideal Films, Ltd., starring Lloyd Hughes and Marceline Day.)

"THE BLACK WIDOW."

(Continued from page 20.)

The receiver was banged down, and then another exchange called.

"Is that the Central Hospital—Dr. Rowland, please. It is the governor speaking, and I must talk to him at once."

It was hours later when the girl opened her eyes.

"Only just in time," murmured Dr. Rowlands. "Not a second too soon. You're a plucky girl and a lucky one also!"

"And Ramsey?" she whispered in a voice in which anxiety was plain to hear. "Is safe," she was told, "and free!"

The eyes closed, the lips smiled, and the plucky girl passed into a profound sleep that was surely peopled by the most enchanting of dreams.

Some dreams are destined to remain dreams. Others happily and incredibly come true—such as the wedding of Gertrude Clark and Jack Ramsey. Gertrude's newspaper rose nobly to the occasion, with headlines that caused the happy pair to blush in embarrassment. And after all it was literally true. For did she not in very truth save his life? And, having saved it, what fitter than that this life should remain in her keeping?

(Story by courtesy of Ideal Films, Ltd., who are releasing the Burns Detective Mystery Dramas.)

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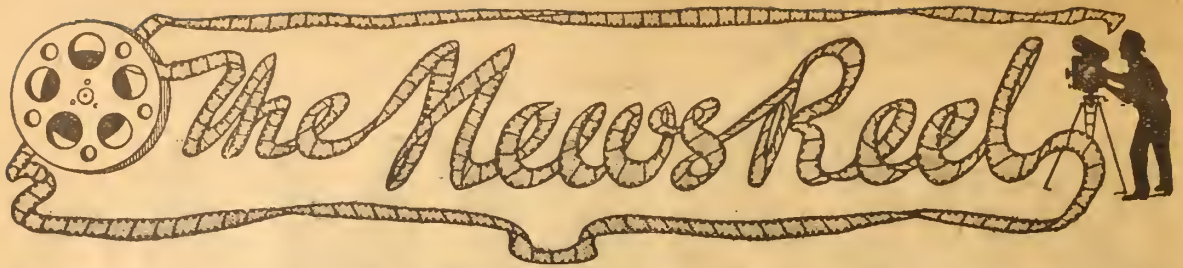
NOVEMBER 14th, 1931.



A
Daring
Reporter's
fight for
Vengeance
against
Ruthless
Gangsters

STARRING
Charles
DELANEY

HELL BENT for' FRISCO



The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"Hell Bent for 'Frisco."

Jimmy Gray, Charles Delancy; Ellen Garwood, Vera Reynolds; Frank Kenton, Edmund Burns; "Re-L." Reed Howes; Doctor Clayton, Charles Craig; Nick Corrigan, Richard Cramer; Graham, William Desmond; Lane Garwood, Carol Nye; The News-boy, Wesley Barry; Tony, George Pegas; Fogerty, Tom O'Brien.

"Transatlantic."

Monty Greer, Edmund Lowe; Judy Kramer, Lois Moran; Henry D. Graham, John Halliday; Sigrid Carlene, Greta Nissen; Rudolph Kramer, Jean Hersholt; Kay Graham, Myrna Loy; "Handsome" Moran, Earle Foxe; Hodgkins, Billy Bevan; Captain, Claude King; First Officer, Crauford Kent.

An Under-Water Thrill.

Wang Wong is a Chinese extra who now realises that it is not possible to talk under-water. In an exciting moment, however, Wang Wong tried to do so and was saved from a watery grave only just in time. This is how it happened: The exterior scenes of "Submarine," the new B.I.P. picture, were being filmed at Portsmouth, and six actors, including Wang Wong, after being fitted with the Davis life-saving apparatus, had to descend into the depths of the sea by means of a rope, and then be filmed as they rose to the surface.

But when below water Wang Wong found his feet had been wound round by the rope and he could not get them free. In his excitement he removed the mouthpiece of the apparatus and tried to call to another actor who was above him. The water at once rushed into Wang Wong's apparatus and increased his difficulty. Luckily the other actor, Sidney Seaward, saw what was happening and hauled the Chinese boy to the surface, where he was found to be in a distressed condition.

But the thrill of the occasion was not all over. As the rest of the actors came to the surface, a swift current began sweeping them out to sea. All of them could swim, but their ordinary clothing with the addition of the apparatus hampered their movements. By the time the last man was rescued he was literally at his last gasp. It was only through the prompt action of the sailors on the whaler, the Allecto, that a disaster was prevented.

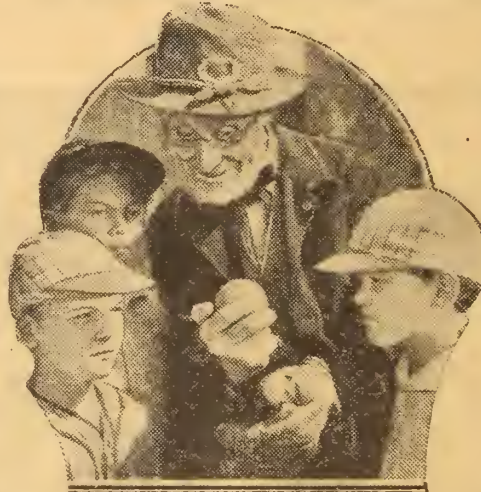
A Radio Favourite "Goes Talkie."

One of Britain's most popular radio entertainers makes his debut in a full length talkie in the screen version of Edgar Middleton's sensational play, "Potiphar's Wife," which First National Pathé have released.

He is Ronald Frankau, who has delighted millions of listeners by his "silly ass" type of fooling in various radio revue. His disarming pleasantries

November 14th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S THREE COMPLETE FILM STORIES



CHARLES (CHIC) SALE

IN

"THE STAR WITNESS."

Eye-witnesses to a terrible crime. Threatened—beaten—kidnapped. Their duty is to tell all—but their lives are worthless if they speak! A heart-stirring story of a family who found themselves menaced by ruthless gangsters.

"SUNDOWN TRAIL."

A haughty young beauty came with a cowardly attorney to take over her father's ranch, but the daredevil manager and a gang of rustlers upset her plans. Starring Tom Keene and Marion Shilling.

"THE WARDEN'S PEN."

A gripping story of a risky plot by a prison official to capture a callous, fearless gunman. Another true story from the notebook of William J. Burns, of the U.S. Secret Service.

have won for him a reputation that has meant regular appearances in the broadcasting studios.

Ronald Frankau, however, has paid the penalty of fame. Fame means work, and more fame means more work. With stage plays, cabarets, broadcasting, and now the screen, he has very few worlds to conquer nowadays. Many people may not be aware of the fact, but he is one of the few entertainers who writes his own material, and he is his sternest critic.

It is not to be supposed, though, that "Potiphar's Wife" represents his first appearance before the movie camera, for many flinggoers will recall his several appearances in the topical screen magazine, "Pathéone Weekly," in which he has built up a considerable advance reputation.

It was a happy inspiration of Maurice Elvey, the director of "Potiphar's Wife," to select him for one of the featured portrayals in the

picture, although the offer of the rôle was easier than the accepting. The part was offered at short notice, when Frankau was even busier than usual. He was appearing in "The Skin Game," and his night's work included a wireless act and a couple of cabaret turns. Elvey informed him that it was essential to be word perfect by the next morning, as the production would otherwise be held up, a costly business.

Frankau set to work on his lines, learning them between his various other activities, and the next morning turned up, full of smiles, at Elstree ready to proceed with the production!

Keeping Slim on a Skyscraper."

Ask the majority of film stars what is their pet aversion, and nine out of ten of them will agree that it is the necessity of keeping fit and keeping to the correct proportions stipulated in their motion picture contracts.

Keeping fit and slim, they will agree, presents more difficulties than any work involved by the actual acting in pictures. But during the making of "The Hot Heiress," the First National and Vitaphone comedy, Ben Lyon and Ona Munson, the principals playing in this scintillating comedy, had no choice in the matter. Their work required plenty of strenuous exercise to get back and forth from the set.

"The Hot Heiress" narrates the adventures of a riveter, working on a skyscraper, and his sweetheart, a wealthy debutante, who watches him from the window of a neighbouring window.

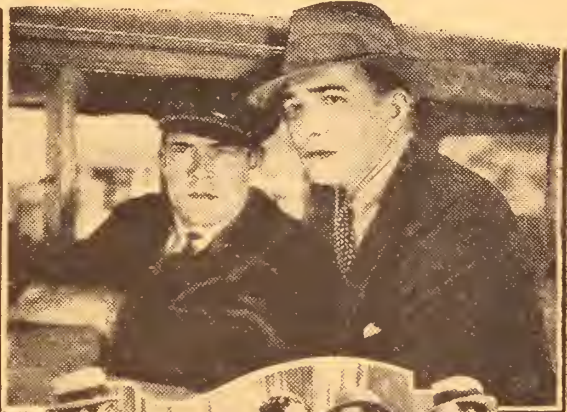
An exact replica of the steel structure of a tall skyscraper was erected by First National in Hollywood, and in order to produce the correct effect the debutante's apartment was constructed on a platform some forty feet from the ground in order that the cameras, shooting through the apartment windows, recorded exactly the scene that would take place as if it were in a great American town.

The apartment set was reached by means of a series of ladders, which the principals were forced to climb at least three times per day. In the morning, at noon, and when the day's work was completed. On most days, however, they made even more than the minimum number of daily trips because the picture was made in the summer. Thus the temperature, coupled with the powerful, heat-generating incandescent lights, made the set almost unbearably warm. After each scene Ben Lyon and Ona Munson had to scramble down for cool air.

"If you don't think climbing forty feet so many times a day isn't enough exercise," says Ona Munson, "just try it. I lost three pounds the first week and a pound or so every week thereafter."

(Continued on page 26.)

A young reporter plays a lone hand to solve the shooting of his chum on a race track. Gangsters try to take him for a ride, but he foils them, securing a big scoop for his newspaper and the girl of his dreams. Starring Charles Delaney and Vera Reynolds.



Hell Bent for Frisco

The News-Getter.

ADMITTANCE to the Garwood Garden Party and Charity Bazaar was by invitation only, but the two young men who drove up to the pretentious colonial home possessed no card.

For one of them was Lane Garwood, whose sister was on the committee of the Los Angeles charity movement, and had lent the extensive grounds of the manor for the affair.

Lane Garwood was just out of his teens, a youth with money to burn and time to waste, a modern sample of rich young manhood looking for pace and excitement. His companion, however, seemed of a different stamp, being a year or two his senior and rather more experienced in the ways of the world.

Jimmy Gray by name, Lane's friend was a Press-man, and, in the rôle of crime reporter on one of California's most prominent news-sheets, he found excitement without having to search for it. He had also found in Lane Garwood a youngster after his own heart, although at the moment he—Jimmy—seemed considerably disgruntled.

"Well, here we are, Good-natured!" said Lane, with sly reference to Jimmy's air of gloom.

"So I see," the newspaper man retorted. "Say, Lane, what's the idea of dragging me out here to this Society tea-fight, anyway?"

"Jimmy," Lane answered, "I promised my sister I'd bring you along. She's crazy to meet you, and wants to see whether or not you're the proper companion for her baby brother."

"Is that so?" growled Jimmy.

"Well, I don't like sisters."

Lane regarded him whimsically.

"I suppose you'd rather be draped

over a card-table with a lot of Press-men," he observed. "But you're coming with me instead."

Aud, taking Jimmy's arm, he walked him across a green sward of lawn that was thronged with fashionable guests.

There was a variety of side-shows, and presently Lane and Jimmy paused before a booth that represented a shooting gallery.

"Say, this joint isn't such a bad spot, after all," declared Jimmy, brightening visibly. "I guess I'll try my luck here."

He handed a coin to a pretty brunette behind the counter and received a pistol in exchange. At the end of the booth there were half a dozen rows of clay pipes, targets on which to practise marksmanship, and Jimmy levelled the gun and drew trigger.

"Too bad," said the pretty brunette behind the counter, as his first shot missed by a hair's breadth. "Better luck next time."

Jimmy grimed, and, pulling up his sleeve, revealed on his wrist a metal disc, a memento of his war service in the American Expeditionary Force. He rubbed his hand over it, and, standing at his shoulder, Lane Garwood laughed good-humouredly.

"You'll wear that lucky charm out one of these days, Jimmy," he commented.

"It hasn't let me down yet," was the rejoinder. "Watch me this time."

Jimmy raised his arm again and fired off the remaining five shots in quick succession. With every blast a pipe-stem snapped, and Jimmy handed the gun back to the brunette while one or two bystanders were marvelling at his skill.

"You haven't forgotten your Army training, after all," Lane told him.

"Say, Jimmy, how'd you like to amuse



yourself around the sideshows while I find my sister Ellen?"

"That's a good idea," Jimmy answered. "And don't hurry back."

Lane walked off, and his steps led him to a swimming pool which was one of the main centres of attraction. He did not find his sister here, but met someone he knew in the form of Frank Kenton, a tall, immaculately-dressed individual with a keen, shrewd face and a trim moustache.

Kenton was an institution at the Garwood home, and, ever since the death of Lane's father, had looked after the vast business interests connected with the bank of which old Garwood had been president.

"Hallo, Frank!" Lane greeted him genially.

"Why, hallo, Lane, how are you?" Kenton rejoined. "Seen anything of Ellen?"

Lane shook his head.

"No, I'm looking for her myself," he mentioned. "Say, it's great here to-day! I guess my social career is ending in a blaze of glory."

Kenton eyed him curiously, and the swift, penetrating glance seemed to belie the smile that was playing around his mouth.

"Well, it's true that business does interfere with social events at times," he murmured. "You're quite serious, then, about starting work next Monday."

"Absolutely," Lane told him. "I hope you've got my desk down at the bank all dusted and ready for me."

Kenton nodded.

"Yes, everything's prepared for you," he said, "and I'm glad you've decided to settle down."

"Well, it's about time I did," Lane

mused. "I should have gone to work when poor old dad passed away instead of playing around and letting you do all the hard graft."

Kenton shrugged.

"I'm very happy to do it, Lane," he answered. "You know, your father was very good to me. He really gave me my first chance, and I'm trying to repay him for it by looking after your interests and Ellen's."

"You've been a mighty good friend to us," Lane said, "and I'm afraid I've been such a sap about money. I guess Ellen and I would have been in the poor-house if you hadn't taken hold of our affairs."

"It's very nice of you to say so, Lane," Kenton murmured. "But let's go and find Ellen."

At that moment Jimmy Gray was confirming his impression that the Garwood Fête was not such a dull affair after all, and, having moved on from the shooting gallery, he was now lingering in front of a booth that for some reason had engaged his attention.

The reason was not hard to locate, being an attractive, fair-haired girl who was in control of the side-show.

"Remember," she was saying, "it's for sweet charity, and the holder of the winning number gets a kiss. And there are only two numbers left—seven and ten."

"I'll take both of them," Jimmy announced impulsively, and handed her some money.

The girl smilingly tendered two tickets with the numbers seven and ten, and then she turned towards an array of dolls, picked up a dart, and, closing her eyes, threw it straight and true.

The dart struck a doll bearing the number seven, and the girl behind the counter faced the onlookers again.

"Who holds number seven?" she asked.

"Right here in person," Jimmy answered with a grin.

There was an envious murmur from the other men who had bought tickets as the girl behind the counter offered her lips to the winner. But Jimmy hesitated.

"Er—don't you think we could do this much better in private?" he suggested.

The girl nodded and slipped round the counter laughingly, guiding Jimmy to an old elm-tree that stood in a more secluded part of the grounds.

"Well, here we are," she said. "And I always pay my debts."

Jimmy stooped to kiss her, and their lips had hardly met when a familiar voice interrupted them. Turning quickly, Jimmy and his fair companion saw Lane Garwood and Frank Kenton approaching.

"Are you in the habit of going around kissing strange fellows?" Lane inquired of the girl. Then to Jimmy: "And you kidded me you didn't like sisters," he added with a grin.

"Oh, don't mind him!" the girl said to Jimmy. "He's only my brother, and this other gentleman—Mr. Kenton—is merely my fiancé. You know, Frank," she went on, addressing Kenton, "this isn't as bad as it looks. The kiss was for sweet charity. I promised it to the gentleman holding the lucky number."

"Well, I think someone ought to introduce me to the lucky gentleman," Kenton suggested, genially enough.

Lane moved forward.

"I'll do the honours," he said. "On my left, old 'Stick in the Mud' Jimmy Gray, the greatest news-hound in the newspaper game. And on my right, Frank Kenton, the boy wonder of the banking business."

Jimmy and Kenton shook hands, and

then the latter turned to Lane's sister Ellen.

"I wonder if you could tear yourself from your sweet charity for a while, dear," he murmured, and, as Ellen agreed, Lane and Jimmy were left alone.

The two friends strolled off towards the swimming-pool, and as they walked Lane began to talk animatedly on a subject that was of particular interest to him at the moment.

"Wait until you see her, Jimmy," he was saying, as they passed along the edge of the pool. "She's a beauty!"

"I have seen her," Jimmy mused abstractedly, "and she is a beauty."

"What do you mean?" Lane demanded. "Say, I'm talking about my racing-car—the one I'm driving in the race at the speedway to-morrow."

Jimmy put Ellen out of his thoughts. It was not much use dwelling on her charms, anyway, when she was already engaged to be married to another fellow.

"Oh, yes," he said, "your car. So you're driving in the race to-morrow, are you?"

"Yep, for the last time," Lane told him. "Then it's good-bye to the high-speed life. I step right from the driver's seat to a seat behind a desk at the bank."

He had said it was to be his last race. Had he but known it, those words possessed a grim significance.

The Race.

ALONE with Ellen Garwood in a remote part of the grounds, Frank Kenton broached the subject of his romance with her.

"Ellen," he said, "I'm getting awfully tired of being engaged."

"Why, Frank," she exclaimed, "do you mean you want our engagement to be broken off?"

Kenton took her hands.

"You know what I mean, dear," he retorted. "When are we going to be married?"

Ellen glanced away for a moment, and then looked at him whimsically.

"You've been wonderfully patient, Frank," she told him, "and I suppose I should make up my mind. You know, I've always wanted to be a June bride."

"June," he said, with a frown. "But that's a long way off. Well, all right," he added with a shrug, "June it will be."

He left the Garwood estate shortly afterwards, and if he could have been traced to his destination, both Ellen and Lane might have gained a very different impression of the man who had for two or three years been their close friend and adviser.

Kenton's destination was a garage on the other side of the city, and as he drove into the building he was greeted by a man who was to all appearances a mechanic. Yet that garage was not what it seemed, for the moment Kenton stepped out of his car the mechanic lifted a trap-door to reveal a flight of stairs which descended into a unsuspected cellar.

Kenton lowered himself through the trap-door and it was closed over his head. A moment later the bank manager passed along a short, subterranean corridor and found himself in a secret room, dimly lit by a shaded lamp.

The lamp stood on a table, and it shone in the faces of two men. One was seated, a big, bluff individual familiar to police records, since he had figured on more than one charge-sheet as Nick Corrigan. The other was a swarthy alien known as Tony, and both men seemed strange company for one of Kenton's standing.

"Hallo, chief," Nick greeted the bank manager. "Say, what's the matter? You look kinda sick."

Kenton's manner had indeed undergone a change, and it was difficult to reconcile him with the well-bred and popular guest who had figured at the Garwood Fête. His smiling geniality was no longer in evidence, but had given place in this underground den to an air of mingled craftiness and agitation.

"I'll be all right," he said to Corrigan. "You and the boys can go ahead to-morrow. You know what I mean."

"Sure," Nick answered, with an heartiness that was somehow unwholesome and sinister. "Leave it to us. But listen, if you're going to have the 'jimmies' like this you'd better keep out of sight."

"I'll be all right," Kenton repeated, and then, with sudden heat: "Why couldn't the kid have kept out of the bank's affairs? Everything was great until he got the idea he ought to go to work."

"Work's killed better men than him," Nick observed, whereat Tony gave an ugly laugh. "You know, chief, I'll admit that you've got the brains in this outfit, but you have to have something more than brains in our racket. You have to have nerve."

"Bumping off your girl's brother isn't exactly a pleasant job," Kenton ground out.

Thus did Frank Kenton show himself in a very different light to that in which Society saw him, but the following day, when he drove Ellen to the Los Angeles Speedway in his roadster, he was again the perfect friend and attentive suitor. Moreover, he managed to assume a composure that was a mask to his true feelings.

Over at the pits where the racers were being conditioned for the gruelling test, Jimmy Gray was wishing Lane Garwood every success as the latter donned helmet and goggles and climbed into his single-seater track model.

"Go to it, boy," the young reporter was saying, "and burn up that speedway."

"I'll do my darndest," Lane assured him. "This is my last race, and it's going to be a good one."

Jimmy strolled off, and, wandering around the fencing of the track, suddenly perceived Kenton's car parked near one of the bends. As he recognised its occupants he hurried over to greet them, and was soon in conversation with them.

They were discussing Lane's prospects when Kenton noticed a closed-in automobile draw up to the fence some distance away, and, excusing himself on the plea that he needed some cigarettes, he left Jimmy and Ellen.

Three men had stepped from the closed-in car—Nick Corrigan, Tony, and another thug. In passing them Kenton contrived to attract their attention, and exchanged a meaning glance with them.

In the meantime, Jimmy and Ellen were still talking of Lane, and presently Jimmy referred to his friendship with the youngster.

"You know," he said, "I think he's a swell kid."

"And that's what Lane says about you," Ellen told him. "And I think he's right."

Kenton returned at that moment, and Ellen spoke to him smilingly.

"You're just back in time, Frank," she said. "Look, the cars are coming up to the line."

Kenton took his place beside her again, and an instant later the race was

on, the cars storming forward in a bunch. Kenton watched them as they gathered speed to hurtle along the furthest stretch of track, and his pulses seemed to beat time to the fierce throb of the engines, whilst his eyes became fixed on a gleaming torpedo-shape that was sweeping from the rear to challenge the leaders.

For a spell he watched it weaving its way through the other competitors. In the neck-or-nothing race that followed there was half a dozen hair-raising incidents on the bends as one or another of the cars failed to hold the surface and skidded fearsomely. But Kenton scarcely noticed these circumstances, for his attention was riveted on the torpedo-like shape of Lane Garwood's machine.

He watched it coming round the last corner into the straight beside which he had parked his roadster, and as the scream of the high-tuned engines drew nearer he heard Ellen's voice raised in a tone of excitement.

"Lane's gaining!" she cried. "Look, he's taking the lead from the rest of them! He's ahead!"

Kenton turned his head and glanced along the fencing at the closed-in car which had brought his associates to the speedway. He could not see the gangsters now, but he knew full well that they were awaiting the fatal moment that would be Lane Garwood's last.

Corrigan, Tony, and the other man were standing on the other side of the closed-in car, and as the racers came forging over the track Corrigan stooped and drew a gun from under his jacket. It was in a leather case, and proved to be the favourite long-range firearm of the gangster, a miniature high-powered rifle with thin barrel and squat butt.

Dropping on one knee, Nick took up his position beside a wing of the car, and Tony and the other man moved close to shield him completely from view.

Lane's racer flashed by, and Nick swung the rifle on its occupant. Fore-

finger on the trigger, left hand steadying the sinister muzzle, he glanced along the sights and followed his victim's course with the gun-barrel. Then he fired.

The competitors on the track were hurtling past in a stream. The muffled report of the rifle was drowned in the roar of auto-engines. But the din from the exhausts could not overwhelm the shriek that arose as Lane Garwood's racer suddenly swerved from the track to plunge over the banking and overturn.

In Kenton's roadster, Ellen gave vent to a sharp cry of horror and involuntarily buried her face against Jimmy Gray's breast. Then, pale to the lips, she looked at her two companions piteously.

"It's Lane!" she faltered. "Lane's crashed!"

Jimmy slid out of the car and raced towards the wreckage. He was kneeling beside Lane with an ambulance man when Ellen and Kenton came up.

"I think he's dead," the ambulance man was saying.

A moment later Lane had been lifted on to a stretcher, to be carried off in a hospital ambulance.

Foul Play.

JIMMY GRAY paced back and forth outside the door of the operating theatre. As a news-man and a privileged friend of the house-surgeon, Doctor Clayton, he had been admitted to the very threshold of the room to which Lane had been carried for examination.

The door opened, and the surgeon emerged. Jimmy looked at him haggardly, and from his grim countenance read the worst possible news.

"His last race, huh?" he murmured, with a break in his voice, and was turning away when Clayton took him by the arm.

"Wait a minute, Jimmy," he said. "There's something strange about this."

He held a small fragment of lead between his fingers, and Jimmy looked at it in a puzzled fashion.

"What is it?" he demanded.

"A steel slug from a high powered rifle," Clayton answered. "Garwood was probably dead before his car hit the fence. He was shot down while driving."

The doctor's words staggered Jimmy. For a moment he could only stare at the medical man.

"Shot—while driving!" he reiterated at last. "But—I don't understand. How could anything like that happen? Who could have it in for a kid like Lane?"

"That's for the police to find out," Clayton rejoined. "All I know is that this bullet killed him. At any rate, they were slick workers, whoever they were. They figured they could make the killing look like an accident—and they nearly got away with it."

Jimmy was silent for a little while. Then all at once he spoke to Clayton earnestly.

"Doc," he said, "do me a favour, will you? Put this down on your report as an accident."

"I'm afraid I can't do that, Jimmy."

"Now wait a minute," Jimmy interrupted. "It would just be for a couple of days—to let those fellows think they had got away with it. And it would give us a chance to take them off their guard."

Clayton agreed reluctantly after some persuasion.

"All right," he said, "but only for a couple of days. I wouldn't take the chance for anybody else, but—I haven't forgotten a certain favour you did me, Jimmy."

Jimmy thanked him fervently, and then walked out into a waiting-room where Ellen and Kenton were sitting, Ellen almost beside herself with suspense.

She looked at Jimmy anxiously as he entered, but he could not meet her eyes



"Bumping off your girl's brother isn't exactly a pleasant job," Kenton ground out.

and lowered his glance miserably. She began to sob distractedly then, and was still weeping when the two men drove her home.

When Ellen had gone to her room Jimmy took the opportunity of talking to her fiancé alone.

"Kenton," he said, "I guess your connection with Lane and Ellen entitles you to my confidence, and I know I can rely on your help. Doctor Clayton, at the hospital, gave me some information that I mean to pass on to you. It wasn't the crash that killed Lane. He was shot dead at the wheel."

Kenton managed to conceal the real sentiments that the statement aroused in him, and assumed horror.

"Shot dead at the wheel?" he stammered.

"Yes, but Clayton has agreed to keep it quiet for a couple of days," Jimmy went on. "We three are the only living mortals that know the truth—excluding the hounds that killed Lane—and I don't think we ought to tell Ellen right away. She's got enough to stand as it is."

"You're right, Gray," Kenton muttered, and as he spoke he was trying to think fast.

"But in the next two days," said Jimmy determinedly, "I'm going to do everything I can to trace Lane's slayer or slayers, and—"

"Hold on, Jimmy," Kenton gripped him by the arm. "I wouldn't do that if I were you. Listen, I can give you some inside information on this affair myself. Lane came to me a day or two ago and said he was in a 'jam.' He confessed that he'd got mixed up in a booze racket, but meant to cut loose from it. Well, you know what those racketeers do to a fellow when he tries to pass them up. They just wouldn't let Jimmy cut loose as he wanted to, and—they bumped him off, I guess."

Jimmy's eyes narrowed.

"Knowing this makes things a whole lot easier," he stated. "For it shouldn't be so hard to get on the track of that Looze gang."

"Jimmy, you don't understand," said Kenton, lying glibly. "Think what it would mean if the whole ugly story became known. Think how Ellen would feel if the papers were blazoning the full facts—her kid brother a rum-runner, associate of thugs. Why, the disgrace would kill her!"

Jimmy pursed his lips, and Kenton saw that his convincing arguments were bringing about the effect he desired.

"If you've any respect for Lane's good name, and if you've any respect for Ellen's feelings," he appealed, "you'll keep this to yourself, Jimmy."

The young newspaper man nodded slowly.

"I guess you're right, Frank," he murmured. "We'll sing dumb, you and I."

Kenton shook hands with him, and they parted—Kenton to drive straight-way to the secret rendezvous under the garage, where he found Nick and one or two of the gang.

"Nick," said Kenton, "the slug that hit Lane Garwood has been found. The buck was against us, and Clayton, the house-surgeon, discovered it. That reporter Jimmy Gray told me so. I've fixed him so that he'll keep his mouth shut, but Clayton will be handing in his report in a couple of days—"

Nick Corrigan turned to Tony. "I think," he said, "you'd better get the typewriter."

"Fine," Tony rejoined with an ugly grin. "I have to write som' letters, Neek."

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"Yeah," drawled Corrigan, "well, you're gonna write one to that doctor over at the hospital. Get the little fellow out of the safe."

Tony moved over to the wall. From a safe there he withdrew "the typewriter"—gangland's term for a machine-gun.

Frank Kenton bit his lip.

"Is that necessary?" he muttered.

"We never waste bullets unless it is necessary," Nick retorted. "And listen, maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea to pump a few into that snooty reporter."

"Oh, he's all right," Kenton protested. "He gave me his word. You see, I gave him a good line about the honour of his dead pal."

Nick frowned.

"We oughta make sure he don't talk," he growled.

"I tell you he'll keep his mouth shut," Kenton answered impatiently. "And if he should get dangerous—well, then I'll let you do your stuff."

On the Track.

JIMMY GRAY was lounging in the press room at police headquarters when a detective of his acquaintance showed up, and from the plain-clothes man's expression Jimmy saw that something was wrong.

"Hallo, Fogerty," he greeted the detective, "what's up?"

"Your old pal, Doc Clayton," Fogerty answered tersely. "They just rubbed him out!"

"They just rubbed him out? You mean—"

"Bumped him off as he was walkin' home," Fogerty explained. "Got the news over the phone this minute. Come on, I'll drive you to the spot."

Ten minutes later Jimmy and Fogerty were alighting at a street-corner where the body of Doctor Clayton lay, awaiting removal to the mortuary.

"So they got him," Jimmy murmured, as he stood looking down at the still form of the surgeon.

An officer was on his knees beside Clayton, and he raised his glance as Jimmy spoke.

"He never knew what hit him," the officer observed. "Friend of yours?"

"Yes," said Jimmy quietly, and drew back.

It was at this moment that he became aware of a newsboy standing near by. The newsboy was one of Jimmy's wide circle of acquaintances, and the reporter walked over to him as he interpreted a sign from the lad.

"Say, Jimmy," the newsboy whispered excitedly, "I think I can spill you a little dope."

"Go ahead and spill it," said Jimmy.

"Well, it was this way," the boy answered. "I was standin' on the corner when I saw the doc comin' down the road. Then an armoured car drove by—you know, the kind they use to take money to a bank. And the guys inside shot him down without ever stoppin'."

"An armoured car?" breathed Jimmy.

The newsboy nodded.

"Yeah, a grey car," he told the reporter. "Had the word 'Monitor' printed on it."

Jimmy took his informant by the arm. "Remember," he said, "this is exclusive."

"Sure," was the rejoinder, "ain't we workin' for the same sheet? You write for it an' I sell it—"

Jimmy acted upon the information he had received, and for the next day or two was a familiar figure in the tough quarters of the city. Then he decided that it was time he called on Ellen

Garwood, and the idea had no sooner occurred to him than he was on his way to her home.

He found her reclining in a hammock on the terrace, fingering a toy doll which Jimmy recognised as the one to which his lucky number had been attached on the day of the fête.

"Well, how did she get here?" he said, with a smile.

"She's yours by rights," Ellen told him, "but you deserted her, so I decided I'd better adopt her. She's been asking about you," she added in a tone of mild reproach, "and wondering why you haven't been to see your friends."

Jimmy's face grew serious.

"I've been pretty busy," he muttered. "I've been trying to get on the track of a gang of dirty killers— But I guess that's not the sort of thing a nice little doll wants to hear about."

"It sounds like a dangerous job for a nice reporter," Ellen rejoined.

"It is," Jimmy answered grimly; "but when two of your best friends have been bumped off it's no time to play safe."

"Was this doctor I've been reading about a friend of yours?" Ellen exclaimed. "Oh, I'm so sorry, Jimmy. But you said there were two. Who was the other?"

Jimmy was momentarily off his guard.

"Why, La—" This much he had said when he stopped himself, and added abruptly: "Oh, nobody that you know—"

But Ellen was leaning forward, her eyes fixed on him intently.

"You started to say 'Lane,' she challenged. "Oh, don't lie to me, Jimmy! Is there anything about Lane's death that I don't know?"

Jimmy tried to stammer out some denial, but she was not prepared to accept it.

"Jimmy, you've got to explain," she insisted tremulously. "You mean—that Lane's death—wasn't an accident. Tell me, Jimmy."

"I can't tell you anything until I'm certain," Jimmy said awkwardly. "But I've got a hunch that there is some connection between Lane's death and Clayton's, and within the next twenty-four hours I hope to have the straight of it, Ellen."

"Do you think you know who killed the doctor?" Ellen asked breathlessly.

Before Jimmy could make any rejoinder there was a footfall close by, and, turning their heads, they saw Frank Kenton approaching, and his first words told them that at least part of their conversation had been overheard by him.

"Do all reporters go in for sleuthing as well as newspaper work?" he inquired, with a smile that masked the glint in his eyes.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, we sort of come by it naturally," he confessed. "How are you, Frank?"

"Pretty good," Kenton told him. "Hallo, dear," he added to Ellen, laying an affectionate hand on her shoulder.

Jimmy stood up.

"I guess I'll be drifting along," he stated, whereupon Kenton spoke to Ellen again.

"You'll pardon me a moment, dear, will you?" he said. "I'll see Jimmy to the porch. I'd like to speak to him for a second."

He accompanied Jimmy through the house to the front door, where the two men paused.

"Jimmy," Kenton began, "I overheard the conversation you had with Ellen—about Lane. You know, I under-

A moment later Lane had been lifted on to a stretcher.



stood that was a closed issue between us."

"It was," Jimmy answered, "until Doctor Clayton was shot down."

"What had that to do with Lane's death?" Kenton retorted.

"Plenty," Jimmy told him. "Don't you see, Frank—someone must have figured that Clayton knew too much. I've got to get to the bottom of this business now," he added determinedly.

Kenton's brows contracted in a frown.

"Don't you think you're taking a pretty big chance?" he suggested.

"Maybe," was the reply, "but that's my look-out."

Kenton followed the reporter with his eyes as Jimmy walked down the steps to the drive. Then, with an ugly expression on his sallow face, he made his way back to the terrace, where Ellen had been reclining in the hammock. As he approached the girl, however, he betrayed no sign of the chagrin and agitation that had been aroused in him by Jimmy's resolution.

"Frank," Ellen said quickly, as he came over to her, "Jimmy told me that Lane—"

Kenton interrupted her. He was a man accustomed to fast thinking, for, to one practising a double game like himself, initiative was an essential characteristic.

"Yes, dear," he announced, "he told me, too. But it's just a reporter's brain storm. You know, they get a lot of wild theories about things. Anything for a story."

"But Jimmy seemed to think—"

"Ellen, dear, it's all a lot of nonsense," Kenton assured her. "Now listen," he added, changing the subject. "I want you to drive to San Francisco with me to-morrow. I'm settling up Lane's estate and having everything turned over to you, and there are some very important papers that you will have to sign."

"All right," Ellen agreed unsuspectingly. "What time do we start?"

"Well, we could drive up to-night," Kenton mused. "It would be a wonderful trip, I'm sure."

"I'd love it," Ellen declared.

The Armoured Car.

THE telephone in the press-room of police headquarters rang insistently, and Jimmy Gray answered it in person.

"Hallo?" he called inquiringly, and immediately heard a familiar voice.

"That you, Jimmy? This is Red—"

Jimmy's interest quickened. "Red" was a certain taxi-driver who had sworn eternal friendship for Jimmy ever since the young reporter had set him on his feet when his luck was out, and it was to Red that Jimmy had gone shortly after the slaying of Clayton.

"Hallo, Red," he said. "Any luck yet?"

"Sure, lots," was the answer. "I spotted that armoured car for you, and I've got it located. I'm at the cab-rank now, and if you'll come down I'll take you along to the dump."

"I'll be with you in ten minutes," said Jimmy. "Wait for me."

He hung up the receiver, reached for his hat and then stepped over to a desk. From a drawer he produced a loaded Service revolver, and when he had examined it he hurried from the press-room.

Ten minutes later he joined Red at his cab-rank, and the taxi-driver carried him to a street on the far side of the city, where he pulled up within view of the garage that was Nick Corrigan's secret lair.

Jimmy climbed out of the taxi.

"So that's the place, is it, Red?" he muttered.

Red remained behind the wheel, a thick-set, burly fellow with a broad, honest face.

"Yeah," he answered. "And Jim, there's an awful tough bunch of babies hang around that joint, so watch your step. It's no health resort."

"But I've got to get in there," Jimmy retorted firmly. "Red, you know what to do."

"You can depend on me, Jimmy," the taxi-driver assured him, and with the words he cast his eye in the direction of a cross-road near by.

"There's your chance now," said Jimmy, indicating a lorry that was approaching the junction of the streets.

It was Jimmy's object to gain admittance to the garage unobserved, and he knew this was to be difficult, for he could see two men standing in front of it, obviously there to prevent intrusion. But the events that followed, instigated by Jimmy and carried out by Red, were to give the young reporter the opportunity he needed.

Driving to the cross-roads, Red purposely swung his taxi into the track of an approaching lorry and grazed his wing against the bigger vehicle.

There was an immediate conflict of words, the truck-driver descending from his lorry to threaten Red with physical violence.

"Why doncha look where you're goin'?" he snarled. "You taxi-drivers think you own the town! Say, I'd like to bat you on the nose for this—"

The altercation which ensued drew a large crowd, and the two men in front of the garage strolled towards the scene of the trouble with the curiosity of the average human being. Next moment Jimmy Gray was heading for the building, and while the men on guard were giving their attention to Red's argument with the truck-driver, he slipped unseen across the threshold.

Inside the garage, standing well back from the entrance, was an armoured car bearing the name Monitor.

Jimmy moved towards it, and he had

opened the door of it to examine its interior when he heard footsteps. He quickly entered the armoured car and ducked out of sight behind the steering-wheel, and an instant later two men walked into the garage.

One was Nick Corrigan, and the other was the rascally Tony. Peering cautiously from the armoured car, Jimmy saw them come to a halt a few paces from the bonnet of the vehicle, and watched Tony lift the trap-door in the floor.

Nick descended, and Tony closed the trap-door over his head and then strode back to the entrance of the garage, where he encountered the other two gangsters as they were returning from the scene of Red's argument with the lorry-driver.

"Where have you fellas been?" Jimmy heard Tony say. "I thought you were supposed to be keeping an eye on de joint."

"We was down the street," came the reply. "But we was watchin' the joint just the same."

"You sure nobody sleep in while you are gone?" Tony demanded, and the other two shook their heads.

But at that instant Jimmy was lowering himself noiselessly from the armoured car and stealing towards the trap-door, and while the backs of the gangsters were still turned to him, he lifted the panel and began to descend the flight of steps which was revealed.

Voices reached his ears from the secret room, and one of them struck him as familiar, though he could not quite place the harsh impatience of its tone.

"Where the devil have you been, anyway, Nick? You got my 'phone message, didn't you?"

"I sure did," was the answer.

"Well, we don't want any slipping-up on this."

"There won't be no slip-ups," drawled Nick. "I've been over arranging details for the funeral of that ambitious young reporter, and I'm gonna see that he breaks into the front page—but not the way he wants to."

Jimmy held his breath. Could it be possible that he himself was the reporter to whom the grim reference had been made? Undoubtedly he was, for the men who had known that Dr. Clayton was dangerous to them must know that he was a menace, too.

Jimmy was now at the foot of the stairs, and, his hand travelling to his pocket, he drew the revolver that he had brought with him. A moment later he was on the very threshold of the lamp-lit, underground room, and as he glanced into it warily, he saw the two men on whom he was cavedropping.

It was with a shock of amazement that Jimmy recognised Frank Kenton, and the feeling was quickly followed by one of rage as he thought of the man's assumed friendship for Lane Garwood, his attachment to the youngster's sister. At the same time he was mystified by the motive for the scoundrel's treachery.

"I wish I'd had Gray bumped off right at the start," Kenton was saying. "But I thought he would keep quiet."

"How do you know he hasn't blown everything already?" Nick argued.

"Yes, that's it," Kenton rejoined. "I don't know, and the police may be on the track right now. That's why I'm not taking any chances. We're leaving here."

"Oh, are we?" Nick drawled. "Where are we goin'?"

Kenton leaned towards him.

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"We're going to San Francisco to-night," he made answer. "You and a certain young lady and myself."

"What's the idea of draggin' a dame along?" Nick snapped.

"Well, she happens to be my fiancée," Kenton replied. "And I need her signature for certain securities that we can realise a lot of money on."

Nick grinned.

"I get you, chief," he murmured.

"And from 'Frisco we leave at eight o'clock in the morning," Kenton continued. "On the John Bolton steamship."

"But what about the rest of the gang?" Nick wanted to know.

"Let them take care of themselves," Kenton sneered. "We've got to look after our own skins, Nick, and—"

He was permitted to say no more, for at that precise moment Jimmy Gray crossed the threshold with levelled gun and stepped into the light of the lamp. "Get 'em up!" he rapped out.

If ever a man's face betrayed astonishment and alarm it was Frank Kenton's in that instant when he realised that his villainy had been discovered. For a spell he could only stare at Jimmy, and two or three seconds elapsed before he raised his hands.

"Did you want to see me, Frank?" Jimmy inquired ominously.

Kenton seemed to have lost his voice, but Nick spoke. He was made of sterner stuff than his accomplice.

"We did, friend," he drawled. "An' it was real nice of you to drop in on us."

With the words he tried to reach for his hip-pocket, but Jimmy jerked the revolver in his direction.

"Don't move," he warned, "and keep those hands high!"

Nick obeyed reluctantly, and cursed softly under his breath.

The Battle.

UP at the entrance of the garage, Tony and his companions were idly keeping watch on the street when the former indicated the armoured car. "We better geev' da truck da once-over," he suggested. "Mebbe we need it soon, huh?"

The crooks moved in the direction of the armoured car, and about the same time Red drove back from the cross-roads, where he had recently concluded his argument with the lorry-driver. As he saw that the threshold of the garage was for the time being unguarded, he resolved to take the opportunity of joining Jimmy Gray and giving him a hand if necessary.

He entered the garage, saw the gangsters walking towards the armoured car, and ducked behind an automobile close by. Next second he heard the man Tony utter a sharp exclamation.

"Look!" the gangster said, pointing at the floor. "Da trap-door—open!"

The other two men looked at him in awe.

"Somebody musta slipped in," one of them blurted.

"Jake, you com' with me," Tony babbled. "You stay and keep an eye on da street, Blink."

Jake and Tony blundered down the steps, but by the time they had reached the underground room Jimmy was ready for them, and as they stumbled into it he switched the revolver on them.

"Stick 'em up!" he ordered. "Stick 'em up! And get over there beside Kenton and the other guy!"

Tony and Jake sullenly obeyed, and a few seconds later fresh footfalls were heard on the stairs. But the newcomer

proved to be Red, and, entering the room, he grinned at the reporter.

"Good work, Jimmy," he said. "Gettin' to be quite a nice little gatherin' here, ain't there?"

Jimmy was watching the captives, but he did not see Frank Kenton shift his foot. Nor did he observe a button on the floor, which, when depressed under Kenton's toe, shone a danger-light in the garage up above.

Nick Corrigan spoke.

"Well, where do we go from here, Gray?" he asked Jimmy.

"For a ride maybe," the reporter answered. "Red, run your hands over these fellows and search 'em for guns!"

The taxi-driver obeyed. Kenton was unarmed, but the other three were carrying an automatic apiece, and Red collected the firearms and stepped back.

"There's another guy upstairs," said Jimmy. "We'll get him as we go out. Come on! Let's go, fellers!"

The words were scarcely uttered when Blink darted unexpectedly into the room. He had seen Kenton's signal, and, descending with more caution than Jake and Tony had shown, had arrived in time to surprise Jimmy.

Jimmy was not aware of his presence till he was actually across the threshold. He attempted to wheel and cover the man with the revolver, but before he could bring the muzzle in line with his body the thug seized the reporter's wrist.

Next instant Kenton and the others charged forward in a bunch, Tony and Kenton to give Blink a hand against Jimmy, Nick and Jake to tackle Red as the latter was in the very act of laying the commandeered guns on the table.

Pandemonium immediately broke loose, a pandemonium of shouts and blows and stamping feet, with curses punctuating the din. Then someone swept the lamp from the table, and the underground room was plunged into a darkness that temporarily blinded the combatants.

Their eyes rapidly grew accustomed to the gloom, however, and, far from being checked, the fight raged more furiously, bunched knuckles thudding heavily into flesh and bone.

Jimmy was striving to retain possession of his revolver, but it was wrested from his grasp and turned against him by the man Blink only a few seconds after the lamp had been smashed.

"Back up, Small-time, an' reach for the air," Blink threatened, "or I'll plug yuh!"

Jimmy's answer was to hit out with both hands, and he proved himself to be as useful with his fists as he had been with a gun. His left struck the revolver-barrel a violent slicing blow, and simultaneously his clenched right drove into Blink's face and hurled him to a far corner.

The gun in the gangster's hand went off, but its muzzle was pointing at the floor, and the bullet embedded itself harmlessly in the boards. Then, as Blink fell in a sprawling heap, the weapon jumped from his grasp and spun away into the darkness.

Kenton and Tony had closed in on Jimmy, and as they tried to pull him down the struggle developed into a fierce scramble. But Jimmy managed to tug free with a sudden effort, and again he hit out with his bunched knuckles.

Tony was his target this time, and a slashing punch caught him fairly and squarely on the point. The blow snapped home to his jawbone, and the alien's face was swallowed in the gloom as he dropped with a grunt at Jimmy's feet.

Kenton lashed out at Jimmy while the reporter was tottering over Tony's prone form, and his fist caught Jimmy off his guard. The young newsman was staggered, and, as Kenton followed up his advantage with an ugly swing, was knocked across the room.

The wall brought him up with a jolt, and, flinging off the effects of Kenton's blows, he retaliated with a straight left that stopped Kenton as the crook was rushing forward. A savage exchange of punches ensued, and Kenton scored with a vicious hook that staggered Jimmy. But the reporter came back at him, battered him against the table, and then gripped him by the throat.

Kenton managed to hurl him away by doubling up his legs and lunging at Jimmy's body with them. Then he reached his feet and laid hold of a chair, but as he swung it up to hurl it at Jimmy's head the reporter leapt to close quarters and hit him with a pile-driving right.

Meanwhile, Red was battling against his two assailants manfully, and, though Nick proved a tough proposition and landed more than one telling blow, the taxi-driver fought like a titan, hammering the crooks with his big, coarse-grained hands.

Jake lurched aside, severely punished, his enthusiasm for the conflict waning, and Red gave Nick his full attention with devastating effect.

It was at this juncture, when the situation seemed so favourable for Jimmy and his friend, that Blink and Tony struggled to their feet and discovered their guns, which Red had laid aside just before the start of the fight.

So long as the gangsters had been unarmed, Jimmy had felt inclined to maintain the battle. But, with firearms figuring in the mêlée, he knew that he and Red stood no chance of winning through. Their one object must now be to escape, ere the underground room became a death-trap for them.

Jimmy dropped Kenton with a shattering uppercut and then wheeled to search the gloom for Red. He saw a group of dim figures between him and the staircase, and, with a flying rush, helped the taxi-driver to hurl his antagonists aside.

"Come on, Red!" he shouted, grasping his friend by the arm. "We've got to make our get-away! Quick, man—up to the trap-door!"

"They're tryin' to beat it!" It was the hoarse voice of Nick Corrigan. "Don't let 'em reach those stairs!"

There was a stampede by the crooks, and a pair of hands clutched Jimmy, but the young reporter whipped round and tripped the man who had tried to stop him, then sped on with Red.

It was Jake who had been thrown to the floor, and his sprawled form threw the rest of the gang into confusion. They were still blundering around the threshold of the room when the fugitives gained the staircase, and when they staggered through to the corridor it was to see Jimmy

and Red vanishing through the trap-door.

Blink and Tony fired, but missed, the blast of their guns echoing through the underground room and the shots ripping their way harmlessly into the roof of the garage.

"Quick! After them, you fools!" belowered the voice of Nick, and, followed by Jake, Blink and Tony raced up the stairs.

Meanwhile, Red and Jimmy were standing by the edge of the trap-door.

"You go on to your taxi," Jimmy said, "and let her rip! Don't worry about me. I'll be right behind you—in the armoured car!"

Red tore on, dashing out of the garage and sprinting across the street to where his cab stood. He climbed in behind the wheel, started up the engine, and slipped the gear-lever into the "first-speed" slot.

Meanwhile, Jimmy had turned in the direction of the armoured car, and, opening the near-side door of it, he scrambled into the driving position even as Tony, Jake, and Blink rose into view.

They paid no heed to the armoured truck, but ran forward to the garage entrance just as Red's taxi was moving away.

"There they go!" Jake ground out. "In that cab! We'll chase 'em up in the tourer."

He was wheeling towards a five-seater automobile when Tony checked him.

"Better still," he suggested, "let's get da amour'-car, huh?"

"That's a good idea," declared Blink, and the words were hardly uttered when an unexpected sound caused the three rogues to spin round in alarm.

The engine of the bullet-proof truck had burst into a sudden roar, and the

vehicle was storming straight for them. They had to jump to avoid the impact of its blunt radiator, and as they flung themselves aside with shouts of alarm they caught a flash of Jimmy Gray at the wheel.

Frank Kenton and Nick Corrigan had remained downstairs in the underground room. The secret rendezvous was still in darkness, but presently Nick found his way to a switch and turned on a wall light, and in the flood of illumination the two accomplices regarded each other gloomily.

Their appearance was dishevelled, their faces bore the marks of punishment, and Kenton, for one, was clearly in a state of panic. Nick was the first to speak, however, and his voice rang harshly through the room.

"This is a fine mess, ain't it?" he snarled. "If you'd let me rub that reporter out at the start, like I wanted to, this wouldn't have happened!"

"I wish I had," Kenton whined, "but how was I to know he was on our trail? I didn't know he was going to locate us in our hide-out—"

"No, you don't know anything," Nick retorted savagely. "A fine guy you've turned out to be for a racketeer. Why, you ain't even got the brains—let alone the nerve!"

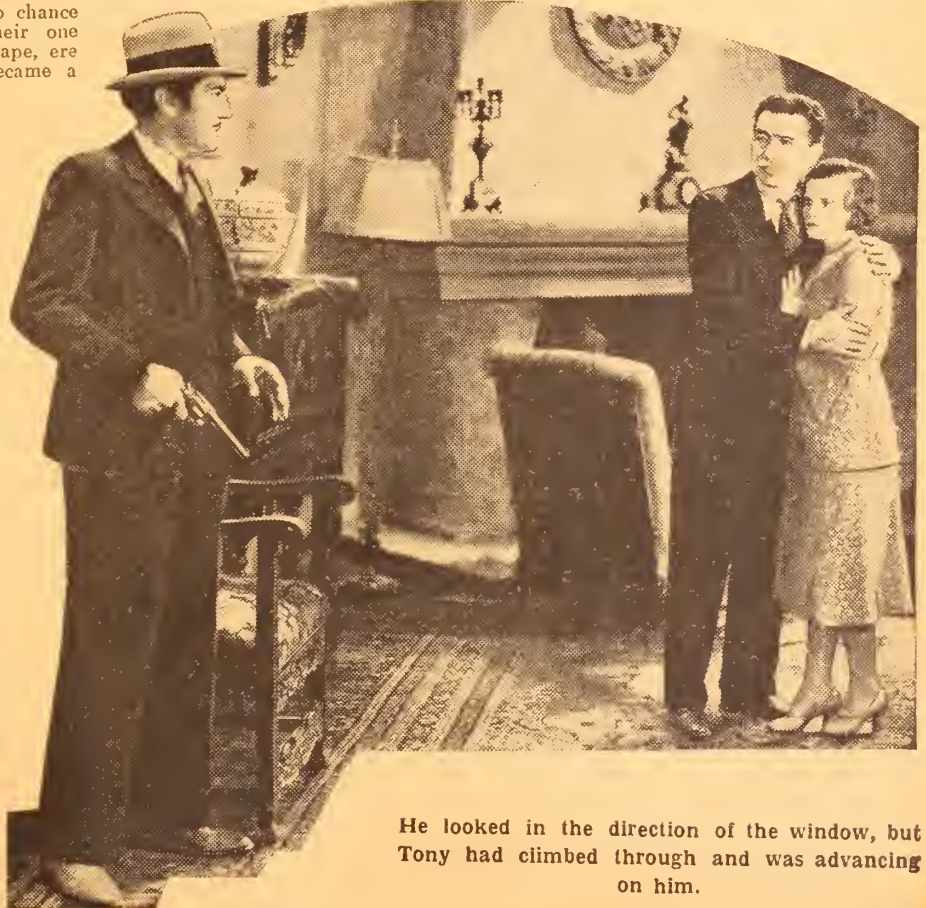
Tony came hurrying down the stairs and lurched into the room, chagrined written on his civil face.

"Well, spill it!" Nick barked at him. "They got clear away, I suppose."

"Yeah," was the answer, "clear away. An' dey pinched da amour'-car, too."

Nick's eyes widened.

"What's that?" he raved. "Pinched the armoured-car? Stole our bullet-



He looked in the direction of the window, but Tony had climbed through and was advancing on him.

proof wagon? Why, the dirty racketeers—"

"What are we going to do, Nick?" Kenton babbled, his voice querulous with fear. "We've got to stay away from this place. We can't get here."

"Ah, shut your trap!" Nick retorted contemptuously.

"But listen, Nick," Kenton appealed. "That reporter is going to bring the cops. They may be here at any minute. We've got to pull our freight right now."

"Yeah, an' you pull yourself together, Kenton," Nick ground out. "Listen, you've run this racket long enough. From now on I'm gonna take charge, an' so long as you do what I say you're on Easy Street. Do you get me, Kenton?"

"You can count on me, Nick," Kenton blurted. "I'm ready to do whatever you think is best."

"All right," said Nick, and then, to Tony: "Go upstairs an' wait for me with the boys," he drawled.

Tony departed, and when they were alone Nick turned to Kenton again.

"Now listen," he said, "an' I'll tell you what I'm gonna do. We're goin' over to that Garwood dump. We're goin' to get the jane, and we're goin' to 'Frisco."

The Ride.

OVERTAKING Red's taxi in the armoured-car, Jimmy drove out to the Garwood home, and, leaving his companion in the carriage-way, was admitted by a maid.

Ellen was in the lounge, and started to her feet as he entered, for it was plain that he had been in some kind of trouble.

"Why, Jimmy," she exclaimed, "what's the matter? You look as if you'd been in a fight."

"I have," he told her. "Listen, Ellen, I want to ask you something."

"What is it, Jimmy?"

He drew nearer to her and looked into her eyes earnestly.

"Do you really care for Frank Kenton, Ellen?" he demanded.

She started violently, and wondered how Jimmy could have guessed that she had somehow felt uncertain of her affection for Frank during the last week or two.

"Why do you ask?" she faltered.

"Because, if you care for Kenton, what I'm going to tell you will hurt, Jimmy said."

"Hurt?" Ellen repeated the word, and then paused. "Is it something I should know?" she added after a moment.

Jimmy nodded.

"Yes, Ellen," he answered. "Your father appointed Kenton guardian of your estate, didn't he? And Kenton had access to all money and securities belonging to you and Lane."

"That's right," Ellen agreed.

"Well, he was evidently afraid that Lane would find out what he was doing with the money," Jimmy tried to explain. "That is, if Lane came to the bank to work. I mean, if Lane had gone there he'd have discovered, sooner or later—"

"Jimmy, what are you driving at?" she pleaded.

He bit his lip.

"It's not easy to break this to you," he said, "but, Ellen, Frank Kenton killed your brother!"

The girl stared at him with a dumbfounded expression on her lovely face.

"Frank — killed — Lane!" she stammered. "Oh—oh, but how could he have done that? Frank was with us when it happened—"

"He had his gang pull the job," Jimmy interrupted. "And when I told

him what Doctor Clayton had said at the hospital—about Lane having been shot—"

Ellen gripped his arm.

"They killed him, too!" she gasped.

"Jimmy, does Frank know that you suspect him?"

"He knows more than that," was the grim rejoinder. "And it looks like I'm the next prospect."

"Jimmy! Oh, Jimmy—"

The anxiety in her voice sent a thrill through him, and in a moment he had enfolded her in his arms. But before he could stoop to kiss her he heard the sound of a car's engine in the drive, and, releasing her, he crossed to the window and looked out.

A tourer had drawn up beside the armoured car, and Kenton and his gang were emerging from it. Red was nowhere in sight, and it gave Jimmy some satisfaction to know that his friend had escaped.

"Jimmy, what is it?" came the voice of Ellen.

"Frank Kenton and his men," the reporter said without turning his head.

"The 'phone!" gasped Ellen. "Get in touch with the police!"

Jimmy nodded and stepped to the instrument, but the line was dead, and there was no response when he picked up the receiver. It was easy for him to guess that the crooks had cut the wire outside the gates of the drive.

"The 'phone's out of order," Jimmy muttered, and then he heard a footstep, and spun around to see Nick, Kenton, and Jake entering the room.

He looked in the direction of the window, but Tony had climbed through it and was advancing on him, followed by Blink.

It was clear to Jimmy that he was in a corner, and the muzzle of a gun compelled him to accept the situation.

"Well," drawled Nick, "quite a family gathering, huh?"

The gangsters closed in on Jimmy, and, when they were grouped around their victim, Nick spoke again.

"I ought to smash you in the nose!" he snarled, raising his fist savagely.

Jimmy lunged forward, but Tony thrust his gun into his ribs and forced him back, and Nick was drawing back his arm when Ellen pushed past him and appealed to Kenton.

"Isn't there any decency in you?" she flashed. "You killed Lane—"

"Keep your mouth shut!" Kenton interrupted harshly. "You'll find it might pay you not to make any fuss."

"Kenton's right," put in Nick. "I understand, miss, that you were leaving for San Francisco to-night. Well, you're leaving with us right now. Take her away, Kenton, and get her into her car."

Kenton gripped Ellen's arm, and, in spite of her struggles, dragged her from the room. Jimmy made a frenzied attempt to follow, but was held by his captors, and once more found himself confronted by Nick.

"We've made other plans for you," Nick said. "The boys are taking you for a ride—your last one. So it's goodbye, News-hound."

Red to the Rescue.

JIMMY had imagined that his friend Red had made his escape, but his surmise was wrong. Red had merely concealed himself in the shrubbery at the approach of Kenton and the gangsters, and when the crooks had gone into the house he stole from his hiding-place.

An idea had occurred to Red, and, making straight for the tourer in which the rogues had arrived, he lifted the bonnet and tampered with the magnet-leads. He had barely achieved his

object and lowered the bonnet when the front door of the house opened, and Red at once dived into the armoured car, crouching behind the steering-wheel.

Jimmy appeared in the charge of Tony, Jake, and Blink. The crooks marched him to the tourer, and, while Tony and Blink hustled him into the back of the auto, Jake settled himself in the driving seat.

Jake pressed the starter-button. There was a whirring sound, but the engine did not respond, and, in spite of the gangster's persistence, not a spark was to be raised.

"What's the matter with this thing?" he growled.

"Didn't you fill her up with gasoline?" Blink demanded from the back of the auto.

"Of course I did," Jake answered irritably. "Something's gone wrong."

Tony spoke.

"We'll use da armour' car!" he snapped. "We got no time to waste. Come on!"

They ordered Jimmy from the car and pushed him towards the bullet-proof truck, Jake pulling open the near-side door of it.

"Get in!" came the order.

Jimmy climbed into the vehicle. Next instant the engine roared stridently, and with an unexpectedness that left the crooks paralysed the armoured car stormed down the drive and through the gateway to the road under the skilful control of Red's hands.

It was thirty paces away before Tony and his companions recovered from their amazement. Then, with one accord, they snatched out their guns and blazed at the truck, only to hear their bullets clang harmlessly against its armour-plating.

"We gotta start that tourer!" howled Jake, and, running to the crippled auto, he flung up the bonnet, and at once realised why the engine had failed to respond to his efforts.

"Why, it's disconnected!" he raged.

"Fix it, then!" roared Blink, and in the space of a few seconds Jake put the car in order again.

The thugs scrambled into it, and, his foot jammed on the accelerator, Jake drove out of the grounds and on to the road. He swerved in the direction that the armoured car had taken, and on the open highway the tourer showed a turn of speed that the bullet-proof truck could not equal.

They followed a trail that penetrated the hills, and presently both vehicles were travelling alongside the brink of a cliff one hundred feet in depth. Scarcely fifty yards separated the tourer from the truck, and the distance was steadily decreasing as Jake kept his shoe hard down on the accelerator pedal.

Blink and Tony looked to their guns. They were a bare thirty yards behind the armoured car now—twenty—ten. They were abreast.

The two crooks in the back of the tourer tried to take a shot at the fugitives, but the bullet-proof truck had been built on lines calculated to safeguard its occupants against a regular fusillade. There was hardly a chunk where a slug might penetrate.

Jake swerved closer.

"I'll run 'em off the road!" he shrilled to his accomplices, and attempted to drive Red into an embankment on the far side of the trail.

The tourer grazed the side of the armoured car, and then recoiled. Again Jake tried to wreck the other vehicle, but he had tackled more than he could achieve. The bullet-proof truck possessed the advantage in bulk, and its driver a nerve equal to the gangster's.

Red retaliated by swinging the

Every Tuesday

armoured car against the tourer, and the effect was disastrous—for Jake and his companions.

There was a violent bump, and the crooks' car swung aside, weaving across the trail to the very brink of the cliff. Jake made a frantic effort to steer it back to safety, but the armoured truck balked him and crowded him to the verge of the precipice again.

"Look out!" screamed Blink and Tony in one breath.

They were the last words that they uttered; for as the dual shriek broke from their lips the tourer plunged over the edge.

It hurtled through space amidst a shower of dust and stones. Fifty feet down it struck the cliff-face with a shock that buckled it, then crashed to the foot of the precipice. As it hit the ground there was a sound like a thunder-clap, and as the dust cleared away three mangled, lifeless bodies might have been seen half-buried in the wreckage.

On the trail above, Red made grim comment on the crash he had engineered.

"It had to be done," he stated, "and I guess they won't bother us any more. But where did you want me to head for when you told me to take this road, Jimmy?"

"The flying field," was the answer. "I'm bound for 'Frisco, Red, and I'm going there in a hurry. For unless I'm mistaken, Kenton, Nick, and Ellen are on the road right now."

He was right. For the three he had named were motoring at high speed over the San Francisco trail—Nick at the wheel, Kenton and Ellen in the back behind drawn blinds.

They had travelled a distance of several miles when the engine-roar of another machine reached Nick's ears, and shortly afterwards a speed-cop drew abreast on a powerful motor-bike. With a disgruntled air the crook lifted his foot from the accelerator and cased on the brakes to bring the car to a standstill.

"Just what is your hurry, friend?" the cop demanded. "Have you got a driving licence?"

Before Nick could answer, Kenton stepped quickly out of the limousine, shutting the door behind him so that the speed-cop should not see the bound and gagged figure of the girl in the interior of the automobile.

"Here you are, officer," he said, producing his card. "I'm on my way to an important meeting in San Francisco."

The speed-cop read the impressive business-card that Kenton had tendered, and his manner became respectful.

"I see," he rejoined. "That's all right, Mr. Kenton."

"Have a cigar," Kenton offered, scarcely able to disguise his relief.

"Thanks!" said the speed-cop. "I don't mind if I do. Good-day, sir!"

About that same time Red and Jimmy were driving on to the flying field, and a few minutes later the young reporter had engaged a pilot to carry him to his destination.

"Well, so-long, Red!" he said to his cabman friend as he was pulling on a flying-helmet and preparing to enter the

BOY'S CINEMA

waiting machine. "And thanks a lot for everything you've done."

"Aw, forget it," Red told him cheerfully. "You know, I ain't forgot what you did for the missus an' me when I was down-an'-out. An' I'd have named my first kid after you if she'd been a boy."

Jimmy laughed, and then climbed into the passenger cockpit of the plane.

"Anyway, I reckon I'm still in your debt, Red," he declared. "And here I go—hell-bent for 'Frisco."

"Contact!" came the voice of the pilot, and next moment the engine roared deafeningly.

"So long!" yelled Red.

The plane moved forward, gathering speed for the "take-off" as it bumped lightly over the "field." Then it rose like a bird into the deep-blue vault of the sky.

News from Jimmy.

IT was early morning when a figure slipped into a 'phone-box near the San Francisco docks. The figure was that of Jimmy Gray.

"Hallo, operator!" he called, lifting the receiver. "Give me Long Distance—Los Angeles, 'Morning World.' Reverse the charges and step on it, will you, sister— Eh, what do you say? Well, maybe you don't like strange guys calling you 'sister,' but you can reverse the charges and step on it, all the same."

There was a pause that seemed interminable to Jimmy, and then a 'phone-bell rang in the editorial office of the "Morning World."

A big man wearing an eye-shade answered it. He was Graham, editor-in-chief, and as he picked up the receiver he heard his star reporter's distant voice.

"Hallo, chief, this is Jimmy Gray talking—"

Graham's brow darkened. "Say," he snarled, "where the devil have you been?"

"Why, I'm in San Francisco," came the answer.

"What!" blazed Graham. "You're where?"

"Now wait a minute, chief," Jimmy appealed. "Don't get excited. Keep your shirt on, will you, and get this— What's that— No, I haven't been drinking—"

"Well, don't you know you're working for this paper?" Graham roared into the 'phone. "You've no business to be trillin' around 'Frisco—"

"Now wait a minute!" Jimmy interrupted. "Listen, now, will you, for the love o' Pete? All right, but get this— just get this—" He cleared his throat, and: "'Murderers of Lane Garwood and Doctor Albert Clayton Captured!' That's your headline, chief."

"What the blazes are you talking about?"

Jimmy began to explain, and he was only half-way through with his narration when Graham broke in excitedly.

"Great!" he shouted, his face alight with interest. "Great! Hold the wire, Jimmy! I'll get the re-write man!"

He turned from the transmitter and called to a fellow at a desk near-by.

"Here, get this!" he ordered. "Story from Jimmy Gray!"

The re-write man settled himself at a typewriter and fixed a pair of head-phones over his ears to listen-in to Jimmy's call.

"Ready?" came the voice of the "Morning World's" star news-hound. "Then take this: 'Frank Kenton was arrested while attempting to board the s.s. John Benton at eight a.m. to-day.'"

The re-write man hammered the keys of his typewriter, and Graham leaned over his shoulder to read the words.

"Hey, wait a minute!" the editor jerked all at once, and, calling through the 'phone to Jimmy again: "Say, what do you mean 'eight o'clock to-day'?" he demanded. "It's only one o'clock in the mornin' now."

"I know," was the reply; "but get



"I reckon he had it comin' to him," said one of the officers.

this straight. You don't want to miss a front-page spread, do you? Well, put this on the presses or you'll be scooped."

Graham abandoned the 'phone again. He knew Jimmy. He knew that he must be on a big story—the sensation of the year. Double slaying of Lano Garwood and Dr. Albert Clayton—and Frank Kenton, prominent banker, involved.

"Boy!" he roared to a messenger. "Tell Jake to hold the front page. Mickey"—this to another lad—"get upstairs to the library and find a picture of Kenton—Frank Kenton! Jump to it!"

He wheeled to the 'phone once more. "Now, listen, Jimmy," he went on, "if this thing don't go through you'd better not show your handsome pan around this office again—not even to collect any back pay. Do you understand?"

"Absolutely!" Jimmy answered heartily.

"We're holding the front page blank," Graham continued. "The moment the cops make the pinch, 'phone me. I'll be right here, waitin'!"

"Don't worry, chief," said Jimmy. "What I've told you is advance information, but the pinch is coming off. I'll call you and give details at eight a.m. sharp."

Graham hung up and turned to issue a fresh batch of orders to a number of subordinates who had gathered round.

"Boys, this is going to be the biggest scoop we've ever had," he declared. "Listen, and I'll tell you what I want you to do. Bill, you beat it over to Kenton's house as fast as you can, and get some flashlight pictures of the dump. Andy, you take a run over to the Garwood place, find out what you can from any of the servant-staff there—and 'phone me. Now snap into it!"

His instructions having been given, Graham and the remainder of his staff settled themselves for the long and anxious wait, and never had hours dragged as they seemed to drag that night. Nor were the hands of the clock above the editorial desk ever watched with so much suspense.

Down in the printing works the giant presses were stamping out the facts already known, and flaring headlines proclaimed a capture not yet effected. If Kenton eluded the snare into which he was running, then the "Morning World" was sunk. A million folios of paper wasted. Its editorial staff the laughing-stock of Los Angeles.

And the name of Jimmy Gray—mud! Graham broke into a cold sweat as he summed up the consequences that would result from the risk he had taken if the scoop failed. At five-thirty he was pacing the room like a caged lion. At six-thirty he was staring haggardly at the hands of the clock. At seven-thirty he was a raving madman, leaping at every buzz of the telephone-bell, groaning audibly as each successive call proved to be in connection with some triviality.

Meanwhile, at the docks in San Francisco, a body of police-officers in plain-clothes and in uniform were taking up position at various vantage-points near the John Benton.

Two or three were waiting at the car-park station. Another lurked in the doorway of a warehouse. Three more, in company with Jimmy Gray, were actually on board the steamship on which Kenton had booked three passages.

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At seven-forty-five a limousine moved into the parking-place.

Gun Play.

NICK CORRIGAN climbed out of the automobile, and had hardly set foot to the ground when Kenton emerged, pulling Ellen after him.

The girl was no longer bound and gagged, and was struggling to free herself.

"Let me go, Frank!" she panted.

"Let me go, will you?"

But he did not heed her, and, exerting all his strength, dragged her towards the John Benton's berth.

Nick was in the act of following him when three figures sprang from hiding. They were the officers who had been detailed to watch the car-park, and, though Kenton raced on with Ellen to elude them, one of their number overtook Corrigan and jammed a gun-muzzle in his back.

"Well, Nick," he drawled, as the gangster pulled up with a jerk, "this looks like the finish for you."

Nick turned round. His captor, a plain-clothes man, was smiling grimly.

"Yeah," said Nick, with a deceptive note of surrender in his voice, "it sure looks like it."

And with the words he ripped his fist to the point of the detective's jaw!

The plain-clothes man went over as if he had been pole-axed, his gun spitting flame and lead as he fell. But the bullet missed Nick by a yard, and the gangster whipped round and ran for it.

The detective reached his feet as his two companions came up, and all three opened fire on Nick's flying figure.

The bullets zipped around the crook, but he raced on, for the time being unscathed. Yet he knew full well that he must be brought down sooner or later if he remained in the open, and like a hare he dashed across the car park and vaulted the fencing of a freight yard.

He crouched down behind the paling and pulled out a revolver. His pursuers were sprinting towards him when he let them have it, and the smashing blast of his gun sent them helter-skelter for cover. They ducked down behind the wing of a car, and blazed at him across the bonnet.

Lead slugs splintered the fencing in front of Nick, or whined through it to flatten themselves on the wheels of a railway truck at his back. He returned the fusillade savagely and shot after shot ricocheted off the bonnet of the car behind which the officers crouched.

"Keep down, boys," one of them warned. "I know this bird, and he's a dead-moral-certainty with that gat of his if he can get a fair squint at us."

Nick emptied his revolver and reloaded. He was holding the Law at bay, but he knew that presently, when his ammunition was exhausted, he would be at the mercy of his antagonists.

Moreover, he was not blind to the possibility that there might be others in the neighbourhood, and that a cordon might eventually be thrown around him.

He resolved to take to his heels again, in the hope of giving the officers the slip among the freight wagons of the railroad depot, then doubling on his tracks and reaching the maze of streets behind the docks.

He scrambled to his feet and wheeled round, and with the movement he saw a couple of detectives step into view round the tail of a goods truck thirty yards away.

Nick brought up his revolver with a

snarl, but ere he could pull the trigger one of the officers had beaten him to the "throw."

There was a stabbing bark, and a .44 cartridge thudded into Nick's breast. He seemed to come up on his toes and he gave a kind of stagger—then braced himself and tried to fire a belated shot at the officer who had hit him. But the agony in his chest caught him in a sudden violent spasm, and with death rattling in his throat he tumbled backward and lay still.

When the representatives of the Law gathered around his prone body he had breathed his last. His gun was still grasped in his fist, but he had used it for the last time, and Society would never more dread the threat of it. A crimson trickle of blood ran from the corner of his mouth across his cheek.

"I reckon he had it comin' to him," said one of the officers, kneeling beside him. "But what about Kenton and the Garwood girl?"

"The last I saw of Kenton he was dragging her off to the John Benton," said a uniformed cop told him. "But if everything goes right that crime reporter and the rest of the boys will make the pinch."

Eight O'clock.

CLUTCHING Ellen's wrist and forcing her along with him, Frank Kenton fled along the docks at the top of his speed and reached the s.s. John Benton.

He stumbled to the gangway and was setting foot on it when Ellen pulled him back with a desperate effort.

"I'm not going!" she gasped, beating at him with her free hand. "I'm not going, I tell you! Let me go, you—you beast! You killer!"

"Keep quiet!" Kenton barked at her. "Keep your mouth shut, or it'll be so much worse for you!"

He flung an arm about her waist and, pushing her in front of him, began to ascend the gangway.

He imagined he was safe. There was no one in view, and it seemed as if the officers who had been waiting at the docks had confined their attention to Nick Corrigan, knowing him for a dangerous slayer.

Kenton did not see the group of men crouching on the bridge of the John Benton, a group that included Jimmy Gray.

"Here he comes," Jimmy whispered to his companions, as Kenton stumbled up the gangway with his captive.

Kenton gained the deck of the steamship, and in the same instant Jimmy led a flying rush down the bridge-ladder. The stampede seemed to bewilder Kenton for a second, and he was still standing by the rail when Ellen uttered a thankful cry.

"Jimmy!"

Kenton suddenly became galvanised, whipped round to make his escape, and abandoned his hold of Ellen as he did so. Hurling himself past the girl, Jimmy overtook the fugitive and seized him by the arm, and with a desperate wrench Kenton tugged free and bolted down the gangway.

"After him!" yelled a police officer who was close on Jimmy's heels.

Jimmy needed no incentive. In one bound he reached the gangway, and, covering the length of it in a few rapid strides, he swung after his man as the latter sprinted along the docks.

Jimmy could cover the hundred yards in less than average time, but Kenton ran with the speed of a man panic-stricken, and he was keeping his dis-

(Continued on page 24.)

On a liner bound for England a tense drama is enacted. How a crook, for the sake of a girl, played a straight game.



Starring
EDMUND
LOWE
and
LOIS MORAN.

The Gangway Watch.

It was a quarter to four in the afternoon. The Transatlantic, that giant ocean liner which had recently lowered the United States to England record by half a day, was due to cast off at four. Already the pilot was aboard, and five tugs were fussing around the dock, busily getting their hawsers made fast in readiness to tow the magnificent vessel from the quay-side.

At the top of the gangway, up which a steady stream of passengers moved, stood the fourth officer and a quiet, unassuming man in plain clothes. They occupied their time by peering into the faces of the passengers that passed them.

The fourth officer nudged his companion, and indicated a small, tubby man puffing his way towards the promenade deck.

"That him?" he asked in an undertone.

The other looked, and shook his head. "No. He doesn't tally with headquarters' description, anyway. Greer is tall, upright bearing, dark hair, slight moustache—"

"Obviously not him," cut in the fourth officer, and devoted his attention to the stream of passengers once more.

The deep, throaty note of the siren reverberated to their ears. The fourth officer glanced at his watch.

"Well, I'm afraid he's not sailing by this ship," he said. "Most of the passengers are aboard, and that siren was the signal for their friends to go ashore. The gangway will be hauled off in five minutes."

"Okay," was the reply. "I'll hang around the quay for a while—until you're on your way, at any rate. Meanwhile, should you see him, send one of your stewards after me. Detective Glennon is the name. So long!"

"So long!" returned the fourth officer. The detective ambled ashore, still peering at the few remaining passengers who fought their way up the gangway against the tide of downcoming passengers' friends. He peered in vain. No one who looked like Monty Greer, notorious gambler, tall, erect, dark, with slight moustache, passed him.

He was new to the game of dockside detection, and he made no allowances for the obvious defects of official descriptions. Such descriptions lacked imagination, otherwise they would have added that Monty Greer, in addition to the more obvious points of his appearance, was a good loser, and that there was a humorous twinkle in his eyes.

And if Detective Glennon had looked for such a twinkle, he would have seen it in the eyes of a smart and extremely good-looking porter who had walked boldly up the gangway only five minutes before, with a small suitcase in his left hand and a larger one on his right shoulder.

As it was, Glennon went ashore empty-handed, and continued gazing at the fashionable New York crowd that lunged about in groups, waving to their friends on the promenade deck of the Transatlantic, and occasionally shouting some last-minute message up to them.

Meanwhile, the smart young porter had ceased to be. He had divested himself of his brass-buttoned tunic and shiny

peaked-cap, and had donned a long rain-coat and a soft-brimmed hat, the front of which had been pulled down well over his eyes.

He stood now some distance along the promenade deck, well away from the gangway, and the twinkle in his eyes became more pronounced as he caught sight of Detective Glennon in the crowds below.

The fact was, Monty Greer saw no reason whatsoever why he should stay in New York. For one thing, the place was getting too hot for him; and for another, he had not had a holiday for years, and he felt that a trip to Europe would do him good.

The Department of Justice at New York felt otherwise. A very important court case was pending at about that time, and it involved serious graft allegations against several prominent people.

Monty had been required as a witness. Because he was the friend of prominent people wherever he went, and because he was such a good sportsman that they never minded losing to him over a crap game or any other form of gambling that happened to be fashionable at the moment, the police knew that what Monty could say if he chose would send quite a few big shots up the river.

Monty, not being a squealer, had decided not to be a witness, and refused to attend the court. The Department of Justice replied by having served on him a subpoena, ordering him to attend, otherwise he would be guilty of contempt. It was exactly that move which had finally decided Monty to fade into the far distance for a while.

Hence the presence of Detective Glennon on the gangway. The officers of the Department of Justice, finding that Monty had ignored the subpoena, applied for and were granted a bench warrant for Monty's arrest.

And now Monty, a gentle smile on his lips, was gazing on the top of Detective Glennon's hat from the promenade deck of the Transatlantic. Being a decent chap, he felt no particular triumph over the fact. Such things were all in his game—part of his day's work.

Even as he stood there, his arms resting on the rail, the ship's bell struck six times. Four o'clock!

Neatly and efficiently the cables fixed
November 14th, 1931.

to the gangway tattered, and the gangway itself swung clear. At the same moment the hawsers mooring the liner to the side of the dock were cast off, and the tugs surrounding her serched their signal to start towing.

Like some gigantic and self-contained city, the Transatlantic glided away. Five days of adventure lay before her—five days of battling with mighty seas, ploughing her way through the carefully charted northern Atlantic Ocean, the one thousand three hundred odd souls aboard her depending upon her and those responsible for her navigation for a safe and joyous crossing.

Getting Acquainted.

ALMOST as soon as the vessel began to move, Monty turned from the rail and slowly retraced his footsteps towards his cabin on C deck.

It was a roomy one and occupied one of the best positions on the ship, testifying to the fact that he was a good gambler. Decorated in the latest style, it had the quiet comfort and luxury to which Monty had long been accustomed.

Monty kept out of sight until well into the evening, deeming it advisable to make himself as little prominent as possible. He passed the time in reading, unpacking, and so on until the bugle on the top deck announced that he had a bare half an hour before dinner.

Then, and not till then, did he ring the bell for his steward.

After a minute or two, a discreet knock on the door announced the steward's arrival.

"Come in!" Monty called out.

The door opened, and a short, fat man in a white coat appeared. He had a round, chubby face which always shone under the lights, and always smiled.

"You're my steward?" asked Monty. "Yes, sir," was the reply. "Me number's seven, and me name's 'Odgkins, sir—at your service."

Monty nodded.

"And this is not your first voyage, I take it?" he said.

"No, sir—it's me two 'undredth."

"Good heavens!" Monty rolled his eyes upwards. "What a monotonous life!"

"Not a bit of it, sir," Hodgkins took a deep breath. "Don't you believe it, sir. No two crossings are the same." He struck an attitude, like a little boy at a party about to recite that celebrated passage from Shakespeare's "As You Like It" which commences, "All the world's a stage." "A ship is like a little world, sir, with all sorts of people bundled together—coming from 'eaven knows where, and shakin' 'ands, an' makin' friends, and lovin' each other, an' 'ating each other. They're five or six days away from everybody and everything, sir, and things might 'appen to them, sir, which changes their 'ole lives for ever."

"Hallelujah, Hodgkins, hallelujah," chanted Monty with mock seriousness.

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir," replied Hodgkins.

Monty nodded pleasantly, and moved towards the door.

"And now, after that profound philosophy of yours, I think I'll take a turn on deck while you lay out my dinner clothes. I'll be back in ten minutes."

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir."

Monty went out, and started climbing the companion-way slowly. When he reached the open, he saw the lights of New York a long way astern, and gazed at them musingly.

"Things happen to some of them that change their whole lives for ever," he

muttered thoughtfully. "I wonder, Hodgkins, if you are anything of a prophct."

Hidden Challenge.

IT was not until after dinner that he decided to look his fellow-passengers over, an idea in his mind that he might be able to make his trip profitable. Therefore, he strolled along to the ship's notice-board and glanced over the published list of passengers.

As the names came before his eyes, his expression changed. At first it became puzzled, then it became anxious; finally it became the hardened mask of the born gambler who has a great stake on the table.

For the names he saw were those of Henry D. Graham, banker, and president of the Graham Investment Corporation, Mrs. Graham, Sigrid Carlene, a notorious dancer, and "Handsome" Moran, one of the toughest gang leaders in America.

Quickly his mind ran over what he knew of each. Graham's banks were believed to be on the verge of a crash, and also his name had been connected with Sigrid Carlene's. Mrs. Graham, Graham's wife—well, Monty had known her long before she had married, and still remembered how beautiful she was. As for Handsome, he was always around whenever big money was in the air.

Monty strolled away from the notice-board thoughtfully, the sight of the beautiful Kay Graham's face before his eyes. For the best part of an hour he wandered up and down the promenade-deck, wondering about the significance of Sigrid and Handsome in the scheme of things.

Suddenly he stopped his pacing and turned on his heel. He had an old grudge against Handsome, and it might be a good thing to do something about settling it right now.

A minute later he was on B deck, knocking at a door. A voice from inside called out:

"Come in!"

He entered, and gave a quick, comprehensive glance around the cabin.

"I'm sorry to intrude like this," he said with a disarming smile, "but, you see, I've misplaced one of my bags."

The man he had addressed was Henry D. Graham himself. Monty found himself looking with curiosity at him, and wondering why the happy, carefree girl he had once loved could have had the courage to become Mrs. Graham. The banker's face was sallow, his forehead was lined, and his eyes seemed always to be looking away.

"What reason have you to suppose your bag is in my cabin?" he asked curtly.

"Well, you see, I occupy the corresponding cabin on C deck," Monty explained. "And—well, my name, like yours, begins with G."

Graham made a gesture of dismissal, and turned back to the desk at which he was sitting.

"There are no strange bags here," he said in a tone that indicated the interview to be at an end.

Monty bowed and made to withdraw. But before he could go, Graham said:

"My wife has a mountain of luggage. You can look in there if you like." He motioned towards a closed door that connected his own cabin with that of his wife's. "But you'll have to go through the corridor outside," he added. "That's locked."

Monty's eyebrows were raised at this information, but he made no comment. He only reflected that apparently Graham and Kay were not on speaking terms—a bad sign.

He went along the corridor and found

Kay's cabin. He knocked, and was bidden to enter.

He opened the door and found Kay seated at her dressing-table. His experienced glance told him that she had been crying—red rims were about her lovely grey eyes.

"I'm so sorry to trouble you," he said apologetically, "but I've lost one of my bags. Do you mind if I look?"

He glanced around and shook his head.

"No. No luck," he continued. "Many thanks for your kindness. If I can be of any service to you on the voyage, will you let me know?"

She looked at him in some surprise, and he caught his breath sharply. She had lost none of the beauty he had once loved her for.

"I can imagine no service you could possibly do for me," she said politely.

"Think it over," said Monty enigmatically, aware that she had apparently not recognised him.

Then he quietly left the cabin.

He retraced his steps slowly towards his own deck, painfully aware that he still cared enough about Kay Graham to want to see her happy. But so far as he could see, there was nothing to be done.

As he was approaching his own door, he caught sight of a slim figure in a dinner-jacket leaning against the bulk-head. He paused and frowned. Then he continued on his way.

The slim figure turned, and Monty immediately recognised him.

"Oh, hallo, Handsome!" he said by way of greeting.

Handsome, sleek but dangerous, did not return the greeting. His hard eyes flickered over Monty, and behind them was a cruel glint.

"What are you doing aboard, Monty?" he asked.

"Oh, just taking a holiday!" replied Monty. "I was wanted as a witness in that graft investigation, but I don't care to testify against a pal."

"Any other important reason?"

Monty knew that there was a challenge behind the words, but he gave no sign of his knowledge.

"No," he replied. "Only that."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Nothing to interest you in the Graham cabin, for instance," said Handsome sarcastically.

"You mean Mrs. Graham?" Monty made a gesture of impatience. "Good heavens, how absurd!"

"You know quite well I don't mean Mrs. Graham," said Handsome. "Come on, Monty, let's get down to cases."

"Cases?"

"You heard me." Handsome took a pace nearer and lowered his voice. "You haven't been paying just a friendly visit to the Grahams. There's more in it than that."

"Is there?" said Monty calmly. "Well, have another think, Handsome. Mr. Graham and I are such old friends that we're like father and son."

Handsome's lip curled with frank disbelief.

"Is that so?" he said. "Well, son, your father's carrying a pretty heavy bank-roll. Now look here, Monty, I don't allow any butting in on my game. I'll go in with you, but whatever's in your mind about Graham has got to be shared. Get me?"

Monty said nothing for a few seconds, but held Handsome's eyes in challenge. He walked to his door and opened it in readiness to go inside.

"Sorry, Handsome," he said slowly and deliberately. "But I don't like crowds."

He went into his cabin and closed the door. Inside he paused for a moment

before his suitcase, thinking. Then he opened it, and felt under the clothes that lay inside.

When his hand reappeared, it was gripping a heavy black automatic. He examined it to see that it was loaded, then quietly dropped it into his breast-pocket.

Monty Butts In.

THE morning of the following day passed comparatively uneventfully. Monty spent most of the time in wandering about the open decks, keeping a fatherly eye upon Graham and Handsome, and wondering rather uneasily what the presence of such diverse types on board meant.

So far he had not been able to guess exactly where Sigrid Carline came into the picture. Sigrid was blonde, very alluring in a cheaply fashionable way, and at heart an inveterate gold-digger. Moreover, she was not one of those women who travel by the expensive luxury of the Transatlantic without some very good reason—and the reason was undoubtedly Graham.

Monty found himself wondering why he was so interested in the Grahams. Was it because he still loved Kay Graham? No, it wasn't that. It was just that he felt intensely grateful to her because, in those months at Havana, when he had known her and met her every day, she had tried to reform him. She had not succeeded, it was true, but a man like Monty could not help feeling very friendly towards the woman who had attempted to make him into something worthy.

Yes, she had failed; therefore she had married Graham. And now Monty wanted to see that she was happy with him. She deserved happiness, he told himself.

Monty pondered over these things for a while, and finally decided that he ought to drop in on Sigrid and see what was doing. He and Sigrid were old friends, the reason for their friendship being that they were both grafters.

It was getting on towards lunch-time when Monty, armed with the number of Sigrid's cabin, went below. He found her door and, without troubling to knock, opened it.

Sigrid was standing in front of a long mirror, putting the last touches to her appearance in readiness for luncheon. She stood back and gazed at herself—pretty, spoilt, vain.

"Oh, Sigrid," she said to her reflection, "why are you so beautiful?"

Monty chuckled.

"I know the answer to that one," he said with a grin, and indicated with a brief motion of his hand the array of cosmetics and powders on her dressing-table. "Incidentally, I heard that you were on board, and rushed right over. Nice of me, wasn't it?"

Sigrid had swung round, and was glaring at him angrily.

"You might have had the decency to knock," she said curtly.

"Why should I?" replied the amiable Monty. "I never used to in the old days, and you never seemed to mind."

"But these are not the old days," she retorted. "Times have changed."

"But you haven't," he said, his eyes busily roving round the cabin. "You couldn't." He caught sight of a huge basket of roses standing in the middle of the floor, and his expression became thoughtful. "Oh, you got my roses, I see!"

"You sent them?" She spoke with astonishment.

"I ordered roses," he lied, and strolled across to the basket. Quietly he detached a card from the flowers, and held it up to the light. "To my beloved, from—Bunny. Sorry. My mistake. They're not mine, after all." He chuckled again. "No, my dear, times haven't changed, and nor have you. When you see what you want, you take it, without any regard for others."

Sigrid's eyes narrowed. She knew what he was insinuating.

"I only take from those who can afford to lose," she replied shortly.

"Well, there's one woman on board this vessel who can't afford to lose," he said. "A woman who's mad about her husband—whose heart is breaking."

Sigrid smiled maliciously.

"I see," she said ironically. "So you're interested in Mrs. Graham, are you?"

He sighed.

"No. Not now." He considered the point. "Well, perhaps I am, Sigrid—as a brother. And brothers can be very dangerous sometimes, you know." He turned away, and walked to the door. "Think it over, my dear," he said slowly. "Think it over."

Quietly the door closed behind him, and as it hid him from Sigrid's sight his expression became hard. "Bunny"—the name written on the note accompanying the roses—was Graham's nickname!

On the Promenade Deck.

MONTY returned to the promenade deck in a distinctly pensive mood, wondering quite where the strange situation that had arisen was going to end. Hodgkins, with his "a ship is like a little world" speech was certainly right. Strange things do happen on a voyage over the big pond.

He made his way to the rail, and leaned on it to gaze out over the sea. Not a thing was in sight—no land, no other ships, only limitless water. He smiled grimly as he reflected that he and his fellow-passengers were isolated from the world for four whole days—unable to escape each other, and having to bear with each other's company.

His musings were brought to an end by a girl's clear voice.

"Oh, daddy, it's wonderful! But isn't it all rather extravagant? Ought we really to be doing it?"

Monty turned his head so that he could see the speaker, and as she came into his line of vision, his hardness vanished.

He found himself looking into a girl's face that was perfect. The set of the chin, the slightly upturned nose, and the deep-brown eyes combined into a picture that moved him to his very depths.

She was with a man who was only slightly taller than herself. His face was bearded, and he wore the gold-rimmed spectacles of the professor type. Grey hair, brushed back from his high and intelligent forehead, showed him to be about sixty or so. The girl, Monty judged, could not be more than twenty-two.

The bearded man spoke.

"Judy," he said quietly, "all my life I have been grinding lenses—lenses for other men to see by. I have given them spectacles so that they can read and telescopes so that they can study the stars. For over thirty years I have taken pieces of glass and held them to the rouge wheel so that others could



Graham was slumped across his desk and a revolver lay on the floor.

see the world. Well, now it is we who shall see the world."

The girl nestled close to him and hugged his arm.

"You're a darling," she said. "You pretend you're doing all this for yourself, whereas I know it is for me."

The old man laughed and moved away. He strolled across the deck to where a model globe was standing. It was this globe that told the passengers day by day their exact position in terms of latitude and longitude.

He leaned over the globe interestedly, and began to study it. Monty watched him for a minute or two, and then crossed slowly to his side.

"Good-morning!" he said, with the easy familiarity life on board ship makes possible.

The old man looked up and smiled. Monty took an instant liking to him.

The old man pointed to the globe.

"Do you understand this?" he asked, and in his voice was a faint but unmistakable German accent. "It is supposed to show where the ship is—forty degrees and ten minutes north of latitude, and seven degrees eighteen minutes west longitude."

Monty looked at the globe gravely, and decided that he ought to show his learning.

"It's quite simple," he said, with a smile. "You see, you stand with your right hand pointing north and your left hand pointing south. In front of you you have longitude and behind you you have latitude. There you are!"

The old man laughed, but made no other comment. Instead he called his daughter from the rail and she joined them.

"You must tell my daughter about it," he said, and his air of innocence completely deceived Monty.

"Certainly!" Monty turned to her and cleared his throat. "I was just explaining to your father how this globe works. You see, if you stand with your right hand pointing south—no, north—and your left hand pointing south, before you you have latitude—er, longitude—and behind you you have latitude. Isn't that right?"

The girl looked at him seriously. "Well, no, not exactly," she replied, and at close quarters Monty thought her more lovely than before. "You see, latitude is the distance north and south of the equator, and longitude is the distance east and west of the prime meridian."

Monty coughed. This was really most embarrassing. These two had been pulling his leg.

"Maybe you're right," he said resignedly, and then laughed. "But let me introduce myself," he said to the old man. "My name is Greer—Monty Greer."

"And mine is Rudolph Kramer," replied the old man. "This is my daughter, Judy."

Monty bowed, and thereafter conversation became general for a few minutes. Old Kramer told Monty about his life, and how he was now retired. They were seeing the world for the first time.

"I have met so many interesting people on board, too, Mr. Greer," he said. "I was speaking to one last night—a Mr. Graham, president of the Graham Investment Corporation. I found him very entertaining. You see, I am one of his depositors—all my savings are in his banks."

Monty gulped, but said nothing. He did not dare tell the old man that Graham's banks were tottering on the brink of ruin, and that Graham himself was going to Europe to avoid the consequences of the smash.

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But he mentally resolved that something had to be done, if only for the sake of Judy, the most marvellous girl he had ever met in his life.

Scandal.

MONTY did not need to do much thinking to realise that before the voyage was over there was going to be a large quantity of trouble for somebody, and that somebody was himself.

He could feel himself being gradually entangled in about three different directions. There was the Graham problem, in which Sigrid was so intimately concerned; there was Handsome, who was sure to start something before long; and there were now the Kramers. It was impossible for him to let little Judy Kramer suffer for Graham's sins.

He decided to do something about it. Acting on the assumption that Graham was not sailing empty-handed—indeed, Handsome had been most definite upon the point—he felt that there would be no harm in a little mild burglary in Graham's cabin. It would only be justice to lift from the banker sufficient of his private hoard to make up the Kramers' loss when the news of the crash came.

With this idea in mind, he quietly opened Graham's cabin door that evening after dinner, and locked it from the inside with his skeleton key. Graham, of course, was in the lounge, smoking, and was not likely to disturb him.

He started his search quietly and efficiently, showing that he was by no means new to the particular rôle he was now playing—that of gentleman crook. With brief thoroughness, he went through Graham's wardrobe, two of his trunks, and a suitcase, in each instance drawing blank.

Suddenly there was the sound of a key in the lock. Graham was returning!

Monty looked round swiftly, and caught sight of a small door which led, apparently, to a private bathroom. He opened it, and went inside.

Graham entered the cabin. He crossed to the far side of it, and listened at his wife's door to assure himself that she was not within hearing. Then he went to the telephone, and called the number of Sigrid's cabin in a low voice.

"Hallo! Is that you, Sigrid? Look here, I'm just going to the lounge to have a cocktail, and then I'll be right along. Be with you in five minutes. Very nice of you to ask me. Good-bye!"

He hung up the receiver, and hummed to himself as he straightened his tie and hurriedly brushed his hair. Then he left the cabin again.

Monty poked his head out of the bathroom, and there was a knowing look on his face. So Sigrid had invited Graham along to her cabin, had she? Well, well! And Graham had fallen for it! He would be having a quiet cup of coffee with her when she would suddenly spring up and fling her arms round his neck. At that moment the door would open, and in would walk a man who professed to be her husband, or something. The result would be that Graham would have to pay out, or be involved in a scandal. It was old stuff.

With a gleam in his eye, Monty carefully let himself out of the cabin. Silently, but without any loss of time, he made his way through the maze of corridors to Sigrid's door.

He paused before it, wondering whether to knock, and decided against it. He thrust the door open quickly, stepped inside, and closed it again after him.

Sigrid had been standing in the middle of the room as he entered. She had taken an eager step forward at the first sound of someone coming in; but she stopped as she saw who it was.

"Monty Greer!" she cried. Monty looked at her in mock astonishment.

"How did you know?" he asked. She ignored the fatuous question, and went quickly to his side.

"I want you to go away at once," she said, betraying her alarm by her voice. "Please!"

He did not hurry himself. He was playing for time. Calmly he took his watch from his pocket, and consulted it.

"Ten o'clock," he mused. "Surely you can't be expecting anyone at this hour of night?"

"Yes, I am."

"Oh!" There was the faintest suggestion of pained astonishment in Monty's tone. "Anyone I know?"

She clenched and unclenched her fingers, striving hard to keep her self-control.

"Oh, Monty, you must go—now—please," she begged. "Don't you see —"

There came the sound of footsteps in the corridor outside, and she stopped speaking, panic gripping her. She could see her well-laid plans failing hopelessly.

But Monty was inexorable. Stepping forward deftly, he put his arms round her.

"Oh, Sigrid," he said loudly enough to be heard by anyone standing in the doorway. "why are you so beautiful?"

Sigrid struggled in his grasp, white with rage, but as she struggled Monty's grip became more secure.

Suddenly, as though aware for the first time that someone had entered, Monty turned his head, and saw Graham standing not four paces away. Abruptly he let Sigrid go, and bowed ironically.

"How do you do?" he said politely.

Graham was angry, but as his eyes shifted from Monty to Sigrid, his anger gave way to cold scorn.

Sigrid saw the change, and made a desperate effort to win a battle that was already lost. She went towards Graham, her arms outstretched.

"Oh, Bunny——" she cried.

Graham still regarded her coldly.

"I must apologise," he said quietly.

"I seem to be a trifle—early."

"Bunny, you must listen to me," said Sigrid. "I can explain everything."

"Somehow I seem to have heard those words before," said Graham unmoved.

Then he turned abruptly, and left the cabin.

Monty watched him go sadly. He did his best to look contrite.

"Sigrid—oh, Sigrid!" he murmured in a broken voice. "Did I do wrong?"

She swung on him, all her fury unleashed.

"You beast, why did you do this to me?" she flamed. "Get out. I never want to see you again. Get out, or I'll scream."

Monty got out. Grinning quietly to himself, he drifted down the corridor towards the ball-room, knowing that he would find Kay Graham there.

He saw her standing against a pillar, watching the dancers idly. Deep sorrow shadowed her beautiful eyes.

He went up to her, and touched her on the arm.

"Kay, my dear, will you run along and put a candle in your window to-night?" he said gently. "I think your daddy's coming home."

The sorrow vanished from her face like magic. As she turned her head

so that she could see him, her expression became radiant.

"You mean—"
"Just that," said Monty. "Good-night—and good luck!"

Monty hurried off, and sought the quietness of his cabin. As he shut the door on himself, and prepared for bed, he gave a smile of satisfaction.

"That's one of my troubles over," he said to himself. "I wonder when the next will arrive?"

Found Shot.

DURING that night a storm arose. It came swiftly, bearing down on the gigantic liner with hurricane speed, enormous waves dashing themselves against the bows and spreading themselves in spray over the decks. The boom and thunder of the running seas was enormous—like a succession of guns distinctly fring.

Up on the bridge, the all-night watchers decided that the speed of the vessel should be reduced to half. Only a short distance away, in a small cabin fitted with wireless apparatus, the night operator was taking off the broadcast news of the day in readiness for the morning paper that was published from the ship's printing presses.

None could hope to escape the inexorability of that news service. The thirteen hundred people on the Transatlantic were under its influence as it reached out like an invisible arm across the world, including everyone within its grasp. Even Graham could not hope to escape.

Thus, when Monty woke up the following morning to the din of the crashing breakers against the iron hull of the ship, the first thing he saw was his copy of the "Transatlantic Daily." He opened it idly as he sipped his morning tea.

And there, spread over three columns across the front page were the headlines:

FAILURE OF GRAHAM INVESTMENT CORPORATION.

GIGANTIC FINANCIAL COMBINE SMASHES FOR \$20,000,000.

THOUSANDS OF SMALL INVESTORS RUINED.

Monty took the news calmly. Frankly, knowing Graham, he had expected something of the sort, although he had not expected the failure to be quite so large.

He read the half column of print that followed the headlines, and emitted a long drawn-out whistle. Not only had Graham crashed, but he had also, according to the news agencies, decamped with \$5,000,000 worth of securities which were immediately negotiable into cash!

Five million dollars! A million pounds! So that's why Handsome was so interested!

Monty was very thoughtful as he dressed and had breakfast, and the result of his thoughtfulness was that he felt he ought to pay Handsome a visit, just to see how the land lay now that this news had broken.

It was shortly after ten o'clock when he dropped into Handsome's cabin. Handsome was there, sitting at a table playing poker, and with him were some of his "boys"—Socker, Chalky, and a couple of gorillas.

The boys stiffened as Monty entered, but Handsome quelled them with a gesture, and rose in greeting.

"Well, Monty, if this isn't a pleasure," he said drily. "Come right in. Make yourself at home."

Monty smiled disarmingly. No one knew better than he did the uneasiness his presence was causing.

"I'm not stopping," he said amiably. "I just thought I would let you know that you can lay off Graham now. He's failed."

Handsome's eyes narrowed, but he still kept his forced smile.

"Graham's banks failed—but not Graham," said Handsome. "He's packing a lot of personal securities he doesn't want the law to grab."

"That's so," said Monty, and decided that it was now Handsome's turn to take the lead. "Well, what do you want me to do about it? Break down and cry?"

Handsome moved a pace nearer, and leaned forward confidentially.

"I asked you to join in with us," he said softly.

"That's right," Monty replied. "So you did. I forgot!"

"I also asked you to give me a clear field."

"Well, haven't I?"

"You started by making passes at Mrs. Graham," said Handsome, his temper beginning to rise in the face of Monty's complete serenity. "Last night you were in the Graham cabin again. On business, I suppose?"

Monty looked at him aggrievedly.

"Handsome," he said reproachfully. "you haven't been spying on a pal, have you?"

"I know every move you make," said Handsome menacingly.

Monty's attitude changed. He ceased to be calm, and for the first time Handsome saw something of the steel that lay beneath the genial exterior.

"Anything more, Handsome?"

"You've heard my last word, Monty." Monty's eyes swept over the gangsters with contempt, finally coming to rest upon Handsome once more.

"I've been hearing your last word for a long time," he said quietly. "One of these days you're actually going to say it, and maybe I'll be there to hear you." He turned towards the door, and instantly his seriousness left him. He was Monty Greer once again—gay and debonair.

"Happy days!" he called over his shoulder, and shut the door softly behind him.

He wandered along to the shelter deck, intending to take his morning walk. The ship was lurching under the impact of the waves now, and the noise was terrific.

He did not take his walk, but stood at an open porthole and looked at the raging seas, the storm suiting his mood. How long he remained there he could not tell, for he was musing upon the fact that it was part of his game to remain quiet and inconspicuous while on the Transatlantic—after all, the police in New York were still looking for him—and here he was poking his nose into everything that came before it.

He shrugged his shoulders. A decent man at heart, he hated the idea of

A slight noise behind him made him start.



leaving a wrong undressed, and on no account could he ignore a call for aid.

Eventually he turned along the deck seeking his belated exercise. But he had hardly gone a few paces before he discerned the neat, slim figure of Judy Kramer coming towards him. She was wringing her hands in obvious distress, and looking from right to left as though seeking someone.

He hurried towards her, and she saw him.

"Oh, Mr. Greer, I'm so glad to see you," she cried, and her voice sounded curiously choked.

"Why? What's the matter?"

"My father."

"What's happened?"

"Ever since we heard of the failure of the Graham bank this morning, he has been moody, and uttering threats about what he would do to Graham if they came face to face." She gripped Monty's arm imploringly. "You will talk to him, won't you—try to persuade him to take the smash calmly?"

"Of course," said Monty readily. "Where is he now?"

"He went off in the direction of Mr. Graham's state-room," she replied.

Monty took her by the arm, and hurried her below. They reached Graham's door, only to find everything quiet. There was no sign of Mr. Kramer.

By way of making sure that all was in order, Monty opened Graham's door gently and looked inside. What he saw there made him utter an exclamation of horror. Graham was slumped across his desk, and a revolver lay on the floor near him, while standing on the other side of the room, staring straight in front of him as though his mind was stunned, stood Mr. Kramer himself!

Judy, looking over Monty's shoulder, saw him, and with a scream rushed across the room and took her father in her arms.

Monty followed her, and shut the door after him. He bent down and examined Graham. Then he straightened himself, and his face was grave.

"I'm not quite sure, but I think he's dead," he said quietly. "He's been shot through the chest!"

The Getaway.

FOR several minutes there was no other sound in the cabin but Judy's sobbing. Old Kramer, his hair dishevelled and his eyes wide and staring, was like a man in a dream.

Monty considered the situation swiftly. He accepted without question that whatever had happened to Graham was well deserved, and he saw no reason why old Kramer should suffer.

He turned, and crossed to Judy. She was obviously terribly upset, and was not likely to be of much use unless she could get her feelings under control, so he caught her by the shoulder and shook her gently.

"Get your father back to his own cabin right away," he said sharply. "Don't leave him alone for a minute. I'll see to things here. Quickly, now!"

"Oh, Mr. Greer, you think—"

"I think nothing. Get going, and hurry."

He led her and the old man to the door, and almost pushed them out into the corridor. Then he returned to the cabin and locked himself in.

Swiftly he crept across to Kay's adjoining room and listened. All was quiet. Furthermore, owing to the screaming of the wind and the buffeting of the waves on the side of the ship, no one had heard the shot—that was obvious.

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He took a towel from a rack over the wash basin, and used it to wipe the revolver clean of finger-prints. Then he took the weapon over to where Graham was lying, and closed the man's hand about it.

He looked about him quickly. There were signs that the cabin had been ransacked, but he had no time to tidy things up now. Someone might come in at any minute.

He went towards the door, intending to leave, but stopped as he saw the faulight above it. He stood considering its possibilities for a few moments, then snapped his fingers as an idea came to him.

A piece of string was in his pocket. He unravelled it and tied one end with a slip-knot around one of Graham's fingers. The other end he dropped through the faulight so that it hung down in the passage outside.

Quickly he stepped out of the cabin, taking the key with him. He locked the door on the outside, and mounted a sofa. Deftly threading the key over the string, he allowed the former to slide down until it came to rest upon the desk close to Graham's hand; then, with a quick jerk, the slip-knot was released, and Monty pulled the string through the skylight and thrust it into his pocket.

A slight noise behind him made him start. He looked round slowly, knowing that he had been detected by someone coming along the corridor, and hoping that it would be a complete stranger, who would never know him again.

It was no stranger. It was Sigrid Carlene, and even as he recognised her he knew that when the alarm was raised she would speak about what she had seen.

Investigation.

EVENTS began to move with great rapidity. Kay Graham, going below to find out why her husband had not joined her on deck, discovered him lying where Monty had left him, and her cries attracted the notice of a steward. He, having seen what had happened, called another steward, and sent him away to the officer in charge of the bridge. Inside ten minutes the captain of the vessel arrived, accompanied by his first officer and the purser.

An investigation was held on the spot. Mrs. Graham was questioned, and she told of the discovery she had made, saying also that the whole of Graham's money had completely vanished. The doctor, summoned immediately, said that Graham had been shot from close quarters, a fact that was indisputable in view of the marks of burning on Graham's clothing, but that he was still living.

They rushed the shot man to hospital. Meanwhile, the captain returned to his office, and had a notice issued to the whole of the ship's crew asking for information.

It came. The steward on B deck said that he had seen Mr. Kramer go into Graham's cabin about a quarter of an hour before the discovery was made, and now he came to think of it the old man seemed strange.

The captain's secretary took a statement of this in writing, and made the steward sign it. While this was being done, the first officer bent down and spoke into the captain's ear in a low voice.

"There's a woman outside who wants to see you," he said. "She says it is very important."

"Very well. Bring her in."

The first officer went away, and returned with Sigrid. It was exactly as

Monty had guessed. Still smarting under the humiliation of her defeat over Graham by Monty, she had come to tell what she knew.

She told it briefly, and without offering any explanation for her apparent eagerness to have Monty put under suspicion.

The captain heard her out, and then asked what was known of Monty Greer. The fourth officer immediately related the watch that had been kept upon the gangway at New York by himself and Detective Glennon.

"Very well," said the captain briefly. "Send Mr. Greer and Mr. Kramer to me at once!"

A steward hurried away, and found Monty in Kramer's cabin, trying to calm the old man. Monty heard the captain's summons unmoved, but knew that it had to be obeyed. He nodded to Judy to help him, and between them they managed to get Kramer to his feet. The old man was as weak and helpless as a child.

They reached the captain's office and went inside, to find that a complete case had already been made out against them. As soon as they appeared, the captain briefly stated the facts.

"Mr. Kramer," he said, "I find upon investigation that you had a personal grudge against Mr. Graham owing to the loss of your savings, and that at the time when Mr. Graham was shot you were in his cabin. I am not here to try you, but I feel bound to keep you in custody until you can be handed over to the police when we reach port. You will be confined to the brig for the remainder of the voyage."

Kramer, if he heard, remained unmoved, still staring ahead, but Judy ran forward, with a little cry.

"But, captain, my father isn't guilty. He couldn't do it," she said in anguish. "He couldn't!"

"I'm very sorry," replied the captain. "My decision remains unaltered."

Monty decided that it was about time he said a few words. He knew that he was in a tight fix, but he had often found in the past that facing a situation squarely often pulled him through.

"I understand that it's a case of suicide, captain," he said.

The captain raised his eyebrows slightly.

"Indeed?" he said quietly. "So you know all about it already?"

Monty saw that he had been a little too hasty and tried to recover himself.

"The affair is the talk of the whole ship," he said.

The captain glanced at his papers.

"Mr. Greer," he said, "you were seen in the vicinity of Mr. Graham's cabin. You were also seen sliding a key down a piece of string through the transom. I very much regret, therefore, that it will also be necessary to confine you to the brig with Mr. Kramer until the end of the voyage."

"But—"

The door opened, and the ship's doctor entered. He went quietly to the captain's desk, and said in a low voice:

"I have operated, and the bullet is out. He is in a bad way, but he may recover if properly nursed. It was a close thing."

The captain nodded, and signed to the first officer that the investigation was at an end. Monty and Mr. Kramer were led away.

In the Brig.

UNDER a guard directed by the first officer, Monty found himself being conducted down on to the lower decks, far into the bowels of the vessel, where was situated a small but quite

comfortable cell constructed of steel. This was the brig—a term which survived from the days when prisoners were confined in a special square-rigged, two-masted ship on their transportation to the penal settlements.

The door was locked on them, and one glance sufficed to show Monty that escape was out of the question.

Monty placed a kindly hand on Mr. Kramer's shoulder, realising that the old man was not used to this sort of treatment.

"Don't worry about all this, Mr. Kramer," he said. "I know you didn't do it. In fact, I have been doing a little thinking, and while I don't pretend to account for your being in Graham's cabin while the shooting was on, I think I know enough to have us both out of here in a short time."

"But when I went to Mr. Graham's cabin I intended to kill him," said Mr. Kramer. "He robbed me! I can't remember—"

He passed his hand across his brow in a bewildered fashion, and it was clear to Monty that the old man's brain was still suffering from the shock he had had.

He let the matter drop.

Within half an hour it was lunch-time, and the key grated in the lock. An officer entered, followed by the worthy Hodgkins carrying a large tray.

"Good morning, gentlemen," said Hodgkins cheerfully. "Is everything all right?"

"Oh, yes!" said Monty. "Everything's quite cosy. In fact, I'm wondering why I ever went to the expense of travelling cabin."

"Well, here's a meal for you, gentlemen, which will warm the cockles of your 'carts," said Hodgkins, upon whom Monty's heavy humour was quite lost. "There's kidney stoo, a bit of salad, soup, and cheese, strawberry jam, and some buttered scones."

"Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for the scones, Hodgkins," said Monty flippantly.

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir," replied Hodgkins, unabashed. "But you mustn't let the trouble you're both in get you down, gentlemen. What I always says is a ship is like a little world. It can't always be easy sailing. There's rough weather and calm; there's quiet seas and heavy squalls, and the man what takes the bitter with the sweet is bound to have a happy crossing in the end."

Monty laughed.

"You're a happy soul, Hodgkins," he said. "The sailors must adore you."

Hodgkins squinted down his nose modestly.

"Yes, sir. And if there's anything else you want, sir, don't be afraid to ask me, sir. You've always been very nice to me, sir, and I'd like to do anything I can."

"Is that so, Hodgkins?" said Monty humorously. "Well, go and find me the key to all my difficulties, and I'll make you a rich man."

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir. I'll see what can be done, and will come back with your supper to-night, sir."

The door elanged to, and once more Monty and Kramer were alone.

Dinner-time came, and the door opened again, admitting Hodgkins accompanied by an officer.

"Ah, there you are!"

said Monty welcomingly. "I'd almost given you up."

"I'd 'ave been 'ere before, sir," said Hodgkins, "but I had to get hold of a nice raspberry-pie for you gentlemen, knowing that you like them, sir."

Monty looked puzzled.

"But I don't like—" he began.

"What I always says is," went on Hodgkins hurriedly, "we often find the key to all our troubles in a good raspberry-pie, so you must cultivate a taste for them, sir."

Monty said nothing more. He just exchanged a look with Hodgkins that satisfied the latter's speculations concerning his future financial anticipations.

Once more the door of the brig closed on Monty and Kramer, and Monty settled down to wait.

The Duel.

IT was several hours later when Monty made use of the key Hodgkins had secreted in the raspberry-pie, but once free he made his way quickly to Handsome's cabin.

He pushed open the door silently, to find the place empty but for Chalky. Chalky was sitting with his back to the door, his villainous face hidden, playing solitaire.

Monty closed the door softly, and put his right hand in his jacket pocket. His gun had been taken from him when he had been placed in the brig, but a finger thrust against the cloth of his pocket looked just as formidable.

"Stick 'em up, Chalky!" he said softly.

Chalky's white face could not go whiter, but he recognised the voice of Monty Greer, and knew that it was not to be disobeyed.

"Get over there—against the wall," Monty continued. "That's better. Now where is it? Come on—speak up!"

"In my pocket—hanging on the chair."

Monty went to the chair upon which

"Stick 'em up, Chalky," he said softly.

Chalky had recently been sitting, and retrieved a large automatic pistol from his coat.

"All right. Put them down. Turn round." Monty uttered his commands sharply.

As Chalky obeyed, Monty heard the sounds of footsteps outside. He stepped back behind the door as it opened, and another of the gang entered.

"It's all set, Chalky," said the newcomer. "We've got Socker in the engine-room with overalls up to his ears. He's got the stuff, and when we dock in the morning—"

Something in Chalky's face made him stop. He turned, to find himself menaced by Monty's gun.

"Keep right on talking," said Monty, and jammed the gun into his ribs, at the same time taking the crook's own gun from his side-pocket. "I knew you boys shot Graham and took his money and securities. And you'd let an innocent man suffer for it, too, would you? So Socker's down in the engine-room with overalls up to his ears, huh? And he's got all Graham's loot with him, eh? And when the ship docks in the morning, he goes on shore with the engineers and crew, and carries the stuff with him? Did I get that right?"

Chalky and the other nodded sullenly. "To blazes he does!" snapped Monty, and slammed out of the cabin.

He raced up to the top deck, and



found the door which led to the engine-room elevator. Swiftly he got inside, and pressed the switch for one of the lower levels.

He found himself amidst a maze of machinery. The din was deafening. A gigantic reciprocating pump was working close to him, while beneath his feet he could feel the throb of the turbines.

He made his way along some steel galleries, looking about him carefully. Suddenly he saw a man bending over a large piece of moving mechanism that was connected with the steering rudders, and that man looked like Socker, in spite of the oil-can and cotton-waste in his hand.

He hurried along the adjacent gallery so as to get close to Socker, and in that moment Socker turned and saw him. He whipped out a gun from his pocket and fired.

Monty asked no questions, and showed no mercy. He knew that the shooting would never be heard amidst that roaring, clanking machinery, and he let Socker have it. Once—twice—he pressed the trigger, and at the second shot he saw the crook open his mouth to let out an unheard yell. At the same time his gun flew wide.

Monty was on him before he could recover. He gripped him by the throat, and thrust his face close.

"Where have you got it, Socker?" he roared above the din. "Come on, or you're finished!"

Socker winced, and fear showed in his eyes.

"In the store-room upstairs," he replied.

Monty flung him on one side, and made for the elevator again. The game was in his hands.

Hit.

BEFORE reaching the elevator, Monty had to return along the galleries by which he had come, and as he swung round the cylinder head of a huge bilge exhauster, Handsome appeared on the next level above.

The two saw each other about the same time, and Handsome reached quickly for his shoulder holster. A gleaming gun appeared in his hand, and Monty saw the flash and heard the whine of a bullet past his ear.

He ducked behind the exhauster, and waited. Once he looked out cautiously, only to see Handsome's gun flash once more. Then Handsome began to retreat to higher levels still.

Monty knew that he had to get him, otherwise the crook would go straight to where the Graham loot was hidden, and remove it.

He left his cover, and came out into the open, sending a shot flying after Handsome's retreating back. Handsome turned at bay, firing as he swung round.

Monty let out a yell as he felt a sharp searing pain in his right arm. The gun dropped from his nerveless fingers. He leaned back against a bulkhead weakly, suddenly faint from the shock of being hit; then, as he saw Handsome's gun flash yet again, he ducked low, and picked up his weapon with his left hand.

Everything depended upon him now, and he had very little time left. Some distance away he could see one of the engineer staff racing towards them, intent upon finding out what all the trouble was about.

Deliberately he mustered his strength, and took aim at Handsome. His gun kicked, and at the same moment a spasm

November 14th, 1931.

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convulsed the crook. The shot had taken effect.

Monty threw off his feeling of weakness, and dived up a near-by companion-way to the higher level. He grabbed Handsome by the waistcoat and dragged him to his feet. He could see that the crook was all in.

"Come on, Handsome," he said harshly. "I have a date for you."

He dragged Handsome to the elevator, and slammed the door of it in the face of the oncoming engineer. The next moment, as he pressed the switch, they were travelling upwards.

Handsome was lying on the floor of the elevator, his eyes closed. Monty bent down, and lifted his head.

Slowly Handsome opened his eyes. "You win, Monty," he said feebly. "Let me alone."

"Huh!" said Monty unsympathetically. "So you can still talk, can you?" "Yeah! I can talk!"

"Then you're going to—plenty," said Monty. "You are in a bad way, but if you spill what you know, I'll see that something's done for you. You'll tell that you shot Graham, and you'll tell that you robbed his cabin. See?"

"I'll tell everything," gasped Handsome weakly.

"You're right. You'll tell everything. You won't leave out a single blessed thing."

The elevator stopped at the top deck, and Monty flung open the door.

"Hi, you!" he yelled to a deck hand. "Help me with this trash to the captain's office."

"Dull Voyage."

IT was several hours later, and the Transatlantic was already in sight of land. In the ship's hospital lay Handsome, and in the brig were—not Monty and Kramer, but Chalky, Socker, and the others.

Graham was in the hospital, too—in a different part. His wife was by his side, nursing him. He only spoke once before being taken ashore to a nursing home, but what he did say made Kay realise that all her troubles were over.

"Kay," he whispered, "I can't talk much—my breath won't let me. I've been an awful fool—forgive me—"

"Don't worry yourself, dear," replied Kay. "Get better—for my sake."

"You'll give me another chance to make good?"

"Of course."

"Then I'll make amends. All that money—those securities—I'll give them all back—"

He could say no more. Unconsciousness claimed him, but it was the unconsciousness that meant complete recovery.

Kay felt that she could not stay with him any longer. She wanted to cry. Hastily she left his bedside and went out into the open. There she met Judy and Mr. Kramer, waiting for news.

"Mrs. Graham," said Judy quickly, "how is he?"

"He's going to recover completely," replied Kay. "Meanwhile, I want you to come to my cabin as soon as we dock. Your savings are quite safe, and I will give you a letter of credit on my private account which will see you through until you can draw your own money."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Judy.

Meanwhile, in the captain's office, Monty awaited the arrival of the ship in port, when he would have to go ashore to testify concerning the shooting of Handsome. He knew what that meant,

(Continued on page 24.)

A gripping drama of how the Police cunningly tricked a gang of rascally crooks. Another true story from the notebook of William J. Burns of the U.S. Secret Service.



The Squealer.

THE hall of an apartment-house in the Bowery of New York.

At one time the carpet had been good, the stairway well kept, and the furniture polished and clean, but now it was drab and dirty. Except for the occasional visit of a charwoman only men inhabited that house. Racketeers did not welcome outside influence nosing into their affairs.

A round-faced man in a faded raincoat and slouch-hat drawn well over his eyes slunk into the hall, glanced quickly round, and sidled across to a telephone on a small three-legged table.

Stealthily he removed the receiver, and a tense expression appeared on his squat, flabby features.

Leading off that hall were a number of rooms. The library was the best furnished and kept of them all. It was much the same as when the gang had taken over, though there were additional features that not even the police suspected.

Mr. Langman sat at a carved wooden chair of ancient make, and there was a queer expression on his clean-cut features. A glint in his sharp eyes as he replaced the receiver of the telephone, and with one hand drummed softly on the large, flat-topped table that was littered with papers and books. Mr. Langman was a business man to the outside world, hence the books and papers, and shelves lined with books on legal subjects.

Evidently something had arisen that caused him considerable anger, because the lined face twisted and contorted so that it became repulsive and bestial—fury revealed the real nature of the man. Usually the chief was a grey-haired, placid-featured man of smooth manners and a benevolent attitude. The men who worked for him knew that he was as hard as iron.

He ceased drumming on the desk, got to his feet and paced softly up and down the room. Evidently he was planning how best to deal with some problem.

Then he undid a drawer and took out a revolver, and, after seeing it was loaded, carefully replaced it. From

TRAPPIED



another drawer he took out a small book; on each page was the photograph of men and women, and an account of each. The chief believed in having full knowledge of the life-story of each person who worked for him. It was the history of Spike Mullins that interested him, and after a while he nodded his head, replaced the book, and resumed his pacing of the room.

A pause, and slowly he pointed at a bookcase near a big fireplace, smiled, and placed a chair by the side of his table—this chair was between the bookcase and his own chair. Satisfied, he pressed a button twice.

The door from the hall opened, and a young man in a blue suit entered. In age the newcomer was about twenty-eight, dark hair and brown eyes, and held himself erect. A quiet, strong type—a useful man to Mr. Langman.

"Close the door, Wilson." "You rang for me, chief?" The young man had shut the door and now came to the desk. The eyes that watched the chief, who was busy writing, were very alert.

"Yes, and the matter is urgent." The chief looked up at his assistant. "I am just making a few notes of importauce—we're quitting this place."

"Quitting, chief?" "Yeah, and some folks will quit for good." There was an ugly sneer on the chief's face. "Somebody is a squealer. Have you any idea who it could be?"

For a second Wilson's eyes flickered, and their gaze moved towards the chief's waistline. The chief's hands were on the legs of his trousers, and not in his pockets. Wilson did not like a hand in a pocket, because it was difficult to tell what might be in the hand.

The chief gave a mirthless laugh. "You have no idea, Wilson?"

"None, chief. I would have sworn that there were no traitors among us." Carelessly he slipped a hand into his own coat-pocket. "Do you know this man's name?"

"Yeah, and it will surprise you when you hear it."

Again the brow flickered curiously. The tense expression left Wilson's face as if the chief's words were a great relief.

"What do you intend to do, chief?" "A little joy-ride in the country!" The thin lips smiled cruelly. "In fact, he'll go with us when we make our getaway from this dive. He's spilled the racket to the cops."

"When, chief?" "Not many minutes ago." The chief waved a thin hand towards the telephone. "That device by which I can listen-in to any conversations proved useful. A little patent of my own. If anyone takes off the receiver that white-dial goes red. If I had not removed the receiver and listened-in we should all be due for a spell in gaol. The cops will raid this place within the next few hours—at five o'clock, to be exact, and it is now two. So we have just three hours, Wilson, to clear out and to settle the squealer."

"You recognised the voice?" Wilson asked the question quietly.

"Yeah, I'd know it in a thousand. A guy I reckoned was on the level. Wilson, how much dope have we got in the cellars?"

"A new supply came in yesterday. About a hundred packets and twenty cases of liquor."

"To blazes with the liquor—that's of no account," snapped the chief. "If the cops get us with drugs we're up for a long stretch. Give orders for the dope to be packed up—it must be all ready to move within an hour—no, an hour and a half. Can you fix that, Wilson?"

"Yes, chief."

"Now, I'm going to put that squealer on the fire." The chief laughed harshly. "You'll hide behind the secret."

November 14th, 1931.



"Keep yer mitts off me and away from that drawer," sneered Spike.

bookcase, and when I ring you cover the guy from behind. First, get the men down in the cellars busy packing up that dope, because I want to put a guard on the front door. Can you guess who the squealer is, Wilson?"

"I can make a mighty good guess, chief." Wilson pursed his lips and showed his teeth. "No mercy, chief!"

"Leave that to me. Get busy, Wilson."

Wilson vanished, and another bell summoned a young man whose face was dissipated and lined. Drink had been his downfall. The small eyes blinked suspiciously at the chief.

"I want Hank on the door and Red at the back exit," ordered the chief. "You're to stay outside this room, and only enter if you have any news of the cops. Yeah, we're expecting a raid. Tell the rest of the gang to get ready for a flit, but to have their gats ready. No need for a scare as I've taken the matter in time. I've located the squealer."

"Squealer, chief? Who?"

"You'll learn later. Wilson will give my instructions re the get-away. He's busy now."

The chief waved his hand in dismissal.

As the crook left the room Wilson entered.

"Everything set, chief," he stated.

"Good!" The chief raised his voice. "Creason, come back." The young crook hurried back into the room. "Send Spike Mullins in to see me."

The door closed, and the chief half-closed his eyes.

"Spike's the squealer. Better get into hiding."

Wilson nodded and hurried to the bookcase. He touched a book, and the whole case swung back. Swiftly he disappeared into the darkness.

The chief slightly opened the drawer containing the gun, his face twisted into an evil leer, and the eyes became hard and steely. His fingers twitched as if they were coiling round a trigger.

November 14th, 1931.

The Two Crooks.

THE door opened, and the man in the faded raincoat slouched into the room; his hat was on his head, and he was chewing gum as if he hadn't a care in the world.

The chief gave him a welcoming smile.

"How are things, Spike?"

"Danged slow!"

"Slow?"

"Too much caution about this joint."

Spike transferred the gum to another tooth. "Can't run a load because the cops ain't in a good humour or the weather ain't nice or some other fool reason."

"You don't mince your words, Spike."

"Why should I?" Spike shrugged massive shoulders. "You're a big shot, but I ain't a pellet from an air-gun. Plain speaking and straight shooting's my motto. I ain't a dumb-bell."

"No, one can't teach you much." The chief opened a drawer and took out his book. "You'll pardon my asking a question, but why did you ask for a transfer from 'Frisco to headquarters? You've been here a fortnight, and I've often wondered. Were you wanted for anything, Spike?"

"Yeah, I should say I was." Calmly Spike took the vacant chair. "The Spicer gang wanted to come in with us, and, against my advice, we made a hook-up. We got two blocks of ice sent us a week later, and in those blocks were a couple of our men, and I got a hint that there was ice to spare. I asked old man Spicer what he weighed, and he told me a hundred and sixty, but he looked a bit green when I asked him what lead bullets weighed. They got two blocks of ice a few days later, and he was in one of 'em. I reckoned I was going to be hustled plenty, and that a change of air might be advisable."

"You're a tough baby, Spike." The chief laughed and produced a cigar-box. "Have a smoke. We certainly got the right man when you joined headquarters."

"You've said it." Spike lit his cigar. "But I'm finding New York pretty

slow; reckon I'll soon be asking for a move to Chicago."

"Maybe I'll get you a move." The chief laughed. "If you reckon this game is too slow, give me an idea on how you'd act if you were in my place."

"I'd fire half a dozen of the boobs that call themselves hard eggs. They turn yellow as soon as they see a cop. They're scared to put anyone on the spot, and quake with fright that they may go that way themselves. Ain't worth wasting good lead on those saps. You want guys that ain't scared to shoot first and ask questions afterwards. The cops are getting the upper hand in this burg, and unless we get moving they're going to push us out of business. You have thousands of bucks' worth of dope, and you ain't planting any, and we're so skinned we have to play crap for cents."

"Would it surprise you to know that the police are wise to this hide-out?" The chief's eyes narrowed to mere slits. "We're sitting on Vesuvius, and likely to erupt any second."

"Is that so? Fancy the cops being wise. Shouldn't have thought those flat-feet had the brains. How did they horn in on our game, chief?"

"You haven't any idea—yourself?" Spike favoured the chief with a puzzled glance.

"How should I know? They could have trailed one of our boobs; someone mighta squawked—" He broke off to rub a bristly chin. "Say, is that the way the cops have got wise?"

"It sure is!"

"Oh, oh, ain't that queer?" Spike was silent for a moment or so, whilst the chief watched his intended victim with mocking gaze. He spoke at last. "Have you a trail on the squawker?"

"Maybe I have, and maybe I haven't."

"You mean you know, but you ain't talking." Spike's face seemed to change to a brutal coarseness. "It ain't always wise to talk too much, chief."

Mr. Langman bristled at the man's arrogance.

"I don't get the hang of your ideas, Spike."

"Nor I yours," came the swift answer. "What's the bright idea in all these questions and wise-cracks? Why have you picked out me to spill the beans about a squawker? Do you want him bumped-off, because if that's the office I'll start right in."

"The squawker will be bumped-off soon enough." The chief was laughing. "I'm taking him for a lovely ride out in the country, and he can admire the beautiful scenery for the last time. Must be a nasty feeling to know you haven't got long to live. What do you think, Spike?"

"I think some folks are going goofy!" Spike snorted. "Say, chief, I've got a date. Just what do you want me to do?"

"I thought you might like to come and see the fun." The chief puffed at his cigar and slid one hand towards his desk. "Glorious day for a ride, Spike."

The chief's hand was within an inch of a button hidden on the leg of his desk-table; a movement from Spike, and the button would be pressed. Spike seemed quite indifferent.

"I ain't kinda keen on riding," he said. "I might have a bit of business myself in that line. You see, I knew afore I came in to see you, chief, that the cops were wise to this dive." Spike grinned at the startled expression of his chief. "That surprises you."

"It sure does." The chief pressed the button. "What made you tell me this? Someone has squawked, and what you've just said makes it sound—"

"As if I've been and squealed." Spike's hands were near his pocket. "No, that ain't my sort of racket. I just mentioned the matter because I'm wise to your game."

Mr. Langman scented danger. Was Spike aiming to draw his gun? What a fool not to have housed a weapon in his own pocket. He had taken this squealer too lightly—most of them were yellow. There was a menace in Spike's voice and in the beady dark eyes.

"Wise to my game?" The chief was playing for time. Thank Heaven the door of the bookcase was slowly swinging open. "What game do you reckon I'm playing?" He gripped Spike's right arm. "Pull yourself together, man, you're talking like a madman!"

"A good game of bluff, but I'm wise," Spike sneered. "And keep yer mitts off

me and away from that drawer! I told you a while ago a guy what weighed one hundred and sixty pounds. What do you weigh, chief?"

"You're crazy!" raged the chief. "You're crazy with fear." Spike grinned and chewed contentedly. "You're just wondering how long you got to live, you dirty squealer!"

Wilson had slithered through the open bookcase, and in his hand was a gun. A grim smile twitched the strong-mouth.

"What have I done that you want to talk that way? The chief spoke jerkily. A few seconds more, and Wilson would be close behind Spike.

"I'd like to strangle you with my own hands!" A mask of hate appeared on the crook's face. "The Spicer gang thought I was easy, and tried to frame me, but I got 'em! You tried to frame me, and now I'm gonna get you! Did yer think that all that junk about a ride cut any ice with me?"

"I'm not trying to frame you." The chief was white and scared. This attitude of Spike's was baffling. "You squealed to the cops! I heard you." "You lying skunk!" yelled Spike, and whipped out a gun. "I ain't ever squawked. Say yer prayers, you big boob, and take yer medicine!"

"Stand quite still, Spike," drawled a voice. "There's a gun about six inches from your ribs. Chuck that gat on the table—and step quickly!"

The fury and murderous rage died from Spike's face, and he became a furtive, cornered rat. He was trapped. This would mean a ride in the country.

"Curse you!" Spike snarled at the chief. "You've got me, but you won't always get away with this yeller game! One day you're gonna be riddled with lead! I don't play a lone hand in this burg. Take me for a ride, and see what happens to you!"

The chief sighed, and ran a finger round his collar. Gosh, that had been a mighty close squeak with death. What did he care now for the idle and futile threats of a man almost dead?

Spike and Langman Get a Surprise.

WILSON watched the two men under furrowed brows—Langman, who was slowly recovering his courage, and Spike, preparing to face an unpleasant ride.

"Keep Spike covered," drawled the chief. "As he hasn't got much time on this earth, we'll let him have a show-down."

"Cut out the funny stuff!" Spike snarled. "Let's get going!"

"Not before I explain how foolish it was to pit your wits against mine," sneered the chief. "It was unwise of you to ring up police headquarters and arrange for them to pay me a call. I heard the instructions that you gave, and have acted accordingly."

"You heard me squawking?" gasped Spike. "Why, I—"

"Hold your tongue, fool!" snapped the chief. "You can talk when I'm through. I've arranged for this place to be abandoned, so that the cops will only find a dead man when they get here—the squawker who tried to put the cops wise." He pointed to the 'phone. "I listened in, you yellow dog!"

"Now I see yer dirty game!" raved Spike. "You ring up the cops, tip 'em off, collect blood money for selling the game, and try to make me the cat's-paw! You and Wilson have framed this between you! But the boys ain't such fools as that! Sell them, and see if they don't pay it back! You dirty, yeller —"

"Cut out the monickers!" The chief banged on his desk. "Why keep up this lying racket? Why pretend, Spike? I'm wise—I heard your voice!"

"You—you heard?" spluttered Spike. "But I swear on all that's sacred I never spilled the beans! Chief, you're on the wrong trail! I listened in on the 'phone in the hall, and I heard a voice. It did sound like my voice, but—"

"But what?" demanded the chief, scrutinising the other closely. Even a crook sometimes knows when the truth was being spoken.

"But I thought you were imitating my voice!" shouted Spike. "I came in here meaning to square the account."

"Then whose voice did I hear?" The chief spoke softly. "If it wasn't you, who could it have been? You're trying to razz me!" Spike met his gaze boldly. "No, I believe you're on the level. Then who has put the cops wise?"

"How should I know?" muttered Spike. "Maybe Wilson has a line."

(Continued on page 27.)



"A smart piece of work, Wilson." The chief of the gang glared at the detective. "I'm not likely to forget it!" November 14th, 1931.

"TRANSATLANTIC."

(Continued from page 20.)

He would have to return to New York under an extradition warrant.

But his spirits were not damped, in spite of his arm being in a sling. He stood at the window gazing at the people that hurried past.

As he stood there, two men stopped within earshot. One of them lit a cigarette.

"Horribly dull voyage, don't you think?" one of them said.

"Stupid," was the reply. "Nothing interesting ever happens. I'll be glad to land."

They passed on.

Monty laughed, and turned away. As he did so, he saw that Judy and her father were in the office with him. He immediately advanced to meet them.

"Well, well, well!" he said cheerily. "This is awfully good of you."

Kramer cleared his throat noisily.

"Mr. Greer," he said awkwardly, blinking through his spectacles, "I have come to thank you."

Monty smiled and patted his arm.

"Please don't. I've got all the thanks I want in seeing that you are both all right." As he spoke, his eyes wandered to Judy's face, and he found that she was looking at him with an expression in her eyes that made his pulses throb wildly. Hurriedly he looked away again. "Be sure you both have a good time."

Kramer held out his hand.

"Well, good-bye," he said. "Judy wants to say good-bye, too."

They shook hands, and Kramer left the office. Judy and Monty were alone.

"Well, Judy," said Monty, trying to be off-hand, "the voyage is over, and you are going on your way. Good luck to you, wherever you go."

"Yes," said Judy wistfully, looking at him. "The voyage is over."

"And now it's London, Paris, Vienna, Berlin—all the places you've dreamed about and wanted to see," continued Monty, trying to hide his emotion. "What a wonderful adventure you have ahead of you!"

Tears came into Judy's eyes, and she went a little nearer to him—timidly, as though afraid.

"I wish you were coming, too," she said, and from the way the words rushed from her lips, Monty could tell that they had been spoken sincerely—longingly.

"So do I," said Monty, with a touch of sadness. "I'd give all I had to be able to see the world through your eyes. But I'm afraid it's too late. Those responsible for law and order have too much interest in me for me to be able to choose my own comings and goings. Perhaps—one day—"

"Yes?" She breathed the word eagerly.

"Perhaps one day we shall meet again, Judy. I hope so, because you will then find me a far different man."

"I hope so. Oh, I hope so."

Monty held out his hand.

"Well, good-bye, Judy," he said finally. "And all the luck in the world."

"Good-bye."

She took his hand and pressed it, then turned away. She had barely gone a pace, however, when she turned back again, and went very close to him.

"You're the most wonderful man I have ever known," she whispered.

She flung her arms around his neck, and pressed her warm lips to his. The next moment she had gone.

Monty started after her, regrets for his past life filling his mind. How long he stood there he did not know, but presently he felt a touch on his arm.

He turned with a start, to find the worthy Hodgkins in the office.

"Is there anything I can get you, sir?" Hodgkins asked, not forgetting the handsome tip he had received only a short time before.

Monty smiled, but ignored his question.

"Isn't it wonderful, Hodgkins?" he said dreamily.

"What's that, sir?"

"To find a woman who sees us as we might have been—not as we really are."

Hodgkins heaved a deep sigh.

"Women are like that, sir," he said philosophically. "Bless 'em! As I often say to Mrs. 'Odgkins, sir—"

Hastily Monty interrupted him.

"I know, Hodgkins, I know," he said. "A ship is like a little world. You have the rough weather and the calm—the quiet seas and the sudden squalls—and the man who takes the bitter with the sweet is bound to have a happy crossing in the end."

"That's right, sir," said the pleased Hodgkins, beaming brightly.

"Well, good-bye, Hodgkins."

"Good-bye, sir."

They shook hands, and once more Monty found himself alone. Outside the gangway was lowered, and the passengers slowly tramped ashore.

The voyage was ended.

(By permission of the Fox Film Co., Ltd., starring Edmund Lowe and Lois Moran.)

"HELL BENT FOR 'FRISCO."

(Continued from page 12.)

tance when he tripped over the track-way of a travelling crane, to come down in a sprawling heap.

He regained his feet in a moment, but already Jimmy was upon him, and, grappling with him, the young reporter swung him around.

"Take it easy, Kenton," he ground out. "You can't make any getaway."

"No?" snarled Kenton, and as he spoke he pulled free again, and struck Jimmy a blow that rocked him to the heels.

But the Press man was on him again in a twinkling, and his fist caught Kenton on the temple and hurled him to the ground. Jimmy flung himself a-top of the scoundrel, and they wrestled fiercely, the police drawing nearer to the scene in the meantime.

Kenton managed to throw Jimmy aside, and as he scrambled up he kicked at the reporter savagely. Jimmy dived clear of the crook's driving boot, missed it by the fraction of an inch, and regained his feet.

Kenton crowded him, lashing out with right and left in an effort to floor him and continue his flight. But Jimmy met him toe to toe, and fought back against the onslaught, and in the space of a few seconds it was Kenton who was on the defensive.

Jimmy broke through his guard and swung his bunched knuckles to the ribs. Kenton wilted visibly under the impact of the punch, and as he dropped his

hands Jimmy ripped home another blow—to the mouth this time.

Kenton tottered backward. The edge of the dock was behind, and, forty feet below, the choppy waters of the sea, smeared with the oil of ocean-going ships.

Jimmy measured him and slammed his right to the jaw. One hundred and eighty pounds of bone and muscle were behind the blow, and it lifted Kenton clean off his feet and pitched him over the quay.

Kenton dropped to the sea, his arms flailing and his legs trundling frantically. He hit the surface with a resounding splash and was swallowed in a smother of foam, and when his head broke water a second or two later he was spluttering breathlessly.

Jimmy peeled off his jacket, and he was throwing it to the ground when the police officers came up with him. They were followed by Ellen, and as she reached the scene the girl tried to restrain Jimmy from his purpose.

"Don't, Jimmy!" she pleaded.

"You'll be drowned!"

But he was scarcely listening. Kicking aside his shoes, he poised himself on the brink of the quay and dived.

His body cleaved into the water close to the spot where Kenton had come to the surface. A moment afterwards he reappeared beside the crook and reached out to clutch him.

The cold shock had revived Kenton and counteracted the effects of the punch that had hurled him into the sea. There was still fight left in him, and he struck at Jimmy viciously as the young reporter approached him.

Jimmy parried the blow, and then filled his lungs to plunge below the surface again. Taking Kenton by the

legs, he wound his arms around them firmly and dragged him under.

Kenton writhed like a madman. In thirty seconds Jimmy rose to the surface once more, and grinned up at Ellen and the police officers on the quayside. But he did not permit Kenton to lift his head above water, for, changing his grip to the scoundrel's sleek, dank hair, he held his squirming body beneath the waves.

Kenton's struggles grew feeble, and he had ceased to show any signs of resistance when Jimmy brought him to the surface.

Jimmy then took him by the armpits, and, swimming on his back, kicked out for a stretch of pebbled shore some distance from the quay. Meanwhile, Ellen and the police-officers made for the same objective, realising Jimmy's intention.

They met the young reporter and his prisoner at the water's edge and helped him on to dry land.

"Jimmy," Ellen cried, "are you all right?"

"Sure, I'm all right," he told her. "But Kenton looks pretty sick for himself. Better take him, boys," he added to the officers, pushing the crook towards them.

Sagging limply, Kenton was delivered into the hands of the law. He tried to speak to Ellen, but she turned away from him scornfully and helped Jimmy to don his coat.

"Say, what's the time?" Jimmy demanded all at once. "I've got to get in touch with the chief."

One of the police-officers answered him, drawing a watch from his pocket.

"The exact time is seven fifty-eight," he informed Jimmy.

"Gosh, I've just got two minutes," Jimmy ripped out. "Where's the

nearest 'phone? The 'Morning World' can't come off the presses till I give the word to Graham."

"There's a 'phone over there," he was told.

Jimmy raced for the call-box, and Ellen hurried after him. She joined him in the 'phone-booth just as he was lifting the receiver.

"Give me Long Distance—Los Angeles, 'Morning World,'" he jerked. "Reverse the charges and step on it, sis— Er—I mean, step on it, miss, will you, please?"

At seven fifty-nine, when Graham was tearing his hair, the 'phone-bell rang in the editorial office of the "Morning World." Half a dozen hands reached for the instrument, but Graham scattered his subordinates in one blundering rush that was reminiscent of a buffalo stampede.

"Here, gimme that 'phone," he snarled.

He picked up the receiver, anxiety written in every line of his face. Then his brow cleared, and gradually a beam spread across his countenance.

"Hallo?" he panted. "Jimmy? Jimmy Gray? Aw, thank heavens—"

"More dope for you, chief," came the voice of Jimmy. "I just arrested Kenton with my own hands. Knocked him off the quay, then dived after him and brought him to the shore. Say, chief, if you think this has been a picnic— But get a load of this, will you—"

He talked on, Graham listening attentively.

"Good work, boy," the editor said, as Jimmy finally ended his report. "Good work! Hold on a minute, Jimmy, will you?"

He turned to the re-write man. "Add this to Jimmy's story," he ordered: "'Kenton's accomplice, Nick Corrigan, was bumped off in a gun-duel with the police-officers who tried to arrest him. Kenton was taken after a desperate hand-to-hand struggle with the 'Morning World's' special crime representative.'"

"All right, Jimmy," he added, speaking into the telephone once again. "It's a wonderful story, pal, and thanks a lot. Hurry back."

"I'll catch the next train," Jimmy assured him. "So-long, chief!"

Graham hung up the receiver and then faced the members of his staff.

"Gee, what a scoop!" he announced enthusiastically. "Say, if I had to go through another two or three hours like that I'd go crazy. Yes, sir—plumb crazy. Oh, boy, when we get that edition on the streets can you imagine what the guys on the other papers in this town are gonna do?"

He fixed his eye on an office-boy and rapped out a command.

"Go down to the works and tell Jake to let her rip! Quick, son, snap into it."

"Yes, sir," the boy answered, fairly leaping to obey.

Far from the clamour and the hustle of newspaper offices, Jimmy Gray was drawing Ellen Garwood deeper into the telephone-box, and, enfolding her in his arms, he stooped to kiss her tenderly.

Fully a minute afterwards an elderly man hurried up, and he had actually grasped the handle of the booth before he realised that it was occupied. He did not see Ellen, and was only able to distinguish the broad back of Jimmy, whom he imagined to be 'phoning.

With an impatient shrug he passed on.

(By permission of the Gaumont Film Co., Ltd., starring Charles Delaney and Vera Reynolds.)

Hollywood's Monuments.

HOLLYWOOD, though too young in years to possess any history, has many monuments of its own in the shape of "sets" still standing of famous picture classics of the past. In the days before the talkies many pictures were made by the largest of the producing companies which entailed the erection and equipment of sets of gigantic dimensions. After the picture was completed it was often found that to dismantle the set would take so much time and labour that it would be a more economical proposition to let it remain standing, particularly if it happened to stand on ground that was not urgently needed for immediate use for another production.

Many strangers in Hollywood, ignorant of the pictures in which these sets were used, would pass these landmarks in film history without as much as a second's thought, for, to the uninitiated, they are nothing but the remains of old scenes apparently used in days gone by for some picture or another, dead and forgotten.

To the veterans of film-land, however, these old settings bring back pleasant memories. Whilst in the busiest studios the sets erected for present-day pictures are being changed practically every day, these old relics, often on the outskirts of Hollywood, remain as monuments to the greatness of the particular picture for which they were originally built.

Sometimes a corner of a wall in one of these old sets is even now used for a close-up in a present-day picture; often a part of an old set is remodelled so that it is given an entirely different appearance for a new film.

It was only a short time ago when the famous Rex Ingram production, "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," was recalled by the destruction of the huge set of the ruined chateau, which played such an important part in that film. Many people made wealthy and famous by this picture used to look upon this set with a feeling almost of reverence, for it had been one of the few permanent reminders of one of the greatest films the silent screen ever knew, bringing in its trail of conquest the fortunes of Rudolph Valentino, Alice Terry and Rex Ingram, to name only a few of those who were "made" by its success.

About a quarter of a mile away from the Culver City studio is the old Pathé studio, where, still standing, close to the boundary fence, is a towering castle, partly hidden in these hectic days by smaller sets which have been built in front of it. Despite this, however, its battlements stand above everything else

in the neighbourhood to remind one of the first picture Cecil B. de Mille made as an independent producer, "The Road to Yesterday."

Big sets for motion pictures are never mentioned in the best-informed circles without some reference to what has been claimed by many to be the mightiest of them all, the marvellous Notre Dame Cathedral setting at Universal City. There Carl Laemmle

poured in hundreds of thousands of dollars to perfect every detail in making as near as human ingenuity and endeavour could devise an exact replica of the original cathedral it was built to represent. There, for many months, crowds of thousands played in huge scenes in making one of the biggest and most spectacular films of all time, "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," which set the seal on the fame of the late Lon Chaney. Now the set, still standing, is looked upon as a mute reminder of this great character actor.

No visitor to Hollywood can say that he has had a proper look over all the sights unless he has seen this set on the Universal lot, for to come away without doing so would be as bad as "seeing the sights of London" and leaving without a visit to the Tower!

When a couple of the largest of the new stages on the Metro lot were built to make space for the making of an even bigger number of talkies, a long, majestic flight of steps was destroyed. They had stood for years since being first built for the making of the old Goldwyn film, "Three Weeks"; in fact, a large amount of the action of the film took place on them.

Just off Motor Boulevard, in Culver City, the high walls of a gigantic prison can be seen towering over the walls that surround the studio. Curious visitors, peering quickly through the gate which admits to the guarded enclosure, would see what appeared to be a part of a great house of detention, a cold, grey expanse of confining walls. To folks who know their film lore that setting will always be "The Big House," for it was for the film of that name that it was originally built.

Not far away from it is a six-story orphanage, built to provide the many thrills in that pictorial glorification of the fireman, "The Fire Brigade," released in this country under the title of "Fire!"

At the corner of Vine Street and Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood there stretches an enormous vacant lot, covering several acres in the very heart of the film colony. It was here that the old Lasky and the present Paramount studio was founded. Several years ago the whole studio was transferred to a new location, and all the old buildings were either razed to the ground or moved. In an odd corner, however, can still be found the crumbling remains of a plaster pedestal. On this stood the "Golden Calf," used in the first of the great Biblical pictures, "The Ten Commandments."

(Continued on page 28.)

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"TRAPPED."

(Continued from page 23.)

"If you'll put your hands high, Spike, I'll tell you," softly spoke Wilson. "And that applies to you, chief." "Are you mad, Wilson? You know how I deal with—"

"Put your nitts high, Mr. Langman, and don't try any funny stuff," drawled Wilson, and now his gun covered the chief. "And just stand right away from that drawer. You want to know who did the talking—well, you ain't got far to look."

The chief and Spike stared at each other as they raised their hands. What this meant was slowly dawning on them. Wilson was in the pay of the police!

Trapped.

SOMEWHERE a shot rang out and then a cry of pain.

"This place is surrounded," calmly announced the man with the gun. "It's taken me weeks to get you, Langman, but I've got you now. I've done some of your dirty jobs so that you never suspected me."

"So you're a cop!"

"Police detective," smiled Wilson. "After you shot my comrade, Gilson, I asked to be put on the job. They transferred me from Boston. That's why you did not know my face. A week ago a patrolman was shot who stopped a lorry, and from that moment the net's been closing round you."

"You imitated my voice!" Spike thrust his jaw forward. "Are you lying, or is this more bluff?"

"I ain't the kind that lies." Wilson spoke in a husky undertone not unlike the other's voice. "Yours is not the only voice I can imitate. I'm thinking of taking someone for a nice ride in the country." Mr. Langman showed his teeth at the perfect imitation of himself. "Now nothing remains but to wait here until my colleagues appear. If there are any questions I can answer, don't hesitate. You won't have much time to talk where you two cheap skates are going."

"When I get through I'll come back for you, Wilson!" The chief's eyes were blazing with hate and baffled fury.

"Maybe you won't come back or have the chance," sneered Wilson. "I've got the gun that shot that patrolman, and it was your gun, Langman!"

The chief and Spike watched the detective with eyes alert for any chance. They knew that if taken to gaol it meant the end. Spike cursed himself for boasting; Wilson would have heard all about the clean-up of the Spicer gang. Better to die than go to the chair! He edged a pace nearer the detective.

"Don't move again, Spike! I have no compunction about shooting rats like you! Keep those hands high, Langman!"

Sounds of sudden shooting and much commotion, harsh voices, cursing, and the moaning of someone badly hurt. Pounding footsteps running towards the library.

"Keep quite still, gentlemen!" cautioned Wilson.

The curtains over the doorway were flung aside, and the dissipated youth, with blood streaming down his face from a bullet graze, glared at the three men with fear-distorted visage.

"The cops, chief! The cops—" His voice trailed away as he saw the gun in Wilson's hand.

In a second he knew Wilson was a

policeman, but as he swung up the gun in his hand Wilson's weapon spoke.

The gun dropped from the nerveless fingers as, clutching at his shoulder, the crook sank to the ground in a moaning heap.

In that same instant Spike and Langman flung themselves forward, but Wilson was prepared. A jump backwards, a straight upper-cut with his left fist, and Spike was flung back into the chief's arms.

Angrily the chief pushed his comrade aside and leaped forward. The gun spoke again, and a spasm of pain creased the chief's face. His arm flapped useless against his side, and he could feel a trickle of blood running down the back of his hand.

"Try that again and I shoot to kill!" blazed Wilson. "Get up, Spike, and quick!"

Slowly and reluctantly Spike got to his feet, his ferrety eyes seeking everywhere for some chance of a break, but in the steely eyes of the detective he knew there was no hope.

"Stop nursing yer jaw!" Wilson snapped, and pushed forward a chair. "Sit there, Langman, and don't forget I can handle a gun!"

Wilson backed across the room till he stood over the groaning, dissipated young crook.

"Stop snivelling!" The detective was not inclined to be merciful. "You've only got a flesh wound. Pass me up that gun of yours—the hutt first!"

He snapped open the breach, saw the gun was loaded, and smiled grimly. He reloaded his own gun, but his intent eyes never relaxed their watch over the chief and Spike.

Outside the house came the whirr of a machine-gun and then a crashing sound that meant that the cops were breaking in. The round-up should soon be complete.

The shooting in the library must have warned the besieged crooks that there was trouble in their midst, and that their chief might be in danger. What had become of Spike, Wilson, and the Kid?

Only the chief and those wholly in his confidence knew of the secret passage behind the bookcase, but the gang did know that there was some method of escape. The chief must reveal his secret, and let them get away from the deadly fire of the cops, already two of the gang had been badly wounded.

The front door gave way as three of the gang raced towards the library. Wilson had heard them coming, and was watching from behind a curtain that screened the library door. Wanton killing was not in his line, and he contented himself with dropping the first gangster with a bullet through the leg. The other two darted towards the stairs, and wasted their ammunition by blazing away at the library door.

One, holder than the other, edged down the steps with the intention of flinging the curtains aside and jumping in at the hidden marksman.

Just as he was about to hurl himself through the curtains three policemen rushed into the lounge hall. The man on the stairs fired through the banisters, missed, and next moment came rolling down the stairs with a bullet through the lungs. The other two cops flung themselves on the other crook before he could turn his gun on them.

Handcuffs stopped all further arguments.

"This way, boys!" shouted Wilson. "I've got Langman and two others! It's okay because I've got 'em where I want 'em."

A few moments later Langman had the humiliation of having handcuffs slipped over his wrists. Spike took it as a matter of course; he was an old lag.

Men in uniform lined up on either side of the two gangsters, whilst two others attended to the snivelling, moaning Kid.

"A smart piece of work, Wilson!" The chief glared at the detective. "I'm not likely to forget it."

"Don't worry yourselves about remembering," laughed Wilson, and helped himself to one of the chief's cigars. "We're not having any further trouble. We've too much on you to permit even the crookedest of lawyers to get you out of this jam. Take 'em away, boys!"

When the gangsters had been taken away and the wounded Kid removed on a stretcher, Wilson organised a complete search of the house, and found enough evidence to ensure there being no escape for the Chief.

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HOLLYWOOD'S MONUMENTS.

(Continued from page 25.)

A little while ago a buyer of scrap lumber found in his wagon a long sign which read "Newberry Prison." This was the last remnant of the appearance of Lillian Gish in a picturization of the classic song, "Annie Laurie."

On the opposite side of the city of Los Angeles, far from Hollywood, there is an abandoned studio which stopped work many years ago. Still standing there, however, is a section of an African village which had its initial use in one of the episodes of those very early film thrillers, "The Adventures of Kathleen," featuring Kathryn Williams, one of the first stars in films.

When the wreckers went to work on the old Mack Sennett studio at Edendale after the comedy producer had moved to another location, it recalled to many present the days when the late Mabel Normand played there in her great success, "Mickey."

One of the most pathetic sights of all is the crumbling ruin of a church set which stands on the coast highway running north from Santa Monica to San Francisco. About six miles from the former town, it stands by itself, although real estate offices and new beach residences are beginning to crowd in on it from all sides. Most people who pass it have not the slightest idea that it ever had any connection with the film industry, yet it is all that is left of one of the busiest of the early studios, the old "Inceville," where Thomas H. Ince raised, among many others, William S. Hart and Charles Ray to stardom.

The quickly-growing population increased the demand for beach property, and after Ince moved to another quarter the studio structures were taken away and the land divided up for sale in separate sections. All that remains of the old studios is the disintegrating chapel, once built for a picture so long ago that no one can remember its name.

To persons with imagination and sentiment these mute reminders of the past glories of the film industry are the most stirring sights in that part of America. Unfortunately, we have none such in England, perhaps because the average British film has never reached that spectacular stage which has entailed the erection of sets of the mammoth order.



(Continued from page 2.)

Two Lovely Black Eyes.

Jack Hobbs, who in the past few weeks has fought with thirty people, dashed round corners in a racing car at breakneck speed, crashed through the side of a barn in a taxi, and done many other things inviting injury to himself, has been the victim of a simple accident which rendered him unconscious and left him with two perfect black eyes.

Hobbs is playing in the film, "The Love Race," which is being directed for B.I.P. by Lupino Lane at Elstree, and the accident in which he was involved took place inside a taxi which, for the purpose of the film, was hurrying with him to the start of a big motor speed race in which he was to take part.

He was standing up urging the driver to gain speed when the taxi swerved at a corner in one of the lanes near Elstree where the action was taking place, and he struck his head with terrific force against the roof. It was at once seen that he was badly hurt, and a doctor was summoned. Hobbs was still unconscious when the doctor arrived, and it was learnt with relief, after he had been examined, that his injury was not as serious as at first feared. At Lupino Lane's instructions the injured actor was sent home by car, and later (with the exception of his black eyes) was none the worse for the accident.

Film Stars in Gas Masks.

The exciting spectacle of four film stars trapped and surrounded by flames in a burning mansion was witnessed by crowds of people from Beaconsfield and the surrounding district who hurried to the British Lion studios at Beaconsfield during the early hours of one morning, thinking that the studio was on fire.

Actually scenes were being filmed for the talkie version of the Edgar Wallace thriller, "The Old Man," and the sequence depicting the fire at Lord Arranway's mansion was being filmed. The central figures in these tense

scenes were Anne Grey, Lester Matthews, D. Clark-Smith and Gerald Rawlinson, all of whom had to receive medical attention after the scenes were shot.

So dense and choking was the smoke in this realistic sequence that the artistes and the studio staff were forced to use gas masks during the several rehearsals.

The mansion, which was built up in the grounds of the studio, was a spacious affair over 50 feet in height, and when the flames were at their deadliest Manning Haynes, who is the producer of the film and a stickler for realism in his productions, discovered that some valuable old furniture and tapestries which were being used on the set were in danger, and, rushing into the flames, he was responsible for the rescue of a famous old tapestry worth several hundred pounds which had been lent for the production.

This exciting fire sequence is only one of the many thrilling scenes which will go towards the making of what it is hoped will constitute the first talkie with 100 per cent action.

The "Gorilla" and the Charwoman.

Dubois, the well-known animal impersonator, had an amusing experience recently at Welwyn Garden City. He had to take the part of a full-grown gorilla in the picture, "The Four Winds."

While trying to find his way through the studio to the "set" where the film was being made, he lost his way, and found himself in a darkened passage. There he saw a charwoman, and, fearful of his frightful appearance, went up to her to ask the right way. But before he had time to speak, the old lady turned round and, seeing a big ape standing near her, gave a piercing shriek and went along that passage faster than she had ever moved for years.

Norman Lee, the director of the film, and his company heard her yell, and hurried to the scene to see what was the matter. They recognised that it was only Dubois in his make-up, but it was not till he had removed his mask and then confronted the frightened charwoman that she could be convinced he was not "the missing link."

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"Sundown Trail" and "The Warden's Pen."

Complete Film Stories in This Issue.

Boy's **CINEMA** 2^D

No. 623.

EVERY TUESDAY.

NOVEMBER 21st, 1931.

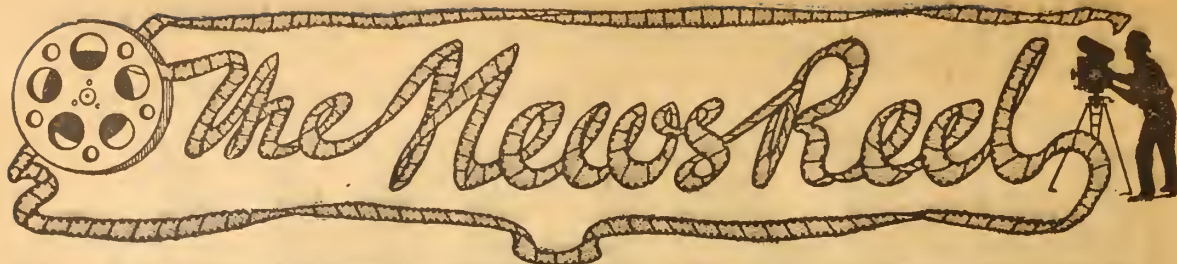
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The News Reel

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"The Star Witness."

Grandpa Summerill, Charles (Chic) Sale; District Attorney Whitlock, Walter Huston; Ma Leeds, Frances Starr; Sue Leeds, Sally Blane; Pa Leeds, Grant Mitchell; Jackie Leeds, Ed. J. Nugent; Ned Leeds, Dicky Moore; Donny Leeds, George Ernst; Thorpe, Russell Hopton; Maxey Campo, Ralph Ince; Williams, Robert Elliot; Big Jack, Nat Pendleton.

"Sundown Trail."

Buck Sawyer, Tom Keene; Dorothy Beals, Mariou Shilling; Flash Prescott, Nick Stuart; George Marsden, Hooper Atchley; Joe Currier, Stanley Blystone; Jenny, Louise Beavers; Ma Stoddard, Alma Chester; Pa Stoddard, William Welsh.

"Horror" Films.

I do not know how many of you like the "horror" films of the "Dracula" type, though personally I cannot see what "entertainment" there is in pictures that are designed for the sole object of making one's flesh creep. But apparently there is some demand for the judging by the fact that other such pictures are being produced.

"Frankenstein" is the title of one, and no pains or money is being spared by Universal to make it even more horrible and creepy than "Dracula." Colin Clive will be seen in the title rôle and Boris Karloff will appear as a monster. At the Paramount studios a new version is being made of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

As some of you may remember, John Barrymore made one of the greatest hits of his screen career when he appeared some years ago in the dual rôles of the silent film. There were scenes in it that were creepy enough then, but with the addition of such sounds as shrieks and moaning the horror of the story is certain to be increased. Both these films are being made in an atmosphere of secrecy.

Colin Clive's Hustle.

Colin Clive's recent departure to America to play the lead in "Frankenstein" makes it his third visit to that country. He first went there when James Whale, also an Englishman, was put in charge of the direction of the screen version of "Journey's End." Mr. Whale tested a number of other actors for the part of Capt. Stanhope, and, failing to be satisfied, cabled to Colin Clive to come over and play the rôle.

His second trip across the Atlantic November 21st, 1931

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND NUMBER.

"DANGER ISLAND"



Adventure! Nerve-tingling, daredevil, hair-raising exploits on a dangerous expedition in search of a fortune in radium to an uncharted volcanic island off the coast of Africa! Start this magnificent new serial next week! Starring Kenneth Harlan, Lucille Browne and Walter Miller.

"THE GUEST HOUSE."

Owing to rustlers, an old rancher and his charming daughter are forced to take in paying guests. Ruin stares them in the face until a stranger rides in from the prairies. Starring Rex Lease.

"THE LADY FROM NOWHERE."

A stirring tale of the Secret Service. Trapped and double-crossed by a woman, faced with disgrace, a man fights back to save his name. Starring Alice Day and John Holland.

"THE TRIANGLE MURDER."

Another gripping story from the notebook of William J. Burns of the U.S. Secret Service of blackmail and a mysterious menace.

was in answer to a summons to play in "Overture" at the Longacre Theatre in New York City. But his third trip proved a real hustle. As soon as he arrived in New York he was rushed off to Universal City by aeroplane so that no time might be lost before he began his rôle in "Frankenstein." This time his stay in America will be very much longer than his two previous visits, for Carl Laemmle, jun., has taken the precaution of getting Colin Clive to sign a five-year contract.

Mickey Daniels' Freckles.

Mickey Daniels, the big freckled-faced lad, who used to play in his younger days in "Our Gang" comedies, has been much worried lately over his freckles. They have always been his pride and trade-mark, and it was even whispered (you can reach for the salt if you like) that he knew exactly how many freckles he had.

But the Californian sun has had its

effect on Mickey's face. It not only tanned it a rich brown, but drew quite a number of those freckles together, till now Mickey can't tell one from the other. He feels the value of his trade-mark is disappearing.

His Own Double.

The other day Stan Laurel found himself in the strange position of being regarded as only an imitation of himself.

It happened while the sad-faced comedian was fishing from one of several barges that were anchored off the Californian coast. It was his day off, so that he had no sort of make-up on. Standing next to him in silence was a pudgy stranger who was also bent on trying to get a "bite." After a while the stranger walked over to the barge-keeper for some more bait. He came back chuckling heartily.

"Say," he remarked to the comedian, "can you beat this? That guy over there"—jerk-ing a thumb in the direction of the barge-keeper—"has been trying to kid me that you are Stan Laurel of Laurel and Hardy. Just keep up the joke and you and I will be able to raise a lot of laughs!"

Why Be an Extra?

If you want to be an extra in films the chances are a thousand to one against you. You'll certainly starve most of the time, go without work almost continually, and if you are lucky enough to get past the studio gates you will probably find that the rôle you have been assigned is so small that your friends and relations will not be able to spot you in the crowd.

Yet there are people who seem to be content to be nothing else but extras. There are 15,000 registered ones in Hollywood and 150,000 prospective others who stand by, hoping upon hope to be given a chance some day. Why, therefore, be an extra? Here is the answer of one of them.

He is Sherman Dowd, fifty-eight, white-bearded and slightly deaf. His opinion was sought when he was playing the part of a sword-dealer, hawking a colourful collection of sinister-looking weapons in the new Samuel Goldwyn production, "The Unholy Garden."

"Why be an extra?" Dowd repeated. "Because ever since I have been a boy I've wanted to see the world and do adventurous things. Being an extra enables me to gratify this desire within Hollywood itself where many parts of the world can be reconstructed. Today I am an Arab peddler, to-morrow

(Continued on page 27.)

Eye-witnesses to a terrible crime—threatened—beaten—kidnapped. Their duty is to tell all—but their lives are worthless if they speak! A heart-stirring story of a family who found themselves menaced by ruthless gangsters.



Starring CHARLES (CHIC) SALE and WALTER HUSTON.

The Unexpected Guest.

FARAMENTO, city of eternal gang warfare—where guns spit death at all odd moments of the day, sending law abiding citizens scuttling pell-mell for shelter, while the ruthless racketeers fight out their quarrels till one gang or the other is exterminated, or the police interrupt and quell the outbreak by a grim and vigorous attack on both sides.

A week-end of many such desperate gun battles, resulting in much bloodshed, was followed by a quiet and peaceable Monday morning and afternoon. Never the sound of a single shot—not the least sign of a gangster to be seen prowling the streets. The calm before the storm. Soon a terrible fight would be waging somewhere in the city. So thought Charles Whitlock, the eminent and powerful district attorney, as he sat in his office at the Criminal Courts Building, ruminating upon the unusual inactivity of the dread law-breakers he had sworn to crush.

And there were thousands of others, citizens as well as police, who had adopted the same line of thought as the district attorney, as late afternoon came and the peace of the day remained unbroken by the wicked splutter of revolver and machine-gun bullets. This tranquillity could not last. Soon there would break yet another grim and awesome gun duel among the crook fraternity, who had the whole city in a grip of terror and dread.

But there was one family in Faramento, at least, who that day had not given a single thought to the terrible menace of the gangster—and certainly this callous brute never entered their

heads as they sat down to table to partake of the evening meal.

There was Pa Leeds at the head of the laden table, a short, stockily built man of some forty-eight years, with sandy hair that was tinged with grey, and brown eyes that looked tired after the toil of the day. Opposite him was his wife, a shade younger than himself, but whose face, once obviously pretty, now showed lines of care and worry. On her right was her eldest son, Jackie, weak of character though not bad-looking—and at the moment out of a job. Beside him was an empty chair, yet to be filled, while facing him sat a pair of incorrigible youngsters, his brothers, Donny and Ned, ten and five years respectively.

The clatter of knives and forks and the sound of much chattering as the meal began, then suddenly the dining-room door swung open, and a pretty, neatly-dressed girl, with large hazel eyes and light brown hair burst in upon the diners.

"Oh, so there you are, Sue!" Pa Leeds paused in the act of conveying a succulent piece of boiled pork to his somewhat large mouth, to frown at his daughter as she sank wearily into the empty chair beside her elder brother. "I thought you'd got lost. Unusual for you to be so late for dinner."

"Forgive me, dad." Sue gave him a bewitching smile that chased away his frown. "We came home by Victory Drive and got stuck in several traffic jams."

"More meat, please," came a plaintive voice.

Little Ned glanced at his mother hungrily, then passed her his empty

plate as she finished serving Sue. Satisfied with his girl's explanation of her lateness in arriving home, Pa Leeds renewed his attack on the pork and beans. But Jackie was openly sneering at his sister, forgetful for the moment that his dinner was getting cold.

"I say, Sue," he remarked nastily. "I should think Jim Martin would be ashamed to drive that old tin can of his among all those swell buses up on the drive."

Sue pouted, but made no answer, for it was not the first time her brother had got at her over her boy friend's second-hand car. But their father, somewhat irritable on account of the immense amount of work he had been called upon to do that day, cast glinting eyes upon Jackie.

"Well, my lad," he said with biting sarcasm, "that old tin can, as you call it, is a darn sight more car than you'll ever drive, if you don't quit wasting your time around pool-rooms."

"That's right, ram all that down my throat again," Jackie looked at his father sullenly. It always did touch him on the raw whenever his parent accused him of haunting the local billiards hall, mixing with the set of idlers that frequented the place. "Tell me, is it my fault I can't find work?"

Mrs. Leeds gave her husband a warning glance. Always she did her best to avert quarrels among her family. But Pa Leeds paid her no heed.

"Whose fault is it, then?" he snapped, glowering fiercely at the boy. "Not yours, of course. Well, let me tell you something, Jackie. I can't say I've seen you bust any legs trying to find a berth."

"But, pa," protested Mrs. Leeds, hastening to protect her eldest son. "Jackie tries every day to find a job—I'm sure of it."

"You think so, eh?" The father turned his eyes on Jackie again as his wife made to satisfy young Donny, who was clamouring for more potatoes. "You ought to have stayed at High-school a while longer, my boy. You'd have then been fitted for a decent clerical job. Why, at this very moment, W. P. Randolph & Co. are in want of a bookkeeper. I could no doubt have got you the post, but you know nothing—simply nothing. As a matter of fact, in my opinion you don't wish to know anything."

"So that's what you think, is it? Well, I know a darned sight more than you imagine. And now let me tell you something, father. I wouldn't dream of working for such a rotten firm as yours. Why, they're nothing more than—" Jackie broke off his furious outburst, not because his father had half-risen from his seat and was glaring at him angrily, but because there had drifted to his ears the sounds of a life being played somewhat out of tune. The boy groaned dismally. "Oh, heck! Now we're in for a pleasant evening—I don't think!"

A pleased expression had come into Mrs. Leeds' face at the first notes of the musical instrument, while they had caused young Donny and Ned to leap to their feet and to scatter from the room.

The front door reached, the elder of the two boys quickly flung it open to reveal, standing on the doorstep, an aged man with iron-grey hair and beard, and grey eyes that held a peculiar hard glitter. A quaint figure he cut as he stood there in his army pensioner's blue uniform, spectacles perched half-way down his nose, the fife to his lips, his legs bent at the knees with the rheumatism from which he suffered.

"Gramps! Gramps!" cried Donny ecstatically. "Well, it's sure nice to see you again."

The old fellow ceased to torture the fife, patted the heads of the two small boys affectionately, then stamped in and entered the dining-room. After him went Donny and Ned, and they made a divo for their seats as their grandfather suddenly halted and, grinning amiably, drew his hand to the salute.

"Silence in the ranks!" came the throaty tones of the old soldier. "Private Summerill salutes the family of Leeds!"

In another moment Mrs. Leeds was beside him, clutching him by the arm. "Glad to see you, father!" She kissed the thin and wrinkled face. "But come along. You're just in time for dinner. I'll get you a chair."

But Sue had already procured one from the kitchen, and had placed it in between Donny and Ned. Greetings were eventually over, and the old warrior sank with a grunt into the chair and attacked the pork and beans his daughter set before him.

"Staying long, grandpa?" inquired Pa Leeds as he set aside his empty plate.

"Forty-eight hour furlough." The old fellow thrust some of the pork and beans into his capacious mouth and smacked his lips appreciatively. "That means I'll be with you till Wednesday."

Jackie grunted disgustedly, for this meant he would have to share his bed with his grandpa. But the others fussed round the old boy in an endeavour to make him feel at home.

"I'm mighty glad you came, gramps." Young Donny cast a furtive glance in

his mother's direction, saw that she was not looking his way, and slyly appropriated a spoonful of mashed potato. "Yes, I am that, for you'll be able to see the baseball game with Downey Intermediate."

"Sure—that's just what I came for, Donny." The old warrior shot his young grandson an affectionate glance. A baseball enthusiast himself, he was glad there was at least one member of his daughter's family who had taken to America's great national game. "And see here, you young scallywag, I'll be sitting right there behind that wire-netting a-watching that out-shoot of yours just a-comin' a-tearin' across the plate. My, but how I'll cheer you."

There was an audible sniff from Jackie, who despised all outdoor games and exercises. To his mind there was far more honour to be gained in compiling a hundred or two break on the billiards table than there was in making the winning shot for one's side in a big ball game.

Two pairs of eyes instantly glared at him. Both Donny and his grandpa knew the reason for that sniff, and it riled them to have the game they loved scoffed at in this way. But they could say no word in protest, for at that moment Ma Leeds spoke.

"If you intend to go to the ball game, father, you'd better quit drinking right now." She wagged a reproving finger at the old fellow as, a pained look creeping into his eyes, he opened his mouth to voice a protest. "No, no, I don't want to hear any excuses, father. I tell you I'm not going to have this family disgraced again—like the last time you were here and you blacked poor Mr. Ashton's eye."

"Oh, so you'd hang that over me, huh?" Grandpa gave a chuckle as he remembered the incident alluded to. It had often tickled him to think that he, an old fellow of eighty, had stood up to a man a full thirty years his junior. But there was no doubt he had had a drink or two too many that day, and, remembering, his face took on a repentant expression. "I'm sorry about that little spot of bother, my dear, of course. But still I'd every excuse. It was provocation, that's what it was. You see, that particular day my leg'd been bothering me and I just had to take something to relieve the pain—a little overdose kinda limbers it up. But, as I said, I'd every excuse about the Ashton affair. An argument over the baseball match. I was right, but he couldn't see it. And, besides, he called me a billy-goat."

"And then the fireworks started." Pa Leeds cast a reproachful glance at his wife's father. At the time of that brawl between the old fellow and Claude Ashton, who lived near by, he had been very much upset. Supposing the fracas got to the ears of his boss? Well, Pa had realised the harm it could do him in regard to his business position, for old W. P. was a martinet, and any scandal in which a member of his staff was involved was likely to meet with much disfavour. But, fortunately, W. P. never got to hear of that disturbing episode. "That certainly was a disgraceful business, father. You came home with one eye closed and a policeman hanging on each arm—that's what you did."

"Oh, a policeman? Well, let me tell you I just walked home with those boys. Yeah, I'd been a-wrestling with 'em friendly-like." The old stager's eyes gleamed fiercely. Not for nothing had he won half a dozen medals during the period he had served his country. In his veins was fighting blood, and as the episode of that day came clearly back to him, that fighting blood was roused.

"Heck, but I'd have put them two bulls on their backs that day if it hadn't been for my darned leg."

"And you said it was friendly wrestling?" Pa Leeds sadly shook his head. "Why you ought to be ashamed, at your age, causing such a disturbance as you did."

"Age!" Grandpa Summerill hopped up from his chair, banged his fist violently on the table, then sat down again, eyeing his son-in-law fiercely. "Why, doggone it, I'm just as strong as a bull and just as quick and active as a kitten. Dang you, George, if you don't get my monkey up, I've half a mind to put you on your back just to show you to be careful what you say."

"Now, now, father, please!" Again his daughter looked at him reprovingly. "Get on with your dinner, and not so much of the fighting spirit. Have some more spinach?"

"No." A good portion of pork and beans disappeared into his mouth.

"Don't like spinach, my dear."

"But it's good for you. It's got iron in it. Makes you strong."

"Heck! Didn't I tell you just now I'm strong enough? Now be quiet, the lot of you, while I finish my food."

For several minutes the meal progressed with the silence broken only by the two small boys, who possessed amazing appetites and clamoured for more of the pork and beans in no uncertain manner.

Presently grandpa pushed aside his empty plate, drew a smaller plate towards him, then reached for a piece of bread-and-butter.

"No blackberry jam?" he grunted, as his eyes swept the table.

"Sure, grandpa." Pretty Sue was on her feet in an instant. "There's some stowed in the cellar. I'll get it for you."

As she ran from the room, the peace of the evening was shattered by several loud reports and the roar of a motor-car's engine somewhere in the street.

"What's that?" gasped Ma Leeds, startled.

"Some car back-firing," said Jackie laconically.

But Donny and Ned had jumped up from the table and had scampered to the bay windows overlooking Western Street.

"Hully gee!" Donny's eyes went wide with horror as he peered through the panes of the right-hand window of the bay. "Tain't no back-firing. It's two cars—sh-shooting at each other!"

Gang Warfare.

IN a moment Jackie, together with his mother and father and his grandpa, were crowding round the window, gazing with horror-filled eyes along the street that stretched below. Darkness had fallen, but in the light from the powerful street lamps they could see two speeding cars, one a little distance behind the other; see, too, the wicked stabs of flame as the occupants of the vehicles fired at each other.

"Sounds like the Battle of Chickamauga," grandpa grimly remarked.

Quite a fusillade of shots echoed along the street, then suddenly there came the raucous note of police whistles, and an unmistakable whining noise that increased quickly to a roar. And all the while those two cars, tearing madly up the street, drew nearer the house of the watching Leeds' family.

"The dirty skunks!" Grandpa's fists were tightly clenched, the fighting light back in his eyes. "But the cops are after them—hear the roar of their cars and motor-bikes? This is one gang feud that won't have a very long life."

"Look, look! The leading car's zig-zagging across the road. I can just see the driver; he—he's sprawling over the wheel. K-killed, I sup-suppose. The— Mrs. Leeds suddenly clapped her hand to her mouth, her heart thudding painfully against her ribs, her face draining of all colour. "Oh, heavens! The car—it's out of control! It—"

There was a loud crash, followed by the sound of smashing glass as the leading car, driverless and completely out of control, suddenly swung on to the pavement below and drove straight into a lamp-post. Next second the horrified Leeds family saw two men leap from the wrecked vehicle and dash away down the street.

On the instant there came three wicked flashes of flame from the pursuing automobile as revolvers were hastily fired, but the reports were drowned in the roar of the police cars hurtling at top speed after the gunmen.

The watchers at that window in Western Street saw one of the fleeing men stagger a little as if he had been hit, then go on again after his companion at a pace that told that a bullet had got him in the leg.

"That other car—it's stopping!" Jackie pointed as the second auto drew into the kerb with a shrieking of brakes, and three men jumped quickly from it. "Heavens, that man in the yellow raincoat—he's got a gun! He's going to—"

They heard the reports of the revolver that time—saw the men who had fled from the wrecked car pitch headlong to the ground—and their hearts went suddenly sick within them. Obvious from the way both lay upon the sidewalk that they were dead—shot in the back by the avenging gunmen!

Bare seconds the Leeds family stood awestruck, then a cry from little Ned made them all jump in alarm.

"Those men—they're coming into our house!"

The boy was right in what he said. Their dastardly work done, the three gangsters were all for flight now. And time was precious, for the roar of the police machines was unpleasantly loud in their ears as they shot down Western Street like some avenging angels. Scarce time to get back into their own car, start it up again and make a clean getaway. This house by which they stood offered a good means of eluding the police.

"Oh, stop them! Stop the brutes!" Ma Leeds cried distractedly as she saw the three men run up the steps that led to their front door.

"The door's locked, my dear," her husband hastily assured her. "It's quite all right. They'll never—"

"It isn't locked—nor even shut!" From where he stood Jackie had a clear view of the front door, and he saw that it was unlatched—saw, too, the gangsters as they slammed it open and burst

in, then crashed it shut with a violence that shook the windows. Back he jumped in alarm. "Oh, heavens, they're in! That fool Donny must have left the door open when he let grandpa in."

Heavy footsteps sounded in the hall outside the dining-room and Ma Leeds encircled her two small boys with protecting arms, while her husband stepped quickly in front of her. Next second the gangsters appeared on the threshold of the open door, their eyes gleaming viciously beneath the brims of their soft felt hats.

"The back way out!" The tall, burly ruffian in the yellow raincoat jerked up his arm, levelled the ugly-looking revolver he carried straight at Pa Leeds' heart. "You—tell me quick, or, by heck, I'll drill—"

"Your dirty scum!" Eyes blazing fiercely, the fighting blood coursing in his old veins, grandpa shook his fist at the gangster. "You think you'll get away with it, huh? Well, you won't. No, siree. I saw you shoot them two—"

With a vicious oath the man in the yellow raincoat had flung himself at the old fellow, and the butt of his gun, slamming to the side of grandpa's head, sent him thudding to the floor, unconscious.

"Hey, you beast!" Little Ned's eyes flashed fire as the gangster jerked up his gun again, covering his father. "That's my grandpa. You've hurt him—"

"Shut up, you little rat!" The brute made to strike the small boy, but with a terrified cry his mother thrust him quickly out of reach. Again mur-

derously gleaming eyes met the scared gaze of Pa Leeds and his family. "Listen, you simps. You ain't seen nothin', see? You ain't heard nothin', see? One move out of you and I'll shoot down the lot of you like as if you were mad dogs! Now, how do you get out by the back way?"

The sound of screeching brakes down in the street told of the arrival of the police. In another moment they would be clamouring at the door—asking the occupants if they had seen which way the killers had gone in their mad flight.

Every moment was precious now, as the crooks realised only too well—and the gun in the hand of the man in the raincoat dug viciously into Pa Leeds' ribs.

"Quick—the back way," the gangster snarled threateningly, "or, by hades, I'll drill you where you stand!"

But Pa Leeds never flinched. Good citizen that he was, his soul revolted against the gangster and his terrorism, and to help such brutal law-breakers as these to escape the police was the last thing he intended to do. But there was fear in his wife's eyes for the safety of her husband, and as she gave an anguished cry Jackie stepped forward.

"That way!" He pointed a shaking finger at a door on the opposite side of the spacious dining-room. "Through the kitchen—you'll see the back door there!"

Even as he spoke the hum of voices drifted up from the street below, to be followed instantly by the clatter of booted feet ascending the steps that led to the front door.



"One move out of you and I'll shoot down the lot of you like as if you were mad dogs!"

As the three gangsters ran hastily across the dining-room to make good their escape, the door leading from the kitchen swung open and Sue appeared, jam-pot in her hand. But sight of those grim-faced men coming towards her with guns in their hands caused her to pull up instantly and to give a terrified cry.

"What—what—" she stammered, trying to collect her wits.

Brutal hands thrust her roughly aside and the gangsters darted quickly into the kitchen, slamming the door violently behind them. Then, ere the sound of their fleeing feet had died in the distance, a thunderous rat-a-tat-tat came upon the knocker of the front door.

The police! But at that moment not one of the Leeds household seemed to have sufficient power to move a single muscle. The grim happenings of the past few minutes, the deadly menace that had threatened themselves had left them completely numb.

The knocking was repeated, loud and insistent; then came heavy thuds upon the front door as powerful shoulders were flung against it. Under the terrific impact thrust upon them the panels splintered quickly and a hand came through the gap and unfastened the latch.

Next moment two plain-clothes men and two uniformed officers burst into the dining-room and confronted Pa Leeds and his terrified family.

"Where'd they go?" The uniformed officer who fired the question glanced quickly round the room, then fastened his stern gaze on Pa Leeds.

"We know they came into this house—saw them as we came after the brutes. But quick now! Which way did they go?"

"They went through the back way." His face ashen, Jackie pointed a quivering finger to the door through which the gangsters had vanished. "Out through the kitchen there."

In a flash the police officers were gone, leaving the Leeds family to collect their shattered wits and to revive Grandpa Summerill to consciousness. But never a trace of the killers did the officers find, though they searched every house and every piece of ground in the immediate vicinity.

Identified!

A ROOM in the Criminal Courts Building. At a large mahogany desk sat a tall, well-built man of some forty-eight years, with clear blue eyes, dark hair and a chin that told of great determination. Standing close to the desk, notebook and pencil in hand, a not bad-looking and alert young man, while ranged on seats in front of the desk sat the entire Leeds family, together with that old warrior, Grandpa Summerill.

"We may assume, then, that these are the actual facts of the case, Thorpe." The man at the desk glanced quickly at his assistant. "A man known as Greener Kaufman was on his way to this office in the company of one of my trusted officers—Jim Preston, a man who never swerved a hair's-breadth from the full performance of his duty, a man we all loved."

Thorpe nodded grimly, while the Leeds family wondered vaguely in what way this could be connected with the shooting affair that had taken place outside their house, that atrocious crime about which they had been brought here to be questioned.

"Kaufman, then, was on his way here," resumed District Attorney Whitlock in grim, icy tones. "We were waiting to hear his story. If he told

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all he knew, we could break the power of the gangs in this city for ever. We could send to prison, if not to the electric chair, that whole cabinet of thieves and murderers who have actually tried to seize the reins of government out of the hands of decent citizens." His fine eyes suddenly switched to Pa Leeds and held the latter's gaze. "Do you know, Mr. Leeds, that not one gangster has ever been sent to the electric chair from this county?"

"Is that so?" Pa Leeds looked utterly astounded at this amazing information. Crimes almost every day and not one of the culprits meeting with his just deserts. It really was incredible. "Well, Mr. Whitlock, lots of 'em should have been, from what I've read in the papers."

The district attorney nodded, his eyes searching the intent faces in front of him and finally coming to rest on Grandpa Summerill who, in an endeavour to hear clearly all that was being said, was leaning forward in his chair, his left hand behind his ear, pressing it forward.

"Now folk." Whitlock rose to his feet, walked round to the front of his desk and lounged back against it. "We've an idea we know the man who did the shooting in front of your house, and we think we can send him to the chair. That man we believe is a fellow named Maxey Campo—leader of one of the smaller gangs, it is true, but a rapidly growing power in the underworld. If we can send one man of Campo's importance to the chair, we as good as tell every gangster in this city that there is law, and that every one of them is answerable to the law. You see the idea?"

"Yes," Pa Leeds nodded. "And we're with you, Mr. Whitlock."

"I thought you would be." The district attorney experienced a thrill of satisfaction. His vow to smash the gangster element in Faramento was a difficult one to fulfil, but with the backing of honest and true citizens he knew that that difficulty could be overcome.

"Well," he went on, "I want you all to get every detail of this case clear, so will you please listen carefully. My man Preston had been trailing Greener Kaufman, a rival gangster known to have a grievance against Maxey Campo. Suddenly my telephone bell rang—that was yesterday, of course. It was Jim Preston. He said that Greener had decided to come through and tell all he knew. But he also said that one of Campo's men had seen him and Kaufman together. I knew in a flash, then, that it was a matter of life and death."

He paused a moment to allow his words to sink in. Then:

"Well, I told Jim Preston to grab a car and to bring Kaufman right in. Then I ordered police cars out from every direction to try and pick Jim up before Campo's men could catch him. Well, what happened? Campo was as much taken by surprise as we were. No time to send his hired gunmen—it was a matter of minutes—seconds. Greener Kaufman must never reach this office to spill the beans. Campo ran for a car himself, followed by his personal bodyguard—Al Allen and Jake Short."

"We know that much, because we have witnesses who saw Campo get into the car. These witnesses even described the brute's clothing—dark suit, grey hat. That's much we have okay. But beyond that we can prove nothing. You see, the crash occurred so suddenly that eye-witnesses could give us no clear

idea of what followed. A man in a yellow raincoat seemed to be the leader. Now Campo could have slipped that coat on while he was in the car. Whether he did or not, of course, we do not know."

"Well, we saw the man in the yellow raincoat." Pa Leeds glanced at his wife, who sat on the end chair, nursing little Ned, who was nearly asleep. "Didn't we, ma?"

Mrs. Leeds nodded, and again a satisfied smile came into the district attorney's face. These witnesses were invaluable—handled carefully and in the right way they would be the means of striking a vital blow at the very heart of the gangster fraternity of the city.

"Why, doggone it, the skunk stood right on the sidewalk and knocked off them two poor fellows a-runnin' down the street, like they was jack-rabbits a-jumpin' for cover." The battle light in his eyes, Grandpa Summerill jiggled up and down in his chair in the excitement that gripped him. "Oh, I seed him all right. I've got a good eye I have."

"Then he came into the house." Whitlock glanced towards his assistant to make sure he was putting down what was now being said. The young fellow was leaning negligently against the far wall busily scribbling in his notebook. Satisfied, the district attorney returned his gaze to his invaluable witnesses. "This man in the raincoat—he came close enough for you to recognise him if you saw him again, didn't he?"

"Close enough?" shrilled grandpa, giving the others no time to answer.

"Why, doggone it, I was just ready to grab him when he whacked me over the head with something—his gun I think—but I got a good look at him before he outed me. Feel that bump?"

The old campaigner shuffled over to the district attorney and pointed to a spot on his iron-grey head. But Whitlock was not in the least interested, though he patiently touched the indicated place, feeling the large swelling there.

"And you'd know the man again if you saw him, huh?"

"Now, now, ain't I telling you so!" snapped grandpa on his way back to his chair.

Whitlock smiled tolerantly, and turned inquiring eyes upon each of the others in turn. Without exception they nodded, and, swinging round on his heel, the district attorney picked up a photograph that lay upon his desk. Turning back to the Leeds family, he held up the portrait for all to see. It was the picture of a man of the lowest type—the features bloated and obviously coarse, eyes that showed a marked fierceness, and a thin-lipped mouth that twisted at one corner, giving the owner a sinister appearance.

"Well?" the district attorney inquired.

There was no room for doubt—no hesitation on the part of these people sitting before him.

"It's him, Mr. Whitlock." Pa Leeds nodded his head emphatically. "That's the man who fired the shots, then escaped through our house."

"Yeah, that's him!" shrilled grandpa, and vigorously shook his fist at the portrait, while Ma Leeds and the others told the district attorney that they, too, were positive that the subject of the photograph was the murderer of the two men in Western Street.

"Good." Whitlock replaced the portrait on his desk, then turned his gaze on Pa Leeds. On the district attorney's face was a triumphant smile, and in his



"Now, my boy, if this is Campo's crowd, stall 'em—understand? It might mean your brother's life!"

heart a grim determination to rest not a moment now till Preston's death was avenged—till the Chair claimed this Maxey Campo whom he had now established, firm as a rock, was the perpetrator of the crime. "All right, Mr. Leeds, that's all for now. But hold yourselves in readiness. I'll be wanting you all later."

He shook them warmly by the hand, then, because every moment was now precious, he hustled them from the room. Directly the door had closed behind them, he pressed a bell-push that was let in the top of his desk. Almost as if by magic, the door opened again and in trooped half a dozen plain-clothes men, their faces grim set, their eyes meeting Whitlock's inquiringly.

"Listen, all of you. I'm going to try and hang this latest outrage on Maxey Campo. You know what that means, don't you? It means his pals will try to get me—they'll try to get every one of you." He shrugged his powerful shoulders in a careless gesture. "But we're going to fight till Campo is where he should be—nicely seated in the Chair. I've got the witnesses I want to land that brute high and dry, so just you get busy and pick him up. If he comes peaceably, so well and good, but if he doesn't, drag him in! Drag him in!"

A wave of the hand was all that was needed, and in another moment the plain-clothes men were darting from the room, grimly resolved to fulfil their mission—to bring in Maxey Campo at all costs.

Trapped!

MAXEY CAMPO had his spies everywhere, and one brought in to him the disturbing news that District Attorney Whitlock had had the Leeds family down to the Criminal Courts Building, and by clever handling had induced them to speak.

"You say they saw my photo, swore I was the same man as did the killing and then invaded their house?" the gangster snapped, glaring fiercely at his henchman.

"Sure, boss," averred the other. "I got it from Tony Larkins. It was sure a swell idea to bribe that fool commis-

sionaire. He's come in mighty handy, huh?"

"Yeah." Campo's face was hard as steel, murder glimmered in his sinister brown eyes. "But just you get out and send Big Jack to me."

The man departed hurriedly, and Campo occupied the time in waiting for Big Jack to put in an appearance by fingering a wicked-looking revolver that lay beside him on the desk.

Meanwhile, after the interview with District Attorney Whitlock, Pa Leeds had hastened to the palatial offices of W. P. Randolph & Co., in Main Street, where he worked as chief cost accountant, while Sue had returned to the big shipping firm near the river where she held the important post of secretary to the managing director.

A short afternoon for both, but at six o'clock, the time for leaving for home, each had got through a fair amount of work, and knew it would not take them long next morning to completely make up for the time lost that day.

"Excuse me." A well-dressed young man, not bad looking in a grim kind of way, confronted Pa Leeds as he came down the steps of the Randolph building and made to turn his steps for home. "But could you tell me where I could find Mr. Leeds?"

"Why, I'm Mr. Leeds," replied the sandy-haired man, vaguely wondering what this fellow could want.

"Now isn't that lucky? And I got here only just in time." The stranger waved a hand towards a car that stood at the kerb with a dark figure at the wheel, then smiled disarmingly at the puzzled Mr. Leeds. "Well, Mr. Leeds, I'm from the district attorney's office. He's got a complaint ready to sign."

"A complaint?" Pa Leeds was more mystified than ever. "I'm not complaining about anything."

"But you're ready to testify against Campo, aren't you?" the other persisted, his eyes narrowing to mere slits.

"Ah, now I understand." Pa Leeds smiled grimly. "Of course I'm ready to testify. There isn't the slightest doubt it was Maxey Campo that did the shooting last night."

"Yeah. Well, Mr. Leeds, you've got to sign an affidavit to that effect—a complaint." He took Pa Leeds by the arm, and jerked his head towards the automobile. "Now, come along. Step right in the car, Mr. Leeds, and I'll have you down town and back home again in 10 time at all."

All unsuspecting, Pa Leeds allowed himself to be led to the vehicle and helped inside, and scarcely was he seated with the other man beside him, than the car shot away from the kerb and rapidly gathered speed.

Mile upon mile the vehicle travelled, quickly leaving the better quarter of the city and sliding in and out of a perfect network of mean alley-ways and sordid streets. But Pa Leeds was completely lost to his surroundings, for the man beside him engaged him in a conversation that thoroughly interested him so that his eyes never left the fellow's face.

Then at last the car stopped and his companion opened the door, took a grip on his arm.

"Come on," he said somewhat tersely. Brown eyes blinked in astonishment as Pa Leeds peered through the open window of the car, saw a dilapidated building in front of him. Quickly he gazed round—a mean and squalid street with tumbledown dwellings and warehouses on either hand.

"Why," he gasped, turning back to the man who had been his companion on the drive, "this isn't the Criminal Courts Building—"

"Why, no; didn't I tell you?" The other scrambled out of the car and almost dragged the bewildered Pa Leeds after him. "Mr. Whitlock is down here on another case. He's got the necessary papers for you to sign with him. Come on, Mr. Leeds."

He led the way into the dingy building, up a flight of narrow wooden stairs, and at the top, flung open a door and thrust Pa Leeds into the room beyond.

An almost bare apartment with dust thick upon the floor and cobwebs hanging from the ceiling. Very little light, for the one window was shuttered, the only illumination being the guttering flame of a candle that stood in the neck

of a bottle that rested on a worn and rickety table.

But Pa Leeds paid no heed to his forbidding surroundings. His terrified eyes rested on the brutal faces of the four men who sat at the table fixing him with murderous gaze.

"Get over there!" His companion of the car pushed him roughly forward, then turned to the biggest of the four men, a huge fellow whose battered features told plainly enough that he was an ex-pugilist. "Well, Jack, here's the bird as ordered—and mighty easy game. believe me. Fell for it like a fool."

"Give him a chair." A chair was pushed forward, and Pa Leeds sank timidly into it, his mind a chaos of conflicting thoughts. He felt that something was wrong, that he had been tricked into taking that ride—then as he heard the big man's coarse voice again it came to him in a rush that he was in the hands of the Campo gang. "Your name Leeds?"

"Er—yes!" stammered the frightened man. "But I don't understand."

"You'll understand in a very few minutes, and if you're wise, Leeds, you'll consider carefully all I say!" Big Jack grinned evilly and held out a cigar he extracted from a waistcoat pocket. "A smoke? No? Well, please yourself, of course. Now let me tell you something. We brought you down here for a little talk. Just a friendly talk. Get me? Now you claim it was Maxey Campo that shot these men outside your house?"

"It—it was Campo, all right," asserted Mr. Leeds a trifle hesitantly.

"But are you sure? It's a serious business, sendin' a man to the Chair. It was gettin' dark, you mighta been mistaken. As a matter of fact, you were mistaken!"

Big Jack, deputed to corrupt Pa Leeds, to fix him so that he would not testify against Campo after all, allowed his words to sink in. This man, obviously a weakling, should be easy game. Campo did not want him killed—it would only mean another murder to be laid at his door. Bribery, or if that failed, a rough-handling that would terrify him, intimidate him so that he and his family would be too scared to stand witness against Maxey.

"Now I'll tell you why you were mistaken, Mr Leeds," Big Jack went on. "Campo was over at his summer place at Terrace Hill. You know, Campo ain't really a bad fellow at all. There's a gang of politicians in this city tryin' to hang something on him. That's all, and we know you ain't the man to let 'em get away with it. Now, are you sure it was Campo you saw?"

"It was Campo all right," Pa Leeds forgot his first fears. "I might have been mistaken in the street, but when he came right into the house and stood as close to me as you are now, I couldn't help seeing him. Then when they showed me his picture in the office, it was the same man all right."

"You could forget it if you wanted to." Big Jack was not so certain now that the prisoner was going to be easy, after all. He produced a bulging pocket-wallet, drew out a wad of a thousand dollar bills. "Look here, we'll make it worth your while to forget it. A wonderful holiday in California for the entire family, Mr. Leeds, and five thousand dollars to spend. It's yours if you'll keep your trap shut and guarantee to handle the rest of your family."

Pa Leeds was trembling now. His fears had crowded back on him as he realised the terrible plight he was in—the hands of a set of ruthless gangsters who thought nothing of using the gun. But honest to goodness man that he was, he would never accept a bribe even at the risk of his own skin.

"I—I couldn't do it. Oh, please don't ask me!" He looked pleadingly at the big man, shuddered as he saw him rise ponderously to his feet, an ugly snarl curling the large, cruel mouth. "Oh, please, please, I really couldn't take that kind of money. Now do let me go home, I implore you."

"Sure we'll let you go home. After you've learnt your lesson." Bribery being out of the question, Big Jack made a sign to his evil companions, and they quickly gathered round. "And now, Leeds, we've got a little piece we want you to speak, and the sooner you say it the better for you. It goes like this: 'I ain't seen nothin'—I don't know nothin'!'"

"Oh, oh, for Heaven's sake don't look like that at me!" Pa Leeds recoiled as

the gangster thrust his face forward aggressively. "Oh, leave me alone—leave—"

His words snapped off as a huge fist crashed under his jaw. Back he hurtled under the force of the impact to bring up against the wall of the room whimpering like a child, his body trembling with the terror that gripped him.

"You miserable little scum, we'll learn you!" Big Jack's voice was grim and harsh. Again he signed to his companions. "All right, boys, beat him up. And don't spare him till he's whining for mercy—till he swears he'll keep as quiet as a mouse!"

They nodded, then, grinning hideously, moved forward to obey the brutal command, while the terrified Mr. Leeds cringed back against the wall, eyes wild with fear, words of imploration tumbling from his quivering lips.

Scared!

WHEN Pa Leeds failed to arrive home at his customary hour that evening his wife became very uneasy. She remembered those grim words of Maxey Campo's when he and his ruffianly bodyguard had broken into their home the previous night: "You ain't seen nothin', see? You ain't heard nothin', see? One move out of you and I'll shoot down the lot of you as if you were mad dogs!"

Supposing Campo had got to know that they were going to testify against him in Court? Utterly callous as he was, he would carry out his grim threat without the slightest compunction!

Ma Leeds turned almost sick as the thought beat into her burning brain. With a cry of anguish she ran blindly to the telephone, rang up the district attorney's office and spoke to Whitlock in a sobbing voice. Her husband was not home. Could Maxey Campo possibly have discovered they were going to stand witness against him and had waylaid her husband and carried out his brutal threat?

Whitlock was alarmed. He thought it all quite likely, though he refrained from admitting that much to the distracted woman. He would do his best to locate her husband—he was sure Mr. Leeds was quite all right, perhaps delayed on business.

The moment he hung up the receiver he called his men around him, sent them out in search of the missing man.

Within the hour Mr. Leeds was found—found semi-conscious in a gutter in the slum quarter of the city. They carried him to his home in a car babbling that he had been the victim of Maxey Campo's ruthlessness, and he was put to bed, badly broken in mind and body.

Scared nigh out of their wits, his family clustered around him, heard from his bruised and bleeding lips all that had happened since he had stepped from his office that night.

"And the brutes said this was only a sample!" the injured man groaned. "A kind of warning to us all to know what to expect if any of us dare go into the witness-box and swear that Campo did the killing last night. Oh, mother, Sue, Jackie, we can't take a chance—we—"

"Bah! You're scared, scared of a few measly little rats! Heck, but I'll learn 'em—I'll show 'em a thing or two. I'm a law-abiding citizen, I am, and I'm willing to make any sacrifice to see this city clean." Fists clenched, Grandpa Sumnerill danced about the bed-room, a warlike gleam in his eyes. "And I'm a soldier, too—been in battle after battle, and by hades, I'll fight a whole darned battalion of Maxey Campos—"

Maxey Campo
scowled at the
old man.



"And go out first pop," sneered Jackie. "Why, I bet you'd be the first to stick up your hands if he came in here at this moment."

Grandpa was on the point of making some caustic rejoinder, when there came a knock at the front door.

"All right, I'll go." The old warrior smiled disdainfully as he saw the terrified expressions that had leaped into the faces of his daughter and her family. "It's not Maxey Campo or any of his scum, if that's what you think. Whitlock, for a pension—just you mark my words."

It was the district attorney, and he came into the bed-room with grandpa at his heels.

"Hallo, folk! Feeling comfortable, Mr. Leeds?" the district attorney inquired.

"No, I'm not—and it's all thanks to you," grumbled the invalid in little more than a whisper. "If you hadn't got round us to—"

"Now, now, don't be sore, Mr. Leeds." Whitlock glanced at the others, saw the grim expressions on the faces of Mrs. Leeds, Sue and Jackie, and knew that this latest outrage of the Campo gang had intimidated all three. Now it would be difficult to attain the greatest ambition of his life—to indict the killer of Jim Preston and the gangster Kaufman. He could see that clear enough. His witnesses were turning yellow. "Look here, folk, I can see what's biting you, and I can quite understand your feelings. It's tough that Mr. Leeds should have fallen into the hands of these ruthless curs, but nothing like it will happen again. I've put a guard on this house, and he's going to remain on guard till after the trial. That's the day after to-morrow, for, by a stroke of good fortune, my men have just brought Campo in. Behind prison bars he is now, and with you to swear he did that killing he'll never be free again."

"But his men will wreak vengeance, Mr. Whitlock." Weak-kneed as he was, Jackie was more scared than any of them. "If we put a foot outside the door they'll—"

"But none of you are leaving this house till you're wanted for the trial." The district attorney smiled grimly. It was the only way to make certain that the remainder of the Leeds family did not lay themselves open to an attack by the gangsters. Shrewd that he was, he was taking no further risks with them. "No, no; don't protest, Mrs. Leeds. I've been along to Miss Sue's office, and her boss is quite willing to allow her the time off. And there's no need for the boys to go to school. I've seen their headmaster, and—"

"You have, huh?" Donny scowled at Whitlock. "Well, I ain't stopping in, so there. The baseball game's to-morrow, and the boys'll be wanting me to—"

"Now, now, Donny!" His grandpa wagged a reproving finger at the boy. "You'll do what Mr. Whitlock says. There's a far greater game for you to play down at the courts the day after to-morrow. You're a law-abiding citizen and a man, you are, and—"

"Oh, for heaven's sake, father, please don't talk like that!" There were tears in

Mrs. Leeds' eyes and her heart was like a leaden weight within her. Well she knew the uselessness of standing firm for law and order. Her husband had suffered brutally at the hands of the Campo gang, and if any of them testified against their leader there was no doubt in her mind that the consequences would be very dire indeed. Probably they would be shot down when next they appeared in the street. "Donny is my boy, and he'll do what I say, father; and I tell you he's not going to say a word that will endanger his life."

"But, Mrs. Leeds," protested the district attorney, "as respectable citizens you must—"

"Must nothing!" snapped Jackie, his eyes flashing fire. "If we don't want to testify you can't make us. You had our promise, yes. But poor father's suffered for it, and that's quite enough. The rest of us are not taking chances."

"Scared, that's what you all are! Darned fine relations, I must say!" Grandpa Summerill glared at them with a disdainful look on his wizened features. Then he turned to the district attorney, whose face wore a troubled expression. "Mr. Whitlock, why worry about these white-livered fools. You have me—Private Summerill, the man who never feared a single foe. I'll testify against that brute Campo and the rest can go hang!"

"Thanks, old-timer." Whitlock patted his shoulder appreciatively. "You'll be wanted, of course, and so will the others. You see, the more witnesses we have, the better chance there'll be of proving Campo guilty." His stern blue eyes wandered to the faces of Mrs. Leeds, Sue and Jackie. "Sorry, folk, but you can't get out of it now. You're going into the witness-

box and you're going to say your piece, see?"

A curt nod that was meant for them all, then, turning sharply on his heel, he strode from the room, ramming his hat on his head as he went.

A Terrible Blow.

IN the afternoon of the following day District Attorney Whitlock, together with a plain-clothes officer, paid yet another visit to the Leeds' home. He knocked upon the front door and almost immediately it was opened by Thorpe, his young assistant, whom, by way of extra precaution, he had installed there late the previous night.

Together they went into the sitting-room, where Thorpe looked at his chief inquiringly.

"Anything new, Thorpe?" Whitlock asked, as he flung his soft felt hat into a chair.

"Nothing here, chief," was the instant reply. "Everything quiet—not the least sign of the Campo gang. How are things shaping?"

"Fine! I'll indict to-morrow for first degree murder." There was a harsh note in the district attorney's voice and his eyes glinted like twin points of steel. "And if the Campo gang make one move to stop me, I'll ask the governor to call out the militia. I'll throw a guard around the Criminal Courts Building, empanel a special jury, and I'll watch Maxey Campo die in the chair ninety days from next Tuesday. Now, just you bring in the witnesses. I want to check their testimony."

Thorpe was out of the room in a flash. Jackie, Sue, and their grandfather he found in the dining-room partaking of an afternoon cup of tea, and he sent them in to the district attorney. Sue told him her mother and the two small boys were upstairs with their injured father, and with a word of thanks the young fellow ran up the stairs and knocked on Pa Leeds' bedroom door. Mrs. Leeds' voice bade him enter, and, opening the door, he poked his head into the room.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Leeds, but the



"Ah, ha! that's the fellow that did the shootin'!" Eyes gleaming fiercely, he raised his hand and pointed his finger straight at the gangster.

district attorney wants you downstairs with little Ned and—” Thorpe cut off his words abruptly and looked around the room with a puzzled frown. “But Donny—they said he was up here with you.”

Mrs. Leeds' face went suddenly white, and a sob of anguish escaped her.

“Donny! He hasn't been up here at all—at least, not since dinner!” Her hands clasp convulsively, she sprang to her feet. “Oh, please, please don't say he's not in the house! Oh, don't say it—don't say it!”

“Heavens, those brutes—they've got him! He—he must have slipped out for the baseball match, mother.” Pa Leeds struggled to sit up in his bed, but the effort was too much for him, and, with a gasp of pain, he sank back on the pillows. “Oh, this is terrible—terrible! Oh, what on earth have we done to deserve this? What—”

But Mrs. Leeds scarcely heard him. With a protective arm around little Ned she staggered from the room, and Thorpe, his face grimly set, followed her.

Distractedly the mother burst into the sitting-room, and the terror in her face, the tears swimming in her eyes, was sufficient to tell those gathered there that something terrible was wrong.

“Donny! Donny!” Her voice was shrill and pathetic. “He's not in the house—he's gone—gone, and those brutes have got him! I know they have! I know they have!”

“Is this right, Thorpe?” Whitlock grabbed his assistant fiercely by the arm.

“It looks like it, chief,” came the grim answer.

The district attorney at once issued brisk orders, and Thorpe and Williams, the plain-clothes man who had accompanied Whitlock to the house, rushed away to search for the missing boy. Not a sign of him anywhere in the house, and no trace of him in the immediate vicinity when they continued their search outside.

Back they came to report failure, and the district attorney, learning from his sobbing mother that the boy had most probably disregarded instructions and had slipped out for the baseball match, at once got through on the telephone to his school. Nothing had been seen of him there, and he was not on the ball-ground.

It was at that moment that the detective who had been guarding the house from outside entered the sitting-room and gravely handed to his superior a cap and a baseball glove.

“I found these down the end of the alley,” he announced. “They were trampled in the mud. It looked to me as if there had been a struggle.”

“Oh, my Donny! My Donny!” Mrs. Leeds burst into a flood of tears, her shoulders heaving convulsively. “They've got him! The brutes—they've got him. Oh, what can I do! What—”

The ringing of the telephone-bell broke into her bitter outburst, but as Jackie lifted the receiver of the instrument, Whitlock flung forward and quickly clapped his hand over the mouthpiece.

“Quick, Williams, run out and trace this call from the nearest phone box. Quite likely it's the Campo gang going to tell us they've got young Donny. See what I mean?” As Williams darted from the room the district attorney returned his gaze to Jackie. “Now, my boy, if this is Campo's crowd 'tall 'em, understand? It might mean your brother's life!”

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Jackie nodded sulkily, took the receiver from its hooks, and placed it to his ear with a hand that trembled.

“Hallo,” he said into the mouthpiece in a shaky voice. “Yes, yes, this is the Leeds' house. No, it isn't Mr. Leeds speaking; it's his son.”

“Then you listen here.” The voice of Big Jack sounded menacingly in Jackie's ear. Shrewd that he was, the gangster suspected that the delay in answering his call was to allow someone at the other end sufficient time to trace from where it was being made. “You just cut out the stalling and get this straight. Your kid brother's here, see? And if any member of his family identifies Campo at the hearing tomorrow that's the last you'll ever see of him.”

With that grim threat the line went dead, and replacing the receiver Jackie turned from the instrument, his face haggard, stark fear showing plainly in his goggling eyes.

“They've got him, eh?” Whitlock said in a quiet, grave tone.

The boy nodded wretchedly, and on the instant Mrs. Leeds let out a hysterical scream. Quickly her daughter ran to her, flung her arms compassionately around her neck, while Grandpa Summerill, his eyes blazing fiercely, stamped up and down the room, shaking his clenched fists and uttering dark threats against Campo and his ruffianly gang.

Then Williams returned breathlessly. “Too late, chief,” he gasped. “It was somewhere on the Adams exchange. They hung up before we could get the number.”

“Where's the Adams Exchange?” Whitlock fired at him.

“Around Eighth and Stanton Streets.”

“Yeah. Well, that's where they had the father, near the Ideal Paper Box Plant. And that's Campo's territory all right.” The district attorney's face was set with a grim determination. “Heavens, but I'll throw every policeman in the city into that territory, and go through it, house by house. I'll find that kid if I have to move Heaven and earth. Come on, Williams, let's be going!”

But before he had time to grab up his hat, to reassure the distracted Mrs. Leeds, Grandpa Summerill, his eyes a gleam, grim resolution blazing in his heart, had slipped quietly from the house. Campo's gang of killers had got little Donny, his favourite grandchild, somewhere in the salubrious district surrounding Eighth and Stanton Streets. The callous brutes! If only he could trace their hide-out they should be made to suffer dearly for this heinous offence.

Grandpa to the Rescue.

THE day of the trial, and the Leeds household was in a state of panic.

No news of Donny, in spite of the widespread efforts of the police to locate his whereabouts, and there was no news or sign either of Grandpa Summerill, who had been missing from the house in Western Street since the previous afternoon.

District Attorney Whitlock was almost demented. He simply had to get the Leeds family to testify against Campo, but with Donny and now his grandpa obviously in the hands of the Campo gang, he knew it was more than likely that the others would be too terrified to say the words that would send the ruthless gang chief to the smoky cell.

But he had them taken to the court, for all his fears, and Pa Leeds went, too, travelling on a stretcher in an

ambulance van that was heavily-guarded by an escort of plain-clothes men who, from the powerful automobiles in which they rode, kept an alert eye on the sidewalks in case any attempt should be made to “get at” these precious witnesses.

Meantime in a room above the premises ostensibly occupied by the Ideal Paper Box Plant, Ltd. in East Street, which was not a quarter of a mile from Station Street, little Donny Leeds sat upon a Chesterfield, virtually a prisoner, but listening with rapt attention to the thin-faced man who was seated beside him explaining in detail the rudiments of baseball pitchings.

A strange thing that this brutal gangster should be consorting thus with the boy. But a few moments before Donny had absently pulled from his pocket the baseball that his grandfather had recently given him with his initials upon it, and the man, an old player himself, had been keenly interested as the youngster made pretence to hurl it at an imaginary batsman.

“You've a lot to learn, son,” the gangster had said. “Here, give me that ball and I'll show you how to make some of the best pitches ever.”

So Donny had given the crook the ball and had soon become engrossed in what the man had to tell him. The fact that he was a prisoner in the hands of some of the most ruthless gangsters in the city—that even at that moment four of them were crouching at a window, guns ready in their hands, prepared to put up a stout resistance should the police, who were even then scouring East Street for the boy, suddenly break in upon them—all this was lost to the little fellow in his eagerness to improve his knowledge of the great ball game.

“Now you bring the ball over the end of your finger—like this, kinda whip it when you let it go and it's an indrop.” The gangster illustrated the pitch perfectly. “Kid, that's sure a nasty one, believe me. One guaranteed to help any side to victory.”

“Gee, mister”—Donny's eyes shone with enthusiasm—“it certainly does look a good 'un to me. As soon as I get the chance I'll try it.”

“Here!” The man thrust the ball into Donny's hand. “Let's see you go through the movements of the pitch right now. Then I can see you get it absolutely okay.”

Donny got to his feet eagerly, the ball clasped in his fingers, his arm stretched out behind him.

“That's right.” The gangster nodded his approval. “Now your arm comes over—yes, that's it. And now—”

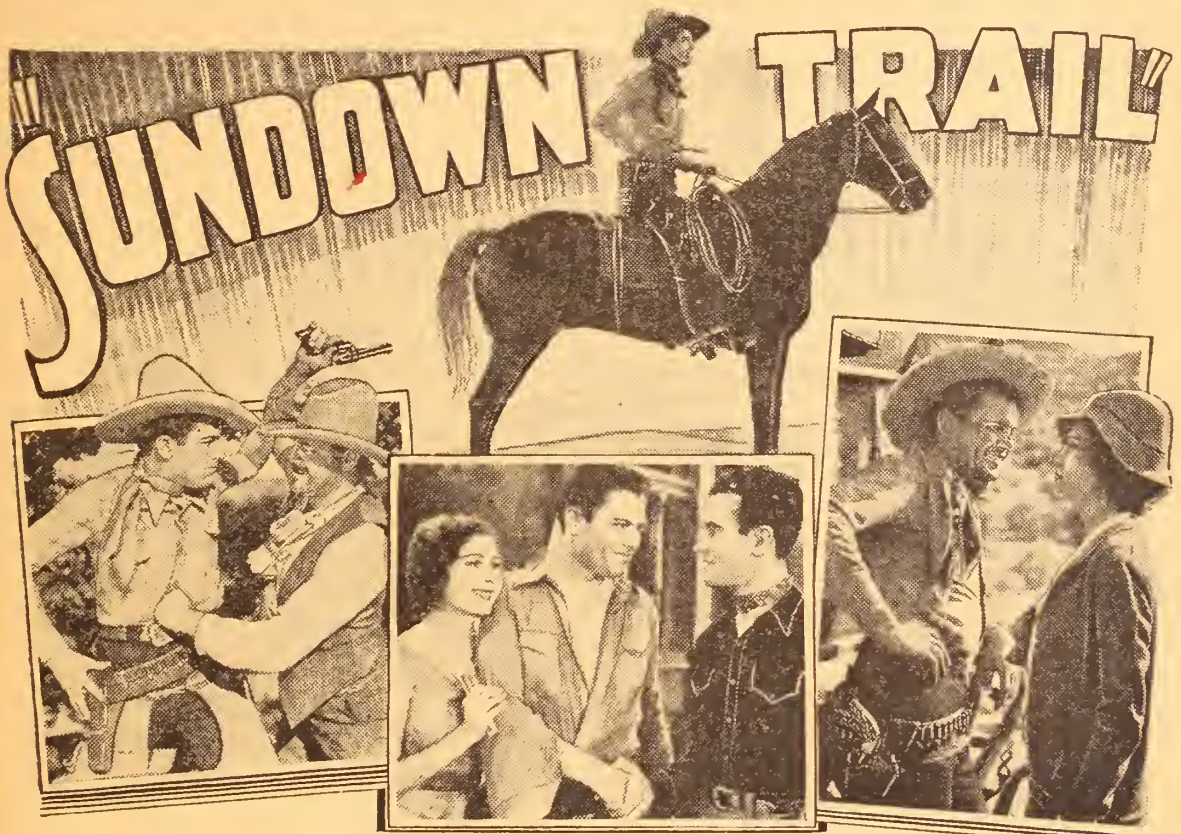
He broke off as Donny let his arm drop suddenly to his side and gazed inquiringly at the boy whose eyes had taken on an eager gleam as he caught the notes of a life being played down in the street. That tunc. Donny could not mistake it. It was one that his grandpa played time and time again.

His grandpa in the street below! Here was a chance of escape. Scarce had the thought flashed into his mind than Donny drew back his arm again and hurled the baseball with unerring aim straight at the window where Big Jack and the others were crouching.

The tinkle of broken glass as the ball smashed clean through the window-pane within an inch of Big Jack's head, mingled with a string of violent curses as Campo's men leaped back in alarm. For the moment they feared that a machine-gun attack was being made

(Continued on page 23.)

A haughty young beauty came with a cowardly attorney to take over her father's ranch, but the daredevil manager and a gang of rustlers upset her plans. Starring Tom Keene and Marion Shilling.



The Tally-ho.

THE strains of music agitated the atmosphere in Las Cruces, near the Rio Grande, ten miles from the point where that mighty river leaves New Mexico and enters Old.

The music came from the throats of a bunch of parched cow-hands who were escorting into town the strangest equipage that Las Cruces had ever witnessed. It was an open wagon with a kind of four-poster awning, to keep the sun off two or three easy-chairs that had been placed in the carriage, and it was drawn by a couple of high-stepping ponies.

A big, bronzed fellow, wearing an outsize in sombreros, was plying the reins, and his voice gave a strident rendering of the melody which he and his companions seemed to favour. Thus the attention of everyone in the street was attracted to the new arrivals, and as the cavalcade came to a standstill it was at once surrounded by a crowd of inquisitive onlookers.

"What's Buck Sawyer up to now?" someone demanded, and the question was repeated to the big, bronzed cowboy who occupied the driving-seat of the wagon.

"What in Sam Hill do you call that, Buck?" he was asked.

The hefty cowboy made an accommodating gesture.

"Say," he stated, "this is the first open-air, sight-seein' tally-ho in the State of New Mexico."

"Tally-ho?" a man in the crowd repeated doubtfully. "What's that, Buck—a travellin' piazza, or the result o' hard liquor?"

"Brother," Buck Sawyer answered with mild reproach, "this is the result

of a lot of hard thinkin', and has been built by lovin' hands to carry Miss Dorothy Beals, heiress of the Lazy B, to her regal domain."

There was a saloon hard by, and from the veranda of it a burly, dark-complexioned individual had noted Buck's approach. He was a man known around Las Cruces as Joe Currier, and his reputation was none too savoury, though no actual misdeed had ever yet been pinned on him.

Currier regarded the Lazy B ranch-hands and their comie equipage for a spell, and then strolled through into the saloon and singled out a slim, curly-headed youth who was drinking at the bar.

"Flash," he drawled, with the suspicion of a sneer, "your old runnin' mate, Buck Sawyer, has gone plumb loco, ain't he?"

The youngster whom he had addressed was one Jim Prescott, commonly known as "Flash," a likeable fellow, whose only failing was his recklessness. He looked at Currier inquiringly, and only gathered the latter's meaning when the man led him to the swing-doors and indicated the scene in the street.

Flash grinned at the spectacle, then suddenly became serious.

"Say, listen, Joe," he muttered, "if Buck should come in here, don't let on that I know you, will you?"

Currier frowned, and fixed him with his narrow, penetrating eyes.

"I don't savvy why you're so seared o' that dude," he growled; but before he could say more young Flash interrupted him.

"Buck's one of the best," he declared stoutly, "an' somehow I wouldn't like him to know anything about the kind

of racket we're mixed up in. And another thing—don't you ever tangle with that 'dude,' as you call him. He'll shoot the spurs plumb off your boots and never spoil your shine. I'm tellin' yuh."

Meanwhile, the crowd in the street was drifting away, as their brief interest in the fancy tally-ho began to fade. But when Buck descended to the ground a man came out of a Wells Fargo Express office opposite and drew him aside. He was the agent in charge of the Las Cruces branch.

"Buck," he said, "I'm kinda worried. Currier an' his gang are in town, an' there's a heavy shipment of gold comin' in on the train. It's to be carried on to Victoria by stage-coach."

Buck was listening attentively, and the mention of Currier's name had produced a thoughtful expression on his face.

"You know," he murmured, "it's a funny thing. They've never nailed any thing on Currier, but he's generally around when things happen."

"Listen, Buck," the agent went on. "Supposin' I put the gold in a sack and slip it in your tally-ho. The Victoria agent could pick it up at your rancho to-night."

"All right," Buck agreed; "you do that while I'm makin' Miss Dorothy welcome. In the meantime, I guess me an' the boys will trail over to the saloon an' wait there till the train's due."

The Lazy B hands trooped across the street in a body, and Buck, the first to cross the threshold of the saloon, was pounced upon by a crouching figure the instant he pushed open the swing doors.

Though taken by surprise, he proved

himself equal to the emergency, and in the twinkling of an eye he had swung his assailant off his feet and dumped him on the floor. He then sat on his chest, but without animosity, for he had already recognised the practical joker as Flash Prescott.

"Say, you old burro," he drawled, "what are you doin' in these parts—lookin' for your old job with the Lazy B?"

"Not me," Flash gasped, his merriment and Buck's weight combining to rob him of his breath. "Hey, get up off me, will yuh? You're sittin' on an official of the R. and S. Beef Company."

Buck stood up and pulled Flash to his feet.

"I sure am glad to see you, anyway," he stated. "Listen, old-timer, I've got some things to talk over with you—No, don't stampepe for the bar. What I've got to say to you is private."

He led Flash away from the counter, where the rest of the Lazy B boys were already forming up for liquid refreshment.

"Come on, now," he resumed, when there was less likelihood of their conversation being public property, "what's this job you're braggin' about?"

"No foolin', Buck," Flash answered, "I'm western appraiser for one of the largest beef concerns in the country."

Buck eyed him keenly.

"I hope you're tellin' me the truth," he said. "You've been showin' up here too often with that Currier hombre."

Flash looked uncomfortable for a moment, then met Buck's steady gaze with a carefree laugh.

"Don't you start gettin' riled about me, Buck," he told the big cowboy. "I'm behavin' right churchily, I am."

"I'm glad to hear it," was Buck's rejoinder. "For you never were the kind of guy that settled down easily, and I've been thinkin' I might have to lick you into shape one o' these days. And lister, Flash—when you decide to go back to work for a livin' instead of trailin' along with this Currier outfit, let me know. I'm still manager of the Lazy B—"

He came to a pause, realising that they were no longer alone. A man had strolled towards them, and, turning his head, Buck recognised the burly form of Currier.

Currier's first words made it plain that he had chosen to disregard Flash Prescott's appeal, and was also inclined to flout his warning.

"Sawyer," he said to Buck, "this kid's weaned. Why don't you let him pick his own company?"

"He has," Buck retorted pointedly.

"That's what's worryin' me."

A dangerous glint appeared in Currier's eyes.

"No one has a thing on me," he blurted, with heat. "Not a thing."

"No, not yet," Buck granted, and at that Currier's face grew livid. For an instant he was tempted to reach for his gun, but he saw that the big cowboy's hand was near his holster, and he contented himself by glaring truculently at the ranch foreman.

It was at this juncture that a shrill and distant blast penetrated to the saloon. It was the whistle of a train's siren, and as Buck heard the sound he forgot Currier's presence and turned to the boys at the bar.

"Come on, fellers!" he roared. "Here comes the rattler, with Miss Dotty Beals aboard!"

Over the Prairie.

A CONDUCTOR entered the private compartment that had been booked in the name of "Miss Dorothy Beals."

It was occupied by three people, one November 21st, 1931.

of whom was Dorothy herself, a girl of twenty, fashionably and expensively dressed in the latest New York style, and radiantly beautiful, though the expression on her pretty face at the moment was somewhat petulant.

Opposite her was seated a thin, clever-looking Easterner in a smart lounge suit—George Marsden, her attorney and legal adviser. The third occupant was a sixteen-stone coloured woman known as Jenny, Dorothy's handmaid.

"We're pulling into Las Cruces, Miss Beals," the train conductor announced.

Dorothy thanked him, and then gazed through the window at the picturesque sweep of country over which they were passing—a country of rolling prairie and mountain pinnacles.

The train had slackened down, but was still travelling at a fair speed. A few seconds before, it had pulled level with a cowboy who was riding in the same direction, and in a sportive mood the ranch-hand was now racing abreast of the long line of cars, exhibiting his own magnificent horsemanship, as well as the pace of the mustang on which he was mounted.

Dorothy was watching him without enthusiasm when Marsden spoke.

"I hope our stay in these parts will be short," the lawyer observed.

Dorothy nodded, and then with a contemptuous gesture indicated the cowboy who was galloping abreast of their coach.

"They're all show-offs," she said scornfully. "You know, I've still a faint recollection of the West—very faint, thank heavens. I think I was seven when mother took me to civilisation."

Marsden leaned forward.

"I agree with you that its attractions are overrated," he declared, "but I'd advise you not to show your prejudice—at least, not until after we learn the conditions of your father's will, Dotty."

"Don't use that horrid nickname when you're talking to me!" Dorothy snapped. "You know how I loathe it."

Marsden hastily apologised, but Dorothy was in an irritable mood, and had been prone to fits of temper ever since she had known that she must travel West if she were to inherit her father's estate. She was still frowning when she descended from the train at Las Cruces.

Buck and the boys were waiting for her with the tally-ho, and, as she was the only feminine passenger to alight, Buck stepped forward, hat in hand.

"Howdy, Miss Dotty?" he greeted.

"Welcome back home to the Lazy B!"

Dorothy's eyes snapped as she heard the detested nickname. She looked Buck up and down with a glance that should have chilled him.

"I'm Buck Sawyer, the manager of your ranch," the cowboy went on to explain.

"Pardon me, Mr. Sawyer," Dorothy said with scathing sweetness, "but I think you mean my ex-manager. My attorney, Mr. Marsden, will have full charge of my affairs from now on."

Buck was for the moment taken aback, but he speedily recovered his composure, and when he spoke it was with a slight curl of the lip.

"Howdy, Mr. Marsden?" he drawled. "You've sure taken a load off my shoulders."

Marsden frowned.

"I suppose you've arranged for us to drive out to the ranch right away?" he suggested.

"Have I?" Buck declared, turning with pride towards the tally-ho. "Say, the boys and I have rigged up, especially for Miss Beals' comfort, the first open-air, sight-seein' carriage ever known in these parts."

Dorothy looked at the colourful

equipage with unconcealed amazement and disgust.

"I refuse to make myself ridiculous!" she cried hotly. "I'd rather walk than ride on such a conveyance!"

Buck and the boys exchanged glances. Then the ranch foreman spoke quietly.

"The Victoria stage-coach goes right by the Lazy B outfit," he said. "It's a heap faster—but not nearly so private an' artistic," he added.

Dorothy turned on her heel and, followed by Marsden, marched towards the stage coach. Her handmaid Jenny did not accompany her, however, but looked longingly at the fantastic tally-ho, feeling that nothing would have pleased her more than to ride out to the ranch in such splendour and state.

"Mistah Sawyah," she said, "can Ah ride with you-all?"

"Can you?" Buck echoed. "Say, mammy, I'll show you the most all-fired private sight-seein' tour you could ever wish for. Hey, Tom," he called to one of the boys, glancing dubiously at Jenny's buxom form, "get me a derrick, will you?"

Jenny was lifted aboard amidst laughter, and she had settled herself regally in one of the easy-chairs when the Wells Fargo agent appeared on the scene. He was carrying the sack to which he had transferred the shipment of gold.

"Here's the stuff, Buck," he said in an undertone, and when the sack had been deposited in the tally-ho he drew back and wished the ranch foreman a safe journey.

Buck climbed to the driving-seat and ordered one of the boys to strike up a melody on a banjo, and as the cavalcade moved forward in the tracks of the Victoria stage, a dozen voices were raised in song.

Before the fast-travelling coach could roll on out of hearing the opening words of the first verse reached the ears of Dorothy Beals and brought an angry flush to her pretty face.

"I built my gal a tally-ho, flowers an' fixings fine,

I thought I'd be a riot, but I'm thinner than a dime."

The boys sang on hilariously, and long after she was beyond sight or sound of them Dorothy felt her blood boiling with resentment. But the circumstances that had upset her might rightly have been regarded by her as trivialities had she been aware of what was going on at the bank of a stream a mile ahead.

Four or five men were gathered there, and if any casual wayfarer had seen them he might have been struck by the strangeness of their behaviour. For every one of them was down on his knees, busily plastering his face with thick, black mud from the stream-bed.

Their features were unrecognisable when at length they stood up. No man could have said with any certainty that those mud-smothered faces were the faces of Currier and his associates. Yet the voice that reeled off a series of instructions before the stage-coach drove into view was that of the man whose reputation Buck Sawyer had questioned in the saloon at Las Cruces.

"Flash," said Currier, "don't get too prominent."

"All right," came the reply from the grime-smearing youth who had assured Buck that he was in honest occupation.

"Bill an' Sam," Currier continued, turning to two more of the gangsters, "your job will be to cut the hosses loose. And Burghley, you get the gold-chest. Come on now, let's get goin'!"

They left their ponies in a thicket and advanced to the edge of the road. They had not long to wait ere the stage was

sighted on a bend a couple of hundred yards distant.

The crooks watched it grimly and calmly. The least composed of them was Flash; but, the more to his discredit, his conscience was not the reason for his anxiety. This was his first stick-up, and the excitement of it had set his pulses hammering. In his folly, he imagined that the sensation was a pleasurable one.

The coach drew near the point where the gangsters had concealed themselves in the brush, and suddenly Currier jumped out into the middle of the trail. The others followed suit, flourishing their six-guns.

"Elevate," Currier rapped out, "an' don't try no heroics!"

The driver drew rein and promptly shot his arms above his head. Scared faces appeared in the window of the coach—the faces of Dorothy, Marsden and another passenger. The occupants were ordered in a gruff voice to step down, and did so with their hands in the air.

Burghley climbed to the roof and dragged an iron-bound chest from its resting-place there. In the meantime Bill and Sam were cutting the traces and stampeding the coach-horses as a precautionary measure, and while they were about this work Currier and Flash were covering the trio of passengers.

"Toss your valuables in a pile and it'll soon be over," Currier ordered, and with gingerly fingers Marsden and the other male passenger obeyed.

"Now, lady," Currier went on, as Dorothy made no move, "do you donate or do I have to search you?"

"Don't you dare lay hands on this lady!" Marsden cried vehemently, but in a moment Currier's six-gun was against his ribs.

"Back up there, hombre," the gang-leader warned, with a sternness that sent Marsden stumbling away in full retreat. "You ain't seen enough of this glorious West to die yet. Come on there, lady, make it snappy."

Thoroughly frightened now, Dorothy hastily plucked one or two rings from her fingers and a necklace from her throat. She threw them to the ground, together with some money from her

handbag, and the loot being gathered, Currier and his companions vanished into the brush again.

The driver of the stage stumbled off in the hope of securing his horses, Marsden, Dorothy and the other passengers remaining where they were.

"I reckon you can take your arms down now, brother," the third passenger said to Marsden, as he saw that the attorney was still standing with his arms raised. "Them road-agents won't be back."

Marsden turned to Dorothy. "Now I understand your mother's loathing for the West," he told her querulously, mopping his brow as he spoke. "I never experienced—"

He did not complete the sentence, for just then a familiar sound broke on his ears. It was the refrain of a ballad which a number of lusty voices were rendering, and presently Buck Sawyer and the Lazy B cowboys moved into view with their tally-ho.

"I woke up one morning on the old Chishold trail,

Rope in my hand and a cow by the tail.

Coma yi-yi yipi, yipi ya—"

Marsden and the other passenger ran towards the bend around which the cavalcade had appeared, and thirty seconds later they were relating to Buck all that had occurred.

"Road-agents, huh?" Buck ground out. "Did they get Miss Dotty?"

"No," Marsden cut in, "but they took all her jewellery and threatened her. They can't be far off, Sawyer."

"Tom," Buck said to one of the boys, "give me your horse."

"Wait a minute, Buck," the puncher interrupted. "Miss Dotty might need your attention. Better let me an' the rest of the boys trail 'em."

Buck nodded.

"All right," he agreed, "bring 'em in."

And as the ranch-hands galloped off he glanced down at Marsden and the attorney's fellow-passenger.

"Better come aboard, Marsden," he offered. "And I can give you a lift, too, stranger."

"No, thanks," was the reply. "I'll wait till the stage-driver finds his horses."

With Marsden installed in a chair next to the one Jenny was occupying, Buck drove on to join Dorothy. He pulled up alongside her and spoke to her attorney.

"Mr. Marsden," he said, "would you ask Miss Beals if she'll be ridiculous now and ride in my tally-ho? Or is she bent on walkin'?"

"Mr. Marsden," Dorothy rejoined curtly, "tell Mr. Sawyer I'll walk."

With the words she proceeded to step out along the dusty trail in her high-heeled shoes. She was stumbling in the wagon-ruts before she had gone three paces, but seemed determined to continue the march.

Buck raised his voice again. "Mr. Marsden," he said loudly, "tell Miss Beals we've got twenty miles of real rough goin' ahead of us. Well-stocked with mountain lions and rattlesnakes."

He saw Dorothy come to an abrupt standstill.

"Yeah," he went on, "and I don't want to brag about it, but we've got a pretty fair crop o' gila monsters, too."

Dorothy faced round and moved back to the tally-ho reluctantly. Dropping to the ground Buck swung her up in his powerful arms without comment and dumped her aboard the carriage. Then he climbed to the driving-seat and cracked his whip above the heads of the two horses in front of him.

A Brush with Currier.

MAKING for the spot where they had tethered their horses, the road-agents swung themselves into the saddle and galloped through the thicket. They followed the course of the stream, and did not halt till they were a couple of miles from the scene of the hold-up.

They deposited their loot on the ground. The valuables taken from the



November 21st, 1931.

The occupants were ordered in a gruff voice to step down, and did so with their hands in the air.

three passengers did not concern them a great deal, for when money and trinkets had been divided each man would only be a few dollars the richer. But the contents of the chest should provide a fortune, they imagined, and it was with eagerness and impatience that the gangsters watched Currier force the lock.

The lid burst open to reveal a number of sacks, and snatching one of the canvas bags Currier drew out a knife and slashed the fabric. The mud on his face concealed his expression as he saw the result, but the fury with which he ripped open the other sacks betrayed his feelings.

From every one of the canvas bags a worthless stream of grit had poured. "Sand!" blazed Currier. "Why, the dirty, double-crossin' coyotes!"

"That's the first time we ever slipped up on a job," Burghley growled. "Wonder what could've gone wrong, boss? Who was it that planted that stuff there?"

Currier was glaring at the sacks, and all at once he stood up.

"Kid," he said to Flash Prescott, "you go on an' wait for us in Victoria."

Flash made as if to utter a protest, but Currier broke in on him.

"Get goin'!" he rapped out, and Flash mounted his horse obediently and cantered away.

When the youngster was out of earshot the rest of the gangsters looked at Currier inquiringly, and he at once voiced his thoughts.

"We're goin' to take a look at Sawyer's funny wagon," he grated. "I saw that Wells Fargo agent snoopin' around it just before the stage left Las Cruces. Sawyer's Flash Prescott's friend, so I figured I'd get the kid outa the way."

The crooks remounted and made for the road again. A hillock now lay between them and the ribbon of trail, and as they reached the peak of the promontory they caught a glimpse of the tally-ho winding its way across the flats below.

"There he is now!" jerked Currier.

In that same moment Buck sighted the rogues as they formed a group of dark silhouettes against the vivid skyline, and the instant they began to sweep down the hillside he whipped his horses into a gallop.

"Hqld fast, folks!" he called to his passengers. "That looks like the stick-up party, and we're gonna ramble!"

His voice mingled with the strident tones of Currier, which reached the occupants of the tally-ho as the vehicle was lurching forward.

"After him, boys! He thinks he can beat us to the ranch!"

The crooks urged their hroucs down the declivity, and in a whirl of dust the animals slithered to the trail scarcely fifty paces behind the fugitives.

By then the tally-ho was careering along the road at break-neck pace, but the crooks gave chase determinedly, and the drumming of their horses' hoofs was punctuated with the blasts of gunfire.

Hot lead ripped around the fancy carriage and an anxious expression appeared on Buck's face. He was not concerned for himself, however, but for Dorothy and Jenny, as there seemed every likelihood of a random bullet hitting one of them.

A deep gully lay to the left of the trail, and swerving to the brink of it, Buck pulled the horses to a standstill and cut them loose. Then he turned to

Marsden and pointed out a copse near by.

"Get Miss Beals behind those trees and keep out of sight," he ordered. "And Jenny, you lead these horses to cover!"

The passengers descended, and the instant they had set foot to ground Buck put his shoulder under the carriage and with a terrific heave overturned it. It tumbled into the gully and finished wrong side up, and, diving after it, Buck took cover behind its wreckage and drew his six-gun.

Meanwhile Marsden had hustled Dorothy to the copse, which stood near the foot of the slope, and they had concealed themselves when Currier and his men reached the scene.

"Sawyer," Currier shouted, approaching the edge of the trail cautiously, "turn over that Fargo box and you can keep the girl. But if we have to fight for it, we'll take her, too."

Buck's answer was a bullet that sent Currier to cover, and next second that shot was greeted with a fusillade from the gangsters. The crash of the guns shattered the silence of the New Mexican noon, and leaden slugs sang around the ranch foreman's head, but, though he knew he had stirred up a hornet's nest by his decision to fight, he displayed magnificent coolness as he fired back at his adversaries.

Perhaps that was why a man of Marsden's unheroic calibre was inclined to regard the duel with some suspicion.

"Evidently this man Sawyer isn't afraid of the whole gang," said Dorothy in a tremulous voice, as she watched the gun-battle from the shelter of the copse.

Marsden sneered.

"I'm beginning to think the whole thing has been staged to impress you," he told her.

"But why?" Dorothy demanded, in a bewildered tone.

"Either to frighten you or arouse your admiration," Marsden rejoined. "I'm not quite sure."

At that instant Buck jerked back with a half-stifled exclamation and grabbed at his shoulder, where a bullet had clipped him and drawn blood. But though the pain for the moment was excruciating, he blazed away at the crooks, and he had actually avenged himself and plugged one of the ruffians through the arm when a commotion on the trail caused the gang to scatter.

The Lazy B ranch-hands were in sight, and as they came on at full gallop Currier and his men leapt into the saddle and took to the bush. Buck then moved from behind the overturned tally-ho, and, dragging out the sack of gold that had been hidden in it, he rejoined Dorothy and Marsden and elinbed with them to the trail, where they were met by Jenny and the horses.

"Mr. Marsden," said Buck, "you and Miss Beals take the ponies and go on ahead. Jenny and I will walk."

Dorothy spoke. She was looking at Buck superciliously.

"But surely," she observed, "one capable of staging highway robberies and comic opera hold-ups should be able to furnish better mounts!"

Buck eyed her steadily. His wound was hurting him cruelly, but when he answered her slighting comment he betrayed no sign of suffering.

"Gosh, I should have thought of that," he said, with mild sarcasm. "But we're plumb out of luxuries, so—it's bareback or walk."

He lifted her astride one of the ponies,

and, while Marsden was mounting the other, he turned back to Jenny. But Dorothy, laying a hand for a moment on his shoulder just as he had swung her up, had drawn her fingers away to find them smeared with the blood that had soaked through his shirt.

It was with a shock of something approaching remorse that she realised how she had misjudged her foreman, and involuntarily she called to him.

"Oh, Mr. Sawyer," she said, "I—I'm afraid I must ask you to hold me on."

Buck shrugged, and then climbed up behind her. She added, in an undertone:

"I want you to know how sorry I am—about that unkind remark. The one about the comic opera hold-up."

"Miss Beals," Buck answered deliberately, "unkind remarks are like bullets. Once fired, being sorry doesn't stop their damage."

She bit her lip, but made no rejoinder, and Buck spoke to Jenny.

"Stay here and make yourself comfortable," he said to the negress. "I'll send somebody back for you."

"Yassuli, Mistah Sawyah," Jenny replied, picking up a heavy piece of wood that would serve her as a bludgeon. "Ah'll be heah, if dem outlaws don't come. An' even if dey do come," she added stoutly, "Ah'll still be heah."

The Will.

WHEN Buck and his companions appeared at the Lazy B they were welcomed by the domestic staff of the ranch-house, including Pa and Ma Stoddart, who had been firm friends of Dorothy's father, rather than employees.

"Say, Buck," old Pa Stoddart demanded, as the foreman dismounted and helped Dorothy to the ground, "where's the boys? And what's happened to the tally-ho?"

"There was a stick-up," Buck explained briefly, "and the boys are out lookin' for the bandits. Nobody was hurt—I got a scratch, that's all. Oh, folks," he added, "I want you to meet Miss Beals. Miss Beals, this is Pa Stoddart, your father's oldest friend. And this is Ma Stoddart."

"Welcome to the Lazy B, Dotty," said Ma.

Dorothy's eyes flickered dangerously. "How do you do?" she answered, with an airiness that did not escape the older woman.

"And this is Mr. Marsden," Buck was saying, "Miss Beals' attorney and manager."

"Manager?" Ma Stoddart repeated testily.

"Now listen," Buck continued, ignoring Ma's comment, "there's a coloured servant down at the pass. Will somebody take the buckboard and bring her in?"

"And in the meantime," put in Dorothy haughtily, "someone might be good enough to show me to my room."

Ma Stoddart took it upon herself to answer.

"There's plenty of rooms in there," she snapped, jerking her thumb towards the ranch-house, "and they're all yours. Help yourself!"

Buck tried to frown her into silence, but not succeeding, he escorted Dorothy and Marsden to the ranch-house and conducted them into the lounge, where a legal-looking gentleman was waiting.

Buck introduced him to Dorothy as her father's executor, and, in the additional presence of Pa Stoddart and one or two of the ranch staff, the lawyer

proceeded to read out the last will and testament of the late James Beals.

After quoting several minor bequests, he came to the clause with which Dorothy was concerned.

"And to my daughter Dorothy Mae Beals," the executor read, "all the property and estates of which I die possessed. But the said Dorothy Mae Beals is compelled by the terms of this will to live on the property known as the Lazy B ranch for a period of five years. . . ."

Dorothy's face as she heard these words was a study in emotion.

"Why, it's—it's preposterous," she cried involuntarily. "Surely you can't mean—"

"In the event of my daughter failing to comply," the lawyer continued, "my executor shall consider this will broken. And in such a contingency, Robert (Buck) Sawyer shall receive all properties and money left by me.

Also, under any and all conditions, Robert (Buck) Sawyer is to remain as manager of the Lazy B rancho, and—"

Dorothy was on her feet.

"I've heard enough!" she flashed. "If there is more of this imbecility, you can conclude the reading of the will with my attorney—Mr. Marsden!"

"Now, Dorothy," Marsden appealed, "I must insist that you make no statement at this time."

Dorothy turned from him impatiently and looked at Pa Stoddart.

"You were my father's closest friend," he said. "Why has he compelled me to live here?"

"Your dad spent all his life without you," Pa Stoddart answered quietly. "Why, the only practice he ever had at bein' a father was rearin' Buck Sawyer. But he always hoped that you'd come back and live hero with him. You wouldn't, but—I guess you will now."

With these words he departed, and the lawyer immediately afterwards, Buck, Dorothy and Marsden found themselves alone.

"Of course, Sawyer," said Marsden superciliously, "you didn't know the conditions of this will."

"Certainly not," Buck retorted. "Mr. Beals promised me nothing—not even a job. But, since I'm still manager here," he added, turning to Dorothy, "are there any orders you'd like carried out?"

"Yes," Dorothy answered curtly. "You'll find quarters outside this house, and in future you will transact all business with my personal manager—Mr. Marsden."

Buck smiled a slow smile.

"Oh, Mr. Marsden," he said, "you might thank Miss Beals for those favours and say 'good-night' to her for me. And I sure hope the coyotes don't keep her from beddin' down right comfortable."

He strolled from the room, and when he had gone Dorothy looked at Marsden.

"That's the first person who's ever made me delight in sarcasm," she declared bitterly. "I can't understand the violent dislike I've taken to him."

"I can," Marsden rejoined, with what he imagined to be a shrewd expression. "I didn't understand his motive at first, but now it's all too obvious. He thinks that by making things unpleasant he'll drive you away and inherit this property—worth about a million dollars. Remember—if you leave this outfit he falls heir to it absolutely."

Dorothy frowned, believing that Marsden's suppositions were correct.

"He doesn't know me," she announced determinedly. "He'll never get me off this ranch, if that's his idea."

She crossed thoughtfully to the window, which was open. From somewhere near by came the strains of a guitar, and a plaintive chorus of cowboy voices, singing a mournful ballad.

"Oh, bury me down on the lone prairie,

Where the wild coyote will howl o'er me."

Something seemed to rise in Dorothy's throat as she heard those words. Her father—he was buried "down on the lone prairie"—lonely old man who had never known his daughter's affection. She felt a pang of remorse, and something of the subtle spell of the West, too—and all at once an emotion both strong and deep brought the tears to her eyes.

"Why, Dorothy," said Marsden, approaching her side, "you're crying."

"I'm not," she answered, but there was a catch in her voice that belied her denial.

Tornado.

IT was early morning, but Buck and the boys were already astir, the ranch manager having emerged from his new quarters shortly after sunrise.

He was now saddling a restive-looking bronc that stood in the little corral at the back of the bunk-house, and as he tightened the cinch-buckle one or two of the punchers came to the fencing.

"You know, fellers," Buck said to them, "if I didn't give this pony a work-out every morning he'd feel neglected. He sure is an ornery bronc—kicks out every mornin' just as regular as the sun comes up."

"Yeah," one of the boys observed, "an' for four or five jumps it takes pretty much of a man to hold him. Then after that he's gentle as a kitten."

The bronc was already beginning to show signs of rebellion, and Buck had some difficulty in holding him.

"Whoa, there," he said. "All set for your frolic already, are you? Okay, Tornado, let's go." And as he spoke he sprang lithely to the saddle.

The bronc cut loose, and for the space of sixty frantic seconds the demon streak in him held sway. Bounding around the corral he tried his hardest to throw his rider, but failed signally, and, as was his wont, he became docile as soon as his early morning mood had run its course.

"Whoa!" Buck commanded with a grin. "You're just a great big bluff, that's all."

He brought the pony to a standstill, and it was as he was dismounting that he noticed Dorothy and Marsden had appeared at the fencing.

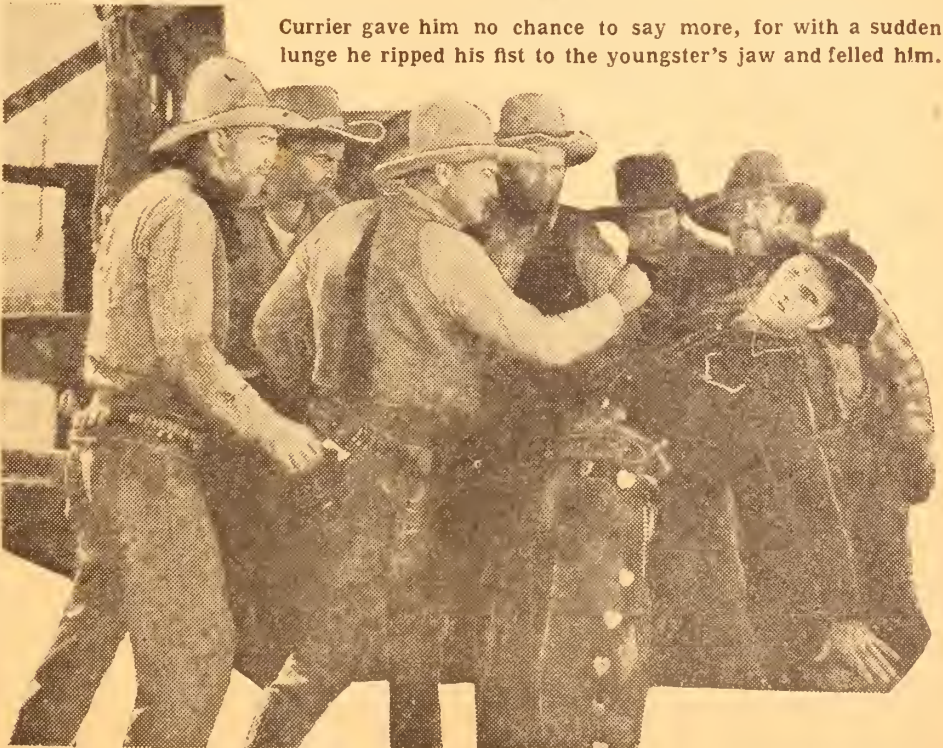
"Good-morning, Sawyer," Marsden greeted him in a patronising tone. "Miss Beals would like to have a horse saddled."

"Can I ride that beauty?" put in Dorothy, indicating Tornado.

Buck knew that the bronc's "cussedness" was now quite spent, but, nevertheless, he was only to be mounted conditionally.

"Sure, you can ride him," he stated, "if you keep him in the corral. Don't let him in the open, because he'll head for the hills and won't stop till he reaches 'em."

Currier gave him no chance to say more, for with a sudden lunge he ripped his fist to the youngster's jaw and felled him.



"Why is that?" Dorothy demanded impatiently.

"Well, he's got wild blood in him," Buck explained, "and fightin' range stallions is his idea of a picnic."

"Do you think it's safe for Miss Beals to ride him?" Marsden interposed with some anxiety.

Buck nodded.

"That pony's as gentle as a kitten now, so long as he's kept in the corral. Tom," he added to one of the boys, "you'd better shorten them stirrups."

Dorothy was helped into the saddle a moment later, and the animal under her seemed so meek that she fell to wondering if Buck's words had been intended to impress and alarm her. The thought had scarce occurred to her when she resolved to disregard his warning, and she at once spurred out of the corral before the gate could be closed.

Buck uttered a yell and flung himself astride another horse. His example was followed by one of the boys, and the two men were in full pursuit before Tornado had covered a hundred yards.

But the half-tamed bronc was racing across the prairie at a pace which Dorothy was powerless to check, and, as Buck had prophesied, he was heading for the hills.

Dorothy blanched, realising now that Buck's warning had not been so many idle words. She threw all her weight on to the reins, but her efforts to stop Tornado were ineffectual, and a chill seized her as she foresaw what might happen when the runaway pony encountered the wild herd and gave battle to one of the range stallions.

Straight for a canyon amid the hills Tornado galloped, and as she was swept into the gorge Dorothy saw a troop of wild horses ahead of her.

But Buck Sawyer was close behind her, and, when Tornado was only fifty yards from the herd, the ranch foreman came abreast and circled Dorothy's waist with one strong arm. Next instant he had plucked her from the saddle.

He lowered her to the ground and rode on after Tornado, who was now almost upon a big black stallion which had advanced from the muster of wild horses. Before a clash could take place, Buck whirled his lariat and circled Tornado's neck with the rawhide noose. Then he blazed off his gun and frightened the herd of outlaw brones into a stampede.

He held Tornado in check till the other ranch hand came up.

"All right, Jim," he said then, "you take him. An' don't ever let Miss Beals ride him again."

He cantered over to where the girl was standing, and dismounted beside her.

"I—I didn't realise the danger," she stammered. "I thought—you were trying to scare me."

"What would I want to scare you for?" he demanded, and Dorothy could find no words with which to answer him.

Her next encounter with Buck was of a more pleasant nature, and took place in circumstances that showed she was not so averse to the West as she had at first declared.

For when the big ranch foreman came across her she was indulging in a little revolver practice on a target that she had rigged up with Jenny's assistance.

Buck watched her amusedly for a spell, and then, seeing that she was not meeting with much success, he strode across to her.

"Say, lower your sight," he told her. "You're elevatin'. Come on, let me show you."

Taking up a position behind her, he

held her wrist and levelled the six-gun at the target.

"Now," he went on, "top your sight—take a dead bead—and set her on the bullseye. Okay—let her go!"

There was a report, and the slug hit the centre-spot of the target.

"That's what I call real shootin'," Buck declared. "Let's try it again."

She looked up at him and nodded smilingly, and as their eyes met Buck was seized with an impetuous desire to kiss her. It struck him, too, that she might not resent such a liberty as much as she would have done on the day of her arrival, but he overcame the impulse and turned his attention on the target again.

"We'd better get to shootin'," he drawled.

A man was watching them with an expression that betrayed a good deal of displeasure. The man was Marsden.

The Return of Flash.

A WEEK or two had passed since Dorothy had first taken up residence at the Lazy B Ranch, and, as he confronted her in the living-room one day, Marsden's manner conveyed impatience.

"Since you're compelled to remain out here in the West," he said, speaking no longer as an attorney, but as a suitor, "why not set our wedding-day?"

Dorothy studied him for a moment, and then glanced sidelong through the window.

"No, George," she murmured. "As a husband you might have worn well enough in New York. But you're no bargain in the West."

"I notice that your attitude has changed towards me since you started seeing a good deal of this man Sawyer!" Marsden said hotly. "Now, if you think I'm going to let him come between us—"

He was interrupted by a tap on the door, and as he looked round he saw a figure that immediately struck him as familiar. It was the figure of young Flash Prescott, and suddenly Marsden found himself associating him with the gang which had robbed the stage.

The youngster's face, of course, was unknown to him. But the somewhat gay and picturesque attire which had earned the irresponsible youth his nickname of "Flash" was the link which connected him, in Marsden's mind, with the plundering of the coach.

"One of the men who held us up," he said to Dorothy in a husky whisper.

Flash did not hear those words, and approached nonchalantly.

"Sorry to butt in," he stated, "but I reckon Buck half-expects me. My name's Prescott—Flash Prescott."

Marsden coughed nervously.

"I—I'll fetch Mr. Sawyer for you," he faltered, but Flash restrained him.

"No," he protested. "Oh, no, don't bother to do that. You see, I'm aimin' to buy stock, and I guess I can talk business with you."

Marsden's ill-concealed agitation gave place to interest, and a deal had been clinched when Buck appeared on the scene.

"Hallo, Flash!" he greeted. "Saw that pint of yours outside, and knew you were around. What brings you to the Lazy B?"

"I've just sold that herd for ten thousand dollars, Sawyer," put in Marsden. "That's a fair price, isn't it?"

Buck glanced from Marsden to Flash.

"Sure, it's a good price," he said. "And then to young Prescott: 'C'mon outside,'" he added. "I want to talk to you."

He escorted Flash from the ranch-house and looked him full in the eyes.

"Pardner," he observed, "a man is judged accordin' to the herd he trails with, and I've got a sneakin' idea I'd like to separate you from Currier and his influence. Now, listen, I know of a good job waitin' for you on a ranch up in Montana, and I think you need a change of air."

Flash laughed easily.

"Don't you worry about my health, Buck," he said. "And, getting back to business, I'll be ready for delivery of that herd at Allen's loading corral by sundown. Adios, amigo."

He swung himself into the saddle of his horse and cantered away, leaving Buck to give instructions for driving the purchased cattle to railhead.

Meanwhile, Dorothy and Marsden were discussing the situation from an angle that the big ranch-foreman did not suspect.

"Do you think Buck Sawyer knows this Prescott is a hold-up man?" Dorothy was saying.

"I'll bet they're working together!" Marsden retorted spitefully.

Dorothy favoured him with a glance that held just a trace of contempt.

"You wouldn't dare say that to Buck!" she challenged.

"No?" Marsden sneered. "Well, if you think he's on the level, you may change your mind when I get him in here and ask him a few questions."

He walked to the door of the ranch-house, and, as he opened it and saw Buck, he hailed the stalwart Westerner and asked him to step in for a moment.

Buck entered the house, and, in the presence of Dorothy, Marsden began his interrogation.

"Sawyer," he asked, "how well do you know this Prescott?"

"Why, I've known him ever since we were kids," Buck replied. "We were pals. He used to ride for the Lazy B."

Marsden looked sidelong at Dorothy and then addressed the foreman again, an ugly sneer playing around his mouth as he spoke.

"Then you know that he held up the stage-coach!" he accused.

Buck acted involuntarily, his bunched fist driving to the point of Marsden's chin and landing with a shock that flung the attorney to the floor. He lay with his back against an armchair, a vacant, stupefied expression on his sallow face.

Buck stood over him and was still glaring at the man when he felt a touch on his sleeve. He turned his head to find Dorothy at his side.

"You obviously consider Prescott is thoroughly honest," she told him. "But you're wrong. He was one of the bandits who held us up on the day of our arriva'."

It was hard for Buck to credit her statement, for, though concerned over the company Flash was keeping, he hated to think that the youngster was already involved in a life of crime.

"Did you see him that day?" he demanded of Dorothy.

"No," she admitted. "I didn't see his face. The men were all masked with clay. But his build, and the style of his dress—they convinced me that Marsden's suspicions were correct."

"Marsden could be wrong," Buck declared. "I think Flash is honest, and I'm going on believing it. He's just a fresh kid, under bad influence. But he's not crooked."

He strode to the door and walked out of the ranch-house, but as he was

approaching the men's quarters one of the hands accosted him.

"Buck," the fellow said, "I've just come in from town, and I've got red-hot news for yuh. You've gotta find Flash Prescott and tell him to pull his freight."

"Why?" Buck wanted to know.

"The sheriff's looking for him on account of that hold-up job," the cow-hand answered. "He's got a strong hunch Flash was mixed up in it."

Buck bit his lip. He was not sorry that he had laid out Marsden, for he had not been partial to that worthy from the first moment of clapping eyes on him. But he was now forced to believe that the attorney's words had not been ill-founded, and Flash must be saved from the consequences of his own rashness.

"All right," said Buck. "I think I know where to find him. You help the boys to get the herd on the way. I'll see that Flash hits the trail and quits these parts."

He sprang towards his brone and, vaulting into the saddle, galloped off in a north-westerly direction, headed for Allen's loading corral. He hoped either to make up on Flash, or else locate him at the railroad siding.

Currier's Plan.

FLASH PRESCOTT came in sight of the railroad and entered over the prairie to the lonely siding where the loading corrals stood.

A group of men stood near a rough shelter that was a boon in the rainy season. The men were Joe Currier and his associates, and, riding up to them, Flash dismounted.

"Well," said Currier, "how did you get on?"

"Okay!" Flash rejoined casually. "I talked business with that hombre Marsden and bought the beef for ten thousand."

"Did you say delivery had to be made to-night?" Currier asked.

Flash nodded.

"Sure," he answered. "I saw Buck afterwards, an' told him we'd expect the cattle here by sundown."

"Great!" said Currier with a smirk. "That'll take all their men, an' we can get the dough back without any trouble."

"It's a cinch, boss," another of the gang declared. "The sweetest job we've pulled in a long time."

There were similar comments from the remainder of the crooks, comments which Flash Prescott heard with a bewildered air.

"Say," he demanded, "what are you fellers talkin' about?"

Joe Currier leered at him.

"That ten thousand dollars you just paid over at the Lazy B," he rejoined.

Flash Prescott's eyes blazed as the truth dawned on him, and all at once he had thrust his impassioned face close to Currier's.

"So that's why you had me buy that herd!" he cried. "You stock up with cattle, and while the ranch is deserted you bust in and grab the money. You get the herd and your money back as well, huh?"

"What a brain you've got!" sneered Currier. "Well, supposin' you're right, Prescott?"

"Listen!" Flash ground out. "You made a sap outa me and fooled me into tyin' up with you over that stage robbery. Well, maybe I had myself to blame for that. Maybe I should've known that only a mug is crooked. But when you sent me to the Lazy B with that ten thousand dollars I thought it was a straight cattle-deal."

"And now you know different, Prescott," Currier said dangerously, "just what do you aim to do?"

"I'm through!" Flash shouted violently. "When you start stealin' from my friend you can count me out."

Currier squared his shoulders.

"You'll do as I tell you, kid," he advised.

"You can't make me put one over on the outfit my pal works for!" Flash raved. "I'll queer your game—"

Currier gave him no chance to say more, for with a sudden lunge he ripped his fist to the youngster's jaw and felled him.

Flash went sprawling in the dust, and lay dazed for a moment. Then he shook himself, and as his brain cleared an inarticulate cry escaped him. Next instant he had scrambled to his feet and was springing at Currier.

Currier was a burly ruffian who could have given Flash a couple of stones in weight, and it might have fared badly with the slim youngster had the gang-leader torn into him. But before Flash could come within striking distance again half a dozen pairs of hands had seized him.

He struggled furiously, but Currier's accomplices held him fast, and at their leader's bidding they bound his hands with cord.

Hardly had he been made secure when the drumming of hoofs was heard, and Currier instantly rapped out a command.

"Get Prescott inside that shelter and keep him quiet," he jerked. "Bill, you an' Blaney see who it is!"

With a grimy hand clapped over his mouth to prevent him from calling out,

Flash was dragged into the shanty, and in the meantime two of the gang hurried round an angle of the corral to confront the newcomer.

The approaching horseman was Buck Sawyer, and as he caught sight of the two gangsters he urged his pony towards them and drew rein.

"Say, you seen Flash Prescott around here?" he inquired.

"Nope," said the man Blaney. "Ain't seen him since mornin'."

Buck appeared to accept the statement as the truth.

"That's funny!" he murmured. "He told me to meet him here. If he shows up, tell him Buck Sawyer's lookin' for him, will you?"

"Yeah, we sure will!" Blaney promised, and Buck wheeled his horse and galloped off.

The gangsters retraced their steps round the corral and joined Currier and the others.

"Well," said Currier, "who was it?"

"Sawyer," Blaney replied, whereupon Flash Prescott's eyes gleamed. "Said he was to meet the kid here."

"Yeah?" growled Currier. "Say, listen, somebody's gotta keep an eye on Prescott. He'd squeal to his friends if he had the chance."

He turned to two of his men.

"Jim, you an' Silver better stay here," he continued. "You can take delivery of the herd when it shows up, and in the meantime watch the kid."

"All right, boss."

"Well," Currier said to the others, "let's hit the breeze for the Lazy B ranch-house and collect our dough."

The gangsters mounted and galloped

Buck hit him again, this time with a full swing.



away, leaving Flash in the care of the two men, Silver and Jim—and their going was witnessed by a watcher on the crest of a hill overlooking the railroad.

For if the crooks imagined that Buck Sawyer had been fooled by the denial of Flash's presence they were mistaken. In the men he had met at the corral Buck had recognised two of Currier's gang, and had hardly asked after Flash before he realised that he was not likely to obtain much information from them.

Thus, after conveying the impression that he was abandoning his quest for Flash, he had made a detour behind the cover of the hill and had gained a vantage point from which he could command a view of the shelter.

He caught sight of Flash, and, when Currier and the main body of the crooks had departed, he began to work his way to the corral again. He was careful to avoid being seen by Jim and Silver, and, as Flash gained a glimpse of him, he held up his hand in a mute gesture that enjoined caution.

Only by an involuntary start had Flash shown any sign of excitement that might have warned his captors. But it passed unnoticed, and a moment later the youngster had hit upon a ruse calculated to help Buck in his attempt at rescue.

He began to struggle violently, and thereby concentrated the attention of the gangsters. Buck at once darted to the corner of the corral and crouched there, within a few paces of the two men guarding Flash, but the rogue known as Silver must have had keen ears, for all at once he looked round.

Buck was stooping beyond the angle of the fencing, and Silver did not see him. The crook stood in an attitude of suspicion, however, his head on one side.

"What was that, Jim?" he demanded. "Iuh?" muttered the other. "I didn't hear nothin', pardner."

"I'll swear I did!" Silver declared emphatically.

Flash renewed his struggles with even greater enthusiasm, and once more succeeded in diverting the gangsters.

"It's no use you tryin' to get loose, Flash!" growled Jim. "You can't bust them cords nohow. Keep still, will yuh?"

The crooks again had their backs to the Lazy B foreman, and Buck pulled his six-gun from its holster and stepped to the front of the shelter.

"Stick 'em up!" he ordered curtly.

Silver and Jim whipped round in alarm. Silver thrust his hands into the air promptly, but Jim carried his hand involuntarily to his hip. He changed his mind as Buck jabbed his "forty-five" towards his ribs.

"You heard me!" he ground out. "Up with those mitts, or I'll drill you!"

Jim obeyed sullenly, and Buck relieved the two ruffians of their "irons."

"Now cut the kid free," he ordered Silver, indicating Flash.

The man did as he was told, and, once he had been liberated, Flash proceeded to bind Currier's hirelings hand and foot. They were then pushed into a corner, and Buck thrust his gun back into its holster.

"Take a seat," Buck said to the crooks with a grin. "You won't have to wait long. I'll send the sheriff to collect you just as soon as I can. And Flash," he added, "you head for Montana—pronto. The law's on your trail."

"Thanks, Buck!" Flash answered fervently, "you're a pal."

"Go on, kid!" Buck told him. "Beat it—and good luck to you."

Flash turned towards his horse, which was tethered near by, but on an after-thought he paused.

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"Hold on, Buck!" he said. "Currier's gone to the Lazy B ranch-house to get that ten thousand dollars I paid you for the stock. Silver and Jim were to take delivery of the cattle while the rest of the gang raided your outfit and took the dough. That's why I fell out with 'em. Come on, I'll trail along with you."

"Wait a minute," Buck jerked, laying a hand on his arm. "I've got a better idea. I'll take the short-cut by Red Canyon. You ride the long way round and meet the boys with the cattle. Tip 'em off to Currier's little scheme, will you?"

"Right, Buck!" Flash agreed, and, springing into the saddle of his horse, he clapped spurs to the animal's flanks.

In the meantime Buck sprinted to where he had left his bronc, and less than a minute after he had parted with Flash he was galloping at top speed in the direction of Red Canyon.

The Raid on the Ranch-House.

RIDING by the same route that Buck was to choose, Currier and his men sighted the Lazy B outfit shortly after sundown.

The shadows were falling swiftly, and ere they had tethered their ponies in a chaparral thicket fifty or sixty yards from the ranch, the stars were out.

The gang advanced on foot, and, at the veranda of the house, Currier called a halt.

"Blaney, you and Carson guard the outside in case of accidents," he said, picking out two of his hirelings. "You other guys follow me."

The Lazy B ranch-house was a sumptuous, two-story building. There were lights in the upper floor, but the lower windows were in darkness, and, the front door being unlocked after the free-and-easy style of the West, Currier and his companions had no difficulty in entering.

Each with a gun in his hand, they filed into the lounge-hall with noiseless tread, but they had scarcely made their way across the threshold when they heard the sound of a door opening and closing somewhere above their heads.

A man began to descend the stairs, and Currier and his gangsters crouched down beside the banisters. The man proved to be Marsden, and as the attorney reached the lounge he switched on a light and walked over to a safe at the far side of the room.

Currier restrained his men and watched with interest. He permitted Marsden to open the safe and take from it a legal document, which was actually a copy of the will that had been made by Dorothy's father. Then, before the attorney could close the safe, the gang-leader moved from hiding.

"Elevate, pardner," he drawled. "Elevate."

Marsden spun around and saw three armed men. He uttered an exclamation and stuck up his hands with a seared look, the will falling from his grasp.

"Friend," said Currier, "we're here to make a collection. The cattle we bought from you will be on the railroad by now, with a couple of my men travelin' along to take spot cash on delivery. We dropped in to get back the ten thousand we paid for 'em. Stand aside from that safe, brother—"

One of his men pulled at his sleeve, interrupting him.

"Listen, boss," he hissed. "Somebody else comin' down the stairs."

Currier and his men crowded Marsden into a corner, and held him there as the newcomer descended. It proved to be Dorothy, and, without seeing the

(Continued on page 25.)

A gripping story of a risky plot by a prison official to capture a callous, fearless gunman. Another true story from the notebook of William J. Burns, of the U.S. Secret Service.



The 'Plane to the Rescue!

THE warden of the State prison paced up and down his study, a frown upon his usually placid features. The telephone had shrilled, and the message that had reached his ears a few short moments earlier was evidently unpleasant in character. Prison executives must of necessity plumb the depths of the emotions, and Warden Thompson was evidently to be no exception to the rule.

But here was a message of an unusually serious nature. "Serious," in fact, would be a somewhat mild description. "Alarming" would describe it with even greater accuracy, for the message hinted at a carefully laid plan to set prison discipline at naught and flout the authority of the law. It was nothing less ominous than the fact, conveyed to the authorities by prudent connections in the New York underworld, that steps would most certainly be taken to keep "Killer" O'Rourke from the electric chair!

Steps *would* be taken! Not *might* be taken! There was the rub! It was no mere idle threat—of that the warden was perfectly convinced. For the associates of the Killer were men of their word—silent, ruthless, banded unitedly against decent society. Applied to the ordinary, everyday business of life, the talents of this particular gang might have assured for all of them a comfortable position. But the excitement of law-breaking, the joy of "besting" the authorities, far outweighed the attractions of legitimate occupation.

The warden well knew the class of individual he had to reckon with—men of the underworld who would stop at nothing; men who had limitless illegally secured resources at their command; men who were able to enlist those resources in defying the law and fighting it to the very limit.

Killer O'Rourke had been their 'bright particular star'; had enjoyed amazing immunity from arrest

in a long and hectic career of crime; had hitherto slipped through the meshes of the law, simply by reason of the fact that he had borne a charmed life. But Killer had gone too far, had over-estimated his powers.

Here he was, then, with a double guard outside his cell, his days definitely numbered. For Killer O'Rourke had slain one of his fellows under circumstances that made a pardon impossible. His friends had moved heaven and earth to secure a revision of the death sentence, but without avail. Mike O'Rourke, his daredevil brother, long a thorn in the side of the police of New York and an accomplice in Killer's latest crime, had escaped the extreme penalty by the very breadth of a hair, and now was faced with the prospect of ending his life as an unwilling guest of the Federal Government.

Mike had accepted his sentence with a resignation that certainly deceived the authorities. His behaviour whilst in prison was regarded as exemplary, and already he had qualified for little concessions such as fall to the share of prisoners who bow to the inevitable and make as little trouble as possible.

He was permitted to receive visitors at carefully regulated periods, such visitors being searched and watched and their conversation overheard. He was permitted also to receive a certain number of letters per month, letters which referred to, or seemed to refer to, matters of a purely domestic character. Not a single word about the gang or its activities, for every line of those letters was carefully scrutinized by the warden, every sheet of paper subjected to a test to avoid any possibility of an illegal message coming through.

Yes, Mike O'Rourke had bowed to the inevitable. No convict sang more fervently in the prison choir, none seemed so anxious as he to remain in the good books of the kindly prison warden.

The warden pressed a button, and within a few seconds, as if impelled thither by some well-oiled mechanism, there came into the room a plump, clean-shaven individual bearing a closer resemblance to a commercial traveller on vacation, than to one of the smartest detectives in the Force. "Morning, chief," greeted Detective Connell. "What can I do, sir?"

"It's about Killer O'Rourke," said the warden. "There is, of course, no chance of anything going wrong with our plans. He's going to the electric chair. That's definite!"

"And no man more justly deserved it," came the deep-toned response. "A menace to the community, if ever there was one; no man ever had a more just trial or a more honest verdict."

"Quite," returned the warden. "But the point is that the time and place of O'Rourke's end will have to be kept as quiet as possible. The less publicity we get the better. So, please, keep your eye on the Press; pass them the word, and tell them that there's more in our request for as little publicity as possible than meets the eye. I leave *you* to handle the Press." This with a twinkle in his eye, for Connell had graduated to the Force from the reporters'-room, a firm believer in his own private axiom that the truncheon's mightier than the pen!

"Do you think," asked the warden, that ominous telephone message still at the back of his mind, "that we ought to keep a special watch on his brother Mike? I've often thought, you know, that Mike was the brains of most of the enterprises that have led Killer to the chair. That, of course, is my private opinion. I do not speak officially."

"No, warden," replied the detective thoughtfully. "I believe that Mike is perfectly satisfied that he's got off with a life sentence, instead of sharing the death penalty with his brother. He seems surly and morose at times. Still,

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the prospect of a 'lifer' is enough to make a chap surly, though he hasn't been in long enough to realise what a 'lifer' really means."

"That's as may be. Anyhow, just to prove to you that appearances are deceptive, we've just had warning that Mike is going to attempt to escape! We have been warned also that if he *does* manage to get away—and I'd like to see him try it!—he proposes to have my life!

"Not the first man, by any means, to threaten the warden of the State prison, and, I imagine, not by any means the last. What earthly chance does a man stand these days, not only of breaking prison, but of keeping out of reach of the wireless descriptions of him? Still, Connell, we'll keep our eye upon his associates and the members of the O'Rourke family. There's never smoke without fire, and our informant is usually correct—uncannily so."

The convicts were assigned to their various duties in the drab, high-walled yard of the State prison. Warders armed with loaded rifles patrolled the place from various points of vantage; not a single move of the prisoners passed unnoticed. And yet, in spite of the eagle eyes that watched them, two members of the working-gang managed somehow to snatch a hurried and breathless conversation.

"Say, Kinky," said Mike O'Rourke, out of the corner of his mouth, "what time is it?"

The man addressed as Kinky curled his cruel lips in disgust.

"Time?" he repeated. "What's botherin' you, O'Rourke? You should be worrying about the time, when for the rest of your life you'll be raking this yard!"

"Don't believe it!" muttered O'Rourke, "I'll not be raking this yard all my life! Tell me, Kinky," he begged, "what d'you reckon the time to be?"

Kinky muttered a curse.

"Look out, Mike, they're watching us! It struck eleven about a quarter of an hour ago."

"Fine!" was all the convict said. And all the time that quiet prison yard was a seething volcano, a place of carefully restrained passions, of feelings that ached to be unleashed. Hopelessly the men looked up from their tasks, glimpsing the sky that roofed those prison walls—freedom so near at hand, freedom impossible to attain.

The guards were patrolling the prison wall, every man on the alert, every rifle ready for instant service, every prisoner a marked man. Hopeless to even dream of escaping from this living tomb. Foolish to ever plan to run the gauntlet of those sharp eyes, those fatal bullets; to scale that murderously lofty wall—cruel, unclimbable as the side of a precipice. And so O'Rourke went on sullenly with his job, apparently resigned to his fate, but with a glint in his eye that seemed to betoken mischief. Suddenly from the distance came a musical humming, as of a giant bee questing for some mighty flower.

Nearer and nearer came that insistent droning, and then, a mere speck in the sky that might have been a bird gradually revealed itself as a sturdy, swift-moving aeroplane. Nearer still it came, ever nearer, and its antics were both surprising and alarming. It nosed, then righted itself, spiralled, enveloped itself in a smoke cloud, performed evolutions that brought forth the loud-voiced admiration of those well-armed warders.

A welcome diversion in the prison routine. They speculated whither the 'plane could be bound, the reason for its evolutions, commented upon the nerve of the pilot, playfully suggested what an ideal method it might prove to be to make a clear getaway from gaol!

Uninfluenced by the commotion, a couple of labourers, in the uniform of railwaymen, were patrolling the railway

track. The aeroplane and its stunts had no seeming interest for them, for they walked with hurried step along the iron road that lay beyond the prison walls, evidently bent upon their routine duties. Here were the warders, sky-gazing still, watching with unwonted interest the spirallings of that hardy airman. And while the warders watched, in the flick of an eyelid the "railwaymen" had thrown a rope over the high prison wall—a long rope, a strong rope, of which they held the ends, and held them firmly!

His guardians still 'plane-gazing, Mick O'Rourke seized that heaven-sent rope, clambered with the agility of a monkey up the terribly high wall, ran along the top of it with all the speed at his command, and, just as his escape was discovered, dropped on to the roof of a passing train.

Shot after shot rang out, all very wide of the mark. The convicts in the prison yard raised a feeble cheer as the redoubtable O'Rourke disappeared from view. Stern orders from above curbed their enthusiasm, but many a convict's heart beat frantically at the sheer audacity of that exploit. The alarm was sounded, the train sped on, carrying on its roof, in a position of gravest peril, a man who, above all men, the prison had desired to keep in closest custody.

O'Rourke clung to the sloping roof, swayed to and fro by the violent motions of the train, grabbing a precious hand-hold upon the centre-ridge, the aperture through which the carriage lamps were lighted. Now it seemed as if he must be dashed to the permanent way as the train swerved round a wicked curve. Now, almost suffocated by the poisonous fumes that filled a terribly lengthy tunnel. Sparks and dust flew in his face, and there were moments when Mike O'Rourke, now a fugitive from justice, longed once more for the safety of the prison yard. But he had made his choice—would see it through to the bitter end, come what might!

That telephone message had evidently been inspired. The train—an express, as it so happened—flew on, and it might have been observed that the mysterious aeroplane, queerly enough, was keeping pace with it! Stranger still, the pilot could now be seen paying out a long rope-ladder carefully, gingerly, whilst hovering above the speeding train. A breathless second, an awful moment of indecision, then, with a bound, O'Rourke had caught the yielding rung of the ladder, dangled perilously in mid-air, till strong and willing hands hauled him into the rescuing 'plane. Higher still it soared into the clouds, until it became a mere speck, its destination a matter of infinite speculation.

The impossible had happened! Mike O'Rourke had made his getaway, aided by means that only



In spite of the eagle eyes that watched them, two members of the working gang managed to snatch a hurried and breathless conversation.

money could have made possible. So, it seemed, he was in a position to wreak his threatened vengeance upon the man who had determined to send his brother to the chair. But would O'Rourke dare?

The Wireless Warning.

THE voice of the wireless announcer broadcasted the startling news: "The public are advised that Mike O'Rourke, brother of Killer O'Rourke, has just escaped from the State Prison, and was last seen on the top of a train headed for the city."

Then, after a brief interval, came an announcement that added thrill to thrill, as if the news of this amazing exploit were not sufficiently startling:

"An aeroplane played a part in his escape, and it is believed by the authorities that it had been specially chartered for his rescue, as the pilot could not be identified. Watch is being kept upon all aerodromes and police and public are requested to report anything of a suspicious character which may be considered to bear upon O'Rourke's escape."

"So that's that!" exclaimed Warden Thompson, after having made every possible arrangement for the apprehension of the elusive Mike, if and when discovered.

"This," he remarked to Connell, who had since returned from his satisfactory interview with the Press, "this is where I come in."

"This," corrected Connell, "is where we all come in!"

"No, you don't quite grasp it, for it all boils down to quite a personal matter. O'Rourke is the charming gentleman who remarked to the judge, to the warders, and to his prison chums, that if ever he escaped, his first and most 'pleasant' duty would be to settle me, once and for all."

"Well, warden," grunted Connell, "now that we know, it's up to us to show Master Mike just where he's going to get off."

Meantime, in a secret, unsuspected landing-place, far away on the outskirts of the city, the aeroplane came to rest, and almost as soon as its wheels had touched the earth a mud-splattered saloon car, that seemed as if it had passed through several campaigns, raced to meet the machine. In a trice the convict was out of the 'plane, bundled into the closed car, where he stripped every stitch of his prison garb and changed into the smartly cut garments of a man about town.

"Gee, Ben," O'Rourke said to the man at the steering-wheel, "everything worked like a clock. The simple message in your letter—even the warden read it, and didn't suspect anything—kept me fully prepared. The 'plane came on the tick. I haven't had a chance to thank the pilot yet,

You'll do this for me, won't you? And here's your auto on time, just like a railway train, and with a fine, smart rig-out that makes me respectable again. What a bunch of pals to have, you boys!"

Within half an hour the former convict was speeding to the home of one of his associates.

"Well, Mike," they said, after mutual congratulations, "you're a smart lad to make so clean a getaway."

"Smart?" replied O'Rourke, as the refreshments circulated and the congratulations had begun to grow irksome. "It was the only chance, the only way to cheat the chair of my brother."

"But," they replied in hushed voices, "Killer did it, didn't he? You'd have to be the governor to save him."

"I know," came the surly answer, "I know that Killer did it. Just the same, I'm going to save him. What d'you think I broke prison for? I got out, didn't I? Got away from the closest-guarded prison in the States! And whether Killer's got a double guard or not, he'll be here in this very house before another day's passed." They listened to this gruff-voiced colleague as if to a worker of miracles.

"Now, see here," And they drew closer as the desperate man outlined his plans. "I'm going to Warden Thompson's place to-night. And, what's more, if he doesn't get hussy and tell the governor that Killer was innocent, then Mister Thompson's number's up!"

"Well, Mike," observed his bosom friend, "a brother's a brother, and blood's thicker than water, as someone said, but there's no sense in putting your head into a noose, too."

"Shut up!" was his reply, and further comment became frozen.

The Warden's Ruse.

"MY plan is this," said the warden, addressing his men: "I shall see to it that all the evening papers carry a front-page paragraph to the effect that I am called to the city

this evening. Then I want you to pass the word to Gippy Wilson, our man in the underworld, that the trip to the city is a 'blind.' I want it to be given out to him—and he knows how to pass on the news—that I am working on a case at 325, Edgewood Road."

"Edgewood Road?" repeated Connell. "What sort of place is that?"

"It's Sam Levering's house. His family is out of town, and I can borrow the place for a day or two if necessary."

"A nice little trap," was Connell's comment, "and I hope it keeps fine for Mike and his cronies. But it's risky, chief."

"We are always taking risks," came the reply, "and this time I'm the cheese in the mousetrap!"

The telephone-bell rang at O'Rourke's hideout, and Red Wolff, bosom friend of the redoubtable Mike, answered the call.

"Funny," was all Red could say. "It's Gippy Wilson on the 'phone, and he says that Thompson's visit to the city is a blind. He's working on a case at 325, Edgewood Road, and he's going to lie low there until you're back in gaol."

"Oh, he is, is he?" commented O'Rourke. "Well, Red, you can tell Gippy just where I'm hiding, just to show how 'frightened' I am of Thompson and his men."

"But, Mike, it's sheer madness."

"You heard what I said, Red?"

"Have it your own way, then."

Mike's friends eyed each other as if doubting the sanity of the man. Reckless, that was the only word for it! Asking for trouble, and he'd get it for sure!

Not very long afterwards, a telephone bell rang in the apartment at Edgewood Road, where Warden Thompson had elected to "hide," for reasons of his own. His caller was Gippy Wilson.

"Hallo!" said Thompson. "What's

There came from the pen a puff of white smoke and a deafening explosion.



the address—829, Livingstone Street? You're sure?"

"That was Gippy Wilson speaking," explained Thompson to the trio of plain-clothes men within call. "He has found out where O'Rourke is hiding. Get the other boys together and go after him. You, Connell, better hang around here with a couple of the men. One never knows. And if O'Rourke makes an entry here, don't stop him! There's none too much time. Smart's the word."

A posse of police raided the hiding-place of O'Rourke, amid a joyous smashing of glass and a splintering of woodwork. The house was surrounded, every exit barred. Ah! Here was a room with the lights all on, and seated in an armchair a figure unconcernedly reading an evening paper. The fugitive at last! It seemed too easy—too good to be true!

"Put 'em up!" came the stern order. The man looked up with obvious annoyance. It was none other than Red Wolf! The policemen did their best to hide their chagrin.

"Say, gentlemen," drawled Red, "what do you mean by damaging the place like this? Why didn't you knock on the door like decent fellows?"

In the meantime, taking advantage of the commotion that was bound to arise—and as has been seen, did arise—at his own hideout, Mike O'Rourke had trailed the warden to the house at Edgewood Road. Little by little, foot by foot, taking advantage of the deep shadows, he had drawn nearer and nearer to the man whose life would be forfeit, unless the warden yielded to a peremptory demand. Sharp eyes were watching O'Rourke as he tampered with a window-fastening.

Unaware of the danger near at hand, the warden had selected a volume from the bookcase, had settled down comfortably to an hour of undisturbed reading. The bell tinkled.

"No news of O'Rourke," came across the wire. "We surrounded the place, but only succeeded in nabbing Red Wolf. We think he knows more than he'll tell. So we'll hang on to him for a bit."

"Good work!" was the warden's reply. "Carry on, then come straight along to Edgewood Road and bring the boys along with you."

And all the time death was creeping ever nearer to the tranquil warden.

Book in hand, and by now deeply immersed in its pages, there came a gruff voice from his immediate rear, a voice that was full of menace—a merciless, unforgiving voice, if ever there was one.

"Well, Thompson," was the message carried by that cold, hard voice. "I've got you this time! Your men are outside. I believe?"

"Just a couple of the boys," replied the warden easily, without a falter.

"Then you'll take up that 'phone," commanded Mike, "and tell your men to beat it—quick! And then we'll talk business—you and me. And there's quite a lot to talk about," he added, fingering his gun significantly.

The warden, hesitating for the fraction of a second, took up the telephone communicating with the ante-room.

"There's no need for you fellows to stay on any longer. Get along home until you hear from me further."

"That's the ticket," commented the convict. "Now you'll switch off that 'phone and listen to me. Just attempt to call Headquarters, or anybody else, and you're as good as dead. You can walk out of here alive—and I don't sup-

pose you want to peg out before your time—on just one condition."

"And that condition is?" inquired the warden.

"At five-thirty to-morrow morning my brother is supposed to go to the electric chair. It was you who helped to put him in that chair, and it's you who are going to get him out of it."

"Listen O'Rourke, what you ask is quite impossible, and you know it!"

"Nothing's impossible when your life is at stake," snarled O'Rourke. "It's the very simplest thing in the world. And this is how you're going to do it: you'll telephone the governor right away, and tell him that you've got some new evidence which proves that my brother did not kill Kelly."

"Such a lie that would not be sufficient to free your brother," said the warden, playing for time.

"I know that. But it will do just what I am planning to do, which is this: it will delay the execution, delay it just long enough for my brother to make his getaway as easily as I did, in spite of all your precautions." The convict chuckled at the recollection.

"I don't honestly believe the governor can do a thing at this late hour. The case had a fair trial, there was an appeal, and it will take more than a 'phone-call to interfere with the course of events. No, O'Rourke, it's a waste of time—and you know. Shoot, if you want to! You'll hang, in any case—my men will get you if it takes a life-time."

"Stop your nonsense, Thompson," the convict commanded. "You're only playing for time. I'm going to count ten, and if you've not called the governor by then, you might as well say your prayers—if you know any."

"All right, O'Rourke," returned the warden with a sigh, "I'll call him up, though you might as well know that he's in town here to-night, attending a banquet at the home of Frank Spear."

"I don't care where he is—'phone him."

The warden took up the telephone book. "Let's see, Spear's place is on Main Street—here it is—Central 9854." Then closed the book.

"What a nuisance!" he exclaimed.

"What was that number?"

"How should I know?" was O'Rourke's angry reply.

Once more the warden reached for the book, drew a scribbling pad towards him, reached for his pen, only to be roughly warned: "Put down that hand, Thompson! How do I know there's not a gun?"

"Wrong again, Rourke. I'm just reaching for my pen."

But the escaped convict was taking no chances.

"Pen or no pen, I'll handle it."

With a jerk, he freed the pen from the warden's pocket, covering him meantime with the wicked-looking revolver.

"Listen, Mister Warden, just you get me right. I'm running this show! Now jot down that number, so that you don't forget it this time, and make it quick. Time's getting along, and that brother of mine is going to be free! Get me?"

"What's the hurry?" inquired the warden, with an assumed indifference that goaded his captor to anger.

And then, with an innocent and quite disarming glance, Warden Thompson pointed the pen at Mike O'Rourke; and as he pointed there came from the pen a puff of white smoke and a deafening explosion, and a generous charge of tear-gas went full into the eyes of the astonished criminal. O'Rourke recoiled, gasped, spluttered, yet in spite of his agony kept a grip on himself. Grabbing his pistol, he fired wildly in the warden's direction, and with the noise of the firing the detectives hurled themselves into the room, grabbed the blinded convict, handcuffed him before he had time to collect his senses.

"Boss," said Connell, wringing his chief warmly by the hand, "remember you ordered us never to leave until we received the instructions a second time. That was the only thing that saved the situation."

"I know," replied the warden, wiping his eyes, for by now the tear-gas had penetrated the room. "But never forget that I told you boys that the little tear-gas pen of mine might come in handy some day. It has."

Killer O'Rourke paid the penalty. Mike still dawdles over his duties in the prison yard; still watches the skies for possible rescues from the clouds. But the State Prison, prepared for most eventualities, is prepared even for that! (By permission of the Ideal Film Co., Ltd.)

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(Continued from page 10.)

upon them from the upper part of the shop opposite, but almost at once the man who had been tutoring Donny in the art of baseball pitching allayed their fears.

"It's all right, Jack." He grinned at his leader's obvious discomfiture. "Just a slight accident. The kid was practising a pitch and sent the ball through—"

"An accident, boloney!" A hate-facéd gangster, Lug Lorgens by name, turned quickly from the window. Below on the side-walk he had seen an aged man with iron-grey hair and beard and dressed in the blue uniform of an army pensioner, pick up the baseball that had landed at his feet. "The kid's grandfather is down in the street—I recognise the old fool. It was him who was playing that flute. Searching for the brat, I guess, and the kid knew it was him by the music."

His ugly face black with rage, Big Jack swung on his heel, and his murderously gleaming eyes glared down to the side-walk. He was just in time to see Grandpa Summerill inspect the baseball closer and to give a start as he discovered from the initials upon it that it was the one he had recently given his grandson.

Next moment and the watching gangster saw the old warrior hobble away, and knew on the instant that he had gone in search of the police.

"You dirty little brat!" Big Jack fairly leaped at Donny, caught him savagely by the coat collar and slung him into the settee. "For that I've a darned good mind to drill you!"

His gun was out in a flash, menacing the cowering little figure, but evidently he thought better than to shoot a mere child, for he suddenly swung away and confronted his confederates.

"That old swine's gone for the bulls—-that's certain, boys!" he spat at them fiercely. "Best make a break for it before we have a hornet's nest about our ears."

But grandpa had run into half a dozen stalwart patrolmen not fifty yards along the road. They came swinging out of a side-turning, one of several parties of officers who were searching that quarter of the city for the kidnapped boy.

"Quick! Quick!" The old stager excitedly grasped the arm of the foremost officer. "Along here, quick—the Ideal Paper Box Plant, Ltd."

"Now, see here, grandpa," growled the patrolman, a good-natured man of English descent, "you can't play tricks like this on—"

"Grandpa's right. That's just what am. I'm his grandpa." In his excitement old man Summerill did not realise he need for making himself clear to the group of officers. Again he tugged at Police-Officer Sainty's arm, succeeded in dragging him almost to the door of the premises labelled the Ideal Paper Box Plant, Ltd., and pointed a trembling finger towards the smashed window above. "See up there, that smashed window? Donny's up there—ony, my grand—"

"That's enough, you old ditherer." no of Police-Officer Sainty's colleagues grasped grandpa firmly by the arm. We can't have you raving like this in the streets. Batty, that's what you are, and you're going inside to be certified." "Why, doggone it!" grandpa fumed.

"So I'm batty, huh? Why, you big mug, I'll—"

"Now, now, what's all the row?" a stern voice suddenly inquired.

A police lieutenant, followed by a sergeant, had stepped from across the road to discover what the scene was about. But before any of his subordinates could answer him, the sergeant accompanying him gave a shrill whistle, then turned quickly to his superior officer.

"This man's Summerill, sir," he explained. "The missing witness in the Campo case."

"Missing witness, your granny!" The old warrior pulled a face at the sergeant, then turned eagerly to the lieutenant. "Now, now, you listen here, young man. Take a sly look above these here premises, the broken window there. You see it? Well, my grandson's up there. How do I know? Well, he threw this here baseball through the window as I came along a-playing my fife. I was hunting for him, and he recognised the tune I was a-piping. See his initials on the ball? You do? Well, if you've brains you can guess the rest. Campo's gang kidnapped Donny Leeds and they've got him right up there."

The lieutenant nodded grimly as he again took a surreptitious glance at the broken window above, saw the pair of sinister eyes that peered down at them. The eyes of Big Jack, who stepped hastily back from the window to report to his companions that there was no easy getaway for them now—that it had come to a show-down with the cops and that they must fight their way to freedom.

"Now, boys"—his face set grimly, the police lieutenant reached for his gun—"we're going in after that kid right now, and if those thugs show fight don't hesitate to shoot 'em down. Ready?"

They nodded, and he led the way to a door upon whose frosted glass panels were the words, "Ideal Paper Box Plant, Ltd." Instantly Grandpa Summerill, his eyes shining with the light of battle, shuffled to the police lieutenant's side. But the officer, becoming aware of the old fellow's presence, stopped and gravely shook his head.

"No, you can't come, grandpa," he told him sternly. "It's too darned risky. Those brutes will almost certainly shoot when we break in and—"

"Let 'em shoot!" With an effort grandpa drew himself erect. "I'm a soldier I am—and I'll say the army can take care of itself. Yes, siree, they darn well can, believe me."

The lieutenant knew there was no time for argument, so with a shrug of his shoulders, he went forward again, led his men into what seemed to be half-shop, half-office. Not a soul to be seen—if there had been anyone in the place in the last few minutes he had evidently become aware of the presence of the police and had made himself scarce.

Without hesitation, the lieutenant opened a door at the far end of the spacious premises, and, gun in hand, he led the way into the wide passage beyond. In front lay a staircase that ran up to the floor above, and the police swarmed towards it.

All seemed strangely quiet and still, but not for long. Suddenly there came a loud report from the direction of the upstairs landing, and, with a gasp, one of the leading police officers pitched to the floor, a bullet imbedded in his thigh.

Next instant the place echoed to a regular fusillade of shots.

Taking advantage of what little shelter they could find, the police officers fired every time a face showed

on the landing at the top of the stairs. But Big Jack and his confederates, trapped though they were, offered a stout resistance, and the battle waged grim and relentless for some few minutes before a concerted rush by the police at last overpowered them.

"Ah, ha, we've beaten the dirty skunks!" To the amazement of the police lieutenant, Grandpa Summerill waved a revolver excitedly above his head. The old stager grinned as he saw the frown on the stern but good-looking face. "Yes, siree, a gun, and I sure enjoyed meself with it. Shot one of the white-livered curs, I think. But don't look at me like that. I've got a license for the darned thing. You pay attention to your business. Find my grandson—you hear me?"

The officer laughed good-naturedly, then gave quick instructions to two of his men. A few minutes' search, then back they came with little Donny, who, at sight of his grandfather, gave a loud whoop and ran into his outstretched arms.

"That's the Fellow Who Did the Shooting!"

THE court was crowded, for the trial of the notorious Maxey Campo, racketeer and killer, had aroused tremendous interest in the city of Faramento, especially as this was the first time in many months that a gangster had been put in the dock.

Would he be found guilty of the charge upon which he was indicted? All present hoped that he would be, though the majority feared that bribery and corruption, or intimidation, would carry the day in his favour.

Every precaution had been taken by the authorities to guard against the possibility of an attempt being made by Campo's gunmen to kidnap the prisoner from the court-room. A strong force of armed police officers had been flung around the building, while some score others stood at vantage points within the court itself. And every care had been taken not to let in any known member of the gangster fraternity of the city or any other suspicious characters.

The case for the State had been outlined. Campo was charged with killing Jim Preston, a trusted officer of Faramento, and Greener Kaufman, the gangster who had sought to double-cross his old enemy by giving evidence against him to the police.

The first witness, Jackie Leeds, was placed in the box, and District Attorney Whitlock, his face hard and grim, immediately confronted him.

"Now, Mr. Leeds, you have heard the charge, one of first degree murder, made against Maxey Campo, the prisoner." He half-turned and glanced at Campo, who was leaning arrogantly against the dock, hands in pockets, a cynical smile upon his thin, cruel lips, coolly masticating chewing-gum. "You saw the shooting down in Western Street from the window of your house, Mr. Leeds. Now is this the man who fired at Jim Preston and Kaufman?"

Jaekie looked nervously at the sinister figure of the racketeer, saw the ferocious gleam in the man's eyes and experienced a feeling of nausea.

"Nun-no," he said in a weak and trembling voice.

A wide grin spread across Campo's coarse face, while Whitlock eyed Jaekie with white-hot fury in his gaze.

"But your statement," he rapped out. "In it you said you identified the killer from the photograph I showed you—and that photograph was Maxey Campo's."

"Ye-yes." Jackie fidgeted restlessly with his watchchain. "But I—I see now I made a mistake. This is not the same man as the one who did the shooting."

Whitlock gritted his teeth. In that moment it was on the tip of his tongue to tell the youngster that he was yellow—scared to do his duty as an honourable and law-abiding citizen because he feared the power of Campo's gang. But he suppressed the feeling, and, indicating that the witness should be allowed to stand down, he called upon Jackie's sister, Sue.

"Miss Leeds." Whitlock's voice was pleading as the girl took her stand in the witness-box. "You did not see the shooting, I know, but you can establish one fact. The killer and his diabolical companions entered your house that night as they made their getaway. You saw them as you returned from the cellar, where you had gone for a pot of jam. Was the prisoner the man in the raincoat?"

Sue shuddered as she stole a glance at Maxey Campo, saw the evil glitter in his eye.

"Well, I—er—well he looks something like him," she said lamely. "But, really, I wouldn't swear to it."

As the district attorney shrugged his shoulders helplessly, Maxey Campo let out a loud guffaw and winked at his counsel, a crook lawyer who was in his pay.

"Silence in court!" came the deep-throated voice of the usher.

"Your honour." Campo's counsel was now on his feet. "I demand that the case against my client be dismissed on the ground of insufficient evidence."

Campo shot the discomfited Whitlock a triumphant glance, then turned his sinister eyes on the judge's disappointed face.

"Mr. Whitlock, I need not tell you the law." The judge experienced a twinge of pain that he should be compelled to speak thus to the district attorney. Like all law-abiding citizens he had hoped that Whitlock would have a clear case—that at the end of the trial he would be able to pronounce the death sentence on the prisoner. But his hopes were now dashed to the ground. "You have produced no evidence to warrant me holding the defendant, therefore—"

He paused as he noticed that Whitlock's assistant, Thorpe, had come hurriedly into the court-room and was whispering in his chief's ear. Next moment and the district attorney, an eager gleam in those fine blue eyes of his, was facing him again.

"Your honour." Whitlock cried in a voice vibrant with excitement, "may I ask the indulgence of this court for just a few moments on a matter of great importance in this case?"

"Granted." The judge hesitated not a moment in giving his reply.

But as Whitlock swung about with the intention of hastening into an adjoining room, where he had been told by Thorpe he was wanted on the telephone by the Stanton Street Police Station, Maxey Campo's counsel leaped hastily to his feet. Shrewd that he was, he shared the judge's suspicion that this interruption in the proceedings meant fresh evidence against his client—perhaps vital evidence that would condemn him.

"Your honour, I object!" he cried warmly.

"Objection overruled," announced the judge promptly.

The district attorney, with a triumphant November 21st, 1931.

ant smile, bowed to the judge, then hurried quickly from the court. A few minutes' absence, and then he was back again. But even as he took up his stand once more, a police officer approached and spoke to him in a whisper.

"Yes, yes, officer. Bring them right in." His face beaming, Whitlock went over to Mrs. Leeds and her family, who sat in the seats reserved for witnesses. His shining eyes took in them all, including the father who rested comfortably on his stretcher on the floor, but it was to Mrs. Leeds that he addressed himself. "Mrs. Leeds, I've real good news for you. Your boy is safe. I just had word to that effect from the Stanton Police Station."

"Oh, thank Heaven for that!" The mother clasped her hands thankfully and gave the district attorney a grateful glance. "Donny safe! Oh, how wonderful!"

"They're bringing him here now," Whitlock went on. "And his grandfather's with him. It appears that Mr. Summerill was searching for the boy and—"

But his words were drowned in a bedlam of sound that suddenly welled up in the Court. All faces turned instantly towards the door at the far end of the crowded room where, surrounded by half a dozen police-officers, there had appeared the aged form of Grandpa Summerill and the small figure of little Donny.

"One moment, your Honour!" Whitlock faced the judge with the air of a man who has already tasted the fruits of victory. "Some additional witnesses arrived to testify."

The judge nodded, experiencing a thrill of elation at the district attorney's words.

Instantly Whitlock swooped down on Grandpa Summerill as he and Donny joined their family, and the small boy was embraced passionately by the greatly relieved Mrs. Leeds.

"Do you want to take the stand now, Mr. Summerill?" the district attorney eagerly inquired.

But as the old stager swung round on him, and as he saw that he was breathing heavily, that his eyes looked heavy as if from lack of sleep, Whitlock remembered what the police chief at the Stanton Street Station had told him over the telephone. Grandpa Summerill had been tramping the streets since he had disappeared the previous day, in the hope that he would be able to trace his kidnapped grandson. It was clear that he must be very tired—almost at the end of his tether. And humane that he was, Whitlock felt he could not possibly tax the old man further yet awhile.

"No, Mr. Summerill," he said, squeezing grandpa's arm. "You'd better wait a little while. You must be tired. I'll get an adjournment while you snatch a little rest."

"Adjournment nothing!" The fighting light was back in grandpa's eyes. Rest when he had his duty to the State to do? Not he! Hadn't he once been in battle for the better part of a week with little more than two hours' sleep the whole while? Shoulders squared as if he were on parade, he looked at Whitlock determinedly. "Of course I'm going to take my stand now, and, by heck, they're going to hear a darned pretty tune!"

Importantly, he shuffled forward, making straight for the judge's bench. Arrived there he blinked up into the stern face, bowed somewhat awkwardly,

then, with surprising suddenness, turned quickly about.

"Ah, ha, that's the fellow that did the shootin'!" Eyes gleaming fiercely, he raised a hand, pointed his finger straight at Maxey Campo, who seowled at him. But the ferocious look in no way perturbed the old warrior. Quickly he turned to the judge again, while everyone in the court-room strained their ears to catch his words. "Yes, he's the fellow, judge. Now let me tell you and the whole darned Court something. These skunks ain't so tough as they think they are. The trouble with us is that we're too weak-kneed with 'em. I ask you, what would the founders of our country have done with scum like them? What would Abraham Lincoln have done? Why, he'd have risen up and flung them slap into the ocean. And it's time we was a-doin' the same thing. Yes, siree!"

The judge could only blink at him, so taken aback was he with this irreverent outburst. But his Honour was not the only one in the court who was utterly astounded by Grandpa Summerill's passion-inflamed words. Every single person present was flabbergasted—as for Maxey Campo, he felt suddenly weak and helpless, without a spark of fight left in him.

Watched by hundreds of pairs of fascinated eyes, Grandpa suddenly shuffled forward and confronted the prisoner as he leaned limply against the dock.

"You low-down dirty rat, shoot me in the back, would you, huh? Kidnap little Donny, beat up his father, huh? Well, I'm going to give you a dose of clean medicine, not the rotten stuff that you like to dish up."

Eyes flashing fire, he brought up his fist and smashed it with all his force to the point of Campo's jaw. With a grunt the gangster tottered sideways, but grandpa only grinned ferociously, then with another quick movement he kicked Campo's feet from under him and brought him crashing to the floor.

"And that's one I owe you for laming me on the head with that gun. How do you like it, huh? Tell me, how do you like it?"

Whitlock came darting forward, the first in all the Court to recover from the effects of the startling scene that had been enacted before their eyes. Quickly he gripped grandpa's arm, but the old fellow pushed him aside, then scanned the court with his fiercely gleaming eyes.

"Now where's that infernal witness stand?" he shrilled. "I'll show 'em! I'll testify that it was this dirty thug who did the shooting on Western Street. Fond of taking folk for a ride, is he? Well, it's his turn to take such a trip—a trip to the Chair, and, by heck, it's going to be warm for him!"

Words that sounded the death-knell for Maxey Campo, for, inspired by the pluck and grit of Grandpa Summerill, star witness in the trial, the whole of the Leeds family went into the witness-stand and swore that it was he who had shot Jim Preston and Greener Kaufman in Western Street that fatal night.

And so Maxey Campo went to the Chair, and his demise did much to lessen the gang atrocities in the city, for the czars of the underworld were compelled to realise that the Law was a power, after all, and was not to be lightly defied.

(By permission of Warner Bros. Pictures, Ltd., starring Charles (Chic) Sale and Walter Huston.)

"SUNDOWN TRAIL."

(Continued from page 18.)

attorney or his captors, she stooped as she reached the hall and picked up the document that had fallen from Marsden's hand a few seconds previously.

She was gazing at the document when Currier moved into view, and as she heard his footfalls she looked up quickly. Next instant she drew back with an exclamation.

"Just a minute, sister," said Currier. "This is unexpected good luck."

Dorothy whipped round and darted towards the stairs again, but one of Currier's men slipped between her and her objective and pushed her away roughly.

"Take it easy, ma'am," he advised. "Kinda looks as if the boss 'ud like to have your company."

"Yeah, the boss would," observed Currier. "You see, we'll have to take you along with us, lady—as you might put the sheriff on our track too soon. We don't want any description of us circulated until we're a long way from here."

One of Currier's men caught Dorothy by the wrist. The other was standing guard over the cringing figure of Marsden.

"Well," the gang-leader continued, "we'd better get to business, I reckon. I'll lift that money from the safe, boys, and then we'll hit the saddle. Bring the gal along—an' that guy Marsden, too. We'll show 'em the moonlight on the river—from the other side."

He was thinking of the Mexican reaches of the Rio Grande, which he hoped to make before midnight. Once over the border he and his men would be safe from U.S. law, and could safely allow Dorothy and Marsden to return.

Currier did not know that Buck Sawyer was approaching the ranch-house at that very moment to tether his horse in a range of brush and steal forward noiselessly.

It was as well for Buck that he employed caution, for when he had almost penetrated the thicket he discovered the two men, Blaney and Carson, standing on the edge of the brush.

Buck crouched down. The gangsters were somewhat to the left of him, but he could hear their voices distinctly and made out every word that they uttered.

"I reckon we oughta tour around the house," Blaney was saying. "We're only watchin' the front of it from here."

"Okay, Blaney," agreed Carson. "That's a good idea. I'll walk this way and you walk the other."

They separated, and Carson's steps took him towards the point where Buck was hiding. By the time he was passing the ranch-foreman, Blaney had vanished beyond a corner of the house.

Buck sprang to his feet and lunged forward. Carson caught sight of him in the instant of his attack, and reached for his six-gun with a cry, but the exclamation was stifled as Buck clapped a hand over his mouth. Nor was the rogue successful in his attempt to draw his revolver, for Buck forestalled him and snatched the weapon out of its holster before the crook's fingers could close on the butt.

Buck had thrown his arm around Carson's neck and face, and as the fellow began to struggle the big foreman clubbed the six-gun and struck him a stunning blow on the temple.

Carson sagged to the ground in a heap and lay still. Buck, throwing the

man's revolver far into the brush, moved on to the ranch-house.

He gained the wall of it, and peered in through a window of the lounge. He immediately saw Dorothy, Marsden and their captors, and realised that it would be suicidal to enter by the front door, as the crooks happened to be facing it.

Buck drew back and took stock of the outside wall of the building. A moment later he was climbing to a balcony on the upper floor, and, having scrambled over the rail of this, he made his way quietly through a bed-room and stepped out on to a landing overlooking the hall-lounge.

The occupants of the lounge were in more or less the same position as when he had last seen them, and Currier and his men now had their backs to him.

"Up with your hands!" Buck commanded imperatively.

There was a scuffling of feet as the crooks wheeled. Looking towards the gallery, they discerned Buck standing near the head of the stairs with a forty-five in his grasp, and the muzzle of the weapon was threatening them indiscriminately. They raised their arms with only a momentary hesitation.

Buck spoke to Marsden, who seemed incapable of thinking for himself.

"Come on there," he said. "Get their guns—and make it snappy."

Marsden advanced to disarm the gangsters, and Dorothy willingly gave him a hand. Currier uttered an oath and for a second seemed inclined to resist, but Buck called a warning.

"Back up there, Currier," he rapped out. "The hammer of this gun is itchin' to fall!"

Currier accepted the situation and was relieved of his six-shooters. His two hirelings were also obliged to remain passive while their "artillery" was taken from them.

"All right," Buck called to Marsden again. "Lay the forty-five on that table and then fetch some rope."

Marsden did as he was told, and proceeded to bind the gangsters' wrists.

Bare Fists.

MARCHING around the house, Blaney wondered why he did not meet with Carson, and he only

discovered the reason when he came upon his comrade's body at the edge of the brush.

Blaney stooped quickly, and as he peered at Carson he made out a dark bruise on the fellow's temple. He attempted to arouse him, but his efforts were in vain. Carson lay like a log, utterly oblivious of his surroundings.

"Gosh!" Blaney muttered. "Somebody in a musta soaked him just after we left each other."

He straightened up and made for the ranch-house veranda, but as he was approaching it he caught a glimpse of the hall through one of the windows.

Blaney took in

the scene at once—Marsden in the act of securing Currier and the other two gangsters, Buck Sawyer covering them from the gallery.

It was as easy for Blaney to climb to the upper floor as it had been for Buck, and sixty seconds later the ruffian was moving on to the landing to surprise the foreman from the rear.

"Drop that iron, Sawyer!" he grated, jamming the barrel of his forty-five into the small of the cattle-man's back.

The young foreman lowered his gun and then let it fall to the floor. The thud of it synchronised with Currier's voice.

"Good work, Blaney," the gang leader called. "Hey, Bill, get me loose, will yuh?"

Currier and one of his companions had been bound, but the third man was still free, and, pushing Marsden aside, he set about untying the cords with which the other two had been secured.

Meanwhile, Buck stood helpless on the landing, but an opportunity for action was yet to come, and it presented itself when a bed-room door suddenly opened.

It was opened by no more formidable a personage than Jenny, Dorothy's coloured servant, who had been attracted by the sound of strange voices. But Blaney whipped round in some alarm, and turned his gun from Buck, whereupon the foreman turned swiftly and struck the weapon from his hand.

Blaney uttered an angry bellow and lashed out at Buck, but the young cattleman parried the blow and banged his fist to the bridge of Blaney's nose. The crook's strident roar became a howl of pain, and he bumped violently against the wall.

"Hold him, Blaney!" yelled Currier from the hall. "We'll be with yuh in a couple of shakes! Quick, Bill—get these cords slackened off!"

Marsden made a belated attempt to hinder the man Bill, but the latter turned on him and flung him into a corner with a sweep of his arm. Meanwhile, up on the landing, Blaney was doing his best to tackle Buck.

He grappled with the big foreman



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November 21st, 1931.

and tried to wrestle him, only to meet with another reverse. There was a fierce scuffle, during which Blaney appeared to hold his own for a second or two. Then Buck swung him clean off his feet and lifted him in his powerful grasp.

Blaney squealed as he was borne aloft. Poised above the banister rail, he struggled frantically as he saw the hall twenty feet below him, but his struggles were of no avail, and a moment later he was dropping through space.

He crashed into a bureau and rolled to the floor, groaning and breathless. By that time, however, Currier and the other two were ready for Buck, and Currier was running to the table to snatch up one of the guns Marsden had laid there.

Buck climbed to the gallery rail and threw himself at a heavy chandelier which hung from the ceiling. He gripped it as he dived through mid-air, and the momentum of his leap swung him forward above the heads of his enemies.

He let go of the chandelier and plunged downwards, and he struck Currier feet-foremost. The gang leader was bowled over like a ninepin, and Buck sprawled a-top of him.

The other two rogues rushed to where the foreman lay, but before they could reach him the hall was in darkness. For Dorothy, standing near the door, had turned off the switch.

Buck scrambled to his feet and drove his bunched knuckles at a face which loomed close to him. The blow connected with an impact that was heard all over the lofty room, and the face disappeared.

The remaining gangster pounced on Buck and caught him with a savage punch that rocked the big foreman, so that he tottered across the hall for several paces. But he came back at the crook and dashed him to the floor with a terrific hook.

Blaney had roused himself, however, and so had Joe Currier and the man Bill; and the three of them made a concerted attack on Buck that threatened to overwhelm him.

A faint spark of unsuspected courage urged Marsden to go to the foreman's assistance, and he stumbled through the gloom and engaged Blaney, dragging him out of the mêlée and giving him a tap on the chin.

Blaney retaliated with a full swing that spun Marsden across the hall. The attorney brought up against a chair, and was steadied by the collision. But as he was endeavouring to brace himself for a fresh onslaught, a boxom figure stepped towards him from the rear.

It was the figure of Jenny, who had descended the stairs a moment before. She was carrying the cudgel with which she had armed herself the day the stage had been robbed, and she deliberately lifted the bludgeon above George Marsden's head.

She did not recognise the attorney in the gloom, and took him for one of Currier's ruffians. Down came the cudgel with a smart thwack, and, as Marsden collapsed, Jenny drew back into the deepest shadows.

Buck, in the meantime, was battling desperately against his assailants. Bill was felled by an upper-cut that might have staggered a gorilla. Currier was hurled across a settee by a devastating right to the head. Blaney, after scoring with one or two blows, was driven across the hall before a rain of punches.

Currier and Bill regained their feet

and closed on Buck once more. The fourth man, who had been laid low in the initial stages of the fight, now struggled up as well, but as he was stumbling towards the scene of conflict Marsden rose to confront him.

Marsden was still dizzy from the rap across the skull which Jenny had conferred on him. But he struck out hazily at the gangster.

The crook hit back at him just as hazily, and soon the two were exchanging a regular series of blows, most of which went wide. But as Marsden was warning to his work, Jenny stepped out of hiding and, still under the impression that the attorney was one of Currier's gang, she smote him once again over the back of the head.

Marsden wavered at the knees and then sank into a sitting posture. Jenny withdrew once more, never dreaming that she had been instrumental in raising the odds against Buck from three to four.

Buck was knocked sprawling by an unlucky punch, but, as the crooks dashed towards him, he rolled aside and sprang to his feet, in time to see Currier and his men blundering into the big, open fireplace.

The gangsters wheeled and renewed their attack in a body. Yet, despite the odds against him, Buck did not choose to wait on the defensive. Springing to meet them halfway, he tore into the ruffians with both hands, smashed two of them to the floor and, sweeping aside the burly form of Currier, hammered the wits out of another gangster.

He had crushed the rogue under a storm of punches, when a girl's voice screamed a warning. It was the voice of Dorothy, and, turning on his heel, Buck saw what she had seen—the figure of Currier brandishing a chair in his hands and rushing across the hall like a maniac.

The young foreman scarce had time to duck. He took the shock on his broad back, and the chair broke in two. Next second he had closed with Currier.

Over by the stairs George Marsden rose for the third time, but as he was tottering forward shakily Jenny again assailed him, and she struck him with the bludgeon even more lustily than before.

Marsden drooped with a sigh and stretched himself out on the floor, whereupon Jenny gave vent to an exclamation of satisfaction.

"Ah always gits mah man!" she declared.

The Clean-Up.

WHEN Flash Prescott had left Buck, he had pushed every inch of speed out of his brone, and three miles of mesquite had slipped past under the pony's drumming hoofs when he sighted a moving herd of cattle.

It was the stock that had been purchased from the Lazy B outfit, and, drawing rein as the head of the column approached him, Flash hailed the men who were riding at flank and rear.

"Hey," he called, "Buck Sawyer's in trouble. He needs us at the ranch-house. Joe Currier's gang!"

The boys were quick to comprehend his meaning, and did not waste time by asking for details. The herd was left in the charge of one or two men, and the rest followed Flash in a break-neck gallop across the prairie.

They had seven or eight miles to cover, and they made the distance in record time. As they neared their destination they saw the mounts of the gangsters tethered by the chaparral, and knew, at least, that they were not too late to round-up the rogues.

Close to the ranch-house they discovered Carson. The man had recovered consciousness, but was still in a dazed condition, and before he could make his escape Flash and the boys overtook him.

"Where's Buck Sawyer?" Flash demanded.

"I ain't seen him," Carson whined, "Somebody grabbed hold o' me an' gave me a bump over the head. That's all I know."

"One of you fellers stay out here and take care of this hombre," Flash said, indicating Carson. "The rest of you follow me. I guess Buck must be in the house."

They dismounted and advanced to the building, leaving Carson in the charge of a stalwart ranch-hand. A few seconds later they were tramping across the veranda to the front door.

Flash was the first to enter, and the boys crowded across the threshold after him. The hall was still in darkness, but sounds of strife came to their ears through the gloom—the stamping of feet and the thud of blows, and every now and then a grunt that told of a solid punch finding its mark.

One of the boys located the electric switch and turned up the light, and the scene that met the newcomers' gaze was one that held them awestruck.

Dorothy was cowering on the stairs. In the fireplace lay the huddled form of a gangster. A second man was sprawled under one of the windows, and a third was stretched out near the foot of the staircase. All three were insensible, and they testified to the havoc created by Buck Sawyer's fists.

Nearer, another still form was to be seen. It was the form of George Marsden, and Jenny was looking down on him in consternation, her eyes rolling comically as she recognised her victim.

And at the far side of the hall Buck Sawyer and Joe Currier were fighting tooth and nail.

Flash and the boys did not interfere, for, savagely as Currier struck out at the young foreman, it was plain that Buck needed no assistance. He had accounted for three men single-handed, and he was capable of accounting for the fourth.

Currier did land one lucky punch that drove the cattleman backward. But as he tried to follow up the advantage Buck jerked his head aside and then ripped his right to the jaw in a flashing cross-counter.

Currier's onslaught was checked, and he gave a kind of lurch. Buck hit him again, this time with a full swing that threw the gang-leader headlong into the hall-table.

The table capsized, and Currier plunged over it and rolled across the floor. He picked himself up and stood on the defensive as Buck advanced. But the young foreman drew down his guard with a feint to the ribs and banded his fist to the jaw again.

The smack of the blow must have been audible outside the ranch-house. Currier was knocked off his feet by it, and with arms wide-spread he fell on his back and lay quite motionless.

Flash and the boys came fairly into the room, and Flash looked round at the prone bodies with a grin.

"Somebody must have made Buck mad," he opined humorously.

At that moment Buck was looking down at Dorothy, who had run forward and laid a hand on his arm.

"Oh, Buck," she was saying, "I'm so grateful! I don't know what you'd have done without you."

"That's all right, Miss Dorothy," Buck told her, and was turning away when Flash confronted him.

"Regular old-fashioned rumpus, Buck, huh?" he declared. "Gee, I'd like to have been here sooner."

Buck smiled and took hold of him by the shoulders.

"Pardner," he said, "I reckon I've got news for you. We're both going to head for Montana."

"Both?" Flash echoed.

"Yep," was the rejoinder. "I made up my mind as I was comin' along by Red Canyon. But of course, I had to stop Currier's game first."

Flash clapped him on the back.

"You're trailin' along with me!" he shouted. "Gee, that's great! Come on, we'll get goin' and leave the boys to collect this garbage"—with a gesture that encompassed Currier and his gang.

Buck started for the door, but before he could reach it someone tugged at his sleeve, and as he paused he realised it was Dorothy.

"Buck," she appealed, "Buck, why are you going away?"

"Well," he said, "I figured I'd let you see as how I didn't want to hang on here, like I was hopin' you wouldn't be able to last the five years, in accordance with your dad's will. I hope you settle down here, Miss Dorothy, and get to like the Lazy B, so's you'll never aim to leave it at all."

"But Buck—" She looked up at him, and then coloured swiftly. "Buck," she added in a voice that he alone could hear, "I—I can't stay here—without you. If you go—I'll have to lose the inheritance."

Buck gazed at her incredulously for a moment, and then, taking her in his arms, he spoke to Flash.

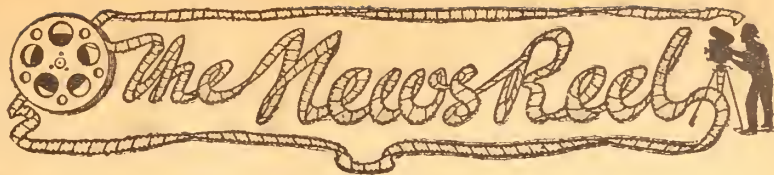
"I sure am sorry, pardner," he told the youngster, "but you'll have to make that trip to Montana alone."

Flash grinned.

"Sure, Buck," he stated, "I understand. I'm sorry I can't be your best man, but I've gotta be hittin' the trail. Adios, companero." And with the words he stepped into the night.

From the doorway, Buck and Dorothy watched him mount his pinto and ride away till the night swallowed him. He had learned his lesson and was heading for a new life, wherein men like Currier would play no part.

(By permission of the Producers' Distributing Co., Ltd., starring Tom Keene and Marion Shilling.)



(Continued from page 2.)

I am a sea-captain, and the day after a gangster. Then, maybe, I don't earn enough to eat for a couple of days, and the following day I am made a chef on a motion picture liner where every conceivable delicacy comes under my supervision. Yes, the hard life of an extra has its compensations."

Stories for Tom Mix.

Preparations were recently completed for two of the six super Western productions which Tom Mix is to make on his return to the screen under Universal.

The first two stories are "Destry Rides Again" and "Christmas Eve at Pilot Butte," both by well-known American authors, though it is certain that the titles will be changed.

Tom Mix, who not long ago finished his engagement with Sells-Floto Circus, is in Universal City with his horses and equipment, and has already started production on the first of the two stories chosen for him.

An Eskimo Picture.

Ewing Scott, a film director, and Roy Klafki, a cameraman, will be able to give civilisation a picture of what life is like in the far north.

For nine months these two endured terrible hardships while living among the Eskimos and filming their ways. After being given up as lost by those who had sent out the expedition they were eventually found marooned on Icy Cape, where they had been for more than thirty days. Their rescue was due to the chance arrival of a whaling ship.

Stars' Lucky Escapes.

While acting the other week for a new Western picture, Buck Jones was unable to dodge quickly enough out of the way when a chair was thrown at him. Result—two broken ribs and a badly injured back. This is what the stars have to pay for our entertainment, and it is marvellous how they manage to escape worse consequences.

Bill Boyd was nearly killed not very long ago. He was on location in Arizona when an explosion sent a big rock hurtling in his direction. It missed him by only a few feet.

Though Paul Page was not acting at the time he had his lucky escape, he was on his way to the studio to do his part in "Palmy Days." His car overturned, and it was thought certain at first that he had been killed. As it was he was badly injured, his nose and leg being broken and his head and face terribly cut. Thanks to skilful surgery, however, Paul Page will be able to return to the screen later on.

It was while filming the submarine scene in "Tho Seas Beneath" that disaster very nearly overtook several members of the company. The U.S. naval submarine V-4, the largest in the world, was being used in the rôle of a German U-boat. Henry Victor's part as the commander was being doubled by Lieutenant-Commander Quigley, of the U.S. Navy, and his vessel had to keep a secret appointment in enemy waters with a lighter carrying oil fuel.

On board the lighter itself was John Ford, the director of the film, John Loder, Marion Lessing, and cameraman. The V-4 disappeared and cameramen on the lighter got ready to film it as the submarine came to the top. Then came the terrifying discovery that the lighter, failing to answer its rudder, had drifted on to the spot where the submarine was expected to rise.

Slowly the 207 ft. deck of the V-4 could now be seen rising from below. Those on the lighter immediately above it were in a helpless position. Then, as the periscope and next the conning tower broke the surface of the water, a shout of horror went up from the Kingfisher, an auxiliary ship standing by. A second or two later, Commander Quigley was able to see that the V-4 was only two feet away from the keel of the lighter. Instant orders were given, and the rise of the submarine checked and its course altered. But for the director and the others, it was touch and go.

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All Applications for Advertisement Space in this Publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, **BOY'S CINEMA, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.**

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 We tested dozens of new 2-valve sets. Our experts examined every set that claimed to compete with the K-B "Masterpiece," and not one surpassed the standard set by

Kolster-Brandes. The K-B "Masterpiece" is the finest value offered! A revelation in 2-valve radio. Get your K-B quickly and enjoy the pick of the winter programmes . . . free . . . save B.D.V. coupons—from to-day.

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COUPONS ...
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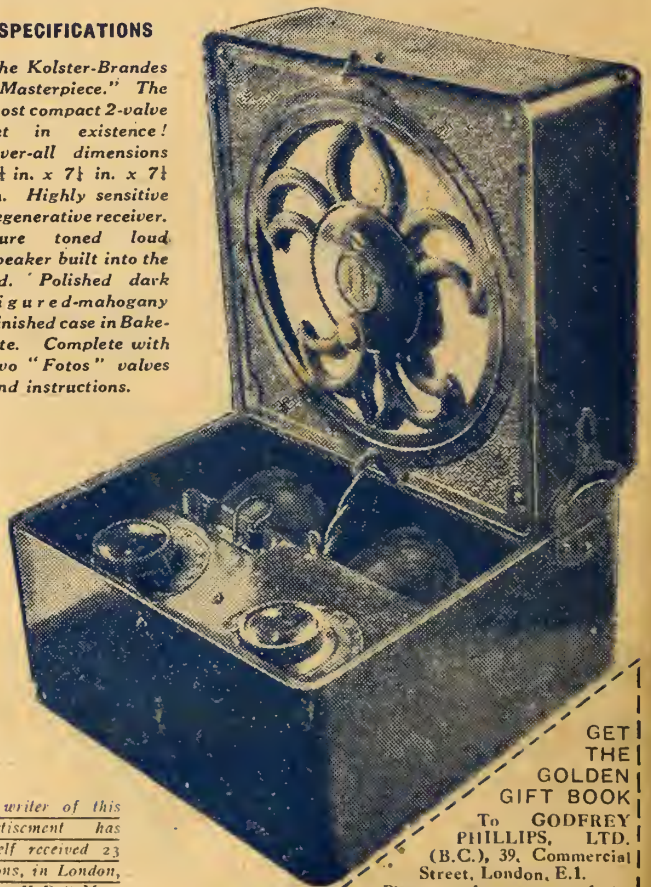
Old King Cole was a merry
 old soul,
 And a merry old soul was he;
 He called for his pipe,
 He called for a light,
 And he called for his B.D.V.



The writer of this advertisement has himself received 23 stations, in London, on the K-B "Masterpiece" Set, using only a 15 ft. indoor aerial.

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The Kolster-Brandes "Masterpiece." The most compact 2-valve set in existence! Over-all dimensions 7½ in. x 7½ in. x 7½ in. Highly sensitive regenerative receiver. Pure toned loud speaker built into the lid. Polished dark figured-mahogany finished case in Bakelite. Complete with two "Fotos" valves and instructions.



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No. 624.

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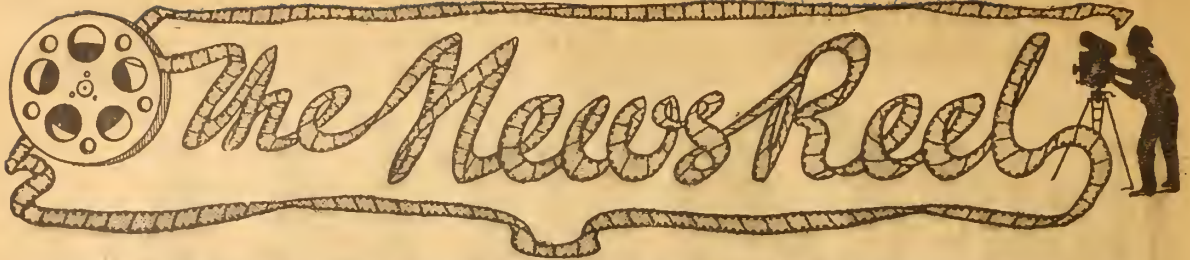
NOVEMBER 28th, 1931



DANGER ISLAND

*A Cargo of
Breath-taking Thrills on a
Three-masted Schooner Freighted with
Adventurers bound for World's Wildest and Strangest Island*

START this GRIPPING NEW SERIAL TO-DAY



The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed to BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"Danger Island."

Captain Harry Drake, Kenneth Harlan; Bonnie Adams, Lucille Brown; Doctor Adams, Tom Ricketts; Ben Arnold, Walter Miller; Bull Black, W. L. Thorne; Arlene Chandos, Beulah Hutton; Briney, Andy Devine; Lascara George Regan; Cebu, Everett Brown.

"The Guest House."

Jim Weston, Rex Lease; Helen Sutter, Dorothy Gulliver; Frank Sutter, Jay Hunt; Harry Winslow, Harry Woods; Ben, Harry Todd.

"The Lady from Nowhere."

John Couroy, John Holland; Marion Dale, Alice Day; Barstow, Phillips Smailley; Rigo, Mischa Auer; Millie, Barbara Bedford; Jones, James Burtis; Colonel Snowden, Lafe McKee; The Chief, Ray Largay.

A Little Child Taught Him.

It seems improbable that one could capitalise on what might be learned from a two-year-old baby. But it's possible.

Stan Laurel, the undersized partner of Oliver Hardy, admits he has learned much from babies. And he makes money with the knowledge.

Famous, among other things, for his "cry-baby face," Stan frankly admits having learned it from a crying babe.

"Making funny faces is an art in itself, when they are used in the spasmodic business of making a motion picture," said the comedian. "It's easy enough to make a funny face once or twice for the amusement of friends, but when it comes to making the same face over a dozen times before a camera, you have to start studying the actual business of making the face to make it appear natural.

"It took me several months to get even a semblance of a 'cry-baby' face. I used to stand before a mirror, close my eyes a little, pucker up my mouth and try to look like a squalling baby. Believe me, it was anything but funny trying to get it down pat.

"The first three or four weeks I worked on it the muscles in my jaws were so sore I had to use liniment on them when I ate my meals. I tried holding a baby before the mirror with me, but I guess my efforts to cry made the baby laugh, for I got very little help from the youngster when he saw me working.

"I used to watch a baby cry and then try to get the same expression on my own face. It might entertain movie audiences now, but when I pull a 'cry-baby' face around home my daughter embarrasses me. She makes a better one than I do with all the rehearsing I've done, and she's only three years old!"

King of Stunt Artists to Star for Radio Pictures.

After having "doubled" for the star of a film drama a hundred times, one of Hollywood's unphotographed heroes November 28th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S COMPLETE FILM STORIES.



WALLACE BERY

IN

"THE SECRET SIX."

Tony Scorpio started as a stockyards slaughterer, then won his way, by a sinister trail of gun-play, till he had a town at his mercy. Then came the Secret Six, grimly resolved to crush him.

"WILD HORSE."

Two kinds of outlaw—a wild stallion and a ruthless bad man—both ridden to a finish—conquered by a daredevil and reckless cowpuncher. Starring Hoot Gibson and Alberta Vaughn.

also

The second episode of our gripping new serial-drama of treasure guarded by a tribe of fierce cannibals:

"DANGER ISLAND."

Tell all your friends about this amazing new story.

is at last to receive due recognition.

Dick Grace, a frail little man with a quiet, nervous manner, the last survivor of the famous Squadron of Death Club, formed in Hollywood by stunt flyers, is now to star in his own story, "The Lost Squadron," based upon his hair-breadth escapes.

This will be made by Radio Pictures, with Paul Sloane directing, and Eric von Stroheim playing in support of Dick Grace.

When he makes this picture it will be the first occasion on which his face has been seen by the audience. Although he has crashed thirty-four aeroplanes before the camera, and broken sixty-eight bones in so doing, it has always been with his back to the lens, and the star got the credit.

It was Grace who provided the thrills in "Wings," "Young Eagles," and "The Air Circus," whilst his dare-devil stunts in the Colleen Moore picture, "Love Never Dies," was the talk of Hollywood.

Believing that Fate can be tempted too many times, when he has finished "The Lost Squadron," Grace intends to retire. But before he does this he has to make the most daring crash he has ever attempted.

When every other scene in "The Lost Squadron" has been finished to everyone's satisfaction, he will crash an aeroplane into the sea at 100 miles per hour.

Realising that this is courting violent death, Grace had a special clause added to his contract with Radio Pictures. This calls for a mobile operating theatre with surgeons ready on the spot to take care of any emergency operation necessary, and for special police to keep the area of the crash free from spectators.

"The Lost Squadron" being the swan song of one of Hollywood's greatest dare-devils, and dealing with the game he knows so well, will undoubtedly prove one of the most thrilling air spectacles ever offered by the screen. In addition to this, it will bring before the public one who has for many years "taken all the kicks and collected aught but little of the ha'pence."

Director of Horticulture.

During the making of Richard Dix's latest Radio picture, "Secret Service," a new Hollywood profession was discovered.

A Japanese horticulturist supplied the studio, at a few hours' notice, with a complete garden stocked with flowers popular in the Southern States of America seventy years ago, at the time of the American Civil War.

Jimmy Evergreen, as he is called—his own name being unpronounceable—through his own knowledge and the work of his own research department, has managed to cultivate over 10,000 flowers and plants not indigenous to the country, and consequently does an exceptional amount of business with Hollywood producers, supplying landscapes for pictures staged outside America.

"Secret Service" is a story of the American Civil War, and Jimmy Evergreen helped considerably to bring to the screen the atmosphere of the period.

Movie Stars in Training.

More than a dozen former pugilists and athletes are now making goodly incomes training the male stars of Hollywood.

One of the most successful of these is Nate Slott, who was a champion boxer in Chicago arenas ten years ago. He trained Richard Barthelmess for his fight in "The Patent Leather Kid," and made a real boxer out of the star within two months. Now he is once more employed in keeping this famous star fit.

Barthelmess, however, is not the only cinema star he has under his wing. There are others, feminine as well as masculine. Dorothy Mackaill has trained with Slott; James Cagney has taken boxing lessons with him; Warner

(Continued on page 28.)

Follow a two-fisted sea-captain and the beautiful daughter of a brave explorer—as they sail on a perilous trip to a forgotten cannibal island—where they defy storm, fire and water, man and beast—on a search for a fortune in radium! Starring Kenneth Harlan and Lucille Browne.



DANGER ISLAND



The White Men.

THE sweltering tropic heat seemed to penetrate even to the deepest recesses of the jungle. For the three men plunging through the swamps and tangled thickets there would have been no escape from it even had they been in the mind to seek refuge from its oppression.

The dusky shadows under the huge cotton-trees were a mockery, seeming to promise coolness, yet in reality offering none. For on all that considerable island there was no single place where the very air did not seem like the breath of a furnace.

Sleek creatures stalked the bush. A tawny lion, padding his way along a forest track with the scent of mankind in his nostrils, aroused a thousand echoes with the thunder of his hungry roar. A hyena challenged the sound with his hideous, half-human laughter, and in his lair a dappled leopard snarled truculently, frightening some chimpanzees, who sprang chattering through a tracery of leaves and creeper-tendrils up above.

These sounds were too familiar to impress the three men who were forging their way through the jungle. Their waking hours had been punctuated by them, their spells of slumber interrupted by them for weeks on end. If they had not known it before, they had soon learned that the beasts of the wilds were cowards at heart, easily frightened off if a man were armed and kept his nerve.

The menace which these three men feared was one a hundred times more dire than the menace of skulking, feline brutes, a menace symbolised by an ominous throb that now reached their ears.

It was the throb of drums, sounding a grim tattoo that seemed to become louder

and more rapid in its beat as the three men listened. War drums thudding out in mad diapason the frenzied measure of the death-dance.

The three men pushed on, forced to follow a track that was bringing them ever nearer to foes who stood between them and the safety of the coast—primitive, treacherous and fiendish enemies ripe for slaughter—black demons of the jungle.

Of the three men two were white, one a thin, aged intellectual fellow known to the civilised world as Professor Adams, scientist and explorer, the other a younger individual answering to the description of John Ramage, soldier of fortune. The third man was a gigantic negro, and these were all that remained of a brave company which Professor Adams had mustered for an expedition that must have benefited the whole of mankind had it succeeded.

Privation, fever and wild beasts had taken their toll ere Adams had reached his goal, and now, with his mission so near accomplishment, he was threatened with utter defeat and destruction.

Yet he was pressing forward determinedly in the hope of reaching the coast, when all at once a vista of track opened up before him in a kind of avenue several hundred yards long. The dense walls of jungle on each hand and

the canopy of boughs and foliage overhead gave the path a tunnel-like appearance, and at the end of it a clearing was revealed.

"Down!" Professor Adams jerked, and suited the action to the word by dropping suddenly into a crouching attitude.

His companions followed his example, and the professor lifted a pair of field-glasses that were hung around his neck. Gazing through the powerful lenses, he perceived in magnified form the scene that he had distinguished a moment before with the naked eye.

The clearing was occupied by a native village of thatched huts, and in the midst of these a mob of black savages were capering wildly, brandishing spear, bow and war-club as they danced, and every now and then raising their voices in a fierce shout. But the central figure, one which engaged the professor's closest attention, was that of a villainous negro whose half-nude body was hideously tattooed and daubed with paint.

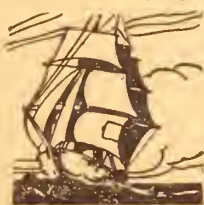
He was far inferior to the capering warriors in physique, but his head-dress of a wild beast's skull marked him as one supreme in the counsels of the tribe. He it was who goaded the blacks as they danced, chanting to them in the barbarous island dialect, and flourishing an ugly bludgeon as he harangued them.

"What do you see, professor?" Ramage asked huskily, as he knelt behind the scientist.

"Savages!" Adams answered in a terse voice. "Their witch doctor is up to something. I can't just tell what—"

He turned to the huge negro who accompanied Ramage and himself, and spoke to him in clipped English.

"Cebu," he said, "look through



EPISODE 1.

"The Coast of Peril."

glasses. Tell us what witch doctor is doing."

The black giant took the field-glasses and held them to his eyes as he had often seen the professor do. He focused them on the tattooed medicine man, and watched him solemnly for a full minute ere turning to the white men again.

"Owando, witch doctor, he told his people their god angry," he said slowly. "He told them go out and kill white men."

"Give me those glasses again," Professor Adams rapped out, and, peering through them once more, he again riveted his attention on the witch doctor Owando.

As he followed the medicine man's antics a new sound was heard. Louder than the drums, louder than the roar of any lion, it broke over the entire island, and must have been audible far out to sea—a deep rumbling that seemed to belong to those primeval days when the earth was in the making.

Professor Adams and his companions knew well enough what it was. It was the voice of a volcanic mountain to the north, whence they had come, and during the last day or two they had heard it at frequent intervals.

But if it did not impress the white men and Cebu, its effect on Owando and his warriors was marked. For they ceased their capering for an instant and gazed with superstitious awe towards the distant, smouldering pinnacle of the mountain.

"Fire-god talks, baas," Cebu muttered uneasily. "Owando, he say black man's Fire-god tell bush people to kill whites."

Professor Adams was scarcely listening. Through the glasses he now saw Owando snatch up a black object twice the size of a man's fist, a tarry substance with a peculiar lustre, and as the witch doctor held this aloft the warriors danced towards him and struck their weapons of war against it in accordance with some ancient rite.

"The old devil!" Adams ejaculated. "He's got a piece of pitchblende in his hands. No doubt it contains enough radium to save hundreds of human lives with its healing properties. And here's this black ruffian using it to incite his men to kill!"

Even as he spoke the bushmen began to rush to and fro, abandoning the clearing to plunge into the jungle yelling fiendishly as they ran, and shaking assegai, club and bow with unmistakable significance.

"They're scattering in all directions!" gasped the professor. "There's a body of them coming this way. We've got to make our way to the coast and find some means of leaving the island. Cebu—Cebu—you've brought us this far, can you guide us out of this accursed jungle?"

Cebu pointed to a track that branched from the one they had been following. The giant negro's face was an impassive mask that concealed the terror he must have felt.

"Try this way," he said. "Come!"

Flight Through the Jungle.

THE bush seemed alive with sound and movement, voices chanting a chorus of doom, black forms flitting hither and thither like hell-fiends.

Professor Adams, Ramage and Cebu stumbled forward doggedly, the horror of pursuit at their very heels. Alone, Cebu might have made good progress, but the two white men were handicapped by the weight of thick-soled boots. Meanwhile, Owando's warriors were drawing ever nearer, travelling hot-foot with the rapidity of a people bred to the jungle.

"They're close behind," Ramage kept

saying over and over again. "They'll sight us any moment."

And those words were on his lips when a party of half a dozen savages burst into a patch of open ground across which the fugitives were running.

A yell went up, and Adams and his companions half-turned. The blacks had checked, and one had fitted an arrow to his bow. Even as Cebu and the white men were in the act of wheeling to continue their flight into the bush the shaft sped on its mission of death, and the heavy blade of the arrow tore into the professor's breast.

A sharp cry of agony broke from the scientist's lips, and he pitched to the ground. Ramage and Cebu immediately stopped and bent over him, the former haggard with anxiety.

"They've got me," the professor moaned. "They've got me—"

With a strong, firm pull, Ramage wrenched the arrow from the old man's body. Then, with Cebu's assistance, he raised him.

At the other side of the little clearing another of the savages had fitted an arrow and was preparing to send it on its way. But Ramage caught sight of him, and, throwing aside the missile that had struck the professor, he plucked a revolver from a holster at his belt.

He fired, and the blast of the gun challenged the exulting howls of the bushmen. The bullet thudded into the dusky chest of the savage who was in the act of drawing bow, and with a grunt the warrior staggered back. The arrow leapt from his fingers as he fell heavily, but it flashed harmlessly towards the shimmering blue vault of the sky, and when it had spent itself dropped somewhere into the heart of the jungle.

A shriek of execration burst from the other blacks, but in face of the "thunderstick" in Ramage's fist they hesitated. While they stood there wavering, Ramage and Cebu seized the opportunity of dragging the professor into the bush.

The tangled vegetation swallowed them, and at the same moment the party of blacks at the other side of the clearing were joined by another and larger body of tribesmen. Howling murderously for blood, the savages swept forward.

Carrying Professor Adams between them, Ramage and Cebu reeled on. But they realised the folly of keeping to the beaten tracks, as they knew that they must speedily be overtaken with their burden, and so they swerved aside and crashed through a mass of jungle fronds and creepers.

Tree-apes chattered at them from lofty boughs, but the fugitives had no ears for those animal voices. They were on the alert for sounds of pursuit, and it was with indescribable relief that they heard their enemies surging in full cry along the path which they had abandoned.

Ramage and Cebu toiled through the thickets with a dead weight hanging on their arms. It was an appalling trek, this blazing of a new trail through the dusky jungle—for two encumbered men, a titanic endeavour that sapped the strength even from the giant negro's magnificent physique.

Fibrous creepers tripped them, and thorny tendrils whipped and tore their flesh. Time and again they had to lay the professor down and tear a pathway with their bare hands. Sometimes they were confronted with impenetrable barriers of giant flora that might have resisted an axe, and were forced to change their course.

They paused at last, from very exhaustion, and lowered Professor Adams to the ground. He was conscious, and his

eyes were open, but a mass of blood had coagulated on his shirt and he was very weak.

The jungle was still, and the sound of savage cries came but faintly to their ears, cries in which a baffled tone was distinguishable. For the time being, at least, the pursuers had been thrown off the scent.

"They've lost track of us," Ramage breathed hoarsely. "We'd better keep going as long as we can."

"Wait," Adams pleaded, as they made to lift him again—"wait—"

He reached inside his shirt, and, stifling a groan, drew out a faded paper, which proved to be a chart when he opened it with trembling fingers. It was a map of the island on which so many of his companions had met their doom, and wrapped in it was a fragment of that same lustrous black substance that the witch doctor, Owando, had used to incite the bushmen.

"Ramage," the professor said, speaking with difficulty, "this chart—already stained with the blood of my ancestors—must go back to civilisation—whatever happens to me. It must be—preserved—"

"I understand, professor," Ramage answered, urging him with a gesture to thrust both map and pitchblende back inside his shirt. "But we must get out of here."

"This chart," the old man persisted—"this chart and this piece of pitchblende—must go to my daughter Bonnie—Bonnie—"

"Yes, yes, professor; I'll attend to it," Ramage turned to Cebu, and: "Come on," he added, "give me a hand with him. We've got to get him out of here!"

They raised the old man, and once again pushed on through the eternal gloom of the bush.

Bound for Danger Island.

AT the other side of the world, a group of people whose lives were linked up with Professor Adams' enterprise were gathered in the drawing-room of the scientist's New Jersey home.

They included Bonnie, the professor's blonde and lovely daughter, and Dr. Adams, his brother. There were two others in the room, a man and a girl, both in the late twenties. The man, tall, dark, and in some respects handsome, was Ben Arnold, who had formed a friendship with the Adams family some time prior to the professor's departure on his ill-fated expedition to Africa. The girl, Arlene Chandos, was a pale, slender brunette, who had for the last year or so acted as a companion to Bonnie.

They were standing around a globe that represented the world, and Ben Arnold was turning it on its pivot.

"You see, Bonnie," he was saying, "the island we think your father is on is not charted on this map. But it lies about here." He laid his finger on a point just off the coast of Angola, where the barbarous Congo River empties its sluggish waters into the sea. "And it is known as Danger Island."

Bonnie nodded, and bent her blonde head over the globe.

"Captain Drake, my new skipper," Ben Arnold continued, "knows every inch of that coast. With him in command we're sure to find your father—if he's alive."

Bonnie looked up swiftly, and just for an instant an expression of dismay was written on her lovely face.

"Oh, he must be alive, Ben!" she said, with more hope than conviction in her voice. "Don't you think so, Uncle Anthony?" she added, turning to Dr. Adams.

"Oh, I'm convinced my brother is

alive," the doctor murmured. "But I'm not so sure that an expedition of this kind would be safe for a young girl. There are wild beasts—savages to encounter—"

Arlene Chandos interrupted him. It was as if she wished to sidetrack the doctor from his protests, for some reason best known to herself—and perhaps to Ben Arnold.

"Doctor," she said, "Bonnie tells me that she hasn't heard from her father for a long time."

Dr. Adams pursed his lips and looked anxious for a moment.

"Yes," he muttered; "quite some time. It may be that some disaster has overtaken him."

"Your brother's expedition was not properly equipped," put in Ben Arnold. "My ship, the Lottie Carson, has everything. She is engine-driven, but is rigged for sails in case of an emergency—a breakdown, for instance. She carries motor-boats, and in addition to these—an aeroplane. In fact, there is no hazard or contingency which may possibly arise that I have not provided for."

"Very thorough preparation, I should say," Dr. Adams declared emphatically. "And I'm sure both Bonnie and I are considerably indebted to you. It's magnificent of you to fit out this expedition—"

"Not at all," said Arnold, with complacency, his dark eyes shifting for an instant towards Arlene Chandos. "I regarded the professor as one of my dearest friends, and am willing to do everything in my power to help him. I am afraid, in view of the lack of news, that he may need help."

The door opened at that juncture and a butler appeared on the threshold.

"Captain Drake," he announced formally, and at mention of the name Arnold glanced round.

"Oh, show him in," he said, and a moment later a young man of commanding appearance entered the room.

He was something over six feet in height, clean of limb and superbly built. His free stride and blue, far-seeing eyes were characteristic of the man whose trade is the sea. His bronzed face, though almost youthful in its lines and pleasing in its expression, possessed a certain manly ruggedness that told of fighting qualities.

"Hallo, Captain Drake!" Arnold greeted him. "I'm glad you're here, for I can introduce you to the folks while we're all together. This is Dr. Anthony Adams. This lady is Miss Chandos. And this is Miss Adams."

Captain Harry Drake found himself taking the slim, delicate hand that Bonnie proffered to him.

"Glad to meet you, Miss Adams," he said, and though the bridge of a ship was home to him, the intonation of his fine, strong voice told of English birth.

"How do you do, Captain Drake?" said Bonnie. "Mr. Arnold has been telling us all about you. I understand you know where Danger Island is."

"Well, I think so, Miss Adams," Harry Drake told her with a smile. "It's somewhat out of the track of ships, but I've sailed those waters many a time."

"We have a map here," Bonnie mentioned, indicating the globe. "Won't you show me where the island is, and just how we get there?"

"I'll be glad to," Harry answered, and, approaching the atlas with her, he began to turn it with his hands, at the same time tracing their intended course across the North and South Atlantic.

"You see, Miss Adams," he explained, "we sail from here direct to the Azores, about eight hundred miles from the west coast of Portugal. We take on fuel and provisions there, then alter our course and run direct for the south. In two weeks from now we should be nearing this point right here."

Dr. Anthony Adams had joined Drake and Bonnie at the atlas, and was looking over the captain's shoulder interestedly. Ben Arnold and Arlene Chandos did not attach themselves to the group, however. They took the opportunity of drawing aside and conversing with each other in a low tone that Bonnie and her companions could not hear.

"Drake knows the exact location of the island," Ben Arnold said, with keen satisfaction.

Arlene Chandos favoured him with a penetrating glance.

"Yes," she retorted significantly, "he knows too much. Take my advice and get rid of him."

"Don't worry," Arnold told her with a sardonic smile. "I've had my mate, Bull Black, trail him ever since he signed on. Once Drake shows me the island, Bull will take command of the ship!"

At Sea.

THE Lottie Carson ploughed her way through the waters of the South Atlantic, spray dancing from her bows, a trim, three-masted schooner bound for a remote and savage coast.

On the after-deck Harry Drake and Bonnie Adams were talking of the voyage.

"It hardly seems possible that we've been at sea two whole weeks," the girl declared. "How many days will it be before we reach the island?"

"You won't have much longer to wait, Miss Adams," Harry informed her. "A couple of days at the outside."

Bonnie laid a hand on his arm and looked at him earnestly.

"Captain Drake," she said, "you do believe we'll find my father, don't you?"

"I think he'll be on the beach waiting for you," the Englishman answered reassuringly, and he added, with a smile: "Any man would, Miss Adams."

There was a good deal of bustle going on aboard the craft at this particular hour, and further conversation between Harry and his fair companion was interrupted by the strident and unmelodious voice of a hefty young sailor who was fixing a rope.

Harry and Bonnie could not see him, for the squat bulk of bridge and wheelhouse concealed him from their view, but his cracked tones reached their ears as he gave hideous rendering of a seafaring ballad:

"Oh, my name is Briney, I was born on the briney deep;
And you'll always find me workin' when the other swabs are asleep!"

Harry and Bonnie laughed, but there was a man, sour of temper, whose mood did not coincide with that of the cheerful Briney. That man was Bull Black, mate of the Lottie Carson, and Harry Drake's immediate subordinate.



With a strong, firm pull, Ramage wrenched the arrow from the old man's body.

Bull Black approached Briney with a scowl as dark as his name. A heavily-built man with a deep chest and the face of a tyrant, he was a fair seaman, eminently capable of handling a ship—and capable, too, of handling a crew, so long as he was given free use of his fists. Harry Drake was not too partial to him, and more than once he had been compelled to check him for his brutality to the men.

But Harry Drake was not in view, and, brushing aside a sailor who stood in his path, Bull Black stepped up to Briney, swung him around by the shoulder and snarled a command at him.

"Stow that cursed noise!" he said.

Briney looked at him cheerfully.

"I think it's pretty," he declared, without offence.

"Oh, you do, do ye?" growled Black in a tone that was dangerously quiet.

There was an inhuman leer on his ugly face, and his narrow eyes seemed to fasten on the point of Briney's jaw.

"Well, then," he went on, "what do yuh think o' this?" And with the words he swung a fist like a hammer and knocked Briney sprawling.

Black made a gesture as of dusting his hands, and then swaggered aft. A moment later he caught sight of Drake and Bonnie near the stern of the vessel, and after pausing to watch them for a few seconds, he changed his course and strode in the direction of Ben Arnold's state-room.

Arnold had received a visit from Arlene Chandos, and, like Bonnie and Harry Drake, the two were discussing the prospects of the voyage—though from a very different angle.

"Listen, Ben," Arlene was saying, "supposing we find Professor Adams alive and kicking, with a few million dollars' worth of radium in his possession?"

"We won't find the professor," Arnold retorted. "We'd have heard of him before this if something hadn't happened to him."

Arlene was silent for a spell. Then she laid a hand on Arnold's sleeve and looked at him appealingly.

"Ben," she said, "there's something else I want to ask you. Bonnie Adams doesn't mean anything to you, does she? If I—"

"Now get this, Arlene," Arnold interrupted. "It's the radium I'm after—noting else. But I brought her along because she might remember something of that chart her old man carried. When she's served her purpose—"

He shrugged, and:

"Well, this island we're bound for is dangerous," he continued, "and accidents—are likely to happen."

There was a tap on the door and Bull Black entered the cabin.

"Mr. Arnold," he said gruffly, "you'd better look out for your captain. Him an' the Adams girl are up on the after-deck cooin' together like a pair o' turtle doves."

Arnold bit his lip. It did not suit him to stand by and watch Harry Drake winning Bonnie's confidence, but for the time being he did not care to interfere.

"I can't afford to quarrel with Drake until we sight Danger Island," he muttered.

Before more could be said on the subject a voice was heard all over the ship. It was the voice of the look-out in the cross-trees, and Bull Black pulled open the door to catch his words.

"Row-boat three points off the star-board bow!"

Black and Arnold stepped out on deck and encountered Harry and Bonnie as

they approached the bulwark. The Englishman had a pair of field-glasses in his hand, and he focused them on a dark object some distance away.

"What is it, captain?" Bonnie asked. "Some sort of a canoe," Harry answered. "But I can't make out what's aboard her."

"Let me see," put in Arnold, and, taking the glasses, he studied the small boat for a moment. His attention was still fixed on it when he saw the flutter of a strip of white cloth waved in a signal of distress.

"Held your course, captain," said Ben Arnold curtly.

"But there's an SOS coming from that boat," Bonnie interposed. "We must go to her."

"Miss Adams is right," Harry observed, and raising his voice: "Port your helm!" he called to the man in the wheel-house.

"Port your helm, sir," the man at the wheel repeated, and immediately afterwards the Lottie Carson was heeling over on the starboard side as the steersman altered her course.

The distance between schooner and rowing-boat rapidly dwindled, and soon those on the deck of the Lottie Carson were able to make out the half-naked figure of a huge negro. There was another figure in the boat, that of a white man, but he was quite motionless. The nigger alone moved, rowing like one in the last stages of exhaustion.

When they were alongside, one or two of the hands threw a rope-ladder over the bulwark and then proceeded to help the big negro aboard. The white man was carried up the rungs a moment later, and as he was brought on deck—a thin, wasted figure that seemed more dead than alive—Drake and his companions crowded round him.

Next instant a scream broke from Bonnie's lips.

"Daddy!" came her startling cry. "Oh, it's daddy!"

Arnold, Bull Black and Arlene Chandos exchanged glances but said nothing. Then Bonnie spoke again in a voice that trembled with anxiety.

"Take him to my cabin," she said to the sailors who were carrying her father. "And someone fetch my uncle. Oh, quickly, please!"

"Come on, boys," Harry put in crisply. "Hustle up there."

Professor Adams was borne to Bonnie's state-room and laid on a bunk there, Arlene Chandos, Ben Arnold and Harry Drake remaining with him, together with Bonnie and her Uncle Anthony.

The professor was unconscious, but a stiff drink was poured out for him, and as it passed his lips he seemed to revive a little. He was a pitiable spectacle, however, shrunk to a skeleton, and wearing clothes that were tattered and begrimed, while a dark stain over his breast showed where that bushman arrow had struck him.

One glance at him and his brother Anthony knew he could not survive much longer, and as the professor opened his eyes the unnatural brightness of them told how near he was to his end. His strength sapped away by privation and loss of blood, he had no stamina left to help him recover from his terrible experiences.

"Ramage," he whispered, as he stared past the group in the cabin, seeing only those past events with which his waking memory tortured him.

"Ramage—poor Ramage. Speared as

we ran for the boat. But his was a quick, easy death. He didn't linger on as I'm lingering."

"Daddy!" Bonnie cried, flinging herself down beside him. "Daddy, don't you know me?"

The professor's brain cleared as that well-known voice called him to his present surroundings, and a look of recognition dawned on his haggard face.

"Bonnie," he faltered huskily. "Bonnie! Is it really you?"

"Oh, daddy," she told him in a tone that trembled with emotion, "I'm thankful—thankful that we arrived in time."

The professor gave a wan smile.

"I'm afraid you didn't quite arrive in time, Bonnie dear," he murmured. "Listen, I can't last much longer, and there is a great deal I must tell you before I go."

From the inside of his shirt he pulled out the chart of Danger Island and the fragment of gleaming black rock that was wrapped in it.

"Pitchblende, Bonnie," he whispered. "The treasure I was after. Rich in radium of untold value. See. See the radium in it. And there are vast deposits of that pitchblende located on the chart. Take it, dear. I charge you to find that radium field and save it from impostors and adventurers. Preserve it for the good—good of humanity."

"Daddy," Bonnie urged, "you mustn't worry yourself about the treasure. You must rest a while."

Again that wan smile flitted across the professor's face.

"Presently I will rest," he said. "I have only a few minutes left." His voice was growing weaker and his mind began to wander again. "For days and days we drifted. Danger Island—coast of peril—dark jungle. Wild beasts—savages, they killed all my companions."

Harry Drake laid a hand on Anthony Adams' sleeves.

"Can anything be done for him, doctor?" he said in an undertone; but the older man shook his head sadly, his lean, aristocratic features wearing an expression of utter hopelessness.

"No, nothing," he made answer.

"My brother is dying."

"Bonnie," the professor was saying, "Bonnie, swear to me that you will carry on."

She promised brokenly, and he lay back with a look of contentment.

"Radium," he murmured. "Rarest and most treasured substance of the civilised world. Vast deposits of it, Bonnie. Mankind must benefit. Radium! Radium!"

His eyes closed, and a tremor passed through his shrunken frame, the tremor of his last breath.

"Daddy!" the girl cried. "Daddy! Oh, he's gone—he's gone!"

A sob escaped her, and she was racked by a fit of weeping. The others in the state-room tried to comfort her, Ben Arnold and Arlene Chandos making a great show of sympathy. But it was some time before Bonnie could speak.

She pushed the chart and the fragment of pitchblende into Arnold's hands.

"You'd better keep this for me, Ben," she said trustfully.

Arnold's grasp closed on map and pitchblende with an eagerness that he could scarcely conceal. Nor could he refrain from exchanging a glance of keen satisfaction with Arlene Chandos.

Trouble Brewing.

TWO of the crew stood near the ship's side. One of them was the irrepressible Briney of the lusty voice, and the other was an able-bodied seaman named Burke.

Leaning over the bulwark they gazed at the heaving waters of the ocean and occasionally caught a glimpse of the pale-green belly of a shark. The sea was infested with the brutes, and the two sailors looked at them with the disgust of men who had learned to hate and fear the snap of their deadly jaws.

"It allus gives me a turn to watch them critters," Briney said with a shudder. "I never seen so many of 'em around a ship."

Burke looked over his shoulder cautiously.

"Ah," he told Briney with a murky air, "an' speakin' o' sharks, I never seen so many of 'em in a ship."

"In a ship?" Briney echoed dully.

"You're crazy, Burke."

"Oh, no, I ain't," Burke retorted. "Bull Black, for one—he's what I call 'a shark.'"

"Aw, you mean human bein's? Say, I know a lotta sharks that walk around in pants."

Burke laid a hand on the big fellow's sleeve.

"You know, Briney," he said, "there's something about this craft I don't like. It gives me the shivers—like a ship with a curse on it, an' if you ask me, we're all headed for trouble."

"Stow it," Briney scoffed. "You allus was superstitious."

"Well, I can't rightly explain the way I feel," Burke rejoined. "But I've got a hunch there's a storm blowin' up for us all, if you know what I mean. An' it ain't superstition that makes me say so."

"It don't look like dirty weather to me," Briney declared innocently, studying the vivid blue sky.

Burke leaned nearer to him.

"I ain't talkin' about weather," he said. "But I am talkin' of squalls, and its my opinion that one's liable to break right here on this ship. I never did

know a craft that didn't have trouble when mate and skipper wrangled like Bull Black and Captain Drake do. I'm tellin' yuh they don't see eye to eye nohow, an' Black ain't the man to take orders lyin' down when he's in a position to defy 'em."

"What could Bull Black do?" Briney argued. "Drake's in command, an' everybody has to do what he tells 'em, otherwise it's plain mutiny on the high seas."

"Ah, an' that's the hang of it, matey," Burke declared. "Mutiny on the High Seas! That's the squall this craft is headed for. Have ye seen the way them fo'c'sle swabs Dempster, Gavigan, Markham an' Baxter get into a corner an' start a-whisperin' an' a-mutterin' among 'enselves? Bull Black's crawlers, they are. They're the same dirty breed as him, an' they're up to no good."

Briney spat thoughtfully into the sea. "Bull Black was never any good, anyway," he stated. "An' one day my nauter is gonna kiss his jaw for that sock he gave me."

"Yeah?" said Burke. "Well, maybe you won't have to wait long, or maybe he'll be handin' you another wallop. Mark my words, Bull Black aims to command this craft, an' if he does you'll see the bad 'uns will be top-dogs over the good 'uns. I've heard funny kinda talk passin' amongst Dempster an' Co. An' what's more, I ain't got much use for that owner of ours—Arnold. Now Bull Black's thick w' him, slippin' in an' outa his cabin all day long."

"What's at the back of it, Burke?" asked Briney.

The other sailor shook his head solemnly.

"Ah, I dunno!" he muttered. "I wish I did know, but I'll tell ye this much. I wouldn't give fifty cents for the bunch aboard this ship—exceptin' you an' me an' them two fellers Collins an' Connor. An' Captain Drake, of course."

He said no more, for at that moment a formidable figure loomed into view. It was the figure of Bull Black and as he caught sight of the two sailors at the bulwark he advanced towards them ominously.

"Get outa here, you blame' lubbers!" he thundered in his deep, bass voice. "Come on, get out an' step lively. If you ain't got work to do, it wouldn't hurt to swab the deck. D'ye hear me?"

Burke and Briney moved off, and Black was glaring after them when the door of a state-room opened close by. It was the door of the cabin in which Professor Adams had died a moment before, and in the man who now emerged Black recognised Ben Arnold.

Arnold moved across to where Black was standing, and from an inside pocket he drew out the map that Bonnie had given him.

"Listen, Bull," he said. "I've got the chart locatin' Danger Island and the radium deposits."

A glint appeared in Bull Black's crafty eyes.

"Then we don't need Captain Drake any more, huh?" he mentioned, pronouncing the young skipper's name with a vicious sneer.

"No," Ben Arnold answered, "we don't need him— Look out," he added tersely, as the door of the state-room opened again. "here he comes!"

Harry stepped out of Bonnie's cabin, and, closing the door behind him, approached Arnold and Black.

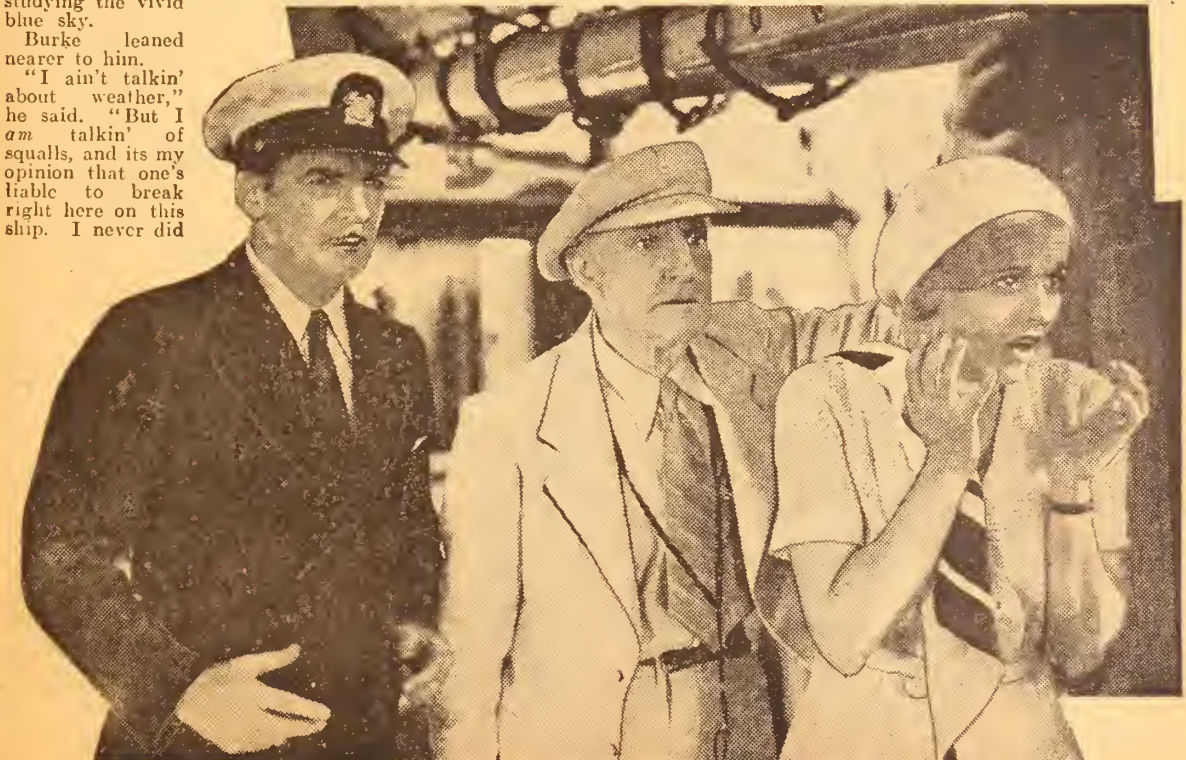
"This is a bad business, Mr. Arnold," he observed. "and I'm afraid it will change our plans."

Arnold glanced at him narrowly.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "You heard what the professor said. We're to carry on."

"Sure," Harry retorted, "and I'm game enough. But we'll head for the nearest port and put Miss Bonnie and Miss Arlene ashore. If the island is as dangerous as the professor implied—"

"Wait a minute!" Arnold rapped out.



"Ben, what are they doing?" gasped Bonnie. "What happened—what are they fighting for?"

"It strikes me you're taking a lot of responsibility over Miss Bonnie, but I'm the owner of this ship, and you'll do as I tell you!"

Harry Drake's jaw took on a stubborn thrust.

"Yes!" he said. "Well, owner or not, we'll head for the port of Twamballa. When we get there you can hand me my discharge if you like. But until then I'm in command, and you'll leave me to give the orders— Head for the port of Twamballa, Mr. Black."

Bull Black hesitated, but, uncertain for the moment of his ground, he touched the peak of his cap sailor-fashion.

"Ay, ay, sir!" he answered, none too civilly.

Harry passed on, and he had gone a few paces when Arnold tapped Bull on the arm.

"Bull," he said through his teeth, "you've wanted command of this ship. Now's your chance. Let's see you take it!"

Bull squared his shoulders.

"You mean—"

"Yeah, that's just what I do mean," Arnold told him curtly, interpreting the sentence that Bull had left unfinished.

The rascally mate nodded, and strode after Harry. At that moment Harry was running his keen eye over a group of seamen, and he noticed that one of the hands was loafing. He was Dempster, Black's cronie of the fo'c'sle, and Harry spoke to him sharply. He had marked among some of the crew, Black included, an air of subdued insolence, almost amounting to insubordination, and he did not intend to tolerate it.

"What are you doing there, sailor?" he demanded. "Come on, clean this halyard!"

The curt reprimand brought Dempster to his feet, though it was with some sullenness that he proceeded to obey, and Harry was watching him sternly when Black came up.

Captain and mate looked at each other, and something about Black's easy self-assurance warned Harry of what was afoot.

"I've orders to take command of this ship," Bull announced. "From now on you'll consider yourself a passenger, Mr. Drake."

Harry's brow darkened.

"Is that so?" he ground out, in a voice that must have carried to Arnold's ears. "Well, let me tell you this. You'll take orders from me, Mr. Black!"

The men near by stopped their work. Briney and Burke were among them, and Burke shot a glance at his shipmate which seemed to express the sentiment, "I told you so."

There were three other members of the crew in the neighbourhood—Dempster, Gavigan and Baxter—and they also seemed to regard the situation with significance.

With every eye upon him, Bull Black took a step forward, his knuckles bunched ominously.

"I'll take nothin' from you!" he barked, and with the words swung his fist for Harry Drake's jaw.

Mutiny.

HAD it connected, that blow must have hurled Harry to the deck, but he acted with a rapidity that baffled Bull Black.

Up came his arm, and as his elbow parried the swing Bull's fist glanced aside. Next second Harry had ripped his right to the mate's chin, and the burly ruffian went over like a ninepin. Heels flying, he struck the boards with a resounding thump and rolled to the scupper.

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He lay prone for a moment, while Harry stood over him, still in the attitude of delivering the blow. Then the mutinous rogue shook his great shaggy head as if to throw off the effects of the punch and with a full, round oath, he scrambled to his feet and lunged at the younger man.

Harry was ready for him. His left tore into Bull's ribs with an impact that drew a sharp grunt from the mate. His right lashed him in the jaw again and dropped him to the deck for a second time.

Standing at some distance, Ben Arnold could scarcely refrain from shouting a word of impatient encouragement to his fallen henchman. There were others, however, who were prepared to go to Bull's assistance, for as the mate was laid low both Dempster and Gavigan started forward.

"No, you don't," roared Briney, flinging his hefty bulk in front of them and holding them off with widespread arms. "Keep back, ye seum, an' give the skipper a chance."

Bull reached his feet again, and made still another savage onslaught. This time he was more successful. He broke through Harry's guard and rocked the young captain with a buffet that drew blood from the mouth, and, though Harry was quick to recover, his assailant fell into a clinch with him and tried to throw him.

They staggered across the deck, grappling fiercely. Meanwhile, Briney was keeping Bull's underlings in check, and at the same time watching every phase of the struggle—and a delighted yell escaped him as Harry switched his foot behind Black's legs and brought him down with a trip-throw.

There was a patter of feet on the deck, and Markham came running on to the scene.

"Say, what's the matter with you fellers?" he squealed, as he saw the mate sprawled near the bulwark. "Come on, let's give Bull a hand!"

He dashed forward, but Briney caught him and wrenched him back.

"Just a minute, you!" he stormed. "Fair play! The first guy that makes a move, I'll break him in two!"

"Yeah?" came the voice of Dempster, and next second he had wrapped his arms around Briney's neck, assailing him from the rear.

Briney was instantly engaged in a fierce scuffle, and Baxter, Gavigan and Markham leapt towards Harry. Burke took Markham on the run and brought him down in a heap, and Connor, appearing at that moment, tackled Baxter manfully. Gavigan was left to go to Bull Black's aid, for Collins, the only other reliable member of the crew, was in the wheel-house, and did not dare to leave his post. But Briney threw Dempster to the deck and pounced on Gavigan like a lion.

He hit Gavigan with a force that sent him staggering, and the man blundered against Harry. The young captain almost lost his balance, and only saved himself from falling by clutching at the bulwark. By the time he was fairly on his feet, however, Bull Black was up again, and rushing at him like a madman.

Bull's fist drove into Harry's face before he could lift his guard and block the punch. The shock swung him backward, and in a twinkling he was almost over the side—within an ace of plunging into a shark-infested sea.

He lurched back at the mate and caught the rogue with a right-hand jolt at the same time. Bull reeled away, and, following him up swiftly, the

Englishman rained blows at his impassioned face. For the next sixty seconds the mate was the victim of a relentless hammering that drove him along the deck towards the stern.

In the meantime Briney and his companions were battling wholeheartedly against Bull's underlings of the fo'c'sle, and above the noise of the strife Briney's strident voice was bellowing powerfully.

"Give 'em beans, boys!" he roared. "A scarlet runner every time ye hit 'em on the nose!"

Briney was handling both Gavigan and Dempster now, his big, touselled head rearing above them and jerking this way and that as he battered them with his calloused fists. Burke was piling into Markham, and changing the contour of that rascally seaman's features with a series of well-timed blows. Connor was up against a tough proposition in Baxter, a man of Bull Black's build, but was managing to hold his own.

Ben Arnold was watching the fight eagerly, particularly the grim conflict between Harry Drake and Bull Black, and it was with feelings of chagrin and dismay that he saw the burly mate stumbling back in full retreat before the Englishman's attack. But an exclamation of satisfaction broke from Arnold as Bull rallied with an effort and rammed home a heavy body-blow.

Harry was pulled up by it, and suddenly Bull launched a terrific onslaught that was well-nigh irresistible. He used all his weight, and his bulk was a big advantage to him, for he must have turned the scales at fifteen stone, fully twenty pounds more than the younger man.

But Harry's clean-cut frame had resources of strength and stamina that were yet to bewilder Bull Black, and with his compact build the Englishman was singularly well-equipped for a "rough-house."

The mate landed a full swing that floored Harry. It should have smashed the wits out of him, too, but the young captain had scarcely fallen before he was starting to pull himself to his feet again.

Bull flung himself forward and discovered to his cost that Harry had plenty of fight left in him. For he planted his boot in the mate's stomach, hurled him back with a powerful thrust and then dragged himself up by the bulwark.

The Plunge.

DR. ANTHONY ADAMS had remained with his niece in her stateroom, where he did his utmost to console her over the passing of her father.

"You must be brave, Bonnie!" he told her. "All the weeping in the world wouldn't bring him back. And remember—he has left us with a mission to perform, a mission that is going to save thousands of lives. We've got to keep a stiff upper lip, my dear—"

It was at this juncture that the doctor first became aware of the commotion on the deck, and as the sounds of the mêlée reached his ears he took his arm from around Bonnie's shoulders.

"Why, what's going on?" he stammered. "It sounds like a battle royal."

He stepped to the door and pulled it open, and the noise of strife immediately became a hundred times more distinct. With an exclamation the doctor hurried out of the cabin, and, forcing back her sobs, Bonnie moved after him.

Ben Arnold was standing a few paces away, and Bonnie and her uncle joined

(Continued on page 27.)

Owing to rustlers, an old rancher and his charming daughter are forced to take in paying guests. Ruin stares him in the face until a stranger rides in from the prairie. Starring Rex Lease and Dorothy Gulliver.

The GUEST HOUSE



The Angry Owner.

"PAH, they make me sick!"

The old man in the wheeled chair spat out the words with vicious hatred. His hair may have been white, his cheeks sunken, and his limbs crippled, but the eyes blazed with life and determination, and the small jaw and lips were thrust forward. A fighter, rebelling at Fate, and itching to be back in the fray.

His chair was on a wooden balcony of a large ranch-house; before him lay a lawn, well-kept flower-beds, trees, and beyond—a glimpse of the rolling prairie. On the lawn sat four women in arm-chairs, and their tongues were doing overtime. Middle-aged, over-dressed women, and their Eastern clothes seemed very much out of place on this Western ranch.

Frank Sutter owned the Bar L, and it made him mad to think that he had been compelled by bad business to convert his property into a home for lunatics and soft-lidded greenhorns.

For years Sutter had been one of the big cattlemen on the Mexican border; but since the war times had not been so good. Recently rustling had caused him such heavy losses that ruin stared him in the face. He had converted the ranch into a "Guest House"—a place where people from the East could live and imagine that they were "Doing the West." Most of the women had more money than brains, whilst their children were typical of themselves.

A big, burly man, with a heavy mustache, strode on to the veranda.

"Hallo, Burke! Any news?"

"No trace, Mr. Sutter," replied the foreman. "We tried to follow the trail, but the rustlers must've drove the horses into the river and landed them, lower down. Twenty head we lost, boss."

"Yeah, and that makes two hundred head of our best stock," cried Sutter. "If these rustlers don't quit soon, Burke, I'm ruined. Has the sheriff any idea?"

"Sheriff ain't wise, boss." Burke shrugged his shoulders. "Ain't much good raising posses and riding blind. Then rustlers has a mighty clever leader."

"I'd like to have him here now!"

raged the ranch-owner. "I could shoot him and those cackling women quick as lightning—and I should laugh fit to bust! Where's Winslow—does he know?"

"Out for a ride in Miss Helen's car, boss."

"Oh, well, I wanna see him soon as he gets back," cried Mr. Sutter. "We've got to do something to round up these rustlers!"

The Accident and the Quarrel.

A CLEAN-SHAVEN young man bent over a wood fire and carefully twisted and turned some bacon over the flames. Dark curly hair set off a laughing face, which was healthy and tanned by the sun. The squareness of the shoulders and the well-knit frame showed him to be an athlete. His eyes were brown and mostly laughing—he went through life with a smile.

Fumbling with a tent was a wizened-faced man of middle age. The top lip of the large mouth seemed to protrude over a small chin, thus giving him a conical expression, which was heightened by small, beady eyes.

"Say, Ben, how ye getting on with that tent?"

"You've got the soft job," came the growl from the old campaigner. "This yere tent is all rope, and dang me if I knows which end's which!"

"You wouldn't!" laughed the youngster. "I suppose I shall have to show you."

"Any chump can sizzle bacon," was the grumble.

"For two mornings it has been burnt, and who did it?" The young fellow turned his head. "If you made a living cooking you wouldn't earn a cent, nor would you make a whale of a lot putting up tents. I can see from here you're using the wrong end of the pole."

"Why didn't you say so, Jim Weston?"

"Because I haven't got eyes in the back of my head," was the gay reply. "Come here, old pard, and eat this bacon. We'll settle one thing at a time."

"Suits me." Ben dropped everything and eagerly grabbed up a piece of

bacon from the frying-pan. "Wow, it's hot!" He scowled as the younger man laughed. Ben decided to change the conversation. "What time do we strike this yere ranch?"

"Could have made it to-night, old-timer, but what's the hurry?" Jim replied. "I wanna take a look-see in the daylight, and it ain't always healthy to arrive night-time. Think you could make some coffee without spilling it?"

"Boy,—there ain't a guy—"

"I know there ain't; but I'm thirsty," interrupted Jim. "I aim to have a look at this country before turning in, and we're wasting time. Get busy with that coffee, Ben, and don't make it like pitch, or else you do that tent on your own."

"A laugh would choke me." Ben shook his head. "Fancy having to live with a jackass!"

Ben and Jim always pulled each other's legs, but actually they were fast friends. Say one word to Ben against Jim, and about six guns would be in your waist line.

The coffee was good, and when the two men had drunk their fill the problem of the tent was tackled. So far they had camped under the stars, as they had been moving in a hurry, but both men knew it would rain that night and decided to sleep in comfort. Hence the unpacking of the small tent, which had been carried in the prairie schooner.

The two men were camped near a stream. Just above them lay a stony and rough road, whilst a part-worn trail led from the road past their camp-site to an old quarry. A good place for a camp, as there was little chance of getting the caravan bogged if it rained, and made a good shelter for themselves and their horses from the storm.

A powerful two-seater roared along the dusty, gritty road.

A brunette of undoubted charm sat at the wheel, and smiled with joy as the car answered to her touch. A small felt hat crowned a head of dark curls, laughing eyes peered from beneath long lashes, whilst a dimple came and went in the soft cheeks, and the shapely mouth opened with expectant delight as the car took a corner on two wheels.

Seated beside her was a big-faced man of about thirty-eight to forty years. His small moustache was neatly clipped, but the eyes seemed a trifle too small for so large a face. The mouth was very big, whilst the shaggy eyebrows gave the man a handsome but rather ominous attractiveness. At the moment his eyes were flickering this way and that, and his breath coming in jerks.

"I say, Helen—steady down!"

"Not on your life, Harry Winslow!" came the dare-devil answer. "I'm just revelling in this. You beat me riding and told me I didn't know what speed was like. I'll show you!"

With a screech of tyres, the car took another corner on two wheels, flinging stones in all directions and kicking up clouds of dust.

Helen Sutter had just returned from a college in the East and she had brought the car with her. The college lads and lassies loved Helen, but those in charge sighed their relief. If there were a rag on foot, then the girl would be one of the ringleaders. Returning to her father's ranch, she had expected to be bored by the life, and it had been pleasant to find a cultured man like Winslow acting as manager.

Winslow was a cattle man with modern ideas, and he expounded a proposition to Frank Sutter that he should utilise his ranch and lands not only for cattle, but as a holiday resort for tired Easterners. And, as business was bad, the Bar L had become a guest-house.

The manager had been pleased to look after this high-spirited girl. Old man

Sutter's land was valuable property, and it might be well worth his while to consider Helen as a wife. At the moment Winslow almost detested the girl; he would curb her heels when she became his wife!

"Take it easy, Helen!" cautioned Winslow. "There's a nasty bend by the quarry, and the surface is very loose."

"I've never known this bus not to answer," yelled back the tom-boy. "You've heard of Lightning Hudson, the big race-driver—well, I've been lapping at a hundred and twenty with him. Once he let me drive, and the needle just touched the hundred. Gosh, it was a thrill! Hudson taught me how to skid round corners. Shall I show you, Harry?"

"Thanks, but I'd rather not!"

"It's dead easy. You aren't scared?"

The girl looked at him for a second, and the car slithered towards a bank.

"Here, hi, mind out!" yelled Winslow, and sighed his relief as Helen swung the car back to the safety of the road. "Gosh, kid, but that was a near shave!"

"Watch me take the quarry bend," was her answer. "I'll do it at just under fifty."

Winslow had no chance to protest as the engine made such a noise as Helen stepped on the gas. Like a streak they shot forward.

The quarry corner. Bump! The wheel found a pot-hole and Helen knew then she was going too fast. Desperately she jammed on the brakes, but the car seemed out of control. Helen caught a glimpse of a stretch of grass and decided that if they had to go over the bank here was the place.

The strong brakes were acting and

slowing the car as she bumped off the road on to the old trail to the quarry. Ahead was something that flapped grotesquely and next moment the car had charged head on.

Both Jim and Ben were inside the tent. There were two poles, and the youngster had fixed one and was attempting to tackle the second pole.

"Wants someone outside to drive in some pegs," he cried. "I can just reach your pole with my hand, so if I hold both poles steady do you reckon you could drive in some pegs and fix a few ropes. Don't strain too much on the ropes when you're doing it or the tent will collapse."

"Leave it to me, Jim, it's easy. Why—"

Ben never finished his sentence because the tent, poles and the owners were moved on with considerable force for five or six yards. The poles and canvas saved them from serious harm, though the two were hurled to the ground with much violence.

"What the blue blazes," spluttered Jim, flinging aside the wreck of the tent. "What hit me?"

"Reckon it's a wild bull," gurgled Ben, who was also in difficulties. "If I could get clear of this stuff I'd plug the critter."

Jim crawled out of the canvas and stared round. Almost on top of him was a car, and standing up were two people. The pretty girl had a hand to ashen cheeks, whilst the man looked scared.

"Are you hurt?" Helen's voice was very pleasant, but to Jim it sounded like tearing cloth.

"Oh, no, I'm just fine," he growled. "Say, what do you reckon you were doing with that sardine tin of yours?"

"Sardine tin!" At once the girl forgot her fear. "This is a Hupmobile and she cost—"

"I don't care what she cost." Jim flung aside the tent. "Seems to me a pram would have been more your mark. What made you come charging down here—did you lose control?"

"Certainly not!"

"Wouldn't the brakes act?"

"Of course they acted." How her eyes flashed.

"The bad surface caused this lady to be forced off the road," Winslow had recovered his nerve and was glaring at the youngster in the worn cowboy outfit. "If there's any damage to your property I shall be pleased to compensate you."

"Thanks," drawled Jim.

"Are you hurt, Ben?"

"Nope." Ben felt himself all over. "But I guess I'm mighty lucky not to be all busted up."

"You were driving recklessly." Jim faced the girl with flashing eyes. "You must have come round that corner much too fast. You might have wrecked the car and killed us. You don't deserve such luck. What girls like you want is a nurse."

"Is that so?" Helen was used to admiration and adoration, and this sort of treatment was unknown. "Are you going to stand there, Harry, and hear this man insult me?"

Ponderously Winslow



"What hit me?" spluttered Jim, flinging aside the wreck of the tent.

climbed out of the car, and as he came towards Jim he squared his big shoulders and stuck out his chest in aggressive manner, whilst his thick lips opened to show clenched teeth. His knuckles were bunched, and he looked like a heavy-weight boxer about to administer a thrashing. Many a time this attitude had frightened those who stood in his way.

It did not impress Jim in the least. The boy's hands clenched, and with eyes alert for a sudden blow, he waited.

"Guess you'd better be careful how you talk." Winslow's voice was ominous. "Unless you apologise this instant there's going to be trouble."

"And you're the trouble. Ha, ha! You make me laugh," Jim sneered, and for a split second his eyes gazed straight at the girl. "Why should I apologise? You were driving too fast and carelessly, you've smashed up our tent and darn night finished me and my pard, and you're surprised because I ain't pleased. Reckon, lady, the best thing you can do is to go home to Nanna and take this big lapdog with you."

"Oh—how dare you!" cried the girl. "I'm going to smash you for this!" cried Winslow, and swung back his arm.

But, strange as it may seem, the blow hit nothing, because Jim had ducked his head, but Winslow got a jolt when a hard-as-iron fist battered his ribs just below the heart.

Winslow had an ungovernable temper and the blow made him see red. Wildly he rushed at the slim figure, hit nothing, and got a straight left on the point of the jaw that hurt. He tried to hug his opponent, but Jim was not there, and a left-right made his ears burn by the force of the blows. Then he saw Jim's face and swung a vicious hook, but the blow hit the boy on the shoulder, and next second a fist was in Winslow's right eye. This time a grunt of pain escaped his lips.

"Sock him, Jim," shouted Ben. "Give the big palooka a tousing. Knoek him cold. Let me know if you want any help."

Helen decided that this fight had gone quite far enough. Her father would be furious if he heard, and she would probably get the blame. For some strange reason she did not want this fearless youngster to get hurt. Besides, it was all her fault.

Helen knew when she was in the wrong, though she would not have admitted the fact publicly. Just as the two men were about to charge in again, the girl leaped out of her car and rushed between them.

"Stop fighting at once!" she ordered. "I won't have it!" Her eyes stared into those of the boy, who suddenly grinned. "I think you've got very bad manners."

"Maybe, but you've got mighty fine eyes." Jim's temper vanished. "Gee, how I like that dimple. I suppose we rouldn't fix up a date, because I might care to stay around this district for a spell."

"Impertinence! You ought to go back to school!" Helen tossed her head. "Harry, let's get going. I won't have a fight, but I won't stay here and listen to the babblings of a child."

"You're a pretty kid," Jim called after her. "Wouldn't like to leave your name and address, I suppose?"

Helen made no answer, though she had to lay a restraining hand on Winslow's arm.

"Let me pulverise him," he whispered. Helen shook her head decidedly and started the engine. The car backed out of the tent, turned and then shot away over the grass.

Ben was doubled up with mirth. "We sure handled them two fine," he chortled. "That big galoot looked fit to bust. The lass could do with a good spanking."

"Yeah, you're right, Ben." Jim stared thoughtfully after the fast-disappearing car. "I hope I see that girl again."

"You leave the women alone," growled Ben. "They're more dangerous than a six-shooter. Let's get on with this danged tent and forget about 'em. Reckon we'll have to cut new poles."

Jim was quite quiet as he set about helping Ben erect the tent.

Enemies.

NEXT morning Jim and Ben broke camp, piled their tent and belongings on the schooner, rounded up the half-dozen young ponies and took the trail.

"Mighty good idea bringing these mustangs along," Ben chewed at his pipe. "Reckon you'll get a good price, buddy?"

"Better than carrying money. Bandits can take money, but they wouldn't find it easy taking the horses." Jim had lit a cigarette. "Besides, old Sutter asked me to bring along any colts that were going cheap. He has had a darned

thin time. Bad luck he should have been laid up with these rustlers about."

"We're just a couple of wandering punchers?" asked Ben. "Do we stand to get a pay-roll?"

"Sure, if we get the rustlers," Jim laughed. "Old Frank's offered me a thousand bucks to stop this rustling. I'd do it for nothing because he was a real pal to my father in the early days."

"Yeah, so you told me," Ben nodded. "I'm sure eager to get at them rustlers, for I ain't loosed off a gun for months."

"Don't forget to act a bit simple." Jim was grinning from ear to ear. "You oughta be able to do that fine."

"Sure I—here, you're pulling my leg!" growled Ben. "Dang me, but you're a pal! Mighty good thing you ain't a rustler, or—"

"Not so loud," cautioned Jim. "The forests have ears, and we ain't far from the Bar L."

Both Jim and Ben decided that the hacienda of Frank Sutter was a comfortable building, but they were staggered to see women in muslin dresses holding gay sunshades over large hats, children who screamed and yelled, and a number of young men.

"Gosh, old man Sutter's turned his dive into a guest house!" gasped Jim. "Things must be bad for him to go to that length."

They parked the schooner under the trees, hitched the led horses, and then made towards the ranch-house. But sharp eyes had observed their approach, and Harry Winslow stepped through an open french window.

"What do you men want here? We don't want any hoboes."

"So you are—" Jim recovered from his surprise. "Gee, ain't this a welcome! We want to see Mr. Sutter."

"I represent Mr. Sutter. I am the manager." "We heard back at Cross Trails that punchers were wanted," Jim nudged



"I'm running this show!" snarled Winslow. He glanced down at Jim's hand and caught his breath as he saw the ring.

Ben to keep quiet. "We were told that if we spoke to Mr. Sutter he'd take us on the payroll."

"The boss does not want any hands," was the answer. Winslow spoke in a quiet though hoarse voice. "Better beat it before I get the boys to move you." "Searched to try it yourself?" taunted Jim. "Well, we ain't going till we've seen Mr. Sutter."

"It's getting mighty unhealthy for you every second!" snarled Winslow. "For the last time, are you going quietly, or—"

"Here, what is all this noise?" cried a voice. "What's wrong now?"

A wheeled chair appeared, and in it Mr. Frank Sutter. Jim guessed that Winslow had spoken quietly because he did not wish his words to be overheard. Sutter looked up, opened his mouth to say something, and then shut it as Jim slowly rubbed his lips with his fingers.

"You two men want work—is that it?" Frank Sutter peered at Jim and his partner. "I've got sharp ears, Winslow, and I can use them. If these two can work, which is more than some of the hands you've hired, then they can stay. You're here on a month's trial."

Winslow's eyes were narrowed and furtive. "Just as you please, boss." He shrugged his shoulders. "If you take on hands you know nothing about, don't blame me if you get stung." With that he turned his back and left them.

"Jim, Jim, it's glad I am to see you!" The invalid held out both his hands. "What was the idea of the warning? That was Winslow, my manager."

"I've come here to trace those rustlers." Jim was very serious. "I want nobody to know who I am—everybody except yourself and Ben must be a suspect until I know they're innocent." The sound of clattering hoofs made Jim turn. His eyes opened wide—the girl of the car. "Mr. Sutter, who is that girl?" "One of your suspects," chuckled the old man. "That's my daughter Helen; she's just back from college."

Helen jumped lightly from the saddle, ran across the strip of grass, and stopped dead when she saw the two men.

"Helen, I've just taken on two new hands—Jim here and his pal Ben." Sutter smiled proudly at the pretty girl. "Had a nice ride, dear?"

"Sure I have." Helen could not take her eyes off Jim, who was grinning defiantly. "Have you hired these two men, dad?"

"Yes, my dear. But why do you ask?"

"One meets some funny kinda hoboes these days!" Helen snapped out the words. "One can't be too careful."

"We're only on trial, Miss Helen," mocked Jim. "You ride a horse mighty well, though maybe you find a motor-car more to your liking."

"Dad, I'm glad these men mentioned cars, because mine wants a clean." Now it was Helen's turn to smile. "Perhaps they might give the car a wash and polish."

"That's one to her ladyship," whispered Jim to Ben as they watched her stride into the house through the windows.

"High-spirited, Jim," her father smiled proudly. "A little quiet for her here. I'll get you to take her riding in the mornings."

"Thanks, boss! I'd like that if your daughter feels like a morning canter." Jim changed the subject. "It seems sorta queer to me to see you in that chair. Pop used to say that you were the fittest man in Arizona, and yet you're crooked with rheumatics."

"Rheumatics be danged!" raged the old man, shaking his fists. "I don't want Helen to know I've been shot."

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Those rustlers got me six months ago in the hip, and I'll be mighty lucky if I ever walk again. Moreover, I've got to act this way, or else these guests would get scared and beat it."

"So they plugged you," Jim whistled. "Any suspicions?"

"None. Burke, the foreman, has raised several posSES, but he can never pick up the trail. By tens and twenties I'm losing my horses, and unless it stops soon, Jim, I look like being sold up."

Meanwhile, on the other side of the corral away from the ranch-house two men listened eagerly to Harry Winslow. Slinking, dirty and unpleasant fellows were these two men.

"Pete"—Winslow addressed the taller of the two—"I'm going to watch this stranger, and that goes with you two men. You are out mostly with the horses, and I want you to watch out for any sight of the youngster and his comic partner. You, Red"—this was to the burly, unshaven man—"you watch round the hacienda. You're detailed to help the guests, so you've got plenty of chance. The least suspicious thing you report to me."

"Can't we settle 'em and take no chances?" growled Red.

"I think we might have them removed," Winslow grinned evilly. "But I must think of a plan that won't fail. I will talk the matter over in the morning. We might get rid of them before the next run."

"Okay, chief!" Pete caught hold of the fat one's arm. "We'll get acquainted with these two guys right away. Same place, chief?"

"Sure! Now beat it!" hissed Winslow. "Hero comes Miss Helen. She mustn't see us together."

The two men slunk away into one of the barns.

The Rodeo.

NOTHING of any importance happened during the next few days. Jim and Ben were detailed to look after the guests, taking them riding, see they didn't fall off, and generally act like guides. The antics of some of the Easterners caused Ben much mirth.

"Fat Mrs. Gallow riding a hoss is a scream!" laughed Ben.

"Listen here, you long herring!" growled Jim. "If she sees you laughing it'll be reported to Winslow, and that means being fired. So you gotta cut out the mirth and get down to business. So far I haven't located any rustling, but I sure don't like some of the lads that work on this yere ranch."

"You've said it, son," Ben nodded. "Biggest bunch of cut-throats ever, though some of the bunch are good enough. What's this rodeo going to be like to-morrow?"

"Something to amuse the guests," scoffed Jim. "Stunt riding, two races, a broncho-busting competition and some comic stuff."

Once or twice Jim had seen Helen, but she passed him by as if he did not exist. Jim grinned, but he was annoyed because Helen was a fine-looking girl, and she was a grand rider. Jim's nostrils twitched when he saw Winslow. The skunk seemed to be always with the girl.

Winslow had not included either of the new hands for the rodeo, and so our two friends enjoyed the rôle of spectators. They sat on the wooden fence that encircled the corral, chewing straws and watching the fun.

"Pretty punk show," commented Ben. "The best hoss in that first race was that piebald, and it didn't win."

"Did you note Winslow was running a book, and laid that horse at fours. You

wanted to back it, but I wouldn't let you."

"Why did you do that?" Ben scratched his head. "I was kinda riled at the time, because I could have sworn that piebald—"

"Yeah, mutton-head, I know it was the best hoss," snorted Jim, "but when I saw Winslow laying those odds I got wise. In my opinion the race was a ramp, and it kinda makes me think."

"So Winslow framed that race." Ben said this slowly, then his old face lit up. "Do you think, Jim, that—"

"Shurrup! Your voice carries!" cautioned Jim. "I don't know anything, but I don't like Mister Harry Winslow. He's too slick for my liking. Look at him now, making bets against anyone sticking on the back of the Killer for two minutes, and knowing darned well none of his bunch intend to stay on."

"Why don't you upset his game?"

"Don't want to get Winslow too riled or he may get wise." Jim removed the straw and pushed his sombrero on to the side of his head. "I did think about it, Ben, but that hoss may be one of those trick horses. Any rate, it's best left alone, and the prize for sticking on for two minutes is only ten bucks. You try, Ben."

"Not me!" Ben was decided. "I had a look at that Killer, and it's a good name."

They watched man after man climb into the wooden box that housed the Killer, get on to the creature's back, and then give the signal for the trap-door in front to be opened. Most of them shot out like rabbits, and within twenty seconds had bitten the dust. A couple of "Sun-fish" bucks, and the cowboy sailed into space. The guests roared with delight, whilst Winslow grinned and took their money.

"Suppose he gives 'em a share of the profits," mumbled Ben. "They earn it. Hallo! Look who's here!"

Jim, who had been watching the antics of the cowboys, turned to his partner. Ben's head gave him the clue to the direction of the latest interest—Helen Sutter, in neat riding costume, flicking a crop against buckskin breeches, was sauntering towards them.

"All set for trouble." Ben spoke out of the corner of his mouth. "I bet she's got some work for us, and it's going to be unpleasant."

Helen paused opposite the two men, looked up, and saw them sitting on top of the corral fence.

"Not riding?" Helen's eyes were speculative.

"Nope!" Ben answered.

"Neither of you?"

"No, lady," Jim smiled. "We're just watching the fun."

"I'm surprised you're not trying to ride the Killer," said the girl. "Don't prizes mean everything?"

"Meaning?" Jim did not like her tone.

"Father was telling me that you had quite a reputation in Montana—or so you'd told him!" Helen saw the last bit had gone home. "I should have thought riding a brone like the Killer would have been too easy."

"Are you suggesting that I haven't got the courage to ride this Killer?" Jim's voice was sharp. "Is that what you mean, Miss Helen?"

"I'm really not in the least interested," was the lofty answer, and Helen made to move off.

"Miss Helen"—Jim climbed down from the fence and stayed the girl by a firm grip on her arm—"I'm going to make this my interest even if you aren't interested. I'll wager I'll stay on longer than some of these other hombies."

"No man has ever ridden the Killer." Helen stared at Jim with mocking gaze. "What can you expect to do?" "I'll ride the horse if it's the last thing I do!" Jim swung round on his pal. "Ben, try and get ten bucks wagering with Mr. Winslow against my riding."

It seemed as if no one else wanted to have a try at riding the Killer. Winslow was shouting about odds of ten to one against. A surprise when Ben appeared and wanted to back Jim for ten dollars.

"Weston hasn't entered," cried the wily Winslow. "But I'll take the bet all the same."

Jim had a foresight that it was going to be a difficult ride, and that made the blood tingle. He would show this girl he was not a coward. Up the side of the fence box that corralled the Killer climbed Jim, and in a second he was in the saddle. Someone fired a gun, and as the front of the box opened the horse shot forward.

But if the guests expected to see another puncher bite the dust, they were mistaken. They saw a horse that seemed to twist into all shapes, go up in the air and land on all four hoofs, rear high in an attempt to fall on the rider, and fly round the corral trying to smash the leg of the rider against the wooden stakes of the fence. Never had they seen such an arched or venomous creature as this horse. The women shuddered as the foam-flecked animal came near them, and they saw the gleaming teeth and fiery eyes.

Everyone expected Jim to be flung from the Killer's back, but the boy seemed to anticipate every move of the fierce creature. He appeared to be modelled to the horse, and never once did he ever look like being thrown. It was a marvellous and almost effortless ride, and only once did Jim ever resort to brute force. That was when the Killer tried to fall back on him, and a cut over the head was necessary. Soon it was apparent that the black stallion had had enough and was tiring.

Two mounted cowboys, who were acting as judges, rode forward and lined up on each side.

"You win, buddy," cried one. "That was grand riding."

"Thanks," laughed the boy, and leaped lightly to the ground.

On the same spot of the fence sat Ben, who was grinning from ear to ear and holding up a wad of notes.

Jim climbed up beside him, but the grin became immense when once more Helen Sutter approached the two friends.

Helen did not know her own mind. She was glad that Jim Weston had ridden the Killer, and yet angry that he should have done the trick so easily. She felt humiliated, and therefore inclined to be angry.

"The Killer must have been tired, but you rode him well," was her grudging concession.

"Thanks, Miss Helen," Jim winked at Ben. "But I'll guarantee that though that boss is tired there isn't a soul here that could stay on his back as long as I did. Don't think I'm talking big, but I learnt riding in a hard school, where it meant life to keep in the saddle."

"So you think no one could ride the Killer?"

"I'll wager anyone five bucks."

"That bet's taken."

coolly answered the girl. "I know someone who can stay as long as you did."

"She must mean Winslow," muttered Ben, chewing at his straw and staring after the girl's trim figure. "I'll go shares in that bet, buddy."

"Shurrup!" Jim was clutching the rails. "I wish I hadn't bragged about my riding."

His fears were realised a minute later when he saw the Killer shoot once more into the corral, with Helen Sutter on the creature's back.

Helen was a marvellous rider, but however good a rider may be, it requires iron wrists to manage a wild broncho, especially when that bronco sees a chance of getting its own back for a recent humiliation.

Jim was off that rail like a flash, and running towards the hitching-rail and his own horse.

Failing to throw the girl, the Killer tried to crush her legs against the rails, and one of the judges hurriedly whispered to the other. They swung open the corral gates. If the Killer headed for the open country, there might be less chance of the girl being hurt.

The horse flashed away like a streak, and in a cloud of dust vanished down a canyon amongst the trees, and as Winslow yelled to his men, Jim went after the girl as if his life depended on it.

Helen's wrists began to give out. She could not check the mad creature. Already her head had just missed a low bough, and all the strength seemed to be going from her body.

The thud, thud of hoofs behind her, and she turned in the saddle.

"Jim! Jim!"

No answer from the boy save an urging of his horse to greater speed. The animal responded gallantly, and Jim surged alongside as Helen swayed in the saddle. His strong arms caught her and swept her on to the pommel of his own saddle.

Panting and scbbing she clung to him, and Jim held her very close.

"You're a mighty brave kid," whispered the boy. "Gee, you can ride a horse!"

Slowly she raised her face and looked into the serious blue eyes.

"Thank you, Jim, for saving me. I've been a little fool."

"A brave and darned nice fool," boldly answered Jim.

The sweet mouth was close to his own. He kissed her.

"Oh, you brute!" was her answer but Jim knew it was not meant.

Fired.

A FEW days later Winslow got his chance to "remove" Weston.

When Jim brought off his spectacular rescue of Helen, and Winslow saw the admiration in the girl's eyes, he determined that it was time to act. Moreover, he was suspicious of Jim: because the latter was camping out at nights. Old man Sutter had explained that Jim had volunteered to act as a night guard. The manager had a few words with the cook.

The result was that Jim one night took out doped coffee, drank it, and fell into a sleep of stupor. Pete then rode up, and from his pocket produced a bottle of whisky, which he poured into Jim's mug, and also smeared the face of his victim.

Next day, Jim was taken before Sutter on a charge of sleeping whilst on duty and being drunk.

Triumph gleamed in the cunning eyes of Harry Winslow as he watched Frank Sutter demand an explanation. Helen was also present, and so was Ben. The horrified expression in the girl's face almost made the villain chuckle. So well had Winslow talked to Sutter that the boss was convinced that Jim had fallen for strong drink.

"It was a frame-up," cried Jim, whose head was still buzzing painfully from the dope. "I hate the stuff."

"You were found soaked in liquor," shouted Sutter. "Your kit has been searched and we've found four more bottles. It's a clear case. You're fired!"

Jim decided that little use would be gained by arguing, though he was determined to prove his innocence.



Jim was forced back over the table.

"Okay with me." Jim paused by Helen. "When I said it was a frame-up I meant it, and I'm coming back to prove it. Good-bye."

Jim had a few minutes alone with Ben.

"Look after my spare saddle, hide it, and keep yer eyes skinned," he whispered. "If you want to get in touch with me, drop a note in the hollow of that old tree—the one struck by lightning. When you get a chance, search it for one from me. I want you to run me down a lot and give it as your opinion I've hit the trail south—they nusta't suspect you. Now I must be off, and keep a watch over Helen."

"Leave it to me, pard." Ben gripped his partner's hand in a horny fist. "By gar, I'd like to neck-tie Winslow and his skunks!"

"That may come later. 'Bye for the present." A nod and Jim had gone. From a window Helen watched him ride away, and then was angry with herself for crying.

Except for the stigma on his name, Jim did not mind about being fired, because now he could devote all his time to watching out for the rustlers. The previous night, whilst he lay doped, twenty valuable horses had vanished, and he swore to search every valley and canyon till he found them. Already he knew the country, but where those horses had gone was a mystery.

It was in the early hours of the morning that Pate first helped Jim. He had camped for the night near a sheer granite cliff, which at some time had been used for quarrying stone. It was honeycombed with tunnels, and he decided that they might be worth exploring to find out where they led. The sound of voices disturbed him, and he cautiously peered round the rock behind which he had been sleeping.

Winslow, Pete and Red!

"Now that meddler's gone we can get busy," Winslow was saying. "To-night we're holding a masquerade ball. I've got costumes for ourselves. Nearly all the boys will be there, as the women will want to dance. I'll talk to you there about our plans. You boys see to your side of the scheme."

"Okay, chief!" Pete rubbed his hands. "Reckon we oughta make a final clean-up and beat it before the old fool gets wise to our game."

"I aim to do that. That Weston fellow was a spy," answered Winslow. "You've seen no sign of him?"

"Followed his trail out into the prairie and there lost it," cried Red. "He's cleared out—a yeller cur."

"I wish I thought that," answered Winslow.

Jim cursed his bad luck—his foot loosened a small stone and instantly the three men swung round and saw him. Before they could draw their guns Jim had dived back to cover behind the rock. Behind another rock was his horse, and he did not waste any time in getting to saddle. Guns got busy as Jim broke cover, but the fire of the crooks was poor and the light bad.

Jim soon realised that his horse was a speedier creature than the mounts of the pursuit, and he slowed as a daring plan was forming in his head. Could he put over a daring bluff?

Winslow yelled encouragement to Pete and Red. They were gaining on their man. Nearer and nearer they drew. Jim made for higher ground and his horse seemed to be lame. Several times he turned and fired wildly. "We've got him," exulted Winslow, and urged his horse forward.

Jim was riding along the rim of a

gulch when the three men got within range and opened fire. Jim swayed in the saddle, and when they fired again the reins slipped from his hands and he crashed to the ground. For a moment or so the figure twisted on the very edge and then rolled over in a cloud of dust and loosened stones. The fall was broken by a bush and lay lodged, with hands sprawling into space.

The three men dismounted and stared down at the still figure.

"That's settled him," growled Winslow. "Best leave him for a day or two, maybe the vultures will help us out. Come on, let's beat it."

But when the villains had rode away Jim came back to life, stood up and shook the dust from his clothing.

"I'm not settled yet, Mister Winslow," he cried. "That bluff worked. Soon I'm going to settle our account."

The Masquerade.

IT was the evening of the masquerade. In an empty stable crouched Jim Weston.

"Pete and Red, here are your costumes," Winslow was giving instructions. "You two are supposed to be riding range, but disguised, the Sutters will think you're guests from neighbouring ranches. My plans are not quite definite yet, but I shall be certain during the evening, so watch out for my sign. If the worst comes to the worst, we might make a clean-up of the guests."

"I'm with you, chief," cried Pete.

"We must see how things plan out," Winslow answered. "Here are the costumes. Don't let anyone see you changing. Red, you had better change in my room; Pete, you had better stay here for a spell, then dress and join us later. I want someone to watch for any trouble."

"Trouble?"

"Always wise to have a watch-dog," laughed the crook. "Better come with me, Red."

How Jim chuckled when Pete chose the empty stable as a changing room. A sack descended over the unfortunate rascal's head, steel-like fingers gripped his throat, and when he recovered his senses he was bound hand and foot. Little did he guess that a man wearing his monk's costume was at that moment joining in the revels.

Jim was received by Helen. How he longed to reveal his identity! The girl looked pale, and Jim wondered if she had been crying. Lest she should recognise his voice he spoke no word, just bowed, keeping the cowl of the monk's hood well over his face. Another thing in his favour was the wearing of masks.

Jim soon recognised Winslow, who was wearing the costume of a Spanish matador, and when the crook talked to a Chinese mandarin, he guessed the latter to be Red. He was also suspicious of a pierrot, who badly needed a shave. Was this another one of the gang?

An hour went by and Jim was alert for any sign from Winslow. Once he danced with Helen, who was strangely silent. Was she grieving for him? How would she act if Winslow told her that he was dead?

But Jim was alert when Winslow made a beckoning movement with his head, and directly the dance stopped he strolled towards the matador. His sharp eyes saw the mandarin and the pierrot hovering close by. Winslow nodded to the three men, and, opening a door, went into a small lounge, which was deserted.

Winslow did not waste time.

"To-night we're having the final show-down," he announced. "We've got the best of Sutter's horses, and we'll take the whole lot across the border in the night. We shall, naturally, take that bunch of colts Sutter has corralled down in Timber Creek. I've taken a good look at the folk here, and I don't think they're worth troubling about. The time is now ten, so let's make the hour eleven."

"We'd better get the word down to the boys," cried the mandarin.

"They've got White Cloud on the job."

"White Cloud?" What did Red mean by that? Jim was puzzled.

"Will you be coming with us, chief?" asked the pierrot.

"Later; I've got a job here." The matador grinned evilly. "I'm aiming to take someone with us over the border."

"You mean Miss Helen?" asked Red. Jim forgot his caution. These skunks should not get Helen.

"What's the idea?" His voice was hoarse. "A girl will bring every sheriff in the States on our trail." In his agitation he laid his hand on Winslow's sleeve.

The crook-manager scowled.

"I'm running this show," he snarled. "You take my orders or pay the consequences. I—" He glanced down at Jim's hand and caught his breath. Pete had calloused hands and did not own a ring. What did this mean?

"All right, have it your own way," Jim withdrew his hand. "You know the game best. What's the next move?"

"Back to the dance for ten minutes and then to your posts." Winslow's eyes had narrowed. "Best get going, Pete. It won't do to all swarm back in a bunch."

Jim was glad of the excuse to get away, but directly the door had closed Winslow turned to the other two.

"You perishing fools!" His face was livid with rage. "That wasn't Pete—that was Weston. I noted a small ring on his hand and, what's more, the hand he laid on my sleeve wasn't anything like that of our Pete. He's roped Pete and bluffed us."

"But we left Weston for dead!" gasped Red.

"Well, he's come back to life again," raged Winslow. "And we've got to act quick."

"Why didn't you shoot him, chief?"

"And have all the bunch down on us," was the jeering answer. "And how do I know he doesn't park a gun under that costume? One movement to draw and I get it. We'd best get outside, find Pete and see what Weston is planning."

The clatter of hoofs showed them that Weston had ridden into the night.

"The moon is showing over the trees, soon it will be almost as light as day," cried Winslow. "You guys have got to trail Weston, and you must get him. If you can't overtake him warn the boys to stand by for a change of plans; we may have to fight our way out of this mess." He clapped his hands together. "We've got the sheriff at the Masquerade—by gar, that's an idea."

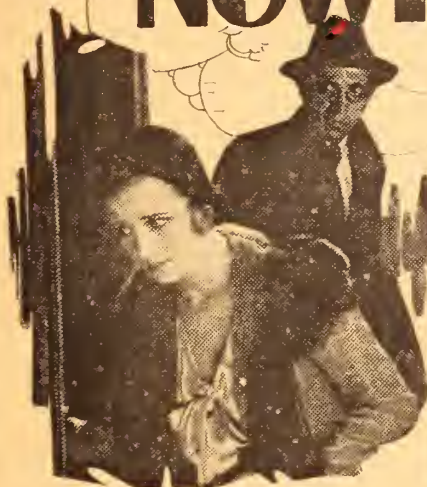
"Are you crazy, chief?"

"I'll get him to raise a posse among the guests," Winslow spoke almost to himself. "I'll make out that Weston is the rustler, and if we can catch him disguised as a monk it will look bad against him. He cau swear it's a lie, but who can support him bar that old fool Ben? Guess we'd better settle

(Continued on page 25.)

Thrills, mystery and suspense in an exciting story of the Secret Service, starring Alice Day and John Holland.

"The LADY from NOWHERE"



The Mysterious Shot.

CRACK!
John Conroy's rather stern brows drew together abruptly, and he involuntarily turned his head listening.

There was no mistaking that sharp noise, like a large piece of brittle wood being snapped suddenly. It was a revolver shot!

Cautiously Conroy left the mirror, where he had been standing tying his tie, and crossed to the door of his room. There was a puzzled look on his face. This hotel in which he lived was one of the quietest in the city, and the last thing he would have expected was the sound of firearms.

He had two rooms on the third floor, one leading into the other. The inner room—the one he now occupied—was the bed-room, and to get from there to the landing he had to pass through his living-room.

He opened the door slowly, and almost simultaneously a girl rushed from the landing into the living-room. She paused abruptly at the sight of him.

"Oh!" she exclaimed in alarm.
Conroy studied her closely, and noted that she looked pale and distraught, as though in fear of her life. He became tense, realising that he had stumbled upon some mystery.

"Where did you come from?" he asked quickly.

She ran across the room and gripped his arm in panic.

"Don't let them get me!" she cried.
"I don't understand. What's the trouble?"

"I was on the landing outside delivering a package for my employer, Mr. Barstow," she explained. "Suddenly I heard footsteps behind me, and turned to find a horrible-looking man coming towards me with a life-preserver in his hand. I was scared. I pulled a revolver from my handbag and fired."

She covered her face with her hands and started to tremble.

"It all happened so quickly," she went

on breathlessly. "I didn't realise what I was doing. Please—please help me!"

Conroy looked at her thoughtfully for a moment, then went across to the door leading to the hall and locked it. He returned to her side, and on his face was an expression of frank puzzlement.

"I still don't understand," he said.
"Why were you carrying a gun?"

"I have to. Mr. Barstow insists upon it. He is a stockbroker, and most of the packages I carry are worth thousands of pounds."

Conroy opened his mouth to ask another question, when noises from the landing made him stop. A crowd of people had gathered from adjoining rooms, disturbed by the shot, and Conroy could hear the voice of the hotel detective ordering them to stand back.

"Did you hit the man you fired at?" Conroy asked quickly.

"I don't know. I didn't see."

Someone knocked. Conroy caught the girl by the shoulders and thrust her towards the bed-room.

"In there quickly," he said. "I'll see to the folks outside, and you can finish your explanations afterwards."

"Oh, thank you!"

"Don't stop to thank anybody. Hide!"

She vanished into the other room as the knock was repeated, and Conroy crossed to the outer door. He unlocked it and threw it open.

The hotel detective was standing outside, but there was no sign now of the aggressive manner in which he had been heard speaking to the others.

"Sorry to trouble you, Mr. Conroy," he said in a respectful manner, "but a girl took a shot at someone and disappeared down this end of the landing. Did she come in here?"

Conroy smiled disarmingly.
"She couldn't have done," he replied.
"I've only just got up, and the door was locked from the inside until I opened it a moment ago. Anybody hurt?"

"No, sir. Whoever it was she fired at must have run like blazes, because there's no sign of him." He scratched his head, puzzled. "It's a funny business."

"Well, I'm afraid I can't help you," said Conroy.

"All right, sir. Good-morning!"
"Good-morning!"

Conroy closed the door again and silently locked it. Then he turned eagerly towards the bed-room, wondering what strange chance had thrown the lovely but mysterious intruder across his path.

"It's all right now," he said, entering the bed-room, and stopped abruptly. It was empty!

A hurried glance round showed him what had happened. The bottom of the window was wide open, and the curtains were flapping in the morning breeze. She had taken advantage of his conversation with the hotel detective to make good her escape.

"Fool!" he said angrily to himself, and started for the window. But he never reached it. As he passed his dressing-table he caught sight of a sheet of paper that had not been there before, and on it was scrawled the words:

"If you will call at 225, Elmore Drive, I will explain.—MARION DALE."

"Phew!" he muttered as he read the enigmatic message a second time. "I wonder what the game is?"

Barstow.

MEANWHILE, a taxi was racing away from Conroy's hotel towards another part of the city, and in it was the girl who had signed herself "Marion Dale."

She was looking worried, hating herself for what had just happened. Somehow the memory of Conroy and his willingness to help her affected her more deeply than she cared to admit even to herself.

As the taxi swept on she closed her grey eyes and surrendered herself to her thoughts about him. She liked his handsome but stern face, with its suggestion of grim humour when faced with a difficult problem, and she liked, too, his fearless eyes that had never once wavered from her face while she was telling him about the shooting. In spite of their directness, they had betrayed admiration, and the admiration had been for her.

A thrill of pleasure ran through her veins at the thought.

She was roused from her reverie by the hiss of brakes, and saw that she had arrived at her destination. She alighted quickly, paid the driver, and mounted the steps of the large, stone-fronted house which had been her home for the last four months.

In answer to her summons the door was opened by a tall, stooping man whose black hair lay in a tangled mass over his broad forehead, and whose dark, crafty eyes were turned into pin-points by the thick-lensed spectacles that rested crookedly upon the bridge of his nose.

Involuntarily, at the sight of him, she shrank back; then, as if by an effort, she pulled herself together again, and forced herself to speak normally.

"Thank you, Rigo," she said. "Is Mr. Barstow in yet?"

"He is in the study," Rigo replied, and the slight guttural slur in his voice proclaimed him to be a German.

Marion hurried past him as though glad to be beyond his reach. She crossed a wide hall, and entered a room on the far side where, seated at his desk, was the man she had mentioned as her employer.

He looked up from his papers as she came in, and nodded a curt greeting.

"Well?" he demanded.

"Everything happened as you planned," she replied. "I fired the shot outside his door, told him that I had been followed, and left him a note when I got away." She spoke wearily, as though she hated what she had done.

"Good!" said Barstow briefly. "And you think he will call?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Perhaps—and perhaps not," she said. "He did not look a fool."

She stood before him, regarding him speculatively, tapping with her foot on the floor. She noted for the hundredth time his hard, cruel expression, and his grossness, barely concealed by an outward suavity.

Suddenly she turned and flung herself into a chair, every nerve tingling.

"I'm tired of this mystery," she cried unsteadily, as though she had reached the limit of her endurance. "I'm tired, too, of being here, working for you. If you want a man like Mr. Conroy to come here, why don't you write to him, or go and ask him yourself? Why do you have to resort to trickery, and drag me into it?"

Barstow rose to his feet, swift anger on his face. He brought down his fist on the top of his desk with a crash.

"How dare you question me!" he shouted. Then, just as quickly as his anger had arisen, so it died again. "Forgive me," he went on suavely, "I

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forgot myself! You see, I do not like being asked for explanations. They are not necessary. All you have to do is to obey me without discussion, and we shall always remain the best of friends."

She stood up also, so that she could face him.

"I do not want us to remain friends," she cried passionately. "I want you to let me go!"

He smiled.

"Apparently you forget," he said softly. "You don't seem to realise that I helped your father to get away when the police were after him, and that even now I could tell them his hiding-place."

She dropped back into her chair helplessly, every drop of colour draining from her face.

He looked down at her, and from the change that came over his features, it was obvious that a new idea had come into his mind.

"I suppose," he said quietly, "you don't happen to be falling in love with this man Conroy, do you?"

She started. His question had taken her unawares.

"I—why—I—of course not!" she finished indignantly.

"Well, don't," he said, his voice hard and metallic. "You will only let yourself in for a grave disappointment otherwise. You see, he is rather in my way at the moment, and—well, perhaps there is no need for me to explain too fully."

She stared at him in horror. A dull red—like blood—seemed to shine from his eyes.

Quickly she rose and hurried from the room.

At Headquarters.

BACK in his hotel, Conroy finished his dressing thoughtfully. His mind was occupied by the mysterious Marion Dale. Who was she? Why had she appealed to him for help, only to disappear?

He knotted his tie, and straightened it to his satisfaction, turning over these questions in his mind. If he found any answers, no sign showed on his face as he donned his waistcoat and jacket and buttoned them.

Finally he went to the telephone, and called a number. Within a few seconds he heard a voice say:

"Yes? Who is it?"

"Conroy."

"Come right over," the voice continued. "It's urgent. How long will you be?"

"Ten minutes."

Conroy hung up, and returned to his dressing-table. He opened one of the drawers and took from it a .38 automatic. With a deft jerk of his fingers, he flung back the breech to assure himself that it was loaded, then dropped it into his breast-pocket.

Nonchalantly he left his rooms and walked slowly down the stairway to the street. Casual passers-by noticed nothing extraordinary about him, yet behind his calm eyes, which seemed to be darting everywhere, was an alertness which showed him to be in readiness for any contingency which might arise.

His appearance on the steps of the hotel was the signal for a taxi to move off from a near-by rank and slide to the kerb. He descended to it slowly, and opened the door.

"Drop me one street away from headquarters," he said in an undertone; and then, in his ordinary voice: "The Astor Hotel."

"Yes, sir," said the short, broad-shouldered driver.

Conroy got into the vehicle and sat down. The driver let in the gears, and the taxi moved off. As it joined the traffic-stream, Conroy moved his head so that it was close to a small microphone let into the side of the cab.

"Anybody around, Jones?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the driver, speaking without turning his head, and with hardly any lip movements. "That old guy who calls himself Colonel Snowden was in the hall of your place early this morning, and when he came out he spoke to Millic, who was standing in front of the jewellery shop three doors down. Also, a girl went from the third floor to the street down the back fire-ladder. Foster told me about that."

"H'm! Did he recognise her?"

"No. Never seen her before."

"Right! Thanks!"

The cab drew up just beyond a corner, and Conroy alighted. He gave the driver some money, and received some change. Then, as the cab drove away, he sauntered across the pavement and into a newspaper shop.

Nobody stopped him. Nobody, not even the proprietor of this shop, seemed even aware of his existence. He merely walked through to the back of the premises, out into the yard, through two small doors, and into a grey stone building by its side entrance.

A minute later John Conroy, secret service agent, stood before the desk of his chief.

A Conference.

D R. LANSEN, local commissioner of the International Secret Service, an organisation maintained by every civilised country in the world for the stamping-out of international crime, was speaking at the telephone as Conroy entered. He motioned Conroy to a chair.

"I know that, sir," he said into the transmitter, and his tone sounded harassed. "We'll do all we can to put a stop to it. I'm putting my best man on the job. Yes, I'll report in a week. Good-bye!"

He hung up the receiver, and sank back in his chair. His grey eyes, which had the appearance of being sunken because of his protruding forehead, were troubled.

"Conroy," he said earnestly, "I've got to hand over one of the biggest jobs that this department has handled for years. You know that counterfeit money is being circulated, don't you?"

"It always is," replied Conroy. "But the police keep it in check fairly well."

"Do they?" The chief leaned forward and picked up a sheet of paper from his desk. "I was just speaking over the telephone to the Treasury Minister, and he tells me that unauthorised notes to the value of two hundred thousand pounds are in circulation. Banks are sending them in for clearance from all over the world—Europe, America, and even from far-off Japan. What's more, every kind of note is being forged—Bank of England, United States Treasury, Bank of France, and others." He slid the sheet of paper across the desk. "Here's the classified list. You can see for yourself."

Conroy picked it up, and uttered a low whistle. It was indeed as the chief had said. From the evidence before him, a vast organisation was in existence which was defrauding the whole world.

"We've got a certain amount of information to start with," the chief continued, and from the way he ran his fingers through his iron-grey hair Conroy could tell that he was perturbed. "The brains of this organisation are here, in this city!"

Conroy leaned forward eagerly.

"How do you know?" he asked.

"I have been making inquiries amongst manufacturers of chemicals, and I find that quantities of aniline dyes, picked white rags, photographic

equipment and so on, have been delivered by various routes to the house of a certain stockbroker."

"A stockbroker?" exclaimed Conroy suddenly.

"Yes. Why?" The chief looked at him curiously.

"Oh, nothing. What's his name?"

"Barstow. He lives at 225, Elmore Drive."

Conroy relaxed in his chair, a far-away look in his eyes and nodded pensively. Into his mind flashed the vision of Marion Dale.

So she wanted him to go to 225, Elmore Drive for an explanation, did she? A trap. Well, well!

The thought began to trouble him. Somehow he could not associate the girl he had seen with anything crooked, and he was a fairly shrewd judge of human nature. Yet there were the facts. She had started that scare in his hotel only that morning, and had left a note which was obviously intended to lead him into the clutches of a criminal gang.

It was some moments before he spoke. When he did he rose to his feet.

"All the documents concerning the matter are in the office outside, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes."

"All right. I'll look them over and get to work."

He made for the door, but before he reached it the voice of his chief halted him.

"I know you won't mind my giving you a personal hint." The chief spoke kindly. "In your last case you very nearly came to grief because of your disinclination to think badly of a pretty woman. This time—"

Conroy grinned.

"I know," he said. "Be a Secret Service man first, and a human being afterwards. That's why you're married, with three children. So-long!"

He got out of the office before the chief could say anything in reply to that. It was better so.

On The Track.

HE regained the street again by the same devious route, a faint smile upon his lips, and stood upon the kerb with the idea of checking up his surroundings. For a week or more past now he had been wondering why he was being watched by the two unskilful individuals known as Col. Snowden and Millie, and at last he knew. They had both been mixed up with counterfeiting before, and apparently they were associated with this latest organisation.

As he stood there a woman dressed in a long fur coat and a hat that partly concealed her face drew up close to him, as though waiting for an opportunity to cross the road. She stepped off the kerb, and as she did so she dropped a small leather money wallet.

"Pardon me," said Conroy, and stooped to pick it up.

As he straightened himself he looked up, and to his sensitive ears came the sound of a muffled click. His quiet

eyes detected a fold of the woman's fur coat hastily concealing something which glistened in the sunlight, and he immediately recognised it as a small lens.

He held out the money-wallet and smiled courteously.

"You dropped this," he said quietly.

The woman uttered an exclamation of surprise and took it.

"Oh, thank you," she said gratefully.

"I don't know what I should have done if I had lost it. It's all I have in the world."

Conroy nodded pleasantly as she moved off, but the moment her back was turned he dived his hand into his pocket and produced a cigarette-case. He extracted a cigarette and tapped it a number of times on the polished side of the case, and at the same moment a stocky taxi-driver across the way let in his clutch, his quarry being the woman in the fur coat.

Conroy turned away, his eyes still active, and detected a bowed, white-haired man leave a cigarette shop opposite and wander aimlessly up the street. It was Col. Snowden.

Conroy did some quick thinking. He realised that every move he made was being watched by unseen eyes; but he also realised that in a crowded thoroughfare he was as safe as though he were behind a foot of armour-plating.

Casually he wandered across the road and into the tobacco shop, certain that it was used for the purpose of watching headquarters. He produced a note for a large sum.

"Twenty Camels, please," he said to the man on the other side of the counter.

The man served him and looked with disfavour upon the large note that Conroy had dropped.

"Haven't you got anything smaller?" he asked gruffly.

"No," replied Conroy.

The man opened his till and raised the spring holding down a pile of smaller notes. He carefully lifted off the top ones and began to pull out some from underneath.

Conroy's hand shot across the counter and gripped the tobacconist's wrist.

"Why not the ones on the top?" he asked casually. "Is it because you know me?"

With his free hand he picked up all the notes the tobacconist had and examined them, at the same time keeping the tobacconist under observation. Finally he put them down.

"Don't bother to reach for your gun," he said quietly. "I can get to mine before you can open that drawer you've got under the counter."

Before the astounded tobacconist could reply, Conroy picked up his own money and walked out of the shop.

That night in the security of his guarded hotel he sent an enigmatic message to his chief. It ran:

"It won't be long now!"

After which he settled down to wait for his unseen enemies to make the next move.

An Arrest.

IN spite of his customary cheerfulness Conroy woke the next morning feeling slightly troubled. Before going to sleep he had spent many hours turning over the problem of the counterfeiters in his mind, and he had been painfully conscious that he had only the slenderest of facts upon which to work.

For instance, although the man Barstow was under suspicion, nothing had occurred to connect him definitely with the international frauds, hence Conroy's ruse to let the other side act first. It was the only way to get to grips with whoever was at the head of the gang.

Again, his thoughts about Marion

Conroy's hand shot across the counter and gripped the tobacconist's wrist.



were strangely mixed. Since he had first met her the feeling that she was not really crooked had recurred time and time again in his mind. Who was she, and why had she acted in such a strange way the previous day?

His reverie was interrupted by a knock on his door. He had then just finished dressing.

"Come in," he called, and as one of the maids entered to tidy up he added: "Oh, it's you!"

He was about to turn away when something familiar about her face attracted him. His eyes narrowed momentarily, then he grinned to himself.

"I don't think I've seen you before," he remarked.

"No, sir," replied the maid. "Bessie, who generally does this floor, is away to-day, so I'm doing this one and the one above."

"I see," said Conroy.

He went over to his jacket which was hanging on the back of a chair and took one or two official documents from the inside pocket. He glanced at them for a moment, then replaced them and went into the living-room, apparently to make a telephone call.

He shut the door behind him and listened with his ear close to the panels. What he heard broadened the grin on his face, for it was the sound of the bottom of the window being gently raised.

He did not hurry. Not until the window was lowered again did he re-enter the bed-room.

He went straight across to the chair and felt in his pocket. The papers were gone!

Calmly he went to the connecting doorway and stood barring any possible exit.

"Well, Millie," he said, "it looks as though I've got you at last."

The girl started, and her face turned a shade paler.

"What do you mean? I don't understand," she gasped. "Stand away from that door!"

"Not on your life," said Conroy. "It was you who bumped into me yesterday, and took my photograph while I was picking up your wallet. And now you've stolen some papers that belong to me."

She rounded on him fiercely.

"Prove it!" she challenged.

There was a knock on the door. Conroy opened it, to admit the short, stocky taxi-driver named Jones.

"Ah, so you got her?" said Jones. "I was keeping tabs on your window, knowing that she had entered the hotel early. She dropped these to a newsboy. I had him arrested." He held out the papers that Conroy had lost.

Conroy took them, and turned to Millie.

"Well?"

"Oh, all right," she said resignedly.

"You win. But somebody's going to get you for this, Conroy." She took a step nearer to him, her face livid with hate. "When you arrest me you sign your own death warrant."

Conroy smiled.

"Surely not," he said quietly. "Barstow might be a crook, but he'd hardly go as far as murder."

"Barstow! Then you know—" She stopped suddenly and bit her lip.

Conroy exchanged glances with Jones, but gave no sign to Millie that he had heard.

"Wouldn't you like to tell me all about it, Millie?" he said persuasively. "This will be so much easier for you if you do. For instance, I'm not the November 28th, 1931.

first man whose photograph has been taken with that pocket camera of yours. Who did you give the negative to, and how many copies were made for distribution to the gang?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Millie obstinately.

"No?" Conroy thought for a minute, then tried a new line. "Then tell me what Marion Dale is doing with your mob? She's no crook, if I'm any judge."

Millie looked at him sharply. She had detected the faintest signs of eagerness in his voice.

"So little Marion interests you, eh?" she said spitefully. "Well, if you think she's better than the rest of us, follow her at twelve o'clock to-day, and you'll see for yourself."

Conroy made a sign, and Jones grabbed her by the arms and handed her over to a couple of policemen waiting outside. When he returned, he found Conroy standing by the window, looking out over the roof-tops with troubled eyes.

"Well," he said cheerfully, "that gives you a line on the job anyway, boss. Millie's dropped Barstow right in the soup."

Conroy did not reply at once. He still stood at the window. Suddenly, without looking round, he spoke.

"Jones, have a spare watch put on Number 225, Elmoro Drive," he said. "And pick me up here at ten minutes to twelve."

Jones nodded and went out. Meanwhile Conroy went on thinking, and his thoughts were not pleasant. They were of Marion Dale.

Apparently he had forgotten his chief's warning about not believing the worst of pretty women!

At Dexter Avenue.

At exactly five minutes to twelve, Jones' taxi drew unobtrusively into the kerb a short distance away from Barstow's house. Jones himself was at the wheel, while Conroy sat in the back.

As the vehicle came to a halt, Conroy spoke into the microphone.

"Who did you detail for the job?" he asked.

"The flower-woman," replied Jones. "She has just given the signal that nothing has happened yet."

Conroy glanced up the street and saw an old woman standing against a wall, a large flower basket slung from her shoulders by a strap. Even as he looked he saw a car pull up outside Barstow's house, and at the same moment Marion came out and walked down the path towards it.

The flower woman, as though scenting a customer, hurried forward, and reached the side of the car at the same time that Marion did. Apparently Marion did not want flowers, for Conroy saw her shake her head and turn away to give the address she wanted to the driver.

The car moved off, and the flower-woman shambled down the street. She approached the taxi, holding out a bunch of carnations.

"Carnations for your buttonhole, sir?" she said loudly; and then, under her breath: "15, Dexter Avenue."

Jones leaned over the side of his driving seat.

"Get to blazes out of here!" he said for all the street to hear. "I'm not going to have people like you worrying my customers. Get going!"

He slammed in his gears and started down the street so suddenly that he almost threw the woman to the ground. It was all part of his plan,

Ho did not hurry, but took an indirect route to the address the flower-woman had given, taking care that he was not being followed.

He drew up before a stucco building in a cheaper neighbourhood eventually. It looked like an ordinary lodging-house or a large family residence that had been converted into flats.

Conroy alighted and went up the front steps, leaving Jones to wait. He tried the front door and found that it was open. Quickly he passed inside.

He found himself in a small hallway. Several doors opened out of it, and at the far end was the beginning of some stairs. Over the whole place hung the musty smell of stale cooking.

Conroy decided that no one who was carrying on the dangerous activities of a crook would be likely to have a room on the ground floor, so he felt that he could safely ignore the lower doors. Whoever it was that Marion had come to see was living a floor or two up at the back of the house, where the fire escape could be reached easily.

Conroy mounted the stairs slowly, stopping every now and then to listen for the sound of voices. On the first landing he drew blank. Only one room was occupied, apparently by two old people who were in the first stages of a domestic quarrel.

He mounted the second flight, and as he reached the top stair a door ahead of him opened and closed suddenly. Marion Dale stood facing him.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "You!"

She looked confused, and glanced back at the door in embarrassment. Conroy advanced to her side grimly.

"Been visiting?" he asked.

"No—er—yes—" she stammered.

Conroy reached past her and grasped the handle of the door. He was about to turn it when she gripped his wrist desperately.

"Please—please don't go in there!" she begged.

"Why not?" He watched her narrowly, convinced now that she was one of the gang.

"Because—oh, I can't explain." She spoke almost in a whisper, just loud enough for Conroy to hear. "If I tell you anything they might—"

She stopped suddenly. Out of the corner of her eye she caught sight of two men standing behind Conroy at the head of the stairs. One of them was Rigo!

Her mind moving like lightning, she released Conroy's wrist.

"All right, then. Go in," she said.

Conroy, not seeing the others, thrust the door open, and found himself in a dingy room, furnished mainly with old chairs and a table. Sitting in an armchair by the window was a man.

Conroy's eyes narrowed. He looked from the man to Marion, and his expression was stern.

"I see," he said quietly. "Just a friendly visit, eh?"

Marion knew what he meant—that she was in love with this unshaven, unkempt individual in the armchair. A denial rose to her lips, but she checked it, hoping to gain time. Rigo was outside, and she knew that if the German and Conroy came face to face, Conroy might be in danger. She remembered Barstow's words: "He is rather in my way at the moment." Already she was beginning to suspect Barstow's true business, yet she could say nothing, for the sake of her father.

"Yes, just a friendly visit," she replied at last, loudly enough for Rigo outside to hear. "Also, I had to bring him something from my employer."

Conroy's eyes flickered over her face

searchingly.

"What?" he asked.

"A packet of bonds."

"H'm!" On Conroy's face was a frank expression of disbelief. "Show them to me."

At this point the man in the chair started to his feet and went towards Conroy angrily.

"Look here, you," he said, "what's the idea of bursting into my room like this? Who are you, anyway?" He stopped, waiting for Conroy to reply, but Conroy said nothing. "If you want information I'll give it to you. She came here to see me, and that story of hers about a packet of bonds is all hoodlum, see? So if you're jealous and think I'm trying to pinch your girl, go away and think that over!"

Conroy still said nothing. His face was as inscrutable as a mask, but in his eyes as he looked at Marion was nothing but contempt.

Suddenly he turned, and before Marion could stop him he had left the room. He crossed the now empty landing and hurried down the stairs and out of the building.

Meanwhile, Rigo and his confederate were watching from a place of hiding. The latter drew an ugly automatic pistol and took aim at Conroy's receding back.

Rigo knocked his arm aside quickly. "Fool!" he hissed. "Do you want the whole of the city police about our ears?" A crafty look came over his face. "We will return to Mr. Barstow. I have an idea—a great idea—that should rid of us of this Conroy for ever. Come!"

The Trap.

CONROY returned to his hotel at once. He wanted time to think. Whichever way he looked at it, Marion seemed to be one of the crooks, her thinly-veiled attempt to cover herself having failed. Conroy, not knowing the true facts of the case—that she was forced to silence by the hold Barstow had over her father, and that she had tried to save Conroy from danger—could only think that she was in league with Barstow.

He wondered what he ought to do next. He realised what his duty was. When he finally landed the gang of international counterfeiters into his net she should be amongst them; yet somehow he could not bring himself to do it. He loved her.

That admission, even in the secrecy of his soul, seemed absurd, he knew; but he had lived long enough to realise that falling in love is one of those things that are not governed by reason. He had met her but twice, and on both occasions he had suspected her of complicity—yet following those two brief occasions he found himself thinking of her more than he had ever thought of any woman before.

For hours he paced the floor of his rooms grappling with his problem and getting no nearer to a solution. He did not notice the passing of time, with the result that when, at five o'clock, someone knocked, he uttered an exclamation of surprise upon glancing at the clock.

"Come in!" he called.

A page entered carrying a card on a salver.

"Gentleman to see you, sir." said the page.

Conroy picked up the card, and

saw neatly engraved upon it—"Col. C. T. Snowden."

"Show him up," he said calmly.

The page departed, and Conroy smiled quietly to himself as he whipped out his pistol and examined it to see that the safety catch was off. So his idea of making the gang seek him was working, eh? He smiled grimly to himself.

The door opened again as Conroy thrust his weapon out of sight, and a white-haired old man with a benevolent expression and stooping shoulders entered. He greeted Conroy rather shamefacedly, and sat thankfully on the proffered chair.

"Mr. Conroy, I fear the reason for my visit is a little strange," he began at once. "Of course, you do not know me?"

"I'm afraid I don't," replied Conroy politely, realising that the old man was not aware of what the secret service really did know.

"Then I would like to ask you one question first, Mr. Conroy," the old man went on. "When one has been engaged in criminal activities, is it not a fact that one's sentence is much lighter if one offers assistance to the police?"

"I believe it is," replied Conroy.

"But I don't see what this has to do with me. I am nothing to do with the police—"

The old man raised his hand.

"We need not hide our identities from each other," he said, "because some time ago I fell upon bad ways, I was compelled to sell my services to a gang of criminals who have been engaged upon the nefarious business of counterfeiting, and it is known that you are operating against that gang. That is known to every one of us, as you can see."

He produced a slip of pasteboard, which he laid on the table before him. Conroy picked it up and saw that it was

his photograph—the one Millie had taken. Conroy felt that he had to

admire the organisation which could pay attention to such details.

"Well?" he said non-committally.

The old man cleared his throat awkwardly, and appeared to hesitate. Then he blurted out:

"Will you arrange for me to go free if I tell you how to bring that gang to book?"

Conroy did not reply at once. He frankly regarded the whole business as a trap, and yet it was so well done that he could easily believe it was genuine.

"That is a question I can't decide," he said at length. "My chief is the only one who can help you there. But I can say this—if I succeed in rounding up the gang upon your information, anything I recommend is almost sure to be done."

The old man appeared quite satisfied.

"Then I will be quite open with you,"

he said. "It is common knowledge that you visited No. 15, Dexter Avenue, this morning. Well, to-night at eleven the gang is meeting there. If you will accompany me I can show you a hiding-place from which you will hear everything, who is behind the gang, where the notes are made, and the addresses of all our distributing centres. Will you come?"

Conroy looked at the old man shrewdly and considered the point. Suddenly he turned and reached for the

phone.

"Taxi, please!" he called.

The old man leaned back in his chair contentedly, a smirk of satisfaction upon his face. But the smirk suddenly vanished when the round face and short, wiry body of Jones appeared in the doorway.

"Jones," said Conroy, "take this gentleman to headquarters and lock him up in the largest cell you can find. Others will be joining him later."

The old man rose protestingly.

"My dear sir—" he began.

"And also tell the chief to send a few men to No. 15, Dexter Avenue, at eleven to-night, in case I want them."



Conroy, not seeing Rigo and his companion, thrust the door open.

Jones nodded briefly and clamped two large hands upon the old man's shoulders. He made a few deft passes, and a large revolver clattered to the floor.

"Naughty, naughty!" said Jones playfully. "A little boy like you shouldn't carry such dangerous things. Kim on!"

Conroy laughed and reached for his hat as Jones escorted his prisoner out of the room.

Rigo.

AT ten o'clock that night, Conroy was sitting against a chimney-stack on the roof of No. 15, Dexter Avenue, a pair of headphones over his ears. At his feet was a leather case carrying an amplifier and a battery.

He smiled quietly to himself as he thought of the sham colonel's ruse to trap him, and speculated upon what was due to happen. He could only guess that the gang intended to kill him in some way.

Fortunately, upon his arrival in the building earlier in the evening, he had found the back room on the second floor empty, its occupant having, apparently, gone to a theatre or something. Only a few brief minutes had sufficed to enable him to hide a tiny microphone behind a picture, and run his wires up the stairway to the roof.

Ten-fifteen struck—ten-thirty! Suddenly he stiffened. In the headphones he could hear the unmistakable footfalls of someone in the room below. They seemed to wander round the place for a few minutes, then a guttural voice uttered an exclamation of satisfaction and a chair creaked.

For another fifteen minutes there was silence again.

Suddenly more footsteps were heard—lighter ones this time. The noise of a door opening and shutting came over the wire clearly—then voices.

"Rigo! What are you going to do?" It was Marion!

Rigo laughed harshly.

"I am waiting for the clever Mr. Conroy," he replied. "I am watching for him to come through that door, and when he does this weapon will finish him. No noise and no fuss. It is fitted with a Maxim silencer, and no one will be disturbed." He chuckled. "That is good, eh?"

"But you can't do a thing like that," said Marion, and there was no mistaking the anxiety in her voice. "In fact," she lied, "Mr. Barstow told me to come here and send you back."

A silence followed that was so long that Conroy felt a strange tingling up and down his spine. What was happening? He strained himself to catch the slightest sound for a few minutes, and was just about to leave the roof and go below to see, when Rigo spoke again.

"I do not believe you," he said deliberately. "We have suspected you for a long time. We believe you to be in love with this man Conroy. Is that not so?"

There was another pause.

"Ah, I can see that it is," Rigo went on. "So you would be a traitor to our cause, eh? Very well, then—"

He broke off suddenly, and Marion gasped. For a moment Conroy feared something had happened to her; but the next moment he knew the reason for the sudden silence. Someone was coming up the stairs towards the second landing. Conroy could hear his footfalls distinctly, and none of them was to know that they were the footfalls of one of the other lodgers.

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"Now!" muttered Rigo in a low voice.

A scream almost shattered Conroy's ear-drums. Marion seemed to take two quick steps across the room, and a scuffle followed.

"Mr. Conroy!" she cried. "Go away quickly, while you're safe! They're going to kill you!"

Conroy did not stop to hear more. He threw down the headphones and ran to the side of the roof. His face set and his fists clenched, he ran down the fire-escape and burst through the window.

He found Marion and Rigo locked in a death-grip in the middle of the room. Rigo, his eyes blazing, was trying to turn the hand that held the pistol so that he could bring the muzzle against Marion's body, and Marion, terror-stricken, hung on to his wrist with both hands to prevent him.

Conroy hurled himself across the room, and sent his fist crashing to the side of the German's head. Rigo let up a cry and staggered backwards. The movement forced Marion to let go of him, and he raised his hand and took quick aim at Conroy.

Conroy ducked low as the weapon crashed out and charged. He caught the German round the waist, lifted him high and flung him across the room.

He leapt to follow, and landed squarely upon Rigo's back. Rigo stumbled forward and fell face downwards, Conroy on top.

The pistol had gone wide. Conroy gripped Rigo's wrist and brought his arm behind his back.

"Get that gun, Miss Dale," he said curtly.

"Let me go!" shouted Rigo madly. "I'll kill you!"

Conroy put pressure on the German's wrist, forcing it up towards his shoulders.

"Who sent you here to finish me?" he demanded.

"I won't tell you. Let me go!"

Conroy forced the German's arm a little higher.

"Come on now. Who was it?"

Beads of sweat began to appear on Rigo's brow, and his face was white with pain. He gritted his teeth as Conroy increased the pressure still more.

Suddenly he broke down. He had reached the limit of human endurance. "I'll tell you—I'll tell you!" he shrieked. "It was Barstow."

Conroy eased his grip slightly.

"Go on," he said. "Is Barstow the forger?"

"I don't know what you mean—Ah!" Rigo winced as Conroy reminded him to speak the truth. "Barstow financed us. I made the notes, and the rest of the gang helped to get rid of them. He—"

"All right," Conroy broke in. "I've heard enough." He looked up and found Marion watching anxiously. His features relaxed into a smile. "Well, what's your confession?" he asked gently.

She stared back at him with frightened eyes.

"I knew nothing about this forgery business," she said earnestly, and it was obvious to Conroy that she was speaking the truth. "Mr. Barstow made me go messages for him, and he told me that the parcels I took were packages of bonds. He tricked me into helping him. He's got a hold over my father."

Conroy dug his knee hard into the small of Rigo's back.

"Is that true?" he asked.

(Continued on page 28.)



"The TRIANGLE MURDER"

A gripping story of blackmail and a mysterious menace.

Mr. Fleming Gets a Shock.

THE career of George Christopher Fleming was as variegated, as colourful and as interesting as that of most American men who have risen to great heights from the lowest rung of the ladder. He had enemies—as which successful man has not?—he had found himself up against stupendous interests that seemed determined to crush him. And he had emerged powerful, assured, firm in his conviction that his financial strength was impregnable.

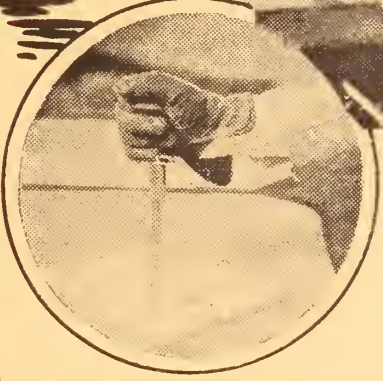
The story of his origin was as romantic as could well be imagined. In one of his expansive moments he assured a gathering of friends, assembled in his lovely seaside residence not far from Atlantic City, that he had entered the ranks of wage-earners at ten years of age, had drifted somehow from city to city, often getting more kicks than ha'pence, but gradually completing his education in the exacting university of Life.

"I was kicked about from pillar to post," he said, and as he talked the music of a negro band, playing noisily in his conservatory, sounded oddly as he sketched his early history. "Yes, from pillar to post," he repeated somewhat dreamily. "I have plumbed the depths, and I have tasted the pleasures of riches, and having tasted them I'll squeeze the uttermost joy out of life.

"The secret of success?" He repeated the inquiry of a zealous auditor. "Just two words—*fear nothing*." And then it dawned upon Fleming that possibly he had said too much. For he realised that there were chapters in his early life that might with advantage remain closed for all time. So with a deftness that did him credit, he turned the conversation into other channels, but his "*fear nothing*" motto was not lost upon those of his friends who had listened to their host with uncommon interest.

Such men as Fleming are the target of the blackmailer; they batten upon shady incidents in the lives of their victims, count upon the unwillingness of successful men to have their weaknesses displayed to the world. Fleming was no exception. But they threatened him in vain. He treated their demands with contempt, met their assurances of imminent exposure with the calm injunction to "get ahead," and knew in his heart that they had discovered him to be a tough proposition.

Now and again his morning mail contained a missive that administered just a momentary shock, a veiled or lurid threat to disclose to the world at least one of the methods that had enabled him to attain to, and to maintain, his present eminence. Invariably he would



apply a match to such letters, watch their gradual crumbling into ash with the grimmest of smiles. Then he would return to his routine and thrust the destroyed letter from his mind.

New York has its legions who live by their wits alone; who exist by preying upon the fears and the secrets of their fellow men. Mr. Fleming was determined that such easy living should not be made possible at his expense; and not even his confidential secretary, from whom few of his activities were hidden, was made aware of the extraordinary letters that came in his employer's mail.

Mr. Fleming was destined to discover, however, that his imperturbability was not quite shock-proof. In its contents, in the strange manner of its arrival, the "Triangle" letter undermined the invariable self-assurance of this financial colossus.

Going to his study desk one early evening, he was amazed to find pinned to the blotting-pad by means of a dagger a brief note to the following effect:

"You have not deposited the 15,000 dollars as demanded in our two former notes. Look out! Death to you at 11 to-night!"

The note was "signed" with a triangle!

This was "Black Hand" blackmail with a vengeance! The kind of thing one reads of in the lurid novel, or smiled at on the movies. To encounter it in real life, to see the glistening blade of the dagger thrust into the clean pinkness of his blotting-pad—surely he must be dreaming! But there it was, a grim, solid reality, the last of a series of similar notes that had reached him through the post—notes which he had destroyed without giving them a second thought.

And now that it had been brought so very close to him, as gingerly he withdrew the glistening blade from the pad, this Triangle business was, he mused,

something more than a mere practical joke. Come to think of it, the Triangle had created something of a sensation in the city. They had carried out their threats in the past, bringing death or ruin whenever they had indicated their intention of doing so. His thoughts dwelled gloomily upon their sinister record, wondered vaguely what could be the nature of an organisation so highly efficient as to be able to deliver its message with such cool effrontery.

Up and down, up and down he paced his study, angered at having been trapped so nearly, wondering who could possibly be at the bottom of it all. Which of his many secrets did the Triangle have possession of? Fleming edged his brains. That there were many who owed him a grudge he was very well aware. That there were scores who would gladly do him harm was evident.

If his Atlantic City guests could have seen him then, treading the soft carpet of his study like a caged and angry panther, they might have taken his "*fear nothing*" motto with a considerable grain of salt.

With a frown Fleming thrust the note from him as if the missive were red-hot, then summoned the butler.

"Perkins, do you know of anybody having entered this room recently?"

"Only the maid, sir, to do the dusting," replied the butler.

"Have you admitted anybody at all during the last hour or so?" snapped out Fleming.

"Not a soul, sir. There have been no callers whatever."

"Then perhaps you can tell me—"

Fleming evidently decided that the less the butler knew the better, and, dismissing the man, telephoned the police. The time had come to take definite action. Here, in his very home, almost under his nose, the blackmailers had struck! Things were coming to a fine pass when a man's private sanctum could be invaded effectively and unseen. Yes, that was it, unseen!

Ill at ease, still restlessly pacing to and fro, Fleming impatiently awaited the arrival of the police for whom he had telephoned a little while before. He greeted the three plain-clothes men cordially, bade them be seated, and handed their chief, Detective Thompson, the ominous message.

Thompson regarded the letter with undisguised interest, dusted it carefully with a fine black powder in the hope of

discovering a useful fingerprint. But the bearer of the message, with the shrewdness of his tribe, had worn a glove.

"Let's have a look at the knife," he said. Here, too, no sign of fingerprint, nothing individual either about the dagger itself; it seemed just one of those nondescript weapons that can be picked up for a few pence in any riverside junk shop.

Fleming explained how and when the message was discovered, and the seeming impossibility of the note being placed on his desk by anyone outside his household.

"To accuse my own people of having engineered this theatrical threat is ridiculous. My servants have been with me for years, and as for it being, as I was at first inclined to believe, a practical joke—well, gentlemen, it seems rather too grim in its contents," he said.

"I was undecided at first whether I should call you," he added, "but on second thoughts this note contains so definite a threat that I felt it better to get on to you straight away. How does it strike you, gentlemen?"

Their spokesman studied the printed lettering of the message, then remarked:

"I wonder if you realise, Mr. Fleming, that the hand that penned this message is the same hand that was responsible for the blackmailing demands in the Kellogg case?"

"Is that so?" replied Fleming, and his eyes became anxious, for the Kellogg case was still fresh in the crime records of the city. Kellogg, a banker, ornament of his community, and held in particular esteem in the town, had been driven to suicide through the outrageous demands of the Triangle gang. What secrets they had discovered in Kellogg's life was never to be known. But it was proved that the self-destruction of this eminent and well-liked personality was traceable to the demands of the powerful Triangle. A half-burned message provided the clue, a clue that it was found impossible to follow.

"There was the Jagger case, also," continued Detective Thompson. "Here, too, the methods indicated the Triangle gang. They pressed Jagger for money, pressed him to such an extent that he was induced to forge his wife's name to a power of attorney authorising him to take over her securities. The discovery of the forgery and the resultant disclosures that were bound to follow drove Jagger to suicide. We were unable to lay the gang by the heels. But I'm in hopes that, with this definite warning, we're going to have better luck this time.

"Now, let's get down to facts," suggested the chief. "We know that these blackmailers are really desperate characters. We know they are killers of the very worst type. And if, as in this case, they announce their intention of carrying out their threat at eleven o'clock tonight, it is up to us to put a monkey-wrench in their plans.

"We aren't going to take any chances. These human leeches have asked for it—and we'll see that they're going to get what's coming to them. There's a big—very big—score to be settled.

"Of course," added Detective Thompson, "the fact that this is a detached house, and standing in its own grounds, makes it a bit of a job to patrol it effectively. Why, you'll be needing half the police force of the district!" he added with a grim smile. "Still, we'll take every precaution that is humanly possible.

"First of all," he ordered, "every telephone instrument had better be disconnected, with the exception of this one in the study. No chance of wires being cut, no chance of monkey tricks when the 'phone's immediately under our eyes."

The Fatal Hour.

"MICK," said the chief, beckoning to a sturdy plain-clothes policeman, "you are to cover the front door. See that no one enters or leaves the house. Pat, you had better watch the windows of this room from

the outside, and keep your weather eye open for anything that seems fishy. They'll come at eleven, will they? Well, they'll get more than they bargain for!"

Fleming, with a smile that seemed to indicate that his fears had been allayed, sat down in his armchair, lit a cigar, and slowly awaited the passing of the hours, with the detective chief for company and a couple of sturdy policemen within ready call. Suddenly Fleming's face became concerned. The sounds of a fierce struggle reached the waiting pair, and the angry voice of Pat was heard exclaiming:

"What on earth are you doing, ferretting round here?"

"Let me alone—let me alone!" came the angry reply. "Take your hands off me, I say!"

A struggling, dishevelled and angry man was hustled into the room.

"I found this bird lurking outside the house, and nabbed him before he did any mischief," said Pat, indicating his prisoner.

"Who are you?" inquired the chief. "Oh, I'm sorry," interposed Fleming, "I should have told you before. He's just an irresponsible brother of mine. He's quite harmless, and keeps us busy watching him. Let him go, please."

"Irresponsible, am I?" said the angry man. "I'll show you!" and was led protesting from the room.

The noise had attracted the attention of the staff, and butler, cook, and the other domestics had arrived on the scene, very frightened.

"I want you all here," commanded the chief to the seared and trembling staff. "There's a chauffeur, too, isn't there?"

"Yes, sir," ventured the butler. "This is his night off. I believe he has gone to town. Otherwise they're all here, sir."

He surveyed the members of his staff with all the assurance of a captain casting an eye over his regiment. There was Ellen, the cook, plump, ruddy of face, wondering what all the business was about, worrying what her favourite policeman would say at her non-appearance that evening. And the little tweenie maid, just back from her nine-pennyworth of romance at the local movies, cheeks flaming at the prospect of a real drama being enacted in the master's study.

A martinet of martinets was Prodson, the butler, and as he counted them by way of assuring himself that, other than the chauffeur, there was no absentee, it was plain to see that there were none among his subordinates who had a spark of affection for him.

So the waiting staff joined their master and the detective, whilst the ticking clock brought the hour of eleven ever closer.

The occasional whirr of the telephone bell, which Detective Thompson answered, shattered the eerie silence. Now and then a swift auto speeded past the closely-guarded house, its occupants unaware of the tense vigil so soon to reach its dramatic conclusion. A cinder dropping into the firegrate seemed to reverberate with a noise akin to thunder.



"Help me!" he moaned. "I—"

It wanted a few minutes to eleven. Now thoroughly aroused, Fleming studied the clock face, as if he would see there the passing of his fears.

A strange, unaccountable noise, a soft rustling that might be the tapping of the branches against the window-pane. It might be that, or—

The little assembly was alert. The detective, hand on his revolver, suddenly stiffened. Time was nearly up. Before many minutes passed the Triangle would be declaring itself, and then— He fingered his revolver lovingly. Still the rustling continued. It was becoming unbearable.

Then a cupboard door opened cautiously, just a fraction of an inch. Still larger grew the opening. The detective cocked his revolver, and amid a silence that could be felt there emerged a tiny kitten, playfully gambolling with a paper bag! The servants fidgeted in relief, the detective gave vent to a mighty yell of laughter at the amusing manner in which the tension had been broken.

And, all unsuspecting, the threat of the Triangle was nearing its fulfilment. Tick-tock, tick-tock! Every revolution of the wheels of the clock sounded to Fleming like a hidden menace—a menace become less fearsome since both within and without this house he enjoyed the sturdy protection of the law. Once more he lit his dead cigar, once more revolved in his mind a list of possible enemies who might have conceived this vile method of torturing him. Police near at hand, servants within sight—what more protection could a man possibly ask for?

Slowly, musically, the ornamented clock on the mantelpiece chimed the

hour, and then a voice that came from nowhere uttered the solemn warning:

"ELEVEN O'CLOCK—YOU FAILED US!"

"Where on earth did that come from?" muttered the detective, looking, puzzled, around the apartment.

Fleming now attempted to rise from his chair, seemingly petrified with fright, his face as pale as death itself, a face suddenly grown very old.

"Help me," he moaned, "I—I—"
Then, staggering to his feet towards the detective, he fell half-way, collapsing on the floor in a heap.

"Father! Father!" cried his daughter Marjorie, who had just returned from a visit to her friends. "Speak to me!"

But Fleming was beyond speech, and a kindly maid led her away, sobbing.

"Unconscious through fright," commented Detective Thompson as he loosened Fleming's garments, chafed his hands, applied every means at his command to bring about his return to consciousness.

"Prodson," he commanded, "get a move on! Bring some water, then ring at once for Mr. Fleming's doctor."

But after a few moments the detective realised that no power on earth could help Fleming now.

The seemingly impossible had happened, after all! The Triangle had carried out its threat under the very nose of the police, ostensibly sent to protect Fleming, but powerless to lift a finger to save him from death in its most amazing form.

The detective flew to the window.
"Pat! Mick! Hurry in here at once!"

Then, taking up the 'phone, he called police headquarters.

"Detective Thompson speaking. Send some men at once over to Fleming's and notify the coroner. Seems to me as if the Triangle blackmailers have found another victim. Yes, but hurry."

The Voice in the Air Once Again!

NOW then, boys," began Detective Thompson, addressing his two subordinates.

But before he could continue that cool and deliberate voice from nowhere broke in upon his message:

"THOMPSON, YOU'RE NEXT—AT ELEVEN THIRTY-FIVE!"

An astonished detective looked around the department, with a shade of something more than anxiety in his eyes.

"I'm not superstitious," he rapped out, "but there's something like the supernatural at work here.

"Boys," he added, in a voice that was unusually agitated, "when that voice spoke out before, Fleming must have dropped dead. We've simply got to locate the speaker. And pretty quick, too!"

Uniformed police and the coroner arrived upon the scene.

"Well, Tom," said the coroner to the detective, "tell us what has happened."

"It's uncanny—more than uncanny. The Triangle gang threatened Mr. Fleming with death at eleven o'clock to-night. Here's their message. As the hour struck, we heard a hidden voice telling him that his time was up, and to the very tick of the clock Mr. Fleming pitched forward, dead, right before our eyes."

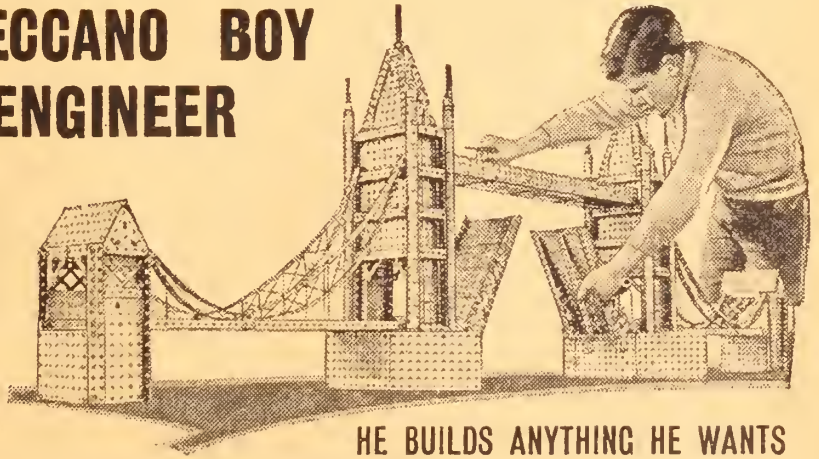
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(DEPT. 11)

OLD SWAN

LIVERPOOL

"Seems to me to be perfectly simple," was the coroner's matter-of-fact comment. "Fleming was really frightened to death. I've heard of ever so many cases similar in character."

"I don't think so in this instance," was the detective's answer, "although I imagined that to be the case at first. You'll find it's something very much more sinister than mere fright."

"Tell me," asked the sergeant of police, "how many people were in the room at the time Mr. Fleming died?"

"Everybody you see here now," replied the detective, "with the exception of Pat and Mick, who were guarding the outside of the house."

"And no one noticed anything unusual before Mr. Fleming dropped dead?"

"Not a thing."

"How long were you actually in the room before it happened?"

"About an hour and a half."

"And you've never left the room?"

"Not for a moment."

The police-sergeant scratched his head in embarrassment.

"The impossible seems to have happened," was all he could say.

Just as nonplussed was the coroner.

"You know, Thompson, that the poison that killed Fleming must have taken effect instantly. What puzzles me is how that poison could have been administered right under your eyes."

"It would help us a bit, Detective Thompson," suggested the sergeant, "if you could show us just where he was when it happened."

With an "I'll show you," the detective commanded everybody in the room to take up the positions they occupied when the tragedy took place.

The detective seated himself in Mr. Fleming's chair.

"He sat in the chair I am occupying, while we all watched intently. There was absolute silence as the clock struck eleven. I am sure—as sure as I ever have been of anything—that not a person in this room moved at the time. And—"

The detective's remarks were interrupted by the same ominous voice from the air, which reminded him again in solemn tones:

"ELEVEN THIRTY-FIVE!"

With a leap, the detective staggered from the chair, grabbed his neck as if in pain, and yelled.

"Boys, it's in the chair! Something sharp pierced my neck!"

Without an instant's delay the coroner examined the tiny puncture in the neck of the detective, looked concerned, then explained:

"Tom, you're a fortunate fellow. Evidently, whatever pricked you has been rendered ineffective, otherwise you'd be a dead man by now. Come along, we'll take no risks and cauterise it right away."

By now a posse of police in charge of a sergeant had arrived upon the scene, and it needed but a few words to place them in possession of the facts of this strangest of crimes.

"Nothing very supernatural about this," said the stolid sergeant, pointing to the detective's bandaged neck. "Something devilishly ingenious seems indicated."

With one move of his powerful hand he had overturned the chair of death, and in a trice had revealed the power for evil so snugly hidden in its tapestried cover.

"Here you are," he said excitedly, turning to the detective. "See these wires running through the leg of the chair, right down through the floor?"

November 23th, 1931.

The detective, amazement in every feature, beckoned to the butler.

"Come here for a moment. You're familiar with the house. Show us the way to the cellar and help us locate the wires."

The butler hesitated for the merest fraction of a second, but his hesitancy was lost in the momentary excitement of another encounter.

"Say!" yelled the sergeant. "Where are you going to?" This to the gardener, who was attempting to leave.

"Up to my room," was the surly response.

"No you don't! You stay right here!"

With a grunt the man consented, regarding the policeman with eyes that glistened with anger. Mumbling something about "taking orders from a common bobby," he was hustled into the cellar, there to be made use of in the clearing-up of the mystery.

Candle in hand, the butler led the way to the whitewashed basement. His hand trembled so that before long his spotless coat was spattered with grease.

"Nervous?" asked the detective.

"Upset, sir," came the laconic reply. Which was to be understood, for Proddon's service had extended over a number of years, and with dramatic suddenness he had lost a kindly and indulgent master. His face was pale. In his eyes was a look very akin to real terror as the detective surveyed the ingenious manner in which the wires had been run up from the cellar to the chair of death. It was a little masterpiece in its way; the work of a man who knew what he was after, who left nothing to chance.

"Let's see," pondered the detective, "this one must lead to the chair, and the other maybe, had something to do with the microphone. Let's pull one of the wires and see where it leads to. Devilish clever idea. Look at this!"

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when he heard a determined "Ah! Would you?" behind him.

An astonished detective turned round, to discover Mick grabbing the hand of the butler, a hand which held menacingly a long, wicked-looking poisoned needle!

"It's a good thing I came down to the cellar to look around before you fellows," Mick explained, "for this gentleman intended to stick this poisoned needle in your back."

A turn of the wrist that made the butler squirm in agony, then the needle dropped from his nerveless grasp. Realising that the game was up, that complete disclosure was but a matter of minutes, the butler attempted to escape, and being intercepted, showed fight. A well-directed punch from Mick sent him spinning.

"There's another fellow in the cellar here," warned Mick, making quite certain that there was no more fight in the butler.

"Careful now!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth before a figure rose from behind a rampart of boxes and fired deliberately, first at the light, shattering the bulb, then at random, in the hope of wounding at least one of the policemen. Pat, realising where the shot had come from, fired the contents of his revolver in that direction, heard a groan, then the sound of a body falling.

The cellar was in darkness; the candle had either rolled to the floor or had been deliberately extinguished. And here, menacing these representatives of the law, was a bloodthirsty butler, and somewhere a needle whose touch meant death! Which was friend? Which foe?

Silence most profound, except for the heavy breathing of men who seemed to be biding their time. Where was the butler and his death-dealing point? Still insensible?

Then on the stairs came the welcome tread of heavy feet, and, best of all, a glimpse of no less welcome light. The shots had been heard, and by the light of half a dozen candles it was possible to discover the outcome of the scuffle.

"Now then," said Detective Thompson, pulling the butler to his feet. "You'd better tell the whole story. Who's this fellow who tried to shoot us?"

The butler hesitated.

"Maybe," suggested Pat, handling the poisoned needle gingerly, "we'd better try some of his own 'medicine' on him, then he'll speak, sure enough."

The butler made no sign.

"Then give it to him!" The fatal needle was brought nearer to the unhappy man.

"Oh, don't!" pleaded the butler. "I'll tell you everything. We did it," he added.

"Who's we?" persisted the detective.

"The fellow you shot, who was Wilson the chauffeur, Snyder the gardener—"

"You're a liar!" thundered Snyder.

A policeman knocked him down.

"And myself," the butler continued.

"The three of us were the Triangle. We had made a study of perfect crimes, and determined that this was the ideal method of making money. We have had a long—and I may say, successful—inings. We banded together to commit what we thought to be perfect, clueless crimes, in order to secure money."

"We have had a long run," he added, and over his face there spread a malicious smile; "a very long run indeed, and sometimes I have wondered at the luck that has attended us. As for the police—"

"Yes, and what about the police?"

Detective Thompson snorted.

"With all respect, they really haven't seen any farther than their noses."

"Indeed," was all that the detective could say.

"Yes, sir. For ten years the Triangle has had things very much its own way, simply because the crimes were thought out to the very last detail. And details count in crime as in other businesses." The butler seemed to relish his explanation.

"You were responsible for the death of Kellogg?" asked the detective sternly.

"That's what it amounts to, sir."

"And Jagger?"

"Jagger also."

"So you determined to make money out of your employer also?"

"That is so. Mr. Fleming refused every one of our previous demands, so we determined, in the sight of everybody, to show that the Triangle could not be trifled with."

"What was the idea?"

"Simply that when the others saw how effective the Triangle was, they would be more ready to pay up without any question."

"You put a needle in the back of that chair?" queried Detective Thompson.

"Yes, a poisoned needle. We reversed the needle, sharpened the reversed end, and placed poison—a little-known Eastern poison—in the needle's eye."

"You see," he added, with something of the pride of a craftsman in his job, "we were pretty perfect on the mechanical side also, and most of our apparatus was specially made for our purpose. You've no idea of the time and patience the chauffeur devoted to such jobs, the pleasure he derived from

(Continued on page 27.)

"THE GUEST HOUSE."

(Continued from page 14.)

Ben in case he causes trouble. I'll get the sheriff to take his posse to Timber Creek." He leered evilly. "It would be lucky if he found Weston and White Cloud. We've got to get going, so let's get moving. First, we've got to find Pete and lock up old Ben."

The three men hurried towards the corral and the stables.

The Rustler.

THE moonlight showed up the corral and the colts. No sign of any rustlers at Timber Creek. Then from a near-by copse appeared a white shape that came gliding forward to break into a canter—a white stallion.

"Great snakes!" Jim drew in his breath. "White Cloud is a horse. I've seen you before—in Ringling's Circus. Now, how do you figure in this game?"

Jim nearly fell out of the saddle with amazement. With deft teeth White Cloud undid the ropes that secured the gates of the corral, swung them open, and "neighed" a command to the colts. They bounded towards the stallion as if obeying a master.

The youngster dug his heels into the flanks of his own horse and went at a mad gallop towards the corral. The colts were all out of the corral when Jim got there, but the boy did not bother about them. Straight at the white stallion he rode, and twice his pistol spoke a threat. White Cloud was a coward and, deserting the colts, bolted for the woods. Jim swung round and soon was herding the frightened colts back to the corral. The job was just complete when the pounding of many hoofs made him look round.

Winslow, the sheriff, and a posse.

"We've got you covered, Weston," snapped the sheriff. "Better not try to make a break."

"Why should I?" retorted Jim. "You're just in time to learn some news. There was an attempt to rustle these colts, but I got here in time. They were free, but I drove them back."

"Ha, ha, that sounds a good tale," jeered Winslow. "He was about to rustle these colts, sheriff, if we hadn't ridden up—that's the man you want, sheriff."

"That's a lie!" shouted Jim. "Sheriff, the real rustler is a white stallion named White Cloud—a circus horse which has got into the hands of crooks. This stallion lures the colts and mares away and can undo gates and rope knots. This stallion is being used by Winslow."

"What a tale!" shouted the crook. "Sheriff, you can see for yourself he's a rustler. Look at his disguise and realise how we found him; don't forget that only a few days ago he got blind drunk on night work."

"I'll have to arrest you, Weston," cried the sheriff. "The evidence is all against you. You can tell all that nonsense to the judge."

"Oh, no, he don't!" drawled a voice. "Those what calls my buddy names is likely to get shot. Stick 'em high, fellers, and slick."

Grinning like an ape was old Ben. Winslow slid a hand to his belt, and a bullet whined so close that he shot his hands skywards.

"Some guy nobbled me, but he couldn't tie a rope," Ben cackled. "Maybo he was a friend of yours, Winslow. Keep 'em up, sheriff!"

"Good work, Ben?" Jim removed Winslow's guns and then got to horse. "Before the sun rises I'm going to prove I'm innocent, sheriff. I don't advise anyone to move till we're out of range."

With a clatter of hoofs Jim and Ben rode away, leaving a cursing Winslow and a bewildered sheriff.

"You'd better trail them," shouted Winslow. "I must get back to the ranch."

The Secret Canyon.

SCARCE a mile had the partners ridden when both saw a white shadow ahead.

"White Cloud," cried Jim. "Follow!" Through forest and gulch went the white horse until Jim turned to his comrade.

"We've been circling. See, we are quite close to that range with the old quarry mines. Gosh, Ben, that horse is a wily old fellow—he's almost human. He seems to be heading for one of those caves."

To their surprise the horse cantered into one of the largest of the tunnels and vanished. Without hesitation Jim and Ben followed, bending low over the saddle to save knocking their heads. Just when it became so dark they could scarce find the way a small speck appeared ahead. Larger and larger it grew.

"Another valley," whispered Jim. "I believe we're on the trail of the rustlers' hide-out."

Out of the cave and before them a canyon right in the heart of the mountains, everywhere they saw horses grazing on the long grass, but they did not have long to wonder, because an angry shout made them whip round in the saddle. Four tough-looking men were running towards them.

But the rustlers pulled up short as Ben and Jim whipped out guns. One made a motion as if to draw, and instantly a bullet smashed his wrist.

"Keep still, you scum!" growled Ben. "Yeah, and stick your hands high!" drawled Jim.

Whilst Jim kept the rustlers covered old Ben removed the weapons of each man. They were a craven bunch, because all of them looked scared out of their lives.

The sheriff followed the trail to the cave. What a surprise for the posse and himself to see the two they were following holding up four strangers! The sheriff stared around at the horses and at the canyon.

"The secret canyon—and I always thought it was a fable," he mumbled; then turned to the grinning Jim: "Say, kid, what's the tale this time?"

"This is the hide-out of the rustlers, and there's Sutter's horses," was the answer.

"And yonder is the white horse that I told you about—the agent of the rustlers. Do you still think I'm lying? If you do, just listen to what that fellow with the smashed arm has to say."

The sheriff learnt of the treachery and cunning of Winslow, and held out his hand to Jim.

"Guess I made a mistake," he growled. "Wish I could get Winslow."

"That's my job." Jim clenched his teeth. "But if you get back to the ranch some time within the hour you'll find I've got him. So-long, sheriff! Come on, Ben!"

Old man Sutter was still awake. Winslow was telling Helen and Sutter all about the treachery of Jim Weston.

"Weston was the real rustler," cried Winslow. "And it won't be long before we get him."

"Weston's son—and I trusted him." The old man shook his head.

The door opened softly, but Helen heard and swung round. "Jim," she gasped. "Winslow says you're a rustler and—"

"Winslow has never told the truth in his life." Jim turned to the invalid. "All your horses have been found. A white horse did the rustling and Winslow did the rest. The sheriff has got the whole of the bunch in Secret Canyon, whilst Ben is looking after the gentry working this end. I've come to settle with Winslow. You framed me with that dope, you left me for dead in that quarry, and finally you tried to fix me as the rustler. The game's dead."

"Curse you!" Mad with rage, Winslow leaped forward and swung a vicious punch to Jim's face.

Fear and rage lent the scoundrel strength and cunning. He managed to get his arms round Jim, and then his hands crept up to the boy's throat. Jim was forced back over a table, trying with one hand to free the grip from his throat. A violent wriggle and Jim came off the table to crash to the floor. The overturning of the table slightly loosened Winslow's grip, and Jim was able to tear the man's hands away from his throat.

Now they were on their feet. Jim leaped forward and smashed his fist to the big face; a quick twist of the body and he had followed the blow with a right-left to the ribs.

Winslow made several futile rushes, but never again did Jim let the man have a chance to get those arms round him. Tables and chairs went flying. A well-aimed punch sent Winslow flying backwards, to crash full length through the French windows. Jim was standing over him, daring him to rise, when the sheriff arrived.

When Winslow and his bunch had gone and frightened guests told they could go back to bed, Jim talked to old man Sutter and Helen.

"I want a new manager. How about it, son?"

"Oh, Jim, please stay!" begged Helen, and, of course, there was no further argument.

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"THE LADY FROM NOWHERE."

(Continued from page 20.)

"Yes—quite true," gasped the German. "She didn't know anything." Conroy looked up at Marion again. "Will you do something for me?" "Willingly," she cried eagerly. "What is it?" "Go downstairs to the street, and see if you can find a short, ape-like taxi-driver by the name of Jones. Tell him to come right up. As usual, the police are late, and I want him to mind this bird while I go after the great Barstow himself."

She sped from the room, and Conroy took a fresh grip on Rigo.

The Room Upstairs.

BECAUSE Jones was watching Rigo, and Conroy was compelled to take an ordinary taxi, it was a full half an hour before he eventually reached Barstow's house. He found it in darkness, except for a light in the library window.

He entered the grounds cautiously, wondering what had happened to Marion. He had not seen her since he had sent her to get Jones.

Keeping to the shrubbery, he approached the house, and eventually climbed on to the balcony under the library window. The sound of voices came from inside, and he listened. One of the voices was Marion's!

"You can't go, and make me face

the music alone," she was saying. "You can't, I tell you. You've got to do something about it."

Conroy raised himself so that he could look into the room, and saw that Barstow was hastily stuffing the contents of his desk into a bag. Marion was standing close to him, her face desperate.

"Then why not come with me, Marion?" said Barstow. "I shall have plenty of money. We could go to Europe, where we could be married—"

Conroy listened thunderstruck, bereft of the power to move. So she had betrayed him, after all! She had come back to Barstow to warn him to get away!

"Perhaps I would, if—" She paused.

"If what?" asked Barstow, pausing in his packing.

"If you would promise to leave my father alone."

Barstow laughed. "Forget that," he said easily. "There's no harm in telling you now, but your father never was to blame. Were he arrested, the police would never get a conviction. He worked for me the same as you did." He suddenly broke off, remembering the need for haste. "But we can talk about that later. There is no time to lose."

Marion looked about her desperately, and Conroy was puzzled by the expression on her face. Suddenly he saw the whole thing. She was trying to delay Barstow! She was playing for time! Also, she had cleared her father!

Sudden movement inside the room made him pay attention to what was going on. Marion, seeing a revolver lying on the desk close to her hand, had snatched it up, and was pointing it at Barstow's head.

"You're going to stay here, Mr. Barstow," she said, and her voice rang out clearly.

Barstow looked up startled. Suddenly he swept up a walking stick that was against the chair beside him and lashed out at Marion's wrist. Marion let out a cry of agony, and he weapon dropped from her nerveless fingers.

Barstow made to leap at her, and at that moment Conroy sprang through the window.

"Lay a hand on her," he shouted, "and I'll kill you."

Barstow heard the voice, and checked himself for the merest fraction of a second. Then he rushed across the room, and out into the hall.

Conroy raced after him, and was just in time to see him vanish into a room upstairs. He took the stairs two at a time, and flung himself at the closed door through which Barstow had passed.

The crack of an automatic greeted him as he charged into a bed-room, dragging out his own gun as he ran. He felt something ping past his head. Almost in the same moment there was a second report, and something which felt like a hammer smashed into the bony framework of his left shoulder.

The impact sent him spinning round, and he realised in the split second that followed that if Barstow got in a third shot it would be the end.

(Continued on page 28.)

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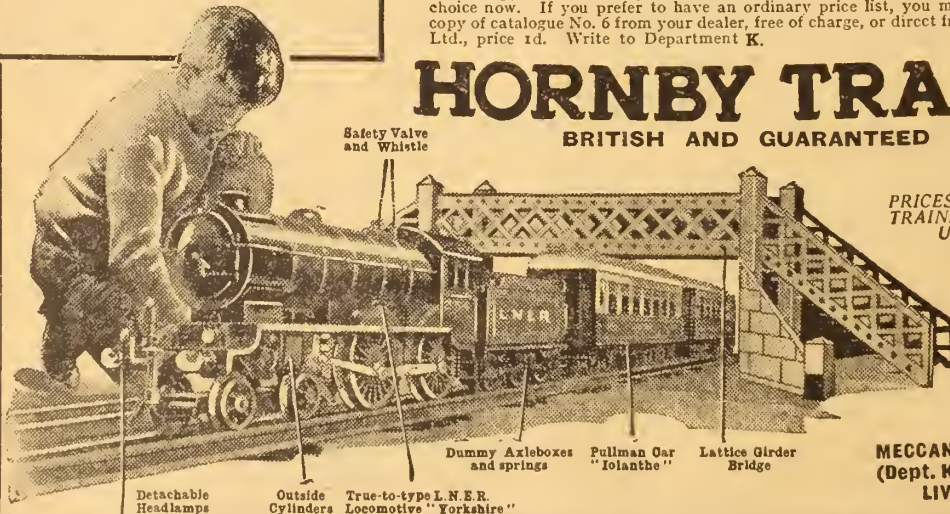
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"THE TRIANGLE MURDER."

(Continued from page 24.)

the making of unusual gadgets to serve our ends."

"Seems to me," commented the detective gruffly, "that you fellows have missed your rightful job. With your ideas and enterprise you might, had you directed them into proper channels, have done pretty well for yourselves."

"Well, sir," was the reply, in which humility and reproof were evidently mingled, "we haven't done so badly to date."

"That's as maybe," Detective Thompson returned. "But, after all, what good has it brought you, now? You've

got much to answer for, not only as regards this case, but the others."

The butler snivelled. "And these things worked the devilish apparatus?" suggested the detective, pointing to the tangle of wires overhead.

The butler nodded.

"Well, you almost got me," he growled.

"Yes, sir," mused the butler sadly. "That was our undoing. The chauffeur went too far, although there wasn't enough poison then left in the needle to do you injury."

The detective rubbed his bandaged neck.

"Is that so?" was all he could say.

Then, almost as an afterthought, Detective Thompson inquired: "And what about the voice that came from the air?"

"That, sir, was a loud-speaker con-

cealed in the wall behind a thin layer of plaster."

Justice was meted out to the members of the Triangle, and the exemplary sentences passed on them brought a sigh of relief to a city that had suffered so long from their devilish ingenuity. Each member of the gang was discovered to have amassed a fortune as a result of this levying of inhuman tribute, fortunes which net one of them was destined to enjoy, for documents and other means enabled the money to be returned to the sources whence it originally came.

The Triangle and its reign of terror has been forgotten now. But Detective Thompson—now enjoying well-earned retirement—will never forget it. For he has a scar on his neck that will remain as long as he lives. "A treasured souvenir," he calls it.

(By permission of the Ideal Film Co., Ltd.)

"DANGER ISLAND."

(Continued from page 8.)

him, to stare in awed amazement at the mass of struggling men.

"Ben, what are they doing?" gasped Bonnie. "What happened—what are they fighting for? Has everybody on this ship gone mad?"

Arnold answered her briefly. He told her the partial truth, but so twisted the explanation to suit himself that it became a deliberate lie.

"Drake refused to obey my orders," he said. "He wanted to sail for the mainland when he heard the island was dangerous."

Bonnie looked at Arnold incredulously, and then turned her glance towards the stern of the vessel, where Bull and Harry were now battling toe-to-toe.

"On, no!" she cried. "I can't—I won't believe it! Anyway, we've got to stop this fight!"

She started forward, but Arnold seized her and dragged her back. He had no desire to see the hostile parties separated, for, though there seemed small likelihood of it at the moment, there was always a slim chance that Bull and his hirelings might turn out to be the victors.

"Bonnie, come here!" jerked Arnold. "You can't do anything!"

"Ben's right, dear," her uncle interposed. "Stay where you are. You might get hurt if you try to interfere."

Bonnie remained with the two men, but continued to gaze aft, watching Harry and Bull Black as they hammered each other furiously.

The mate was taking heavy punishment, and Harry drove him to the very prow of the ship, where he whipped home a shattering punch that flung Bull to the deck. The mutinous scoundrel rose again, and hit out at the younger man savagely. But two out of every three of his blows went astray, for the Englishman was quick and lithe, and the speed of his footwork, together with the dexterity of his fists, more than counterbalanced the advantage of Bull's gross bulk.

He gradually broke the mate's attack and carried the fight to him, raining punches from every angle. Bull began to show a decidedly lop-sided list under

the effects of the battering, and he was in a sorry plight when Harry danced into him with the intention of putting him down for the count.

It was then that an accident occurred which changed the course of events. For, in stepping close to Bull, Harry tripped in a coil of rope and fell his length.

By the time he had disentangled himself and climbed to his feet Bull Black had recovered to some extent, and before Harry could put himself on the defensive the mate scored with a right to the chin.

Harry staggered, and his assailant followed up his success with another blow. The Englishman swayed on his heels, and as he was tottering Bull summoned all his remaining strength and sent his fist crashing into his unprotected jaw.

Harry pitched backward with arms wide-spread, tumbled over the side of the ship and plunged headlong into the sea. He struck the water with a splash and disappeared below the surface.

Bonnie gave vent to a sharp cry and ran to the stern, followed by her uncle and Ben Arnold. At the same time the sailors stopped fighting and crowded to the side.

Harry Drake's head rose into view. The mate's last blow had dazed him, and he could do little more than make a feeble attempt to tread water. It was clear that he would not be able to keep himself afloat for long.

"He's drowning!" Bonnie gasped. "Can't any of you do something? Can't any one give a—"

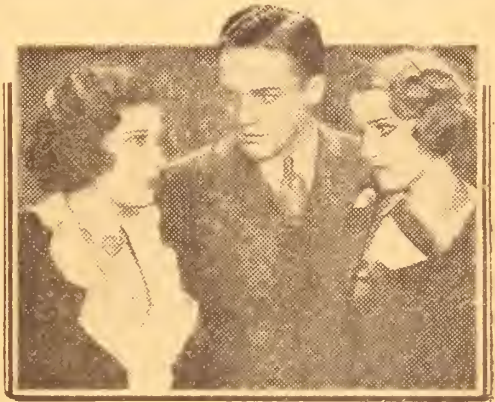
And then she stopped. Some distance astern a dark object had broken the surface. It was a sinister fin, and a stab of horror turned Bonnie sick and faint. Then she saw another and another cleave the water, and caught a glimpse of an evil head and a slit of a mouth with teeth like a saw.

"Sharks!" she screamed. "The sea's full of them!"

The hungry killers of the deep closed swiftly in, silent, ghostly shapes gliding under the surface to challenge one another for their human prey.

(Don't miss the second episode of this grand new serial next week. By permission of the Universal Films, Ltd., starring Kenneth Harlan and Lucille Browne.)

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November 25th, 1931.

"THE LADY FROM NOWHERE."
(Continued from page 26.)

Steeling himself against the awful weakness which gripped his senses, he raised his weapon and pulled the trigger. The kick of the shot sent him tottering backwards.

He fired again, hardly seeing what he was aiming at, and heard a painful coughing from somewhere in front. Then the world seemed to slip away, and he felt himself falling—falling—

Consciousness returned to him within a very few minutes, and he became aware that something warm was upon his lips. He opened his eyes, to find himself looking into the face of Marion.

"Barstow—" he muttered weakly. "He's dead," she replied. "But you—*are you badly hurt?*"

"Oh, I'm all right!" he replied contentedly, and closed his eyes in the peaceful knowledge that Marion's arms were round him, and that his head was against her shoulder. "I'll say I am!"

He was taken to hospital, and it was a month before he was able to visit headquarters again. When he did, his chief welcomed him warmly.

"We cleaned up the whole gang," the chief said. "Your capture of Barstow brought to light the names and addresses of all the distributing centres, and every crook concerned with it is now behind iron bars. Good man!"

Conroy replied with his celebrated grin.

"Then you won't mind if I have a month's leave, will you, chief?" he said.

"Leave? What for?"

"You once told me it was a failing of mine that I hated believing anything had of a pretty woman," he explained. "Well, that failing has got the better of me this time. I'm going to be married."

"Great Scott!" the chief muttered. "Poor devil! Take your month!"

And Conroy took it!

(By permission of Butcher's Film Service, Ltd., starring John Holland and Alice Day.)



(Continued from page 2.)

Baxter, William Powell, Douglas Fairbanks, jun., and Winnie Lightner have all been smartened up physically by this former light-weight.

He also trained Joe E. Brown, but not very much, because the wide-mouthed comedian is not very fond of exercise in any shape, declaring that he gets quite enough of it while working in pictures!

"A lot of my work has been in pictures with athlete sequences, such as fights, football, wrestling, and polo pictures," Slott said recently, "but most of it has been done privately."

"I am devoting three days a week to Mr. Barthelmess now," he continued. "During the summer when the stars get out on the beach and take a good sun-tan they look marvellous, but they may just as easily be as soft as in the winter months."

"That is where I come in. I start by running them a few hundred yards, after which they are usually anxious to quit. We gradually increase the exercise."

"The most difficult training grind I have paced was with Barthelmess. We used to walk and run five miles, mostly up-hill, from Barthelmess' home in Beverley Hills to John Gilbert's place. This is a grind for anyone. We haven't got to that point yet. It takes time, of course, but"—and here he smiled grimly with a glance at Barthelmess, who stood near-by—"we're going to!"

Handcuffed Stars.

Gene Gerrard and Jessio Matthews, the leading stars in the B.I.P. picture, "Out of the Blue," are not likely again to experiment with handcuffs. The story requires that Gene Gerrard be arrested and handcuffed at Biarritz.

After work for the day was over he was explaining the mechanism of the handcuffs to Jessie Matthews. To demonstrate their use, he put one of the cuffs on her wrist, when the key suddenly snapped off in the lock, leaving

them handcuffed together. At first the two artistes treated the matter as a joke. But when it was found that the last of the workmen had gone from the studio and no suitable tools could be found, then the situation began to look serious. Eventually the services of the village policeman had to be obtained, and he was able, after some delay, to free the handcuffed artistes.

Answers to Questions.

Yes, Buck Jones is still acting for the screen, Alice (London, E.). Among his films are "The Lone Rider," "Men Without Law," "The Fighting Sap," "The Avenger," "Desert Vengeance," and "The Texas Ranger." You can write to him care of Columbia Studios, 1438, Gower Street, Hollywood, California, U.S.A. Give him your address in full, including the name of your country, to ensure a reply.

I have been unable to trace the Hoot Gibson picture you mention, Vincent (Melbourne), and am wondering if you mean "Prairie Trails," starring Tom Mix. If so, the cast is as follows: Tom Mix (Tom Benton), Charles K. French (Stephen McWhirter), Kathleen O'Connor (Janet McWhirter), Robert Walker (Winthrop Adams Endicott), Gloria Hope (Alice Endicott), Sid Jordan (Jack Purdy), Harry Dunkison (Ike Stork).

Here are the casts you want, D. J. M. (Graig): "The Sky Hawk"; Helen Chandler (Joan Allan), John Garrick (Jack Bardell), Gilbert Emery (Major Nelson), Lennox Pawle (Lord Bardell), Lumsden Hare (Judge Allan), Joyce Compton (Peggy Phillips), Billy Bvan (Tom Berry), Daphne Pollard (Minnie), Percy Challenger (Butler). "Bigger Than Barnums": Viola Dana (Juanita Calles), Ralph Lewis (Blandin—Old Peter), George O'Hara (Robert Blandin), Ralph Ince (Jack Ravelle).

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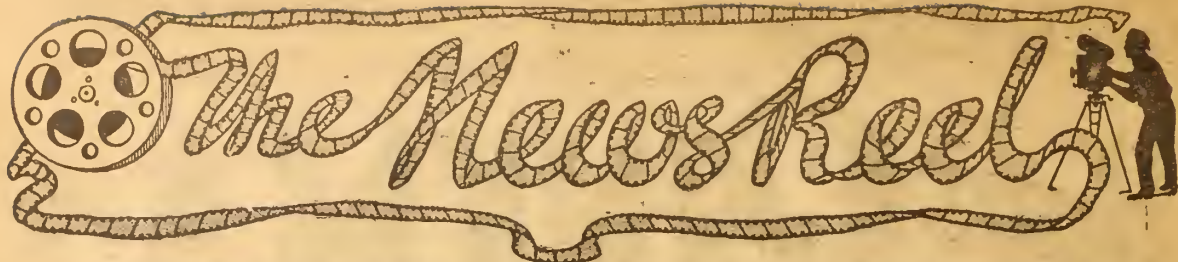
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drama of a
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SECRET SIX



The News Reel

All letters to the Editor should be addressed c/o BOY'S CINEMA, Room 163, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

"The Secret Six."

Tony Scorpio, Wallace Beery; Stanley Newton, Lewis Stone; Hank Tarry, John Mack Brown; Anne Barford, Jean Harlow; Peaches, Marjorie Rambeau; Nick Mizoski, Paul Hurst; Carl Pasher, Clark Gable; Johnny Franks, Ralph Bellamy; Colimo, John Miljan; "Dummy" Metz, Murray Kinnell; Delano, Fletcher Norton.

"Wild Horse."

Jim Wright, Hoot Gibson; Alice Hall, Alberta Vaughn; Stepin, Stepin Fetchit; Hank Howard, Neal Hart; Gil Davis, Edmund Cobb; Skeeter Burke, Skeeter Bill Robbins; Colonel Ben Hall, George Bunny; Sheriff, Edward Peil; Deputy, Joe Rickson; "The Devil," Mutt, Hoot Gibson's trained palomino.

A Call for Dogs.

Numerous small boys in Hollywood recently imagined that their dogs might be able to earn them a few dollars. The reason was that Paramount, when making "Huckleberry Finn," required some canines for the picture. Scouts were sent out from the studio to search for the required type of dogs, but they did not have to look long.

The news soon spread, and dogs by the hundreds were being hurried to the casting office by their owners. Men and women, too, took along their pets. There were mongrels and pure-breds of all kinds and sizes that yelped and barked as though overjoyed at the thought of their sudden importance. But, alas! many of them never got in front of the camera.

What's a "Grip"?

Your answer to the above question will doubtless be at once—a suitcase. But a "grip" in studio parlance does not mean that at all. For in filmland a "grip" is a particular technician whose work behind the scenes is unknown to the average picture-goer.

Someone asked a "grip" at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios what his work was, and received the facetious reply: "A 'grip' is the fellow who does the work which nobody else wants to do." From which it may be gathered that the "grip" is the studio handyman; a jack-of-all-trades. He is not a carpenter, nor a plumber, nor an electrician, nor a camera-man—but he lends to all these a hand when called upon to do so. You may be sure, therefore, that he has a busy time!

Yet "grips," because they are emergency men, help to save the film companies thousands of dollars when "last minute" things have to be done. And their jobs are often as thrilling as they are varied. To-day, a "grip" may lie with his head two inches from a whirling propeller so that Wallace Beery, in the cockpit above, may have light reflected into his face for a scene in the M.G.M. picture, "Hell Divers." December 5th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND NUMBER.



"THE MAN AT 6."

In a lonely country house a strange drama is enacted. A Scotland Yard detective is sent to probe the mystery. What happened to the jewelled chessmen and who was the Man at 6? A gripping mystery thriller, starring Gerald Rawlinson and Anne Grey.

"LARCENY LANE."

The story of a bell-boy who matched his wits against Society to make easy money—but redeemed himself in the end for the sake of the girl he loved. Starring James Cagney and Joan Blondell.

"THE BADGE."

An innocent girl accused of murder, and how the electric chair was cheated of a victim. A gripping detective drama.

Also

The third episode of our thrilling new serial-drama of treasure guarded by a tribe of fierce cannibals:

"DANGER ISLAND."

Tell all your friends about this amazing new story, starring Kenneth Harlan and Lucille Browne.

Reflection of natural sunlight by means of tin-foil, gold-foil, or tin and mirror "reflectors" is one of the most important duties of a "grip."

To-morrow, the "grip" may be called

upon to hold Bert Lahr by the heels—hidden by the window sill—as the comedian leans out of a four-storey window for a scene in "Flying High." Again, the "grip" may have to lie along the running-board of a motor-car and hold on the legs of the camera to steady it while the car is speeding along at over forty miles an hour. But the "grip" has also simple jobs to do. He may have to nail strips on the floor to serve as guides for the artistes when close-ups are required; repair upholstery, mend a leakage in a pipe, and do anything else in the day's work as required.

One for Joe.

Joe E. Brown is an enthusiastic baseball player and a good one, too. Recently he made up one of a team composed of theatrical folk.

They were playing in a small town, and during the progress of a close game, one of the spectators yelled something unpleasant to Joe when his playing did not quite please the individual. He also called Joe a "homely mug."

Joe stopped right in the game, walked over to the crowd and asked: "Who said that?" The critic was pointed out by others standing near.

"Say, you there," called Joe, "which of the Dolly Sisters are you? You don't look so good yourself!" The crowd laughed with delight at this sally and the critic was silenced.

Jackie Coogan's Joke.

Jackie Coogan is not only a good actor, but a wit. He is the only one who has so far caught Irwin S. Cobb, the humorist, napping with a joke.

"Betcha," said Jackie, "I can make you guess a riddle wrong."

"Yeah?" Proceeded, young man," replied Cobb dryly.

"How do you get the water out of a barrel when it is sealed up tight?" asked Jackie.

The humorist wrinkled his forehead and thought for several minutes.

"I give it up," he said at last.

"Why, shoot it full of holes," yelled The Kid gleefully.

Answers to Questions.

You were right in telling your friend that it was the late Fred Thomson who starred in "Kit Carson." E. C. (Stoke-on-Trent). The film was released in July, 1929. Fred Thomson died after an operation for gall-stones on December 25th, 1928. He was 6 ft. in height with brown hair and blue-grey eyes and left two boys, one of them being an adopted son.

Leslie Henson began his film career in 1919, "Curious" (Birchington). Among his pictures are "A Warm Corner" and "Sport of Kings." Lupino Lane made his film debut in 1915, in a British comedy entitled "Nipper's Bank Holiday."

(Continued on page 27.)

Tony Scorpio started as a stockyard slaughterer, then won his way, by a sinister trail of gun-play, till he had a town at his mercy. Then came the Secret Six, grimly resolved to crush him. Starring Wallace Beery, Lewis Stone and Marjorie Rambeau.



Money Talks.

THE dockside of the town of Centro, not so many miles distant from the city of Chicago, was, day in, day out, a regular hive of industry. Always some big cargo vessel was putting in at the quay to be speedily disgorged of the live stock it carried—sheep, oxen, pigs, all were driven to the near-by stockyards there to be humanely killed for the consumption of the American public.

A messy and tiring business the continual killing of so much cattle, and only the very strongest men were employed in the slaughterhouses that backed on to the quay.

A great relief to them all when the siren sounded for the toil of the day to cease. Hands were hastily rinsed beneath watertaps that were set here and there in the stout wooden walls of the slaughterhouses, dried with equal haste upon towels that were dirty and old, then, discarding smocks and aprons, the men donned their hats and coats and made for home.

All save one, a giant of a fellow with massive shoulders that told of enormous strength. Tony Scorpio was an Italian—it was easy to tell that from one glimpse at his dark, swarthy face, and the unruly black hair that showed beneath the soft felt hat that he wore on the back of his head.

Jacket undone, his big hands thrust deep in his trousers pockets, he stouched from the stockyards, crossed the road beyond the gates and turned into an eating-house, from which exuded the strong smell of grilling chops and steaks.

Very few customers were in the place as he entered, but he ignored many of the vacant tables that were divided from each other by stout wooden partitions and passed down the length of the slop-

"Hallo, pardner, fancy seeing you here."

Scorpio pulled up at the sound of that familiar voice and turned his head. Seated at the table by which he had halted, a grilled steak before him, was a young fellow, neatly enough dressed, but with a thin, cruel mouth, dark, flashing eyes which, together with a long scar upon his chin, marred an otherwise not bad-looking face.

"Howdy, Franks?" Scorpio waved his hand by way of greeting. "Thought I'd try this place for a spot of grub. You see, I ain't got no wife, nor no family, so have to fend for myself. You recommend it here?"

"Yeah. But why not sit down here with us. My pal won't mind in the least." Johnny Franks winked knowingly at the smug-faced man who was seated on his left. "Okay with you, Nick?"

"Oh, sure," came the answer.

"Well, that's settled." Johnny Franks half rose in his chair, reached across the table, caught at Scorpio's arm and dragged him down into the vacant chair on his right hand. "Well, Tony, meet my pard, Nick Mizoski—he's in the same game as me. Nick, meet Tony Scorpio, killer in the slaughterhouses across the way. A real tough guy, and he sure does like his liquor."

Scorpio grinned at the young racketeer, who did a fair amount of business among the workers in the stockyards, then shook hands with Nick Mizoski, who was vaguely wondering why on earth Franks had invited this giant to sit at their table. But Franks had a particular reason of his own though, just then, he had no opportunity of pursuing it as a young woman with fair, curly hair glided up to the table and confronted Tony Scorpio.

"Well, big boy," she said in a voice

that was somewhat coarse, "and what can I get you?"

"Spaghetti and a bottle of buttermilk," Scorpio responded, gazing admiringly into her rather pretty face and experiencing a sudden fluttering of the heart.

Franks seized the opportunity to whisper in Nick Mizoski's ear.

"Play up to me. I want to get this guy in on our racket. A man of his strength will be darned useful to us."

"Spaghetti and buttermilk?" reiterated the fair-haired girl, rising her eyebrows in sheer amazement. "Say, that's a kid's diet!"

"Just the same, that's what I'm having, sister," grinned Scorpio. "So just you trot along and get it, see?"

Pearl Peach, popular with all the habitués of the eating-house, shrugged her shapely shoulders, then drifted away, but not before she had shot an affectionate glance at Johnny Franks.

"A peach of a girl—that," remarked Scorpio, looking wistfully after her retreating form.

"You've sure said it, boy." Despite the enthusiastic tone of his voice, Johnny Franks scowled at the big slaughterhouse worker. "Her moniker happens to be Peaches—at least, that's what we call her in this here place. Her real name is Pearl Peach and she is my girl!"

Scorpio swung round on him, impressed by the stress that he laid on his last words.

"My, you're a darned lucky fellow to have such a girl." Scorpio's smile was friendly, yet like Franks there was jealousy in his eyes. "I must congratulate you, pardner. A real peach of a girl."

Franks grunted and viciously attacked his steak. It was clear to him that Peaches had won a place in the heart
December 5th, 1931.

of the giant, and the thought was as wormwood to his mean, wicked soul. But there was no time for heated words or ruffled tempers as Franks realised when he suddenly caught Nick Mizoski's warning glance.

"Say, Scorio, they don't pay you overwell in the stockyards, do they?" Franks said again as he again laid down his knife and fork.

"You've certainly said it." The giant shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly. "A measly twenty bucks a week."

"The skinfints!" The racketeer looked incredulous, though in reality he had known all along the paltry wage that Scorio was earning in the slaughterhouses. He had made it his business to find this out only the day before. "Why, it's a wonder you can live. Twenty dollars! Oh, heck!"

"But it's at least a job," Scorio pointed out with a rueful grin.

"Yeah." Johnny Franks nodded his agreement, then turned his gaze to his confederate. "A deserving case, eh, Nick? Shall I offer him a billet?"

"Why not?" Mizoski grinned at the way Franks was casting his bait—making absolutely sure that it was safe to lay his cards before this man. "He might jump at the chance of handling easy money for very little graft."

"What's that?" Scorio turned eagerly to Franks. "Easy money? Why, you just lead me to it, boy."

A satisfied smile at once broke on Johnny Franks' face, but at that moment Peaches reappeared with a plate of spaghetti and a bottle of buttermilk which she proceeded to place before Scorio.

"Say, big boy, they tell me you work in the stockyards." Hands on hips, the girl stood back and surveyed Scorio with a scornful smile. "You a killer—a man who's supposed to be as tough as they make 'em—drinking buttermilk. Ha, ha! That's certainly rich!"

Johnny Franks and Mizoski grinned at the sheepish look that appeared on Scorio's face. Evidently he was struggling to find words with which to counter the jeering thrust. But it was in vain. All he could do was to push his hat further back on his head and to continue to look foolishly at the girl.

"Now, now, Peaches, you can the wise cracks." Johnny Franks jerked his head in the direction of the back of the shop—a hint to her to depart. "You're interrupting a business discussion."

The girl drifted away, once more followed by Scorio's admiring gaze, but no sooner had she disappeared than he again swung round on Johnny Franks.

"About that job of work," he remarked, the eagerness back in his tone. "What is it?"

"A matter of a hundred bucks a week—perhaps more." The young racketeer pushed aside his empty plate and leaned his arms on the table. "You know my racket, of course. Booze, and believe me, though there's risks attached to it, it's a gamo that carries big money."

"Then I'm your man." There was an avaricious gleam in Scorio's eyes now. Well he knew what lay behind Franks' words, but the knowledge that he had the chance of making as much as a hundred dollars a week swept him completely off his feet. "My fairy godmother, that's what you are, Johnny Franks. You want me to come in with you—to help distribute your booze. A job after my own heart. When you want me to start?"

"Right now." Franks experienced a feeling of elation that he had succeeded in recruiting the services of this man. Scorio was just the type required by the gang of which he was a member.

December 5th, 1931.

A great acquisition, for he was obviously a fellow of enormous strength and fearless into the bargain. "You see, Scorio, we're out to extend our activities, and that means more men wanted in the business. We've got quite a nice little territory around this quarter, but we aim to spread out—to increase the boundary. It means a few scraps, of course, for we'll be muscling in on the preserves of others. But we're going to do it—more money to the mill, you know. Gee, but we're going to be mighty rich before long. You, I, Nick and the boss."

"The boss?" reiterated Scorio in surprise.

"Sure." Johnny Franks got to his feet as he saw that Scorio had finished his spaghetti, had drained the bottle that had contained the buttermilk. "But just you come along of Nick and me. We'll introduce you to the chief, then you can start right in on our racket to-night."

He took Scorio's arm as the giant got ponderously to his feet and, followed by Mizoski, led him to a door at the back of the shop that opened on to a flight of stairs that ran up to a room above the eating-house, a room from which the racketeers directed their illegal business operations.

The door opened and the door closed, and together the three men climbed the stairs to that room of vice.

The Raid.

THAT same night Scorio accompanied Johnny Franks to a warehouse some half-mile from the eating-house, in the spacious cellar of which was the bootleggers' own distillery. The place was like a miniature brewery, and Scorio marvelled as he saw the illicit liquor being distilled—saw the barrels of alcohol that stood in one corner ready for transportation to various restaurants and speakeasies that would pay exorbitant prices for the stuff.

"And they say the States have gone dry," Scorio grinned as his eyes swept the place. "Gee, but it sure makes a man thirsty to see all this drink."

"Shut your infernal trap and remember this—there's no time for wisecracks in this racket!"

Franks shot Scorio a baleful glance. Though he had been anxious to enlist the giant's aid in his nefarious business, bad feeling towards Scorio rankled in his heart. He could not forget the way the giant had looked at Peaches in the eating-house, how he had winked at the girl when the two had left for the distillery.

"No offence meant."

But there was no apologetic note in Scorio's voice, and the grin was still on his face. He had weighed Franks up in the short time he had been in his company, knew that he was a ruthless and callous brute, and above all a dangerous enemy, but the knowledge disturbed him not a bit. Scorio knew his own physical power—knew, too, that he was quite capable of taking care of himself in the event of any trouble with this man who so obviously resented him even looking at his girl.

Why shouldn't he look at Peaches if he wished? As the question formed itself in Scorio's shallow mind an evil glitter came into his cunning brown eyes. To blazes with Franks. If he caused any trouble and it came to a show-down he'd give him the "works"—perhaps with Franks out of the way he could step into his shoes, become enormously rich and powerful. No doubt the booze racket was very

profitable to a man who could hold up his end.

"Say, Lewis"—Franks had confronted one of the workers in the underground distillery, an evil-looking man who wore a blue shirt that was open at the neck, and a cap that was set at an angle on his head. In the racketeer's eyes blazed fierce anger, whilst his jaw was thrust forward menacingly—"what's the meaning of this?" He waved a hand towards the barrels in the corner. "Your output is under schedule. Your orders were to turn out forty barrels to-day, and you're eleven short. How'd you explain it, huh?"

"Forty's rather heavy going, Franks," came the answer. "We've been at it hard all day. But there's still time to—"

"Confound you with your darned excuses!" Franks shook his fist under the man's jaw. "Slacking, that's what you've been doing. Why, I've a darned good mind to smash you to pulp!"

With a sudden sweep of his arm he sent the man staggering from his path, then strode across the cellar, forgetful of Scorio who followed him.

"Well, Metz, you got Jeff Larkins' order through?" Franks inquired of a man with a mop of untidy hair, and who wore thick-pebbled spectacles.

The fellow nodded, and, lifting a hand, extended four fingers.

"What the heck's wrong with him?" Scorio inquired over Franks' shoulder. "Why the secret signs?"

"He's a dummy—one of our most useful men," Franks explained ungraciously. "He sees nothing, knows nothing, says nothing. See?"

Scorio nodded, and Franks swung round and faced him.

"You can get busy on your first assignment to-night, Scorio. Jeff Larkins, boss of the Blue Moon speakeasy on Maine Street, wants four barrels of hooch. Lewis over there will drive you in the lorry. And I warn you to keep your eyes open and your gun in your hand in case of an ambush. Some folks are getting mighty sore because we've been encroaching on their territory. Colimo, for instance—a nasty little skunk who'd— By gar, there's the alarm!"

Franks glanced furtively towards the door by which he and Scorio had entered the cellar as the clangorous note of a bell set high in the wall broke sharply in on his words. Heavy footsteps could be heard hastily descending the stairs from the warehouse above, and, his hand flashing to his jacket pocket where his gun was concealed, Franks turned fiercely blazing eyes on Scorio, Metz, and Lewis, and the two other brutal-faced ruffians who gathered swiftly round him.

"It's the cops or Colimo's gang, at the least," he hissed. "Better beat it by the back way—quick. We're not strong enough to offer resistance."

But even as he raced towards a door on the far side of the underground apartments, the others close at his heels, there burst into the cellar some dozen grim-faced police officers, revolvers clasped tightly in their hands.

A booming voice called on the gangsters to stop and surrender, but they paid no heed. They were at that other door now, and as they crowded through it Johnny Franks half turned round, swung up his gun, and pulled the trigger.

A shattering report that was instantly followed by a choking gasp, and one of the police officers pitched headlong to the ground. Then came a regular

fusillade of shots as his colleagues loosed their weapons at the fugitives.

But the gangsters were now well out of range, tearing up a flight of stone stairs, and the bullets thudded harmlessly into the walls by the door.

"After the swines—some of you!" roared the burly officer who was at the head of the raiding-party. "The rest of you smash up this infernal nest of vice."

The terse command was obeyed with alacrity. Up the stairs after the fleeing gangsters ran seven of the officers, faces grim-set, guns held in readiness in their hands, while the others at once began to wreck everything in the cellar. The bootleggers' still was smashed to atoms with an axe that one of the officers found in a corner, barrels of alcohol were treated similarly, and the taps of two large tanks were turned on and the whisky they contained allowed to flow out upon the cellar floor.

But though the officers of the law exacted a heavy toll upon the property of Johnny Franks and his gang, the racketeer and his followers escaped their pursuers, scuttling from the place by the back way and disappearing into the shadows of the night.

"Put on the Spot."

THE room above the eating-house that faced the stockyards where Scorpio had toiled day in, day out before he had embarked on a life of crime. Seated at the long oak table four men—Johnny Franks, Mizoski, Scorpio himself, and an elderly grey-haired man with a dissipated face, compelling brown eyes and a determined chin. Stanley Newton, a crook lawyer, and the brains behind the gang that Franks led.

Business was under discussion, and at the moment "Dummy" Metz, who stood beside Newton, was checking figures from the notebook he held in his hands, while Mizoski, in his shirtsleeves, was counting out a big pile of dollar bills.

"A hundred and sixty bucks from Lawson," Mizoski placed the notes on the table. "And forty-two from Peakes. That's the lot."

"Should have been more," Johnny Franks savagely flicked the ash from his cigarette. "We lost a whole heap over that raid on our still. Heavens, but Colimo'll suffer for that! Tip off the police 'cause we've broken into his territory. Heck, but he's sure got something coming to him for that!"

"But why in blazes all this waiting?" Scorpio, who had also discarded his jacket and had unfastened his waistcoat as well, pushed his bowler hat farther back on his head. "That was a week ago, and still we've done nothing. He'll be thinking we're scared of him."

"Then he'll soon be disillusioned," Franks shot Scorpio a sneering glance. "You were all for going

after him there and then, weren't you? Hadn't the brains to realise that he was probably expecting us, and had a nice little ambush set."

"Well, to my mind that shows you're darned well scared of him, Franks!" Scorpio shot at him.

"You think that, huh?" His eyes blazing venomously, Franks flashed his hand to his jacket pocket. "Why, you ugly gorilla, I'll—"

"Now, now, quit that, you two. I won't have any wrangling. You hear me?" Newton frowned at them; and the peculiar gleam in his eyes caused them to wilt. A second he gazed at them, then his eyes wandered to Nick Mizoski who had gathered up the pile of dollar bills. "Nick, share the stuff out, then we'll talk about that skunk Colimo. I think to-night is the night to deal with him."

Mizoski nodded, while the scowl on Scorpio's unprepossessing face vanished as if by magic, and his eyes took on a look of greed.

Slowly Mizoski counted out the dollar bills, setting them into four different piles, one for each of the four of them. Newton received two dollars to every one allotted the others, but presently Mizoski slipped an extra note on his and on Johnny Franks's piles.

"Say, what the heck's the game?" Scorpio's eyes had missed nothing. Angrily, he brought his big fist crashing down on the table. "Trying to cheat me, huh? Well, let me tell you I'm not the guy to stand for that kind of dope. Mizoski, another one on my pile. You hear me?"

Again Johnny Franks' hand sought his jacket pocket. For some days now he had repented having persuaded this giant to join up with them. He was too overbearing, too much given to voicing his own views when he should have quietly accepted the views of the others. This, coupled with the fact that Scorpio would persist in trying to thrust his affections on Peaches, had incurred the

young racketeer's wrath, so that Franks itched for the chance to sweep him from his path.

But again Newton interfered, and quickly poured oil on the troubled waters. Shrewd that he was the crook lawyer was well aware of Frank's feelings towards Scorpio, yet while he despised the arrogance of the giant, his blustering ways and harsh grating voice, Newton realised that here was a type admirably suited to the bootlegging game, a man it would be wise to keep in their midst. He had strength, pluck, and was obviously a born fighter.

"Now, now, Mizoski, that's not our code at all." Newton's brown eyes gazed reprovingly at Nick. "Scorpio is one of us, and as such he is entitled to an equal share in the profits. Now, just you put things square with him and no more nonsense."

Mizoski grunted and obeyed, while Franks gritted his teeth and decided to await a more favourable opportunity for the settling of his score with Scorpio.

"Now, about this dirty rat, Colimo," Newton stowed his pile of dollar bills into a wallet which he returned to his breast-pocket. "We're going after him to-night, as I said. A little surprise visit to his place in Nelson Street. He'll not expect you to imitate the spider and the fly business and coolly enter his parlour. It'll be dead easy, and there'll be very little risk. If he's got more than two or three of his boys with him I'll be surprised. Now I suggest that you three with Spike Mullins and Lew Valance will be sufficient to fix him. You agree?"

"Sure!" Scorpio grinned evilly, slid his hand into his hip-pocket and clutched the gun he parked there. "But why five to take care of that dirty pup? I could do it on my own!"

"The brave man speaks!" said Johnny Franks, with a curl of his lip.

"Yeah!" Scorpio thrust his jaw forward pugnaciously. "I ain't forgetting

"You a killer—a man who's supposed to be as tough as they make 'em—drinking buttermilk!" She surveyed Scorpio with a scornful smile. "Ha, ha! That's certainly rich!"



that it's you who's been all for putting off giving Colimo the works."

"That's enough of that, Scorpio!" Newton snapped at him. "I won't have this bickering among you boys. I'm the boss here, and you'll do as I tell you. The five of you are going—and the sooner you get along the better, see?"

He got to his feet, fixed the soft felt hat he wore more firmly on his head, then, picking up the walking-stick that rested against the chair he had occupied, he moved towards the door.

"I'll be back in an hour to hear what success you've had," he said over his shoulder, then strode from the room.

Blazing Guns.

FIVE men strolled casually into the Dojoun Café in Nelson Street, and it was noticeable that each of them had a hand hidden in a pocket of his clothes.

At sight of them a chill ran down the spine of Louis Falco, who managed the establishment, though outwardly he showed no fear whatever as he sidled over to them.

"Ah, it is Mister Franks!" Falco rubbed his hands together as he bowed. "You want to eat? This way, sir."

As he led them to a table, drew out chairs for them, he was aware that Johnny Franks cast a sly glance towards a curtained doorway near which stood a player-piano that provided music for the customers of the restaurant.

"Ah, Mister Franks, you'd like some music, eh?" he purred. "I'll set the piano going for you while you decide what you would like to eat."

He slid away, and Johnny Franks' eyes gleamed sinisterly between narrowed lids. Quickly he cast a glance round the café, saw that the place was deserted save for one solitary diner who was seated at a distant table, then switched his gaze quickly upon his companions.

"He's gone to tip off Colimo for a cert," he hissed between clenched teeth. "Best keep your eyes skinned."

Johnny Franks' surmise was correct. Already Louis Falco was in the adjoining room, clutching nervously at Colimo's sleeve as that notorious gang-leader sat talking with three of his ruffianly henchmen.

"What the blazes you want, Louis?" Colimo, dark and undoubtedly handsome, spoke without removing the cigarette from between his thin lips, and his sinister grey eyes blazed fiercely into the face of the interloper. "Haven't I told you times out of number not to interrupt when I'm in conference? Why, I've a darned good mind to—"

"But, boss, it's urgent!" Falco blurted out. "Johnny Franks and—"

"What's that?" Colimo was on his feet in a flash, gripping Falco fiercely by the lapels of his jacket. "Quick, spit it out, you darned fool!"

"I tell you Johnny Franks is out in the restaurant with four other of his dirty rats," Falco whimpered. "They're after you—they've got their hands ready on the guns in their pockets."

"Is that so?" Colimo whipped out his automatic and scowled ferociously. "Then this is where they get the works. A lot of smarties, huh? Well, they'll find they've run up against it this time, by heck they will!"

"But, boss," protested Delano, Colimo's chief lieutenant, "don't forget there are five of them."

"Yeah!" Colimo shot him a scornful glance. "Well, I don't care a hang if they're twenty-five strong. Those small fry have no brains. We're going to beat them by strategy, see?"

But Delano did not see, and neither

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did the other two gangsters who were with them.

"Louis, listen here!" Colimo again gripped the café manager's coat. "You'll go out and start up that old piano of yours. That'll be the signal for us to make a rush; and see to it that you switch out the lights directly you hear me cough. Got that? Right, then get busy."

As Falco went slowly and nervously towards the door a good-looking boy, who was scarcely out of his teens, rose from a chair on the far side of the room, dropping the book he had been reading upon a near-by table. Quickly he ran across to Colimo, and, his eyes gleaming with great excitement, he confronted the grim-faced gangster.

"Joe, let me in on this!" he pleaded eagerly. "So far since I've come in with you on the booze racket you've not let me do anything big. Now you can do with—"

"No, no, Jimmy!" Colimo patted the boy's shoulder affectionately. Ruthless and brutal as he undoubtedly was, there was a warm and tender spot in the gangster's heart for his kid brother. Many times since Jimmy had left school Colimo had wished that he had not allowed him to drift into the bootleg game; but on one thing he was resolved—he would never allow the boy to take risks. "This little affair's too darned risky, kid. There are men out there who'll shoot till they drop. No, we'll take care of them, Jimmy. You be a good boy and wait here till after the fireworks."

It was at that moment that the player-piano in the restaurant began to play a well-known and lively tune.

"Ready, boys?" His lips drawn in a grim, straight line, Colimo glanced at his henchmen, saw that their guns were ready in their hands and nodded his satisfaction. "Now listen carefully. Locate the table at which those stiffies are sitting as quickly as you can before the lights go out. Then duck down and shoot to kill!"

With that he moved cautiously towards the curtained doorway, the others hard at his heels, all unaware that Jimmy had whipped out a blue-black automatic and was moving after them on tiptoe.

The curtain reached a moment later, Colimo stealthily drew it back, revealing Johnny Franks and his colleagues seated at the table outside. But in the same instant that Colimo coughed, Franks saw him and whipped out his gun.

The crash of a shot, the dull thud of a bullet striking the woodwork of the doorway, and then the restaurant was plunged into utter darkness.

"Right, boys! Let the dirty scum have it!" Colimo hissed between clenched teeth, and dived for the shelter of a nearby table.

Hoarse shouts and vicious oaths synchronised with the terrified squeal of the restaurant's solitary diner as he leaped frantically to his feet and stumbled towards the street door. Then came a succession of nerve-shattering reports, followed by wicked stabs of flame as the gun duel burst in all its viciousness.

From somewhere near at hand Colimo heard a sudden choking sob, the thud of a body as it struck the floor. One of his men had been hit. Grinding his teeth savagely he fired at a moving shadow on the opposite side of the restaurant. But all his bullet did was to smash a water jug that stood upon a table.

"I believe we got him!" Johnny

Franks hissed the words in Scorpio's ear as the two crouched behind a thick mahogany pedestal. "Best make a break for it before they do us any damage."

"Heck, but why not out the darn lot of 'em while we're about it."

There was a brutal note in Scorpio's lowered voice, and in the darkness his eyes gleamed with an unholy light.

"You'll do as I say." Almost Franks was tempted to turn his gun on this man who had so incurred his wrath. But he mastered the impulse as a bullet whistled within an inch of his head and quickly loosed off his gun at a shadowy figure just discernible across the room. "Give the tip to the others. You hear me?"

The others were close at hand, taking shelter behind two tables set side by side. Quickly Scorpio approached them on hands and knees, and whispered in their ears.

Next second they were following him, crawling towards the door that led to the street, their guns held ready in case of emergency.

"Hey, switch on the lights, someone!"

Colimo suspected that the sudden lull in the battle meant that his rivals were making a break for it, but he was wary enough not to leave his shelter till he was sure. But, though he lifted his voice, no shot came, and so he took a chance and rose to his feet.

Then it was he heard a sound coming from the direction of the street door, discerned that the door stood wide open, and in the very same instant he saw a dim shape vanish quickly through the aperture.

"Falco, those lights!" he bellowed.

"Quick! They're making a dash for it! Those lights! You hear me!"

The lights came on, and on the instant three heads rose up from behind tables near the curtained doorway. Colimo's killers, and they quickly joined their leader.

"What's the next move, chief?" Delano rasped, his finger on the trigger of his gun. "Do we go after the rats?"

"No use. They'll be well away by now, skulking in the shadows. Better shut and lock the door in case those shots were heard. We don't want the cops to— Merciful heavens, Jimmy! Jimmy, those swines got him!" His eyes wide with horror, Colimo stood gazing dazedly at the outstretched figure that lay between two tables—at the white upturned face with a trickle of blood coming from the temple. Then a heart-rending sob bursting suddenly from his quivering lips, the gang leader stumbled forward, dropped to his knees, and gathered the limp body close. Clear that the boy was dead, and, as the grim truth beat into the gangster's burning brain, his face reddened with a terrible fury. "Franks, or one of his tykes, got him!" he raved, his voice trembling with the emotion that gripped him. "By hades, but whoever it was, he's going to pay! I'll have him—I'll drill him so full of holes he'll look like a colander. I swear I will!"

Several moments he remained where he was—a pathetic-looking figure as he mourned the loss of his kid brother, the only human being who had ever brought out a streak of goodness in his otherwise cruel and relentless frame. Then he staggered to his feet, lifted the inert body, and carried it into the adjoining room, where he placed it on a settee.

"And now," he rasped in a voice that was vibrant with passion as he straightened and confronted his grim-faced henchman, "we're going out to exact revenge! Come on!"

Treachery.

SOME half an hour later Johnny Franks was smoking a quiet cigarette in the gang's council chamber above the eating-house facing the docks when the door slammed open and a grim voice cried:

"Stick 'em up, you rat, or, by hades, I'll drill you clean between your eyes!"

With a startled exclamation, Franks swung round in his seat, raising his hands as he did so.

"Well, now, if it isn't Colimo!" Franks forced himself to smile, though his heart went sick within him as Colimo and his bodyguard advanced threateningly into the room, closing the door behind them. "This is—is a pleasure indeed. Anything I can do?"

"Yeah, plenty." Like some avenging angel, Colimo strode up to Franks and jabbed the muzzle of his gun into his ribs. "You answer me this. Did you kill my brother Jimmy, Franks?"

"Good heavens, no!" Franks' face drained of every vestige of colour. Alone in that room with these deadly rivals, he knew that his life was not worth a moment's purchase, especially as they were evidently out to avenge the death of one of their number. Desperately he sought a subterfuge. "No, indeed I didn't, Colimo. Why should I? I haven't got a thing on the kid. As a matter of fact, me and Jimmy were pals!"

"Really, you surprise me, Franks!" sneered Colimo with a curl of his lip. "Suppose you've just discovered he was your friend now he's been killed—killed by either you or one of your dirty ruffiaff during your little visit to us at the Dojoun. Well, let me tell you this. That kinda hunk cuts no ice. I'm here after the killer, and, if it wasn't you, you turn him over, or I'll plug you here and now."

A cunning gleam crept into Frank's dark eyes. Well he knew that it was a bullet from his own gun that had killed

this brother of Colimo's. Hadn't he aimed at that dim-seen figure that had instantly dropped to the floor when he fired? And now Colimo wanted retribution, and Franks saw a way to appease the man—saw a way that would sweep from his own path a man whom he considered a thorn in his side.

"Very well, Colimo, I'll tip him off to you," he said with the utmost nonchalance. "It was Scorpio. You know him, of course. Well, if you're quick, you'll find him down on Pier Fourteen. He's running some booze to a ship there."

"Is that the truth?" Colimo snapped at him.

"Why, sure."

"Right. But if I find it isn't, then, by hades, I'll be waiting for you some place with a machine-gun! See?" As Franks nodded, Colimo turned quickly to his henchmen. "Come along, boys. No time to waste now."

They were out of the room in a flash, and, with a grim smile playing about the corners of his cruel mouth, Franks settled himself comfortably in his chair again. The fact that he had put a man "on the spot," sent him to inevitable doom, worried him not at all—such a ruthless procedure was merely a very small thing in his dastardly life of crime.

It was some twenty minutes later, while Newton, who had returned to the council chamber a few minutes earlier, was listening to Franks' account of the raid on Colimo at the Dojoun, that the door to the room was suddenly and violently flung back on its hinges, causing the two men to jump up with a start.

From the doorway a pair of brown eyes fixed themselves on Johnny Franks with a fierce hatred blazing from their depths. The eyes of Scorpio, whose face showed white as death beneath the black of the bowler he wore at an angle on his head.

"Why, Scorpio, is there anything wrong?" Franks recovered quickly from the shock Scorpio's appearance had given him. He had believed the fellow to be already dead, swept from his path for ever. Somehow his ruthless plan had miscarried. And then he saw the blood that dyed the left sleeve of Scorpio's grey overcoat, knew, with a nameless dread tugging at his heart, that the avenging gunmen had somehow missed with their fell shots. "But, heavens, man, you're wounded! Who did it—how in blazes did it happen?"

"You ask me that, huh? You know nothing about it, huh?" Scorpio advanced menacingly into the room, shutting the door with a backward kick of his foot. "I suppose you'll tell me that Colimo didn't come in here a while ago?"

Franks experienced a tight feeling in his throat, as if vice-like hands were throttling him. So Scorpio was aware of Colimo's visit and evidently suspected that he had been the victim of treachery. How could he explain it all away? It was as he was puzzling his brain for some plausible answer that Newton stepped suddenly forward.

"What the blazes is all this, Scorpio?" The crook lawyer's voice was harsh and his eyes narrowed to mere slits. "What do you mean by Colimo coming here?"

"I mean what I say, and it don't need much brain to put two and two together." Scorpio shot Franks a murderous look. "We shot someone when we raided the Dojoun—thought it was Colimo himself but evidently it wasn't. So along comes Colimo after revenge—I saw him turn into this place with some of his men as I was crossing the stockyards. That's the best of having good eyesight—you can see a devil of a long way off. Then what happened? Colimo asked Franks to name the killer of—"



"A hundred and sixty bucks from Lawson." Mizoski placed the notes on the table. "And four twenty from Peakes. That's the lot."

"He didn't, you darned liar!" Franks shot at him vehemently. "If you want to know Colimo came along to suggest that we cut out this gang warfare and join up—"

"Oh, oh, a pretty tale!" Scorpio's hand slid surreptitiously into his overcoat pocket and the fingers curled around the butt of his gun. "He came to know who it was who fired the shot that killed that rat of his, and you said it was me?"

"I tell you I didn't!" Franks roared. "You've got it wrong. Colimo came here as I said to—"

"That's enough, Franks." Newton's eyes blazed fiercely at the two. "How many more times have I to tell you that I won't have you wrangling. I'm the boss of this outfit, bear that in mind, and if I have any more trouble I'll—"

"Yeah; well, you're going to have a whole heap of trouble right now. See?" Scorpio was not to be pacified by the other's stern words, by the fierce gleam in his eyes. He had been the victim of treachery—of that he felt certain—and revenge blazed in his outraged heart and would not be eradicated. His fingers gripping the butt of his gun even tighter he turned on Johnny Franks again. "You low-down, dirty skunk, put me on the spot, would you? Well, it's the last time you'll live to do—"

His words snapped off as he saw Franks reach suddenly for his jacket pocket. But Scorpio was too quick for him. Like lightning he jerked out his own gun and, with a demoniac grin curling his thick cruel lips, he pressed the trigger.

The shot crashed out, reverberating in the confines of the room like a clap of thunder—drowning the choking sob that escaped Franks' lips as he pitched to the floor, a bullet embedded in his foul heart.

"You blamed fool! What the heck did you want to do that for?" Newton turned on Scorpio like a raging tiger. "That shot will most likely have been heard. Then we'll have the cops up here! At the least, it'll mean we'll have to quit this place. Darned nuisance when it's so handy."

Selfish that he was Newton gave no thought to the shot man. To him Franks and the others were mere pawns in the bootlegging game, to be used to gain his own ends, to line his pockets with the money made in the trading of their illicit liquor. A death or two among his hirelings was all in the day's work.

"But it'll be easy to find another place, boss," Scorpio assured him with the utmost coolness. "I'm darned sorry for all this, of course, but Franks—"

"Shut up; here come the police or I'm a Dutchman." Heavy footsteps were heard ascending the stairs that led from below. With a quick movement Newton made a grab for the gun Scorpio still held in his hand, but the giant pulled it out of his reach. Newton glared at him fiercely. "Give me that gun, you darned fool! Quick now, or you'll find they'll convict you for shooting Johnny Franks. Condemning evidence, see what I mean?"

Scorpio did, and he promptly parted with the gun, wondering what Newton intended to do. Quickly the crook lawyer went to a picture on the wall, moved it to one side, revealing a small safe that was let into the wall. A bare second it took him to swing open the steel door, to thrust the gun inside and to relock the door. Then, setting the picture into position again, he came

back to Scorpio just as the handle of the door was turned.

"Keep your mouth shut and leave all to me!" he hissed warningly. "If they take you I'll get you free, never you fear."

And then the door crashed open and into the room strode the captain of police with two uniformed officers, while behind them swarmed a crowd that comprised two newspaper reporters and several customers from the eating-house.

"Ah, so you're the fellow who was concerned in the shooting outside." The police captain casually glanced at the still figure on the floor, then again confronted Scorpio, who, growing suddenly weak from the loss of blood, had slumped into a chair. "I was called out on that affair and got your description from an eye-witness, but didn't think I'd come up with you so easily. A lucky break, and it looks as if I can hold you for murder. Where's your gun?"

But Scorpio made no reply, and the captain quickly ran expert hands over him. Puzzled, he stepped back, then his eyes searched the floor, but there was no sign of the weapon he sought.

"What you done with it? Answer me, you rat?" But Scorpio's mouth remained closed, and the captain swung furiously round on Newton. "You know anything about this, Newton?"

"Sorry, chief, I don't." Newton shook his head, and glanced slyly at Fred Fuller, who managed the eating-house, and was standing in the doorway. "You see, I was downstairs talking to my client, Mr. Fuller, when I heard a shot and came up here to see what it was all about. This fellow"—he indicated Scorpio—"was staggering about the room, his arm limp at his side, while the other was just as you see him now, lying on the floor."

"Hum!" The police captain scratched the back of his head, eyeing Newton doubtfully, for though he had no definite proof he had long nursed the suspicion that the crook lawyer was behind the racketeers of which Franks had appeared the figurehead. "And you saw no gun in either man's hand?"

"No." Again Newton shook his head and twirled his walking-stick. But the police captain was not satisfied. Quickly he turned to Fred Fuller.

"Is what Mr. Newton said correct?" he demanded sharply. "I mean was he talking to you in the office when the shot was fired?"

"Sure!" came the quick answer. "Then why didn't you come up with him?" the captain shot at him.

But the little dark-haired man was equal to the occasion.

"Because I stopped to put my cash away in the safe," he replied. "Surely you don't think I was going to leave it lying about for any sneak thief to come in and whip it up, do you?"

A clever reply that stumped the police officer and caused Newton's eyes to gleam with satisfaction.

"It looks to me as if you've run into a cul-de-sac, old man." Newton grinned at the baffled officer. "Perhaps I can reason this affair out for you. The open window with that roof beyond on a level with it. Quite possible that enemies of these men got up there and shot them, eh?"

"Yes," the captain was forced to admit, though he was far from satisfied. Somehow his suspicions of Newton rankled—he had a vague feeling that the crook lawyer was trying to shield the wounded man in the chair. But

where was the fellow's gun? He could prove nothing in court without substantial evidence.

It was at that moment that there came an interruption that startled them all.

"Let me in! Oh, for heaven's sake, let me in!" cried a distracted feminine voice.

It was Peaches who had just arrived at the eating-house for duty only to learn of the shooting and the death of her lover. Wildly she pushed her way through the crowd that swarmed around the door, her face white as death, her eyes swimming with tears.

As she saw the inert figure of Johnny Franks a pitiful shriek escaped her, and she stumbled blindly forward.

"Steady, my girl!" The police captain pulled her back, looked at her sternly. Perhaps this girl, who was evidently attached to the dead man, could give him some useful information—information such as might clear up this mystery. "Now see here, sister, d'you know anything—"

"Scorpio, you wretch!" The girl's eyes flashed venomously as they suddenly perceived the limp figure in the chair. Well she knew that he and Franks had been at loggerheads—a state of affairs brought into being because both had been inordinately jealous of each other in regard to her affections. What was more likely than that Scorpio had killed Franks in some such fit of jealousy? "You did this, Scorpio, I know you did! Killed Johnny because you were insanely jealous that he was my man!"

Scorpio blinked at her dazedly, but no word escaped his lips. She continued to rave at him, denouncing him in shrill tones as the killer of Franks, while Newton fumed inwardly that she should give vent to such condemning words. What should he do? Best remain silent. If Scorpio was taken in charge he would be sure to find some way to obtain his freedom.

"That's quite enough of that, sister!" The police captain nodded his head to the two uniformed officers as he came to a quick decision. "Take him along, boys. I'm going to bring him up on this woman's evidence."

Strong hands gripped Scorpio, but not before the alert newspaper men had taken a flashlight photograph of him huddled in the chair. Then he was dragged to his feet and marched to the door. Peaches, in the grip of hysteria, continuing to rave at him in shrill tones.

"You brute! You murderer!" She shook her fists wildly above her head. "But I'll get you for this, Slaughter-house. I swear to heaven I will!"

Then the tears started afresh and she sank limply into a chair, covering her face with her hands. Another moment and the room was clear, save for herself, one of the uniformed officers, who had been left behind on guard—and that still figure stretched on the floor.

Prowling News Hounds.

SIX months had passed—six months of terror and bloodshed in the town of Centro. During that time not a day had gone by without some street or other echoing to the staccato reports of machine-gun fire, to the cries and the moans of men who had been hit by the leaden messengers of death.

For the whole of those six months, gang warfare had waged in all its brutality and ruthlessness. It was to be a fight to the death—so had vowed each of the two gangs who waged the struggle in an endeavour to obtain com-

plete monopoly of the liquor trade in the town.

Colimo and Scorpio, the leaders in this bitter feud. But it was a different Scorpio to the unkempt and shabby giant who, six months ago, had forsaken the stockyards for a life of crime and murder. From the moment he had been acquitted of the charge of killing Johnny Franks by a jury "framed" by Stanley Newton, he had stepped into the dead man's shoes. Strong and callous, fearless to a degree, he had gone into the booze business with all his heart and soul. Extra men were imported, ruthless killers from Chicago and New York, and slowly but surely encroaching on Colimo's preserves they had increased their nefarious trade a hundred fold.

Success breeds success. Scorpio had heard of the maxim at some time or other, and so he aimed big. He persuaded Newton to open a swell restaurant down town, explaining that it would serve them two purposes. A new source of income, and, in addition, a place from which they could direct the operations of the gang in some degree of comfort.

So Scorpio appeared thereafter immaculately dressed, hair that had once been for ever rumpled, now nicely parted and brushed. He was more arrogant than ever, too, completely wrapped up in his own importance.

But he had his full share of worries—worries other than those in evading the police and the bullets of the Colimo gang. Two newspaper men had taken to frequenting the restaurant—Hank Tarry, of the "Tribune," and Carl Pasher, of the "Examiner." Their papers, out to smash the gang element in Centro, had assigned them to the task of getting the low-down on Scorpio and his hirelings.

Very disturbing knowledge, for Scorpio was aware of the power of the Press—knew that it was to be feared more than the whole police force in the town. Once let the newspapers get condemning evidence, then it would be in cold print for all to see. And the police would

act on such evidence—accept it as infallible.

The situation called for the utmost caution. The restaurant was a public place, and it was therefore impossible to bar admittance to the two newshounds. Other measures must be adopted, and for days Scorpio cudgelled his brain on the matter—and at last saw the only way out.

"Say, Newton!" Scorpio caught at the crook lawyer's arm as he came in by way of the private entrance to the restaurant. Quite oblivious that Newton frowned at him with disfavour, resenting the familiar use of his name, the giant pointed across the restaurant to a counter where a well-dressed, dark-haired young man was in friendly conversation with Anne Barford, the pretty flaxen-haired cashier. "That guy and his pal are beginning to get on my nerves. Do you realise they can do us no end of damage if we're not—"

"And you stopped me to tell me that." Newton's lips curled in a sneer. "Have them 'bumped off'—it's the safest way. You can rely upon me to get you off if they happen to run you in for it."

"Yeah, but would you be able to fix every newspaper in the town?" Scorpio followed Newton as he made his way up a flight of stairs that led to the room that served as the gang's council chamber. Together they passed into the apartment. "No, that's too darned dangerous when there are other means. Surely those boys could be bought?"

"The mighty killer scared, huh?" There was scorn in the crook lawyer's eyes, in every inflection of his voice. "Want to buy them off. Well, try it, then come and admit that killing's the only way."

"Very helpful, aren't you?" growled Scorpio, an ugly gleam in his eyes. "But I'm trying it, nevertheless."

He strode from the room, Newton's cynical laugh dinning in his ears, went down the stairs and wended his way across the restaurant.

"Hallo, Anne! Hallo, Carl!" His tone was friendly, the smile on his face disarming as he took hold of the young reporter's arm. "Carl, I'd like a word with you. Do you mind stepping this way?"

"Sure."
Vaguely wondering what Scorpio could want, Carl Pasher gave the pretty cashier a cheery nod and allowed himself to be led into a private room. Just a bare chance that he might glean valuable information if he played his cards well.

"Say, Carl, you strike me as being a decent young kid." Scorpio grinned and squeezed Carl's arms. "Just the boy for Anne. No, no, don't deny it. Ever since you've been coming here I've seen the way the wind's blowing. A fine match you two'll make. But, of course, you've not sufficient money to allow you to fix the date. Well, that's nothing to worry about when a friend's going to give you a little wedding present in advance."

He whipped from his breast-pocket a platinum case. A touch of a spring and it flew open to reveal a wad of thousand dollar bills.

"Well, what do you say?" coaxed Scorpio, watching him from between narrowed lids.

Carl's eyes gleamed—but the light in them was not the light of greed. This bribe—it told him one thing—that this gang of racketeers that was becoming more of a menace to the town every day was scared of the Press. And the thought brought to him a feeling of great elation—added to his determination to do all he could to crush them.

His presence here was upsetting their plans, hindering their business deals, making them tread warily for fear he



Scorpio waited till Metz had placed the gun in his breast pocket, then he jerked his thumb imperatively towards the door. "That's better. Now get, and make no mistakes, or there'll be the devil to pay!"

should learn something that would condemn them for all time.

"Thanks all the same, Mr. Scorpio, but I couldn't take it." With a smile on his good-looking features, Carl shook his head. "As a matter of fact, you've got it all wrong. At least, I believe you have, for I suspect that it is Hank Tarry that Anne's got a crush on."

Scorpio bit his lip with chagrin as he realised that his idea of bribery was not going to prove so easy as he had thought. That was the worst of having to deal with two inquisitive news-getters at the same time. But he had to fix them both somehow, so, with a smile on his sinister features, he held out the platinum case invitingly to Carl.

"Well, just the same, take it," he urged. "A little present from a well-wisher, see what I mean?"

Carl did—and he felt like laughing at the impudence of it. But he suppressed the feeling and slowly shook his head.

"No, thanks. I'd rather not, if you don't mind," he said, and, turning sharply on his heel, he strode from the room.

"Curse the little runt!" Scorpio's eyes gleamed savagely beneath lowered brows, his hand instinctively reaching for the gun at his hip. "It looks as if Newton's darned well right. Shooting seems the only way to get rid of 'em."

Returning the platinum case to his breast-pocket he passed from the room. A glance round the restaurant showed him that Carl was nowhere to be seen. Was the boy prowling around somewhere, striving to obtain information of an incriminating nature? Probably he was questioning some member of the staff. At the thought Scorpio became very uneasy. Pearl Peach, much against his wish, had been given the position of hostess in the place. Newton had insisted, telling Scorpio that the only way to make certain she didn't turn completely against the gang was to treat her with friendly respect and consideration. But Scorpio could not feel sure of her; he remembered that wild threat she had flung at him the night he had killed Johnny Franks all too vividly.

"George." Scorpio caught the arm of a passing waiter and spoke in a whisper. "Know where Carl Pasher's gone?" The waiter jerked a thumb towards the door that led to the street. "And the other—Hank Tarry?" Scorpio asked him.

"In the Blue Room with Anne," George informed him with a grin. "Making love, I think."

Scorpio nodded and swung away. Straight to the Blue Room he went, flung open the door and strode inside. Just in time to see Hank and Anne break guiltily from each other's arms.

"All right—don't be scared, kids," Scorpio heaved at them. "A little romance, huh? Well, that's splendid. And I'm the first to know about it, huh? No, no, don't interrupt, Hank." He took from his pocket the same platinum-case with which he had tried to bribe Carl, and held it out to Hank. A touch of the spring and the lid flew back, revealing the notes inside. "A little wedding present in advance, Hank. It might come in mighty handy to help you set up the home."

Hank and Anne were both taken aback at this extraordinary show of generosity, and for the moment they were at a loss for words. Then it suddenly dawned upon the young newsgetter what was the real reason behind the proffered gift, and his eyes gleamed angrily. But before he could find his voice Anne spoke.

December 5th, 1931.

"Sorry, Mr. Scorpio, but we couldn't take it," she said with a bewitching smile. "You see, Hank loves me and so does Carl, and I just can't make up my mind which I shall have."

"Yes, that's just how it stands." Hank was glad of the chance to let it go at that, for he realised now that the words he would have uttered might have had disastrous consequences, and trouble then was the last thing he wanted to happen. He must remain discreet if he hoped to obtain the information he sought.

"But thanks all the same, Mr. Scorpio," he went on. "The thought was very nice of you."

He caught at Anne's arm and led her from the room, and the door closed behind them.

"Blamed little rat!" Scorpio clenched his fists so tightly that the knuckles showed white beneath the skin, and in his eyes was the look of the killer.

"Hell, hut Newton's right. It's the only way to be sure of them!"

The Town in Their Grip.

CENTRO was in a very bad way, and every decent citizen deplored the terrible calamity that had befallen the town on this cold December day. The thing seemed almost incredible—yet it was true enough, though many suspected that it was the result of trickery.

Gang law had the town completely in its grip now, for that day there had been an election for a new mayor, and one of the candidates had been Nick Mizoski, known to be a member of the dread Scorpio gang of racketeers and killers. And he had been elected!

Newton had seen to that, though it had cost him many dollars in the way of bribes.

In the gang's council chamber at the restaurant that night there was great rejoicing, for this victory in the election meant that Scorpio and his hirelings would have unlimited licence to pursue their nefarious "trade." The cops would be well nigh helpless to charge them with anything, for always there would be Newton and Nick Mizoski to intercede on their behalf.

"A great scheme, this election." Scorpio rubbed his big hands together in almost childish delight. "We've now got this town just where we want it, and we're going to make all the money we can. Shove the booze out to every restaurant, every speakeasy and road-house for miles around. My, but it's—"

He broke off as the door swung open and the captain of police came in, his jaw set with grim determination, contempt showing in his eyes.

"Ah, ha, if it isn't our friend, the police chief, come to congratulate us." Scorpio leered in the officer's face. "Say, you small fry, you're not wanted in this burg now. You're sacked, hear me?"

"Couldn't help but hear with such a loud and uncouth voice bellowing in my ear." The captain glared at every one of them in disgust, Newton, Mizoski, Metz, Lewis and Larkins. "But let me tell you this, Scorpio, your friend, the mayor, can't fire me, for I resigned an hour ago—and here's my badge." He flung the silver star almost contemptuously on a table. "And now I'm telling you all something. Though I'm in the force no longer, you haven't seen the last of me. Now just you sleep on that!"

With a great show of dignity he strode from the room, and on his way down the stairs he passed two men coming up from the restaurant. Colimo, and

his henchman, Delano, but they took no notice of him. They proceeded up the stairs, and Delano knocked on the door of the council chamber.

"Come in!" Scorpio's eyes went wide with amazement as Colimo and Delano entered the room. "What the blazes d'you two want? Don't say you've come to congratulate us?"

"Sure we have." With the utmost coolness, Colimo went over to Nick Mizoski, delivered a few congratulatory words that somehow did not ring true, then shook him by the hand. Ignoring the others, he came back to Scorpio and grasped his fist. "Congratulations to you, too, Scorpio. It'll sure be a pleasure to pit our wits against such notable men."

"Yeah?" Scorpio glared at him menacingly from beneath lowered brows. "Then you've sure got something coming to you, Colimo."

Colimo grinned suavely, and, releasing Scorpio's hand, he went slowly from the room. As Delano made to follow him, the giant barred his path.

"Say, our gang is going to rule this town from now on. Just you get that under your cady." He winked his eye, and there was a wealth of meaning behind the gesture. "We pay our men well, so when you find your boss is not much use any more just you blow over here. Maybe we'll find you a job."

Delano looked at him levelly, puzzling over the words, then he went out after his chief.

"Scorpio, what in blazes were you getting at?" Newton demanded somewhat angrily. "I don't like the way you act—anyone would think it was you who were the head of this organisation, not me."

"Sorry!" Scorpio's grin was twisted. "No offence, really. I was only putting the wind up our dear old friends Colimo and Delano."

But Scorpio was not play acting. He was in deadly earnest, and when the others departed some while later he arrested Metz's progress as that unprepossessing scoundrel was on the point of following the others from the room.

"A little assignment for you, Metz." He closed the door softly, waited till the footsteps of the others had died away down the stairs, then drew out his gun, and thrust it into Metz's hand. "Get that skunk, Colimo, and don't dare to come back until you have."

Metz hesitated, then made a motion towards the closed door. Scorpio spat an oath, guessing the meaning of the dummy's gesture.

"Hang Newton! You do what I say or, by hades, you'll get what's coming to Colimo." Eyes gleaming ferociously, Scorpio waited till Metz had placed the gun in his breast-pocket with fingers that trembled, then he jerked his thumb imperatively towards the door. "That's better. Now get and make no mistake or there'll be the devil to pay."

A diabolical grin hovering around his cruel mouth, Scorpio watched Metz as he went slowly from the room, then when the door had closed behind him he coolly lit himself a fat cigar.

Death Stalks Hank Tarry.

WITH the death of Colimo so went all rivalry to the gang of boot-leggers led by the notorious Scorpio. The entire liquor trade in Centro was now theirs, and in consequence their profits rose exceedingly. Not for a moment did Delano, Colimo's right-hand man, or any of the dead gangster's hirelings, think to contest the territory they had hitherto called their own—in fact, they offered their services

to Scorpio, who accepted them with surprising readiness.

In the days that followed, Stanley Newton chafed at the way in which Scorpio assumed command in everything connected with their organisation. Never was he consulted. Scorpio did as he pleased. But though the crook lawyer resented this slight upon him, he realised Scorpio's worth, and mastered the rage that blazed deep in his heart.

But danger loomed upon the horizon for these ruthless law breakers—danger that threatened from two different sources.

The late captain of the police of Centro, together with six wealthy city business men, had banded themselves together, determined to exterminate Scorpio and his gang—to entirely suppress the trade of illicit liquor that not only lined the pockets of these lawless ruffians, but threatened to wreck many a poor man's home. Stout men these six—men who wore masks whenever they held a meeting as a means of safeguarding their identity. Once let their identity and their object become known and their lives would be forfeit. Scorpio would see to that.

But at the moment the real danger to Tony Scorpio and his hired ruffians was Hank Tarry, and on the evening five days after the killing of Colimo, when Scorpio threw a party at the restaurant, he contrived to slip into the place entirely unseen.

Into the suite of private rooms that were Scorpio's he stole and began a diligent search of cupboards, drawers, and every article of furniture that might conceal a gun. If only he could trace the weapon that had fired the shot that had killed Colimo! What a triumph it would be for both himself

and his paper if he could prove his suspicions—if he could only lay that crime at Scorpio's door!

He came into the gang-leader's bedroom, opened a small bedside locker. A few bottles of medicine, a packet of chewing-gum, a box of cigarettes, but no sign of a gun. He moved towards the dressing-table, and then had the misfortune to kick into a chair. Quickly he shot out his hand to save it from falling, but though he succeeded in doing this, the chair thumped the floor as he righted it.

Fearful lest the sound might have been heard by those making merry in the dining-room adjoining, he moved swiftly to the door that led into the luxurious sitting-room. Not a moment too soon, for barely had he passed out of sight and closed the sitting-room door softly behind him than Scorpio and Newton entered the bed-room looking about them with suspicious eyes.

"I swear I heard a sound in this room." His hand on the butt of the gun concealed in his hip-pocket, Scorpio made a thorough search of the apartment, then moved to the door of the sitting-room, motioning to Newton to follow him. "Better take a good look round. Those infernal newspaper guys are too nosy for my liking. It's just like them to slip in to see what they can find."

"You should have taken my advice and got them out of the way, you fool." As Scorpio snorted and strode into the sitting-room, Newton followed him. The place was empty, but the crook lawyer, hearing the faint sound of footfalls, made a sudden grab at Scorpio's arm. "Quick, man! There's someone creeping down the stairs!"

They fairly leaped for the door that

opened out on to a landing where a flight of stairs ran down to the restaurant. As they dashed out and came to the top of the stairs, they saw Hank almost at the foot of them, and their eyes flashed murderously.

"Say, you!" As Hank pulled up at the bottom of the stairs, knowing it was useless to make a bolt for it now that he had been discovered, Scorpio raced down to him, followed more slowly by Newton. "What in heck you doing here, you prying young rat? Tell me, or by the love of Mike I'll—"

A sudden knock upon the private door of the restaurant caused Scorpio to bite off his words and to reach quickly for his gun.

"Careful new, you darned fool!" Newton, who had now joined them, clamped a hand on Scorpio's wrist, and there was a look of warning in his eyes. "Take my advice and see who it is before you do anything rash."

Scorpio muttered something uncomplimentary under his breath, went to the door and opened it, watched by Hank, who had an idea who the visitor might be, and was thankful that the diversion had come in the nick of time. Carl Pasher stood outside, and his shrewd eyes took in the situation at a glance.

"Ah, Hank!" He pushed past Scorpio, who swore at him, hurried over to Hank, and took his arm. "I've been looking for you everywhere, old son. You're wanted at your office—the boss rang me up to know if I knew your whereabouts, and I promised to locate you. Come on. Make it snappy."

He led Hank to the door where Scorpio still stood, completely dazed by the audacious coolness of Carl, and together the two newspaper reporters passed outside.



"The cops—they're after me!" Fearfully Scorpio pointed out of the window. "Peaches, for the love of heaven, help me—save me!"

"My heck, can you beat it!" Scorpio closed the door with a crash, and, his face a mask of cold fury, he confronted Newton. "That was a put-up job. You think that fellow Tarry got a line on us?"

"Quite likely." Newton's brows furrowed for a moment or two in thought; then: "Heavens, did you leave that gun about with which Colimo was shot?"

"It was up in the sitting-room—behind the books in the bookcase." Some idea of the trend of Newton's thoughts came to Scorpio then. "You don't mean to say he was looking for the gun to—"

"Yes, that's what I do mean—that he knows the calibre of the bullet that shot Colimo, and he's been rummaging around here hoping to find a gun that fires that type of shot. Heavens, if he's found that—Here, where you going, Scorpio?"

"To see if that gun's still where I left it!" Scorpio flung back as he flew up the stairs.

Within a couple of minutes he was back again, Metz following close at his heels.

"It's gone. That scrimp of a news-hound's got it!" Face contorted with passion, eyes gleaming fiendishly, Scorpio jerked his head towards Metz. "But Metz is going out after him, to stop the rat from producing that gun as evidence in the killing of Colimo. See?"

"Sure." Newton nodded his head. It was the very first time he had been in complete agreement with the ruthless giant. "It's the only way."

A terse command that came harshly from Scorpio's lips, and Metz slid from the restaurant to fulfil his murderous mission. As he came out on to the sidewalk he saw Hank and Carl some two hundred yards along the road, and went quickly after them. But not until they turned into a deserted alleyway, where they parted company some little distance along it, did his evil hand clasp the butt of the gun that he carried at his hip.

For perhaps five minutes longer he stole stealthily after his victim, then, considering that his opportunity had come, he whipped out the automatic and, levelling it quickly, pulled the trigger twice. Down went Hank with scarcely a sound, shot clean through the back, and bare seconds afterwards Metz was by his side, dragging the condemning gun from his coat pocket.

Not the least sound disturbed the peace of the alleyway. A silencer had been fitted to the gun that Metz had used, and a moment later he calmly made his way from the scene of the dastardly crime as if nothing untoward had happened.

Framed!

THE murder of Hank Tarry not only aroused the fury of every newspaper in Centro, but it also aroused the indignation of every decent citizen in the town. What were the police doing to allow such cold-blooded crimes to go unpunished? Were they corrupted that they never brought to trial these brutal assassins? Words such as these were whispered everywhere—in homes, restaurants, and night clubs.

Then, two days following the murder of Hank Tarry, the news broke in every news-sheet that found publication in Centro. The police had arrested Scorpio, the notorious racketeer, on information given them by Carl Pasher, of the "Examiner," and he was to be brought to trial for Hank's murder that same day.

December 5th, 1931.

Every seat in the court-room was taken long before the time fixed for the case to be heard. Outside the building the street was seething with people who clamoured wildly, but in vain, to obtain admittance to what was considered the biggest trial in the annals of the town. But the police, in great numbers in ease an attempt should be made by the prisoner's gunmen to get Scorpio away from his trial, dealt with them firmly and kept them at a distance from the doors.

Prompt to time the trial opened. The prosecuting counsel outlined the case for the State—Scorpio was charged with having brutally murdered Hank Tarry and also his late rival, Colimo.

Counsel called only one witness—Carl Pasher, who stated that on the night of Hank's death the young reporter of the "Tribune," suspecting that it was Scorpio who had killed Colimo, had set out to prove those suspicions of his. He knew the calibre of the bullet that had killed the gang leader, and in a search of Scorpio's rooms he had found a gun hidden in a bookcase that fired the very same type of shot.

"You knew that Tarry went to the prisoner's rooms believing that he might find the gun that fired the fatal shot?" prosecuting counsel inquired of Carl.

"Sure." Carl was aware of the fierce look that Scorpio shot him, but it in no way perturbed him. "As a matter of fact, I had an arrangement with Tarry that I should call at Scorpio's place if he didn't show up in half an hour—just in case of accidents."

"And you did that?"

"Yes," Carl answered, without the least hesitation. "And I was just in time to get him safely away. He had been discovered as he was leaving after his search of the place."

The eyes of the prosecuting counsel gleamed in admiration of the plucky witness. This boy had no fear of the man he was testifying against—did not fear in the least that the prisoner's gang might take revenge on him for making such condemning statements against their leader.

"Now, Pasher, answer me this," counsel said. "Did Tarry find the gun he sought?"

On the instant necks were craned, ears strained to catch the answer to this most vital question. Eyes smouldering with the fires of vicious hatred, Scorpio looked intently at Carl, knowing what the answer to that question would be.

"Yes." Carl's voice rang through the court-room, clear and strong.

"Then what happened?" inquired counsel for the prosecution.

"We went off towards our offices," answered Carl. "At the corner of West and East Streets I left Tarry to go on to his place where he intended to acquaint his editor of the discovery he had made at the prisoner's apartments."

Prosecuting counsel smiled grimly as he stepped back, signifying that he had finished his cross-examination of the witness. Counsel for the defence was then asked if he would like to cross-examine Carl.

"No, your honour." Stanley Newton shook his head as he got upon his feet. Well he knew that the evidence of this witness was all-condemning, that no word of his could disapprove its authenticity. But clever rogue that he was he had already planned a way out for the prisoner, a way that was cunning and brutal in the extreme.

"If I might have the court's indulgence, your honour," he said, as Carl

left the witness-stand, "I would like to call a man who is present in court, a man who'll prove that my client is innocent of the murders of which he is charged."

There was a stir in court as the judge sanctioned the request, and Newton, in a loud voice, called the name of Metz.

Wondering vaguely how the crook lawyer was going to obtain Scorpio's acquittal through him, Metz left his seat among the general public and went into the witness-stand.

"Your name is Metz?" were Newton's first words to him.

Metz nodded, and the gesture caused the judge to frown.

"Kindly answer in the proper manner, Metz," came this reproving voice.

"Now," went on Newton, his eyes fixed inscrutably on Metz's face, "I have obtained information from a certain quarter that it was you who killed—"

"I object, your honour!" Prosecuting counsel was on his feet in a moment, gazing appealingly at the judge. "The learned counsel's words are irrelevant to this case."

"Objection overruled," intoned the judge.

"The information I obtained," resumed Newton, his eyes gleaming triumphantly, "was that you committed these two crimes on which my client stands accused. Do you deny it?"

Metz, his face the picture of bewilderment, vigorously nodded his head. He was quite at a loss to understand exactly what Newton was driving at.

"The witness will answer in the proper manner," the judge thundered, gazing sternly at Metz.

It was then that Newton went across to the judge and spoke in a voice that only he could hear.

"I have been told this man pretends to be dumb. Shall I pursue my point, your honour?"

The judge nodded, and Newton returned to face Metz again.

"You murdered these two men," he said with savage intensity. "It is useless to deny it, for witnesses are waiting to swear you did."

The tone of Newton's voice, the sinister gleam in his eyes, awakened in Metz a sudden feeling of alarm. In that moment it came to him that the crook lawyer was trying to "frame" him, was endeavouring to swing the whole blame on him so that he could obtain Scorpio's acquittal. Discretion was thrown to the winds then. Under the urge of self-preservation Metz suddenly found his voice.

"But I was forced to kill them," he babbled wildly. "If I hadn't—"

"Your honour." Newton turned to the judge, giving Metz no time to say words that would prove Scorpio's duplicity. "The man in the stand is self-condemned. He pretended to be dumb, a pose to evade answering my questions. I ask that my client be discharged."

Though he suspected that Scorpio was behind the killings, that he it was who had given the orders that had resulted in the brutal murders of Hank Tarry and the gangster Colimo, the judge acquiesced, ordering Metz to be arrested, to stand trial for those two ruthless crimes on a day to be fixed by the public prosecutor. No doubt but what the true facts of the case would be revealed then. Metz would swear that he had acted on Scorpio's instructions and then they would have a clear

(Continued on page 28.)

Two kinds of outlaws—a wild stallion and a ruthless bad man—both ridden to a finish—conquered by a daredevil and reckless cowpuncher.



"WILD HORSE"



(One Thousand Dollars Reward.)

MORNING smiled on the grandeur of the Kentucky mountain country, where the hills piled themselves one against the other. In a grassy valley nestled a large ranch, which at the moment resounded to the sound of many shrill-voiced whoops and the smashing detonations of six-guns.

The ranch, only a few days before, had been a peaceful spot, but Colonel Ben Hall, a promoter of rodeos, had hired the ranch buildings and corrals to try out cowpunchers and bucking brones for the rodeo he was holding in Gunsight, the cow-town some few miles away.

Leaning on the rails of the largest corral and watching an aspirant to rodeo honours taking a toss from a wildly pitching little cow-pony, two cow-boys grinned at his downfall.

"That's the third hombre that wall-eyed pinto has thrown, Skeeter," grinned Jim Wright, the big, genial-looking 'puncher. He was about five feet ten inches in height and turned the scales at something over fourteen stone.

"Betcha yuh do better'n that," said Skeeter Burke, with conviction. Totally different in appearance from Jim Wright, he was about seventy-nine inches in height, thin as a lath, with a long, lean face, bronzed by sun, wind and dust. His eyes were perpetually squinting, and deep wrinkles, that concentrated at their corners, splaying outwards, told of a deep sense of humour in his make-up.

"You got through okay," said Jim. "Guess it's up to me, if we're to stick together."

A hail came from the man in charge of the chute:

"Hey, Wright! Your turn to take a toss!"

"Good luck, Jim," said Skeeter, as Jim turned towards the end of the corral.

A few minutes later he was seated firmly in the saddle of a brone that was like a bunch of steel wire and full of fiery spirit. He could feel the muscles

Starring
HOOT GIBSON
and
ALBERTA VAUGHN

quivering under the satiny skin, and the horse rolled its eyes wickedly.

"All right," cried Jim, settling down in the saddle. "Let go."

The men in charge of the chute swung back the gate and, with a bound, the brone was out and bucking furiously, trying to dislodge the human limpet on its back.

"Ride him, cowboy!" yelled Skeeter, in a stentorian voice.

Three minutes later the battle was ended. The wild-eyed brone stood in the centre of the corral, its head drooping and its breath coming in great gasps. Jim Wright slipped to the ground, and his humorous face was wreathed in smiles as he patted the animal's head.

"Hard luck, little hoss," he said. "You sure put up a good show, but you had to lose, you know," he added, with a laugh.

He turned and walked over to Skeeter and climbed over the corral fence.

"Well ridden, boys!" It was Colonel Hall who had ridden up. He was a little fat man of some sixty-odd years.

"Thanks, colonel," replied Jim. "Do we get the job?"

"Sure!" said the colonel heartily. "My daughter Alice will sign you on. She looks after the business side of this outfit," he added, leading Jim and Skeeter over to a girl sitting on the corral fence near the chutes.

"Alice," he said, "take Jim Wright and Skeeter Burke over to the house and sign 'em up for the rodeo."

"Okay, dad," she replied, slipping to the ground before Skeeter had the chance to offer his assistance, for he rather fancied himself as a charmer of

the fair sex as well as a tamer of wild horses.

As she led the way to the trim little ranchhouse, Jim stole a glance at her, and noted that she was more than pretty. Her eyes were a deep brown and her hair was a beautiful bluey-black. She was dressed in a flowered frock and a large picture hat that was more common in the big cities than in the cow-cabins, and Jim noted that it set her oval face and alabaster skin off to perfection.

"When is the rodeo to take place, Miss Alice?" asked Skeeter.

"Oh, not for another five weeks yet," she replied. "You see, dad always likes to have plenty of time in which to get everything fixed up properly, so that there can be no hitch on the actual day."

Arriving at the ranchhouse, she told them to wait on the veranda while she got the agreement papers they were to sign, and was about to enter the house when a hail reached her.

"Hey, Alice!" They looked round and saw Colonel Hall hurrying over to them from the stables and barns.

"Why, dad, whatever's the matter?" cried Alice anxiously.

"It's that 'Devil' again!" The colonel mopped his brow with a large silk handkerchief. "A bunch of boys have just ridden in from the hills bringing one of their pals badly smashed up. 'Phone for the doctor straight away."

Alice turned on the instant and hurried into the house.

"Who is this Devil you spoke about, colonel?" asked Jim, his curiosity aroused.

"It's a great white palomino stallion up in the hills," said the colonel. "Men who have got close to it say it has got

a split hoof, and its hatred for humans is known all over the range."

"The doctor is coming out right away," called Alice, as she came out of the ranchhouse.

"Good!" The four made their way to the barn where the injured man had been carried, and found the doorway crowded with cowboys, who were muttering dark threats against the Devil horse.

"Ef I get that devil hoss under the sights of my rifle," said one, "he sure won't injure any other hombre."

"You said it," spoke another. "I guess we'd better go an' plug him."

"Dad," said Alice, laying a hand on her father's arm, "don't let them shoot that beautiful horse."

"H'm!" said the colonel thoughtfully. "It would be a good draw for the rodeo if we could get the Devil into the arena."

"Wait a minute, boys," he cried, holding up his hand. "Don't shoot the horse. I'll pay anybody who has the nerve to go up into the hills, capture the Devil and bring him back here in good shape a thousand dollars—cash!"

A murmur broke out from the cowboys, for shooting and trying to capture the horse were two vastly different propositions, although a thousand dollars was a lot of money. Jim glanced at Skeeter, who nodded his head.

"We'll go, colonel," said Jim.

"Oh, yeah!" sneered a voice.

The speaker leant against the doorpost of the barn. He was dressed in a gaudy silk shirt and jacket with a flaming red scarf wound round his throat. Some people would have called him handsome, but as Jim glanced at him through narrowed eyes, he noted that the chin was on the weak side and the eyes were set a trifle too close together. He was Gil Davis, the world's champion bucking-horse rider and star man in Colonel Hall's outfit.

He returned Jim's gaze and laughed. "A thousand dollars will buy me a spree in town before th' rodeo," he said.

"But you haven't got the thousand—yet," replied Jim quietly, but with a hint of steel in his voice, for he had taken a sudden and unaccountable dislike to the champion rider.

"It's as good as in my pocket right now," Davis left his leaning post and stood in front of Jim. "While you two sapheads are roamin' around, lost in the hills, Gil Davis, world's champion brone rider"—he slapped himself arrogantly on the chest—"will be in town spendin' that thousand bucks!"

Jim felt like smashing his fist into the sneering face in front of him, but, calming himself, said to Skeeter:

"Come on, Skeeter, let's go and see about getting that hoss."

"The Devil."

THE next morning the partners set out for the valleys and crags which was the home of the Devil. Jim was leading a loaded pack-horse, while Skeeter trailed a magnificent black stallion, "borrowed" from the colonel's corrals. Jim had had an idea, so Skeeter had quietly roped the stallion.

They rode for the best part of the morning, and were deep in the hills when Jim turned to Skeeter.

"Guess we must be gettin' pretty close to that old cabin we was told about," he observed.

"Yeah," replied Skeeter, "but who's this guy comin'?"

He had glanced sideways and had seen a rider coming down the hill on December 5th, 1931.

their left. They halted as they saw that the course taken by the stranger would bring him to them.

"Howdy?" said the stranger, as he pulled his horse to a stop. "Where'd you get that cayuse?" he added, pointing to the stallion.

"Colonel Hall lent him to us," replied Jim. "But what's it to do with you?"

"I'm Sheriff Hopkins." The representative of law and order in that part of the country drew his waistcoat aside and showed them the silver star pinned to his shirt. "I suppose you ain't seen a dark-lookin' guy ridin' around, have yuh?"

"Can't say we have," said Skeeter, rubbing the stubble on his chin and looking thoughtful.

"What's he rustled, a horse?" queried Jim, a twinkle in his eye.

"No," snapped the sheriff. "He's a dangerous criminal named Hank Howard, an' he busted into the Gun-sight bank an' got away with a pile of dollars."

"That's too bad," observed Skeeter.

"Well, ef you see him, bring him into town," said the sheriff. "S'long!"

They parted, and Jim and Skeeter rode off to locate the cabin one of the cowboys at the ranch had said was near where the Devil roamed with a band of wild mares.

Meanwhile, in the shack, a man was moving stealthily about looking for a hiding-place. It was Hank Howard, the bank bandit, and as his glance encountered the fireplace, piled with logs, he stooped and took from his shirt a wallet stuffed with dollar bills. Shifting the front logs, he placed the wallet at the back of the pile and replaced the front ones.

"That'll be safe there for the time bein'," he muttered, "until that sheriff gets off the trail."

He glanced round the cabin to see that he had left no mark of his visit and then slipped out of the door, and, mounting his horse, rode into the brush at the back of the cabin.

Soon after parting with the sheriff, Jim and Skeeter sighted the cabin half-hidden in the trees.

"There she is, Skeeter!" cried Jim.

They dismounted and hitched their horses to the veranda rail. Jim pushed open the door, and they glanced round the interior. Everywhere was thick with dust, and looked as though nobody had entered the place for months.

"We'd better dump the pack an' go straight after the Devil," said Jim.

"Okay," replied Skeeter. "You take the pack-horse to that corral I noticed among the trees."

They untied the pack, and, while Skeeter carried it into the cabin and dumped it into a corner, Jim took the unwanted pack-horse and turned it loose in the ramshackle corral built amongst the trees.

Mounting their brones and leading the stallion, Jim and Skeeter rode towards a rocky crag where the wild horse had last been seen.

As they neared the crag they saw the horse appear at the top and stand with head thrown back, surveying the country. Jim reined in his brone and gazed with admiration at the magnificent spectacle. He had seen many fine horses during the course of his wanderings over the range country, but never before had he seen such a wonderful creature.

The palomino wasn't big, but its coat was dead white, and under the satin skin Jim could see the powerful muscles of its sloping shoulders ripple and bunch, showing it must have a turn of speed that would be almost impossible to match.

"What a beauty!"

The exclamation slipped from Jim's lips, and Skeeter was no less enthusiastic.

"He certainly is," said Skeeter. "Just look at the way he holds his head, look at the strength in those legs—"

But Jim wasn't listening.

"I'm gonna ride you, you beauty," he muttered, "if it's the last time I ever throw a leg over a brone!"

He turned to Skeeter suddenly.

"Come on, cowboy!" he cried. "We've got a man's job catching that brone."

The Devil horse wheeled from the top of the crag and disappeared into a valley that was thick with trees and shrubs. Jim and Skeeter rode quietly forward and reached the entrance to the valley.

Screened behind a clump of mesquite bush, they watched the Devil and the fifty or sixty mares that were grazing peacefully off the lush grass.

Unknown to them, another cowboy was also watching the Devil. It was none other than Gil Davis, who had quietly trailed Jim and Skeeter from the ranch. He was closer to the wild horses, but as he caught sight of his two rivals he made no attempt to go after the Devil.

"Now, Skeeter," said Jim. "We're gonna let that stallion loose, and, while that Devil hoss is fightin' with him, I'll ride up an' rope him. If I miss I'll drive him this way, an' you can drop your rope over his neck."

"If you miss him!" growled Skeeter. "What chance hev I got of ropin' that brone with you let loose with your lariat?"

Jim smiled at the compliment.

"Stop your kiddin', Skeeter, an' let that stallion go," he said.

Skeeter slipped the halter of the stallion, and, with a slap on its rump, drove it forward towards the Devil horse.

The stallion trotted towards the group of horses with a sbrill neigh. The wild horse leader of the band raised its magnificent white head and whistled a challenging clarion call. Almost as if by some prearranged code, the mares trotted off up the valley to a safe distance, while the Devil stood and waited for the strange horse to come up.

With teeth bared and eyes gleaming hatred, the stallion advanced on the wild horse. As the stallion made a snap at the white throat, the wild horse rose on its hind legs and tried to smash the stallion to the ground with its forelegs.

But the stallion twisted and dodged, and ere the wild horse had quite recovered plunged to the attack. There was a welter of dust and loud squeals, and through the dust Jim and Skeeter could see that the wild horse was gradually overcoming the stallion.

"Now!" hissed Skeeter. "Now's your chance!"

Jim uncoiled his forty-foot raw-hide lariat, shook out the kinks, and carefully recoiled it.

"Better let me have that spare rope of yours, Skeeter," he said as an afterthought. "I might want it."

Skeeter passed over the lariat, and with a pressure of his knees, Jim sent his brone forward at a gallop. The wild horse had by this time almost vanquished the stallion, who was backing away in terror from those gleaming teeth and flashing hoofs. The creature suddenly caught sight of Jim bearing down on him with his lariat whirling, and, neighing defiance, galloped off up the valley as hard as he could; he had had many experiences of those whirling ropes, and knew that the only method to keep away from their coils was flight.

The wild horse was fast, but he was tired, and Jim had a game-hearted little cowpony under him that had quite a good turn of speed, and was steadily gaining on his quarry, when from out of the bushes on his left, Gil Davies suddenly swung into view, cut in in front of Jim, and raced as hard as his pony would go after the Devil.

With a cry of rage, Jim swung his lariat and sent it snaking out after Davis. His aim was true, and the noose settled down over Davis' shoulders. With a jerk Jim tautened the rope, and it seemed as though a giant hand had plucked Davis out of his saddle. He hit the ground with a crash and rolled into a thorn bush.

Jim let go of his rope, and, snatching the spare rope he had taken from Skeeter, raced after his quarry, twirling the rope above his head. With a faint hiss the rope snaked out from his hand and settled round the graceful neck of the wild horse.

Plunging wildly, the Devil tried to rid himself of the rope, but Jim kept it taut; a few minutes later Skeeter rode up, and, throwing his rope round the horse's neck, put the issue beyond doubt. The wild horse, that all men called the Devil, was captured!

"What now?" cried Skeeter. "Can you hold the boss while I go after that snake Davis?" He pointed down the trail. "Look, the skunk's tryin' to get to his feet. If he tries to draw, I'll beat him to it."

"Let him go, Skeeter," replied Jim. "We've got the horse, and that's all that matters. Come on, we'd better get the Devil into that corral at the hut."

With two ropes on him, the Devil was forced along to the corral at the back of the hut, and as Skeeter placed the bars that formed the gate into position, Jim gave a chuckle of satisfaction.

"Do you know, Skeeter," he said, "in spite of that thousand bucks the colonel offered for the Devil, I'd like to keep that horse. It's the finest piece of horse-flesh I've ever seen, an' I've seen a few horses in my time."

"Same here," agreed Skeeter. "But a thousand bucks is a thousand bucks, Jim, an' we're not exactly flourishin'."

"All right, old pardner!" Jim slapped Skeeter fondly on the back. "We'll turn the Devil over to the colonel an' collect the cash. Now for some grub. Come on!"

Murder.

THE first shades of the evening were falling as the buddies entered the cabin. They looked round, and on a shelf in the corner found an oil-

lamp still with a plentiful supply of oil in it.

Jim trimmed the wick and lit the lamp, and, with it glowing on the table, the cabin looked almost cheerful.

"Come on, Skeeter," cried Jim. "Get the coffee-pot ready, an' I'll mix up the flapjacks."

Meanwhile, Gil Davies had extricated himself from the thorn bush into which he had rolled when Jim had pulled him off his bronc, and, cursing the partners, he caught his horse and mounted.

He rode slowly towards the cabin, muttering threats and planning how best to get even with Jim and Skeeter. As he neared the cabin and saw the white wild horse in the corral, an idea took hold of him and a cruel smile creased his thin lips.

"I'll have that thousand yet," he muttered savagely.

Dismounting some distance from the cabin, he hid his bronc in the bushes, and stealthily crept towards the window of the cabin. Peering in, he saw Jim and Skeeter getting their evening meal ready, and shook his fist silently at them.

Slipping away to where the riding horses of the two had been staked out, he cut their halters and, giving each a good slap with his hand, sent the high-spirited cow-ponies off at a gallop.

"What's that?" yelled Skeeter, as he heard the sound of galloping hoofs.

Jim strode to the window and looked out.

"Our ridin' stock is loose!" he snapped. "Come on."

He dashed out of the cabin, closely followed by Skeeter, but their brones were well away, and galloping hard.

Jim stopped.

"That's sure enough put us in a mess," he said ruefully. "You go back and get on with the grub. I'll go and round up them darned brones."

"Okay!" replied Skeeter. He picked up the lariat that was on his saddle peg where he had put it. "Better take a rope with yuh," he added.

Jim took the rope and coiled it over his shoulder and stepped out after the vanished horses. Skeeter half turned back into the hut, then paused.

"Darn funny thing fer them brones to bust loose," he muttered. "I'll go an' look at them hobbies."

He strode over to where the brones had been tied up for the night and picked up the ropes.

"Cut!" he snarled. "If I'd got my hands on the dirty skunk that did this I'd—I'd—"

He broke off as through the trees he caught a glimpse of a figure taking down the bars of the corral. Silently

he slipped across to the corral, drawing his forty-five as he went.

"Stick 'em up, hombre!" he ground out, digging the gun into the middle of Gil Davis' back. "An' don't try any funny tricks!"

Davis raised his hands and muttered a curse.

"Get goin' to the cabin," said Skeeter, prodding the prisoner with his gun. "I've got a few words to say to yuh!"

Davis was compelled to obey, for with a gun pressing into the small of one's back it is no time to argue.

"All right, Davis," said Skeeter, as they entered the cabin. "That's far enough. Now turn round."

Davis swung round on his heel and took a chance. With his left hand he grabbed Skeeter's wrist and whipped his right full into the jaw of the cowboy. Skeeter staggered back, and with a lightning movement, Davis jerked the gun from his hand.

Skeeter recovered his balance and plunged forward, and before Davis could bring the weapon round, grabbed the barrel. There and then began a struggle for the forty-five.

Backwards and forwards across the cabin floor they reeled, each striving to gain possession of the gun. In the struggle the gun fell to the floor and was kicked into the corner.

They broke apart, and Skeeter drew back. Davis charged forward, exulting, and aimed one mighty punch at Skeeter's unprotected jaw. Then things began to happen. Somehow the blow went awry, for Skeeter was no longer on the spot where he had been when it had been launched; and next instant a fist that felt like a lump of rock took Davis on the jaw and propelled him ungracefully, all flailing arms and sprawling legs, into the corner.

He rose to his feet and immediately lumbered straight into a hurricane of punches. His head was jerked back three times in quick succession. His ribs sustained a series of shocks that made him grunt. His jaw coming in for punishment again, he took the floor a second time.

This time he fell on to the gun that had been kicked into a corner at the commencement of the fight, and as he touched it his eyes lit up with exultation. He snatched the gun up and levelled it at Skeeter.

"Now," he snarled, as he slowly rose to his feet and advanced on the puncher, "I've got you just where I want you!"

With the barrel almost touching Skeeter's chest, he pressed the trigger. There was a deafening explosion and, with a strangled sob in his throat,



The rope snaked out and settled round the graceful neck of the wild horse.

Skecter crashed on to his back and lay still.

For a few brief moments Davis gazed down at the lifeless puncher and fear seized him. But with an effort he shook it off, and loading the forty-five, stuck it back in Skecter's holster.

He rose to his feet and slipped out of the cabin.

Arrest and Escape.

THE sun rose in a magnificent ball of fire, and as the beams penetrated the valley where the cabin was situated it also showed Jim Wright, jogging along, riding his bronc bareback and leading Skecter's.

Arriving at the cabin Jim slipped to the ground and tied the horses to the veranda rail, then let out a shout.

"Hey, Skecter!" he yelled. "I'm back!"

There was no answer to his hail, and a puzzled frown appeared on his brow. He pushed open the door.

"Hey, lazy," he cried, "why haven't you got—"

His voice trailed away to silence as he caught sight of the still figure of his partner, laying stretched out in death.

"Skecter," he whispered, dropping on his knees beside the body. "Skecter, old pal, speak to me."

But there was no reply from those white lips. Jim straightened up, his eyes misty and his fists clenched. He staggered slightly as he walked across the cabin to the chair and sank down into it. He gazed dumbly out of the window unable to speak with the shock and horror of finding his pal. His brain seemed unable to work and for long moments he sat there without a movement.

Then he rose and his eyes were like two steel pin points of fire.

He walked round the cabin, his eyes darting here and there trying to find a clue to the identity of the murderer, but in vain.

Suddenly to his ears came the faint clip-clop of horse's hoofs on the sun-baked ground. He became rigid, his fists clenched, waiting for whoever it might be, but hoping it was the murderer returned to the scene of his crime, so that he could exact justice—a justice that would be terrible in its intensity.

"Hallo, there?" came in the sheriff's ringing voice. "Anybody at home?"

Jim's body relaxed and he walked slowly to the door.

"Lo," he said as he opened it. "Nice mornin'!"

"Yeah," replied the sheriff. "An' I'm hungry. Goin' to ask me in for breakfast?"

"Sure, sheriff," said Jim quietly. "I wanted to speak to you."

The sheriff swung himself off his horse, and hitched it to the rail.

"I hope you have news of that Hank Howard I was tellin' you about."

"No," said Jim. "Somethin' more important. 'Come in an' I'll show you."

He led the way into the cabin and pointed to the lifeless figure of Skecter stretched on the floor. As the sheriff dropped on his knees to examine the body, Jim sank dejectedly into the chair.

"H'm!" muttered the sheriff, giving Jim a side-long glance out of the corner of his eye. "Shot at close quarters by a forty-five slug." He rose to his feet. "Let me have a look at your gun," he rapped out.

"It's in the pack," said Jim, without moving.

Sheriff Hopkins untied the indicated pack and drew out a Colt .45. He glanced at it and then spun the cylinder.

"There's one cartridge been fired," he

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said slowly. "Can you account for that?"

"It's a natural precaution of anybody," said Jim. "Most everyone has an empty cartridge under the hammer of his gun."

"Maybe." The sheriff placed his hand on the cowboy's shoulder. "Maybe," he repeated. "But I'll have to arrest you for the shootin' of your pal."

Jim came to his feet and swung round to face the sheriff, his eyes blazing. "But that's absurd, sheriff," he said. "What kind of a skunk d'you take me for, to shoot the only real pal I have ever had. Why, Skecter was more to me than a brother. An' besides, that gun is only circumstantial evidence."

"All the same, I'm gonna arrest you." The representative of law and order was determined. "Coming quietly, or do I have to use the handcuffs?"

"All right," growled Jim. "Let's go."

"I'll send some of the boys out for that"—indicating the body—"when we get back."

Jim nodded and moved slowly to the door and swung himself on to his bronc's back. The sheriff followed, and a minute or so later they were on their way back to Gunsight.

They jogged along slowly, the sheriff trying to make conversation, but Jim only replied in monosyllables, until the sheriff grew tired of his one-sided conversation and relapsed into silence.

The trail twisted as it wound its way round the base of many small hillocks, and as they came round one such hillock the sheriff saw a figure crouching over a small fire, boiling coffee.

"Hank Howard!" The exclamation slipped from his lips before he could stifle it.

The crook heard and was on his feet in a flash, and like a streak of lightning his gun appeared in his hand. The sheriff made a desperate grab at his own shooting iron, but he was too late.

The iron in Hank Howard's hand belched flame and smoke, and with a groan the sheriff slipped off his bronc to the trail. And before Jim could grab the gun that had fallen from the sheriff's hand, Hank Howard was on his bronc and was spurring the animal as hard as he could and riding leather-to-split for safety.

Jim dropped to the ground beside the stricken sheriff and lifted his head on to his knee.

"Water," muttered the man, as his eyes flickered open.

"All right, old timer, take it easy," said Jim. "I'll get you some."

"You'll stay where you are," groaned the sheriff. "I've got you for murder an' I'll take you in." He struggled with Jim's gun that he had stuck in his belt, and managed to drag it out and cover Jim. "Keep still, or I'll—I'll—"

His voice trailed off and he slumped back in a faint.

Jim gazed down at the unconscious figure, and the thought flashed through his mind that now was his time to escape, but he knew he could never leave a wounded man without making some effort to help him.

"Come on, bronc," he said, and swung himself on the animal's back. He cantered back a little way until he came to a small stream he had noticed, and, filling his hat with the clear cool water, rode back to the sheriff.

"Here you are," he said, pillowing the sheriff's head on his lap and pouring some of the water down the parched throat. "You'll soon be o.k."

The sheriff revived a little, and his eyes flickered open, and he looked up at Jim

gratefully, then he lost consciousness again.

Jim bathed the wound and with his handkerchief plugged the hole. Then, putting the sheriff's inert figure across his horse, he mounted his own and set off along the trail they had been following. Jim rode slowly for an hour, then, as the trail emerged from the hills, he caught sight of a ranch. With a sigh of thankfulness, he turned his bronc towards the buildings.

He arrived at the gate of the hacienda, without attracting notice and, placing the sheriff on the ground, let out a hail.

"Hi, there!" he yelled. "Come an' help the sheriff, boys!"

Two or three cowpunchers came out of a barn at his shout, and Jim pointed to the ground, then swung himself astride his bronc and galloped off as fast as his horse would go.

For the Sake of a Girl.

THE noon time sun was high in the sky when Jim rode into the yard of the ranch taken over by Colonel Hall, and saw the colonel looking through the railings of a high corral.

"Howdy, colonel," Jim cried, as he slipped out of the saddle and clapped the genial man on the back.

"Hallo, Wright," said the colonel. He indicated the corral. "You lost that thousand bucks I offered for the Devil."

"Why we—" Jim broke off and peered through the bars at the magnificent white horse. "Who brought him in, colonel?" he asked, his eyes narrowing to mere slits.

"Gil Davis, my boy," replied the colonel with a smile. "A grand horse-man, that Gil Davis."

"Yeah, he must be to bring in the Devil," said Jim. "But I don't see him around anywhere."

"No, he's gone to town for a 'big town blow-out,' as he calls it, before the rodeo."

Jim became thoughtful and a gleam appeared in his eyes. Davis had tried to cut in in front of him when he was about to rope the Devil, so Davis must have trailed them to the cabin and taken the wild horse from the corral. Skecter must have seen him and Davis had shot him! Jim drew in his breath with a hiss as the thought struck him.

"It's a grand creature." The colonel's voice broke in on Jim's thoughts. "And when the crowd see Gil Davis on its back at the rodeo they'll go stark, raving mad with excitement, you mark my words."

"Yeah, he's all you say he is, colonel," said Jim.

Round the other side of the corral, the colonel's daughter, Alice, drew her pinto pony to a halt, and, dropping to the ground, opened the corral gate and led the animal in, without noticing the wild horse already there.

She turned and shut the gate after her, and was just taking the saddle off the pinto, when, with a squeal of rage, the wild horse charged across the corral.

Alice turned at the sound, and a scream came from her as she saw the great white horse bearing down on her, with eyes flashing fire. She raised her whip and made a slash at the horse, trying to keep it off, but it rose on its hind-legs and crashed them down at her.

But with a spring she avoided those flashing hoofs and slashed at him again and again with her whip.

"Look, colonel," yelled Jim. With a leap he was on the top bar of the corral and jumped into the corral itself. He ran across the ground, shouting at the top of his voice to attract the wild horse's attention. With a scream, the

Devil swung round to combat this fresh enemy, and as he turned Jim ran away from Alice, with the wild horse after him.

Stepin, the colonel's black servant, had been attracted by the shouts from the cook-house, and as he arrived at the corral and climbed up to where the colonel was perched on the top rail, he saw the great white horse's hoofs crash down on the back of Jim Wright's unprotected head.

Jim collapsed in a heap, but before the horse could trample his prostrate form, the colonel and Stepin jumped to the ground and raced across the corral shouting.

"Drive him into the inner corral, Stepin," yelled the colonel.

"Ah'll do mah hest, bawss," panted Stepin, his eyes showing white in his fear of the wild horse.

The Devil seemed to be satisfied with the damage it had done, for, with a toss of its head, it cantered into the inner corral, and Stepin breathing a prayer of thankfulness slammed the gate shut.

The colonel dropped to his knees and cradled Jim's head in his arms, just as Alice, white of face, came running up.

"Oh, daddy," she cried. "He saved my life!"

"Yes," replied the colonel sorrowfully. "And lost his own, I'm afraid."

"Don't say that, daddy," Alice tried to wipe the blood off Jim's forehead. "Get him into the house, daddy, and I'll phone for the doctor."

"Get to it, then," said the colonel. "Give me a hand, Stepin," he added, as the black came up.

With infinite care they raised Jim up and carried him to the ranch house, while Alice flew in advance to phone the doctor and get a bed ready for the man who had so unhesitatingly come to

her rescue, even though it might have meant his own life.

Alice and Colonel Hall Repay a Debt.

JIM awoke two days later and, as he painfully turned his head and looked around the room, he noticed the door was open, and sitting in the next room was Alice.

He looked at his left arm and saw that it was heavily bandaged. There was a bandage round his head, too, and he ached in every limb from the terrible hoofs of the wild horse.

Alice glanced in at him through the open door, and, seeing that he had gained consciousness, she hurried swiftly into the bed-room.

"How do you feel now, Jim?" She laid her hand gently on his bandaged head. "Better?"

"Yeah," replied Jim slowly. "Guess I can get up now, eh?"

"Don't be a silly," she retorted. "You'll have to stay where you are for a day or two."

"Gosh!" groaned Jim, for the thought of laying in bed, even for a day or two and smashed up as he was, made him squirm. "If I stay here I'll get so darned lazy I won't want to get up!"

"You just lay quiet and go to sleep," Alice ordered sternly. "The doctor said you were to be kept quiet and not talk too much."

"But I feel hungry," he complained. "I could eat a steer, hide an' all, right now."

"All right, I'll get you some broth." And Alice left the room, laughing at the expression that came over the invalid's face at the mention of broth.

She returned some five minutes later, followed by Stepin carrying a tray with a large bowl of broth on it.

"You must eat it all up, Jim," said

Alice as the black put the tray down on the bed.

"Take it away!" howled Jim. "I want something solid!"

Alice motioned Stepin away with her hand, then gently but firmly made Jim drink some of the broth.

The bowl was almost empty when Stepin shuffled into the room again and touched Alice on the arm.

"Dere am de deputy sheriff awaitin' outside in de parlour to see yuh," he announced. "Somethin' about Massa Jim."

Alice looked inquiringly at Jim, and he nodded. She left the bed-room and made her way to the ranch parlour, and as she entered the room the deputy sheriff of Gunsight took off his sombrero.

"Good-morning, Miss Alice," he said pleasantly.

"Good-morning," replied Alice. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes." The deputy put his hand in his pocket and pulled out an official-looking document. "I have here a warrant for the arrest of Jim Wright for the murder of Skeeter Burke."

"Oh!" Alice's face blanched and her hand flew to her lips to stop the quiver.

"Yes," went on the deputy. "I was told he was here."

"No," said Alice, regaining her composure. "He was, but he left us yesterday."

"What's the trouble?" It was Colonel Hall who had entered the room unobserved who asked the question.

"He's come to arrest Jim Wright," Alice told him, "but he left us yesterday, didn't he, daddy?"

The colonel looked at his daughter keenly, and she nodded her head



"Jim Wright," said the sheriff, "you rode darned well, but I've gotta arrest you again."

slightly. "Yes, that's right," he said to the deputy.

"Well, in that case I won't take up any more of your time," said the official. "But if you see him around send word to the sheriff, will yab?"

"Why, certainly I will."

The colonel opened the front door and showed the deputy out.

"Now, my girl, what's the meaning of this?" he demanded, as he shut the door.

"I think Jim can explain things better than I can," she replied. "Come on, we'll ask him."

Together they entered the bed-room and confronted Jim.

"Well, my boy," said the colonel. "Glad to see you lookin' better. But what's this about you murderin' your partner?"

Jim explained to them what had happened as far as he knew.

"I think I know who did the shootin'," he concluded. "Gil Davis brought in the Devil, and I feel sure it was him that did the killin'. But as soon as I get up I'm goin' to make it my business to find out for sure."

"It certainly looks as if Gil is the culprit." The colonel took a turn or two up the room. "And if you can prove beyond a doubt that it was him, you can count on me to help you all I can."

"Thanks, colonel," said Jim. "I'll prove him guilty, never fear. Skeeter was the best pal a man ever had, and if it's the last thing I do, I'll make Davis pay for killin' him."

Colonel Hall nodded his head, and a moment later left the room.

As soon as he had gone Alice turned to Jim with a look of concern on her pretty face.

"Jim," she said, "I hope you find the killer of your friend; but if it is Gil Davis, promise me you won't do anything until after the rodeo. You know father has billed Davis to ride the Devil, and if he doesn't there will be a fiasco and daddy will lose a lot of money."

"All right, Miss Alice," said Jim. "I promise."

"Thanks." She squeezed his arm and hurriedly left the bed-room.

The Rodeo.

THE days slipped by pleasantly for Jim, who was still in hiding at the colonel's ranch. Word came from Gunsight that the sheriff was recovering from the wounds inflicted by Hank Howard, and that he would be up and about by the day the rodeo was fixed to take place.

The day of the rodeo came at last. The sun was shining high in the vault of a perfectly blue sky. The crowds began to arrive at the stadium at an early hour. Men on horseback, men and women in buggys and buckboards and almost everything that went confined to pour in its human load until the proceedings started.

There were relay races, calf roping, steer riding and a dozen other Western sports which soon had the huge crowd in a good humour.

Jim Wright was there, with his big black Stetson pulled down well over his eyes. Gil Davis, boastful and arrogant, was strolling round the horse corrals, telling everybody in a loud voice just how he was going to ride the Devil.

Suddenly a shrill scream rent the air and everybody glanced at the corrals. It was seen at once that there was something wrong with the Devil, for
December 5th, 1931.

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the white stallion was prancing about on its hind legs and neighing shrilly.

Jim made a rush for the corral, and, followed closely by a bunch of horse-wranglers who were in charge of the animals at the rodeo, he saw a crumpled figure on the ground, with the Devil prancing over it.

"Great snakes!" gasped one of the wranglers. "That Devil's been and killed one of the boys!"

With loud shouts they clambered over the rails and drove the maddened horse into the box. Jim lifted the dead man gently from the ground and, helped by one or two of the others, carried him away.

As he lifted his head Gil Davis, who, in spite of all his boasting and arrogance, was a coward at heart, had been watching the scene with fear, caught a glimpse of Jim's face. Instantly some nameless dread clutched at his craven heart, and as Jim's eyes encountered his, a half-stifled sob of terror rose in his throat. For he could read the message in Jim's eyes, a message that meant the end of the trail for him.

He glanced round furtively, but everybody's gaze was on the sad little procession coming from the corral. He turned on his heel and slipped away.

Meanwhile the announcer in his box cleared his throat and spoke into the microphone.

"Ladies and gentlemen," his voice boomed out from the giant loud speakers dotted about the ground. "Colonel Hall has now great pleasure in presenting to you Gil Davis, the world's champion bronco rider, riding the wild stallion the Devil. As you know, folks, this horse was captured only a few weeks ago and has never yet been ridden, so may the best man win. Ladies and gentlemen, Gil Davis on the Devil."

Every eye was on the elute that housed the wild horse. It was saddled, and stood there with every muscle quivering with rage, its eyes bloodshot, and its teeth gleaming savagely in the sun.

Colonel Hall glanced round the little knot of men standing by the chute.

"Anybody seen Gil?" he asked.

"Th' last time I saw him, colonel," said one, a little wizened cowpuncher, "he was over by th' stands."

"Here, Stepin," cried the colonel, catching sight of his black servant. "Scout around quick and see if you can find Gil Davis."

"Ah'm on my way, bawss, ah'm on my way," replied Stepin, shuffling off. He made his way round the corrals, but in vain.

The crowd began to clamour for the expected treat, and as the time went on and still Davis couldn't be found the clamour became an uproar.

"Boys," appealed the colonel, "Davis seems to have disappeared. Will any of you ride the Devil?"

"Not me!" said one. "I wouldn't ride the boss for a thousand bucks."

The colonel looked at each in turn, but they all shook their heads, and the colonel turned away in despair, for he knew what might happen should the crowd be disappointed. They would get out of hand and probably smash the whole show up.

"I'll ride him for you, colonel."

It was Jim Wright, who, after seeing that the victim of the Devil's hoofs had been taken away, had come up in time to hear the colonel's question.

"You will, Jim?" A glad light appeared in the colonel's eyes. "Thanks, my boy."

"That's all right." Then turning to the wranglers: "Come on, boys, get that Devil ready," he said.

Jim climbed the rails of the chute and gently lowered himself into the saddle. The Devil tried to buck, but the confined space of the chute stopped him. Jim settled himself firmly, gathered the reins in his left hand, waved his right, and announced that he was ready.

The starting-gun roared and the gate was flung open, and like a streak of lightning charged with dynamite the Devil flashed from the chute. Amidst a swirl of dust the horse bucked and twisted, his back arched and his muscles like coiled springs. Round and round the arena the Devil bucked, but Jim kept to the saddle as though he was glued there.

The crowd rose to its feet and cheered to the echo, for never before had they seen such riding, and they were men who were riding horses themselves every day in their lives.

"That's not Gil Davis." The deputy touched the sheriff on the arm as they sat in the front row of the stands. "It's Jim Wright, the man we want for that murder."

"I know," replied the sheriff quietly; "but let him finish the ride out—it's too darned good to stop."

At last the fight for supremacy was over. The wild horse gradually began to tire, and, as its bucks became less and less, Jim whacked into him with his stetson, riding the animal to a standstill. At last he stopped the horse, and it stood with drooping head, its breath coming in great gasps—beaten.

Two of the officials rode up, and, as Jim slipped out of the saddle, took charge of the horse. Jim walked across the arena to the corrals, waving his hands to the plaudits of the crowd.

"Well done, Jim!" cried Alice joyfully, and hugged his arm. "You were splendid."

Colonel Hall was also loud in his praises, and as they stood there congratulating the cowboy, the sheriff and his deputy quietly left the stands and made their way to the spot where Jim was standing.

"Jim Wright," said the sheriff, "you rode darned well, but I'm afraid I've gotta arrest yuh again."

"Oh, but, sheriff—"

—"began Alice, her hold on Jim's arm tightening. "That's all right," said Jim, laying his hand on hers. "The sheriff's gotta do his duty. Come on, sheriff, let's go."

The sheriff and his deputy escorted Jim to the town gaol and locked him up in a cell.

Trapped.

THE rodeo was over, and night had fallen. The saloons of Gunsight were crowded with the high-spirited cowboys, gambling and drinking was the order, and many a man was drinking more than he could stand.

The sheriff and his deputy were busy

rounding up those who were incapable of looking after themselves and taking them to the gaol to sober up. The biggest cell in the gaol soon become crowded, and when the deputy brought in a man helplessly under the influence of his jollifications, he was forced to put the man in the cell occupied by Jim.

"You stay in there till morning," he grimmed. "An' cool off a little."

"Wash he shay?" burred the drunk to Jim. "Here, old-timer, have lil' drinksh wi' me."

He produced a flask from his pocket and proceeded to swallow the contents. Jim watched him with a grin, and as the man staggered and collapsed on to the wooden bed a daring plan entered his head, a plan to escape from the gaol and take the trail of Davis.

The drunken cowpuncher lay back on the bed and snored in a stentorian voice, and Jim sat quietly on the edge of the bed waiting patiently for the dawn.

Dawn came at last, and with it the deputy-sheriff to let out the now sobered roysterers. He came to the cell that housed Jim and the man he had put in the night before. He saw a figure stretched out on the bed with a large black stetson on—Jim Wright. The other was waiting to be released, with his white stetson pulled well down over his eyes.

"Come on, you," growled the deputy, "get out and clear that head of yours."

The man shuffled out of the cell, across the passage and into the sheriff's office.

"Wait a minute," said the sheriff, who was sitting at the table examining his forty-five and putting fresh cartridges into the chambers. The man paused at the outer door. "Just take things easy the next time you come into Gunsight, and leave the whisky alone. Understand?"

"Sure, sheriff," the gruff voice answered him.

"Well, that's all. Get goin'."

The door swung open and shut. The man had gone.

"Sheriff, sheriff!" yelled the deputy, rushing into the office. "That was Jim Wright that went out then. He fooled me—"

"I know," answered the sheriff coolly. "But I've been thinkin' things over, Bill, and I'm not so sure that he's guilty. We'll let him go for the time bein', and see what happens. But, meanwhile, get the boys together; we're goin' after Hank Howard."

Meanwhile, Jim, for it had been Jim that had gone out of the sheriff's office, found a horse hitched to the rail, and, mounting the animal, set off for the colonel's ranch.

He rode into the deserted yard and made his way to one of the barns. But his arrival had been seen, and Alice came running from the ranch-house.

"Jim," she called from the entrance of the barn. "Has the sheriff let you out?"

"No," replied Jim as he came out of the barn on his own bronc. "I escaped and I'm after Davis."

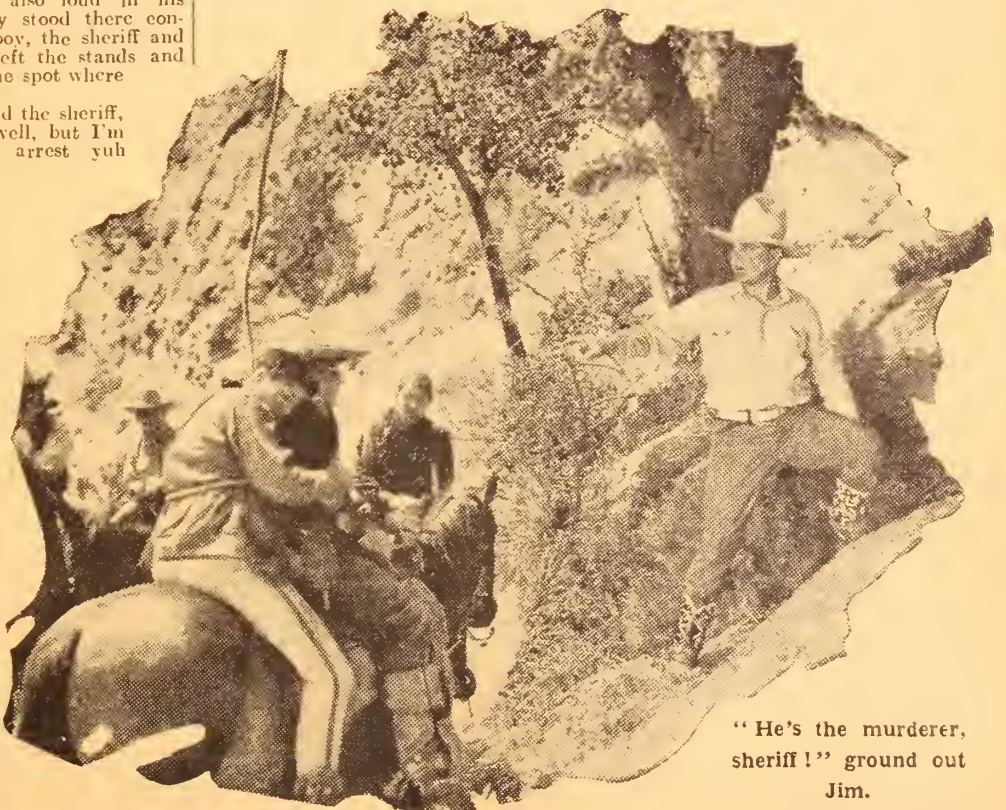
He set spurs to his horse, and it broke into a gallop.

"Good luck!" yelled Alice after his fast-disappearing figure.

The deserted cabin in the hills. There was not a sound as a furtive figure stole round the end of the cabin and pushed open the door. It was the figure of Hank Howard, the bank robber.

He gave an evil chuckle as he entered the cabin and made straight for the fireplace. Moving the logs he drew out the wallet stuffed with the proceeds of his robbery.

(Continued on page 25.)



"He's the murderer, sheriff!" ground out Jim.

Follow a two-fisted sea-captain and the beautiful daughter of a brave explorer—as they sail on a perilous trip to a forgotten cannibal island—where they defy storm, fire and water, man and beast—on a search for a fortune in radium! Starring Kenneth Harlan and Lucille Browne.



DANGER ISLAND



READ THIS FIRST.

In search of pitchblende deposits containing immense quantities of precious radium. Professor Adams and his companions are beset by savages on a volcanic island off the African coast, and Adams escapes with one surriering follower, Cebu, his giant negro guide.

In America his daughter Bonnie and her uncle, Dr. Anthony Adams, have become alarmed at his failure to communicate with them. Ben Arnold, an adventurer professing friendship, offers to fit out a relief expedition.

His ship, the Lottie Carson, sets sail under the command of Harry Drake, a young Englishman, and for companion Bonnie engages Arlene Chandos, who is in league with Arnold.

Professor Adams and Cebu are picked up by the Lottie Carson off the coast of Africa. The professor is dying, but before passing away he gives Bonnie a chart and charges her to secure the radium for the benefit of humanity.

Bonnie innocently gives the chart to Arnold, who now sees his way clear to locate the radium and make a fortune. But, fearing Harry Drake's honesty of purpose, he plans to relieve him of the command, and orders Bull Black, his rascally mate, to take over the vessel.

A fight ensues, the crew taking sides, and during the battle Harry falls from the prow into a shark-infested sea!

Now Read On.

Overboard.

A DOZEN pairs of eyes watched Harry Drake as he floundered astern, with those evil sharks gliding towards him. Then Bonnie turned to Bull Black distractedly. "Stop this ship!" she panted. "Stop this ship!"

December 5th, 1931.

The rascally mate gave no indication that he had heard, but at that moment the hulking figure of Briney stepped between Black and the girl.

"I'll go over an' get him, miss," he rapped out, and next second he was climbing to one of the lifeboats.

He poised himself for an instant and then dived into the sea, shooting below the surface and reappearing quite close to the semi-conscious Englishman.

With the exception of Arnold and Bull Black, those aboard the Lottie Carson crowded to the stern to watch Harry and Briney with bated breath, and Arnold at once spoke to the mate in a hoarse undertone.

"Bull," he jerked, "you'd better pick him up. When we do get rid of Drake there must be no hint of foul play."

"All right," said Bull, and had soon scattered the men with a few strident commands.

The Lottie Carson had left Harry and Briney struggling in her wake, but Bull uttered an urgent command that soon had the effect of bringing the vessel close to the two men in the water again.

"Let her come up in the wind!" he roared to the helmsman, who answered his instructions smartly.

Once alongside, the mate ordered a line to be thrown, and as a rope fell with a light splash close to his hand,



EPISODE 2. "Death Rides the Storm."

Briney seized it thankfully. Supporting Harry with his other arm, the sailor was then drawn close to the vessel by his shipmates.

"Drop the ladder to 'em!" Bull shouted.

He was obeyed, and Harry and his rescuer began to drag themselves up the rungs. Nor were they an instant too soon, for as they climbed the rope-ladder they heard the snap of steely jaws at their very heels, and Briney cursed whole-heartedly at a shark that missed his ankle by a hair's breadth.

Up on the deck of the Lottie Carson Ben Arnold had been joined by Arlene Chandos.

"I warned you that Drake would get us into trouble," she said to him in an aside. "Something told me he was the kind of man who wouldn't let anybody override him. I wish you'd respected my woman's intuition, Ben."

"I'll have Drake put in irons down in the brig as soon as he steps aboard," Arnold retorted, and even as he spoke Harry and Briney were helped over the side.

Harry was fully in possession of his senses now, but was in a state of exhaustion, and had difficulty in breathing on account of the water he had swallowed. But he gave a game and reassuring smile as Bonnie confronted him.

"Thank Heaven you're safe!" she said fervently. "Oh, Briney, take him to his cabin and let him get some dry clothes on."

"I'm all right, Miss Adams," Harry declared, bracing himself with an effort. "Please don't worry yourself on my account. I—"

But he did not finish the sentence, for

just then he became aware of the curious tones of Ben Arnold.

"Mr. Black, put Captain Drake in the brig, will you?"

And Bull Black's answer, given with the accompaniment of an unholy leer:

"Ay, ay, sir! Come on, there, take him down to the brig and put him in irons, boys!"

Led by Dempster, Bull's cronies advanced on Harry, but the Englishman was not to be so easily disposed of.

"Connor, Burke," snapped the voice of Briney, naming two members of the crew who had proved themselves loyal to the young skipper, "we're not going to stand for this, are we?"

The response of Burke and Connor was stout and emphatic, and Bull Black's minions hung back, for, though they possessed the advantage of numbers, they had already sampled the fighting qualities of the men who were loyal to Harry Drake.

Even Bull Black himself was unable to shake Briney and his companions from their determined front.

"What's this talk I hear from you, you swab?" the ruffianly mate ground out, thrusting his face close to Briney's.

The young sailor folded his arms and looked him straight in the eye.

"What did it sound like, Mister Mate?" he rejoined. "An invitation to try an' sock me like you did this mornin', huh? Well, try it on! You ain't mate any longer, but plain mutineer—an' I'm eravin' to bust that ugly mug o' yours."

Bull's eyes blazed, and a fresh outbreak seemed inevitable. But in the meantime Bonnie was attempting to reason with Ben Arnold, at the same time expressing her amazement at his conduct.

"Ben, have you gone mad?" she exclaimed. "You can't do this thing to Captain Drake!"

"Let me handle this, Bonnie, please," Arnold said to her, whereupon there was an immediate hail from Briney.

"Sure, let him handle it, miss," he called. "We're ready for him."

Arnold bit his lip. Thinking things

over, he began to regret his hastiness. He saw plainly that he had given Bull instructions to take over the ship before the time was ripe. In the first place, he had not realised that Drake had friends among the crew.

"After all, Ben," Bonnie continued, "I—I think I deserve some consideration, and it's my wish, too, that we change our course and make for the port of Twamballa. I want my father to—to have—a decent burial."

It was against Arnold's interests to fall out with Bonnie just now, and, first of all favouring Bull Black with a glance that was both apologetic and significant, he turned to Harry Drake.

"All right," he said to the Englishman, "you're in command. But you get your discharge when we arrive at Twamballa."

Harry shrugged.

"If you choose to pay me off at Twamballa," he observed, "I can't do anything else but accept dismissal. But out here on the high seas there's no argument as to who's handling this ship, Mr. Arnold—and I'd like you to bear that in mind. As for you, Mr. Black," he added, turning to the mate, "you'll kindly confine yourself to your quarters. And, Briney, you can take his place as first officer."

Briney stepped forward smartly.

"Ay, ay, sir!" he said. "Any orders, captain?"

"Yes, bring the ship about," Harry answered. "Twamballa's our next call, and we ought to reach it by morning."

Barometer Falling.

BRINEY seemed delighted by his promotion, and his first concern was to see Bull Black conducted to his cabin. He detailed Connor for this duty, and, with the latter's firm grasp on his arm, Bull strode off in sullen mood.

Briney then turned to the men who comprised Black's fo'c'sle underlings.

"Listen, you scum," he barked, "you're takin' orders from me! Understand?"

There was a surly chorus of assent, and Briney walked to the bridge. He mounted the ladder and entered the wheelhouse, where he found Collins at the helm.

"The course is south by east, matey," Briney said.

"South by east, sir," Collins repeated, turning the wheel in his hands. Then he looked at a barometer near by, and: "Looks like dirty weather, Mr. Mate," he observed.

Briney fixed his eyes on the glass for a moment, and then glanced through the windows of the wheelhouse. The light of the sun had become pale, sickly and indecisive, and the sea was leaden-grey, with a swell running higher and swifter every moment. The Lottie Carson dipped heavily in the smooth, deep troughs between the waves.

"Yeah," Briney commented, "there's some dirty weather knockin' around. 'S a funny thing—I was only thinkin', half an hour ago, that we'd had a mighty fine passage all the way from our home port."

Harry Drake at that moment, was scarcely aware of weather conditions, for, believing that he was alone with Bonnie on the after-deck, he was endeavouring to express his gratitude for what she had done.

"I want to thank you," he told her. "But for your intervention, the situation might have been a good deal uglier than it was."

"I couldn't stand by and see your authority disputed in—in such a fashion," Bonnie answered simply. "You see, Captain Drake, I—I've come to look on you as one of my most trusted friends."

"I'm glad of that, Miss Bonnie," Harry murmured, and he seemed on the point of saying more when the slight lurching of the ship advised him of the impending hurricane.

He glanced at sky and sea, and for the first time became aware of the thick,



"What's this talk I hear from you, you swab?" the ruffianly mate ground out.

clammy heat that had descended over the ocean.

"It looks as though we're headed for a storm," he announced. "And a bad one at that."

"Even the elements are against us," Bonnie said a little drearly. "But listen, captain. I'm worried about this trouble between you and Ben Arnold. It seems unfortunate that there should be dissent at this stage."

"Yes," Harry agreed. "You know, I can't figure out Arnold's attitude. All seemed plain sailing until just lately, when I began to notice that he was mighty partial to that fellow Black. Miss Bonnie, there's something about the whole business I don't like, and I want you to guard the chart that your father gave you."

"Why?" she asked him wonderingly. "Because I've got a sneaking suspicion that there's treachery aboard this craft," was the answer.

Bonnie started. "Treachery?" she echoed. "Why, what do you mean? Ben has father's chart. Surely you don't suspect *him* of treachery?"

"Miss Bonnie, I *do* suspect him," Harry rejoined. "I know he has professed friendship for you and your father, but I'm inclined to think that he's fitted out this expedition for his own ends. You've got to take this into account—that those vast deposits of radium, discovered by your father on Danger Island, offer a tremendous temptation to an ambitious and unscrupulous man. I mean that he might regard them more in the light of a gigantic commercial undertaking, than as a benefit to the medical profession and humanity."

"And you think that Ben—"

Harry interrupted her.

"I think personal gain is at the back of his mind," he told her, "and I'm convinced that he'd trample down anyone who stood in his way—you included—if he found it necessary. And before he's in a position to play his hand as he wants to play it, I'd like you to do something that will prove my suspicions."

Bonnie hesitated. She was loath to question Ben Arnold's honesty of purpose, but at the same time Harry's earnestness impressed her.

"It's hard for me to believe that Ben could be playing a double game," she murmured.

"And I'm not certain that he is," Harry put in. "But, in view of what I've said, it would be reassuring to both of us if we could convince ourselves he's on the level."

"What do you want me to do?" Bonnie asked.

"Just this," Harry answered. "I want you to go to Arnold and *demand* that chart, for it's yours, and you should have it. I think you made a mistake in handing it over to him—and I want to see his face when you ask him for it."

Bonnie laid a hand on his arm.

"Listen, captain," she said, "supposing we go to Uncle Anthony and talk it over with him. If he thinks there might be anything in your suspicions, then I'll do as you suggest."

"All right," Harry acquiesced, and together they made their way in the direction of Dr. Adams' state-room, the young Englishman supporting Bonnie against the pitching motion of the ship.

From a passage-way under the bridge, close to which Harry and Bonnie had been standing, a figure moved stealthily. It was the figure of Arlene Chandos, and without delay she hurried towards Ben Arnold's cabin to impart all that she had just overheard.

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The Chart.

CONTRARY to Harry Drake's command, Bull Black had vacated his quarters at the first opportunity and joined Ben Arnold in the latter's state-room, where the two now stood poring over the old chart that Professor Adams had delivered into Bonnie's hands just before he had died.

"Say, this thing looks pretty old," Bull commented, as he indicated the faded parchment. "Where did Adams get it?"

"Well, it has a history," Arnold told him. "It was handed down through the family from some old buccaneer ancestor."

"A pirate, eh?" Bull retorted, with a coarse laugh. "But what did any old buccaneer know about pitchblende and radium?"

"Not a thing," Ben Arnold replied. "He only knew that the savages on Danger Island held this spot sacred."

He indicated the chart, and, glancing over his shoulder, Bull Black saw that his finger was resting on a cross that had been marked on the map, close to the location of that volcanic peak known as the Fire God's Mountain.

"That's where the deposits of pitchblende are?" asked Bull.

"Yes," was the answer. "But this old buccaneer ancestor of Adams got it into his head that the niggers were guarding buried treasure—like diamonds, or gold. He never found out his mistake, but the professor did. And then the professor got bitten by this 'humanity' bug. The fool! There's a fortune in the stuff—never mind the benefit to humanity—and we can play the market at our own price—"

He stopped speaking as the handle of the door was turned. A moment later Arlene crossed the threshold.

"Well," she announced bitterly, "your friend Drake has upset the apple-cart. Oh, you make me tired! Why didn't you leave that bird in the ocean when you had him there half an hour ago?"

"What do you mean?" Arnold demanded. "What's the matter?"

"I just heard Drake telling Bonnie this cruise is crooked," Arlene informed him.

"Ah, she'll never believe him!" Arnold scoffed.

"No?" the girl retorted. "Well, get a load of this! He told her she could prove it by demanding that chart back from you!"

There was a blank silence, during which Arnold's fingers clutched the old parchment map involuntarily. Too involved to memorise, that chart was not a thing he cared to relinquish. Nor did it suit him to share it with Bonnie or anyone else bent on using its secret in the interests of medicine.

Bonnie's father had instructed that the untapped deposits of radium on the island should be used for the welfare of mankind—delivered as a gift to scientific research. But Arnold intended to see that it was paid for at the fabulous price which a substance so rare and precious could command—a price that would make him a millionaire many times over.

Bull Black was the first to break the silence.

"Well, give the map back to her," he advised.

"Give it back to her?" Arnold cried, wheeling on him angrily. "Are you crazy? How do I know that Drake won't turn her right against this expedition of mine? How do I know that he won't get her to leave the Lottie Carson at Twamballa—"

Bull cut in on him:

"Give it to her," he repeated craftily, "after we've doctored it."

"What do you mean—'doctored it'?"

"Listen," said Bull. "We'll make a copy first—exact, with all the markings and locations just as they are in the original. We'll keep that copy for ourselves. Then we'll give her the original when we've changed the markings, putting the cross that locates the pitchblende deposits—at the other end of the island."

And with the words he ran a thick forefinger from one side of the chart to the other.

"Oh, I see," Ben Arnold murmured, his eyes narrowing. "That's a good idea, Bull, providing you can fix the map so that the alteration won't be detected."

"Leave it to me," Bull told him confidently. "I once got some stuff from a Chinaman that will take out ink without leavin' a sign of it. I'll go an' fetch it. In the meantime, get me some tracing-paper."

He slipped out of the cabin, and Arlene looked at Ben Arnold.

"Say, not so dumb for Bull, eh?" she remarked.

"I should say not," Arnold declared with an air of satisfaction. "Oh, Arlene, you go out on deck and if Bonnie or her uncle come this way, stop 'em."

Arlene departed and stationed herself at the top of a companion-way which led both to Arnold's cabin and Bull Black's quarters; and she had not long been there when Dr. Adams approached.

He was obviously bound for Ben Arnold's state-room, but Arlene barred his path and engaged him in some conversation relating to the storm, which was now threatening to break at any moment. It was not long before the doctor had forgotten his intention of dropping in on Arnold, and a few minutes later he passed on along the tilting deck.

Meanwhile, Bull had returned to his associate's cabin, and he was soon seated at a bureau with parchment chart and tracing-paper in front of him.

"Say, this Danger Island's a big place," he observed, as he laboriously proceeded to draw a facsimile of the map. "Sure covers a lotta territory."

"Come on, Bull—come on!" Arnold urged impatiently. "Snap into it, will you? We've got no time to lose."

"This is a ticklish job," Bull protested. "It's gotta be done right, an' I'm workin' as fast I can."

The tracing was completed at last, and Bull then set to work on the original, erasing the cross that marked the true location of the pitchblende deposits, and placing a false one at a point many miles distant from it.

"There you are," he said when he had finished. "Pretty good job, hey, Arnold?"

"That's fine, Bull!" Arnold declared. "No one would ever suspect that the chart had been tampered with."

Arlene entered at that moment.

"You'd better hurry," she told them. "I've been talking to Dr. Adams, and after he left me I saw him meet Drake and Bonnie."

"Fine," said Arnold. "I'll give Bonnie her father's chart before she has a chance to ask for it!"

The Storm Breaks.

HAVING located Dr. Adams Bonnie and Harry entered his state-room with him, intending to explain the situation at once.

"Uncle Anthony," Bonnie immediately began, "Captain Drake and I have been discussing Ben, and the captain feels that I should have the chart in my possession."

The doctor looked at Harry and blinked stupidly.

"Why?" he asked.

"Well, to tell you the truth, Dr.

Adams," Harry explained, "I'm inclined to distrust Mr. Arnold. You see—"

But before the Englishman could proceed further there was a knock on the door, and next moment the subject of their conversation stepped across the threshold, followed by Arlene.

"Well, folks," Arnold said breezily, "it looks as if we're in for a little blow. Oh, Bonnie, I'm glad to find you here, for I want you to relieve me of a great responsibility."

"What is it, Ben?" Bonnie murmured. From an inside pocket Arnold took the map that Bonnie had so unwisely given into his keeping.

"I want you to take charge of this chart your father left," he declared. "It's your property, and ought to be in your possession."

There was a silence, during which Bonnie and her uncle tried to catch Harry Drake's eye. But Harry was watching Ben Arnold. To all appearances the man's action gave the lie to the young captain's suspicions, and yet Harry somehow felt that all was not well. He had absolutely no evidence to support the conviction, but he was certain that Arnold was a double-dealing rogue. Too often in his travels had Harry encountered the type not to recognise it now.

Bonnie spoke, naturally believing that Ben Arnold's offer to return the chart proved Harry had been mistaken in his estimate of the Lottie Carson's owner.

"Why, you keep it, Ben," she faltered. "You're the— the head of this expedition, and you should have it."

"No, Bonnie," Arnold told her, thrusting the parchment into her hands, "I insist that you take it."

Bonnie was fumbling with the chart when once again there came a knock on the door. This time the caller was Briney.

"Beg your pardon, sir," the newly-appointed mate said to Harry, "but the glass is still fallin', and it looks like we're rumin' into a real twister."

Harry dismissed the chart from his thoughts and prepared to occupy his mind solely with the welfare of his ship.

"Take four men and batten down your hatches," he ordered, and then, hurrying out of the state-room after Briney, he made his way to the bridge.

The Lottie Carson was now rolling heavily in a high cross swell. The pallid sun had gone down, and a dense bank of cloud was moving from the north to cut short the drab twilight and obliterate the early stars. But for the flashes of white foam that flecked its heaving surface, the sea was rapidly becoming as dark as the sky.

A puff of wind put an end to the calm that had existed for the last few hours. It was the forerunner of the gale which presently struck the ship, like a force that had for its mission the special purpose of waging war on all ocean-going traffic.

A wild clamour beset the struggling vessel, a clamour comprising the crash of mountainous seas, the rush of the hurricane and the deep vibration of the air.

Harry Drake left the bridge and yelled commands that sent the men of his crew reeling about the decks. They toiled with rope and canvas covering; they fastened the shutters of the wheelhouse for fear the glass panels might blow in, and they covered all ventilators.

The Lottie Carson had been rolling, her decks full of water, for some time, but heavy seas were breaking over her now. She staggered under their impact, and took successive plunges that ended every now and then in a terrific shock, as if she had planted her bows on something solid. It was the shock of

giant waves, and she quivered like a frightened thing.

Lamps wriggled in the gimbals, and every movable object was sliding with the motion of the vessel. The wind howled incessantly, as if an army of clamorous demons were hurtling past in the darkness. A clap of thunder ripped the heavens, and lightning blazed momentarily on an immense waste of ocean and a lowering mass of clouds. Foam swept the decks in swift, ugly rushes, carrying men's feet from under them, and the gale whipped high flights of spray through the gloom.

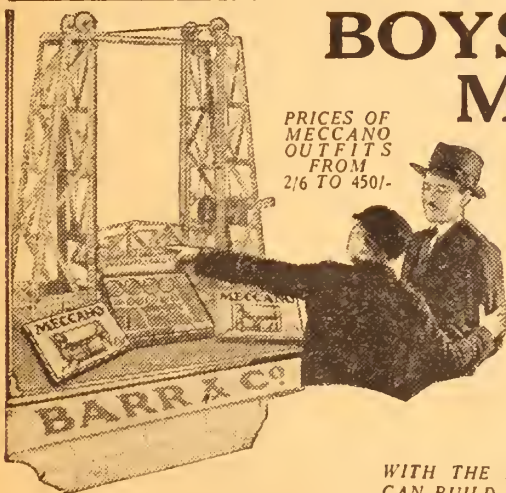
The turmoil was maddening, and seemed to increase with every moment, even as the waves seemed to become more stupendous. Towering black walls of water collapsed on the ship in awful deluges, and the decks were swamped under raging torrents. A man was carried over the side, his despairing cry unheard, the going of him almost unseen. Only a few minutes afterwards another of the crew vanished.

Harry himself, in an unguarded moment, was plucked away and actually borne overboard, to flounder on the crest of a wave. But by some chance he was carried back to the deck like so much flotsam and tossed breathlessly into the scupper, whence he dragged himself with an effort.

Down in the privacy of his cabin Ben Arnold stood propped against a table, his eyes fixed on a barometer that was swinging like a pendulum against the wall. He was staring at it in a scared fashion when Arlene stumbled into his presence.

They had both left for their own quarters shortly after the "doctored" chart had been handed back to Bonnie. But Arlene had found it impossible to remain alone. She felt faint and ill—

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sick as much from fear as with the pitching of the boat. "Ben!" she faltered. "This storm is terrible!"

"Yeah, and there's worse to come," Arnold told her grimly. "It's a twister all right."

"That's what Bull said," Arlene panted. "I just saw him at the foot of the companion-way. He was headed for the deck."

At that moment Bull was moving towards the bridge, his head lowered and his massive shoulders hunched as he battled forward against the hurricane. A burst of lightning showed him another figure close by—a figure even more gigantic than his own. It was that of Cebu, the giant Negro who had been Professor Adams' guide on Danger Island.

Cebu had come up from below, his primitive mind appalled by the extravagant rocking of the ship. For one brief instant Bull gained an impression of the black fellow's blundering form, and then both he and Cebu were overwhelmed by an avalanche of water that broke over the vessel's bow.

Bull managed to seize a hand-rail and hang on like grim death, though it seemed to him that the entire South Atlantic Ocean was striving to tear him away. Then the pressure ceased, and he was left bruised, breathless and drenched.

Cebu had gone, his black body vanishing into the storm-racked night and the frenzied sea. In the same instant one of the lifeboats had been wrenched from the ship's side, and its empty davits offered mute testimony of the tremendous strain and pressure against which Bull had maintained his grasp.

Another vivid stab of lightning showed him the figure of Harry Drake, and he stumbled along to him and faced him in the partial shelter of a burst weather-cloth.

Bull had to raise his voice to a yell to make himself audible, and at the same time a lurch of the ship nearly threw him off his feet, so that he had to clutch at Harry to steady himself.

"Why don't you heave-to before you lose all your hands and the ship as well?" he shouted stridently.

Harry's answer came through the clamour of the storm.

"I'm running this ship!" he roared. "You get back to your quarters, where you belong—or I'll throw you in the brig down below and have you put in irons! Go on—get back to your cabin!"

Bull snarled something that was lost in the howl of the wind, and then reeled back towards his quarters. He paused on the way to them, however, and turned aside into Ben Arnold's cabin.

"Hallo," said Arnold lmskily. "How are things up there, Bull?"

"Plenty bad," was the gruff answer. "Drake won't turn the ship."

"What does that mean, Bull?"

Arlene interposed, in an anxious tone. The rascally mate smiled.

"If ye ask me," he ground out, "it means that we're sunk unless something happens to Drake. Our best chance is that he's carried overboard!"

Overboard!

WITH the chart in her possession Bonnie had gone to her state-room, which was situated next to Ben Arnold's, and the storm was at its height when she was joined by her Uncle Anthony.

"I should think we're weathering one December 5th, 1931.

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of the worst storms it would be possible to encounter," said the doctor. "I decide I'd better come along and keep you company, in case you were frightened, my dear."

"Oh, I am, Uncle Anthony," Bonnie told him tremulously. "I'm terribly afraid. What's going to happen to us?"

"We'll have to brave it out, Bonnie hope for the best. There's one thing we can be thankful for. We have a capable officer in control."

The words were hardly spoken before he realised that his opinion of Harry Drake's seamanship was unwittingly being called in question. For, having left the door of Bonnie's state-room wide open, he now heard the voice of Bull Black.

"I'm tellin' you Drake's stubbornness will have us all at the bottom o' the sea," the ex-mate was saying to Arlene and Ben Arnold. "There's three men gone over already!"

"What do you mean?" the voice of Arnold demanded.

"What I say," came the reply. "Three men washed over the side an' gone to Davy Jones' locker—one o' them Cebu the nigger. Drake will be next if he stays where he is!"

The grim prophecy did not escape Bonnie's ears, and she uttered a sharp cry.

"Uncle Anthony, you heard that!" she gasped. "I'm going to reason with Captain Drake. He musn't throw away his life!"

"Bonnie!" the doctor jerked, trying to restrain her as she made for the open doorway. But she evaded his hand and sped towards the deck.

Bonnie reached the deck with her uncle stumbling along in pursuit. The wind caught her a solid buffet that almost hurled her to the slippery boards, but she pushed on determinedly, now forced to an uncertain standstill as the prow became tilted high above her, now running forward sharply as it dipped suddenly into a trough of the angry sea.

Dr. Adams emerged to find himself enveloped in the storm-rent darkness. "Bonnie!" he called shrilly.

"Bonnie! Come back!" The hurricane strangled his voice, and though only ten paces from him, the girl caught not a single syllable. But by pure chance she turned her head, and in the same moment a flash of lightning threw a quivering, unholy glare over sky, sea and ship.

Bonnie saw a towering wall of water swooping on the vessel, like a grim cliff suddenly undermined so that its rim was toppling towards its base. It struck the Lottie Carson a blow that sent a shudder through the vessel from stem to stern.

The ship reeled under the impact. An avalanche of water poured furiously across her deck, and it seemed as if the sea must engulf her. Dr. Adams was flung down, then lifted on high and carried off by the surge—swept ruthlessly into the deep to disappear amid a welter of foam.

Clinging to a rope, Bonnie uttered a horrified scream. The wind snatched her voice and carried it to a figure in oilskins standing near the bridge. It was the figure of Harry Drake, and as he heard the girl's cry the Englishman wheeled with a startled exclamation.

In the swift-fading glow of the lightning flash he caught sight of her, and regardless of the risk he was running in abandoning his hold on the rail of

(Continued on page 28.)

"WILD HORSE."

(Continued from page 19.)

All unknown to him a face peered in at the window—the face of Gil Davis. His eyes were gleaming greedily as he saw the bandit draw out the wallet and looked at the dollar bills inside. He stole round to the door and stood, pressing back to the side of the cabin with his six-shooter in his hand.

"Stick 'em up!" he snarled as Hank Howard stepped across the threshold. The bandit's hand shot above his head as he felt the muzzle of the gun in the small of his back.

"Hand me that wallet," came the next order.

"What's the idea?" growled Howard.

"Never you mind," snarled Davis, jabbing harder with the gun. "Do as I say. Come on, hand it over!"

Howard was forced to obey, and as Davis took the wallet, he reversed his gun and brought the butt smashing down on the bandit's head. With a groan Howard pitched forward, rolled off the veranda and lay still. Davis looked down at his victim with a sneer. "Thanks," he said. "You're a fine bank robber, you are!"

He went round the side of the cabin, and appeared a moment later mounted on his brone. He took a trail that would lead him through a deep canyon and so clear of the hills.

Jim sat his horse on the brow of a hill, an interested spectator of the drama that had been enacted at the cabin, and as he saw the direction that Davis took, he chuckled.

"Come on, brone," he said, shaking the reins. "We'll take the short cut and get him as he comes outta the canyon."

He turned his horse and rode leather-to-split for the other end of the canyon. He came to it over the brow of a hill and slithered his brone down the almost sheer side, risking his neck every inch of the way, but his brone, with a sure-footedness that equaled a goat's, brought him safely to the bottom.

Swinging himself out of the saddle, he took his lariat and concealed his brone in a clump of mesquite. Then, climbing a tree, he stretched out on a bough that overhung the trail, and waited for his quarry.

Five minutes later the clip-clop of hoofs told him that Davis was approaching, and he quietly shook out the coils of his lariat. The hoof-beats grew louder, and a moment later Davis rode into view round a corner, all unconscious of the waiting cowboy. He passed directly under the bough and the nose of the lariat dropped and settled neatly over his shoulders, pinning his arms to his side. Next second he was plucked clean out of the saddle, and as Jim made a turn or two round the bough with the rope, he was left dangling some six feet from the ground.

"Well, Davis," drawled Jim, "I've got you!"

"Let me down, let me down," cried Davis, glancing up at Jim's grinning face. "I didn't kill your partner. I swear I didn't!"

"I know different, you lyin' skunk!" Jim's eyes were blazing. "And you'll stop there until you say so."

"But I didn't kill him, I didn't." Davis was almost whimpering.

"You'll stay there until you confess, Davis." Jim calmly rolled himself a cigarette and lit it. "You can please yourself. I don't mind if we stay here for a week—but you're goin' to confess!"

The posse, led by the sheriff and his deputy, were scouring the hills in search of Hank Howard, and their course took them to the cabin. As they neared it a figure was seen to rise to his feet and stagger about in a dazed condition.

"It's Hank Howard, boys!" cried the sheriff. "Come on, we've got him at last!"

They rode up, and before the dazed bank robber could put up any resistance, the manacles were on his wrists.

"Come on," said the sheriff. "Where's the cash?"

"I haven't got it," snarled the captured man. "A guy laid me out and took it from me."

The sheriff was sceptical, but the dazed condition of Howard and the hump on the back of his head was almost convincing evidence.

"Well, let's get back to town," he said. And with one of the posse bringing up Howard's horse, the party moved off down the trail taken by Davis not half an hour before.

Jim heard the approach of the posse before they came into view, and he drew his six-gun in readiness.

The sheriff came round the bend in the trail, and as he caught sight of Davis hanging from the bough of the tree he drew his brone to a halt.

"What's the idea?" he gasped, then drew nearer, with his posse close behind him.

"That's far enough!" came a grim voice from the foliage of the tree.

"What's goin' on here?" growled the sheriff, pulling his horse to a halt. "What's the idea of using Davis to decorate the landscape like this?"

"Just a new idea of gettin' a rotten skunk to confess a crime!" came that grim voice from the foliage above their heads.

"What crime's that? The only crime he's committed that I know of is bolting from the arena the day of the rodeo—"

"Cut me down, sheriff!" groaned Davis, breaking in on the sheriff.

"Don't touch him," Jim swung off the bough and dropped to the ground. "That's the man that killed my partner, Skeeter Burke!"

"He's lying!" cried Davis. "He killed him himself and is tryin' to put the blame on me."

"Put up that gun, Wright," said the sheriff, "and we'll thrash this matter out peaceable."

Jim put his gun away and the sheriff ordered one of his men to let Davis down. The man rode forward and Davis sat on his brone's back.

"He's the murderer, sheriff, right enough," growled out Jim, pointing to Davis, who was almost on the point of collapse.

"That's right." Everybody turned to where Hank Howard was sitting quietly on his horse. "I saw that skunk shoot the man in the cabin."

"You saw it?" gasped Jim.

"Yeah!" replied Howard. "I was lookin' in at the window and saw him plug your partner after a fight!"

"That's pretty convincing, ain't it, sheriff?" asked Jim.

"Yes, I reckon it is," replied the sheriff. "Put the irons on Davis, fellers, and we'll get goin'. I shall want you down at the office to testify to-morrow, Jim."

"Okay," was all Jim said, and he watched the sheriff leading Davis off to the gaol, his vengeance complete.

It was several weeks later. Gil Davis had been convicted of first degree murder, and was shortly to pay the full penalty for his crime. Jim Wright sat in the middle of the largest corral at Colonel Hall's ranch, with an apple balanced on his head and a beautiful white stallion gently nuzzling the fruit.

"Go on, old devil hoss," said Jim. "Take the darned thing!"

The Devil was a devil no longer, for Jim, with infinite patience, had trained the wild horse to forget its hatred of mankind. At least, of one, and that was himself, for should anybody try to sit on its back, then the Devil lived up to its name, and became once more as fierce as it was the day that Jim captured it up in the hills.

The horse took the apple and munched it contentedly. There was a sudden burst of girlish laughter, and Jim turned his head to see Alice perched on the rail, watching him.

With a grin, Jim hurried over to her and sat by her side on the rail.

"What do you think of the Devil now, Alice?" he asked.

"He's fine!" cried Alice. "He's almost nice enough to kiss."

"Well," growled Jim, "he's not goin' to get a kiss from you, but I'll take his place—"

The Devil broke in on Jim, for with his head he pushed Jim and Alice off the rail to the ground. Jim sat up and, his arm round Alice's waist, gazed up at the horse.

"All right, you Devil," he said with a grin. "I don't want any help from you!"

And he kissed Alice, while the Devil lifted up its head and neighed shrilly.

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"THE SECRET SIX."

(Continued from page 12.)

case against this public menace. Scorpio's re-arrest would promptly follow, and nothing, not even the pleading of his counsel, would save him.

Amid a perfect hubbub of sound the court was cleared, and Metz, shouting wildly, hurling threats at the heads of those who had "framed" him, was hauled to the cells in the grip of four uniformed officers.

"Darned clever the way you fixed it, Newton," Scorpio whispered in the crook lawyer's ear.

"You think so?" Newton scowled at him, once again resenting the familiar use of his name. Almost he wished he had made no attempt on Scorpio's behalf in this trial, that he had left him to be found guilty. But the parting of the ways was near at hand. The crook lawyer was resolved to wait till the gang had made a really big pile from the sale of their illicit liquor and then to walk out on Scorpio and the others, taking every cent with him. "But you're not out of the wood yet, let me tell you. Metz will swear it was you who was responsible for those murders and then you'll be re-arrested."

"Yeah." Scorpio grinned easily. "Well, you'll have a darned fine chance to use your wits again to get me off, huh?"

Newton shrugged his shoulders non-committally as he turned to leave the now almost deserted court.

"Into the Net."

THAT night the ex-captain of police called a meeting of the Secret Six. Once again Scorpio had escaped justice; the time was now ripe for them to take the law into their own hands. The ruthless gangster who terrorised the town from end to end must be exterminated forthwith. It was the only way to get rid of such a deadly menace.

"Gentlemen, I suggest that we raid this brute's place to-night. Are you all in agreement?" Each of the six nodded his head, and the ex-police captain smiled grimly. "Very well. I have enlisted twenty of my late subordinates, fearless officers who'll follow me into that den of vice, who'll not hesitate to shoot down Scorpio and any other member of his vile gang that we happen to find there. I have enlisted the aid, too, of this young fellow." He pointed to Carl Pasher, who sat in a chair listening intently to the ex-captain's words. "He is Carl Pasher of the 'Examiner,' as I believe all of you are aware, and in addition to the fact that he is anxious to have a hand in this affair, because he was the friend of poor Tarry, he will be most useful to us as he knows every inch of Scorpio's place."

"Splendid," one of the masked men approved. "And we wish you every success in your mission, captain."

For some minutes longer they conversed together, then the meeting broke up, the ex-police captain going off with Carl to pick up his men and to make final and complete arrangements for the proposed raid.

It came in the region of one o'clock in the morning when Scorpio, Newton

and Nick Mizoski were in the former's sitting-room above the restaurant, drinking their own bootlegger whisky and discussing orders that were to be delivered the next night.

The report of a shot, followed by the tinkling of broken glass brought all three leaping to their feet in sudden panic.

"What the heck was that?" As Scorpio whipped out his automatic there came the unmistakable crackle of gunfire down in the street, again followed by the shattering of glass. His face contorted with a wild fury, eyes gleaming with the light of a maniac, Scorpio rushed to the window and peered out, only to jump back the very next second as the window was smashed by a bullet which, narrowly missing his head, thudded into the wall opposite. "Blazes, it's a police raid, and that measly rat of a captain that we fired is leading them! My heavens, but I'll make the little swine pay for this—and pay dearly!"

"Don't be a darned fool!" Newton laughed contemptuously as he hastily snatched up his hat, ranniced it on his head, then picked up his walking-stick. "Suppose you're going to fight the whole blamed crowd of them single-handed, eh?"

He moved quickly towards the door, through which Nick Mizoski had scuttled a moment before, intent only upon escape.

"Better beat it, Scorpio." Newton looked back from the doorway with strangely gleaming eyes. The parting of the ways had been reached, and the crook lawyer thrilled at the knowledge that in his pockets were the entire takings of the gang for the past week—the money that was this night to have

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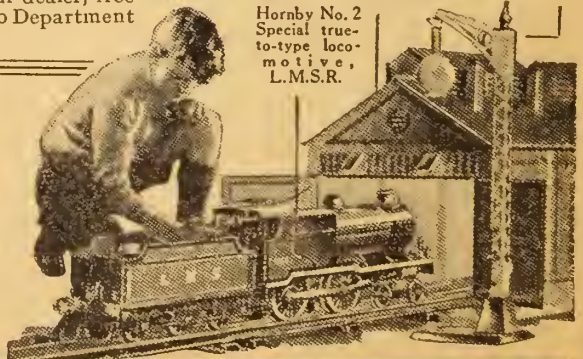
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been shared out between Scorpio, Mzoski and himself. "Let me tell you something. This is an organised raid. You know what that fool cop said that night. He told us that we hadn't seen the last of him. If I'm not mistaken they intend to shoot you on sight. Hear that?"—as there came a loud shattering of glass from below. "They're smashing a way into the place. Best beat it while there's time—and don't stop till you're right out of town or it might be unhealthy for you. Make for Chicago—I'll meet you there at Paul Lucas' place, then we'll—"

He broke off as there drifted up from below the sound of heavy feet crossing the restaurant. Next second he had darted from the room, making for the back of the premises. Like lightning Scorpio went after him, but not till Newton had descended two flights of narrow stairs and entered an underground cellar where the gang had their "still" did he catch up with the crook lawyer.

"Say, Newton!" Scorpio grabbed him roughly by the arm and swung him round. "That money—our takings. I want my share."

"Confound you, there's no time to stop for that now." Eyes gleaming fiercely, Newton shook off Scorpio's hand. "The cops'll be after us in a moment. Can't you hear them stamping up above? You know what I said—meet me—"

"I'll have that money now!" Scorpio interrupted violently, his hand tightening on the gun he held. "You see, Newton, I'm not going to risk you double-crossing me."

But Newton made no answer. There came the sound of many feet descending the stairs that led to the cellar, and turning suddenly he ran towards a door some few yards away. Next second, murder gleaming from the depths of his eyes, Scorpio swung up his revolver, levelling it dead at Newton's back.

The crash of the shot was followed instantly by a choking gasp as the crook lawyer pitched forward on his face, then came a hideous laugh from the killer that died suddenly in his throat as he heard voices shouting from the stairs behind him.

Taking to his heels, he ran to the door on the far side of the cellar, but even as he flung it open his pursuers burst into the place. There came the crash of a shot—the thud of a bullet hitting the wall very near to him, and his gun slipped from his hand. All at once the bravado in Scorpio went from him, leaving him white and scared. Quickly he leapt from the cellar, slamming the door behind him. Up a flight of stairs he went, through a door that opened out to an iron stairway that was intended for use in case of fire. Up this he raced two steps at a time, with the sound of pursuing feet dimming in his ears. Presently he came to a window, and, feverishly raising the sash, he hastily flung a leg over the sill.

"What the blazes d'you want, Scorpio?" Pearl Peach looked at him from beneath narrowed eyelids. She was arrayed in a dressing-gown, ready for bed.

"The cops—they're after me!" Fearfully Scorpio pointed out of the window. "Peaches, for the love of Heaven, help me—save me!"

A strange gleam showed instantly in the girl's eyes.

"Sure I will, Slaughterhouse! Quick, into this cupboard and leave all to me." She quickly flung open a cupboard door in a corner of her bed-room, and, as

Scorpio, his face white as death, sprang inside, she closed the door and locked it. Then into her face came a look of triumph. "Ah, ha, I've got you at last, Slaughterhouse—got you just as I said I'd get you for killing Johnny Franks!" she shrieked hysterically.

In the cupboard Scorpio heard those grim words, and he trembled violently. They sounded his death-knell, and he knew it. Bare seconds later and the police were in the room and he was dragged from the cupboard at the point of the gun.

"Hold 'em up!" came the harsh voice of one of the officers. "That's right, Ah, so we've got you at last, Tony Scorpio, just where we want you. But this time there'll be no getting out of it. You killed Newton—we were just in time to witness your very last crime."

An unmistakable click, and manacles fettered cruel, murderous hands. Then Scorpio was marched away with Peaches' hysterical laugh of triumph dimming in his ears—was marched away this time to stand trial for the murder of Newton, which resulted in him being found guilty and sentenced to death.

So the Chair claimed Scorpio, the killer, and with his demise gangster rule was completely obliterated in the town of Centro—a fact that was almost entirely due to the pluck and determination of the now reinstated captain of police and those lion-hearted business men, the Secret Six.

(By permission of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures, Ltd., starring Wallace Beery, Lewis Stone and Marjorie Rambeau.)

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Robert Montgomery and Irene Purcell
in

"THE MAN IN POSSESSION."

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A young girl of seventeen is enjoying life to the full when she meets the spoiled and dissatisfied son of a millionaire. At last the father of the boy takes spartan action and in the snow-cold Adirondack Mountains the youngster fights for his manhood. Starring Thomas Meighan, Dorothy Jordan, and Hardie Albright.

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"SCREEN STORIES."

On Sale Wednesday.

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(Continued from page 2.)

A Clever Fake.

Now that many of you have seen "Hell's Angels" there can be no harm in disclosing that a real Zeppelin was not used in the spectacular scene of the bombing raid over London.

Howard Hughes, the director, who had already spent several thousands of pounds on the purchase of aeroplanes alone could have had a real Zeppelin had he wanted one. He is a multi-millionaire, and the cost would not have bothered him. But there would have been insuperable difficulties in the way of filming the scene as shown in the picture. The only effective method, therefore, lay in using a model of the great air ship. So one was made to scale and he then rented the hangar at Arcadia, near Los Angeles, and turned it into a studio.

Stretching almost diagonally across half the length of the building, he next had rigged up on high a sturdy steel cable from which the Zeppelin could be moved up or down or from side to side as required. All round and close to the roof, balconies were erected for the cameramen to film the action from different angles.

The clouds through which the Zeppelin is seen emerging on the screen were chemically produced, and the model was slowly drawn through the thick vapour. All this was comparatively easy with what followed, when the Zeppelin was attacked by an aeroplane and fell a mass of flames. This, the most difficult scene of all, had to be done by double exposure when two objects are photographed separately and later shown in the same scene.

A miniature aeroplane, twenty-four inches in size, was built and swung from a wire against a black background. Its movements were filmed by a high-speed camera, and the undeveloped negative was then rewound into the camera magazine and the picture of the Zeppelin slowly recorded on the same film. Then filming was stopped and begun again when the model was sprayed with kerosine oil and set alight. The interior views of the "Zepp" were just studio sets.

Slim Summerville's Prank.

It is not generally known that Slim Summerville, who enlivens many a picture with his comedy, was at one time called "The Keystone cutup." That was in the days when he acted under Mack Sennett with the late Mabel Normand and Polly Moran.

Slim was always a fellow for playing pranks on others in the studio until his last trick ended in disaster and caused him to turn over a new leaf. Polly Moran, too, was not averse from a practical joke, though one day it seemed to Slim that she had played rather a mean one on him. So he decided to get even and took Mabel into his confidence. She agreed to help him. It was arranged that Slim should climb to the top of the studio gate with a pail of water. Mabel consented to signal to him when Polly was passing underneath. The pail of water would complete the act.

But even a joke has a way of going wrong at times, and this one certainly did. Mabel signalled as agreed. Mack Sennett was also entering at the moment and being in a hurry happened to get in front of Polly. The pail of water was overturned and completely ruined

December 5th, 1931.

his new hat as well as drenching him to the skin. It was a very frightened-looking Slim who came down from his perch above the gate, and it was a long time before he played any more pranks.

Answers to Questions.

Clive Brook was born in London on June 1st, 1891, Frank (London, N.), and was educated at Dulwich College. For some time afterwards he worked as a journalist, and then enlisted when the war broke out. On his return to civilian life he decided to try the stage, and the success he achieved resulted in his being offered film work in British productions, the first of which was "Trent's Last Case." His talking film career was begun in America, where he has appeared in "Slightly Scarlet," "Anybody's Woman," "East Lynne," "Scandal Sheet," his latest release, and others.

be out on deck! I'm going to take you to your cabin."

She did not seem to hear him. "Uncle Anthony," she cried distractedly. "Uncle Anthony! He's gone, captain!"

"Gone!" Harry ejaculated tersely. "Good heavens, you don't mean that Dr. Adams has—"

"Gone!" came the voice of Bonnie in a high-pitched moan. "Gone overboard!"

The tragedy of it dumbfounded Harry for the moment. Bonnie's father drawing his last breath aboard ship less than twenty-four hours since, and now her uncle a victim of the storm—lost in the immensity of the raging South Atlantic, beyond all possible aid!

Meanwhile, up in the wheel-house, the helmsman was steering doggedly, guiding the vessel through the fury of the hurricane.

He was shut in alone with the flickering light of the binnacle; shut in, too, with the grim fear that the wheel-house might at any instant be wrenched away under the battering of those terrific seas which were hurling themselves over the ship.

The helmsman was Collins, and his face was damp with the sweat of suspense. He could hear the masses of water pouring on top of the structure in which he stood, and every crash that shook the bridge set his ragged nerves on edge. He was almost at the breaking-point, and ready to drop with fatigue and anxiety.

His duty was plain, and he stuck to his post like a man. But he wondered dismally if his existence had been forgotten, or if any of his shipmates still survived to remember him.

Harry Drake was thinking of Collins,

and realised that he had been at the wheel for a considerable time before the breaking of the storm.

The fellow had had a long spell, and must be near the end of his tether. He ought to be relieved immediately and sent below for some well-earned rest, but before the change could be effected it was necessary to hurry Bonnie Adams to a place of comparative safety.

"This way!" gasped Harry, urging her across the deck. "I'm going to take you to your state-room, Miss Bonnie, and you've got to stay there!"

The tumult of the storm reached a crescendo as they slithered aft, the wind howling its loudest and the thunder pealing like a cannonade. Once more there was a burst of lightning, and once more it revealed a mountainous sea bearing down on the Lottie Carson.

The barrier of water dashed into the ship. It was as if the Lottie Carson had thrown herself at the foot of a cataract, and the crushing weight of it descended on man and girl.

They were thrown off their feet and then snatched up by the torrent, even as Dr. Adams had been. Bonnie was half-torn from Harry's grasp, but he clutched her again and secured his hold on her. Next second the two of them were being swept headlong from the port side to the starboard.

A feeling of stark helplessness and despair gripped Harry. His own fate and the fate of the girl in his arms were beyond all human intervention, and they were at the mercy of the sea.

(Don't miss the next thrilling episode of this grand serial next week. By permission of Universal Pictures, Ltd., starring Kenneth Harlan and Lucille Brown.)

"DANGER ISLAND."

(Continued from page 24.)

the bridge-ladder, he staggered in her direction.

Wading knee-deep in the wash that swirled over the decks, he reached her side and took hold of her even as another wave broke over the ship. It was not so heavy as the one that had hurled Dr. Adams to his doom, and he managed to brace himself against it, at the same time supporting Bonnie.

"Uncle Anthony!" she kept sobbing. "Oh, Uncle Anthony!"

"Bonnie," Harry panted, "what are you doing here? You've no right to

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No. 626.

EVERY TUESDAY.

DECEMBER 12th, 1931.

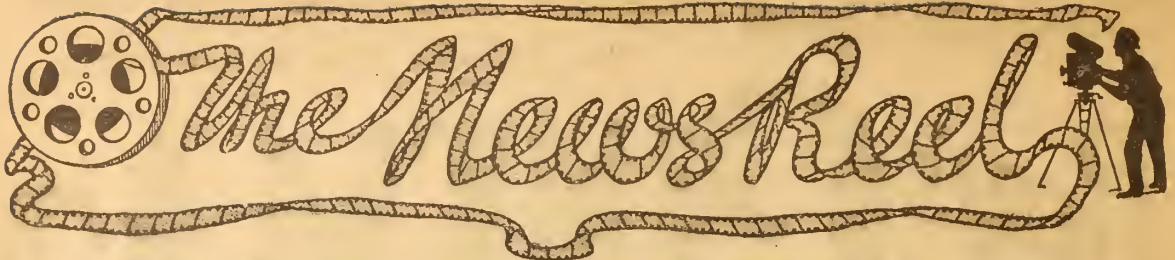
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THE MAN AT 6



The News Reel

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"The Man at 6."

Frank Pine, Gerald Rawlinson; Sybil Vane, Anne Grey; George Wolner, Charles Farrell; Chief-inspector Dawford, John Turnbull; Sergeant Hogan, Arthur Stratton; Sir Joseph Pine, Herbert Ross; Campbell Edwards, Lester Matthews; Joshua Atkinson, Kenneth Koye; Mrs. Cumberpatch, Minnie Rayner.

"Larceny Lane."

Bert Harris, James Cagney; Anne Roberts, Joan Blondell; Dapper Dan Barker, Louis Calhern; Helen, Noel Francis; Joe Reynolds, Raymond Milland; Colonel Bellock, William Burress; Mrs. Snyder, Maude Eburne.

Level-Crossing Thrill.

The inhabitants of Beaumont Hall, a picturesque village near Redbourne on the Hemel Hempstead road, can no longer say that "nothing ever happens" in their little part of the world. For they were given a thrill such as they will long remember.

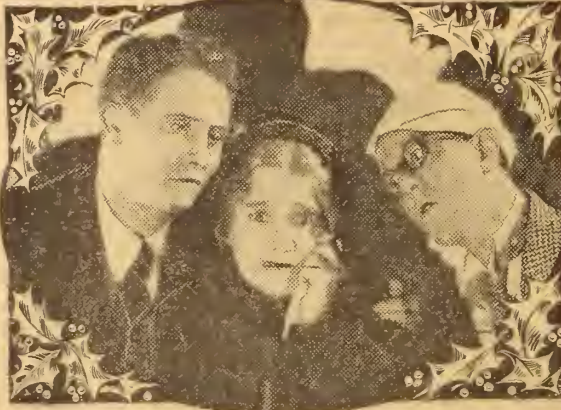
It happened through Lupino Lane, the director of the new B.I.P. film, "The Love Race," choosing the site as a location for a thrilling episode. And this is what the villagers saw. A taxi containing two men rushing down a hill at breakneck speed towards the level-crossing the gates of which had just been closed. At the same time an L.M.S. train came speeding towards the spot. At one of the gates stood a policeman frantically waving his arms in the endeavour to stop the car. The villagers stood still and gasped. It seemed as if nothing could stop a frightful collision before their eyes. Then came a crash as the taxi tore through the nearest gate, flashed across the rails and then went through the second gate only just in time as the train now roared past.

The thrill had been carefully planned down to the smallest detail so that a real accident should be avoided. The speed of the train had been worked out as well as that of the taxi, and the weight of the latter had also to be taken into consideration owing to the vehicle having to break through the gates. Stanley Lupino and Jack Hobbs were the two occupants of the taxi, and the experience was a thrill for them as well as for the villagers.

Filmed Three Times.

"The White Man," which is Warner Baxter's latest, was originally called "The Squaw Man," and it may be interesting to know that this is the third time it has filmed. As "The Squaw Man," it was first screened in 1913 with December 12th, 1931.

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND XMAS NUMBER.



WHEELER and WOOLSEY

IN

"CAUGHT PLASTERED."

Tommy and Egbert, two down-and-out comedians, undertake to run a derelict drug store for a little old lady—and bring about the downfall of a bootlegger. A delightful comedy, with complications and laughs galore.

"A HANDFUL OF CLOUDS."

He wanted to be boss of gangland, eventually attained his ambition, then decided to quit—but there was no turning back. A thrill-loaded cook drama, starring Lew Ayres and Robert Elliott.

ALSO

The fourth episode of our amazing new serial :

"DANGER ISLAND."

Tell all your friends not to miss this bumper Christmas Number.

the late Dustin Farnum as the star. He was paid £1,250 for his rôle. The story was again brought to the screen in 1918, and this time the leading rôle was filled by Elliott Dexter.

In Search of a Storm.

Going to sea to look for a storm. This is what the Regina Films unit did for the purpose of filming a storm scene for "The Verdict of the Sea." Manufacturing a storm on land would not have been quite so realistic, and so the company set sail from Falmouth on the s.s. Capri, a 3,000 tons cargo boat. For days they voyaged in the Channel, off Cornwall, and then on to the Scilly and Balearic Islands. There were some beautiful backgrounds to be seen, but of storms there was none.

In despair the Capri was turned towards the Atlantic, and there off Ushant a real "snorter" was encountered. Huge waves dashed across the deck and gave the company all the "atmosphere" they wanted, plus a good drenching. The film voyage lasted five weeks, for only two or three hours a day could be used for filming owing to the varying light and weather.

Cut-Throat Crew of a Film.

Had you been at Elstree during the making of "Tin Gods," you would have seen the most murderous looking set of

cut-throats that had ever collected. They comprised flat-nosed, ebony-skinned negroes stripped to the waist, Chinese, half-castes and white men of several nationalities, some with broken noses and others with scarred faces. These men had been recruited from the lowest dens of dockland to appear as the mutinous crew of a steamer, which, in the story of the film, is carrying a number of European passengers when it is captured by Chinese pirates.

The leader of this motley gang is George Cristian, a well-known coloured boxer, who, after a strenuous fight with Frank Perfit, the captain of the ship, confessed that he felt quite as bruised and shaken as he did after fighting Jack Dempsey in 1917. More recently Cristian had acted as sparring partner to Schmeling, Carpentier and other well-known figures in the boxing world.

First British Talkie Serial.

One good result of the invasion of American film producing companies is shown in the making of "Lloyd of the C.I.D.," the first British serial talkie by Mutual Pictures for Universal. It is packed full of excitement, much of which is provided by Sam Lee and

Adrian Gilbert, the two stunt actors.

In one scene Lee had to be knocked through some banisters, turn a complete somersault and fall heavily on the floor some thirty feet below. He did all this as arranged, and when the camera had stopped turning, he calmly picked himself up and walked quietly away.

Adrian Gilbert had to drive a small saloon car at thirty miles an hour into a steam wagon lumbering along at the rate of fifteen miles an hour. He was supposed to be kidnapping Janice Adair, but her place in this particular stunt was mercifully taken by a dummy. Gilbert drove into the steam wagon in great style, completely wrecking the car, and though very much shaken by the impact was able to extricate himself unscathed.

Answers to Questions.

While I very much appreciate your interest in the BOY'S CINEMA, L.F. (Coniston, Ontario), I am sorry it is not possible to reprint any back numbers of the paper. Only three months' issues are kept in stock, so if at any time you require any issues within that period, it will be best to write early to the BOY'S CINEMA, Back Number Dept., Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. The price of a single copy is 3d., including postage.

In a lonely country house a strange drama is enacted. A Scotland Yard detective is called in to probe the mystery. What happened to the jewelled chessmen and who was the man at 6? Starring Gerald Rawlinson and Anne Grey.



Visitors at "The Gables."

REMOTE and quiet in the midst of its unkempt and neglected grounds stood an ancient manor-house known as the Gables, once the dwelling-place of a family of distinguished lineage, a family that had fallen upon evil days. The old house had at last been sold, and it came into the possession of a certain Mrs. Rowson, who lived as a recluse within its walls.

Few of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood had any knowledge of the new owner of the Gables, beyond the bare fact that she was an elderly widow without children. She was never seen outside the house, not even in the grounds, and, except for one constant visitor, no one ever called upon her. Two servants she had, a grim old man called Jenkins, the butler, and a charwoman who went to the house three times a week, but rarely saw her employer.

Yet one evening the almost deserted house became the scene of a most unusual activity, and stranger after stranger came up the grass-grown avenue to its door. The first arrival was a tall young woman clad in a heavy dark cloak, wearing a fur round her neck, and her way of approach did not suggest that she had been invited to call.

The night was dark and cold, for the month was December. Yet the girl prowled surreptitiously round the house before she approached the front door, and for some minutes she concealed herself behind a clump of trees, watching the dark and silent building intently. At last she stepped out of her hiding-place and walked quietly up to the front entrance.

Cautiously she pushed at the door, which was not quite closed. It opened noiselessly, but the girl did not enter at

once. She took an electric torch from her bag, and by its light she saw that several steps led down into a large hall. Descending the steps, she glanced round quickly, and then walking a few paces forward she stood still to listen for any indication that her entrance had been observed by anyone in the house.

No sound came save the ticking of a large clock in one corner, and soon the light of the torch was flickering here and there as the girl made a rapid survey of the hall. Presently she stooped to pick up an envelope which lay on the floor near a small table. Looking at the outside, she saw that it was addressed to "George Wolmer, Esq.," and that it was unsealed.

Again she stood still and listened carefully. Then, apparently satisfied, she drew a sheet of paper from the envelope and read the words written upon it.

The unsealed letter was certainly a very puzzling document, and a frown of perplexity spread over the girl's face as she studied it.

"Dear Friend,—By the time you get this I shall have gone. Do what you like to Jenkins. He hates you too much to tell you anything. Farewell.

"ELIZABETH ROWSON."

The girl read through this strange document, stood in thought for a moment, and then deliberately walked across the hall and switched on the electric light. She turned to the table, on which she had noticed some writing materials, and searched there for a clean envelope. Just as her hand fell upon one she heard a faint sound outside, as though someone were walking very gingerly up to the front door.

With the speed of light, she tore open the envelope addressed to

George Wolmer, thrust the fragments under a sheet of blotting-paper, and slid the letter into the clean envelope. Quick though she was, she had no time to seal down the envelope, for even as she raised it to her lips the door began to open slowly.

In an instant the letter was out of sight, held in her left hand behind her, while she wetted the first finger of her right hand hoping to get an opportunity even yet to finish the job. Meanwhile her gaze was fixed on the doorway, and in another moment she saw a tall young man enter and stand nervously on the top of the steps.

The second stranger to enter the old house that evening had a handsome boyish face, and he was neatly dressed in well-fitting clothes of an expensive cut. But his manner was so hesitating and nervous that a child would have been suspicious of his intentions, and when he saw the girl calmly facing him he started and half-turned, as though to go out.

"What are you doing here?" asked the girl sharply.

"I—I beg your pardon," stammered the young man. "I saw the light go up, and I thought that Jenkins was here."

"I am Miss Vane—Sybil Vane. I am secretary to Mrs. Rowson, the old lady who owns the house."

The girl's right hand went behind her back as she spoke, and she managed to seal down the envelope unobserved by the nervous stranger.

"I didn't know that Mrs. Rowson had a secretary, Miss Vane," remarked the young man, looking puzzled. "But perhaps you will tell her that Frank Pine has called, and—"

"I think this letter is for you." Sybil Vane cut into the remark as she held out the envelope. "Mrs. Rowson told

December 12th, 1931.

me to give it to the man who would arrive at six o'clock."

Frank Pine took the letter rather dubiously, glancing at the clock as he did so. It was within a few seconds of six, and as he opened the envelope the clock struck the hour.

"But I don't understand this at all." Frank read the letter through, and seemed even more puzzled than before. "She couldn't possibly have known I was coming here this evening. I didn't know myself until a little while ago. And she wouldn't address me as 'Dear Friend.' Why, she hasn't even seen me!"

He looked at the envelope again and then handed the letter back to Sybil.

"There's no name on the envelope," he remarked, glancing suspiciously at the girl. "This letter is most certainly not meant for me."

"And yet you came in almost on the stroke of six!"

The girl's words came slowly and deliberately, full of a meaning that Frank did not in the least comprehend at the moment. Before he could frame any reply, however, a third visitor entered the Gables, and began at once to interest himself very much in the affair.

"Who came at six? I came here at six!" cried a harsh voice.

Sybil and Frank turned to see a coarse-featured man in a rough overcoat, wearing a cloth cap. The newcomer glared fiercely at Frank, and then fixed his eyes on the letter which Sybil still held in her hand.

"What's that you've got?" he snarled, advancing towards the girl. "Gimme that letter! It's for me."

"Are you the man who was to come at six? Is your name George Wolmer?" asked Sybil, retreating a pace or two.

"What's that to you?" The stranger snatched the letter suddenly from Sybil's hand and thrust it into his pocket, just as Frank Pine tried to interpose.

"What do you want here?" began Frank, only to be rudely interrupted. The man in the cloth cap instantly whipped out a revolver and covered young Pine, who jumped back in alarm.

"Stand away!" growled the stranger fiercely. "I ain't letting any young cub interfere with me!" He turned to Sybil with a sneer, but still kept his revolver pointed at Frank. "As for you, miss, I don't know how you came here, but you'd better get out right now. I'm Wolmer, if you want to know, and what I say I mean. Get out, and take this young fellow with you."

Chief-Inspector Dawford.

EVEN as Wolmer spoke a grinding of brakes sounded outside, and the beams of a pair of powerful headlights swept the front of the house. Wolmer instantly ran across the hall and disappeared from view through a door on the opposite side.

Heavy footsteps plodded up to the front door, and into the hall came a tall, burly man of stern appearance, clothed in dark attire, with a bowler hat upon his head. It was obvious at a glance that he was a police officer of some kind, probably an inspector. Behind him came another man of the same type, and outside the door Frank caught a glimpse of uniforms. The police had evidently been informed that there was something mysterious going on at The Gables.

"I am Chief-inspector Dawford, from Scotland Yard," said the burly man, surveying Sybil and Frank with a piercing glance. "This is my assistant,

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Mr. Jackson. We have come down here on information received."

"Good-evening, inspector!" replied Sybil coolly. Frank was too much upset by the events of the last few minutes to say anything. He felt and looked exceedingly uncomfortable, and Dawford did not fail to notice the young man's shrinking manner. The inspector decided to question the girl first, however, and began at once.

"You are perhaps Miss Rowson, the daughter of the old lady who is said to have disappeared?" asked Dawford.

"Disappeared?" cried Frank, startled out of his nervousness by the word.

"Yes, disappeared. Someone gave the Yard a phone message to that effect." The inspector looked suspiciously at Frank, but immediately turned again to Sybil. "Are you Miss Rowson?"

"No," replied the girl. "My name is Sybil Vane, and I have been doing some secretarial work for Mrs. Rowson."

"Well, Miss Vane, you can no doubt give me some information," remarked Dawford. "When did you last see Mrs. Rowson?"

Sybil paused for a second before she answered, and the inspector's eyes narrowed as he watched her keenly.

"Yesterday," she said at length.

"What time?"

"About six o'clock." The girl's answer came more quickly this time, and her eyes met Dawford's serenely and confidently.

"And how long have you been her secretary?"

"Not very long," replied Sybil.

"No? Well, we had no information that Mrs. Rowson had a secretary at all." Incredulity was in Dawford's voice and manner as he spoke to the girl.

"We were under the impression that she lived here alone, except for a butler. You're not the butler, of course?" he added, swinging round on Frank. "Who are you?"

"I'm—I'm just a reporter—from the local paper, the 'Argus'—I mean the 'Tribune,'" stammered Frank. "My name is John Sm—I mean John Wilson."

"H'm! You're a queer reporter!" Dawford surveyed Frank even more suspiciously than before, and, indeed, the young man's confused manner would have made anyone suspicious. "You don't seem to know what paper you work for, or even your own name. And why did you come here this evening?"

"I came to—oh, just to look round," muttered Frank, carefully avoiding the inspector's eye.

"I don't believe a word you say!" thundered Inspector Dawford. Turning to Jackson, who stood just beside him, the man from Scotland Yard nodded, and without a word his assistant went to the door and beckoned to someone outside.

A moment later a tall police-sergeant of splendid physique came in, and stood awaiting orders.

"Have you placed your men, sergeant?" asked Dawford.

"Five minutes ago, sir. All round the house." Sergeant Hogan indicated the location of his men by a wide sweep of his arm, and then again stood to attention solemnly.

"Very well. You see these two?" Dawford pointed out Sybil and Frank. "They are not to leave the building. Instruct your men that no one whatever is to be allowed to pass out. Then return and help Mr. Jackson to search the house."

The sergeant saluted and went out, while the inspector turned again to Sybil, whose coolness under his questioning had rendered him even more suspicious of her than he was of Frank Pine.

"Now, Miss Vane, you haven't helped me much so far. Where is Mrs. Rowson?"

He barked out the question with great vehemence, but the girl only smiled in reply.

"I don't know," she said quietly.

"Has she disappeared, then, as we were informed?" queried Dawford.

"I think so." To the amazement of Frank Pine, the girl smiled again as she replied, and the inspector's manner became dangerously calm.

"You think so, eh? Well, I'm not satisfied with your replies," he said. "I find you and this young fellow in a house which I was told had only two inhabitants, and you are both concealing something. I don't believe you are Mrs. Rowson's secretary any more than I believe the yarn your friend here spun me. Have you been here all day?"

"No," replied Sybil. "I arrived this evening, about half-past five."

"And our young friend the—reporter?" Dawford's emphasis on the word was extremely significant. "Did you meet him here?"

"I came after Miss Vane," Frank broke in nervously.

"He came at—six o'clock," remarked Sybil, looking sideways at Frank.

"Hardly a deserted house, The Gables, eh? Has anyone else been here this evening?" The inspector's eyes bored into Sybil as he asked the question, but the girl replied without a moment's hesitation.

"No!" she said.

Frank could not forbear a start as Sybil spoke. Who was this girl, he thought, and why should she conceal the fact that the man Wolmer had broken in upon them to take away the mysterious letter? He had little time to consider the matter for Dawford had instantly observed his movement, and turned upon him like lightning.

"And you, Mr. Wilson—you said your name was Wilson, didn't you, or was it Smith? Have you seen anyone here this evening besides this young lady?"

"N-no," stammered Frank, uneasily conscious that the inspector did not believe him.

Dawford looked sternly from Sybil to Frank, but to the young man's relief, Mr. Jackson and Sergeant Hogan returned from their search of the house at that moment, and the inspector wheeled round upon them.

"Anyone in the house?" he asked.

"No, sir," replied Jackson. "The sergeant and I have searched every room, but there's no one here."

Then where was Wolmer? thought Frank. The man might, of course, have got clear away without being observed by the police, but that seemed improbable if Sergeant Hogan had posted his men all round the house as speedily as he had said. And where was Jenkins, the butler, and the mysterious Mrs. Rowson? Did Sybil Vane know anything about them? Frank Pine grew more and more puzzled and nervous as he glanced at the impassive face of the girl, and a second later he gave a convulsive start.

Outside the door could be heard a querulous voice that Frank well knew. Someone was arguing with the policeman on guard—for yet another visitor had just arrived at The Gables.

New Arrivals.

CHIEF-INSPECTOR DAWFORD looked towards the door where the altercation was going on, and then turned to Sergeant Hogan, who stood near him.

"Go and see who is there, sergeant," he ordered. "If it's anyone asking for

Mrs. Rowson, bring him in. He may have some information about her."

Hogan went to the door, and presently ushered in an old man, well-dressed and with the outward appearance of a gentleman. The newcomer was, however, in a very agitated state, his face working and his whole body shaking with excitement and nervousness.

"What's all this?" he cried, going straight up to Inspector Dawford. "Why is this house surrounded by police? Why can't I be allowed to call on Mrs. Rowson without being questioned by a constable at the door?"

"I am Inspector Dawford," replied the Scotland Yard man icily. "I should recommend you to calm yourself, sir, for I may have some questions to ask you. I am conducting an investigation here. We have been informed that Mrs. Rowson has disappeared under suspicious circumstances."

"Mrs. Rowson—disappeared?" The old man stared uncomprehendingly at Dawford for a moment, and then as he took in the sense of the words his agitation increased tenfold, and his voice rose to a wild scream.

"She can't have disappeared! You're lying—you're trying to trap me. Why, she asked me to call to-night. What shall I do? For Heaven's sake, tell me where she is!"

"Be careful what you're saying," came the stern warning. "Mrs. Rowson is not here, and you may be the last person who saw her alive. Pull yourself together and answer the questions I must ask you."

"Is—is Mrs. Rowson—dead then?" The old man seined on the verge of collapse as he stammered out the question, but Frank Pine suddenly ran across to him to hold him up as he swayed uncertainly on his feet.

"Steady, sir," he said soothingly. "We know nothing certain about Mrs. Rowson, except that she is not here. Do try to be calm, and perhaps you can

help the inspector to get at the truth."

"You here, Frank?" came the answer in trembling tones. "Well, I suppose you're right. What do you want to ask me, inspector?"

Dawford had at first seemed rather puzzled at the obvious intimacy between Frank Pine and the old man who had just come in. He looked at the pair keenly, and a grim smile presently came over his face.

"This young man, whom you call Frank, told me his name was John Wilson, or Smith," remarked the inspector. "He didn't seem quite sure which. In reality, I suppose he is—"

"This gentleman is my father, Sir Joseph Pine," interrupted Frank.

"Yes, I am Sir Joseph Pine." The old man suddenly pulled himself together and spoke more calmly, facing the inspector coolly enough. "Have you any complaint against my son?"

"He did not give me his real name, as I told you," replied Dawford. "Beyond that—well, I cannot say for the present. I am sorry I did not recognise you, Sir Joseph. You are the curator of the Antiquarian Museum in this neighbourhood, I believe."

"Yes, that is right, inspector," said Frank's father. "As to Mrs. Rowson, I saw her in this house last night, and I arranged to come here this evening at six o'clock. I am a little late, of course, but I cannot understand why she should not be here."

"You came here frequently, Sir Joseph?" Dawford's voice was quiet, but he was keenly attentive to the old man's voice and manner, for he believed that the mystery of Mrs. Rowson's alleged disappearance would probably be solved by the questions he was about to ask.

"Yes, I was, I believe, her only visitor," replied Sir Joseph. "She is interested in chess, and so am I. For some time I have been in the habit of coming here in the evenings to play

chess with her. She never spoke of going away. In fact, so far as I know, she never left the house."

Sybil Vane had moved nearer, eagerly listening to the old man's narrative, and Dawford observed that Sir Joseph's glance rested on the girl for a second, apparently without recognition.

"One moment, sir," said the inspector. "You recognise this young lady as Mrs. Rowson's secretary, of course?"

"Mrs. Rowson's secretary?" Sir Joseph looked at Sybil, and the old man was obviously puzzled. "No, she hadn't a secretary. I have never seen this lady before."

"I thought as much," cried Dawford in accents of triumph. "You'd better tell me the truth, madam, as to why you came here."

"I shall tell you nothing," replied Sybil firmly.

"We shall see." The inspector turned to Sir Joseph again and resumed his queries. "Another point, Sir Joseph. Do you know the man who acted as Mrs. Rowson's butler?"

"Certainly, certainly," said the old man. "I saw him last night."

"He is not in the house now," declared Dawford. "We have searched every room, and he is not to be found."

"Jenkins gone, too? He can't have gone!" Sir Joseph Pine was becoming extremely agitated again. "He was too infirm to get far. You can't have searched properly. He must be somewhere about."

Inspector Dawford was annoyed at the old man's tone, but Sir Joseph was right. One part of the house had not been thoroughly searched, and Jenkins the butler was indeed "somewhere about." Not yet, however, was his presence to be revealed, for as Sir Joseph spoke there came again the murmur of voices at the door.

Once more Sergeant Hogan went to investigate, and this time he brought in two more visitors to The Gables. One



"Stand away!" growled the stranger. He turned to Sybil, but still kept the revolver pointed at Frank. "As for you, miss, I don't know how you came here, but you'd better get out right now!"

was a very tall and well-groomed individual, with a clear-cut, handsome face, who smiled cynically as he saw the inspector. The other was a scared-looking little man, excessively neat and dapper in appearance, who held in his hand a case of documents; obviously a professional man and suffering at the moment from shock, for he was plainly extremely worried at the sight of the police.

Inspector Dawford looked eagerly at the two newcomers as they approached, and his face fell, for he instantly recognized the taller of the pair.

"That's Campbell Edwards," he muttered to himself. "What can he be doing here?"

A Cry in the Dark.

"WHY, Mr. Dawford, you here? What an unexpected pleasure!"

The tall man greeted Inspector Dawford with every appearance of cordiality as he came up. Campbell Edwards was a well-known private detective, and the man from Scotland Yard foresaw immediate complications from his unexpected appearance. The inspector replied politely enough, but his manner was the reverse of enthusiastic.

"Good-evening, Mr. Edwards. I was not aware that you had heard of this business."

"Business? What business?" replied Edwards, glancing round. "I see that the place is surrounded by your men, and that this hall seems to be crowded with people, but I don't know what you mean, all the same."

"You don't know anything about this reported disappearance of Mrs. Rowson, the owner of The Gables, then?" Dawford's face brightened as he asked the question. Perhaps, after all, he was mistaken in his idea that the private detective had come on professional business.

"Not a thing. I'm down in this part of the country on a holiday, and my friend here"—Edwards indicated the nervous little man—"my friend has been kind enough to bring me to look over The Gables. I understand the house is for sale, and I have thought of buying a place somewhere in this district."

Inspector Dawford transferred his gaze to the little man, who stood looking helplessly round, clutching the case tightly in his hand. As Dawford turned upon him, he spoke in a feeble, twittering voice.

"Did—did somebody say that Mrs. Rowson is not here?" he remarked.

"Who are you?" countered Dawford, ignoring the question.

"I am Joshua Atkinson, of the firm Atkinson, Atkinson & Atkinson, estate agents. Mrs. Rowson has instructed us to sell The Gables, and now you say she has gone. You did say so, didn't you?"

The timidity with which the little man brought out his last query made even the grim Scotland Yard man smile, and Sergeant Hogan hurriedly coughed to hide a chuckle, while Frank Pine and Sybil Vane laughed outright.

"She's not here, at any rate," said Dawford. "Did you see her when she gave you instructions about the house?"

"No, no, inspector." Joshua Atkinson looked in a scared fashion at Dawford, who was regarding him with mingled scorn and contempt. "She sent her instructions to us by post."

"Got the letter with you?" asked the inspector.

"The letter is at the office of Atkinson, Atkinson & Atkinson," came the precise reply. "I can repeat the wording to you, inspector, if you wish me to do so." Dawford nodded, and the little man went on. "She wrote: 'Please sell my house, The Gables, for the best price you can obtain, as soon as possible.'"

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That was all. We received the letter only this morning."

"Her usual signature?" queried Dawford.

"Oh, yes, yes, inspector, that was quite in order. May I go now, please? I can't possibly show Mr. Edwards over the house this evening, now that there is all this trouble."

"No one is going out of this house yet." The inspector glared round on the group fiercely as he spoke. "I'm going to get to the bottom of this business before anyone leaves."

"But—but—my wife, inspector," stammered Atkinson in extreme agitation. "It's not that I mind being detained here. I know nothing at all about Mrs. Rowson, but my wife won't like it if I come home late. You don't know my wife, or you wouldn't keep me here." His voice rose to a plaintive wail as he finished, and everyone in the hall, except the inspector, chuckled at the expression of dismay on the little man's face. Dawford looked at him stonily and replied in his iciest tone.

"Well, Mr. Atkinson, if you're afraid of your wife's tongue, that's your affair. You've come into this house, and you stay here until I'm satisfied."

"But surely you don't suspect me of any connection with Mrs. Rowson's disappearance?" twittered Atkinson, almost in tears and twisting convulsively in his alarm. "I assure you, inspector, I am quite innocent. Everyone knows me. Here's Sir Joseph Pine. Please tell the inspector that you know me, Sir Joseph."

"This is certainly Mr. Atkinson," said Sir Joseph. "You surely haven't any reason to suspect him, inspector."

"I suspect everyone present." Dawford's tone was stern as he looked round angrily at the group, and on several faces he saw unmistakable signs of alarm. "This house had the reputation of being practically deserted, and yet five people have called here this evening. Mrs. Rowson has apparently disappeared, and some of you know more than you have admitted about her. I am sure of it."

Campbell Edwards smiled sardonically at the inspector, who caught the look and resented it, for the private detective had more than once solved problems that had baffled the Scotland Yard man. Before Dawford had time to speak again, however, there came a startling interruption.

From the darkness outside came a wild scream of pain and fear—a scream in the voice of a terror-stricken woman.

"Quick! Go and see what's wrong!" cried Dawford, turning sharply on Jackson and Hogan. "Let the men search the grounds again."

The group of people in the hall waited expectantly for a few minutes, until a couple of stalwart policemen entered, carrying with great difficulty the inanimate form of a stout, elderly woman, poorly dressed in cheap clothes. Jackson followed, evidently in some excitement.

"I've found Mrs. Rowson," he cried triumphantly, "out there in the shrubbery! Someone attacked her as she was coming towards the house, I think. She's fainted, but she's not much hurt. The men are searching the grounds."

"See what you can do for her, sergeant," said Inspector Dawford. "Does anyone recognize this woman as Mrs. Rowson?"

"This is not Mrs. Rowson—this person is the charwoman, Mrs. Cumberpatch."

Sir Joseph Pine came forward as he spoke.

"I don't see how anyone could mistake her for Mrs. Rowson."

"You forget, Sir Joseph," said Dawford. "I believe you are the only person present who has even seen that lady."

"Yes, yes, I suppose so," stammered the old man. "Well, Mrs. Rowson is much older, fairly tall, though now she stoops somewhat, and she is always well dressed. Sometimes she wears a shawl over her head in the cold weather. Mrs. Cumberpatch is nothing like her."

"So this is the charwoman, is it?" The inspector was obviously disappointed, and Jackson, his assistant, retired into the background in dismay over his blunder, while once again a sarcastic smile curled the lips of Campbell Edwards, the private detective.

"You'd better try to get some information from her when she recovers," remarked Edwards in a tone which expressed his complete disbelief in the powers of the inspector. Dawford was about to answer fiercely, when a plaintive voice behind him distracted his attention.

"Please, inspector, will you permit me to use the telephone?" wailed Atkinson. "My wife will be getting so very anxious, and I must let her know I am detained."

At that moment Mrs. Cumberpatch sat up, and the inspector called Sergeant Hogan, who had been administering first aid to the charwoman.

"Take this very anxious gentleman to the telephone, sergeant," he remarked. "He wants to let his wife know he's out. Do you know if there's a telephone on this building?"

"Yes, sir, in that room on the left," replied the sergeant.

Soon Joshua Atkinson was desperately trying to explain to an incredulous wife that he was unavoidably detained at the office, for he did not dare to mention The Gables or the police. Sergeant Hogan stood by, trying in vain to keep a straight face.

"You see, sergeant," said the little man plaintively, when he had at last succeeded in pacifying the good lady to some extent, "you see, my wife is always so very nervous when I am out late. She imagines all sorts of queer things. You'd hardly believe some of the odd suspicions that come into her mind."

"Oh, yes, I should, sir," replied the sergeant. "I quite understand what you mean. You see, I'm married myself."

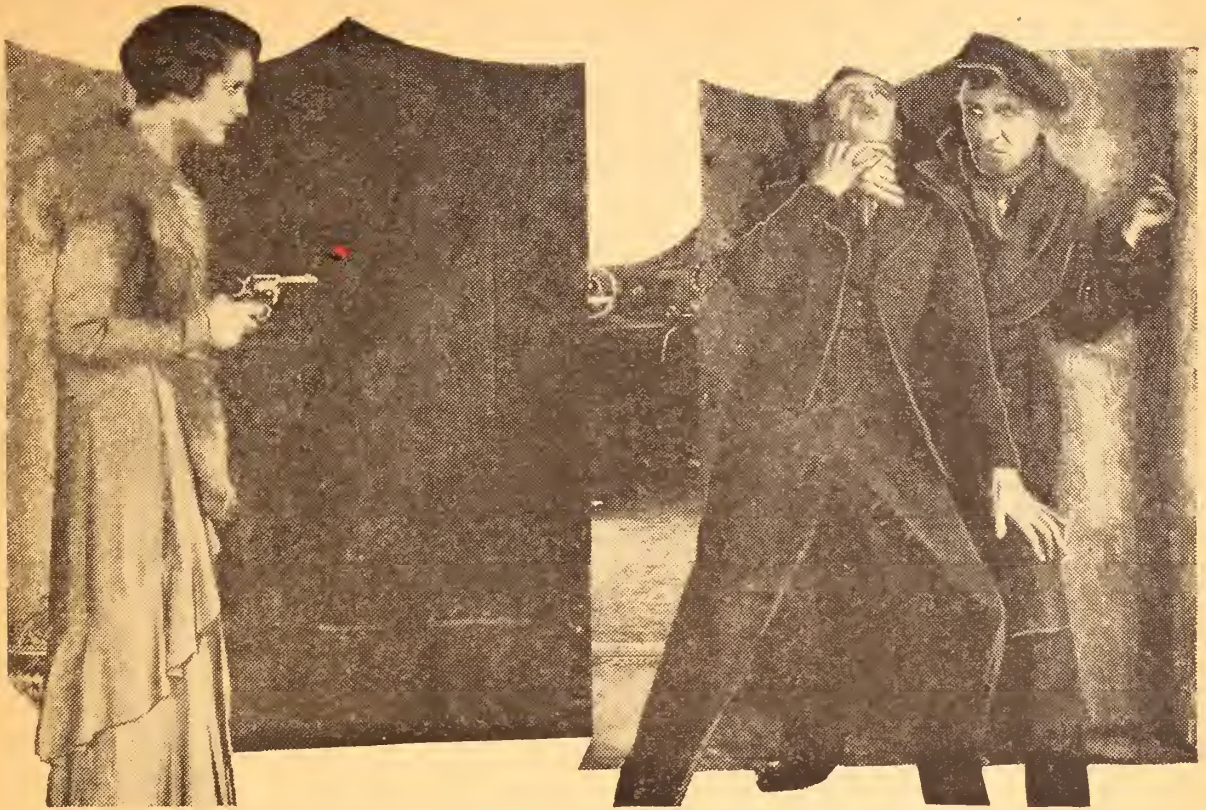
Jenkins is Found.

CHIEF-INSPECTOR DAWFORD admitted to himself that he was puzzled. Six persons had entered the house which had been described as "deserted"—the total was, in fact, seven, but the inspector knew nothing, as yet, of George Wolmer. One or more of these persons must know something about Mrs. Rowson's supposed disappearance, and yet the information he had obtained so far had given him no clue.

Some mystery there was, he thought. The entrance of so many people on the same evening could not be mere coincidence, and he turned to Mrs. Cumberpatch in the hope that she might be able to throw some light upon the affair.

"Are you feeling better, Mrs. Cumberpatch?" he asked. "Can you tell me what happened outside there just now?"

"Oh, yes, sir," replied the charwoman eagerly, only too ready to relate her experiences. "I was just a-comin' in to see Mrs. Rowson, 'cos



"Put up your hands, or I fire!" she said in a low voice.

Jenkins told me she wanted me to-night at six o'clock, and I was hurrying through the garden 'cos I was a bit late, an' a man, sudden-like, sprang out on me, an' I screamed."

"Yes, we heard you," remarked the inspector as Mrs. Cummerpatch paused to take breath. "Did you know the man?"

"Not in the dark I didn't," continued the voluble charwoman, "but he'd got a big cap drawn over his eyes, I think. An' he said, 'That's for you, Mrs. Rowson,' as he knocked me down, so he must have taken me for her, I s'pose. But why anyone should want to knock the old lady down is more than I can tell you, an' if you can catch him—"

Mrs. Cummerpatch would no doubt have gone on for some time longer, for she was gifted with a great capability for talking. At that moment, however, she was interrupted, for a policeman came in to report that no trace of her assailant could be found. Dawford observed a smile on the face of Campbell Edwards as the man made his report, and the inspector's annoyance overcame him altogether.

"May I ask you what you think of all this, Mr. Edwards?" he inquired sneeringly.

"I cannot express any opinion," replied the private detective quietly. "I know too little about the business. I do not even know if you are quite certain that this Mrs. Rowson has really disappeared. But if you wish me to assist you in any way, you have only to ask, and I will do what I can."

"Have you any suggestions, then?" asked Dawford.

Campbell Edwards looked coolly round, surveying Frank and Sybil, Sir Joseph and Joshua Atkinson and Mrs. Cummerpatch with his keen glance. The three men fidgeted uncomfortably

as his gaze fell upon them, but the women remained quite unmoved. Edwards turned again to the inspector.

"You have searched the house and the grounds, of course. Found anything suspicious?"

"Nothing at all as yet," confessed Dawford.

"Have you searched this hall?"

Edwards glanced round the large apartment in which they stood, and the inspector's face grew crimson with annoyance.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "I forgot the hall."

"I don't at all suppose that you made a mistake in overlooking the hall," remarked the detective calmly. "There's not much chance of finding a solution to the mystery, if there is a mystery, in this hall. Still, I'll have a look round, just to make sure."

Edwards began to stroll slowly around, and presently came to the small table where Sybil Vane had found the writing material when she first came in. The girl watched him turning over the papers which lay upon the table, wondering whether he would lift up the sheet of blotting-paper under which she had hidden the fragments of the envelope.

"What have we here?"

Edwards had found the torn envelope, sure enough, and he held it out for the inspector to see.

"Envelope torn in half, eh?" said Dawford, taking it and piecing the fragments together. "May have been there for days, of course. Addressed to George Wolmer, Esq. Any of you know anything about this?"

"That blotting-paper was not on the table last night," replied Sir Joshua Pine. "I was here then, and the table was clear."

"H'm! Was there any blotting-paper

on this table when you arrived this evening?"

Dawford turned to Sybil and Frank expectantly, only to be disappointed.

"I am not giving you any more information," said Sybil firmly, while Frank merely shook his head.

"Who is this George Wolmer?" demanded the inspector; but once again he drew blank, for no information was forthcoming from those who knew something of the person mentioned.

Meanwhile Campbell Edwards had resumed his stroll about the hall, and presently a sharp exclamation from his lips drew the attention of everyone to him.

"Look there!" he cried, pointing towards a large settee which stood at one side of the hall.

Just visible, protruding from beneath the settee, were the fingers of a hand.

Inspector Dawford rushed across the hall, calling to Jackson and Sergeant Hogan to help, and a moment later the settee had been turned over to reveal lying beneath the motionless body of a man.

"Good heavens! It's Jenkins!" screamed Sir Joshua.

"He's dead, I'm afraid," remarked Campbell Edwards.

The inspector was speechless with chagrin. There all the time, a few yards from him, the body of the missing butler had been lying, and yet it had been left for a mere private detective to make the discovery. Dawford knelt down beside the body to examine it.

There was no sign of violence so far as he could see, but it was plain enough that the unfortunate Jenkins was dead. "Send for Doctor Grayson at once," said the inspector, rising, and the sergeant went off to 'phone for the police surgeon.

Sir Joseph Pine had been staring fixedly at the body of Jenkins for some

moments in silence, but now suddenly the old man's nerve gave way completely, and he began to rave in frantic fashion.

"Yes, that's Jenkins!" he screamed wildly. "He's dead—he's dead. And where's Mrs. Rowson? Won't anyone tell me where she's gone? Then I'm going to find her."

Sir Joseph began to stagger across the hall towards the stairs. He had just reached the foot of the staircase when Frank rushed to his side, just in time to prevent his father from falling.

"Calm yourself, father," he implored. "We'll find her, never fear."

"Those men—they're missing!" shrieked the old man. "I must find them, and she can tell me where they are."

"Missing men? What do you mean, Sir Joseph?"

Dawford looked curiously at Frank's father, and his glance showed that suspicion was still alive in him.

"I must find them or I'm ruined!" cried Sir Joseph, taking not the least notice of the inspector's question.

Sybil Vane looked at the frantic old man, but there was no pity in her eyes, and a contemptuous smile curled her lip. Dawford did not see that smile, but Campbell Edwards observed it.

"Do you know what Sir Joseph means?" he asked her.

"I? How should I know?" retorted Sybil sharply. "He's raving. The sight of Jenkins' body has turned his brain, no doubt."

But in spite of her words, Sybil Vane had a very good idea of the meaning of Sir Joseph's outburst, all the same.

George Wolmer Again.

INSPECTOR DAWFORD determined to clear the hall before the arrival of the police surgeon, in order that the medical man might make his investigation into the cause of Jenkins' death without interruption. He turned first to Sybil and Frank.

"Go into that room and stay there, both of you," he indicated a door on the right of the hall. "I shall take you down to the police-station presently. I am not satisfied that either of you has told the truth about your reason for visiting this house to-night."

Sybil walked at once towards the door, looking defiantly at the inspector as she went. Frank hesitated a moment, glancing at his father, who had now collapsed heavily into a chair, quite exhausted by his emotions. Then he followed Sybil slowly across the hall, and the door closed behind him.

"Sergeant," pursued the inspector, "you will take Sir Joseph Pine, Mr. Atkinson and Mrs. Cummerpatch into that room on the left. Stay with them, and attend to Sir Joseph if he needs assistance."

"Very good, sir," replied the sergeant, shepherding his charges out of the hall, which was thus left clear save for the inspector, his assistant and Campbell Edwards. Dawford spoke at once to the private detective.

"Will you help me by trying to get some information from Miss Vane and young Pine?" he asked. "I am convinced that they both know something."

"Certainly," replied Edwards, smiling. "I quite agree with you. The young lady knows quite a lot about this business, in my opinion. I will do what I can."

A moment later Campbell Edwards entered the room to which Sybil and Frank had gone. He found the girl sitting on a chair, quite calm and self-possessed, while Frank Pine stood dis-

consolately by her side, still extremely worried and nervous.

"Your father seems better, Mr. Pine," said Edwards easily. "The sergeant is looking after him. Strange state of affairs this. I came here to look over the house with a view to purchase, and I seem to have stumbled upon a mystery of sorts, or even possibly a serious crime. I imagine the inspector hasn't quite made up his mind as to what is wrong."

"Are you trying to solve the problem?" asked Sybil sharply.

"I shouldn't think of interfering with the inspector," came the smooth reply. Edwards took out his cigarette-case and smiled at the girl. "Will you have a cigarette? No? You, Mr. Pine? You don't smoke? You will permit me, Miss Vane? Thank you."

The detective lighted his cigarette, and paced gently up and down the room for a moment or two, while the young man and the girl watched him in silence.

"There is something queer about this Mrs. Rowson," he said at length. "If you know anything about her, Miss Vane, I hope you will reconsider your attitude and inform the inspector. There was the matter of that torn-up envelope, too. If we knew what that envelope had contained, we might be nearer a solution."

Frank Pine started visibly, and the detective glanced at him.

"Yes, Mr. Pine," he remarked quietly. "You know something about it. Why not tell me, or tell the inspector? You will be helping your father if you do, for at present I fancy that Dawford suspects him of making away with the old lady."

Frank was in two minds. He wanted to disclose the facts about the letter and the mysterious appearance of the man Wolmer, and yet a queer feeling of loyalty to Sybil Vane restrained him. He looked at the girl, and saw that she shook her head slightly, so he did not speak.

The conversation remained one-sided. Do what he would, Campbell Edwards failed to induce either Sybil or Frank to give him any information, and at last he retired, baffled, to consult Inspector Dawford again. The girl drew a breath of relief when he had gone.

"I'm glad he's gone," she said to Frank. "I told the inspector nothing of importance, and I'm certainly not going to tell Mr. Edwards anything. The inspector sent him in to draw us, of course."

"What's become of Wolmer?" said Frank in a whisper.

"I imagine that it was he who attacked Mrs. Cummerpatch. He is probably lurking somewhere about. This is a very old house," Sybil glanced round the room as she spoke. "The sort of house which makes me think of secret passages and hidden doors."

Frank looked uneasily at the girl, and then his gaze wandered round the room. On the further side was a door leading into a small adjoining chamber, and even as the young man's glance rested upon it there came a slight noise. The door opened slowly, and a man appeared, peering cautiously into the larger room before he advanced.

He evidently expected to find the room empty, and he started with surprise when he perceived Sybil and Frank. The girl rose to her feet and confronted the intruder steadily, and Frank stepped to her side.

"You again, George Wolmer?" said Sybil. "What do you want now?"

"Where's Mrs. Rowson?" growled

Wolmer hoarsely. "Lemmo pass. She's in the hall, I reckon, and I'm going to get her."

Sybil and Frank stood firm, and Wolmer, after a moment's hesitation, came forward stealthily, and then with a sudden spring leaped at the young man. Frank grappled with him, and as he did so Sybil Vane swiftly produced a revolver.

"Put up your hands, or I fire," she said in a low voice.

Frank Pine was no match for Wolmer, who by now had him in a vice-like grip round the neck. He dragged the half-throttled young man to the side of the room, keeping Frank's body between him and the threatening pistol. Sybil did not dare to fire, lest she should hit Frank, and a second later the room was in darkness. Wolmer had switched off the light, and the girl heard the sound of his retreating footsteps as she groped her way forward to assist Frank.

The light went up again, for the young man found the switch before Sybil reached him. Frank was more shaken than hurt, and he stared in silence at the girl as she stepped to his side.

"Are you hurt, Mr. Pine?" she asked gently.

"Not very much, I'm glad to say," replied Frank. "I felt half-stifled for the moment, but it's nothing. What are we going to do now?"

Sybil did not reply, and to Frank's amazement the girl began to sway uncertainly on her feet. She staggered back a pace or two, and the young man at once rushed to her assistance, and made her sit down in a comfortable chair.

"Don't you feel well, Miss Vane?" he asked anxiously.

"I am a little faint—it's shock, I think," murmured Sybil. "Will you try to get me a glass of water, please?"

Frank went out into the hall, told Dawford that Sybil was not well, and in a few minutes returned with a glass of water. The girl was not to be seen when Frank re-entered the room, and he thought for a moment that she must have gone into the smaller apartment beyond.

He set down the glass and looked into the small room. It was empty, and to Frank's amazement there appeared to be no exit from it. Yet Wolmer had gone that way, and he was not to be seen either. Frank was completely puzzled. He ran back to the hall, and seized Inspector Dawford by the arm.

"Come at once, inspector," he cried breathlessly. "Miss Vane has disappeared!"

"I'll Tell the Truth."

SOME minutes before Frank Pine came out to get the glass of water the police-surgeon had arrived at The Gables in response to the urgent telephone message from Sergeant Hogan.

"Man found dead here, Dr. Grayson," said Inspector Dawford as the surgeon came hurriedly in. "Will you see if you can state the cause of death?"

The doctor knelt down by the body of the butler and examined the corpse closely for a few minutes. Then he stood up and turned to Dawford.

"No sign of a wound, or of violence," he stated. "The man has been dead for not more than three or four hours. I should say. He's an old man, and I think he died of heart-failure, probably from some sudden shock. Look at his face—there's fear stamped upon it."

"Yes, I noticed that look of horror on his face," replied Dawford thoughtfully. "You are able to say definitely that he

was not actually murdered, then, doctor?"

"He was not," came the instant reply. "But there must be an inquest, of course. I cannot sign a death certificate under these circumstances."

"Of course you cannot, doctor. There is more in this than meets the eye." The inspector looked grave as he glanced down at the body of the unfortunate butler. "I will have the body removed at once."

Dawford called in some of his men, and when Frank Pine came out to fetch the water the corpse of the dead butler had already been taken away. The inspector had just brought Sir Joseph, Mr. Atkinson and Mrs. Cummerpatch back into the hall in readiness to resume his questioning when Frank burst in with the news that Sybil Vane had disappeared.

"There's no way out, inspector," cried Frank, "and yet she's gone."

"Take charge here, Jackson," ordered the inspector hastily. "I must look into this matter at once."

Dawford accompanied Frank and made an examination of the rooms, only to find that the young man's story was correct. There was no sign of the girl, and there seemed to be no exit from the small room.

"The window, perhaps, inspector," suggested Frank. "She may have got out that way."

"I think not." Dawford looked at the window and shook his head. "This window has not been opened for many a long day. She certainly hasn't got out there. Probably there's a secret passage somewhere."

Dawford began to tap the wall here and there, but before he had discovered anything Sergeant Hogan came rushing in.

"Will you came at once, sir?" he cried. "Mrs. Rowson is outside!"

Hastily the inspector and Frank went back to the hall, and there at a window

they saw the figure of an old lady, with a shawl over her head, peering in.

"You see her, inspector?" gasped Sir Joseph Pine, trembling with excitement. "That is Mrs. Rowson at last. I must speak to her. Please bring her in at once."

In another minute the woman whom Sir Joseph had identified as Mrs. Rowson stood in the entrance of the hall, and the old man ran eagerly up to her.

"Where have you been, Mrs. Rowson?" he began eagerly. "I was afraid you had gone away."

There was no reply. The onlookers could not see what the old lady was like, for she stooped badly, and the shawl partly covered her face, which was still further concealed by a heavy veil. Sir Joseph, however, seemed sure of her identity, and he went on speaking in a shaking voice.

"Where are those men, Mrs. Rowson?" he asked. "I shall be ruined if I don't get them soon. Where are they?"

Still there came no reply from the motionless figure of the old lady. Campbell Edwards took a step forward and gazed intently at her, while Inspector Dawford looked at Sir Joseph Pine in bewilderment, unable to understand what he was talking about.

"If you won't tell me what you have done with the men, give me the drug," pleaded Sir Joseph. "If you do that, I'll let you keep the men, though that will be my ruin. Give me the drug, Mrs. Rowson, please!"

"The men? The drug? What is the meaning of all this, Sir Joseph?" asked Inspector Dawford impatiently.

The old man seemed not to hear a word the inspector said. He continued to stammer incoherently about "the men" and "the drug," though the old lady had not as yet said one word in reply to his wild pleadings.

Frank came up, and was just about to interfere when there came a startling interruption. A revolver barked from

outside the front door, and Sir Joseph with a groan of anguish collapsed in a heap on the steps of the hall.

Instantly all was confusion. Inspector Dawford, forgetting "Mrs. Rowson" altogether for the moment, shouted to his men, and Sergeant Hogan hurried out to take charge of the search for the man who had fired the shot. Sir Joseph was lifted on to a couch, and the surgeon began to examine his wound.

Only one person seemed to keep his head. Campbell Edwards ignored Sir Joseph, and ran swiftly over to the old woman just as she was about to go out through the open door. He seized her by the arm, pulled off her shawl, lifted the veil from her face, and revealed the features of Sybil Vane.

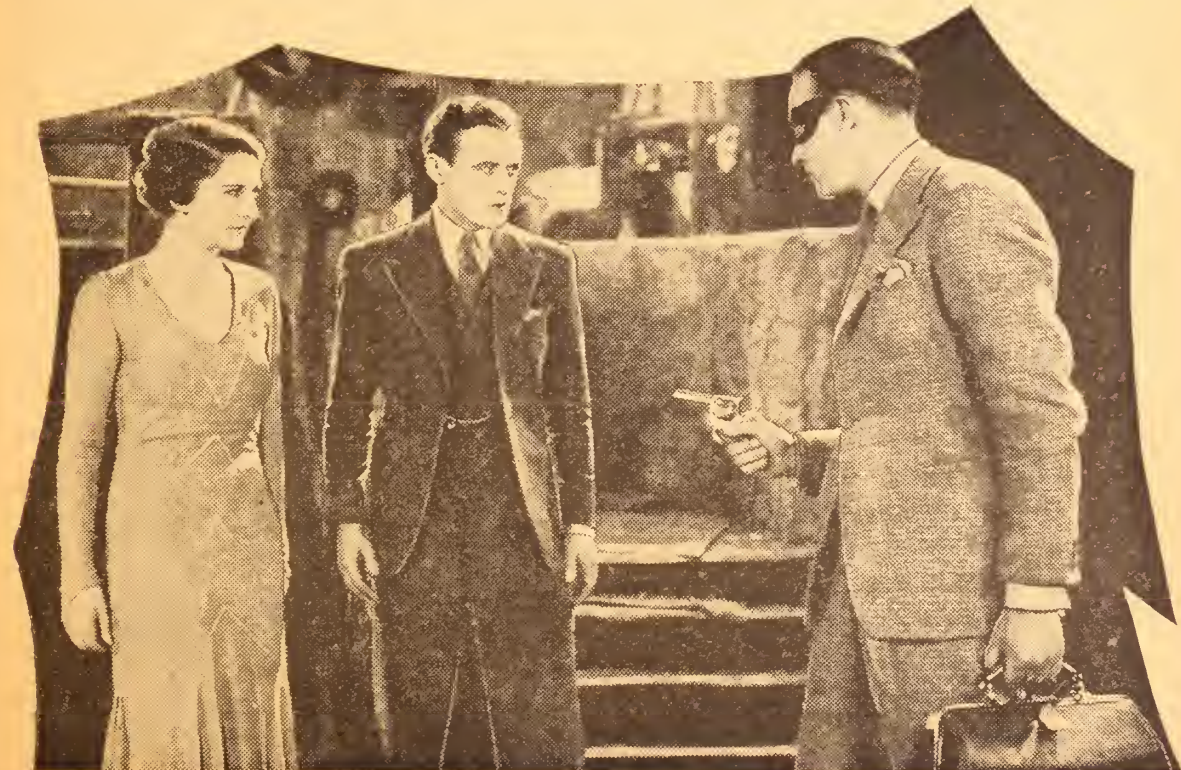
"I thought as much, Miss Vane," said Edwards coolly. "What is the idea? Why are you masquerading as Mrs. Rowson, pray?"

"I refuse to give you any explanation," retorted Sybil defiantly. Shaking off the detective's grip, the girl ran past him across the hall, and into the room from which she had so mysteriously disappeared a short time before. Edwards hesitated, and then followed, but he was too late. By the time he had reached the smaller room Sybil had once more vanished.

Meanwhile a little group had gathered round the couch on which Sir Joseph lay. Frank stood at the end of the couch, anxiously watching the doctor, who was examining the old man's arm. Mrs. Cummerpatch had come up with a bowl of water, and Inspector Dawford, by her side, looked alternately from Frank to Sir Joseph, quite unable to form any theory as to the conduct of either.

"He is not much hurt, inspector," said the doctor at length. "The bullet just grazed his arm, no more. Severe shock, of course, but he'll recover from that before long."

Frank breathed a sigh of relief, and



"Stand back, you young fool!" ground out the masked man fiercely.

soon his father opened his eyes and looked up in a bewildered way. Presently he was able to sit up, and as his strength returned he seemed to come to a sudden decision.

"I've had a great shock, Frank," he said slowly, "but it's all for the best, perhaps. It has made me realise that I am in serious danger. I'll tell you and the inspector the truth."

Sir Joseph's Confession.

SIR JOSEPH PINE began his narrative in a feeble voice, but as the effects of the shock wore off he proceeded more firmly, and the fact that he was at last confessing his troubles seemed somehow to relieve his mind.

"I had a letter from Mrs. Rowson soon after she came here," he said. "She professed to be interested in the museum of which I am curator, and as she was too unwell to visit it, she asked me to call. She wanted to discuss certain antiquarian matters with me, she said. I called in answer to her letter, and after that I came here very often."

"Did you ever see anyone else here, Sir Joseph?" Inspector Dawford asked the question eagerly, for he had come to the conclusion that the old man could tell him all he wanted to know.

"The butler and Mrs. Cummerpatch, no one else. She had no visitors except for me."

Campbell Edwards came out of the room into which he had followed Sybil, and stood unobserved at the side of the hall. A smile curved his lips as he noticed the group round the couch. He felt sure that in the excitement of Sir Joseph's wound none of them had seen him unmask Sybil Vane, and he was right. Apparently even Sir Joseph and the inspector had for the moment quite forgotten the appearance of the supposed Mrs. Rowson at the door.

"Surprising that Dawford didn't keep an eye on that girl," thought Edwards. "I'll remind him of that little mistake in due course."

Meanwhile Sir Joseph continued his story, and Edwards gradually moved near enough to hear what the old man said.

"After a time Mrs. Rowson and I began to play chess," remarked Frank's father. "There was in the museum a set of jewelled chessmen, centuries old, worth thousands of pounds. They were in my charge, and they should never have left the museum."

Frank's face lengthened, for he guessed what was coming, and the inspector looked grave. He began to understand what was meant by "the missing men," and he became more and more intent on the old man's words.

"You've guessed what I did, no doubt," continued Sir Joseph slowly. "I was fool enough to bring those chessmen here, because Mrs. Rowson said she would like to see them. We played with them at times, and then three nights ago—"

Sir Joseph broke off, and sank back on the couch in great distress. Frank gave him a drink, and he rallied enough to continue in low tones.

"That night I was mad enough to allow her to keep them here, and I haven't seen them since, though I called every evening. She said she loved to look at them, and kept begging for one more day. I told her I should be ruined if I didn't take them back to the museum, and she promised to return them to-night. Where is she? Surely I saw her at the door just now?"

"I am afraid you did not see her just now, Sir Joseph." The cool voice of Campbell Edwards broke in as he came up to the couch. "That person at the door was not Mrs. Rowson at all. December 12th, 1931.

It was the girl Sybil Vane, cleverly disguised."

"Good heavens!" cried Dawford. "I'd forgotten all about that girl. Where is she now, Edwards?"

"Rather a mistake to forget her, wasn't it?" said the detective pleasantly. "She ran into the room over there, and she's disappeared again. Why did she come here this evening? I think perhaps this young man knows."

He turned to Frank Pine with a smile, and Dawford realised that he was still far from a solution of the mystery. Sir Joseph's statement had not cleared up the matter, after all, for he had not accounted for the presence of Sybil Vane.

"I don't know anything about her," said Frank firmly, determining still to conceal the fact of the intrusion of the man Wolmer. "As for me, I came here simply to find out why my father visited Mrs. Rowson so often. I was puzzled and worried about it, and I thought I'd investigate a little."

"I have an idea," remarked Edwards thoughtfully. "Possibly the young lady has been masquerading all along as Mrs. Rowson. That good lady seems to me to be a very mysterious person, and Sir Joseph certainly thought he recognised the girl a little while ago."

"Impossible, impossible, Mr. Edwards," cried Sir Joseph shakily. "That woman at the door looked like Mrs. Rowson, but I couldn't see her face."

"Have you ever seen her face—Mrs. Rowson's face?" Edwards barked out the question suddenly, and the old man was visibly taken aback.

"Why—why—never very well!" he stammered slowly. "She was always muffled up in a shawl, and—and—" He stopped, looking helplessly from the detective to Inspector Dawford, utterly puzzled. Suddenly he struggled to his feet.

"She's gone, and she's taken the chessmen with her!" he screamed. "I'm utterly ruined. I shall lose my position unless we can get them back at once."

Frank managed to calm his father down, while the inspector turned to Edwards.

"I have made a grave mistake, as you suggested," he said bitterly. "Now will you do what you can to find that girl, Edwards? Go out and see if the sergeant has traced the man who fired at Sir Joseph, and ask him to give you one or two men to look for Miss Vane. She can't have gone far. Search that room. I believe there's a secret passage somewhere."

"I will do my best," replied Edwards. "But why not go yourself?"

"I will come in a few minutes, but I must ask Sir Joseph one or two more questions first," said Dawford.

"Now, Sir Joseph," The inspector turned again to the old man as Campbell Edwards strolled off towards the door. "You have not explained everything yet. What do you know of the death of the man Jenkins?"

"Nothing, nothing whatever," stammered Sir Joseph hastily. "He was well enough when I saw him here last night."

"If I'm! Well, I don't suspect you of any connection with his death," said Dawford. "Another point. Have you any idea as to the identity of the person who fired that shot?"

"Not in the least, but I fancy the bullet was not meant for me, but for the woman I supposed to be Mrs. Rowson. I was almost touching her when the shot came."

"If anyone suspects her of being in possession of those chessmen, you may be right there," replied the inspector

thoughtfully. "There is certainly someone hanging about outside—the man who attacked Mrs. Cummerpatch, perhaps."

"George Wolmer," thought Frank, but he kept his countenance under control, and he did not speak.

"One last question before I go to see if my men have traced him," said Dawford. "You mentioned a drug, Sir Joseph. Has that any bearing on this matter?"

"Hardly, inspector." Sir Joseph Pine whispered the words, and a look of shame came over his face. "Mrs. Rowson used to supply me with a drug for my nerves, and lately I seem to be unable to do without it, that's all."

At that moment Sergeant Hogan came into the hall, looking extremely crestfallen.

"You haven't found him, I see," said the inspector.

"No, sir," replied Hogan. "We caught a glimpse of him at the lower end of the garden as he was scaling the wall, but he's given us the slip. Some of the men are still searching the common outside, but the ground's very rough, and I'm afraid it's a hopeless job in the dark."

"I'll come out myself," said the inspector. "You stay here and look after these people. Have you seen anything of Miss Vane?"

"No, sir, nothing at all." Sergeant Hogan seemed thoroughly ashamed of himself as he replied. "Mr. Edwards is looking for her now, and I sent one of the men with him, but I don't suppose he'll find her."

"If he doesn't, I will!" retorted Inspector Dawford, as he went out.

The Two Bags.

FOR the second time that evening Sybil Vane crept slowly along a narrow passage into which the secret door opened. She had found the door without much difficulty while Frank was fetching the water, and now again she had passed through it after Campbell Edwards had exposed her masquerade.

The girl stopped once or twice to listen, but there was no sound of pursuit. Presently she came to the end of the passage, and, pushing gently at a door, she stepped down into a large garage. Two motor-cars stood there, and Sybil went over to them and examined both carefully, especially the smaller of the two. She did not seem to find whatever she may have been seeking, and she began to prowl round the garage quietly, looking in every corner carefully without seeing anything unusual.

After a while she came back to the corner near the door by which she had entered. She had left the door open, but now she shut it softly, and as she did so she noticed a niche in the wall close by. In the niche were two large brown bags, exactly alike. Sybil took them down cautiously, and went over to a bench. She was just about to try to open one of the bags when she paused and looked round.

The door she had just closed was being pushed outward slowly, and for the second time that evening Sybil saw Frank Pine come hesitatingly into a place strange to him. On this occasion, however, his face lighted up when he saw the girl.

"I hoped I should find you here, Miss Vane," he began.

"Speak quietly," whispered Sybil.

"How did you manage to get away?"

"Easily enough. The inspector went out to look for the man who fired that

(Continued on page 20.)

The story of a bell-boy who matched his wits against Society to make easy money—but redeemed himself in the end for the sake of the girl he loved. Starring James Cagney and Joan Blondell.



The Bell-Boy.

BERT HARRIS walked smartly across the annexe of the Washington Hotel, Pittsburgh, as the desk-clerk beckoned him with a thin forefinger.

"Show that young lady to the housekeeper's room, will you?" the clerk said. "She's called with reference to the linen job that was advertised, though as a matter of fact I believe the position has already been filled."

Bert turned his head and glanced at a girl who was sitting on a plush-covered bench. The glance told him that she was pleasing to the eye, being a dainty and attractive blonde, and Bert at once made up his mind that he would use his influence to see that the linen job was still vacant.

Bert was but a bell-boy, decked out in a uniform with brass buttons, and yet, in spite of his lowly position, his influence was as considerable as his activities were varied. At least, he usually found ways and means to realise his ambitions, and his immediate ambition was to see the blonde girl on the staff of the Hotel Washington.

He approached her and addressed her crisply.

"Step this way, please," he said, and, escorting her to the basement, led her along a wide corridor.

"I came to get the linen job," the blonde girl mentioned, as they walked towards the housekeeper's room. "I hope the clerk was wrong when he said he thought the position had been taken."

"Did you ever see a hotel clerk that was right?" Bert answered scornfully, and a moment later he was ushering her into the presence of the matronly woman who was in charge of the Washington's domestic personnel.

"Mrs. Snyder," Bert announced, "this is the girl you hired for the linen job. Oh, I know you told her to report to-morrow morning, but she wanted to get acquainted with her new situation right away. Mrs. Snyder is the lady you talked to over the 'phone this morning, Miss Jones," he added.

The blonde girl looked at him blankly, quite obviously stupefied by what he had said. Then Mrs. Snyder spoke to her.

"Ever done hotel work before, Miss Jones?" she asked.

"Oh, sure she has," Bert interposed, lying glibly. "Eight months at the Blackstone in Chicago, a year at the Startler in Buffalo. I can vouch for her, Mrs. Snyder. You see, her—her boy friend's a pal o' mine, and he told me all about her."

"I see," murmured Mrs. Snyder, and, having given his imaginary recommendation, Bert left the blonde girl with the housekeeper and sought out another bell-boy.

"Say, Jim," he began urgently, "your girl friend, Mamee Jones, got that linen job, didn't she?"

Jim nodded smugly. "That's right," he replied. "Phoned up Ma Snyder this mornin' and got orders to start to-morrow, like I told you. She was a cinch for the job, anyway. You know the experience she's had—eight months at the Blackstone in Chicago, and a year at the Startler in Buffalo—"

"Listen, Jim," Bert interrupted, "I hear Mamee can't come to work. You see, they needed somebody with a lot more experience, so another girl got the linen job instead."

The face of the other bell-boy waxed wrathful.

"Say, I'm goin' to see old lady Snyder right now!" he declared violently. "She can't get away with that stuff—"

"Now wait a minute," Bert said, in a tone that was intended to soothe his irate colleague. "Here, just tell Mamee that one of the old hands came back—you can do it." And with the words he thrust two or three dollar bills into Jim's hand.

"All right, Bert," the other bell-boy muttered, trying to look as if he were taking the bribe with reluctance, and then he moved off.

He had hardly disappeared when Bert saw the blonde girl ascending from the basement, and he hurried towards her eagerly.

"Well, you got the situation without any trouble, didn't you?" he said.

"I did," was the answer, "but I'm not so sure that I'll keep it. I don't want any job that I have to take away from somebody else."

"Aw, that ain't sense," Bert argued. "Why, whenever you take any job you keep somebody else from havin' it. There's more people than jobs in this world, ain't there?"

The blonde girl shrugged.

"Well, it was all above my head," she murmured, "this story about 'Miss Jones and her boy friend.'"

"What is your name?" Bert asked.

"Anne," was the reply, "Anne Roberts."

Such was the beginning of a partnership that was to remain fast amid the chequered eventualities of Bert Harris' career. But, during her first day or two at the Hotel Washington, Anne Roberts knew nothing of the various side-lines that Bert practised, and she continued to think of him as an obliging but common-or-garden bell-boy till one of the other chamber-maids put her wise.

"Keep away from the bell-boys," the girl warned her, "and especially that feller Bert Harris. He's dynamite, and as full of smart ideas as a tramp's sock is full of holes. At least, he thinks they're smart, and they make him a lotta money, but he'll slip up one o' these times—"

"What kind of smart ideas?" Anne murmured.

"Well, for one thing," the other girl answered in an undertone, "he peddles liquor and sells it at a hundred per cent. profit amongst the guests. And then there's the dice game he runs among the hotel staff. Keep outa that, sister. 'Most everybody owes him dough, for I guess he's got them 'bones' mesmerised."

But it was not until she had been at the Washington for a week or two that Anne heard the full facts from Bert's own lips.

A slack spell in the day's work had given him the opportunity of a few minutes alone with her, and from his locker in the staff-room he produced a scrap-book that was filled with newspaper cuttings. As he handed the volume to her she scanned its contents quietly and then began to quote one or two of the more striking headlines.

"Fraud Charge Against Smart Confidence Tricksters," she read out. "Get-rich-quick Scheme Works Again—Prince of Swindlers Makes Gigantic Haul—Impostor and Bonanza that did not Exist—'Say, what is this? Are you taking a correspondence course in larceny?'"

"Larceny's a hard word," Bert rejoined with a grin. "No, Anne, I'm no burglar, but I've got a respect for the guy that can pull off an elegant job and show he's smarter than the next man. I began this scrap-book so that I could catch on to the line these fellows take, and I'm wise to all the ropes."

"Is it your ambition to imitate these men?" Anne asked him.

"Yes," Bert told her, "and that's why I've been jugglin' with them dice and sellin' strong liquor around this dump. I needed capital, and now I've got it I'm ready for the road."

"It's a road that always ends in the penitentiary," Anne warned, but Bert shook his head.

"It won't this time," he declared, "not the way I'm gonna work things. Listen, Anne, everybody's lookin' for something for nothing these days, and honest men are scarcer in the big cities of the U.S. than feathers on a frog. Now the world owes me a living, and I'm gonna collect it. I ain't built for work—work is for horses—and I'm ready to make a play against some o' the guys that think they're smart."

Anne eyed him searchingly.

"And why are you talking this way to me?" she inquired.

"Do I have to give you three guesses, honey?" he retorted. "Say, a feller with my ideas needs a partner, and the first time I saw you I knew you were the business associate I was lookin' for. You've got beauty, Anne, and with my savvy and your looks we could trim the world."

She hesitated. Like him, she yearned for the things that were beyond her grasp, the things that only money could buy. But unlike him, she was afraid of the possible consequences. She lacked his tremendous confidence, which might have been commendable if his energy and ability had not been diverted into such unworthy pursuits.

"I've never been mixed up in any racket before," she faltered, "and if there's one thing I haven't any use for it's gao."

"Baby," he assured her, "your worryin' days are over if you tie-up with me."

Dapper Dan Barker.

A MONTH had elapsed, an eventful month that had seen Bert Harris and Anne Roberts fairly embarked on the tortuous paths of waywardness.

Already their partnership was progressing, and the Hotel Washington was but a memory. A clean-up that had brought them five thousand dollars had given them a start, and insisting that Anne should take a half share, Bert had drawn on his original capital and made tracks with her for Chicago.

December 12th, 1931.

The Michigan Hotel was his new address, and the Embassy was Anne's. But they had not taken situations in these palatial edifices, for they had abandoned their respective rôles as bell-boy and chambermaid, and tricked out in the smartest of clothes, might have been seen dining at the Michigan one evening about a week after their arrival in Chicago.

The Michigan was a place much frequented by gamblers, confidence men and the like, a swell-dressed parade of parasites who were as troublesome to the authorities as all the gangsters and hoodlums of the underworld.

"Anybody who doesn't like this life should have his head examined," Bert observed, as he toyed with some caviare and looked around at the glittering display of opulence in the midst of which he and Anne were seated.

"I'd like it better if there were some money coming in," Anne mused. "Five thousand dollars can't last for ever, and to my knowledge you've spent two thousand of your share."

Bert laughed easily.

"That was my original stake," he told her. "I've still got that two thousand five hundred. Don't you start worryin', Anne. We'll be on Easy Street yet. It's makin' the right connections that takes time. For instance, take a look at that guy over there."

He indicated a tall, sallow man who was sitting at a table not far away, in company with a fair-haired girl.

"I've been watching him," Bert continued. "He hangs around here a lot. Name's Barker, and I know he's mixed up in the racket—Dapper Dan Barker, they call him. The girl with him is named Helen—"

Bert stopped short, for at that moment the man whom he was discussing became involved in a "scene" with an individual who appeared to be the worse of liquor. Having bumped violently against the girl Helen, the fellow made some leering comment, and Barker immediately sprang to his feet and gave him a push that sent him flying across the room.

The man succeeded in recovering his balance close to the table where Bert and Anne were sitting, and with an ugly snarl he seized a chair and lifted it threateningly above his head. Bert at once stood up and wrested the piece of furniture from his grasp, whereupon the man wheeled angrily.

"Say," he began, but before he could utter another word Bert clipped him smartly on the jaw.

He fell like a log, and was still unconscious when a couple of stalwart attendants carried him from the restaurant and pitched him into the street. In the meantime Bert had been joined by Dan Barker.

"I owe you a word of thanks," Barker stated, and was about to express his gratitude in more fervent terms when Bert interrupted him.

"That's all right," he said. "I don't like fellers who swing chairs. By the way, I've seen you around the hotel a good deal, haven't I?"

Barker informed him that he was staying at the Michigan, and then he presented his fair companion, who was residing at a hotel known as the Wellington, close by.

"Oh, I'm round the corner at the Embassy," Anne put in. "We're almost neighbours."

Barker invited Bert and Anne to join him at his table, and afterwards, when the girls had been driven to their respective hotels, he saw Bert to his

room. By that time they had both come to an understanding and definitely knew each other as members of the same slick-witted profession.

"The minute I saw you I knew you were in the old racket," Barker declared, as he dropped into a chair that Bert drew up for him. "Mind you, I don't like to talk business with strangers, but you look all right to me."

Bert had produced his scrap-book with the intention of showing it to Barker, and he smiled knowingly as he flipped over the pages of it.

"You can depend on me," he said, "if that's what you mean."

Dan Barker leaned forward.

"Things are pretty slack just now," he observed, "so just to pass the time away I'm working up a new deal. It's a little out of my usual line, but money is money. Anyway, the reason I'm talkin' to you is that you've got an honest face and a clean pair of hands. You've never been jugged—arrested?"

"No, I never took a fall," Bert answered.

"Well," said Barker, "how much money can you raise?"

Bert mentioned the two thousand five hundred dollars at his disposal, whereupon Barker grimaced.

"That's coffee money," he said disgustedly. "If you can't promote more than that forget I ever mentioned any scheme, friend."

"Wait a minute," Bert put in, gripping him eagerly by the arm. "Maybe I could get as much again from Anne, my partner."

Barker shrugged.

"Well, all right," he agreed. "You meet me to-morrow in the lobby—say about one o'clock, and we'll get the details fixed."

Bert kept his appointment, and he was in Barker's company till the evening, when they picked up Anne and Helen and took them to a show. Afterwards Bert saw Anne home, and alone with her in the suite she had rented, he began to talk of the new friendship he had formed.

"I don't like that fellow," Anne interposed, at the mention of Dan Barker's name. "I can't tell you why it is, but I've no use for him."

"Well, you'll have to get to like him," Bert announced. "We're working together, him an' me, and his racket is a cinch. Did you see the way he pulled out a twenty-dollar bill every time he paid for anything to-night?"

"What of it?" Anne demanded, and Bert grinned at her.

"Counterfeit," he explained. "And listen, they're so much like real money that I changed ten of those twenty-dollar bills for four fifty-dollar ones at a bank to-day. Even fooled a cashier."

Anne's pretty face became clouded with an expression of anxiety.

"You're beginning to take awful chances, Bert," she protested.

"We aim to minimise the risk by unloading these notes as quick as we can," Bert said. "By the time the banks are wise to 'em we'll be outa town. We can buy 'em off a guy named Kansas City Dutch at the rate of two for one—two 'phony bills for one genuine note. Only my twenty-five hundred ain't enough. Dan goes in for things on a large scale, and I have to have at least five thousand before he'll take me in with him."

"You can count me out," Anne told him shortly.

"Aw, listen, Baby," Bert appealed, "we're partners, ain't we? I made

money for you before, an' I can do it again. Come on, what do you say?"

Anne shrugged.

"Well, I don't like it," she observed in a resigned tone, "but if I don't give you the money you'll probably steal it—so go on and take it."

Clean-Up—For One!

THE following night Dapper Dan Barker called on Bert unexpectedly.

"I hate to break in on you like this," he said, "but did you raise that money?"

Bert nodded.

"Got the five thousand right here," he answered cheerfully.

"Well, this is what's happened," Barker continued. "Kansas City Dutch is leavin' town within an hour, for he's got the tip that the cops are on his tail for a job he did twelve months ago. Now here's my ten thousand. Put it with your five, and we'll go right round and do a deal with Kansas. And don't forget—Dutch is pretty hard to trade with, but we're goin' to stick out for a three-to-one bargain. Forty-five thousand of counterfeit for our fifteen thousand straight."

They pooled their resources and made their way to the Loop District, where Kansas City Dutch was located in a mean back-room on the top floor of a lodging-house. It was Bert who effected the negotiation, Dan Barker having explained to him that he himself had formerly accepted the counterfeiter's notes in the ratio of two to one, and that it was therefore unlikely that Dutch would give better terms to him, whereas a newcomer like Bert might obtain the higher proportion.

Bert felt that he had good reason to pride himself on being a good bargainer, for, after some discussion, Dutch agreed to hand over forty-five thousand for the fifteen that the former bell-boy tendered.

"There you are," he said, counting them out. "If the cops wasn't so hot on me you'd get thirty or nothing."

The transaction completed, Bert and Dan Barker returned to the Michigan Hotel, and in the privacy of the former's room, Dutch's money was produced and examined again.

"It sure looks good," Bert declared. "I can't tell it from the real McKay."

"And nobody else could, either," Barker said. "Well, you'd better keep it all till to-morrow, and put it in some safe place till we share out. There's no use carryin' that amount of money around the streets."

There was a knock on the door at that moment, and Barker seized Bert by the arm and hurried him across the room to a chest of drawers.

"Shove that money in there," he told him urgently, and then, when Bert had obeyed: "Who's there?" he called.

"It's me—Helen," a girl's voice answered, and with a show of relief Barker opened the door to her.

"All right my dear," he said, "I guess I've kept you waitin' over our appointment to-night, but I'm ready now. Say, Bert," he added, "we'll share out to-morrow and have one grand celebration. In the meantime, lock the door of your suite and sleep with one eye open."

With these words of counsel, Dapper Dan Barker passed out into the corridor with Helen and walked to the lift-shaft, where he encountered none other than Kansas City Dutch.

Dutch was carrying a black leather bag in one hand, and he tapped it meaningly.

"I've got the dough," he stated.

"Good!" Barker rejoined. "You know, Dutch, I never knew anyone so stupid as this Pittsburgh sap. All smartened up from that fool scrapbook. The poor chump thought that real money you sold him was counterfeit coin. Said it looked perfect—said he couldn't tell it from the real stuff."

"What a mug!" observed the girl Helen scornfully.

Meanwhile, sublimely ignorant of this conversation, Bert Harris was strolling to and fro across the floor of his bedroom, his leisurely gaze fixed upon the ceiling in an expression of mild self-satisfaction, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, his thoughts dwelling upon the manner in which—as he imagined—he was going to treble his assets.

Of course, he reflected, that money in the chest of drawers was a tremendous responsibility, especially as thirty thousand of it belonged to Dan Barker. He began to wish Barker had taken his cash with him, and finally decided that some safer hiding-place might be found for the notes.

He walked to the chest of drawers and opened the receptacle in which the "counterfeit" bills had been placed. His hand moved searchingly, and then all at once became agitated in its movements. Face blanching he dropped to his knees, scabbled amidst the corners of the drawer, and suddenly uttered an ejaculation as he discovered that a section had been cut away from the back of the chest.

He dragged the piece of furniture from the wall, and saw a gaping hole where half a dozen bricks had been re-

moved. Scarce sixty seconds after Bert had placed the money in the chest, at Dan Barker's instigation, an unseen hand had "lifted" it from the adjoining room—the hand of Kansas City Dutch, had Bert but known it.

Bert was not in the frame of mind to figure things out just then. In the twinkling of an eye he had become like a man possessed, and impulsively he flung himself against the door of the neighbouring apartment. At the third onslaught his shoulder burst the lock, and, staggering across the threshold, he brought up short against a table.

The room was empty, but a note lay on the floor by a gaping hole in the wall, and his eyes became riveted on it.

"Dear Bert," it ran.—"Paste this adventure in your scrapbook. Love and kisses,

"HELEN."

For a moment Bert crouched glaring at that mocking epistle, and then the emotion that was surging up in him burst the bonds of self-restraint.

On a sudden he was a raging mad-man with but one instinct—the instinct to destroy! In his blind fury he wrenched that room, smashing the hotel furniture to fragments. Then he tried to drown his chagrin in drink, and finished by sinking into a heavy but troubled sleep, from which he awakened next morning with mixed feelings of disgust, rage and depression—all alternating in his tortured brain.

He made his way despondently to the lounge, and was sitting there when, with an absent gesture, he picked up a morning paper. A headline caught his eye, announcing the engagement of a certain Lydia Potter, daughter of a millionaire, and on the same page Bert

For a moment Bert crouched glaring at that mocking epistle, and then the emotion that was surging up in him burst the bonds of self-restraint.



observed an advertisement for a Lake Shore Drive jewellery establishment.

The two circumstances connected themselves in his mind and suddenly gave him an inspiration. He was taking one more step forward on the road to Larceny Lane, but Barker and his hirlings had cleaned him out, and he could not go to Anne and confess that he had allowed himself to be cheated of her money as well as his own.

The moment he was clear as to the details of his cunning piece of strategy, he took a taxi to the fashionable Lake Shore Drive jewellery establishment, and paid his fare with one of the few odd dollars remaining to him.

As he entered the jeweller's he was greeted by a manager, to whom he addressed himself.

"In Mr. Alexander Porter's secretary," he said, "and I want to select a diamond bracelet. Mr. Porter just announced his daughter's engagement, you know."

"Oh, yes, I read about it," the manager rejoined. "Er—will you step this way, please?"

He led Bert to a counter and presented him to a young salesman, who began to show him some expensive items.

"How much is this one?" Bert asked, singling out a bracelet.

"Fifteen thousand dollars, sir," the salesman murmured.

"Well, this is very nice," Bert observed. "I'll take it—pending Mr. Porter's approval, of course. Would you mind sending it to his residence?"

The salesman nodded.

"I'll have it sent within the hour, sir," he declared. "And the address?"

Bert had made a point of obtaining Porter's address from a telephone directory.

"Eight-seventy-five, Michigan Boulevard," he said. "And, by the way, may I have your card?"

The salesman obliged, and Bert read the name Roland on it. With the card in his possession he left the establishment and, about an hour later, he entered a phone box, where he put through a call to Alexander Porter's house.

He was answered by the butler, and Bert spoke to the manservant in businesslike tones.

"This is the German Jewellery Company, calling," he said. "Through an unfortunate error a package intended for another of our patrons was delivered at your house."

"The package is here, sir," came the reply.

"Very good," Bert said. "Our Mr. Roland will call for it immediately. Would you give it to him when he arrives? The name is Roland—R-o-l-a-n-d."

Bert hung up the receiver, and, stepping out of the phone box, hailed a taxi. Within ten minutes he had called at the Porter residence, collected the diamond bracelet and was on his way to a "fence," to whom he traded the piece of jewellery for five thousand.

His finances thus restored, Bert felt in a position to call on Anne, and he visited her suite at the Embassy.

"Hallo, honey!" he said as she admitted him. "How's tricks?"

"That's what I ought to ask you," she retorted. "Have you made that clean-up you were talking about?"

Bert dropped into a chair and shook his head.

"Listen, Anne," he told her. "Dan Barker wasn't on the level. He was December 12th, 1931.

playing me for a sap, but it didn't come off—see? Well, we're heading for New York—because I remember Barker once saying that the Big Burg was his main address, and I mean to look him up."

Anne regarded him shrewdly. "Bert," she inquired, "just how much did Dan sting you for?"

"Didn't I tell you?"

"Oh, I know what you told me," Anne interrupted, "and I know when you're telling me a lie. But that's all right—I'll pretend to believe you."

The Big Burg.

TWO or three weeks had elapsed since his arrival in New York, when, strolling into the grill-room of the Hotel Clarendon one evening, Dapper Dan Barker observed a familiar face.

It was the attractive face of Anne Roberts, and as he recognised her he approached her table, where she was sitting alone.

"Why, hallo!" he greeted. "Fancy running into you this way! May I sit down?"

Anne inclined her fair head, and Barker sank into a chair.

"You're sure looking great," he went on in a complimentary vein. "By the way, what happened to that young chump you were running around with? Did he ever tell you about that fake counterfeiting gag that cost him five thousand? Oh, boy, he fell for it hook, line and sinker, and the cream of it all was the note Helen left him: 'Paste this in your scrapbook—'"

"Oh, where is Helen?" Anne asked him, concealing the flicker of resentment that Barker's words had aroused in her.

Barker shrugged.

"She and I were just a temporary team," he mentioned. "We split partnership after we left Chicago."

They talked on, and Anne made herself particularly charming, at the same time pretending to laugh heartily whenever Barker recalled the manner in which he had fooled Bert Harris. Thus an hour or two passed, and when they eventually separated Anne had discovered Barker's address and had arranged to see him again.

She had an appointment that night with Bert, and, shortly after her return to the apartment she had rented on Broadway, the former bell-boy called on her. He entered breezily enough, and, after some conversation, casually picked up a book of poems.

Next second he had discovered an inscription on the fly-leaf, and he grinned as he read it out.

"To Anne," he murmured. "'this book so suitable, Joe.' And who may 'Joe' be?"

"A young man I met on the train coming from Chicago to New York," Anne retorted. "I suppose you hardly noticed him, but he was most attentive when I got that cinder in my eye. I've been seeing quite a lot of him in New York. Reynolds is his name, and he's something in the brokerage business."

"You don't tell me!" Bert mocked.

"Yes, and I'll tell you something else," Anne observed. "To-night I saw somebody who's more in your line—Dapper Dan Barker. He's living at the Saint Anthony. We dined together and talked of nothing but you. And, by the way, I have a message for you—Helen sends her love and kisses."

Bert's face had undergone an instantaneous change at the mention of

Barker's name, and for the time being he seemed bereft of his senses.

"The dirty, double-crossing burglar!" he raved. "And you—laughin' at me along with him! A fine partner you are! Why don't you throw in your hand with me and tie up with that smart-aleck?"

"Bert, you talk like a child," Anne snapped. "Listen, Barker mentioned that he'd cleaned you out, and, before we go any further, you've got to tell me how you found enough money for this trip to New York."

Bert bit his lip.

"I never had any intention of telling you," he answered sullenly, "but I stole a necklace from a jeweller and sold it to a fence. Anne, I was desperate, and I had to do something to get back your two-thousand-five-hundred."

An expression of dismay had appeared in Anne's lovely eyes.

"Oh, Bert," she cried, "out-and-out thievery isn't your style. Oh, I'm sorry I ever got into this racket. At first it seemed clever and shrewd, and we only matched our wits against fellows that you'd call wise guys. All we did was cheat a lot of cheaters. But since you fell in with Barker it's come to plain larceny, and I suppose next week you'll rob a bank or something."

"This sounds like Joe Reynolds' influence," Bert said sourly, cycling her askance. "Well, if you want to quit—"

"I'm not going to quit yet," Anne interrupted. "I'm going to stick with you and even up the score with Dan Barker. He took our money, and he's going to pay. He made you resort to common thievery, and we'll make him resort to worse than that before we finish. Already, Bert, I've got the glimmerings of an idea."

Bert's face cleared, and he caught hold of her hands.

"Atta baby!" he said. "You had me worried for the minute I thought you were going to run out on me. Come on, Anne, what are the plans?"

The Trimming of Barker.

ANNE had spread the net cunningly, and Barker had stepped into it unsuspectingly. A week after he had formed what he believed to be a partnership with the girl, he met her at her hotel for the killing.

"I'm all set, Anne," Barker announced. "And, say, I've got to give you credit for a great idea."

"Believe me," Anne rejoined, "this rich old gent Bellock is crazy over me. He'll be along pretty soon, and we'll head for the racecourse. But I'll keep you waiting just long enough to let the programme get started before we can get to the track and you can make the clean-up from the first three races. By the way, you've given Mike the chauffeur his instructions, haven't you?"

"He knows exactly what to do," Barker answered, "and exactly how fast to travel."

The door-bell rang at that moment, and the visitor proved to be Colonel Bellock, the supposedly rich old gentleman whom Barker imagined he was going to trim. While Anne passed through into her boudoir to change her frock, Barker made himself particularly pleasant to the other man, and discussed the race meeting they were to attend.

Anne reappeared some time later and pronounced herself ready to start, and within three-quarters of an hour she and her companions might have been seen on the open road, travelling in a touring car, which the chauffeur Mike was driving.

Another automobile passed them when they were still several miles from their destination, and, after exchanging a glance with Anne, Barker looked steadily at its rear number-plate.

The driver of that automobile was a party to the scheme that Anne had proposed to Barker, and Barker knew that the man was equipped with a series of numbers which he could place over the genuine identification plate.

The number which met Barker's eye was "002," and he casually turned his attention to the racing page of a newspaper that he was carrying. The page gave the card for the meeting towards which he and his companions were journeying, and every horse was preceded by numbers registering its form in three previous races—a nought denoting that it had been unplaced, a four, three, two or one denoting that it had run fourth, third, second or first, as the case might be.

Barker examined the list of horses scheduled to appear in the first race, and saw that no less than three of them were preceded by the number "002." But the driver of the automobile in front had furnished another clue by attaching two letters—"C" and "B"—so that the identification plate read "CB 002."

Barker, working from the clue, picked out the following entry:

"002 Captain's Boy—"

"You know," came the voice of Bellock, "the time is one-fifty. That means we've missed the one-thirty race."

Barker nodded.

"That's your fault for keeping us waiting, Anne," he reproached. "And I was hoping to back a sure-fire winner in that race. What did you fancy, colonel?"

"To tell you the truth, I haven't had a chance to look at the entries," Bellock answered.

There was a spell of silence, and then Anne spoke.

"Why don't you two bet between yourselves?" she suggested. "Dan can back his fancy, and you, colonel, can act as bookmaker."

Bellock appeared to fall in with the suggestion readily, and Barker became exultant. He knew the winner already. Hadn't the accomplice in the other automobile given it to him via that fake number-plate, after having received the result of the first race over the telephone five minutes ago?

"Captain's Boy is my choice," said Barker, "and the odds are given as two-to-one. Supposing I lay five hundred dollars on that filly, colonel?"

"Make it a thousand," declared Bellock. "We'll let Anne act as stakeholder."

The other auto had accelerated, and was soon lost to view. But its driver halted at a garage some distance farther on, and, after phoning to the track for the result of the second race, he again faked his rear number-plate. Thus when the touring car overtook him, Barker read as follows:

"HB 213."

"How about a little flutter on the two o'clock?" the swindler said to Bellock. "My choice this time is High Ball, and I'll back it for fifteen hundred. Here's my money, Anne."

Bellock acquiesced, and shortly afterwards the other automobile passed them on the road for the second time. The result of the third race had come through, and once more the identification plate had been altered accordingly.

"Well, have you any fancy for the third race?" Bellock asked Dan Barker.

"I was just thinking," the swindler murmured. "I guess I'll take a chance on Queenie. And, say, how would you

like to make it really interesting? Can you cover five thousand?"

"Sure I can," Bellock declared. "The sky's the limit!"

The transaction was made, and before any further wagering could be indulged in the track was reached. Anne and the two men at once made their way to the indicator on which the results were officially marked, but Barker did not even bother to raise his glance to them at first. He knew, or thought he knew, that the first three would be Captain's Boy, High Ball and Queenie.

"You didn't pick a winner in the whole lot," came the voice of Bellock. "Paintbox, Sandro and Skysign were the lucky fillies."

"What!" Barker glared up at the indicator, and all at once he was transfixed. "Double-crossed!" he shouted. "That dirty skunk in the other automobile tricked me! Where is he?"

He plunged through the dense crowd of race-goers who thronged the vicinity of the indicator, but he had not gone far when his suspicions veered to Anne. When he blunderingly retraced his steps, however, there was no sign of her and Bellock.

It was a penniless swindler who set out to walk back to New York that afternoon, and he was still tramping the long, dusty road when the share-out of his money took place in a certain expensive apartment where Bert Harris was staying.

"Colonel Bellock," better known as "Baldy" Tomkins, was one of those to profit from the tripping of Barker, and, when he had been paid off, Anne turned to Bert.

"Are you satisfied with our revenge?" she asked. "Hasn't it been more gratifying than just punching Barker on the nose?"

"With all this dough in my hand,



"How much is this one?" Bert asked, singling out a bracelet.

how can I say you're wrong?" Bert answered jubilantly. "But listen, Anne," he went on, in a more serious tone, "money doesn't mean so much to me as it once did. It's a means to an end, of course. For instance, I want to go to Europe, mix with swell people, see swell places. But there's something I want a whole lot more—and that's you, Anne. I'm no poet, but I'm crazy about you, Honey—and—Let's get married!"

Anne looked at him for a moment, and he thought he saw tears welling in her eyes.

"Oh, Bert, why didn't you say that long ago?" she told him, with a catch in her voice. "I think I cared for you, too—once upon a time. But I'm in love with somebody else now. You never seemed to have any use for me except as a partner for your racket."

"Is it—that guy Joe Reynolds, Anne?" Bert asked her huskily.

"Yes," she said, "it's Joe. I—I've learned something going round with him, Bert. I've met people—people a whole lot different from our friends. Oh, I don't know, it seems a decent way to live—that's all. So I'm going to quit the racket and marry him. I'd have quit before, only—I wanted to help you get even with Barker. And I'd have quit even before that if—I hadn't been in love with you—like I was in the beginning, Bert."

He squared his shoulders with an effort. "But you're right to quit now, Honey," he assured her. "You're right about living decent, and you'd never be happy with me. The racket is in my blood, and I couldn't go straight if I tried. Fancy me as a bell-boy again!"

He chuckled, but his laughter did not ring true. For he knew in his heart that, if she wanted him to, he would have taken any job, however lowly.

It was too late now.

The Embezzler.

BERT HARRIS sat in the lounge of a modest apartment that he had rented in New York. He was back from a year's sojourn in Europe, and it had been a year of boredom, for, though he might have enjoyed the experience under other circumstances, he had been conscious all the time that there was something wanting.

He was brooding over the past when the door-bell rang, and as he answered the summons he found a slender, girlish figure in the corridor outside his rooms. For an instant he could scarcely believe his eyes, and then his expression changed from stupefaction to delight.

"Anne!" he exclaimed. "How did you ever find out where I lived?"

"Oh, I managed," she told him, with a wan smile.

He took her arm and led her into the lounge.

"Sit down," he urged, "and tell me how you are? How'd you like married life?"

"All right, I guess," she murmured; but something in her tone belied the words.

Bert leaned forward and looked at her keenly.

"You don't look very happy," he mentioned.

"Oh, Bert, I'm not!" she cried brokenly. "I've something to tell you. Something dreadful has happened. It's Joe, Bert. He used some of the firm's money for a private deal, thinking he could make a fortune."

Bert pursed his lips. There was a curious glitter in his eyes.

December 12th, 1931.

"That's been tried before," he observed. "I suppose the deal didn't work, and now it's up to you to get him out of the mess. Aw, Anne, is this the guy you held up to me as so respectable, so straight and clean?" He laughed shortly, and: "An embezzler, huh?" he added.

"Bert," Anne pleaded, "I've come for your help, because you're the only person I know whom I can ask. I want you to lend me the money, so that Joe can make good his losses to the firm before the books are audited—on the thirtieth. It's an awful lot of money, but Joe will pay you back somehow. Could you manage—oh, Bert, could you lend us—thirty thousand dollars?"

"Thirty thousand?" Bert reiterated. "Why, Anne, I haven't got it. I haven't turned a trick since you left. I'm just living on my capital, and that don't amount to much now."

Anne looked at him with mingled bewilderment and despair.

"Why, I—I didn't know, Bert," she managed to say. "I thought you were still in the racket."

"No," he told her, shaking his head, "I quit when you did. I figured you were right, Anne—about livin' straight."

There was a moment's silence, and he watched her closely, pityingly. He could see that she was beside herself with grief, and his one desire just now was to help her—at any cost.

"Anne," he said, "how did Joe Reynolds get this money?"

"He took negotiable bonds from the vault," she answered. "He has his own key, and knows the combination of the safe. He's trusted at Werder and Lawrence's—his firm. He's been with them for years."

"I see," Bert mused. "Well, listen, Anne, tell Joe he can expect a visit from me in the morning, and have him take me to his own private office when I get there."

"What do you mean to do?" Anne asked him feverishly; but Bert evaded the question.

"Never mind," he said, "but everything's going to be all right. Just tell him to expect me."

He was true to his promise, and at ten o'clock on the following morning was shown into Joe Reynolds' office. It was his first encounter with Anne's choice of a husband, and, summing him up, Bert put him down as a tall, handsome young fellow of good family but poor principles. He had the charm of breeding, but his mouth betrayed weakness of character and lack of nerve, and there was something shifty about his eyes.

Bert broached the subject of the missing bonds immediately they were alone, and, in faltering tones, Reynolds told him the whole story.

"So you see," he finished, "I didn't intend to steal the money. I meant to return it. It's the—the sort of thing that could happen—to anybody."

"Sure," Bert agreed, with a mirthless smile; "it's happened to a lotta guys. They're up in Sing Sing now."

Reynolds moistened his lips. "Anne said you could help me," he muttered. "I—I'll pay you back. You won't lose anything."

"I can't lose anything, because I haven't got anything," Bert retorted. "Listen, is there any more dough in that safe?"

"Yes," Reynolds answered, fidgeting in his chair. "At least, there are bonds. Why?"

"Just get a load of this," Bert said slowly. "If this place should happen to be robbed—to-night, for instance—and the rest of the securities stolen, they would never know that your thirty thousand hadn't been taken with the rest."

The eyes of Reynolds gleamed hopefully.

"Why, no, they wouldn't," he agreed. "But—that's robbery."

Bert wanted to laugh, and the sneer that came to his lips betrayed his contempt for Reynolds. The latter appeared embarrassed for a moment, and then:

"There's probably forty thousand dollars' worth of bonds in the safe now," he said.

"Any negotiable?" Bert asked; and, as Reynolds made a negative movement with his head: "No, of course there aren't. If there had been, you'd have grabbed those, too."

"Look here," cried Reynolds, with an attempt at indignation, "you can't talk that way to—"

"Shut up and listen to me," Bert rapped out. "Give me the key to this place and the combination of the safe. Take Anne out to-night, and be sure you're seen by a lot of people you know, in case you need an alibi. Tomorrow morning they'll find the place robbed and the safe hanging open. They'll pick up forty thousand dollars' worth of unnegotiable bonds lying in the alley, and they'll figure that the thieves strewed them there, keeping only the stuff they could dispose of."

Reynolds reached across to grip him by the hands.

"That's great," he babbled; "that's great! Gee, I don't know how to thank you—"

"Say, I'm not doing it for you," Bert flung at him. "I'm doing it for Anne, you sap. Give me the keys!"

Reynolds obeyed meekly, and then passed over a pencil and a scrap of paper.

"You can write down the combination of the safe," he said. "Left—nine-seven; right—two-three—"

[The End of the Road.]

IT was in the dead of night that Bert Harris made his way to the offices of Werder & Lawrence, and, with the aid of the key that Reynolds had given him, he had no difficulty in gaining admittance to the premises.

A flash-light in his hand, he made his way through the rooms to Reynolds' sanctum, and the beam of the torch wandered over the office till it came to rest on the door of the safe. Bert advanced stealthily and gripped the dial of the combination-lock between his fingers.

"Left—nine-seven," he murmured, spinning the disc as he uttered the words of the formula. "Right—two-three."

The door of the safe swung open, and, searching the interior, Bert gathered up the bonds. He stuffed them into his pocket and closed the safe again, and he was in the act of turning to retrace his steps through the premises when he heard a footfall.

He darted to the door of Reynolds' sanctum and instinctively swung the beam of the electric torch across the outer office. It settled on the figures of two police officers, and with an exclamation Bert dropped the flash-lamp and ran.

"Hold him!" yelled a voice. In the darkness a hand clutched Bert's arm. He struggled, and hit out blindly, and he felt his fist drive home against a

(Continued on page 28.)

An innocent girl accused of murder and how the electric chair was cheated of a victim.
A gripping detective story.



Heiress No Longer!

CHARLES BACON, a retired stockbroker of considerable means, like many who are blessed with vast possessions, imagined that his wealth gave him the right to interfere with the lives and the happiness of those who harboured "expectations." Self-willed, irascible, there was nevertheless a warm corner in his withered old heart for his niece, Olive Thayer.

With neither father nor mother, the girl had blossomed from childhood to womanhood in her uncle's home, regarded by all and sundry as his heiress. She ministered to his comforts, pandered to his whims, smoothed the evening of his days with those evidences of real affection that money cannot always buy.

On his part, old Bacon, almost a stranger to the meaning of love, had watched the growth of little Olive; had permitted himself to weave romances around her future and, unknown to the girl, had cast around for some fine, upstanding young fellow who might be a fitting life partner for one whom he loved with a fatherly affection.

"Well, uncle," she had playfully remarked on more than one occasion, "has Prince Charming been discovered yet? I'm getting older, you know. Time's passing, and *still* he hasn't come."

"Don't worry, Olive," he would reply gently, "it's only a matter of time, and I promise that the young fellow who's lucky enough to win you will not only wed the nicest girl in the State of New York, but, when I'm gone, there's a fortune for both of you."

"Who's talking of dying, uncle? Why, there's years and years of life in front of you. Besides—" And here the girl hesitated, a blush suffusing her lovely face.

"Besides what?" inquired her uncle sharply, detecting a note of sentiment in her voice.

"Why, nothing," was Olive's reply.

But Charles Bacon, suspicious of everybody, persisted.

"Now, Olive, there must be no secrets between us. What's behind this eloquent 'but'?"

"Nothing, really," she said, and tried to change the conversation.

Her uncle, with a stubbornness that had

earned for him the sobriquet of "Stonewall" Bacon, would not be put off with evasions.

"Well, uncle, if you must know, I'm rather fond of David Landen!"

"You mean you're in love with that fellow? You've decided to throw away your young life on a man whom you know I detest? How *could* you do it?" His voice was now shrill and embittered as he remonstrated with his niece because of her defection. "Anyone but Landen I would not have objected to. I dislike the fellow utterly!"

"But, uncle, there's nothing wrong with David. It's just that you've taken a strange dislike to him. He admires you tremendously."

"Admires *me!* He's probably a greater admiration for my bankbook than he has for you or for me!" snorted the old man.

"Oh, uncle, how can you say such terribly unjust things?" The colour mantled her cheeks as she championed the man she loved.

"They're true, I tell you! But, like many another girl who imagines herself to be in love, you choose to be blinded by this young fellow's good looks. He's not in love with you, he's in love with my money, and you know it!" he growled fiercely.

Olive was weeping softly, aghast at the change in a man who had always been the soul of gentleness, one from whom she had never hitherto heard a harsh, an unjust word. It seemed that her little world was tumbling to pieces. No, there was always her David, whose love and loyalty she never for an instant doubted.

The girl rose and faced her uncle proudly.

"I am not asking for your consent, uncle, for, after all, I am of age. But I wish with all my heart that you could have been kinder."

"Kinder? Here have I been devoting

my life to you, treating you, caring for you as one of my own, regarding you as my heiress. And now in a matter which affects your whole life you do this thing without consulting me. Listen!" Her uncle held up a detaining hand. "I have no alternative but to make a further will. Instead of leaving practically all I possess to you, as I intended, you will have just one-third of my estate, and that on one condition: that you break entirely with David Landen."

Olive Thayer left her uncle's presence, her head in a whirl, determined, in spite of his bitter opposition, in spite of his threat, to remain true to her troth.

This bitter passage of arms between uncle and niece had been observed by two individuals. The evidence of one was destined later to bear considerable weight when eventually the case came up for trial. The other, unseen, noted with evident satisfaction old Bacon's displeasure. From his point of vantage behind the tall bushes he had seen and heard everything, and although it had been his intention to call upon the agitated old gentleman, he deemed it advisable to postpone his visit to a more propitious occasion.

"Tis an ill wind," he mused as stealthily he made his way again to the main road and pondered upon the serious nature of the break between this hitherto inseparable pair.

A day later Charles Bacon called for his lawyer, John Brigham, and in the presence of his niece instructed Brigham to draw up a fresh will dispossessing her entirely.

"You persist in keeping company with young Landen, and I persist in my determination that neither of you shall have a cent of my money!" he said.

In a half-hearted manner, seemingly diffident at influencing his client against his wishes, the lawyer suggested that the new will erred on the side of undue severity. The suggestion merely goaded Bacon to a fresh outburst of anger.

"Whose money am I disposing of?" he queried tartly. "Rather than see my niece throw herself away on a worthless scamp—"

"You know in your own heart that David's no worthless scamp," the girl interposed.

"Rather than that," continued the girl's uncle, ignoring the interruption, "you'll find you've made the worst bargain in your life."

With eyes discreetly bent, his pen scratching hastily across the paper, John Brigham noted his client's further directions for disposing of his riches.

"The draft will be ready in a day or so," he promised.

"The sooner the better!" was Bacon's reply.

When the lawyer had left, uncle and niece were still arguing, the girl attempting to bring him to a reasonable frame of mind, the uncle adamant in his decision to punish this determined attempt to run counter to his wishes.

Bacon, trembling with anger and excitement, was seen by the butler to make his way from the house into the gardens of his estate. A moment later the report of a pistol was heard, and Bacon lay prone on the lawn, evidently at the point of death. The staff rushed to the spot, and his last words to agitated inquiries were:

"A shot was fired at me from that bush, and—"

But the sentence was destined never to be completed.

In spite of her tears and protestations, Olive Thayer was apprehended on the capital charge, to the amazement of her fiancé and the incredulity of the neighbours.

The Trial.

OPINION was equally divided. There were some who persisted that, having everything to gain by the immediate death of her uncle, hers was a deed that had a definite object. There were others who, regarding the lovely, slim figure of Olive Thayer, as she faced the district attorney's terrific verbal bombardment, considered her incapable of the deed that American justice attempted to lay at her door.

Tearfully she protested her innocence, emphatically assured her tormentors that she had loved her uncle far too dearly even to dream of taking his life; and that, so far as his wealth was concerned, money, in her view, did not always represent happiness.

The district attorney declined to be

impressed by Olive Thayer's impassioned denials, and the members of the jury, swayed by the pitiless logic of the lawyer, seemed rapidly to be veering round to the opinion that, although her explanations were plausible, the weight of evidence was against the girl. Her glove, for instance—how did it happen to be covering the gun that had prematurely ended Mr. Bacon's career? Olive Thayer, explained the prosecuting counsel, was not on the spot at the time, but a hundred yards away from where the police discovered the pistol, a weapon that belonged to Mr. Bacon, and one which was readily accessible to the accused.

"What is particularly noteworthy," persisted the attorney, leaving the accused girl to come over to address the jury, "is that the pistol was found to have been soaked in oil. But not a single finger-print was discovered! Why? Because the hand that fired the weapon wore a glove. That glove bore marks of oil. A woman's glove! We will prove that that glove belonged to Olive Thayer, who now stands her trial for the murder of her uncle."

There was an evident rustle in the court as the relentless voice of the attorney made these accusations.

Now John Brigham, Bacon's attorney, and, by a coincidence, defending counsel for Olive Thayer, questioned the girl. He seemed trembling with excitement, like a man who has just emerged from an ordeal. His question is notable because of its surprising brevity:

"Do you know, Miss Thayer, who fired the shot that killed your uncle?"

"No," came the firm answer.

Landen regarded the defending counsel with amazement. Did he really imagine that this trivial question was going to help his client? Surely, in the time at his disposal, he could have introduced a string of relevant questions that would have proved Olive's innocence beyond the shadow of a doubt!

But no! Here was Brigham, wiping the perspiration from his brow, sinking with relief into his chair, as if he had emerged from a gruelling examination.

He was deathly pale; his hand trembled as he sipped a glass of water.

The brevity of Brigham's examination was not lost upon the public, who nudged each other, as if to suggest that the defending counsel knew more than he dared disclose. As events were soon to prove, this was so!

Meantime, Olive Thayer braced herself for further questioning, as the prosecuting attorney now interposed:

"Did you and your uncle have an argument on the morning that he was killed?"

"We did."

"Is it not a fact that your uncle was angered because you absolutely defied him—disregarded his wishes in regard to David Landen?"

"That is so. I considered that I was old enough to exercise my own discretion in a matter affecting my future happiness."

"Did you ever see this pistol before?"

"I don't know. I've seen one like it."

"Did you ever use the one you saw like it?"

"No. Mr. Landen used it two or three different times, shooting at a target."

"Wasn't he instructing you how to use it?"

"No."

"Isn't it true that you had in mind the idea of shooting your uncle?"

"No."

"Did you know of three different wills your uncle made?"

"Yes; my uncle told me about each one of them, but he never signed the last will—in fact, it was never drawn up."

"What do you know about the contents of the different wills?"

"In the first one he left me everything. In the second one he left me one-third of his estate, fifty thousand dollars to his lawyer, Mr. Brigham, ten thousand to his butler, and the rest to some religious cult that he had become deeply interested in."

"How about the last one—the one that was never drawn up?"

"He intended leaving everything to the religious cult."

"This is your property?" he snapped, holding up a white glove.

"Yes—it's mine," she replied in hesitant tones.

"There!" said the prosecuting attorney in triumph. "Could anything be more circumstantial?"

Circumstantial! Yes. But, averred the prosecution, never had there been a case in that court wherein the motive was so clearly defined. Never a case in which the weight of evidence moved so strongly in the defendant's disfavour.

"Rubbish!" murmured a pale-faced young fellow in the body of the court, whereat the usher, with a threatening movement, approached him—then evidently decided to let the interruption pass. It was easy to understand the young man's agitation; easy

to appreciate the mental tourmole through which he must be passing. Here was the sweetheart of the weary-faced girl in the dock,



"We will prove that that glove belonged to Olive Thayer, who now stands her trial for the murder of her uncle!"

December 12th, 1931.

convinced entirely of her innocence, forced to listen to that pitiless brow-beating of the girl for whom he would willingly yield up his life; compelled to witness the slow building up of a case that seemed to become blacker with every moment.

David Landen, shrewd fellow that he was, needed but half an eye to realise that the dead man had but little affection for him. Nor was it possible to mistake the veiled hostility with which his visits to the girl had been received by her uncle.

But that the girl had deliberately destroyed her one benefactor in the world was unthinkable.

"Tell me," David said to her at the conclusion of the first day of the trial. "The quarrel between you and your uncle was just because he objected to me?"

"It was. Uncle told me once again that he objected to our keeping company. I replied that I had the right to happiness, the right to choose my friends. He answered that he agreed that I had that right, but his objection was to you. I asked him why. He simply answered that he didn't like you, and that if I persisted in our friendship, he'd alter his will."

"Nothing more?" asked the boy.

"Not a thing," the girl answered. "He just stalked out into the garden in high dudgeon, and—and the rest you know."

"He never liked me, Olive," the lad explained. "It was not so much that he objected to me personally, as because he associated me with another member of my family who got the better of him in a business deal long ago. That much I learned when first we met. And he never forgave me—for the name reawakened memories of the one occasion when he really met his Waterloo. He was a bitter later. Sometimes I think that, for your sake, it is a pity we ever met. Sometimes—"

"We can't fight against destiny," the girl replied quietly and sincerely.

"Maybe we can't fight against destiny," the lad answered. "But we can fight against what they call circumstantial evidence, as you'll realise very soon. As soon as I heard of your arrest on this monstrous charge I got in touch with the only man who'll really ferret out the truth. I've put Detective Thompson on the job. He's a retired Secret Service man, and though there's been precious little time for him to do anything of practical value, I've hopes—big hopes. Maybe to-morrow, my dear, we shall be hearing good news."

"Maybe," replied the girl cryptically. "Whatever happens, you're a dear."

The second day of the trial, by reason of the interest aroused by the report of the first day's proceedings, attracted a packed court. The jury, alert, important, and appreciating the dramatic nature of the case, were anticipating further interesting disclosures. They were destined not to be disappointed.

The prosecuting attorney went straight to the point.

"Do you still insist that you've never handled a gun in your life?" he asked Olive Thayer. "Now think well before you reply."

"Maybe I have," the girl answered slowly. "A few years ago, when there was a fair in the town, I remember having used one at a shooting-gallery, just out of fun."

"And never since?"

"Never. There was no reason."

"Do you keep a revolver in your bedroom?"

The court was tense with expectancy as the lawyer introduced this unlooked-for query.

"That is so."

"And for what reason, assuming, as you say, that you have never handled real firearms?"

"Just for appearance sake. There have been robberies in the neighbourhood in the past. I should be afraid to hold it if it were loaded."

"So you say," replied the attorney mysteriously.

At this stage of the proceedings a messenger came up to the district attorney, whose cross-examination was thereby interrupted. Would he see Detective Thompson, who had been engaged by Mr. Landen to investigate the mystery?

With a whispered consultation to the judge, who signified an apparently unwilling approval, counsel made his way to the ante-room.

"Morning, Thompson," said the district attorney cheerfully. "What can I do for you?"

The detective explained in a few words the object of his visit.

"I've a string of important witnesses here—only rounded them up at the last minute—and if you can possibly get an adjournment of the case for about an hour, it should be worth your while."

The presiding judge, protesting at this flouting of routine, at length agreed, the court adjourned, and Detective Thompson did some rapid work, not the least important of which was his ability to convince the district attorney that Olive Thayer was incapable of the crime, and that she should be at once discharged.

The court reassembling, the district attorney at once arose, and question and answer filled the court with increasing amazement.

"Your honour," explained the district attorney to the judge, "I ask for the acquittal of the defendant, as I am convinced that she is innocent."

"Well, I am not convinced! Enough evidence has been introduced here for the jury to decide that," returned the judge crisply.

"Your honour, when I asked for an adjournment it was for this reason—to interrogate certain witnesses that a special investigator has produced."

"I thought you were the prosecuting attorney," remarked his Honour sarcastically, "but you seem now to be the counsel for the defendant. Anyhow, continue."

"The guilty party called at Bacon's residence," went on the attorney quietly, "and while Charles Bacon was absent from the room for a short time, that party took the pistol and glove—the glove was put around the pistol to cover up possible finger-prints."

"Are these witnesses in court that you examined?" queried the judge, gazing round the court-room.

"Yes, do you wish to examine them?"

"No—continue."

"The guilty person was hard pressed for money—he had passed several worthless cheques—this person's only salvation seemed to be to procure the money willed to him by Charles Bacon. One witness saw this individual fleeing from the Bacon estate at the time the crime was committed—"



"This is your property?" he snapped, holding up a white glove.

"What I don't understand," interrupted the judge, "is why the defendant's lawyer didn't procure these witnesses instead of you."

"Your honour—there is a very good reason indeed why he failed to do so—the guilty party stands there before you!" thundered the district attorney, pointing a stern finger at the defending counsel.

"John Brigham!" gasped the judge.

"Yes, your honour," Olive Thayer's attorney, and Charles Bacon's attorney and executor."

"Do I understand that he has confessed?"

"We confronted him with an array of witnesses connecting every link," said the D.A. quietly. "He stoutly denied everything until Detective Thompson flashed a lodge badge before him, and then he asked him to explain how that happened to be in the bush from where the shot was fired. He then broke down and confessed."

"How did this investigator know that it was his lodge badge?"

"Brigham's name was on the back of it."

Like a man in a dream, John Brigham arose to face his accusers, his face pale, his body shaking like an aspen.

"You honour—" he said.

But the judge motioned the trembling man to be seated.

"You will have an opportunity, very shortly, of denying this charge, if it can be denied. Meantime—"

"This is a trick!" yelled Brigham. "A frame-up unworthy of American justice! If it takes every cent of my fortune I will get justice done. I have not confessed! If it takes ten years—"

"Silence!" thundered the judge. "You of all men should have some respect for the dignity of the law."

Thereupon the judge motioned to two burly warders, who led the lawyer, protesting, to the cells below. Came a muffled shout, the sounds of a struggle, a hysterical shriek as of one who has been foiled of his purpose.

Hardly had the door of the cell been closed upon him than the unhappy man was seen to place his hand furtively in his hip-pocket. The door was unlocked with lightning rapidity, and a strong hand wrested a small but serviceable revolver with which John Brigham had intended to cheat the law.

A happy trio met outside the court at the conclusion of the case—Olive, Landen and Detective Thompson.

"What puzzles me, Thompson," said the girl's fiancé, "is this: How did you manage to find that lodge pin? Was it discovered near the bush from where the shot was fired?"

"Not at all," was Thompson's reply. "That lodge pin wasn't in any bush. You see," he whispered, "I found it in Brigham's apartment last night in a bureau drawer, and I happened to know that Brigham usually carried the badge—he was a pompous man, who liked to boast about his work in the lodge. I was certain that it would make him confess. And it did!"

The trio moved happily away, their progress impeded by handshakes innumerable. From the shadow of death into the sunlight of happiness. Free as the air—and supremely happy—David and his loved one plighted their troth anew.

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"THE MAN AT 6."

(Continued from page 10.)

shot, and also to find you. He may come here, but I don't think he'll get Wolmer."

"How do you know it was Wolmer who fired?" asked Sybil.

"I don't know." Frank looked in a puzzled way at the girl. "I thought it might have been, that's all. Have you seen him again? I didn't mention him to Dawford, of course."

"I haven't seen him," replied Sybil. "Tell me how you got here."

"Mr. Atkinson began to implore the sergeant to let him go home to his wife. Hogan seemed to think that extremely suspicious, and then the little man made a sudden bolt for it. He got as far as the door, and he may have got away. I didn't stop to see. I took my chance, found the secret door without much trouble, and here I am."

"Come and look at these bags, Mr. Pine," said Sybil. She endeavoured to open one, but found that it was locked. Producing a bunch of keys, she tried one after the other, and at length found one that fitted. A second later the bag was open, and Frank gasped as he saw the contents.

In the bag were the missing chessmen.

"How did they come here?" cried the young man. "Thank Heaven you've found them! My father's saved!"

"These bags were left here by the thief, who was to have come at six o'clock this evening to take them away," replied Sybil calmly.

"How did you know that?" Frank stared in bewilderment at the girl's words. "And who is the thief? George Wolmer?"

"I am not quite sure," said the girl, "but I think we shall soon see the thief—here."

Frank glanced round the garage anxiously, and then spoke in haste.

"Let's go back to the hall at once and hand over the chessmen to the inspector."

"Yes," replied Sybil. "I wonder what's in the other bag," she added, as they moved towards the door of the passage.

"We'll see presently. Why, surely I left that door open!" Frank gazed in surprise at the door, which was shut. He tried to open it, but in vain, and he turned to Sybil in dismay.

"Someone has been here," he whispered in alarm. "Try the other door."

But the outside door was locked, too.

There was a faint sound behind them as they stared in dismay at the locked door, and they turned sharply to look. Even as they did so the outer door of the garage opened, and someone came in. Sybil and Frank swung round again to face a man wearing a mask over his eyes, and they gave back several paces. To their surprise, however, the newcomer's glance went beyond them, and they followed his gaze, to see another man just rising to his feet from behind the large motor-car.

Silence for a moment. Then the man by the car spoke, briefly but to the point.

"Drop those bags, kid! Up with your hands, all of you!"

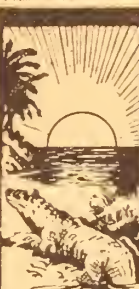
The command was obeyed, for the man who spoke had produced a re-

(Continued on page 26.)

Follow a two-fisted sea-captain, and the beautiful daughter of a brave explorer as they sail on a perilous trip to a forgotten cannibal island, where they defy storm, fire and water, man and beast on a search for a fortune in radium! Starring Kenneth Harlan and Lucille Browne.



DANGER ISLAND



READ THIS FIRST.

In search of pitchblende deposits containing immense quantities of precious radium, Professor Adams and his companions are beset by savages on a volcanic island off the African coast, and Adams escapes with one surviving follower, Cebu, his giant negro guide.

In America his daughter Bonnie and her uncle, Dr. Anthony Adams, have become alarmed at his failure to communicate with them. Ben Arnold, an adventurer professing friendship, offers to fit out a relief expedition.

His ship, the Lottie Carson, sets sail under the command of Harry Drake, a young Englishman, and for companion Bonnie engages Arlene Chandos, who is in league with Arnold.

Professor Adams and Cebu are picked up by the Lottie Carson off the coast of Africa. The professor is dying, but before passing away he gives Bonnie a chart and charges her to secure the radium for the benefit of humanity.

Arnold secures the chart, and before it is returned to Bonnie it is cunningly "doctored" by Bull Black, the rascally mate, after an exact tracing of the original has been made.

A hurricane breaks, and Cebu and Doctor Anthony are washed overboard. Then Harry sees Bonnie on the storm-lashed deck, and reaches her even as a cataract of sea-water hurls them off their feet.

But all at once he was aware of a terrific impact that left him bruised and shaken, and as he lay in the foaming wash he realized that he had been flung against the bulwark and was safe.

He had kept a firm hold of Bonnie, and his first concern as he struggled to his feet was for her. She showed no signs of life, but it was he who had borne the brunt of the shock, and he speedily discovered that she had only fainted.

He raised her from the deck and was wading towards the after-part of the ship with her when the figure of Briney showed up in the tumultuous gloom. The hulking young sailor raised his voice and yelled an anxious question.

"What happened, sir?" he demanded. "Almost washed overboard," Harry answered laconically. "Have the ship pulled up in the wind while I take Miss Adams aft, Briney."

"Aye, aye, sir," Briney rejoined, and promptly roared a command at a huddled group of seamen near by.

"Put over your sea anchor," Harry heard him shout, and then slithered on with Bonnie and bore her to her state-room.

He was laying her on a cot when she came round and opened her eyes. For a moment she stared at him

vacantly, and then she remembered the tragic incident that had occurred just before she had fainted.

"Oh, Harry," she moaned, "it's terrible. Poor Uncle Anthony! I saw him with my own eyes—carried into the sea!"

Harry did his best to console her, but by the time that she had managed to overcome her grief the hurricane was on the wane.

"Thank heaven that you're safe, at least," the Englishman told her. "And the worst of the gale is over. Take it easy and rest here a while, Miss Bonnie."

Meanwhile, in an adjoining cabin, Ben Arnold, Bull Black and Arlene Chandos were watching a barometer fixedly, Arlene with an expression of dull agitation on her pallid face.

"What does the glass say now?" she breathed.

"It's on the rise," said Bull. "These tropical storms go as quickly as they come. It looks as though Drake has weathered it."

Arlene looked at him bitterly.

"Half an hour ago you were trying to tell us he didn't know how to run this tub," she said. "But if it hadn't been for Captain Drake's good seamanship we'd all have been at the bottom of the South Atlantic."

"Aw, why don't you get seasick," Ben Arnold put in angrily. "I'm tired of hearing you grouse."

Arlene had neither cause for grumbling nor sea-sickness during the remainder of the voyage to Twamballa, but when she stepped on to the quay with Bonnie Adams and Ben Arnold she felt heartily thankful for the

December 12th, 1931.

Now Read On.

At Twamballa.

AS the cataract of water swept them across the deck, Harry believed that nothing could save him and the girl in his arms from being carried overboard to a watery grave.



EPISODE 3.

"DEMONS OF THE POOL."

opportunity of setting foot on firm ground.

The tropical African port was a squalid city with a population culled from the gutters of civilisation and the savage heart of the Dark Continent. Here one saw the robed Arab, the swaggering white man, the insolent half-breed, the primitive negro, and here one heard a thousand tongues that were reminiscent of Babel's ancient Tower.

"Well, girls," Arnold said to his two companions, "it will take a day or so to fix up the damage done to the Lottie Carson by the storm. As a matter of fact, Captain Black is ashore now seeing about repairs and getting a new crew."

"Captain Black!" exclaimed Bonnie in surprise. "Why, where is Captain Drake?"

Ben Arnold frowned.

"It was understood that he was to be discharged," he began, but Bonnie cut in on him.

"Ben, I think you're making a big mistake," she protested. "You said yourself before we left America that Captain Drake was an excellent seaman."

"He refused to obey my orders," Arnold retorted. "And very nearly wrecked my ship in the hurricane."

"That's not true, Ben," Bonnie argued. "It wasn't Captain Drake's fault that we ran into the storm, and any man in the crew will tell you that if it hadn't been for the way he handled the Lottie Carson we'd never have weathered it."

Arlene spoke, hoping to change the subject. At the same time she glanced rather disdainfully at a group of native peddlars who were crying their wares close by.

"We'd better go and find a hotel," she suggested, "if there is such a thing in this place."

"Oh, I'm sure we can find accommodation of some kind," Arnold declared; "and both you girls will feel all the better for a rest."

They walked on, and were soon lost to view amidst the crowd that thronged the waterfront. Shortly after they had disappeared four seamen came down the gangway of the Lottie Carson, and might have been recognised as Briney and those members of the crew who had remained loyal to Harry Drake when Bull Black had attempted mutiny.

Briney sang the eternal song that had earned him his nickname, and his croaking voice was echoing through Twamballa's narrow streets when one of his companions drew his attention to a caravan of Arab camels that had entered the town.

"Look, Briney," the sailor ejaculated, as he pointed to the animals. "Our brother-ships of the desert."

"They ain't no brothers of mine," Briney guffawed. "They go eight days without a drink, an' my limit is eight hours. Come on, fellers, let's look for some place to liquor up."

They strode on, and so came to a den that looked passably inviting, a place of haunting native music and half-caste dancing girls.

It was the only hotel and café of any size in Twamballa, and for infamous notoriety was probably unrivalled by any other dive known to humanity. But because they had no choice of destination, Briney and his shipmates passed through its portals.

It was partly for this same reason that Arnold had singled it out, on Bull Black's sinister recommendation, as a resting place for Bonnie Adams. But he had had yet another motive in mind when he had decided to make his quarters there, a motive that was as dastardly as any a man had ever conceived.

The Bribe.

THE riff-raff of the Seven Seas congregated in Lascara's dive, and found fit company in the scum who were permanently domiciled in Twamballa.

Lascara himself leaned against one end of the long zinc bar where drinks were served, a sleek, swarthy Portuguese, with lank black hair and a face on which vice and cruelty were stamped indelibly.

His activities were many, and invariably they were concerned with criminal enterprise. A power in Twamballa's underworld, he had but to utter a single word of command and a dozen ruffians in his pay would have detached themselves from the mob that frequented his saloon. Grim were the stories told of men who had come under the shadow of his displeasure, to vanish for all time and pass utterly from the ken of the world.

It was with this villainous individual that Bull Black associated himself shortly after the arrival of Arnold and the girls, and the two were deep in conversation when Briney and his companions entered.

Black glared at the seamen, and watched Briney truculently as the latter fell in with a dancing girl and walked her over to the bar to stand her some refreshment.

"Here's some o' this feller Drake's pals," Bull told Lascara in an undertone, "but I reckon that needn't worry you any, eh?"

"No," Lascara answered in broken English, favouring Bull with a crafty smile; "my men handle them too eef they start any trouble. But thees man Drake—what does he look like?"

He had hardly put the question when the subject of their conversation entered the saloon, and an ugly glitter appeared in Bull Black's eyes.

"There he is now," he said as Harry sat down at a table. "Look! The guy that just came in."

Briney was fighting like a titan in the hope of rescuing his skipper from a ghastly fate deep down in that well of death.



Lascara riveted his gaze on the young Englishman, and his face was a study in malevolence.

"Well," Bull muttered, "can it be done?"

Lascara gave a leer.

"In Twamballa," he said softly, "anything can be done—ceef there is enough money."

"There'll be plenty o' money," Bull assured him. "I'll go an' have a talk with the man I'm workin' for, an' we'll see yuh later."

He left Lascara and made his way to a flight of stairs that led to the floor above. Ascending, he knocked at the door of one of the upper rooms, and was at once given permission to enter.

Bonnie, Arlene, and Ben Arnold were in the room, and Bull exchanged a meaning glance with the owner of the Lottie Carson.

"I'd like to speak with you a moment, Mr. Arnold," he said.

"All right, Bull," Arnold replied; and then, turning to Bonnie: "I'd advise you to turn in, my dear," he observed. "We've all had a pretty rough time, and a rest will do you good."

"I think you're right, Ben," Bonnie agreed, and, leaving her with Arlene, Arnold accompanied Bull out into the corridor.

"Well," he said when they were alone, "did you fix it?"

"I sure did," Bull answered. "I just had a talk with that feller Lascara downstairs."

"Yes?" Arnold rejoined eagerly. "What did he say?"

"He said he could fix anything," Bull told him, "if there was enough money in it."

Arnold pursed his lips.

"I'll attend to that," he declared. "Listen, Bull!

Drake's got to be put out of the way at any cost! I won't be easy in my mind while he's hanging around. He's gained Bonnie's confidence, and we know that he's kind of wise to us—"

He paused, for the door of the bed-room opened at that moment. Arlene emerged and looked at them keenly.

"How would it be if you let me in on this secret?" she suggested, in a low voice. "I'd like to know just how we all stand. Are you sending Captain Drake home?"

"I'll take care of him," Arnold returned. "All you've got to worry about is this—don't on any account let Bonnie go downstairs. Tell her it's dangerous. You understand?"

"I take you, Ben," Arlene murmured, and with that Arnold and Bull Black made their way to the saloon.

They joined Lascara at the end of the zine bar, where Bull introduced Arnold and then, speaking in guarded tones, brought up the subject of Harry Drake again.

Lascara laid a lean, swarthy hand on his arm.

"One moment!" he said avariciously. "I do thees job for you—verree good. But who pays?"

"I do," put in Ben Arnold. "Here's part of the cash in advance."

And from a wallet he drew out a sheaf of notes, which he handed to the Portuguese.

Lascara moistened his lips as he saw the money, and, taking the bills, he swiftly pocketed them.

"All right," he told Arnold. "You no' worry about Drake any more."

Arnold leaned towards him a trifle anxiously.

"Say, you're sure you can handle this affair, Lascara?" he muttered. "We can't afford to bungle."

"Don't worry," Bull interrupted. "I know Lascara, an' he won't make mistakes. Anyway, you an' me are clear of trouble, no matter what happens."

Lascara drew away and began to walk across the saloon, threading his way between the tables. He chanced to approach the one at which Harry Drake was sitting, and noticed that he had been joined by Briney's shipmates, Collins, Burke, and Connor.

Lascara paused for a moment within earshot.

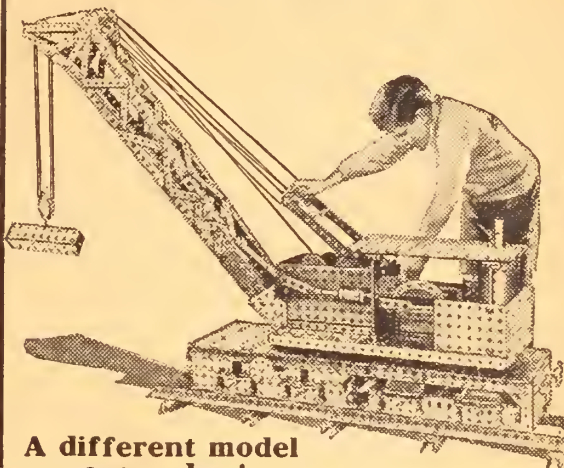
"You know, captain," he heard Collins say, "Bull fired us for stiekin' with you in that fight he an' his swabs started. Of course, I was at the helm, and didn't join in the shindy, but he knew I'd have been on your side if I could've left the wheelhouse, so him and Arnold paid me off as well."

"So we're anchored here until another ship docks," Burke put in. "An' we thought we'd look up this joint to pass some o' the time away."

"I'm here for the same reason," Harry stated. "And don't you boys get down-hearted. I haven't forgotten the way you stood by me, and I'll do my best to see you get a passage home. But listen! Keep your eyes open in the meantime, and steer clear of any rumpus. We're in the toughest port on the coast, and this is about the toughest joint in creation."

Lascara heard so much and then passed on. He stopped at a table where two murderous-looking ruffians were seated and whispered something to them, at the same time indicating Harry Drake with a sly movement of his head.

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The men nodded, and Lascara strolled to another table, occupied by four more of his minions. In all he must have spoken to over a dozen rascally hirelings, after which he stepped to the middle of the spacious room, where a dark-eyed half-caste dancing-girl was swaying to the barbaric strains of a native melody.

He gripped her by the wrist, and, with a cringing movement, the girl ceased dancing. Obeying Lascara's sign to follow him, she slipped after the scoundrel as he led the way to an alcove at the far side of the saloon.

"Pelula," he said, when he was certain no one was within hearing, "there ees something I want you to do. You see white man over there—ship's captain, huh? Well, you go and sit with him."

The girl Pelula gave him a hunted look. "And—what do I do then?" she faltered.

"That's all," was the curt rejoinder. "I do the rest, my little Pelula."

"You make tro'ble for heem!" the girl said, with a swift intake of breath. "Always you say Pelula be nice when you want to make tro'ble for some man. Lascara, I no' like—"

His hand clenched on her arm before she could finish the impassioned protest, and the fierceness of his grasp bruised her flesh so that she uttered a little moan of pain.

"You do as I tell you!" he ground out. "You sarvee—yes?"

"I—I do what you tell me," she answered piteously, almost sinking to her knees.

He dragged her up with a savage gesture.

"Well," he snarled, "you make no meastake, or—you know what happen to you—" An evil smile played around his thin-lipped mouth, and: "There are hungry ones in the pool behind the saloon," he added mysteriously.

The words had an instantaneous effect on the girl, for she covered in abject terror.

"You no' take me to pool, Lascara!" she sobbed. "You no' take me there—"

"Quiet!" he interrupted viciously. "Madre de dios! you go to white man this fashion, and I will kill you. Laugh—you understand? You are happy, so you laugh and be gay—you understand?"

"I—understand, Lascara," the girl managed to say.

A Shock for Briney.

BRINEY was standing at the bar when he saw Harry Drake, and as he caught the Englishman's eye he saluted him cheerfully, then turned again to the girl whose acquaintance he had made.

The drinks served at Lascara's were none too palatable in Briney's estimation, for they were cheap, burning liquors that were handed across the counter in tiny glasses, and presently the big sailor rebelled against such poison.

"Say," he declared to his companion, whose name he had discovered was Rita, "I'm gettin' tired o' drinkin' this taek outa thimblies. How about you and me goin' for a walk?"

The girl started violently.

"Oh, no," she gasped. "I cannot leave thees place. Lascara, he no' let me go out!"

"Lascara?" Briney growled. "Who's he?"

"He own thees place," Rita explained. "He veree bad man to cross. When a girl works for heem, she has to stay here all-a time."

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"Now listen ter me," Briney argued. "You don't have to bother about Lascara. I won't let him do anything."

"No, no," the girl told him emphatically. "If I don't do like Lascara say, he throw me to the crocs."

"To the what?" Briney demanded in bewilderment.

"To the crocs," the girl repeated. "You come an' I show you."

She tugged at his sleeve, and he followed her along the bar and round to a wide doorway at the back of the saloon. It opened on to a bare room with stone flags and granite walls and as Briney strode across the threshold after Rita he noticed a circular pit in the middle of the floor. It was about ten feet in diameter, and surrounded by a low parapet scarce six inches high, and, as far as Briney could judge, it appeared to be a well sunk into the gloomy chamber for some reason or other.

Rita moved to the edge of the pit. A big side of beef lay on the parapet, and she lifted it in her hands, Briney watching her amusedly the while, not understanding the grim significance of what she had told him a few seconds before.

"Say, what are you goin' to do, Baby?" he asked with a grin. "Make a meal o' that?"

"If anybody don't do like Lascara say," the girl told him solemnly, "he— he feed them to the crocs. See—come here!"

Briney advanced, and, standing at her shoulder, peered down into the well. At the sight which met his eyes his face lost its amused expression, and he felt an icy shiver run down his spine.

The pit was twelve or fifteen feet deep, with sheer stone walls. At the bottom of it was a stagnant and muddy pool, and in the slime he saw half a dozen monster reptiles wallowing—loathsome crocodiles with jaws agape and eyes gleaming hungrily, their hideous heads upraised as they scented the meat that the girl Rita was holding high above them.

The muddy waters swirled as they raged in the depths of their prison, thrusting each other aside and craning voraciously towards the food that was poised so far beyond the reach of their fearsome snouts.

"Lascara he feed them like thees," Rita was saying. "Only it is not always animal meat. Sometimes it is people—people who are in his way."

With the words she tossed the beef into the well, and the horrified Briney saw those reptile jaws snap at it savagely. The meat fell amongst the scaly denizens of the pool, and in an instant their tails had lashed the mud and water into a heaving, glutinous mass as the creatures fastened on the food.

For a moment man and girl watched them fighting for possession of it, watched them tearing away great strips of it with their vast, greedy jaws. Then Rita drew back with an exclamation of repugnance, and, covering her eyes with her hands, shuddered violently.

The effect of that spectacle on Briney was even more pronounced, for it was something he had never before witnessed or imagined. Temporarily paralysed by a feeling of mute horror, his first instinct, when he recovered the use of his trembling limbs, was to turn and run from the vicinity of that ghastly well.

"Sufferin' dogfish!" he blurted. "I'm gettin' outa here!"

The girl Rita called to him as he made for the threshold of the saloon.

"Wait!" she cried. "Wait for me!" And then, overtaking him and seizing him by the arm: "You see why I no' go for walk with you, Sailor-man," she

urged, "so now mebbe you dance with me, eh?"

"Not now," Briney answered hoarsely. "I gotta tell my boss about that crocodile pit."

He shook free, and, with the girl still at his heels, entered the saloon and stumbled across to the table where he had last seen Harry Drake.

Harry was alone again, Collins, Burke and Connor having moved off to the bar, and as Briney steered his bulk towards the Englishman the girl Rita shrugged her shoulders resignedly and walked off in search of some other escort.

Briney reached Harry's side, and dropped into a chair beside him.

"I've come aft to join yuh, skipper, with a signal o' distress," Briney panted, lapsing into a whimsical dialect of the sea that he sometimes affected. "There's dirty weather in the offing, an' we've gotta alter our course an' steer clear o' squalls."

"What the deuce are you raving about, Briney?" Harry demanded. "Talk plain English, will you? What's the trouble?"

"We've gotta get outa this dump," Briney gasped. "You know what this feller Lascara does with anybody he don't like? He takes 'em through to a room at the back there, an' throws 'em to the crocodiles!"

Harry greeted this piece of intelligence as light-heartedly as Briney had done when he had first heard it from Rita's lips.

"No!" he said, with an amused grin.

Briney was on the point of emphasizing his statement and attempting to convince Harry of its truth when a slender figure moved between him and the young Englishman. It was the

figure of the girl Pelula, and, knowing the watchful eyes of Lascara were upon her, she forced an alluring smile, and circled Harry's neck with her dusky arm.

"I like you, sailor," she said softly, with the melodious intonation that she had inherited from native forebears.

Harry pushed her gently but firmly aside.

"Cast off, sister," he told her. "You've dropped anchor in the wrong port."

Standing in the background, Lascara glanced quickly round the saloon, and from various points his ruffianly minions approached, forming an ominous circle around the table at which Harry and Briney sat. At the same time, near the end of the long zinc bar, Bull Black and Ben Arnold looked at each other meaningly.

One of Lascara's hirelings stepped close to Harry, and, while Pelula slunk off, laid hold of the Englishman's shoulder. The fellow was a San Francisco wharf-rat who had drifted far from home and enlisted in the service of the ugliest villain on the African coast.

"Say," the man rapped out, "keep your hands off my girl!"

"Take your girl away!" Harry retorted. "She's not wanted at this table."

The rest of Lascara's hirelings closed in, and Briney was the first to become aware of the converging ring of toughs. In a moment the big sailor was on his feet.

"Look out, captain!" he roared. "It's a frame-up!"

Harry sprang up, and on the instant the Frisco wharf-rat pounced on him. The Englishman caught him up in his

powerful arms, and, swinging him off his balance, hurled him over the table bodily. Next second he was overwhelmed by a rush of nine or ten men, a mixed mob of white scum and half-castes.

Briney was tackled by three others, and hit the foremast with a fist as hard as an anchor-cable. The rogue went down, but the others came on and grappled with the sailor; and suddenly Briney caught the glint of a knife.

The Pool.

BONNIE was undressing when the sudden uproar in the saloon reached her ears, and, thoroughly alarmed by the noise, she threw on her clothes again, and hurried to the door.

As she wrenched it open she came face to face with Arlene, and looked at her anxiously.

"What is it?" she panted. "What's happening down there?"

"Oh, nothing," said Arlene carelessly. "Just a bar-room row, Bonnie."

Even as she spoke, the tremendous voice of Briney was heard.

"Collins, Burke, Connor! Lend a hand, shipmates! They're after the skipper's blood!"

Bonnie shot a scared glance at Arlene.

"It's Harry!" she gasped. "Harry's down there!" And, with the words, she slipped past Arlene before the other girl could restrain her.

"Bonnie," Arlene called urgently. "Bonnie, come back here! It's dangerous for you to go—"

But Bonnie did not heed her, and, running down the stairs, she encountered Arnold and Bull Black near the foot of them. The two men started as she appeared beside them, and Ben

(Continued on page 27.)

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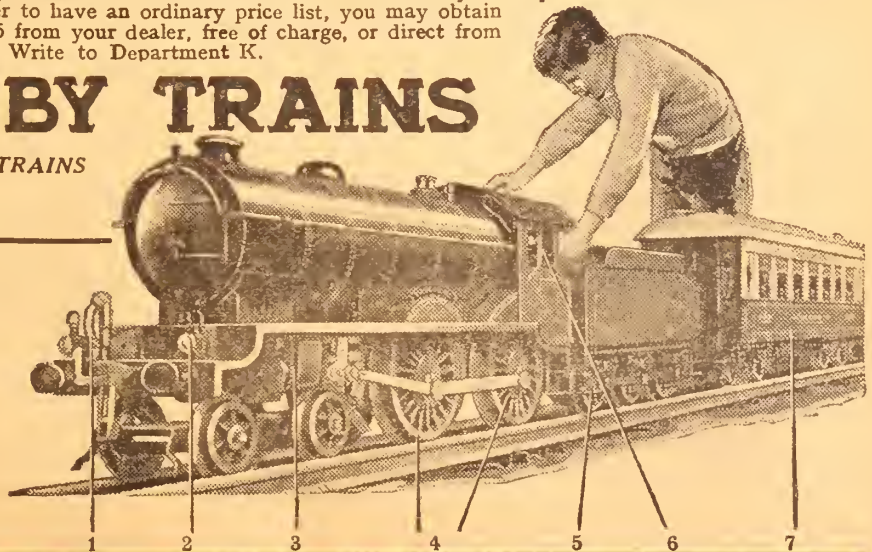
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"THE MAN AT 6."

(Continued from page 20.)

volver, and now he came forward slowly.

"Shut that door!" he growled, and the masked man did so. "The other door is locked. I saw to that. Now hand those bags to me."

The speaker had not taken his eyes off the masked stranger, though he spoke to Frank, who lifted the bags and approached the gunman gingerly.

"Open them," said the man with the gun. "I want one of 'em, not both."

The young man bent over the bags as though to obey, and then, to the surprise of Sybil, and the still greater surprise of the gunman, he suddenly straightened up, and in a flash knocked up the revolver. In a second he had closed with the man who held the gun, and a figure flashed by Sybil as the masked stranger rushed in to help Frank.

Two minutes later the gunman was on the floor, disarmed and helpless. Without speaking a word, Frank found a rope, and tied the fellow up securely.

"That's settled him, anyway!" he cried, turning to Sybil, who was staring hard at the man in the mask.

"Are you the Man at Six?" she asked.

Who Was "The Man at 6"?

THE masked man had taken part in the successful struggle against the gunman, but so far he had not spoken a word. He replied to Sybil's question, however, in a quiet tone.

"I don't quite know how you got the information, madam," he said, "but if you mean to ask whether I had arranged to come here at six o'clock, I must reply in the affirmative. To that extent, therefore, I am the 'man at six,' as you put it."

"Several men came to The Gables about that time," remarked Sybil. "I know what some of them wanted. What do you want?"

"I came to take away those bags." The masked man picked up the two bags and set them on a bench. "Have you examined them? In this one certain valuable jewelled chessmen; in the other—let me see! Ah, yes, a bomb—a time-bomb. How curious!"

He fiddled with the bags a moment, then closed them, leaving them on the bench, the one containing the chessmen being nearer the edge.

"A word of explanation before I take these bags to the inspector," he remarked. "I meant to call before, but I haven't had the chance until now."

"No; because he was after them too, I suppose."

Sybil indicated the man on the floor, but the masked man was eyeing her steadily, and he did not follow her glance.

"You are right, madam," he said. "This extremely unpleasant person has been following me around for some days, only he wasn't quite sure that I had got the chessmen. Now he knows. I must thank you, Mr. Pine, for your courage just now. But for you, this fellow might have got away with the spoils."

"You've double-crossed me, you low bound!" yelled the gunman angrily. "You promised me half. Get hold of him, kid! He's the thief!"

"Be quiet, or I'll send a bullet through you!" came the stern reply as the masked man turned sharply, a gun in his hand. The man on the floor sub-

sided, and the speaker swung round again, seized the bag at the edge of the bench, and faced Sybil and Frank.

"Who are you?" cried Frank fiercely.

"Give me that bag, you scoundrel!"

"Stand back, you young fool!" ground out the masked man, thrusting forward his revolver.

Frank drew back to Sybil's side, glaring angrily at the man who was threatening him. Step by step the man in the mask retired towards the outer door, which he opened. Still covering the young couple, he got into the small car.

"You will be interested to know what will happen in a few minutes," he remarked coolly. "I set the time-bomb, and it will go off in four minutes; no, four and a half." He consulted a wrist-watch and smiled grimly.

"I have just time to make a few remarks before I leave," he continued. "In the first place, our friend on the floor is right. I am the thief, as he put it."

Sybil Vane watched him in silence, quite calm and collected, while Frank fidgeted, looking uneasily at the other bag.

"That fool of an inspector is now looking for you, and for someone who is supposed to have fired at Mrs. Rowson, or at Sir Joseph," resumed the man in the mask, beginning to back the car out of the garage. "Mrs. Rowson! Odd, because—"

"There never was a Mrs. Rowson, of course," interrupted Sybil.

"Of course not. I was Mrs. Rowson. I came down here after these chessmen, and I fooled Sir Joseph into letting me have them. He never suspected Mrs. Rowson to be a man in disguise."

The masked man chuckled, and Frank growled in impotent wrath.

"That explains a lot," said Sybil. "The death of Jenkins, for example."

"Yes, I regret that," came the reply. "Jenkins was useful in his way, and he didn't suspect me either. This afternoon I discarded the attire of Mrs. Rowson in his presence, and the shock was too much for the old man. He saw what he thought to be a feeble old woman change into a strong man before his eyes, and he fainted. When I picked him up he was dead."

"You wrote that letter signed 'Elizabeth Rowson,' I suppose," said Sybil.

"A mere blind, my dear lady. Of no importance except that it indicated the departure of 'Mrs. Rowson.' I congratulate you on your acumen, madam. Why did you masquerade in the way you did?"

"I hoped to surprise a confession out of someone by suddenly appearing as Mrs. Rowson, that's all," replied Sybil, elanged shut.

The masked man had stopped the car in the doorway, but now he began to move slowly out.

"Good-bye," he remarked pleasantly.

"You have one minute left. I must go."

The car disappeared, and in some way which Frank and Sybil could not fathom the door changed to as it went out.

"He doesn't know everything," said Sybil, smiling at Frank. "He doesn't know that I am a private detective. I

was employed to watch—your father. He was already suspected, you know. The chessmen had been missed."

"But—but—" stammered Frank, his face paling as he edged away from the bench where the brown bag lay. "That bomb!"

"Don't worry about that." Sybil smiled at the young man's irritation. "I changed the bags when he turned round to the gentleman on the floor."

She took up the bag and opened it. There, sure enough, were the chessmen.

"He's got the bomb," said Sybil. "Listen!"

A tremendous crash outside, and the ground rocked beneath their feet, while through a window over the door they saw a flash of flame.

"That's the end of the Man at Six," remarked Sybil quietly.

Half a dozen policemen rushed to the scene of the explosion, but it was impossible for them to approach the blazing car. They could only watch helplessly from a distance. Sybil and Frank were soon released from the garage by the inspector and Sergeant Hogan, and the former gazed in astonishment at the pair.

"How did you get here?" he asked.

"And who was in that car?"

"The Man at Six," replied Sybil.

"What do you mean by that?"

Inspector Dawford looked puzzled, as well he might. The evening's events had been a little too much for him.

"I am a private detective, Mr. Dawford," replied Sybil. "I happened to find out that Mrs. Rowson had disappeared, and I sent a telephone message to Scotland Yard about it. I also discovered that a certain man would come here at six o'clock for the chessmen. I didn't know who the man would be, but I think I know now. And I have the chessmen here. He thought he'd got them, but he took the bag with the bomb instead."

Chief-inspector Dawford seemed more puzzled than ever as he looked at the chessmen.

"Come back to the hall, both of you," he said at length. "I must hear the whole story. Bring that fellow on the floor along, sergeant, and I'll question him. Was the man who has just been killed in that car the thief, then? And where's Mrs. Rowson?" he added, turning to Sybil again.

"He was the thief and he was Mrs. Rowson, too," replied the girl. "You have only to gather together all those who came here this evening. One will be missing, and he is—or, rather, he was—the Man at Six."

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"DANGER ISLAND."

(Continued from page 25.)

Arnold bit his lips as he recognised her.

"Bonnie!" he rapped out. "What are you doing here?"

"Ben, Ben," the girl cried, "what's wrong? What are they doing to Captain Drake? Oh, Ben, we've got to do something to stop those men."

"It's not our fight, Miss Bonnie," Bull Black put in. "Drake took a fancy to that half-caste dancin'-girl over there, and another feller jumped him with a crowd o' his pals."

Bonnie glanced towards the dusky Pelula, and then faced Bull indignantly.

"It's a lie!" she flashed. "I don't believe it!"

With that, she wheeled, and, in defiance of Ben Arnold's sharp command, she darted towards the scene of the fracas.

"Bonnie!" Arnold shouted fiercely. "Stop, will you? Keep out of it!"

"Come back here, you little fool!" Bull Black added through his teeth, but Bonnie ignored both men.

Briney was still struggling with two of Lascara's underlings, and he had some difficulty in handing-off one of them—the man with the stiletto. The fellow was a Dago, and he was dancing in and out of the big sailor's reach, seeking an opportunity to bury the blade of his dagger in Briney's ribs. But the seaman finally hurled his other assailant to the floor, and pouncing on the man with the knife, struck aside the weapon with a slicing blow of his hand.

The knife fell from the Dago's grasp, and Briney caught the murderous little ruffian with a buffet that knocked him half a dozen yards, and then dropped him in a heap at the foot of Lascara's zinc bar. Next second, however, Briney's first adversary scrambled to his feet and engaged him savagely.

Meanwhile, Burke, Collins, and Connor had gone to Harry Drake's rescue, and had peeled three of the Englishman's assailants away from him. But there were still seven against Harry, and only a man of the young captain's physique and determination could have resisted them as effectively as he, for a spell, managed to do.

He contrived to break away from them and keep them at bay with his fists. In this way he was at first successful, for one man was crushed under a terrific right to the jaw, and two more were soon grovelling on the floor alongside him, their tumbled bodies throwing the remainder of the gang into confusion.

It was at this moment that Bonnie appeared on the scene, and she flung herself recklessly at one of Harry's enemies, attacking the scoundrel from behind and seizing him by the hair.

The fellow roared with pain, then squirmed round and tore himself from her grasp. But she scratched his face like a wild cat, and, in a fury he caught hold of her and threw her across the bar-room, so that she staggered for several paces, and then fell.

She struck her head against the floor and lay half-stunned while the fight raged around her, but presently she managed to struggle to her feet, and as she stood up she saw Harry's attackers mustering for a concerted rush.

The men whom he had knocked down had risen to their feet, and in an irre-

sistible charge all seven of the ruffians crowded Harry towards the back of the saloon. The Englishman lashed out at them desperately, and his bunched knuckles drove into the face of one man with an impact that broke his jaw, but the others closed with him, and by force of numbers hustled him towards that grimy chamber of horror where the hungry crocodiles wallowed in the pool!

From the far end of Lascara's bar Bull Black and Ben Arnold watched the battle closely, and the eyes of the mate gleamed significantly as he saw that struggling mass of humanity blunder across the threshold of the sinister back-room.

"An' that's the finish o' Captain Drake!" he growled. "I guess you've seen the last o' him, Arnold!"

"What do you mean, Bull?" Arnold demanded. "They'll finish him in there—with knives?"

Bull's mouth twisted into a crooked smile.

"No, not with knives," he said. "With something that don't leave any trace—something that's the particular pastime o' Lascara. An' I give yuh my colonial oath, it would make your hair stand on end to see it, Arnold!"

"I don't care how he's finished," Arnold ground out, "so long as they make a sure job of it—"

Bull Black was not the only one who had seen Harry's assailants force him across the threshold and known their purpose in doing so. For Briney had witnessed the circumstance, and as Harry disappeared into the room of stone the big sailor seemed to become a raving madman.

"Don't go in there!" he shrieked. "Don't let 'em take you in there, captain!"

He was still struggling with one of Lascara's underlings, but suddenly dashed the man to the floor and started for the back room. At the same time Bonnie ran to him.

"They're throwin' Drake to the crocodiles!" Briney told her huskily, and with ashen face he lurched on towards the doorway through which Harry had vanished.

Bonnie followed him, and as she crossed the threshold she saw Harry Drake striving to tear himself from the swarm of men around him. But he was fairly at their mercy now, and with an exultant clamour they hustled him towards the middle of the room and that well of death.

Harry was only a couple of paces from the aperture in the floor when he tripped and fell. He came down with a heavy thud, his shoulders striking the low parapet of the well, and Lascara's hirelings sprawled atop of him. One man had his arm wrapped around the Englishman's neck, another was gripping him by the throat, and while these pushed him farther into the pit two or three others hoisted him up by the legs.

They were trying to toss him headlong into the well, and as he lay across the parapet Harry saw the monster reptiles below him. A thrill of horror ran through him as their ugly bodies slid through the water, their necks craning upwards at the sight of him, their jaws clashing greedily, and a hoarse exclamation escaped him as the brutes leaped at the wall, only to fall back from its sheer surface.

"The crocodiles!" roared the voice of Briney, and next instant the big sailor had flung himself into the midst of the Englishman's foes.

Bonnie darted after him, and she felt sick with terror, for she had realised the meaning of Briney's words. Sobbing distractedly, she clutched at one of Lascara's minions and tried to tear him away from Harry, but at the same time a feeling of faintness overcame her as she discerned the creatures of the pool.

Briney was fighting like a titan in the hope of rescuing his skipper from a ghastly fate deep down in that well of death. He had seized one ruffian by the collar and was dragging back another man whose head he had imprisoned in the crook of his arm. But he was one against many, and the fate of Harry Drake seemed sealed.

Briney pulled aside the two men on whom he had laid his great hands. But the others had Harry in their power, and with a heave they tipped him into the sinister pit.

A shriek escaped Bonnie Adams as the young Englishman's body plunged down, and the echoes of her cry mingled with the horrified shout that Briney uttered.

From the depths of the well there came an awful tumult—a snapping of great jaws, the splash and swirl of muddy waters lashed into a fury by the demons there.

(To be continued in another gripping episode next week. By permission of the Universal Pictures, Ltd., starring Kenneth Harlan and Lucille Browne.)

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December 12th, 1931

"LARCENY LANE."

(Continued from page 18.)

man's jaw. His captor's grip slackened, and there was the thud of a falling body. Next instant the fugitive had dashed into the ground-floor lobby of the skyscraper building in which the premises of Wernor & Lawrence were situated.

He swerved towards a flight of stairs as he saw a stalwart form blocking the only other line of escape. There was an immediate hue and cry, and the blast of a gunshot punctuated the tumult.

"This way, boys! After him—"
Bert raced on up the stairs, but as he reached the fourth floor he turned and sprinted along a corridor. At the end of it there was a window that opened on to a fire-escape, and he clambered through and sped down the rungs, to find himself in an alley.

He had hardly set foot to the ground when something jabbed him in the small of the back.

"Stick 'em up there, and swing around!"

Bert raised his hands and turned slowly. He found himself face to face with a plain-clothes man who was covering him with a revolver, and he knew that he was caught—caught red-handed for another man's crime.

Bert languished in a cell awaiting his trial, and the despair of those first hours behind the bars was only relieved when Anne called on him.

"Gee, it's swell to see you, Honey," Bert said to her as soon as they were alone. And then, as he saw the tears in her eyes: "Oh, don't take it so hard," he urged. "Things could be a lot worse."

"Nothing could be worse," she an-

swered bitterly. "I—I just found out that Joe double-crossed you. Oh, don't you understand? He put the police on you. That's why you're here!"

Bert stared at her incredulously. "You mean to say that he pulled a trick like that, after all we tried to do for him?" he stammered. "Aw, it's impossible. Nobody could be so low."

"It's true!" she cried. "He got in touch with the police and gave you away. Only he made believe that a gang was burgling the office, so that when they caught you they'd think an accomplice had got away with the thirty thousand dollars' worth of negotiable bonds that he himself appropriated."

Bert's face suddenly became livid, and in a moment he was at the door of his cell, tearing futilely at the bars.

"The dirty, double-crossing rat!" he raged. "I want to get my hands on him, I want to tear him to pieces. Aw, if only I could get out of here!" And he sank back helplessly on his cot.

Anne gripped his shoulder. "I'm not going to let you take the blame!" she said. "I'm going to the district attorney, and I'm going to tell him the whole story. I'll—"

But Bert was on his feet again, and all at once his hand was on her lips.

"No, no, you mustn't do that!" he protested. "You'd only put yourself in a jam. Stay out of this, or they'll find out all there is to know about us. They'll dig up the whole story of our racket. You've got to keep quiet. Anne!"

"Oh, Bert," she sobbed, "I don't care what happens to me. I got you into this fix and I'm going to get you out of it. I can't let you go to gaol!"

He smiled down at her gamely. "I'm in, Anne," he told her, "and there's nothing you can do to help me. It'll just be my word against Joe's. Besides, you don't owe me anything. If I hadn't talked you into being my partner in the old racket, you'd still be

holding down some linen job—without a care in the world."

"Bert—"
She drew nearer to him, and there was a tender expression in her lovely eyes.

"Bert," she said, "I went into the racket because I was falling in love with you. I love you still, and it's taken Joe Reynolds and his beastliness to make me realise it. I'm never going back to him, Bert. I'm going to make him give me my freedom, and—if he knows how much my silence is worth—he will."

"Anne," Bert breathed, taking her hands, "do you mean that?"
"Of course I mean it," she told him. "More than I ever meant anything in my life. I won't interfere in your trial, Bert, for you're right—it would mean everything being raked up, and you'd be in the pen for years. But, whatever happens—"

The warden showed up at that moment, and, unlocking the door, interrupted her.

"Time's up, lady," he said. "Come along!"

"Whatever happens—no matter what it is," Anne went on, clinging to Bert as she spoke—"I'll be waiting."

The warden touched her on the arm, and, drawing away, Anne moved out of the cell. The door was closed and locked again, and Bert stepped close to the bars. He was grinning as if he had no longer a single care in the world.

"I seem to remember somebody giving you a book of poetry, Anne," he said. "Did you happen to notice a verse in it that went this way?"

He struck a pose, and solemnly quoted a couple of lines:

"If I had the wings of a bird, my love,
Over these prison walls I'd fly. . . ."

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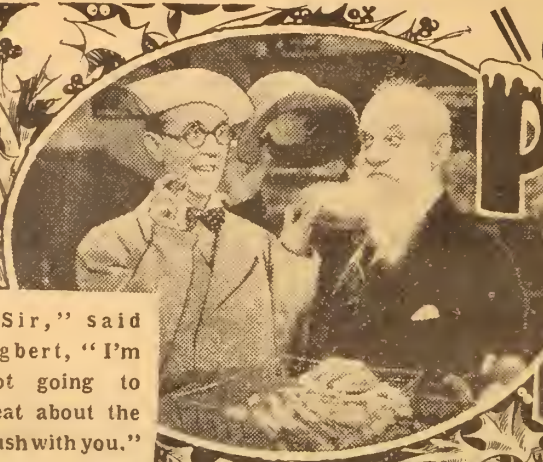
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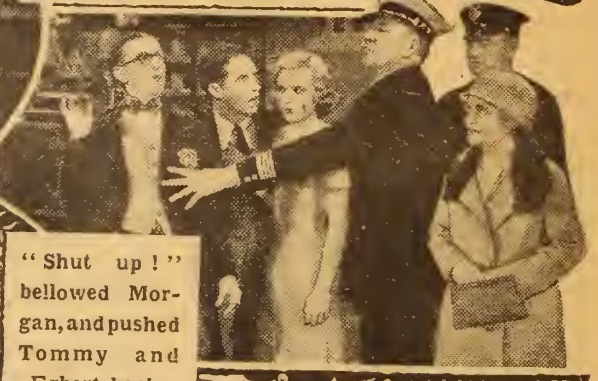
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Tommy and Egbert, two down-and-out comedians, undertake to run a derelict drug-store for a little old lady—and bring about the downfall of a bootlegger. A delightful comedy, with complications and laughs galore.


CAUGHT PLASTERED




"Sir," said Egbert, "I'm not going to beat about the bush with you."



"Shut up!" bellowed Morgan, and pushed Tommy and Egbert back.



They surged forward, singing an entirely different song.



Egbert, in a momentary lull, sailed over to sip with them.

Starring WHEELER and WOOLSEY.

One Free Ride—and Another.

THE long goods train drew slowly into a siding just beyond the unimportant Middle-West station of Lockville and came to a full stop after a certain amount of banging and bumping of buffers. Sheriff Ebenezer Flint, a tall and self-important person of austere aspect, immediately began to search for tramps and other undesirables who, despite his vigilance, too often entered the town by rail without having paid any fare.

Halfway down the row of box-cars a sliding door was pushed back by two pairs of hands, and two young men jumped down on to the track. They did not look like tramps, but Flint immediately hastened in their direction.

As a matter of fact, the two young men were vaudeville comedians—what is known as a "double turn"—but it was a good while since they had appeared on any stage, and then they had been hooted off it. Consequently their pockets were almost as empty as the box-car in which they had travelled unlawfully across two States, and their stomachs were uncommonly like their pockets.

Yet the taller of the two—Egbert G. Higginbotham by name—was smoking a cigar; the last of three which he had purchased with his last dollar. That circumstance momentarily gave Flint pause; he was not to know that although Egbert could go without a meal indefinitely he simply could not exist without

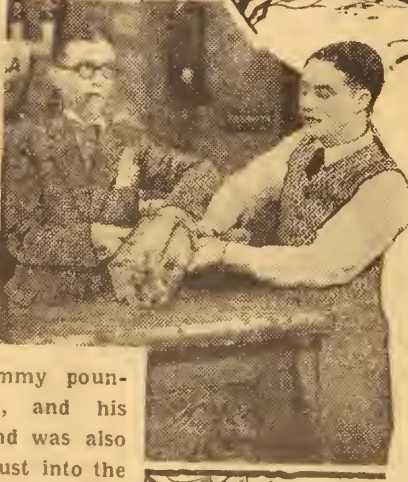
a cigar. In several other ways Egbert was remarkable. He was wearing horn-rimmed spectacles; he was dressed rather loudly in a shabby check suit, with a double-breasted waistcoat that did not match, and a pale grey bowler hat covered most of his flaming red hair. His clean-shaven face was long and his nose was one of its most outstanding features.

Tommy Tanner, his partner, was shorter, slightly bulkier, and several years younger. His face—also clean-shaven—was of a fuller pattern; his dress was distinctly assorted. A straw hat was perched on his brown hair; his trousers were a neat check; his jacket was black, and his waistcoat was a fancy one that few would fancy.

All unaware of Flint's approach, Egbert kissed his hand to the box-car.

"Well, ta-ta, old empty," he said.

"Were you speaking to me?" inquired Tommy.



Tommy pounced, and his hand was also thrust into the jar.

"Certainly not—I was just saying good-bye to our private train."
 "Ha, ha!" Tommy laughed. "Good old gondola. Five hundred miles she's brought us!"
 "Yes."

The tall figure of Flint stepped between them. His thumbs were in the armbands of his waistcoat and the shield upon his waistcoat was disturbingly visible.

"That'll cost you ten dollars apiece to the company," he barked, "or thirty days to the State."

They jumped, stared, recovered from the shock, and raised their hats with the utmost politeness.

"Yes?" said Egbert cheerfully. "How are you? And then, on the other hand—how are you?"

Tommy grinned broadly.
 "Lovely city you have," he remarked. "Haven't we?"

Flint glared; Egbert replaced his bowler and turned; and immediately the two were running with all their might across the rails in the direction of the distant roadway, dodging round intervening trucks.

"Hi, hi!" cried Flint, tearing after them. "Come back! Hi, you! Hi! You, there!"

The sheriff's legs were long, but he was not in form for sprinting. By the time he reached the gates that opened into the roadway his quarry had completely vanished. This way and that he looked in vain; then, realising that some more obvious tramps might be taking advantage of his absence, he went back to the goods train.

Egbert and Tommy had dived round a corner into what seemed to be quite a busy thoroughfare, lined with shops. They came to rest outside a baker's premises and there recovered their breath.

"Whew!" exclaimed Egbert, removing his hat and fanning his face with it. "Well, son, we're running just thirty days ahead of time."

"Yeah," said Tommy, sinking on to an empty box beside the baker's doorway. "and three days behind a meal!"

Egbert, restoring his hat to his head, sat down by his partner in distress.
 "Don't worry," he said optimistically, "our act will make us famous yet."
 "I don't want fame," growled Tommy. "I want food."

"We'll have that, too," Egbert declared, re-lighting the stub of his cigar, which had gone out. "We'll have everything! Our act's the best there is in vaudeville—only in the last town it went over their heads like a hair-net."

"Yeah," nodded Tommy gloomily. "The manager came back stage and said he didn't allow profanity in his theatre."

"We didn't use profanity."
 "I know—but the audience did!"

It was typical of these two that they could not resist cross-talk and wise-cracks even in private life; indeed, they were often funnier together in private life than they were before the footlights—they were always a "double turn."

"Isn't it too bad we're broke, Egbert?" ruminated Tommy. "You know, in Oakville the audience applauded us all the time, yet the management kicked us out."

"They weren't applauding," scoffed Egbert, "they were killing mosquitoes!" And he clapped his hands to show how similar the extermination of mosquitoes could be to the sound of applause.

"And us without a nickel!" lamented Tommy, rising to his feet because the baker was striding across his shop. "Have you ever wondered what you'd do if you had Rockefeller's money?"

"No," said Egbert, with a grimace, "but I've stopped and wondered what he'd do if he had mine!"

Tommy laughed, and slapped Egbert on the shoulder approvingly.

"Was that good?" he exclaimed, and produced from his pocket a circular metal badge on which was inscribed the word "Inspector" and the number 42. "No, kid," he said, attaching the badge to Egbert's vest, "you win the solid lead medal for that one! There you are!"

"Where'd you get the thing?" asked Egbert, blinking down at the decoration through his horn-rimmed spectacles.

"I found it in the box-car—and I kept it because it felt like a dollar in my pocket."

The baker stood in the doorway, scowling at them, and they wandered on into what obviously was the main street. Tram-lines ran down the middle of it, and the traffic was considerable.

"Don't worry," said Egbert cheerfully. "This looks like a town of go-getters to me. Something tells me the people here are alive—they're on their toes."

"They may be on their toes," retorted Tommy, "but we're flat on our heels."

Egbert, at that moment, glanced down at the pavement—and caught sight of a slip of paper lying near his feet. Tommy also looked—and swooped.

"Here, give me that! Let me have it!" cried Egbert. "I saw it first!" And he snatched at the slip of paper, and secured it.

A policeman was frowning at them, so they proceeded quietly along the street to an alleyway littered with packing-cases, entered the alleyway and sat down on an empty orange-box.

"What is it?" demanded Tommy anxiously. "Money?"

"No," said Egbert, examining the find with disgusted eyes. "It's only a street-car transfer. You know, for a minute I thought it was a good old two-dollar bill."

"You're always thinking something is something else," complained Tommy, and grabbed. "Why," he exclaimed, "it's not only a transfer, it's two days old!"

Egbert recovered the slip of paper and studied it thoughtfully.

"Well, come on," he said, "let's take a street-car ride."

"Hold on!" cried Tommy. "What for?"

"To look over our new town, of course. Who can tell—we may bump into a theatre that needs some good talent—come on!"

But Tommy hung back.
 "Wait a minute," he pleaded. "Both of us can't ride on one transfer. Besides, it's two days old."



"You—you——" spluttered Waters. "More of that and I—I'll give you a piece of my mind."

"Well, the worst they can do is to put us off," retorted his incorrigible partner. "Come on—I'll handle the situation in my usual masterly manner. Come on!"

"All right," said Tommy; for where Egbert led he invariably followed.

They stepped out from the alleyway and strolled along the street to a car-stop. An electric tramcar was standing there and passengers were streaming off it, while a little group of people were waiting to invade it. Egbert and Tommy, waiting their opportunity, jumped on to the rear platform just as the vehicle was re-starting.

"This car goes to Glen Park, Allison Avenue, and points east," sang out the conductor, a thick-set man with a pimple on his nose.

"We don't care which way it points," Egbert informed him, flicking ash from his cigar. "We're going to the end of the line."

Opportunity in a Tramcar.

FOR a while the two remained on the platform while the conductor went inside to collect fares. But before the car had reached the end of the busy street the conductor came back to them and held out his hand.

"Fares, please!"

"Here you are, conductor," said Egbert, handing over the out-of-date transfer ticket. "Nice weather we're having. And, by the way, it certainly looks as though the old League of Nations is going to get the Major League after all—and then again, there's the Lickersham Report."

Tommy, responding to a nudge in the ribs, began to pass inside the car, and Egbert would have followed, but the conductor stopped him.

"Just a minute! Just a minute!" he said truculently. "This transfer's two days old!"

"Really?" said Egbert, with a pleasant smile. "It just goes to show how long we've been waiting for this car! Thomas, one moment; you must hear this!"

Tommy turned about, wondering what would happen next.

"Conductor," boomed Egbert, "I want to shake your hand. Your hand! You know, there isn't one man in fifty would have noticed that that transfer was two days old. You're a very remarkable employee. Just make a note of that to the company, will you, Carlyle?"

Tommy fished out a little notebook and pencil, and the conductor stared in bewilderment, as well he might.

"Yes, sir," said Tommy.

"Might I—might I ask you you are?" stammered the conductor, gazing blankly at Egbert.

"Why, certainly," replied that resourceful young man loftily, and he opened his coat to display the inspector's badge upon his waistcoat.

"I—I hope you'll find everything all right, sir," mumbled the conductor, completely abashed.

"I'm sure we shall," responded Egbert. "Now, my good man, what's your name?"

"Sylvester Adolphus Bairnsfender, sir."

Tommy jotted down the name.

"Just take his number, Carlyle," directed Egbert.

Tommy handled the dangling disc on which the conductor's number was recorded, and let it fall back against the tunic to which it was attached. He then wrote down the figures, 5063.

"Now then, Sylvester," said Egbert, in quite a friendly way, "what schedule does this car run on?"

"A quarter past—half-past—quarter December 19th, 1931."

of—and at," was the immediate response.

"Good!" approved Egbert. "Come, Carlyle, we will now inspect the inside."

The conductor took off his peaked cap and brushed back his hair, relieved that the ordeal was over, and Egbert and Tommy stepped into the car's interior, passing up the aisle between the seats of the swaying vehicle from strap to strap.

"You certainly did get by that conductor slick," whispered Tommy admiringly.

"You leave everything to your Uncle Egbert," chuckled the wily one, and reached a vacant seat.

"Where are we going from here?" inquired Tommy anxiously.

"I don't know. When we go out like this something always happens, doesn't it?"

"Yes," growled Tommy, "and mostly to me!"

The car swung round out of Main Street into a less congested thoroughfare. The rows of shops on either side became interspersed with houses. A sound of sobbing suddenly assailed the partners' ears, and they became aware of a little grey-haired woman in a shabby black coat and faded black straw hat in one of the opposite seats who was crying into her handkerchief.

"Look!" whispered Tommy. "The

With All Good Wishes for Christmas

—From YOUR EDITOR.

old lady's crying! I wonder what's the trouble?"

"Maybe she has to ride this car every day," suggested Egbert.

The sobbing continued, and so did the progress of the car. Vacant plots occurred between the houses and the shops; at intervals the car came to a rest and passengers departed and others entered. But the little old lady remained crouched in her seat, and once, when she took the handkerchief from her face, Tommy caught a glimpse of a wrinkled but very sweet face, and thought of his dead mother.

"Egbert," he said uneasily, "let's find out what the trouble is. Maybe we can help her."

"Right you are," nodded Egbert, quite readily. "You know our motto—one good deed every day."

They crossed and seated themselves on either side of the drooping figure, and tender-hearted Tommy speko to her.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," he said awkwardly, "but e-can we do anything to help you?"

The old lady wiped her eyes and looked gratefully up at him, but shook her head.

"Why—why, no, thank you," she whimpered. "I'm afraid not."

"But you've been crying," protested Tommy.

"Ah-ah, and den't deny it," said Egbert, with comical solemnity. "You know it doesn't do any good to pull a Niagara."

"A Niagara?" she echoed wonderingly.

"He means tears," explained Tommy gently. "You know, Niagara Falls—tears fall. We just thought that—er—maybe we coul—er—er—"

"Do something for you," put in Egbert.

The little old lady wiped her eyes again and tried to smile.

"It's very nice of you gentlemen to take such an interest in me," she said gratefully. "Yours are the f-first kind words I've heard in—"

She broke off to sob again, and Tommy patted her arm.

"Oh, but you mustn't do that!" he protested. "Why, we've had more tough luck than you, I know."

"Sure!" nodded Egbert emphatically.

"Why, you'd think we were both born under a ladder, and broke a mirror every morning! Come on, now, mother, give us an earful of the bad news."

The old lady, thus adjured, looked up at them in turn.

"Well," she whimpered, "they're taking my drug-store away from me."

The conductor's head was thrust into the car. He had just collected fares and retreated, but it was an astonishing thing to him to see two supposed officials of the company talking to an insignificant old lady. He began to wonder how it would be to suggest to them that his pay was inadequate to his needs.

"Why are they taking your drug-store away from you?" asked Tommy gently.

"Debt," was the frank reply. "You see, since my husband died I—I did the best I could, but oh, if I'd only had someone who understood about drug-stores!"

Egbert glanced meaningly at Tommy, and said briskly:

"Now isn't that a coincidence? Mether, this is certainly your lucky day! I suppose it's just a trick of fate, us being on this car."

"It's simply amazing, Egbert—amazing!" declared Tommy.

The little old lady screwed her handkerchief into a ball, studying their faces with hope writ large in her faded grey eyes.

"Oh, do you understand the drug business?" she exclaimed.

"Oho!" chuckled the shameless Egbert. "She asks us if we understand the drug business! Why, mother, we understand the drug business all the way from Apollo to Apollonaris! Who was it conducted the biggest kiddie-crying contest the Castoria people ever held?"

"I don't know," confessed the little old lady.

"Us!" declared Egbert proudly.

"Who was it estimated that if all the compound pills in the country were piled into one heap in the Grand Canyon it would be—er—a good idea? Us! Who was it discovered that quinine and whisky was not good for a cold unless somebody else took the quinine?"

"Me!" proclaimed Tommy triumphantly.

"Us!" corrected Egbert. "Us, son—us! Now, mother, you just continue to sit here, but discontinue to weep, and give us the details of this thing."

"Well," began the little old lady obediently, "three years ago my husband was taken ill. He was a qualified chemist—I don't know anything about drugs myself."

"Go on!" said Egbert.

The little old lady went on, pouring her pitiful tale into the eager ears of the two adventurers, and the story was not really complete when the tramcar

stopped and the conductor called out: "Allison Avenue." "This is where I get off," said the little old lady, starting abruptly to her feet. "Then it must be where we get off," decided Egbert.

A Shock for Watters.

ALLISON AVENUE was quite an imposing thoroughfare, second only to Main Street in the size and number of its shops. The little old lady led the way across the road to a drug-store that bore rather a neglected appearance. She took a key from her handbag and unlocked its door.

"Ah, so this is it, eh?" said Egbert. "Yes," she nodded. "I had to look it up while I went down to see the loan company."

"But, mother," protested Tommy, "don't you lose a lot of trade locking it up like that?"

"I don't have very much trade, even when it's open, any more," she said sadly. "Yet you can see it's situated on the right side of the street."

"Yeah," nodded Egbert, frowning at the uninteresting collection of brushes and combs and perfums and soaps in the window, "but on the wrong side of the ledger."

Tommy laughed at that, and Egbert felt called upon to offer a sort of apology for his facetiousness.

"You see," he said, "I'm a kind of a waggish person—you know, some people call me a wit."

"And they're half right," commented Tommy.

"Well, I hope you won't be disappointed," said the little old lady. "You see the business is run down."

"Oh, well, we'll wind it up!" laughed Egbert.

They passed into the shop, and the two were quite surprised at its dimensions, but the stock looked none too enticing, and was none too well displayed. As usual in American drug-stores, there was a public telephone-box at the far end, and a bar set with high chairs behind which reposed a soda-fountain and a variety of bottles and jars.

"Very interesting—very interesting!" commented Egbert, and advancing upon a jar containing jellied beans, plunged in a hand and filled his mouth. Tommy, who was ravenous, followed his example.

"What the store needs," said its proprietress, "is more medicine."

"Mother," said Egbert, glancing about him critically, "I'm afraid medicine won't do it any good. What I mean is—er—we'll make a diagnosis. Maybe it doesn't need medicine—maybe what it needs is exercise."

"You see," explained Tommy, "we analyse. It's a new gag in business. We make people drug-store conscious."

"That's it! That's it!" supported Egbert. "Now, mother, we'll get right down to business."

But Tommy wandered away to peer and pry, and presently he called Egbert over to him.

"We can't do anything around here," he said in a low voice. "Let's get out and find ourselves a job."

"Boy, I think you're right," agreed Egbert, and went back to the little old lady whose name—according to the fascia—was Mrs. Talley, widow of one Timothy Talley. He helped himself to a cigar, which proved to be quite a good one, and because she was looking so anxious and such a lonely little figure, he said the very reverse of what he had intended to say.

"Mother," he began, "my associate has just informed me that he is greatly impressed with the potentialities."

Tommy sat down beside the soda-fountain and made signs, but Egbert would not look at him.

"Now, with the application of our exclusive business methods," he proceeded, "we intend taking this store over for you and placing it where it belongs."

The shop door had been left open, and Mrs. Talley became aware of a tall and powerfully-built young man who was hovering on the threshold, evidently listening.

"Excuse me a minute," she said hurriedly, and went to meet the visitor, who stepped inside and removed his hat. His clean-shaven face was handsome in a way, but his brown eyes were crafty. His name was Harry Watters—a name Egbert and Tommy were going to detest in time.

"Afternoon, Mrs. Talley!" said he brusquely. "Efficiency conference?"

Egbert and Tommy were at the bar devouring jellied beans. They contemplated the newcomer without enthusiasm.

"Well, yes," said Mrs. Talley, smiling wanly. "These gentlemen were just advising me a little."

"I suppose you know what I'm here for?"

"Well, I—I hope so," she faltered. "We've extended your credit to the amount of twelve hundred dollars. You couldn't pay, so we took your note and

assignment. I wanted to help you out."

"You've always been very kind, Mr. Watters. It breaks me up to think of losing the store, but I'm afraid—"

Tears trickled down her cheeks, and Tommy nudged Egbert.

"Mrs. Talley," said Watters, "I have a board of directors to satisfy, and your note is due in thirty days; but I'll take it upon myself, just as a friend, to take the whole thing off your shoulders and hand you a cheque for three hundred dollars, if you will sign—"

Egbert and Tommy rose almost simultaneously, but Egbert was the first to reach the proffered benefactor.

"Just a moment," he said, puffing at his cigar. "Did I understand you to say that this note was due in thirty days?"

"If you did," snapped Watters, "you were listening to something that was none of your affair."

"Well, listen, brother!" said Egbert calmly. "Suppose you come back in thirty days? Get me? Thirty days!"

"We should give you sixty," said Tommy with double meaning.

"Now, boys," intervened Mrs. Talley, "I want you to know Mr. Watters, and to like him. He's been awfully kind to me."

"I'm here merely to help Mrs. Talley out," said Watters angrily.

"Yeah!" drawled Egbert. "Out into the street!"

"Yes—and help himself in," added Tommy, striking an attitude.

"You—you—" spluttered Watters. "More of that and I—I'll give you a piece of my mind!"

"Better give him something you won't need!" taunted Egbert; and then Mrs. Talley tried to establish peace.

"Now, boys, please!" she pleaded. "I'm sorry, Mr. Watters, but they mean well. You see, they understand the drug business."

"Understand the business?" scoffed Watters, and turned suddenly on Egbert. "What's the difference between monoxide and dioxide?" he demanded.



She opened the door and looked round it, whereupon Egbert made a grimace, and Tommy looked innocently away. "It was the wrong number," she said with a smile.

Egbert hadn't the ghost of a notion, but with his ready wit he covered up his ignorance.

"Well," he said brightly, "they had a difference, but they've made it up now."

"Bah!" snorted Watters, while Tommy laughed aloud. "Mrs. Talley, you understand, of course, that we can supply you with no further drugs until all bills are paid. I'll see you in thirty days!"

"Have a bean?" inquired Egbert.

"Bah!" roared Watters, and strode to the door. But the little iron doorstep was in his path, and he stumbled over it and nearly went sprawling on to the pavement, so that his exit was extremely undignified.

Tommy walked over to the mat, picked up the doorstep and kissed it.

The Sheriff Reappears.

NOW Lockville, in addition to its sheriff, boasted a chief of police and quite a considerable force of constabulary. The sheriff was a survivor of an ancient regime, whereas bulky Chief Morton considered himself thoroughly up to date. But Morton was worried, for in spite of all his efforts, speakeasies existed in the town, and bootlegging was rife.

The newspapers had made a dead-set at him and his organisation, and that afternoon he held a sort of conference in his private office at police headquarters in New Street. All his plain-clothes men were present, and all the uniformed men above the rank of patrolman. He waved in their faces a copy of the day's paper which had driven him nearly frantic. He stabbed its glaring headline with a fierce forefinger.

Chief of Police Morton Unable to Cope With Bootleg Situation!

"A fine state of affairs!" he howled. "Now let me tell you men something. There's an election coming on in this town in a couple of months, and unless we show them action, there's going to be a lot of new faces in this department, including my own. That's all! Now get out and show me some results!"

The men trooped off, glad to escape. Chief Morton flung the paper from him with something uncommonly like an oath, and worried his chin with his hand.

He was muttering to himself when the door opened and a brown-haired and very dainty little slip of a girl peeped round it. She was Peggy Morton, the chief's daughter, sweet and twenty, and her extra large blue-grey eyes regarded her red-faced parent quizzically.

"Oh, daddy," she said, entering the room and closing the door, "did I hear you laughing?"

He swung round with a frown, but Peggy was his pet, and he made a valiant effort to speak calmly.

"Oh, it's you!" he said. "You'd better run along, Peggy—I'm kinda out of sorts this afternoon."

"Those nasty bootleggers been bothering you again?" she inquired.

"Yeah!"

"What a shame! You know there ought to be a law against those fellows."

"Yeah—what?"

A telephone-bell shrilled, and he reached for the instrument on his desk, while Peggy perched beside him and swung her shapely legs.

"Watters, eh?" he barked into the transmitter. "All right, send him in!"

He put down the receiver and grinned at his daughter.

"It's Harry Watters," he said. "That's it—go ahead and blush."

"I wasn't blushing!" she declared indignantly.

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"No? Then they must have found another name for it."

Watters was ushered into the room by a sergeant, and his face lit up at sight of Peggy. He greeted Chief Morton, but took two slender hands in his own and seemed to have forgotten the reason for his call.

"Perhaps I'd better clear out?" suggested the chief slyly. "Sit down, Harry, and tell me if I'm in the way."

Watters sat, relinquishing the hands with obvious reluctance.

"Chief," he said, "as a member of the Better City Movement, I've got a little tip for you. May not amount to anything, of course, but as I always say—'better safe than serry.'"

"What've you got?" asked Chief Morton briskly.

"Two suspicious-looking characters from the East—all the earmarks of racketeers."

"Yeah?" Morton leaned eagerly forward. "Got anything on 'em?"

"No," admitted Watters. "I'm afraid that's up to you. But these two fellows have taken over a dilapidated drug-store—one that hasn't made a penny in two years. No sane business person would have taken it as a gift, and just between you and me, it looks like a liquor racket."

"Yeah? Who owns the store?"

"An old lady named Mrs. Talley."

Peggy gave a little exclamation.

"Why, I know her quite well," she said. "Surely you don't think that dear little old lady would—"

"No," Watters broke in hastily.

"No, indeed. My idea is that these fellows are taking advantage of the situation. Personally I have been trying to help the poor old soul out. She owes us a considerable sum. I've been trying to help her along. Just can't help mixing sentiment with business in a case like hers."

Peggy put her hand approvingly on his shoulder.

"I think that's just lovely of you, Harry," she said.

"Thanks for the tip, Harry," chimed in the chief gratefully. "I'll keep an eye on them. These bootleggers are getting my goat."

Peggy reached down to kiss her father, declaring that she must go, and Watters rose hopefully to his feet, but she waved him back into his chair and told him she would see him later.

"Movies, to-night?" he suggested.

"Uh-huh," she nodded, and left them together, and out in the busy street, boarded a tramcar bound for Allison Avenue.

By this time Egbert and Tommy were quite busy in the drug-store, which stood prominently in that thoroughfare—not busy serving customers, but busy dusting and cleaning and re-arranging the wares. Egbert had appropriated another cigar; Tommy had disordered his coat and cleaned out several show-cases.

"You know, Egbert," he said earnestly, "we've got to do something now. D'you realise we kept mother from getting that three hundred dollars from Watters?"

"Sure," nodded Egbert, "but do you realise that that mug isn't passing over three hundred berries for nothing? He's no bargain."

"Then why did he offer her the money? You know, we may be wrong—he may be a regular guy, after all."

"I don't like that fellow," declared Egbert, looking up at an inoffensive trout in a glass case above some shelves. "and I'll find a reason yet!" He clambered on to the counter with a duster in his hand and addressed the trout. "Hold still, Minnie," he said, "while I clean your little home for you."

"Service!" barked a voice in the doorway.

Down sprang Egbert from the counter, and he ducked low behind it—an example promptly followed by Tommy. For the voice belonged to none other than the austere Sheriff Flint.

"It's old Thirty-Days himself," groaned Egbert. "Wonder what he wants."

"What he needs is chloroform!" whispered Tommy. "You go and wait on him."

"No, you go and wait on him."

"No, you go and wait on him."

Egbert was stooping before a shelf on which reposed a number of masks and false faces, some of them decorated with moustaches, some with beards.

"Wait a minute," he whispered, and tore a ginger moustache from a papier-mâché mask, while Flint pounded impatiently on the counter. Some tubes of rubber solution were handy, and Egbert rose up disguised.

"Coming right up, sir," he said. "Coming right up. Nice day—nice day."

The sheriff stared at him, and just then Tommy arose, wearing not only an imitation moustache, but a false nose to boot. He began to polish some cheap watches with a piece of chamois leather.

"Gimme a stamp!" barked Flint.

Now in all self-respecting American drug-stores postage stamps are sold as freely as in a post-office; but Egbert hadn't any idea where they were located. He found some, however, in a drawer.

"Ah!" he said triumphantly. "Here we have some nice green ones—and on the other hand we have some pink ones. Lovely stamps, too—you can't lick 'em—I mean beat 'em."

"I want a two-cent stamp!" bellowed the sheriff.

His want was supplied, but he seemed in no hurry to go. He glared at Tommy, he glanced about the shop.

"We're expecting a new shipment of stamps next week," Egbert informed him. "You might tell your friends, will you?"

"I haven't any friends," retorted Flint, "and I don't want any. Give me change for a dollar."

Egbert rang up two cents on an ancient cash register, but in the drawer there was no money, only a few pins and buttons.

"Now, isn't that funny!" he remarked. "Nothing but twenty-dollar notes! I've simply got to go to the bank to-day!"

"Dirty stamps, no change!" snorted Flint. "Bah!"

"Oh, Mr. Tanner," called Egbert to Tommy, "have you placed on display all that merchandise we're going to sell at fifty per cent. below wholesale?"

"Yes, Mr. Higginbotham," replied Tommy instantly. "But we won't have 'em long at those prices."

Sheriff Flint's beady eyes glistened. "You're selling out below cost?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir," said Egbert "It's our Annual Prosperity Sale—everything to be sold at fifty per cent below— Now here we have some nice bath-salts—if you go in for curiosities. We're letting these bottles go at the astoundingly low price of one dollar."

"I'll give you seventy-five cents," offered Flint.

"Sold!" boomed Egbert.

Tommy came forward with a box full of bottles of patent medicine.

"Mr. Higginbotham," he said, "did you wish to sacrifice these?"

"Absolutely, Mr. Tanner," responded Egbert. "Everything in the store is to be sacrificed." He took out a bottle, read its label. "Ah!" he exclaimed.

"Colds, coughs, bronchitis, asthma—everything for the family chest! An invaluable article with water coming on. Six dollars for the whole boxful."

"I'll give you four," offered Flint, who suffered from a weak chest.

Four dollars were accepted; other articles were offered and sold. Flint went off with his purchases, and Egbert and Tommy gleefully removed their disguises and poked one another in the ribs. Peggy Morton descended from a tramcar outside and peered through the dusty panes at them; Mrs. Talley emerged from the shop-parlour and Egbert flourished seven dollars in her face.

"Mother," he said, "business is great! If only it keeps up, we'll be able to pay Watters off before the day is over."

"But I do wish you boys hadn't quarrelled with him," she lamented.

"Don't you worry about that guy," urged Tommy; and Egbert added:

"If you were to ask me, I'd say he's as crooked as a hatful of bent nails!"

Mrs. Talley apparently did not hear that remark. She had caught sight of Peggy entering the shop, and she ran to meet her, exclaiming, in quite a flutter:

"Why, bless my soul! How are you, honey?"

Peggy Changes Her Mind.

PEGGY looked a perfect picture in her little printed muslin frock with a close-fitting felt hat upon her brown hair, and Tommy almost devoured her with his eyes, deciding mentally that she was the most attractive girl he had ever seen in his life. But Peggy ignored the two young men and whispered in Mrs. Talley's right ear:

"I'm fine, but I've come to warn you about something."

Tommy daringly advanced, signifying that he would like to be introduced, and Mrs. Talley smilingly beckoned to Egbert.

"This is Mr.—er—" she began; and realised with a gasp that she was unacquainted with her helpers' names.

"Mr. Higginbotham, mother—Egbert G. Higginbotham," said Egbert with a flourish.

"Mr. Higginbotham," introduced Mrs. Talley, "this is little Peggy Morton."

"Well, well," said Egbert graciously, "she'd be great in the optical department. You know, easy on the eyes. Oh, yes—er—this is my associate, Mr. Thomas Tanner."

"How do you do?" said Peggy, eyeing Tommy as though he were some dangerous insect. "You're a stranger, aren't you?"

"I hope not," said Tommy eagerly.

"Peggy's father is chief of police," explained Mrs. Talley.

"Oh," said Egbert, with mock dismay, and retreated several steps, "that's a great pity."

"Egbert's only fooling," laughed Tommy.

"He's not fooling me," retorted Peggy tartly. "Could I use your 'phone, please, Mrs. Talley?"

Mrs. Talley smiled and nodded, and Peggy made for the

telephone-box, closed the door, inserted coins, and asked for police headquarters.

Now the telephone-box had a glass panel, and Tommy had begun to clean the glass with whiting; but, having smeared the whole surface with that excellent medium, he had turned his attention to show cases. The glass panel, consequently, was obscured, and Peggy was invisible.

But Tommy, who had fallen in love at first sight, promptly made for the door, and with his finger rubbed a little round hole in the whiting, and applied his eye to the hole. Egbert hurried over to him, disapproving of such conduct, and he arrived just in time to hear Peggy say:

"Is that the police-station?"

Egbert shrank back, but Tommy made another hole for his other eye, then drew in turn a nose, a mouth, two ears, and the outline of a head.

Peggy, inside the box, began to laugh. Harry Watters had convinced her that these two young men were wrongdoers, and Egbert, with his humour, had added to her conviction. But she had liked the look of Tommy from the first, and wrongdoers surely didn't draw funny faces on glass panels.

The voice of a police sergeant rang in her ear just as she was laughing at Tommy's own flattened face, pressed against the face he had drawn.

Sergeant Hoskiss! What should she do?

"Oh—er—I'm wrong—I mean, wrong number!" she stammered, and she hung up the receiver and pushed open the door and looked round it. Egbert made a grimace. Tommy looked innocently away.

"It was the wrong number," she said with a smile.

"I'll get the right one for you," volunteered Tommy.

"No, thanks, I've changed my mind."

"But you'll be coming round again, won't you?" suggested Tommy anxiously. "To use the 'phone."

She laughed merrily and held out her hand to Mrs. Talley, who said quite proudly:

"These gentlemen are going to run the drug-store for me."

"That's wonderful," cooed Peggy. "You boys must be terribly smart. Well, good-bye, Mr.—er—Higginbotham. Good-bye, Mrs. Talley." She turned to Tommy. "You were—" she began, and broke off in confusion. "I—er—good-bye!"

"Good-bye," said Tommy, and took her hand, and still holding it, accompanied her across the shop. "Good-bye."

"Now say it this time and mean it," Egbert called after him.

They reached the front door.

"So-long," breathed Tommy.

"So-long, Mr. Tanner," nodded Peggy, and freed her hand and went out.

"Oh, boy!" Tommy cried gleefully, as he returned to his partner. "She remembered my name."

"Yes," said Egbert, without any noticeable enthusiasm, and he plunged his hand into the jar of jellied beans.

Tommy pounced, and his hand also was thrust into the jar. But though one hand could pass a wrist, two hands could not be extricated simultaneously, and Mrs. Talley was approaching. By mute consent they held the jar behind them.

"Goodness me!" cried Mrs. Talley, who was not so unobservant as they imagined. "Whatever can be the matter with me? You boys must be terribly hungry."

"Oh, no, mother!" protested Tommy.

"Oh, yes, yes, mother," said Egbert frankly. "Honestly speaking, I'm so hungry I could eat a leopard and enjoy every spot."

"Then come along with me," she directed, and led the way to the shop-parlour. "I have a spare room for you."



They crouched in a row before the door, listening intently. It sounded to Egbert as though someone was sweeping up broken glass.

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"Don't you think we'd better stay out here in the store?" suggested Tommy, following close beside Egbert with the jar concealed between them. "No need at all," she answered. "There's a customer's bell—we'll hear it ring."

She pushed open the shop parlour door and disappeared, but almost immediately she ran out again, startled by a crash. They had smashed the glass jar on the edge of the counter to free their hands.

"What happened, hoys?" she asked anxiously.

"Only just a little matter we had to get off our hands," replied Egbert glibly. "Come on, Tommy."

They passed from the shop into a pleasant room, plainly but comfortably furnished.

"Well, this is our little home," she said. "And over here"—opening a door on the right—"is what used to be the spare room; now it's going to be yours."

They peeped in at a double-bedded room, bright, clean and singularly attractive to two who had spent days and nights in a box-car of a goods train.

"I'll run along and prepare a meal," she said. "I hope you've got good appetites. I have a nice leg of lamb."

Tommy looked at Egbert. Egbert looked at Tommy, and they both sighed.

The shop doorbell rang and Tommy made to answer its summons, but Mrs. Talley waved him back.

"No, no, you get ready for dinner," she said. "I'll go this time."

It was a tall, angular and middle-aged woman who had entered the store, wearing tailor-mades and looking every inch a spinster.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Loring," said Mrs. Talley.

"How d'you do, Mrs. Talley," said the spinster primly. "You've written that you would like to enter the Middleton Home for the Aged."

"Well, yes," hesitated Mrs. Talley. "But I'm not quite sure now."

"H'm! We require a short notice, you know. You understand, Mrs. Talley, that the Middleton Home is not a charitable institution, don't you? There are certain light tasks to perform which make the guests self-supporting, and then there's a small entrance fee. Two hundred dollars."

"Y-yes; I've saved that amount."

"Good!" said Miss Loring with obvious satisfaction and took a folded paper from the handbag she carried. "Here is an application form. Fill that in and send it to the home. We'd like five days' notice. Good-day, Mrs. Talley."

The visitor departed, leaving her victim with the application form and her thoughts. The sound of sobbing reached Tommy's alert ears and he ran out to her, struggling into his jacket as he went.

"What's the matter, mother?" he asked, and went down on his knees beside the chair into which she had dropped. "Oh, honey, I'm sure everything's going to be all right. Come on now, you mustn't cry like that."

"I won't," she said, looking tearfully at him, and leaning against his shoulder. "I ought to be ashamed, when you've been so kind to me."

"Things are never as bad as they seem," he declared, hugging her. "You know what they say about those clouds with the silver linings? Well, it's true. I've seen it happen."

Tommy had washed first. Egbert, December 19th, 1931.

who had remained behind to follow his example, now came sauntering into the shop, putting on his coat and booming cheerfully: "Well, well, well." "Ss-s-h!" hissed Tommy. "She's been crying again."

Egbert drew nearer, a forefinger raised reprovingly.

"Now, mother," he said, "what did I tell you? Didn't I say that from now on we were going to do all the worrying around here?"

"I'll be all right in a minute," whispered Mrs. Talley.

"Listen," whispered Egbert to Tommy, "we ought to do something to cheer her up."

"Yes," said Tommy, and rose to his feet with alacrity. "Let's do the act for her we did at Oakville."

"Good idea!" nodded Egbert. "Now come on, mother, just park the body over here."

He helped the little old lady up and marched her to the parlour at the back of the shop where he deposited her in another chair.

"Now, you're the audience, mother, see? And this is the stage. There are the footlights. Now the curtain is just going up. Look! Look!"

Mrs. Talley looked with tears trickling down her cheeks and a woebegone expression in her eyes. Egbert went to one wall, Tommy to the other. Then they turned about and met right opposite the chair in which she was seated, and for her exclusive benefit they did their double turn.

They told funny stories, they sang a comic song, they indulged in typical back-chat, and they performed an eccentric dance of the simultaneous variety, and gradually their audience of one forgot her sorrows and began to smile. The smile broadened. She laughed outright, and before the entertainment was over tears were streaming down her cheeks again because she had laughed till she cried.

"Well, mother," said Egbert, after they had bowed, made a pretence of going off a stage, and returned to her as ordinary individuals, "are we a success or not?"

"I think you're two very dear boys," she told them.

"And we're going to make a success of the drug-store, too," asserted Tom.

"Yes; but Mr. Watters said he couldn't give me any more credit," she reminded them. "What are we going to do for drugs?"

"Drugs?" echoed Egbert. "What on earth does a drug-store want with drugs? What a modern drug-store needs is cold soda, hot lunch, cameras, books—"

"Picture-postcards, magazines, brushes and combs, mirrors, and stationery," put in Tommy.

"But wouldn't that take quite a lot of money?"

"Yeah," said Egbert, momentarily daunted. "I never thought of that."

"I-er—I've got two hundred dollars."

"Why, that'll do it!" he cried. "A jobbing house would take that as evidence of good faith, and we can get ninety days on the balance."

"Egbert," protested Tommy, "we can't do that. We can't take her two hundred dollars—it's too big a gamble."

"Shush, son!" boomed Egbert.

"Mother, there'll be no drugs in this joint. This is going to be a drug-store. We'll change the name—we'll call it the Sunshine Drug Store. We'll advertise—we'll put in a microphone."

Tommy became infected with his exuberance.

"That's the idea!" he cried. "We'll

give 'em an hour of our own entertainment!"

"Mother," said Egbert, kneeling before the little old lady, "it's a cinch!"

The Sunshine Drug Store.

WITHIN a very few days the drug-store began to present quite a different appearance to passers-by. On the plate-glass window, and on the fascia above, the new name, "Sunshine Drug Store," appeared in large gilt letters, and the dusty and decayed-looking display in the shop-window was swept away to make room for more attractive goods arranged with skill.

Egbert and Tommy were quick workers as well as quick thinkers. Decorators entered the premises to erect new show-cases, extend the bar, and paint and varnish. Arrangements were made with various wholesale firms to supply all manner of wares, and the local broadcasting station was induced to sell a certain amount of "the air" twice daily on a credit basis.

A fortnight after the arrival of the two comedians in the town—on Monday, December 15th, to be precise—Harry Watters was sitting at a desk in the private office of the Lockville Trust & Loan Company, scowling at a loud-speaker. Beside him sat a lean-faced man, caressing a clipped brown moustache and listening with occasional chuckles to the broadcast cross-talk of Egbert and Tommy. When the entertainment was over, the voice of Egbert thus addressed his unseen audience:

"And this, ladies and gentlemen, concludes the noonday broadcast from the Sunshine Drug Store. We will again present the Sunshine Hour at four o'clock this afternoon—and don't forget, folks, we serve a better meal than any other drug-store in the city. This is Dr. Egbert G. Higginbotham signing off with the voice that it kind to your ears."

The lean-faced man—his name was Clarke—uncrossed his long legs and grinned irritatingly at Watters.

"Looks like those two fellows are going to put it over," he remarked.

"Maybe," growled Watters, and rose to shut off the radio set. "Now, listen, Clarke—I can't furnish you with any more alcohol this month."

"That's up to you," said Clarke, with obvious disappointment, "but if you want to make dough in this bootleg business you got to remember 'alky' is king."

"Not so loud," warned Watters. "I can't take the chance. We've practically used up the wholesale allotment, and if I can't supply the drug-stores the Government's going to get on to me."

"All right, but it's a shame to lose all the jack we might pick up—and I'm telling you, this town's got an awful thirst."

"Well, we've sold a thousand gallons this month, haven't we?" countered Watters. "Now, listen, Clarke—about this Sunshine Drug Store. It's a good location, and I want it."

"Shoot the details."

"This is the inside of the story. The Texla Oil Company is going to put up a ten-story building across the street. Never mind where I got the tip, but naturally my company want that lot—and I personally hold the assignment of the lease."

"Pretty soft," commented Clarke.

"What d'you want me to do?"

"Suppose we take a little walk, and I'll tell you all about it?"

"Okay!" grinned Clarke. "Anything to turn an honest dollar—you know me."

They put on their hats and coats and went out together.

Meanwhile, in the Sunshine Drug-Store, Egbert and Tommy, arrayed in white overalls, were dealing with quite a flock of customers. The high chairs beside the bar were nearly all occupied by early lunchers, and Mrs. Talley was working at high pressure in the kitchen. Egbert, having disposed of a purchaser, helped himself to some jellied beans from a glass jar on the bar before dealing with a handsome but ponderous lady who had wandered towards the book counter.

Egbert became aware of a portly old gentleman with enormous white whiskers who had entered the shop and was staring about him.

"'Twas the night before Christmas, and the children were all—" declaimed Egbert, struck by the resemblance of the old gentleman to the traditional figure of Santa Claus. "Will you pardon me a moment, madam?"

"Yes," said the ponderous lady, "I'll just browse among your books."

Egbert went over to the old gentleman, who took off his hat, exposing a semicircular baldness of head with a few little sprouts of white hair sticking up on top, and inquired almost jovially:

"Are you going to wait on me?"

"Sir," said Egbert, toying with the right-hand portion of the luxurious white whiskers, "I'm not going to beat about the bush with you—I am certainly going to wait on you."

"I want a toothbrush."

"A toothbrush—yes, sir—a toothbrush. How many in your family?"

The old gentleman smiled and held up four fingers.

"Four," nodded Egbert sagely. "Then you want the large size." He opened a drawer and pulled out a tray full of assorted toothbrushes. "Look," he said, holding one up. "Non-skid bristles from Brussels."

"How much are they?"

"Fifty cents—and one dollar. But the fifty cent ones are all sold."

The old gentleman decided to have the toothbrush, and departed with it in a neat little cellulaine bag.

Egbert scurried over to the bar, where hungry customers were clamouring for attention, and Tommy advanced upon a man who was toying with a perfume spray, wasting its contents. He took the spray away and set it down on its show-case, whereupon the man presented a slip of paper.

"I want this filled," said he.

"What is it?" inquired Tommy blankly.

"It's a prescription."

A prescription! Tommy knitted his brows, this was extremely awkward!

"I'll notify the prescription department immediately," he said.

He sought Egbert in a fine state of alarm.

"Something terrible has happened," he gasped. "This is a prescription! No, you can't read it—it's written in pig Latin. Question is, what are you going to do about it?"

"What am I going to do about it?" said Egbert calmly. "I'm going to take it to a drug-store, of course."

Exchanging places with Tommy, he went over to the customer.

"I'm sorry, sir," he apologised, "but this is going to take a little time. You see, the compound spirits of salamander must first be absorbed by the tincture of— Will you wait?"

The customer decided that he would wait.

"You're wise, my dear sir," Egbert informed him. "Our prescription department is unique—there's nothing like it in the world."

He retired to the shop-parlour, where

he removed his overall and put on his hat, then made his way out at the back door, crossed a yard, reached an alley, emerged from the alley into Allison Avenue, and sought a drug-store at the far end of it, where he had the prescription made up.

The Plot Succeeds.

TWO minutes after Egbert had disappeared, Peggy walked serenely into the Sunshine Drug Store, walked to the bar, and perched herself on one of the high chairs. She had been a frequent visitor ever since that first day when she had changed her mind about telephoning the police; and the more she had seen of Tommy the less she had seen of Harry Watters.

The luncheon bar was not so crowded now, and Tommy delightedly turned his full attention to her.

"Gosh, I'm glad to see you, Peggy!" he exclaimed. "Look!" And he pointed to a neat little hanging glass sign: "Peggy Special."

"It's a new drink," he explained proudly. "I invented it myself, and named it after you. Try one!"

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BUCK JONES

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"BRANDED."

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SPECIAL NOTE.

Owing to the Christmas Holidays, next week's grand issue of BOY'S CINEMA will be on sale SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19th.

Make sure of your copy by ordering NOW!

He picked up a long tumbler and proceeded to mix a beverage in it.

"It's awfully nice of you to name a drink after me," said Peggy, watching him with admiring eyes.

"Why shouldn't I?" said he fondly, and, having completed the blending, handed her the glass and feasted his eyes on her beautiful face.

"Some time I'll name something after you," she told him.

"Gee!" he exclaimed, putting his elbows on the bar and his chin in his hands. "I hope you will."

She found the concoction palatable and asked him of what it was composed.

"Everything that's sweet!" he assured her. "First I took the sweetest syrup—that's your disposition. Then I added those two cherries—those are your lips. Mint leaf-green—that's the way I turn when I see you look at somebody else. And"—pointing to the two straws in the glass—"there are your two pretty little—"

"Oh, Tommy, they're not that thin, are they?" she laughed.

"Malted egg flip!" barked an impatient man beside her.

"Yes, sir," said Tommy obediently, and, still talking to Peggy, proceeded to mix what he imagined to be the desired drink. In his absent-mindedness, however, he poured peppermint into the mixer with the egg he had broken into it, and, reaching to a shelf, added castor oil instead of liquid malt.

The man watched with growing horror. "You know, when I look at you," said Tommy to Peggy, "I don't know what I'm doing."

"No!" rasped the man, and pulled his hat down over his eyes, slid from his chair, and went off in haste.

"He's gone!" exclaimed Tommy. "He doesn't know what he's missed!"

The glass stood neglected on the counter while the two conversed. Egbert returned with the prescription made up, after he had removed the rival chemist's name from the bottle in the kitchen and substituted one of the "Sunshine" variety. Rather breathlessly he handed it to the waiting customer, charged two dollars, and took out a handkerchief to wipe his brow.

The customer departed, evidently quite satisfied. Egbert went to the bar.

"Whew!" he exclaimed. "Boy, that was a close shave! How are you, Peggy?"

Mrs. Talley, immediately Peggy had arrived, had issued from the kitchen to help serve. She smiled across at the three.

"Here's a drink for you," said Tommy, pointing to the neglected glassful of alleged malted egg flip. "It'll buck you up."

"Believe me, I need it," proclaimed Egbert, and he drained the glass. "Gosh, that's good!" he exclaimed, fanning himself with his handkerchief. "Don't neglect the business, Tommy."

Harry Watters and his thin-faced companion, Clarke, had reached Allison Avenue and had paused in a doorway only a few yards from the drug-store.

"Now you know what to do, don't you?" said Watters.

"Sure," nodded Clarke. "I go into the store, see you, look surprised, and say, 'Hallo, Mr. Watters, I haven't seen you for an age!'"

"That's right. And then I ask what you've been doing lately, and you tell me about the lemon extract. You've got it straight?"

"Straight?" chuckled Clarke. "Why, it's fifty per cent. alcohol."

"Never mind the wise cracks," grunted Watters. "I'm going on in— December 19th, 1931."

and don't forget to give me a little time to do some talking before you appear on the scene."

"Okay," responded Clarke, and sauntered off with his hands in his pockets while Watters made his way into the store, and hailed Peggy.

"Nice to see you here," he said. "I just dropped in to speak to Mrs. Talley."

"I'm sure she'll be glad to see you," Peggy decided, and she went with him to the very top of the bar where Mrs. Talley was now busy with plates and a Dutch-oven.

"There goes the one man depression!" growled Egbert to Tommy but Mrs. Talley greeted the visitor quite cheerfully.

"My word," said Watters, glancing around the store, "I really must congratulate you upon this marvellous transformation. Those two young gentlemen, Mr. Tanner and Mr. Higginbotham, are obviously men of real genius."

He had spoken loudly enough for the "two young gentlemen" to hear his words, and they looked at one another and smiled.

"Yes, and we're going to be able to meet the note on the first, Mr. Watters," declared Mrs. Talley delightedly. "That is, of course, if business keeps up."

Watters professed to be glad, for her sake; and then Clarke strolled in at the door, perched on a chair at the bar, and seemed suddenly to become aware of Watters' presence.

"Why, hallo, Mr. Watters!" he cried. "I haven't seen you for an age."

"Well, well," greeted the conspirator, "I'm glad to see you—you're looking fine."

"Your order, sir?" inquired Tommy. Clarke asked for a chocolate sundae, and while he was consuming it Watters joined him.

"By the way," he said, "how are you doing now?"

"Don't tell me you don't know?" laughed Clarke. "Remember that lemon syrup I was working on? Well, she's perfected—and I can tell you she's selling like wildfire. Why, I can't supply the demand. Every drug-store in town's crying for it. It's the newest, biggest flavour sensation in twenty years."

Watters satisfied himself with a side-glance that Egbert and Tommy were listening, and inquired:

"Well, would you listen to a proposition from my firm?"

"Not a chance!" said Clarke. "I offered it you once, remember."

"Well, we all make mistakes, you know—I'm going to come and see you about it. I'm not taking no for an answer."

He professed to have an urgent appointment, and went. Clarke ordered some sausage and mashed and plied his knife and fork. Egbert and Tommy whispered together for a while, and then Egbert sailed over to the eater.

"Nice weather we're having," said he.

"Not bad," admitted Clarke with his mouth full.

"Now, listen; what's the use of us trying to kid each other? I overheard what you told Watters about that new lemon syrup. We'd like to try some of it here."

Tommy, who had followed his partner, nodded emphatically, but Clarke waved the suggestion aside.

"What you don't realise," said he, "is that I'm twenty stores behind in delivery of that Pepo Lemon Syrup now."

"Slip in ahead on one delivery," urged Egbert. "Nobody'll be any the wiser. We'll push the stuff—give it some swell advertising on the radio."

December 19th, 1931.

Clarke chuckled.

"Say, you're a go-getter," he approved. "I'll give you credit for that! Well, I'm not a guy to interfere with a fellow that rolls up his sleeves and goes after what he wants. I'll let you have ten gallons."

"Slip it there, brother—slip it there!" cried Egbert, extending his hand. "I'll never forget you for this."

The two shook hands; Clarke finished his meal and offered payment, but Tommy would not accept any money. "That's on the house," he said.

Clarke thanked him gravely and went off.

"Well, son," said Egbert, striking an attitude, "did you see me hypnotise him? Am I a salesman? Son, I could sell a dead horse to a mounted policeman!"

Business having slackened temporarily, Tommy discussed the matter of the Pepo Lemon Syrup with Peggy.

"Isn't Egbert marvellous?" he exclaimed.

"You are, too, Tommy," she assured him, leaning over the bar so that their noses almost touched.

"You really think so?" he breathed.

"Gee, I like you an awful lot, Peggy."

"I like you an awful lot, too, Tommy," she informed him.

"Do you really?" He imprisoned her little hands and bent his head to kiss them; and he was in the act of kissing them when Chief of Police Morton, who had just crossed the threshold, saw what was happening and strode angrily forward.

"Daddy!" exclaimed Peggy, and tried to release her hands.

"That's the first time you've ever called me that!" laughed Tommy—and looked up. His face fell, his mouth opened, his eyes stared.

"Now see how fast you can get home!" barked Morton at his daughter.

"But, daddy—"

"Don't 'daddy' me! Get out of here!" rasped her father.

Egbert heard, blinked, and deserted a customer.

"Well, well, chief," said he, patting the bulky official on the arm, "this is a kick! Always glad to meet the forces of law and order. What'll you order, chief? What'll you order?"

"Nothing!" roared Morton.

"Have you met my partner, Mr. Thomas Tanner? A very efficient young man, chief."

Tommy looked modestly at his boots because he didn't like the glare in Morton's choleric blue eyes.

"If you want to continue with your efficiency, young man," said Morton fiercely, "you'd better keep away from my daughter!"

Peggy had obediently disappeared. Tommy, nervously clasping and unclasping his hands, murmured, "Yes, sir."

"Bah!" snorted Morton, and went out from the store like a human tornado.

The Effect of Lemon Syrup.

A FEW days later the promised ten gallons of Pepo Lemon Syrup arrived in a cask and was paid for spot cash. Egbert did not immediately put it on sale. In the first instance he had bills printed, show-cards hand-painted, and advertised the drink during the noonday and afternoon broadcast. The drink was to be supplied to customers on and after Monday, December 22nd.

Monday morning was memorable ever after in the annals of the Sunshine Drug Store—and in the lives of Tommy and Egbert. Despite Clarke's declaration that all the drug stores in Lockville were selling the concoction, the demand was not at first very great. But by noon the

shop was thronged, and there was quite a struggle on the part of men who had already sampled the Pepo Lemon Syrup to get near the bar.

Tommy, unable to cope with the rising tide of trade, had to call on Egbert to neglect ordinary customers to assist him. The interior of the drug store became as noisy as a bear-garden.

"A lemon soda!" "Another lemon soda, please!" "Give me another, too!" "How about that lemon soda?"

"Another lemon soda—and plenty of syrup!" The shouts and cries and orders mingled and merged into a roar, and Tommy and Egbert were far too busy coping with custom to note particularly the effect of the new drink upon the customers who imbibed more than one.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, Egbert said worriedly to Tommy:

"If that fellow we sent out to find Clarke doesn't get back soon with fresh supplies we'll be all out of that lemon syrup."

"Yeah," said Tommy. "It must be great stuff—we'll have to try it one day."

"Shay," clamoured a vacant-eyed man, sprawling over the bar, "gimme an—anozzer l-l-l-lemon soda, will ya?"

"It's a repeater," confided Egbert to Tommy. "That fellow's had four already!"

Tommy and Egbert knew no peace, and the drawer of the cash register was never still. Pepo Lemon Syrup was evidently "it."

"These fellows must have been getting some bootleg spirit from somewhere," remarked Tommy innocently, viewing with a certain amount of dismay the more riotous of the clamourers for lemon soda.

He was at the cash register when Peggy entered the premises, and he immediately abandoned the thirsty crowd to talk to her.

"Hallo, Peggy," he said, holding her hand. "Gee, I thought the chief had locked you up."

"Would you have cared?" she asked in a low voice.

"Aw, you know better than to ask that."

Peggy became conscious of the crowd—and the noise. She gazed at the throng round the bar for a moment.

"It's great the way you boys have built up this drug store," she said.

"Everybody's talking about it. Pa says you must be awful smart, even if he doesn't like you."

(Continued on page 24.)

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A Handful of Clouds

Paying the Penalty.

BARTY'S BILLIARDS HALL was situated above some half-dozen shops in Harper Street, which was perhaps the most notorious street in Charlesworth. Here resided many of the racketeers who infested the city, men who terrorised the populace with their frequent use of the gun.

A heated word or two or some trivial grievance and guns would bark viciously, exacting a grim toll. And often among the casualties of these gang feuds would be an innocent citizen or two, unfortunates who happened to be in the line of the leaden messengers of death.

On this particular day in December the underworld of the city seemed strangely quiet. Not a single shot had been heard in the streets and it was now nearly nine o'clock.

The calm before the storm. So said half the populace, which included the entire police force, who knew the gangsters only too well.

But the minutes ticked by and still peace reigned. Ten o'clock came, and it was as a distant church clock was striking the hour that a closed-in car drew up at the entrance to the billiards hall and a man sprang out of the back to the sidewalk. Of medium height, he was young and with a cruel, thin face from which grey-green eyes gleamed with a murderous expression.

"You know what to do?" He turned and thrust his head in at the open window at the front of the car where a shadowy figure sat behind the steering-wheel. There came a murmur of assent, and the young man smiled grimly. "Right, then see you make no mistake." He jerked a thumb towards the back of the vehicle. "Red is well

acquainted with his part of this little affair, see?"

The other nodded, then the thin-faced one crossed the pavement and sped up the stairs that led to the billiards hall. In at the door of the spacious room he went, his sinister eyes searching the faces of the men who were playing at the tables and the faces of those who were clustering around watching those who wielded the cues.

Eventually he located the man he sought, an ugly-faced ruffian who had just made a shot on a distant table and failed to sink the object ball. Another second and he was confronting the fellow, whispering in his ear:

"Oh, yeah!" The unprepossessing rascal set aside his cue and his face took on a brutal expression. "Where is Red, then?"

"Outside in the car, Monk, and Spike's with him," came the sibilant answer. "Now get moving. I'll take your knock—save spoiling the game."

"Okay with me," Monk turned to the three men with whom he had been playing a four-hand of snooker. "Say, boys, Mileaway'll take my place. Mind?"

They shook their heads and, as Steve Mileaway took up the discarded cue, Monk strode quickly from the hall. Down the stairs he went two at a time, darted across the pavement, and dived into the waiting car, the door of which was swung open for him.

Next second the door was slammed and the vehicle slid away from the kerb, gathering speed rapidly. A short run, then it slid to a standstill before a small house in a quiet and deserted street.

"You all set, Red?" Monk watched the man who was with him in the back of the car draw out from under the

seat an ugly-looking machine-gun, then, smiling grimly, he opened the door of the limousine and jumped out. One long stride and he was beside the driver, as sinister-looking a rascal as himself, whose hat-brim was pulled low over cruel grey eyes. "Spike, don't you forget to beat it like hell the moment I shout, see?"

The other nodded, then after a quick glance round to make sure there was no one about Monk ran to the door of the small house and knocked loudly. A woman answered his summons, and nodded in recognition.

"You want Whitey?" she inquired. "Sure I do." The rascal gave her a disarming smile. "You might tell him that I want him urgent like."

She said she would do so, and closed the door. A sneer curling his cruel thin lips, Monk returned to the car, climbed inside, and noted with satisfaction that Red had the machine-gun in position, trained on the door he had just left.

A moment or two of waiting, then the door of the small house was again opened and a man came into view.

"Now, Red, let the skunk have it!" came Monk's rasping voice. "Double-cross us, huh? Well, this is where he gets his in plenty!"

Scarce were the vicious words out of his mouth than the quiet was shattered by the staccato reports of the machine-gun belching out its leaden bail of death. A terrified shriek as the victim at the first dread note of the gun, tried frantically to leap back into the safety of the hallway behind him. But all in vain. Next second half a dozen bullets slammed into his breast—
December 19th, 1931.

ling body and he sagged to the ground in a pitiable heap.

Their fell work accomplished, the gunmen sank back in the soft cushions of the car as it suddenly shot away from the kerb, a woman's wild shrieks coming faintly to their ears. The distracted wife of the dead man who, guessing the meaning of the gunfire, had come scampering frantically down the stairs of her little home.

Her shoulders heaving convulsively, tears streaming down her ashen cheeks, she drooped pathetically over her man, calling down threats upon the killers. And there the police found her when, seconds later, they rushed to the spot to investigate the sounds of the gunfire.

"Who Killed Whitey Eckhart?"

A ROOM on the first floor of police headquarters. Seated at a large oak desk was a tall, well-built man of middle age with piercing grey eyes, brown hair that was inclined to be curly and a chin that denoted strength and a great determination.

Captain Pat O'Grady, the one man in all Charlesworth that every gangster feared. A brave and amazingly clever detective who, once he had marked down a crook to be brought to justice, never rested till the task was accomplished.

"Yes, boys, though his wife won't speak for fear of the consequences, I feel sure Whitey Eckhart was killed by his own gang of rats." O'Grady spoke very slowly as if carefully choosing his words. But those who knew him were aware that that deep, almost drawing voice was characteristic of the man. The four plain-clothes men who were with him hung on his every word as he continued. "You see, I've information that Whitey tipped off Rocco to a lorry of booze that Louie Ricarno was running out to the West Hill Roadhouse the other night. That lorry was ambushed and the two men aboard badly damaged. What's more likely than that Ricarno got wise to what happened and gave Whitey the works? That's how I figure it, and I'm hoping this time that I'll be able to—"

The telephone bell broke into his words, and he snatched up the receiver, clapped it to his ear.

"Hallo! O'Grady speaking. What's that? Yeah. Send him right in." The captain's eyes gleamed from beneath narrowed lids as he replaced the receiver of the phone. Quickly he returned his gaze to his men. "You boys get out. You see, I've a visitor coming up and I want to be alone with him. It's Ricarno. Hawkes and Cox picked him up for me. Smart lads, those, for I only gave them instructions half an hour ago."

The four filed from the room, and almost immediately the door was reopened to admit an upstanding young man, neatly dressed in a grey lounge suit and a grey felt hat. Good-looking he was, too, and neatly brushed dark hair was revealed when he swept off his hat and calmly placed it on a corner of O'Grady's desk, his smiling blue eyes meeting those of the captain unflinchingly.

Strange that such a refined and well-bred youngster should be one of the most clever and daring racketeers that ever menaced the city of Charlesworth. But such was Louie Ricarno, and this boy—he was little more than that—was now marked down by Captain O'Grady to be brought to justice.

"Glad to see you, Louie." O'Grady

motioned to a chair. "Sit down. Make yourself comfortable."

"My, aren't we polite." Louie gave a gay laugh. Well he knew why he had been brought here, but the knowledge perturbed him not a bit. In a battle of wits the boy prided himself with being capable of holding his own. Coolly he produced a gold cigarette-case, opened it and held it out to the captain. "Have a gasper, Pat?"

"No, thanks. I don't smoke that brand." O'Grady waited while Louie lit himself one of the cigarettes, then he rose from his chair, his eyes fixed challengingly on those of the boy. "Tell me, Louie. What do you know about that surprise party on the South Side?"

"Surprise party?" Louie's eyebrows lifted in affected amazement. "I'm afraid I don't get you. What exactly do you mean, Pat?"

"Playing the little innocent, huh?" Pat grunted. "Don't know Whitey Eckhart was bumped off last night, huh?"

"You don't say so!" Calmly the young racketeer flicked the ash from his cigarette. "That why you asked me up here?"

But O'Grady made no direct answer to the question.

"What d'you know about that deal?" he shot out with surprising fierceness.

"Not much, sweetheart." There was a merry twinkle in Louie's blue eyes. It appealed to his particular sense of humour to play with O'Grady in this way. "I only know that Whitey Eckhart was a real bad lad. You agree, don't you, Pat?"

But this question O'Grady also ignored. How to get this self-satisfied young crook to make a slip that would warrant him clapping him behind prison bars? A difficult task, Pat knew. But he wasn't finished yet. He would try a different line of conversation in the hope of achieving success.

"Louie, it's just too bad to see a swell kid like you in the booze racket. Why on earth don't you get out of it when the breaks are in your favour?" He noticed with satisfaction that Louie's lip curled. Perhaps he would blaze out at him in a moment and in his torrent of abuse say something that would condemn him. "You ought to know that the best you'll get if you stick to it is the worst of it. Why be a sap?"

"A darned pretty piece!" Louie was not to be ensnared. The rage he had felt at Pat's words had been effectually mastered. "See here, Pat." He grinned provokingly. "I'm real sorry for you. It's your job to clear up the law breakers. The dickens of a task, for if you'll pardon me saying so, you ain't smart enough."

"Yeah?" O'Grady shot him a ferocious look, smarting under the taunt. But he was not to be outdone by a mere boy. "How in blazes you think I can be that smart when you've got all the brains, huh?"

"Now, now, don't get riled." Louie wagged his cigarette reprovingly at the captain, then a peculiar gleam came into his eyes. "Look here, Pat. If you would set to and clear out Rocco's gang and not be so darned tough on your friends I could give you enough of these things to paper your kids' nursery. Look fine for Christmas decorations, take it from me."

Louie thrust the wad of dollar bills that he had taken from his breast-pocket under O'Grady's nose. Quickly the captain made a grab at them, but Louie, with a grin, jerked them out of reach.

"Getting smart at last, huh?" he taunted.

"No," growled Pat. "I just wanted to see the serial numbers."

"You do, huh?" There was fierce anger in Louie's eyes now. Almost savagely he rained the dollar bills back into his pocket. "Listen to me, you copper-headed mug. I'm no thief. My racket is beer, and you know it. I'm in a legitimate business, I am."

"Sure you are," Pat mocked him. "You're just selling that nice creamy beer to the poor working man with a few murders thrown in for his entertainment, aren't you?"

He came round his desk and confronted Louie, his whole attitude one of menace. Quickly the boy snatched up his hat and stepped back.

"What you trying to do?" With an effort Louie again controlled his anger. "Endeavouring to get me sore so I'll spill something, huh? Well, there's nix doing, Pat, so there. But you'll get a chance to read all you want to know when I write the story of my life at three-fifty bucks a copy."

"What, you going to do that? Well, well, you surprise me." There was contempt in Pat's voice. "But take my tip, Louie. Don't write the last chapter till the night you go to the chair. It'll be more realistic."

"So you think that's where I'll land?" Louie laughed carelessly as Pat solemnly nodded his head. "Rot! I'm too fly to land on the wrong side of the law, and you know it."

Pat shrugged. There was no doubt in his mind that he would have his work cut out to bring in this boy. He was immune to questioning—that was obvious. He must be caught red-handed, or one of his gang be made to "put him away."

"Who killed Whitey Eckhart?" As Louie turned towards the door Pat clamped a heavy hand on his shoulder and twirled him round. "You tell me that, you little runt?"

But the element of surprise did not have the least effect on the cool-headed youngster. Instead, he broke into a grin.

"Ha, ha, wouldn't you like to know, sweetheart!" he chuckled—then flung himself free of the detective's grasp and marched from the room.

A Strange Meeting.

THOUGH he was courageous and possessed more than his fair share of brains, Louie Ricarno felt strangely uneasy after his visit to Pat O'Grady's office. Pat was after him, and, sicker that he was, Louie felt that the time would surely come when a slip would be made and he would find himself in the inexorable hands of the detective.

That was the last thing the young racketeer wanted to happen. Not that he feared for his own safety, but there was his kid brother, Jackie, away at the Military Academy at Fairfield. The two had not a single relative in the world, and Louie knew that if anything should happen to him the kid would be desolate—with no one to pay his fees at the college, or to provide him with food and clothes.

It was as he was thus ruminating the day following his visit to O'Grady that he had a brain-wave. A way to ensure keeping on the right side of the law. Instantly the shadows vanished from his good-looking face, and, without loss of time, he set about putting his idea into practice. The result was that that same evening some hundred men, all with the stamp of the criminal upon their unprepossessing faces, assembled in the large

room over a warehouse in Sanders Street that was used by Louie as a council chamber.

A strange meeting, indeed, for the men represented every known gang in the city. There was the Rocco gang, the one led by an undersized rascal called the Midget, and some score other organisations. Without exception, all wondered why they had been called here by Louie Ricarno. It was for a friendly little chat, so they had been informed by the young man's henchmen, but, in case of accidents, they parked their guns.

When Louie entered the place, surrounded by his personal bodyguard that included his chief lieutenant, Steve Mileaway, there was an immediate stir among the waiting gangsters. Hands flashed instinctively to jacket pockets in case of treachery.

"Order, please!" Mileaway raised his hand as Louie sat down at a table that was set at one end of the room. Silence descended at once. "Now, boys," resumed Mileaway, "I ask you to give Louie Ricarno a fair hearing, as he has something real important to say to you—something which I think you will agree is for the benefit of you all."

Louie got to his feet as his lieutenant stepped back, and his keen blue eyes scanned the evil faces in front of him. All of them bitter enemies of his, but just then the knowledge worried him not at all. Enemies were to become friends now—under his scheme peace was to reign in the underworld. Gun battles to be a thing of the past—everyone to work in complete harmony and accord.

"Well, there are a lot of you mugs that I've never seen before," Louie began in a voice that would have done credit to a senator in congress, "so I thought it was about time we got acquainted. But that's only half the reason for this meeting. Now, most of you fellows knew me when I was a kid in short pants. A runner for a tough mob of South Side racketeers who've now migrated. A punk who knew how to keep his mouth shut."

"Yeah," came the sneering voice of Rocco, a dark, swarthy man with narrow beady eyes, Louie's most dangerous rival. "But when we want history we read books, Ricarno, see?"

There was a burst of coarse laughter which Louie allowed to die down before resuming.

"Of course, I forgot you're something of a student, Rocco, so I'll get down to brass tacks." The youngster returned the fierce look Rocco gave him, then allowed his gaze again to take in the whole assembly. "Now, boys, we're all in one racket or another, and just lately there's been a darned sight too much double-crossing going on. One mob crashing into another mob's territory. No, no, don't interrupt, Rocco, please. We're in big business. The only thing wrong with it is that it needs organising and it needs a boss I'm taking over both jobs. I'm going to—"

"You're whatter?" Rocco was on his feet in an instant, eyes gleaming ferociously, his hand firmly gripping the butt of his concealed gun, while angry voices sounded around him declaiming Louie's cool nerve.

"As I was saying, I'm taking over both jobs," Louie, calm as ever, a cynical smile hovering around the corners of his mouth, raised his voice to make himself heard above the din. "I'm going to lay this town out in zones. I'll give each mob what I think is coming to it, and not one inch more. Get that? Each gang'll back me up and I'll take care of everything."

It sounded quite a good proposition to some, but not to others. Rocco, considered by himself the big noise in gangland, again jumped to his feet.

"Piffle!" he roared and half dragged his gun from his pocket.

"You think so, huh?" Louie froze him with a look. "Well, just you think it over and you'll see—"

"Hey, wait a minute!" The Midget waved his hand frantically to draw Louie's attention. "How much we gotta pay you for bossing the show?"

"H'm!" Louie rubbed his smooth chin, then shook his head. "Well, I hadn't thought that out. Still, I'll decide on that later."

"And supposing we agree and pay you for organisation," the Midget persisted, "what are we going to do if some mug crashes another guy's territory and hi-jacks his stuff, the same as was done to me last week?"

"My dear Midget, what do we always do with rats?" Louie said meaningly.

"I get you." The Midget bared his teeth in a grin. "So you're taking care of that, too?"

"Sure," Louie nodded vigorously. "I'm putting the beer racket on a big business basis, and that covers everything. If you fellows have any sense you'll see that my proposition is for your own good. Everything hereafter running smoothly, no more trouble that might land you in the jug, and big money coming your way as easy as if you were backing winners. Well, what do you say?"

"Splendid!" The Midget for one was impressed. Quickly he got to his feet and faced the others. "Let's get together, boys, just like Louie says. What do you say, huh?"

The majority were agreeable. Among those who were not was Rocco, who was still smarting under a recent raid made on one of his booze lorries by Louie's own gang.

"I say it's piffle!" Rocco snarled. "And if you fellows agree to it you're a lot of simps. Why, it's just a dodge of Ricarno's to swipe up easy money."

Louie's eyes blazed at him dangerously.

"Just say that again, Rocco!" he rasped. "You see, I didn't quite get the last crack."

"Like me to put it into writing?" Rocco spat out.

In the fury that possessed him he strode to the table and confronted Louie threateningly. But the young racketeer only smiled, for, with a quick movement, one of his personal bodyguard had slid up behind Rocco and a deadly automatic, cunningly concealed from the eyes of the assembly by a soft felt hat, was levelled at Rocco's back.

"My dear Rocco," Louie said in mocking tones, "I wouldn't dream of putting you to so much trouble."

"No? Well, get this!" Rocco whipped out his own gun. "I'll run my own business. You hear me? I don't need no punk like you telling me nothing. For why? Because I'm just as big as you are, and bigger. When one man's going to run this town, I'll be him, see? Now, you tell the mob here I'm right. Go on, tell 'em—tell 'em!"

"Pretty hot in here, isn't it?" Louie shot a sly glance at Mileaway, who was

"My dear Rocco," Louie said in mocking tones. "I wouldn't dream of putting you to so much trouble."



seated near a window whose green blind was drawn.

"Yeah, and it's going to be hotter!" raged Rocco, his finger curling round the trigger of his gun. "You going to tell—"

His words snapped off short as he felt a sudden prod in the small of his back. The gun, shielded by the felt hat, threatened him, causing him almost to drop in sheer panic.

"Yes, you're right, Rocco, it's certainly getting a darn sight hotter now." Again Louie glanced at Mileaway out of the corners of his eyes. "Open that window, will you, Steve, and give us a chance to cool down."

In a flash Mileaway seized the cord of the green blind, jerked on it, and let the blind run up on its roller. Next second there came a startled gasp from the assembled crooks as they saw the deadly muzzle of a machine-gun that was set on the fire-escape stairs beyond the window. Behind the weapon was a grim-faced man whose finger was on the trigger, while beside him was another member of Louie's gang with a rifle held ready in his hands.

"How do you like it—sucker?" Louie grinned mockingly into Rocco's startled face. "I ought to give you a little of that heat for luck. But you just put away that toy of yours. It's too darned small." Louie waited while a trembling hand replaced the gun, then he turned to the meeting in general. "You fellows heard what I said at the opening of this meeting, and what I said then goes just as it is. Any mug that don't think so will be treated to the swellest funeral that ever stopped traffic. You have two minutes to decide your fate. My administration or—"

He shrugged his shoulders meaningly. "We agree, Louie!" came in a concerted shout from the entire assembly.

Trouble on the Horizon.

FOR the whole of six months peace reigned in the city, thanks to Louie Ricarno's wonderful organisation of the bootlegging industry. The various gangs pursued their trading of illicit liquor, and never once were their recognised territories trespassed upon by rival factions—never once was the sound of gunfire heard in streets that had hitherto been the scene of much bloodshed and slaughter.

Captain Pat O'Grady, together with the entire police force, was astounded, but not one of them expected this amazing metamorphosis to last indefinitely. The break would come as surely as would the crack of doom.

Another month passed with the peace still unswerving. By this time Louie Ricarno was a very wealthy young man, but for all that he was dissatisfied—sick of the hum-drum life he was leading. Like Napoleon, whom he made his fetish, he craved for fresh worlds to conquer. There was his life story that he had promised himself he would write one day. With the thought came inspiration. He had long since been in love with Doris Chester, whom Mileaway had introduced to him at a dance. Why not marry, settle down and write that book?

To think with Louie was to act. He consulted Doris, and because she and Mileaway had their avaricious eyes on the young man's wealth, the girl accepted him. All that money would be theirs if Louie met his end in some gang feud, as they felt he surely would before he was much older.

So the wedding was solemnised in great secrecy, after which Louie called a meeting of every gang in his organisation.

December 19th, 1931.

"Boys, I've got some news for you and only a little time to say it in." Louie smiled as he saw the puzzled expressions that came into the unprepossessing faces before him. "Since our last meeting everything's been going smooth and rosy. You'll admit that, huh? I've put the beer racket on a 'business basis like I promised you, and now I'm quitting the game. No, no, don't protest any of you. To-day I married, and from now on it's the quiet life for me. In future my old pal Mileaway will be the big boss."

Dissenting voices arose at once, but Louie paid no heed. With a wave of farewell he sped to the door of the council chamber and was gone.

Five minutes later, with Doris beside him, he was driving his luxurious Lincoln at a steady pace for distant Florida, where he had booked by cable a six-room furnished house for his bride and himself.

On the way they stopped at the Military Academy at Fairfield, which was eight miles out of Charlesworth, and visited Louie's twelve-year-old brother, Jackie, an upstanding little chap with fair curly hair and bright blue eyes.

A happy hour together, with Jackie fairly lionising Louie, thanking him times out of number for the magnificent sword he had sent him on his last birthday. The boy simply bubbled with high spirits, and did not forget to show his appreciation of the fact that he now had a sister when Louie confessed to him that Doris was his wife.

Tea followed in the large dining-hall with Jackie and his fellow-cadets, then Louie and Doris continued on their journey to Florida.

Thereafter the weeks slipped by with Louie happy and contented, busily writing his book, "The Life Story of a Young Racketeer." But as he wrote on, conjuring up his daring exploits and the terrible risks he had run in the bootlegging game, he decided that the title he had chosen was much too tame, and changed it for the far stronger one, "The Doorway to Hell."

So the story progressed, and never once did Louie recall those grim words spoken by Captain Pat O'Grady that day in his office at police headquarters: "Don't write the last chapter till the night you go to the chair!"

If he had recollected them, Louie would no doubt have laughed them to scorn, assuring himself that never again would he be exposed to the grave risks of the past.

But alas for Louie, the storm clouds were gathering fast. Back in the city he had left, gang warfare had again broken out, more terrible than before. The streets echoed once more to the vicious sputter of machine-gun fire, to the cries and moans not only of brutal gangsters but of innocent citizens who were unfortunate enough to be caught in the line of fire.

With Louie's departure from Charlesworth there had sounded the death knell to the wonderful organisation he had achieved. Harmony was forgotten, gangs encroached on one another's territories, ambushed each other's booze trucks, and nothing Mileaway could say or do could stem the vicious outburst of warfare that followed.

"Say, Mileaway, you gotta get Louie to come back!"

Mileaway faced an angry crowd of racketeers and thugs in the council chamber in the city underworld—men who had been strong partisans of Louie's organisation and who, with this sudden renewal of gang hostility, sorely missed his wonderful leadership.

"That's what I say," the Midget's voice was quite emphatic. "I was hijacked for twenty barrels of—"

"Aw, stop your squawking!" Mileaway's face was pale and haggard. He had thought himself on velvet when he had taken over complete control of the organisation Louie had founded. But now he knew differently. Fellows like Rocco and Slim Sullivan wouldn't accept him as their leader, and he had neither the personality nor the strength of character to keep them in subjection that Louie had. "Ain't I doing all I can, Midget, to—"

"Yeah. But twenty barrels is twenty barrels." The Midge thrust out his jaw pugnaciously. "You tell me who's going to make them good. Now, if Louie were hero what would he do? Why, he'd—"

"Listen!" Mileaway was at his wits' end to know how to appease the infuriated gangsters. Supposing they were to turn on him? He trembled at the very thought. "If you feel so tough about it, Midget, why don't you go out and take a slug at somebody?"

"That ain't the idea," Jack Hyams, nicknamed Hymie, spat in disgust. "Louie put up a proposition, and we agreed to it. We paid him for protection and what has he done? Given us the breeze!"

"Yeah, he's turned rat!" The Midget laughed scornfully. "Got scared of the whole blamed thing. It was too big for him, and he scuttled for a funk hole. That's what it was."

"You think so?" Mileaway fingered his tie nervously, for he knew that many hidden hands among the gangsters were clutched about the butts of guns. "Well, let me tell you you've got Louie all wrong, Midget. He was never scared of anything."

"Then why can't you get him to come back?" cried an ugly-looking ruffian who was known by the name of Gumpy, and was a follower of the Rocco gang.

"Because he's through with the racket," Mileaway explained. "I've sent him telegrams and letters. But it's no use. There's not a chance of getting him back."

"Then if he's not scared, why did he quit the racket?" snarled Hymie. "You tell me that."

"For two reasons, if you want to know," Mileaway volunteered. "He's goofy on Doris and doesn't want her mixed up in anything fishy. And that goes for that kid brother of his in that military school down in Fairfield."

"Brother!" The Midget whistled in surprise. The knowledge that Louie had a brother was new to him. "You mean to say that Louie has a kid brother, Mileaway?"

"Sure I do!" came the answer. A cunning gleam flashed into the Midget's close-set brown eyes as an idea occurred to him.

"Well," he said, addressing Mileaway, "Louie belongs back here, and I'm going to find a way to—"

"If you don't watch your step, you darned fool," Mileaway interrupted with surprising vehemence, "you're going to find a way to treat yourself to a handful of clouds!"

"Yeah!" The Midget got to his feet and advanced threateningly towards Mileaway, who quickly clapped a hand to his gun, while every gangster present waited for the storm to break. "Tell me, Mileaway," the Midget inquired in a voice as cold as steel, "just exactly what do you mean by a handful of clouds?"

"I mean the kind that come out of the business end of a gun." Mileaway's finger was curled round the trigger of the automatic in his jacket pocket, ready

to shoot. With a forced show of bravado he leered into the Midget's face. "Do you get me, Midget?" he said meaningly.

"Why, sure." There was a gasp of astonishment from the entire assembly as the little crook, instead of showing fierce resentment of Mileaway's threat, turned suddenly on his heel and came back to his confederates who were grouped in a corner of the room. A nod of his head brought them instantly to their feet, then they followed their leader as he went towards the door.

The Midget's resolve was taken—he was determined that Louie Ricarno should return to Charlesworth to renew his former activities in the underworld.

Tragedy.

THAT night a terrible gun-battle was waged in the city between the gangs led by Slim Sullivan and the Midget. It started with Sullivan's men ambushing one of the Midget's trucks that happened to have a strong guard upon it, a dozen men who fought back grimly, wreaking havoc among the attackers. Ten minutes the fight waged before the police arrived to quell the disturbance, but by that time five men lay stretched in the road, grim testimony to the terrible nature of the conflict.

There was no stopping the gang feuds now unless Louie Ricarno could be prevailed upon to return and take the matter in hand. Mileaway was convinced on that score, and so next morning he got on the long-distance telephone to Florida.

He could never hope to make big money as boss of the underworld now. But there was still Louie's wealth that he and Doris coveted. Once get the youngster back among all the turmoil and bloodshed there was every chance that that money would soon be theirs.

First he spoke to Doris, who then handed the receiver to Louie. But Louie only laughed when Mileaway implored him to return to quell the trouble that had broken out amongst the gangs of the city since his departure.

"Nothing doing, Mileaway." There was no mistaking the finality in the youngster's voice. "If the mobs have busted up the good work I did for them

it's not my fault. They can go to blazes!"

"But, Louie," Mileaway protested, "you don't know how tough it's gettin' around here. Why, some of the mobs are talking about coming down to Florida to bring you back."

"Oh, are they!" There was a note of menace in Louie's voice now. "Then you tell the mob of double-crossers that if they think they can take me to come down here and try it. Then tell 'em that the first one that shows his ugly face around this burg will get a load of Florida sunshine. You get me?"

But Louie did not wait to hear what Mileaway had to say to that. With a violent oath he slammed the telephone receiver back on its hook, then snatched up the lighted cigarette he had rested in an ashtray that stood on the table beside the phone.

"Louie, dear." Doris sidled up to him, placed an arm around his shoulders. Because of the affection she bore Mileaway and their designs on Louie's money she was anxious for Louie to return to Charlesworth. "You shouldn't have lost your temper that way. Mileaway is right. You belong back there, and anyway, I'm sick of this infernal place."

"Oh, you are, huh?" Angrily Louie flung free of her encircling arm and faced her with fiercely blazing eyes. "What have you got to be sick of? Are you one of 'em, too? Have you got so much crime in you it won't come out? Well, I'm through with the game. I told you that when we got married, and nothing will make me change my mind."

She opened her mouth to make some kind of protest to his venomous outburst, but before she could utter a single word he stamped from the room and slammed the door violently behind him.

Meanwhile the Midget was acting on the idea he had conceived as a means of forcing Louie to return to control the organisation he had founded. At about the same time that the youngster was speaking to Mileaway over the telephone, a car was drawn up in the road outside the gates of the Military Academy in Fairfield. The Midget was at the wheel, while standing beside him and leaning negligently against the side of the car was Rocco's underling, Gympy.

Both were interestedly watching a squad of cadets who were going through a course of drill just inside the college gates.

"Do you think it's safe to do it?" Gympy suddenly inquired as he ground the butt-end of a cigarette under his heel.

"Why, sure!" the Midget said impatiently. "We ain't going to hurt the kid, are we?"

"We'd better not." Gangster though he was, Gympy had very little pluck. "I hate to think what Louie'd do if anything should happen to his brother. Mileaway told me the kid's his all—that Louie's more fond of him than life itself."

"Can it, you blamed misery!" The Midget's eyes blazed angrily at Gympy. "Ain't it the only way we got of bringing Louie back to town? We take the boy along of us, then when Louie hears he's disappeared he'll come back fast enough. I tell you it's going to be—Here! Quick! The kids have been dismissed. Call one of 'em and see if you can locate the kid brother. Don't forget he goes by the name of Jackie Lamarr—that's what Mileaway told me."

Gympy lounged to the academy gates and interrogated a small boy who stood just inside readjusting a puttee that had come unfastened. Of course, he knew Jackie Lamarr. He would tell him he was wanted. The youth scuttled away and Gympy returned to the car, winked at the Midget, then opened the door to the back of the vehicle.

Presently Jackie appeared at the school gates, and with a puzzled frown on his good-looking little face he approached the car as Gympy beckoned.

"Hallo, captain!" cried Gympy, placing an arm around the youngster's shoulders, while the Midget raised his hand in salute.

"Hallo!" Jackie responded. "You Jackie Lamarr?" inquired the Midget, with a smile that was meant to be disarming, though in point of fact it was twisted and repulsive.

The boy nodded doubtfully, for there was something about these two men that did not invite confidence.

"Well, Jackie," the Midget went on, "your brother Louie sent us along to fetch you."



"You killed Gympy and you had to get the Midget or he'd have got you!"

"Louie?" Jackie exclaimed, and at mention of his brother's name all his doubts vanished.

"Sure! He's just got back from Florida. He ain't feeling any too good, and he wants to see you." The Midget leaned over the side of the car and caught at Jackie's arm. "Come on, get in the car, boy!"

Back came Jackie's suspicions with a rush. This man seemed far too anxious to get him in the car for his liking.

"Oh," Jackie said in as calm a tone as he could manage, "I'd rather wait until I hear from my brother personally."

"Now, now, Jackie, it's quite on the level!" The Midget bit his lip as he sensed the boy's suspicions. "Come on, jump in. We'll take you to your brother, see?"

But Jackie did not move, and at a wink from the Midget Gympy caught at the youngster's arms.

"Here, let me go!" Jackie cried in alarm.

Desperately he writhed in Gympy's grasp, managed to break free, and darted wildly down the road just as a lorry swung out of a side turning. There came a hoarse voice yelling a frantic warning, a screeching of hastily applied brakes. But too late. The heavy lorry was upon the fleeing youngster even as its driver strove desperately to slacken speed. Down went Jackie with a terrified shriek as the bonnet of the vehicle struck him with violent impact.

Came the horrified cries of those who had witnessed the accident, then a white-faced crowd surrounded the broken little figure that lay so still in the dusty road with the front wheels of the now stationary lorry almost touching it. There sounded sobbing, too, for several of Jackie's fellow cadets had seen all that had happened from the academy gates, and the sight had appalled them.

Then, above all other sound, came the roar of a motor-car as the Midget and Gympy, thoroughly alarmed that they should have been the indirect cause of the accident, sped away from the scene.

Well the two rascals knew that their lives would be forfeit should Louie Ricarno get to know that it was really through them that his kid brother had rushed to his death.

The Telegram.

WHEN he heard what had led to Jackie's death the Major of the Military Academy promptly telephoned to police headquarters in Charlesworth, the nearest big town. Mention of the victim's name, together with the information that the little fellow had been running away from two men who were evidently trying to kidnap him in a car, was all that was needed to arouse Captain Pat O'Grady's interest.

Half an hour later Pat was at the academy questioning the boys who had witnessed the accident, showing them a batch of photographs that included every crook in and around Charlesworth. And two of the pictures were pointed to by the boys as being the portraits of the men who had spoken to Jackie outside the college gates.

Pat smiled grimly as, some little while later, he left the academy in his car. The Midget and Gympy! What had been the reason behind their attempted kidnapping of little Jackie? A diabolical way if it had been their intention to pay off a grievance against Louie Ricarno through his kid brother.

Well, he had got something on the Midget and Gympy now, and the evidence he could bring against them was sufficient to put them away for a long spell. Two thugs less to terrorise

Charlesworth. Pat certainly had good reason to feel satisfied just then.

At about the same time that the Major of the Military Academy got upon the telephone to acquaint police headquarters with the mysterious circumstances that had led to little Jackie's death, Louie Ricarno was hastily dashing off the last few sheets of his life's history.

Presently the door opened and Doris entered the room. He glanced round, and not noticing the telegram she held in her hand, gave her a pleasant smile, completely forgetful of the fact that only a short time before he had lost his temper with her.

"Say, kid," he said, "what's the Latin word they put at the end of books?"

"Finis." Doris approached the desk at which he sat, and arched her eyebrows in surprise. "But you don't mean to say that you're actually through with your book, Louie?"

"Sure I do." He got upon his feet, swelling out his chest with pardonable pride. "You see, it had to be finished to-day, for there's a guy coming to read it in an hour or so—a publisher, you know."

She handed him the telegram then, and he took it with little interest.

"So this concludes the life of a gangster and begins the life of a man." There was the semblance of a sneer in the girl's voice. "Finis! Gee, that's swell! I'd have—" She broke off, startled, as a violent imprecation burst from Louie's lips. Bewildered eyes gazed at the youngster's suddenly white face, travelled to the trembling hand that held the buff-coloured telegraph form. "Louie, what in heaven's name is the matter? What—"

The shrill note of the telephone-bell broke into her words, and she sped to the table on which the instrument reposed. For a moment or two she listened to a voice at the other end of the wire, then, still clasping the receiver to her ear, she turned to Louie, who still stood beside his writing-desk as if rooted to the spot.

"Louie," she called, "it's the man from the Atlas Publishing Company. He wants to know if he can come over right now to read your book?"

A moment's silence, during which the telegraph form fluttered from Louie's numbed fingers, then—

"Tell him it's not finished yet!" he said in a voice charged with deadly menace.

Quickly Doris conveyed the message to the man at the other end of the line, then with a puzzled frown she returned to the desk and picked up the fallen telegraph form. On it she read:

"Brother killed in accident. Caused through two men attempting to kidnap him. Come at once.—Major, Military Academy, Fairfield."

"My heavens!" was all the girl could say.

Gympy Pays the Price.

FIVE days later Louie Ricarno, dressed in black save for his soft grey felt hat, came wearily into the sitting-room of the expensive, furnished flat he had rented in the residential quarter of Derwent, and sank heavily into a chair.

"Any luck?" inquired Mileaway, who had been awaiting Louie's return from nearby Charlesworth.

"Yeah," came the listless answer. "Plenty. I got it all from O'Grady's friend in the tobacco store. You see that guy's in Pat's confidence."

"Who did it, Louie?" Mileaway eagerly asked.

But Louie made no reply. Instead, he took up the receiver of the telephone that stood on the table at his elbow and gave a number to the operator at the exchange. A moment later and his connection was made.

"Hallo, is Rocco there?" Louie inquired, a fierce gleam flashing into his eyes.

"Rocco?" reiterated Mileaway. "Did he—"

"No, he didn't do it." Louie slowly shook his head, then sat bolt upright as a familiar voice came to his ear. "That you, Rocco? It is? Well, this is Louie Ricarno. You seen anything of Gympy or the Midget lately? You have? Well, that's grand. Now you listen here. I want you to have Gympy in front of your place to-night at nine o'clock. What? Never you mind what's the idea. You have him in front of your place to-night at nine o'clock, or by hades it'll go hard for you, see?"

"Okay," came Rocco's voice, and with that Louie rang off, a grim smile playing around the corners of his set mouth.

"So Gympy was one of 'em. And the other the Midget, just as I thought." Mileaway flicked the ash from his cigarette, then glanced at his wrist-watch. "It's after eight now, Louie. Want me to come along?"

"No, I'm taking care of that dirty hound myself." Louie ground his teeth savagely. "You stay here and keep Doris company."

That suited the fickle Mileaway down to the ground, and as Louie strode from the room he settled himself in the comfortable settee to wait for the girl who was in the bed-room changing her dress. She put in an appearance a few minutes later, and the two took advantage of Louie's absence to indulge in a mild flirtation and to drink Louie's wine and smoke his cigarettes.

But when Louie returned somewhere in the region of ten, Doris had retired for the night and Mileaway was dozing in a chair. But he awoke the moment Louie came in and glanced at him inquiringly.

"Well?"

But Louie made no reply, just went across to a decanter of whisky, and poured himself out a liberal helping to which he added a splash of soda. Then he turned and raised the glass aloft.

"Here's to Gympy and the look on his dirty face when he took it!" He laughed almost hysterically, tossed down his drink, then started violently as a knock sounded on the door. "See who it is, Mileaway!" he rasped.

As Mileaway went towards the door, Louie set down his glass and dived his hand into his jacket pocket. But the caller was Pat O'Grady, not members of Rocco's gang as Louie had feared.

"Ah, come on in, Pat." As the detective advanced into the room and Mileaway reclosed the door, Louie waved a hand towards the decanter on the sideboard. "What say to a drink, old man?"

"Thanks, no!" Pat shook his head, his eyes fastened on Louie's face in disconcerting fashion. "Say, that was a nice piece of work to-night. A gangster put on the spot and his colleagues, wise to the affair, letting him keep the appointment in the hope that they'd get the fellow who was after him. But nothing doing—the guy was too smart and drilled his victim. He even dodged me and—"

"What the heck are you getting at?" Louie strove desperately to master the sudden fear that gripped his heart. Did Pat O'Grady suspect him, then? From

what he had said it almost seemed that he did. "Tell me, just exactly what do you mean, O'Grady?"

"Nothing much. Only that I was after the victim and also the Midget for being concerned in your brother's death. It's a pity about Gympy, though." Pat sbrugged his shoulders. "When I heard he was going to his death I hurried along, but was too late to save him, or get the fellow who got him. Wish I could have nabbed—"

"But why tell me all this?" Louie broke in impatiently. "Anyone would think—"

"As I was going to say, Louie, I wish I could have nabbed the fellow who drilled Gympy. You see, I'm after him as well." O'Grady jerked down his hat brim so that it almost completely screened his piercing eyes. "An unlucky break that. But my time will come. Hope you're not thinking of leaving town again, Louie. You see, I'm just beginning to take an interest in you all over again. Decent of me, isn't it?"

"H'm!" Louie gave a reckless laugh as all his old bravado crowded back to him. Obvious now that O'Grady did suspect him as the killer of Gympy, but the knowledge, grave as it was, worried him not at all. Hadn't he on numerous occasions proved himself more than a match for the muddle-headed cops? "Well, Pat, in that case I'll sure stick around for a little while longer. How does that suit you?"

"Absolutely down to the ground." O'Grady turned to the door. "Well, so long, Louie. So long, Mileaway."

And with a satisfied smile on his strong features, O'Grady strode from the room.

Into the Ambush.

IT was shortly after nine o'clock two nights later when a knock came at the door of Louie's flat, and because Louie knew by the sound of it who the caller was he lost no time in opening the door. Mileaway stood outside, but instead of letting him in, Louie stepped out into the passage and drew the door to behind him.

"Steve, I want you to take Doris out to dinner." Louie's voice was a mere whisper. "You see, I've got the Midget staked out for to-night."

"Here, wait a minute." Mileaway caught at Louie's arm. "You'll be needing help. Let me come along—"

"No, I'm saving that skunk all for myself." Louie pushed Mileaway to the slightly open door. "You do as I tell you. Take Doris out to dinner. The usual place. I'll meet you there."

Louie was already wearing his hat, and as Mileaway went into the flat he strode along the passage and descended the stairs to the street. As he came out on to the sidewalk he turned right, and set off at a brisk pace, completely unaware that he was instantly followed by a grim-faced man who had been watching the door to the block of flats from an alleyway opposite.

Some half hour later Louie came to an unlighted shop in a particularly quiet thoroughfare on the outskirts of Charlesworth upon the window of which were the words "Union Cleaners." A swift glance round to make sure he was unobserved, then he produced a bunch of keys, selected one, and unfastened the shop door.

As he passed inside and closed the door behind him, the man who had been shadowing him hurried on down the road till he came to a telephone kiosk. Into the box he dived and put a call through to police headquarters. Then back he went, and from the shadows of

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a doorway opposite he watched the shop that Louie had entered and in which there now showed a single light.

Five minutes passed, then along the road came two men who stopped as they drew level with the shop Louie had entered.

"Well, here we are, Joe." It was the voice of Midget. "You can wait. It won't take long for Largon to pay me off for those two barrels he had last week."

Little dreaming of the ambush that was set for him inside—that Largon was not in his shop as he imagined—the Midget went to the door, opened it and paced inside.

No one to be seen, but even as he stood there expecting Largon to come out from the room at the back, the muzzle of a gun, to which had been fitted a silencer, came up over the counter, followed by a face that was distorted with passion. Louie's face! At sight of it the Midget's heart missed a beat and the colour rushed from his cheeks. Next second, a muttered curse escaping his trembling lips, he made a frantic effort to reach his gun.

"You dirty undersized rat!" Louie snarled fiercely. "Kill my brother, huh?"

With the words, he fired, and even as the Midget reeled backwards, the bullet imbedded in his chest, the youngster fired again.

A thud as the victim struck the floor, then the unmistakable whine of police cars racing down the street. Quickly Louie jumped for the electric light switch and plunged the shop into darkness. Were the police wise to this ambush of his? It was quite possible that they were for he knew that Pat O'Grady had far more brains than he would have admitted to anyone.

In two strides Louie was at the door, dragging it open. He stepped out on to the sidewalk. The police cars were now very near and a man was racing away down the road—the Midget's companion who had taken to his heels at the first approach of the police. Off Louie raced as fast as his legs would carry him, intent only on escape. And after him went the watcher from the doorway opposite. Louie quickly outstripped the fellow, but not so the pursuing police cars. As the first one overtook him and stopped, a figure jumped down and quickly grasped him. It was Pat O'Grady.

"A fair cop, Louie," he exulted. "Best be sensible and come quiet-like."

"Yeah! But do you think you'll be able to prove anything against me?" Louie put on a bold front. "No, Pat, you haven't got cast-iron evidence. Then again there's defending counsel; my man hasn't lost a case yet."

"Is that so?" grunted Pat, and marched him to the police-car.

Third Degree.

MILEAWAY was somewhat puzzled that Louie did not show up at the Blue Boar Inn, but the young racketeer's absence did not prevent he and Doris staying there until the small hours of the morning.

When they eventually returned to the flat the clock in the hall was striking three.

"I wonder if anything's happened to him," Mileaway remarked as he followed Doris into the darkness of the drawing-room. "Gee, it'd be swell if—"

He broke off as he thought he heard a slight movement close at hand.

"Probably he didn't feel like coming
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out to the Blue Boar after all, and came home and went to bed, Steve."

As he spoke Doris switched on the electric lights, then gave a startled gasp as Pat O'Grady rose up from the settee.

"Three o'clock," he remarked laconically. "I'll say good-morning to you both."

"Is it that late?" Mileaway arched his eyebrows in feigned surprise. What was O'Grady doing here? Had Louie indeed come a cropper? Slowly he turned to Doris. "Gee, time flew at that dance, didn't it, kid?"

"Oh, so you were at a dance, eh?" grunted Pat.

"Why, yes," Doris answered. "Now if you'll excuse me I'll trot along to Louie's room to see if—"

"Don't trouble, kid." A grim smile appeared on O'Grady's face. "You see his cell number's eighty-six."

"What?" Mileaway ejaculated. "Say, what's the idea?"

But O'Grady ignored the question, and grasped Mileaway's arm.

"I've been waiting here for you for two hours," he grimly remarked. "Now just you come along of me."

"But what for?" cried Mileaway, stark panic gripping him.

But again O'Grady deigned no answer.

"Come on!" he rapped out imperatively.

Despite his wild protests and the pleadings of Doris, Mileaway was led away, and within half an hour he found himself at police headquarters, in the almost bare room where suspects were taken for questioning. Some dozen men—uniformed officers and plain-clothes men in their shirt-sleeves—were in the room when Pat brought Mileaway in and dumped him in a chair at a large table, and they immediately got to their feet and clustered around the prisoner.

"Where were you at ten o'clock?" O'Grady fired at Mileaway, as he, too, discarded his jacket and dropped into a chair beside the terrified crook.

"I told you a dozen times on the way here!" Mileaway gasped, his furtive eyes scanning the grim faces around him.

"Dance, huh?" Pat O'Grady felt confident he was waging a winning game. Louie Ricarno was safe. All that remained now was to get conclusive proof against him. "Tell me, Mileaway, why did you kill the Midget?"

"Heavens, I didn't know he was killed!" came in shrill tones from the prisoner.

"You didn't, huh?" It was a uniformed officer who spoke now. "You killed Gympy, and you had to get the Midget or he'd have got you!"

Mileaway trembled in every limb. What was all this leading to? Were they trying to frame him, or was it that they had Louie on suspicion and were trying to force him to double-cross the youngster? If it was the latter, then he might tell them all he knew, with Louie convicted of the murders of Gympy and the Midget and sent to the chair, the youngster's wealth would be his and Doris'.

"You really think I knocked off those two guys, huh?" Mileaway picked up the glass of water that stood on the table before him, for his lips felt very dry. But with a quick movement one of the shirt-sleeved detectives instantly snatched it away. With a shrug of his shoulders the crook then fixed his eyes on Pat O'Grady. "Say, Pat, if you think I gave Gympy and the Midget

December 19th, 1931.

the works, what you holding Louie for?"

"That's our business." O'Grady thrust out his jaw pugnaciously. "What concerns you is this: You plead guilty to killin' the Midget in self-defence and Louie doesn't hear a word about how you've been flirting with his wife behind his back. Ah, ah, I thought that'd scare you. Now what do you say? Confession that'll mean five years or— Well, we can't hold Louie, and if he hears about your deceit he'll get you, as sure as eggs are eggs."

"All right, Pat. You get these mugs out of here and I'll talk to you alone." Thought of self-preservation overcame discretion. As O'Grady gave a sign and his colleagues trooped from the room Mileaway turned eagerly to the detective. "If I confess, you promise not to tell Louie?"

"Sure. You'll have nothing whatsoever to worry about." Pat rose to his feet, picked up his jacket which he had slung over the back of his chair, and put it on. "Look here, Mileaway, you're really on velvet. You've got a lot of money put by and when you get out you can go somewhere quiet and live like a human being."

Mileaway nodded eagerly, completely taken in by O'Grady's cunning.

"You write it out and I'll sign, Pat," he said quite cheerfully.

"It's already written out."

The detective took a document from his breast pocket, opened it out and set it before him on the table. A triumphant smile on his lips, Pat watched Mileaway pick up a pen and, without troubling to read a single word on the typewritten sheet, apply his signature in a bold, firm hand.

"That okay?" Mileaway asked as he set down the pen.

"Sure!"

O'Grady stowed away the precious document, a signed statement to the effect that Louie Ricarno was guilty of the murders of both Gympy and the Midget. The battle of wits had been won. Pat had at last got Louie where he wanted him, and for him there was now no escape.

Out of the Frying Pan into the Fire.

BUT prison bars did not hold Louie for long. From the moment he was incarcerated he awaited rescue that he knew would surely come. Eagerly he scanned the papers that were handed to him as a particular concession, but it was not until the night following Mileaway's "grilling" that he found what he sought in the late edition of the Courier. An innocent-looking advertisement it was, but it was so worded that it formed a message for Louie. "Escape somehow one in morning. Car outside."

Louie chuckled inwardly. Already he had decided on a way to break prison.

One o'clock came, and the night warder made his rounds, only to stop at Louie's cell as he heard the sound of moanings.

"What the heck's wrong with you, Ricarno?" he gruffly inquired.

"Oh, I'm terribly sick!" Louie was bent almost double, his hands clasped to his stomach. "Will you get a doctor to come and look at me?"

"You'd best come across the yard to the hospital." The warder quickly unlocked the cell door. "Come on. Make it snappy!"

Louie certainly did make it snappy. No sooner was he out of the cell than he

laid the warder out with a terrific blow to the jaw, then snatched at the man's bunch of keys. Minutes later and the youngster was out in the open, but here he was seen by another warder, who promptly raised the alarm.

A game of cat and mouse began then. But Louie, after much dodging and liding in odd corners, managed to effect his escape by climbing an outbuilding at the back of the prison. Escape this way was a blessing in disguise for him, though, of course, he did not know it. As arranged, a car awaited him at the front of the prison, and it contained Rocco and two other sinister crooks. But they were not here to help Louie. Rocco, determined to avenge the deaths of Gympy and the Midget, had had that advertisement inserted in the "Courier," and in the car ready for Louie's coming was a machine-gun!

But the three killers waited in vain.

Where to go now that he had escaped from prison? It was indeed a poser for Louie. He could not return to the flat, for that would be the first place that Pat O'Grady would look for him. He must lie low for a bit, until the search for him had been abandoned. He could then flee the city and start a fresh in some far-off town, sending word to Doris where to join him.

An hour later found him in a room at the top of a squalid and tumbledown house where he had lived before he had risen to be a power in the underworld. All next day he lay on the dirty bed with the door safely locked and a gun near at hand, listening to the raucous cries of newsboys telling the city of his escape from gaol.

Evening came, and because he wanted to see what the papers had to say about him, Louie thrust his head quickly out of the window and asked a passing newsboy to bring a paper up to him. But he found he had nothing less than a ten-dollar bill, and the boy had no change.

"You can get change from the delicatessen store across the street," Louie told him. "And while you're there you might get me some bread and a carton of sweet Caporal cigarettes. Mind?"

The boy shook his head and departed. Ten minutes later he was back again with the loaf of bread and the carton of cigarettes, which he placed on the table together with Louie's change.

"Thanks, gov'nor." The boy pocketed the liberal tip Louie gave him. "By the way, I met a guy down there who says he thinks he might know you."

"Who's that?" Louie anxiously inquired.

"Pat O'Grady." The boy failed to notice the startled look that flashed into Louie's eyes. "He was in the delicatessen. He's known me ever since I was a kid. He said he might be up to see you later on."

Whistling cheerfully, the youngster departed, and, with a quick movement, Louie snatched up his gun. No use locking the door against the detective—it would not take him long to burst it in. But he wouldn't let O'Grady take him.

Half an hour passed, then Louie heard footsteps ascending the stairs, and bare seconds afterwards a knock sounded on the door.

"Come in, O'Grady!" As the door opened and Pat came into the room, Louie swung up his gun, levelling it straight at the detective's heart. "Stop, that's as far as you're coming, Pat. That's right. Now don't you dare move."

"Sorry, Louie, but the gun won't be needed. You see, I don't happen to park one. Not needed, my boy." The

(Continued on page 23.)

Follow a two-fisted sea-captain and the beautiful daughter of a brave explorer as they sail on a perilous trip to a forgotten cannibal island, where they defy storm, fire and water, man and beast, on a search for a fortune in radium! Starring Kenneth Harlan and Lucille Browne.



DANGER ISLAND



READ THIS FIRST.

In search of pitchblende deposits containing immense quantities of precious radium, Professor Adams and his companions are beset by savages on a volcanic island off the African coast, and Adams escapes with one surviving follower, Cebu, his giant negro guide.

In America his daughter Bonnie and her uncle, Dr. Anthony Adams, have become alarmed at his failure to communicate with them. Ben Arnold, an adventurer professing friendship, offers to fit out a relief expedition.

His ship, the Lottie Carson, sets sail under the command of Harry Drake, a young Englishman, and for companion Bonnie engages Arlene Chandos, who is in league with Arnold.

Professor Adams and Cebu are picked up by the Lottie Carson off the coast of Africa. The professor is dying, but before passing away he gives Bonnie a chart and charges her to secure the radium for the benefit of humanity.

After a storm in which Dr. Anthony and Cebu are washed overboard, the ship puts into Twamballa, where Harry is paid off. But, thinking he knows too much, Arnold and Black plan to kill him.

They enlist the aid of Lascara, the dago owner of the hotel where they are staying overnight, and a sinister power in the African port. He stages a quarrel over a native girl, and, despite the intervention of Bonnie and a handful of shipmates, Harry is hustled to the back of the premises and thrown to hungry crocodiles.

Now Read On.

A Network of Lies.

IN the instant that Harry Drake was tossed into the crocodile pit, Brincy flung down the men with whom he had been struggling, and scattered those

who had been responsible for the fiendish act.

At the same time Collins, Burke and Connor came running from the bar-room, where they had routed the villainous gangsters against whom they had been opposed, and as they appeared on the scene the rest of Lascara's hirelings took to their heels.

Brincy lurched to the edge of the death-pool. He was babbling broken sentences in a voice that trembled with emotion.

"The skipper's gone!" he moaned. "Done for. They chucked him to the crocodiles."

And then he stopped, for as he looked down into that ghastly well with a feeling of sickness and horror he saw a figure chinging to the side of it.

Scarce two feet below the parapet there was a narrow ledge, and in falling Harry Drake had managed to clutch it with his hands. He was hanging there by the tips of his fingers now, but at any moment seemed likely to lose his grip and drop into the midst of the hungry reptiles beneath him. As it was, the loathsome creatures were leaping towards him, and a tumult filled the pit as their jaws snapped close to his heels and their bodies fell back into the muddy water with heavy splashes.

"Lend a hand!" roared Brincy. "There's a chance for him yet!"



EPISODE 4.

"DEVIL WORSHIPPERS."

Bonnie darted to his side, and she was the first to follow Brincy's example and reach down to seize the Englishman by the wrists. Next second Harry was being dragged from the well.

He was as pale as death, but squared his shoulders with an effort and gave his rescuers a word of thanks. Then his brow darkened ominously.

"It looks to me as if this fight was a frame-up," he ground out, "and I've an idea who was at the back of it!"

A girl was standing in the doorway watching the group furtively. The girl was Arlene Chandos, and as she heard the young captain's words she turned and hurried back across the bar-room towards a flight of stairs leading to the upper floor of Lascara's premises.

Ben Arnold and Bull Black were at the foot of the staircase in company with the rascally Portuguese proprietor, and as Arlene approached them Ben Arnold flung a question at her.

"Where's Bonnie?" he demanded. "I thought you went through to get her out of that fight."

"There wasn't any need to," Arlene retorted. "The fight's over."

Arnold took a step forward, and: "What happened?" he asked her eagerly.

"What did you expect?" the girl rejoined, her lip curling slightly. "I told you Drake was as hard as nails. He and his friends cleaned up Lascara's entire gang—"

"Here comes Drake now," Bull Black interrupted suddenly. "Let's get upstairs."

Harry had appeared in the bar-room with Bonnie and the men who had stood by him. The saloon wore a deserted air, though two or three of Lascara's men were lying around in huddled positions. Harry had eyes only

for Arnold and his companions, however, and telling Briney and the other sailors to make themselves scarce, he strode on with Bonnie to the stairs.

Arnold and his associates were on the point of ascending when the Englishman overtook them. He gripped the owner of the Lottie Carson by the arm and swung him around.

"I want a word with you, Arnold," he said grimly.

"What's the idea?" the scoundrel demanded.

Harry looked him straight in the eye. "Just this!" he rapped out. "You may not know it, but I saw you and Black having a little heart-to-heart talk with this dago Lascara. I can put two and two together, and I've got a sneaking fancy that the attack on me was some of your dirty work. You thought you'd bump me off, eh?"

"I don't know what you're talking about, Drake," Arnold retorted viciously. "I had nothing to do with your rotten quarrel. When you start flattering one of these native girls," he added, "it's a good idea to make certain that no other admirers are around."

"The girl had nothing to do with it," Harry blazed, infuriated by the attempt of throw a slur on his character in Bonnie's presence. "It was a deliberate frame-up between you and this dago here—"

"No, no!" Lascara protested suavely, taking the cue that Arnold had given him. "I had nothing to do with it. I control the dancing-girls, but I cannot control the men. Bef you pay attentions to Pelula and somebody get jealous, captain, it is not my fault if a free fight start."

The young Englishman heard Bonnie utter a faint exclamation, and a glance at her face told him that the tissue of plausible lies that his enemies were building around the bar-room fracas had roused doubts in the girl's mind. It was hardly to be wondered at, for both Arnold and Lascara sounded sincere enough in their accusations.

"Bonnie," Harry appealed, "you don't believe what they're saying, do you?"

"Oh, I don't know what to believe!" she cried desperately, and with the words she ran upstairs to her room.

A husky mutter of laughter escaped Bull Black, and the ruffianly mate moved nearer to Harry and favoured him with a mocking leer.

"You ain't so lucky in handling womenfolk, are you, Drake?" he taunted.

A fierce spasm of rage seized Harry, but he betrayed it only by the twitching of the muscles in his cheek, and when he spoke his voice was cool and level.

"Maybe not," he said, "but I do know how to handle rats like you!"

Next instant he swung his fist to the point of Bull Black's jaw, and he rammed home his bunched knuckles with an impact that swept Arnold's henchman off his feet.

Bull hit the floor with a thud, and, neither Arnold nor Lascara seeming disposed to take up the quarrel on the mate's behalf, Harry strode from the bar-room into the street.

As he emerged he was confronted by Briney, and it was plain from the latter's first words that he had witnessed the incident with Bull.

"Good for you, captain," he declared. "An' listen—me an' the boys grabbed a little half-caste that was mixed up in the bar-room row. Sneakin' off along the street, he was, but we didn't let him go till we'd made him talk."

"Yes?" Harry murmured. "And what did he say?"

"We squeezed this much outa him,"

December 19th, 1931.

Briney answered. "The guys that started the fight were in Lascara's pay, and it was Bull Black that hired Lascara to have you bumped off."

Harry bit his lip.

"Bull Black isn't the only one behind the racket," he declared. "Say, Briney, get the boys together, will you? I'd like to talk to them."

Collins, Burke and Connor were standing at a street-corner not far away, and Briney gave them a hail. They came up at the double, and Harry addressed them earnestly.

He did not know that Arlene Chandos had quietly followed him from Lascara's premises at the instigation of Ben Arnold, and was lurking within earshot in the mouth of a dark alley.

"Listen, boys," Harry said. "We've got to watch our step. Arnold is out to get me, and I don't want you fellows to run into any danger on my account. The best thing you can do is to take passage on the first ship that docks in Twamballa."

"Sure, captain," put in Briney, "if you come with us."

Harry shook his head.

"Miss Adams is alone among a bunch of traitors who are only professing friendship to her," he said. "I'm convinced that she'll be in an ugly situation once Arnold and his party have her fairly at her mercy on Danger Island—for, with us out of the way, she alone stands between Arnold and his ambition to make a fortune out of those radium deposits that her father discovered."

"Well, what do you aim to do, captain?" Burke inquired.

"See the whole thing through," was Harry's answer, "even if I have to follow the Lottie Carson when she sails in the morning."

Briney laid a hand on the Englishman's arm, and—

"Captain," he stated, "when I speak for meself I reckon I'm speakin' for these here shipmates o' mine as well. If you think we're gonna desert you, you're wrong—"

From Jungle Fastnesses.

LEAVING Bull and Lascara in the bar-room, Ben Arnold made his way upstairs and knocked at the door of Bonnie's room, crossing the threshold as she gave him permission to enter.

"Oh, Ben," she said dismally, as he approached her, "was it really true that the fight started because Captain Drake was paying attention to a native girl?"

Arnold shrugged.

"Well, you know, he's a sailor," he observed, "and there's the old saying about sailors having a sweetheart in every port."

"But I can't believe he's like that," Bonnie told him. "Oh, I'm sick of this whole tragic cruise! Can't we go home, Ben?"

"Bonnie," Arnold protested, with mock righteousness, "before your father died he charged you to finish the task he had begun. Captain Black has signed on a batch of new men, and the repairs on the ship will be completed so that we can sail with the morning's tide. It's this place that's got on your nerves, but I'll check up and see that everything is being done to hasten our departure."

With that he left her and went down to the bar-room again. The usual customers had begun to drift back, and the dive was beginning to assume its customary atmosphere of barbarous gaiety, but of Bull and Lascara there was no sign. Arnold located them, however, in a private apartment behind the saloon, and as he joined them he looked at them sourly.

"Well, your men bungled the job after all, Lascara," he snapped, but before he could say more, Bull Black tapped him on the shoulder.

"Wait a minute," he stated, in his deep, gruff voice. "Before you start gettin' sore, Arnold, let me tell you that Lascara has put up a proposition that looks like a cinch. Let him hear it, Lascara."

The Portuguese smiled craftily and then beckoned Arnold to a window, through which he pointed a lean forefinger.

Arnold peered forth into the starry night. Lascara's dive stood on the very outskirts of Twamballa, and Twamballa, in more than one respect, was unique. Unlike many other ports that had been settled by white men along the tropic African coast, its civilisation extended little farther than its streets and dwellings. The hinterland behind it was the jungle, primeval, untamed—a vast barrier of sinister bush-country stretching between the coast and the heart of the Congo region.

It was towards the dark wall of jungle that Lascara gestured, and Ben Arnold looked at him dully.

"In bush there is tribe known as the Zarbessa," Lascara said softly. "Bad people to make trouble with. I know—for now and then I trade with them. The Zarbessa, they are devil worshippers. They are what you call killers—the mos' dangerous tribe in all Africa. They sacrifice white man. To-day, some of them were seen near Twamballa—skulking, you understand? Lying in wait for victim."

"A victim?" Arnold echoed. "What are you driving at, Lascara? How do the Zarbessa expect to get a white man for a sacrifice here in Twamballa?"

Lascara leaned closer.

"Very few know how," he whispered. "No white man goes out of Twamballa when it is known they are near. Yet every time the Zarbessa come, a white man disappear and we see him no more. It is their superstition—Zarbessa gods must have white man for sacrifice."

Arnold could not repress a faint shudder, for the manner in which Lascara had spoken impressed him with a dull sense of horror.

"We'll have to look out for ourselves then," he muttered, "and for the two girls as well, I suppose."

"No, not for womenfolk," Lascara rejoined. "Zarbessa only take white man. They believe their devil gods no' want white girl. And now listen, senor—you pay, and I fix it so the Zarbessa take Drake—"

Arnold laid a hand on his sleeve to compel silence, for at that moment there had come a knock on the door. The visitor was Arlene, and as she stepped across the threshold quickly the three men thought she appeared agitated.

"I've been looking all over for you," she said. "You've got to do something with Drake. He and his friends have decided to see this thing through to the bitter end. As far as I can make out, they intend to find some way of following us when we sail, and in the meantime they are coming back here to keep their eyes open and watch points."

Bull Black grinned.

"Is that so?" he mused. "Steppin' right into the lion's den, huh? How soon can you get hold of this party from the Zarbessa tribe, Lascara?"

"Yes," Arnold interposed eagerly, "and how can we get them to understand what we want them to do?"

Lascara coolly lit a cigarette.

"I live long time in Twamballa," he said. "I speak many dialects, and I

know how I can get in touch with Zarbessa."

"All right, then," Arnold rejoined. "I'll tell you what we'll do—"

The Zarbessa.

ARNOLD'S conversation with Las-cara was swiftly succeeded by activity on the part of the rascally Portuguese hotel-owner, and within an hour the dago joined Bull Black at the bar.

"I send messenger to Zarbessa," Las-cara said in an undertone. "He is back now, and Zarbessa—they come soon. You get Senor Arnold, and we talk in back room."

Bull slid his glance towards a table at the far side of the room. It was occupied by a group of men who had entered the dive a few minutes before—Harry Drake and his companions—and Bull indicated them with a slight movement of his head.

"All right, Lascara," he muttered, "but watch your step. Drake is over there—on the look-out, I guess."

He parted with the dago and hurried upstairs to the rooms occupied by Bonnie and Arlene. He found Arnold in the company of the two girls, and touched the peak of his cap sailor fashion.

"I'd like to speak with you about some of the new men in the crew, Mr. Arnold," he stated.

"All right, Black," Arnold returned. "I've just been telling the girls that they had better turn in, as we're definitely sailing in the morning."

"Ben"—it was Bonnio who spoke, and there was a hesitant note in her voice—"I wonder if I might see Captain Drake. I've been thinking things over, and, whether he was the cause of that fight or not, I—P'd like to say 'good-bye' to him."

Arnold had some difficulty in concealing his impatience. "Don't waste your time on him," he advised. "He's probably out with some native girl. Anyhow, I'll see you first thing in the morning."

He stepped out of the room with Bull, and the two descended to the saloon and walked through to Lascara's private office. Lascara faced them as they appeared, and smiled an evil smile.

"All is fixed," he said to Arnold. "When Zarbessa come, we show them the man and they take hem away."

Even as he spoke there was a confused tumult, and he slipped towards the door and peered into the saloon through a grille. Two or three men had hurried into the dive from the street, and they seemed in a state of tremendous agitation.

"The Zarbessa!" Lascara heard them exclaim, and a queer light kindled in his malevolent eyes.

The cry was taken up on every hand, and an air of suspense seemed to pervade the saloon. It was a suspense that several in the dive failed to understand, and Briney was among these. Harry Drake was not so ignorant, however, for long experience of that barbarous coast had enlightened him concerning its many perils, and he was about to explain the circumstance when, silent as a troop of ghosts, a number of stalwart savages stole across the threshold from the street.

Half-nude demons of the bush, their bodies were as black as ebony, except where their

diabolical features had been painted and tattooed. A murmur arose at the sight of them, and then a hush fell as they stood in the doorway, their eyes swiftly scanning the saloon.

Several seconds of stark silence must have elapsed ere they began to file through that dive, men drawing aside from them in terror as they approached. Then they were gone, vanishing one by one into Lascara's back room.

A mutter of conversation broke out as they disappeared, and when he had found his voice Briney clutched Harry Drake by the arm.

"Captain," he gasped, "what kind of fiends from Hades are these?"

"Men of the Zarbessa tribe, the most brutal savages on the African coast," Harry answered. "They make a speciality of sacrificing white men to their gods. I guess we're in no danger here, for they always strike in the dark. But if you should go out, stick together, and be sure to keep your hands on your guns."

His listeners reached involuntarily towards their hip-pockets, for, like all members of the Lottie Carson's crew, they had been served out with firearms and drilled in the use of them during the voyage, and, on dismissing them, Arnold and Bull Black had neglected to demand the return of the weapons.

Harry spoke again. "Lascara keeps strange company," he mused, "but I know that dago snake of old. Piracy, murder—these come easy to him, and I've heard that, as a sideline, he trades with the Zarbessa for ivory."

"Then maybe it ain't white men they're after to-night," Collins interposed hopefully.

"Probably not," Harry agreed. "If they were out for a human sacrifice, I doubt if they'd come so openly. They're very likely here to barter with Lascara over a consignment of tusks."

Had he been within earshot of the back room, Harry might have been less disposed to believe that the mission of the Zarbessa was one so innocent. For at that moment Lascara was acting as interpreter for Arnold and Black, and explaining to the savages what was required of them.

"I tell 'em we show 'em the man," the dago said in English, addressing Arnold and Black after he had held some conversation with the Zarbessa in their weird dialect. "They say they waste no time, for they go back to their junglo kraal very soon. They get him when he leaves saloon."

"All right," Bull Black jerked, taking it upon himself to answer, "point Drake out to them. And, Arnold, better keep your hand on your revolver. These bloodthirsty killers would as soon take you or me."

Arnold did as Bull advised, and then glanced at Lascara's sleeve.

"Wait a minute," he said. "Ask them how we're to know they'll do the job and finish him off?"

Lascara repeated the question to a stalwart savage who appeared to be the head-man. The latter made some rejoinder, and the dago turned to Arnold again.

"He say if you no' believe, you come to kraal and see for yourself."

Arnold uttered a querulous, mirthless laugh.

"I'd just as soon take his word for it," he replied, and, with a thin-lipped smile of understanding, Lascara drew the Zarbessa head-man to the grille and pointed to the table at which Harry and his party were sitting.

The dago spoke a few words more, obviously describing Harry in detail so that no mistake should be made, and the savage gave a quick and eager nod.

"All right," said Lascara, addressing Arnold and Bull Black over his shoulder. "When Drake go, Zarbessa go, too."



"I want a word with you, Arnold," he said grimly.

December 19th, 1931.

The Kidnapping of Drake.

SHORTLY after Ben Arnold wished the girls good-night, Arlene Chandos retired to her own room, and Bonnie was left alone with her thoughts.

Harry Drake figured in them prominently, and, looking back on the incidents of the voyage, reflecting upon the deep friendship that they had formed, she found it harder than ever to believe the accusation Ben Arnold had levelled against him. Indeed, she could not help reproaching herself for doubting Harry, even momentarily.

Her mind being in this vein, she suddenly stood up with the intention of seeking out Harry and telling him her true sentiments, and no sooner was the resolve made than she slipped out of the room.

The sound of music and conversation rose to her from the saloon, and, her recent experience in the bar-room still fresh in her memory, she recoiled from the idea of renewing her acquaintance with it. She therefore descended by a back-stair that brought her into the street via a side door in the premises.

She had not the least idea where Harry was to be found, but it occurred to her that he might return to Lascara's in the hope of seeing her again. Possibly he was even there now, and she decided that she would wait near the main entrance on the off-chance of seeing him.

She walked round to the mean thoroughfare that ran past the front of the building, and with that she heard a familiar voice humming the opening bars of a sea-shanty. Next moment Briney emerged from Lascara's bar-room, and the girl immediately confronted him.

"Briney," she said—"Briney, have you seen Captain Drake?"

"Why, yes, Miss Adams," the sailor answered, touching his cap. "I just stepped out for a breath of air and left him in Lascara's dive with the rest o' the boys."

"Will you tell him I'd like to see him right away?" Bonnie pleaded.

"Sure I will," was the cheerful answer. "I'd do anything for you, Miss Bonnie."

The big sailor walked back into the bar-room and gave Harry the girl's message. The Englishman instantly rose, never for a moment suspecting that evil eyes were watching him from Lascara's back room and that his departure was the signal for the Zarbessa to shadow him.

"Drake goes," Lascara said to Arnold and Black. "I tell Zarbessa to steal out by back door and make up on him. Then I follow and see they get him all right, eh?"

In the meantime Harry had passed out into the street, and there he came face to face with Bonnie.

"You sent for me?" he said, a little stiffly, for, though he intended to safeguard her interests, he was still smarting under the impression that she had believed Arnold's lying story concerning the bar-room fracas.

"I had to see you, Harry," she told him urgently. "Will you—will you walk with me a little way?"

He nodded and they began to stroll along the street, the two of them completely unaware that they were being tracked by a band of dark, silent figures.

They came to a kind of market-place, populous and filled with a great clamour, and made their way through it to a strip of open country behind the town. A hush fell over that same market-place as the Zarbessa appeared, and men covered into dark corners as December 10th, 1931.

the savages filed after their prey. Then came Lascara, watchful as a cat.

Bonnie and Harry wandered towards the fringe of jungle, but were still some little distance from it when the Englishman called a halt.

"It's not safe to go too far from the town," he mentioned. "Whatever you want to say to me, you can rest assured that we won't be overheard here."

"Oh, Harry," she began, and in spite of the gloom he saw that her face was raised appealingly, "I want to speak to you about this voyage to Danger Island. I promised father that I'd go on—carry out his dying wish. But—I can't! I can't go on without you, Harry. I don't know why it is, but somehow I'm afraid!"

Her impassioned tone affected him powerfully, and he took hold of her hands with a gesture of sympathy.

"It's been my belief all along that you have reason to be afraid," he told her. "Almost from the beginning I distrusted Arnold, and as for that henchman of his, Bull Black—"

"I think Black is the one who first made me suspicious of the whole business," Bonnie said quickly. "There's something about him that makes me shudder, and Arlene happened to mention that it was he who recommended this terrible place of Lascara's."

"Arnold and Black are hand-in-glove," Harry assured her, "and now they've got Lascara in their pay. But, Bonnie," he added eagerly, "are you trying to tell me that you don't believe what Arnold has been saying against me?"

"I believe only in you, Harry," she answered. "I was a blind fool ever to doubt you. You're the only friend I have in the world now."

Harry slipped his arms around her. Her words had elated him, and in that moment he felt ready to match his wits and courage against all the villainy of Arnold's minions—to meet the ring of enemies with his own good men, and confound them in their nefarious enter-

prise. With Bonnie trusting in him, he would baffle Arnold's scheming—

Harry did not see the figures that were stealing towards him through the gloom, a grim cordon of devil-worshippers between him and the town.

"Bonnie," he said, "you have nothing to fear now that I know what I mean to you."

"But we will at sun-up," she told him tremulously, "and the Lottie Carson is leaving without you, under the command of that awful man Black. Oh, I can't—I can't go on."

"The ship that carries you won't leave me far behind," the Englishman said, smiling down at her. "Listen, Bonnie; I've made my plans. Briney and the boys are staunch. To-morrow—"

But he never completed the sentence. There was a sudden scuffle of naked feet in the grass, and next second a swarm of demon figures sprang at him through the darkness.

Bonnie uttered a shrill scream of terror, and as it rang piercingly on her lips a savage wrenched her from Harry's grasp and swung her aside ere leaping forward to engage the Englishman.

Harry saw the painted face of the jungle fiend, and an involuntary cry escaped him.

"Zarbessa!" he jerked, and with the word he stepped to meet the black and ripped his fist to the bushman's hulking body.

His knuckles drove into the savage's stomach, and the negro fell writhing. His place was taken by another, who ran straight into a terrific punch that hurled him to the ground, but the two were only the foremost of a party that numbered eight or nine, and with ugly shouts the rest of the bushmen closed in.

Harry snatched a revolver from his hip-pocket, but ere he could level it his hand was seized and the gun thrust upward to the sky. A shot crashed out, but the bullet sped harmlessly enough through the fronds of a palm, and in another moment the weapon had been wrested from the young captain's grasp.

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It dropped to the grass unheeded. Harry was now in the grip of many pairs of arms and was lifted clear of the ground, but by a superhuman effort he managed to find his footing again and, with his fists in free play, he lashed out fiercely.

He knew the savage cult which the Zarbessa called their religion—knew that capture would be followed by torture and death before their primitive idols within an hour. Desperation gave him a strength that was superhuman, and two went down under his blows. But the first pair whom he had tackled now rose to weigh the scales as heavily against him.

He actually managed to break from that swarm of black humanity, and as he saw Bonnie scramble to her feet he shouted to her to make off. She whipped round, and he started after her at the double, but one of the bushmen who had been knocked to the ground clutched him by the ankle before he had gone two paces.

He managed to avoid falling, and plucked his foot from the negro's clasp. But the momentary check proved fatal, for as he attempted to run on he was surrounded again, and this time the whole pack of savages made a determined effort to drag him down.

Bonnie turned back and threw herself into the struggle frenziedly, beating at the Englishman's attackers with her clenched hands. She was unheeded for a few seconds, then one of the black fiends wheeled and caught her up in his arms.

He dashed her to the grass and stooped over her to threaten her with his great, dusky fist. But there was no need to strike. For, bruised and shaken, terrified by the apparition of that hideous, tattooed face lowering over her, Bonnie uttered a little moan and fainted.

Scarcely thirty paces distant, the crouching figure of Lascara watched the scuffle. He saw Harry Drake battling gamely against the overwhelming odds, and he saw him dragged under the swaying mass of black humanity. He watched the devil worshippers sprawl over the young Englishman's prone form and strike at him brutally as he lay.

Presently Harry ceased to resist his assailants. He was still half-conscious, but had been battered and trampled into helplessness. There was a tumult of voices all about him, voices clamouring in the wild Zarbessa dialect of the bush. Strong hands closed on his arms and legs and lifted him from the ground.

His captors ignored the prostrate figure of Bonnie, and, in spite of stupor and despair, Harry was thankful that the primitive fiends who had him in their power showed no wish to take the girl along with them to their fastness in the hinterland.

Abandoning Bonnie, they carried the Englishman towards the jungle. Lascara followed them with his eyes until the darkness swallowed the group, and his evil face wore an expression of satisfaction. He could now assure Arnold and Bull Black that Drake would worry them no more, and before morning Arnold would pay the price agreed upon.

The night was still except for a far-off sound that came from the remote depths of the jungle. It was the mutter of native drums in the distant village of the Zarbessa.

(To be continued in another breath-taking episode next week. By permission of the Universal Pictures, Ltd., starring Kenneth Harlan and Lucille Browne.)

"A HANDFUL OF CLOUDS."

(Continued from page 18.)

detective smiled grimly at the puzzled expression that came into Louie's face. "Too bad that I should hit against that kid you sent to the delicatessen, wasn't it? I somehow thought you'd be in this neighbourhood—the place of your childhood days, you know. Well, I got talking to that kid who's a little friend of mine, and when he asked for your particular brand of cigarettes, I knew I'd traced you."

"Well, what you going to do about it?" Louie's voice was harsh and a murderous light flashed in his eyes. "Think you're going to take me?"

"No." Again Pat smiled. "I'm just going to bid you good-bye."

"Good-bye?" Louie reiterated in astonishment. "What the devil do you mean?"

"Just this. That Rocco and some score of his toughs are waiting for you outside with a handful of clouds." O'Grady shrugged his shoulders as a startled gasp burst from Louie's suddenly white lips. "Too bad that you walked out on them, then came back and shot up Gypsy and the Midget. Gee, you're sure mighty sore with you, Louie, take it from me."

"H'm!" Louie affected a sudden air of bravado. "Putting the breeze up me, aren't you? Well, I'll get out of it."

"Like you got out of gaol, I suppose?" scoffed Pat.

Louie smiled and nodded.

"Well, let me tell you," O'Grady went on in his slow, drawing tone, "that the fixing to get you out of gaol was done by Rocco's gang so they could get the kick of bumping you off themselves. They were waiting outside the prison for you when you escaped, but you went the wrong way. But someone tipped them off you had scuttled down here."

"I don't believe a word you say." Louie tried to assure himself that there was no truth in what O'Grady said. "You're just trying to put the breeze up me."

Pat shrugged, and, crossing to the window, Louie took a hasty glance outside. Lurking shadows across the road caused him to spring back with a terrified gasp. No mistaking now that Pat had spoken the truth.

"Pat, for Heaven's sake take me back to gaol!" Louie shrieked. "Anywhere rather than—"

"No go, Louie. You see, the law prefers it this way. It'll save us no end of trouble." The detective turned to the door, then paused with his fingers on the handle.

"Well, it's the finish, Louie, but you can rest assured I'll see that that book of yours is ended properly. And now—good-bye."

His face pale as death, Louie listened to Pat's footsteps descending the stairs, then, when he could hear them no longer, he flung his gun on the dirty bed and burst into a hysterical laugh.

For a moment or two he stood where he was, his mind a turmoil of bitter thoughts. Then, with a pathetic shrug of his shoulders, he suddenly went to a cracked mirror, adjusted his tie, patted his hair with fingers that trembled.

There was no possible avenue of escape. The avengers would wait and wait till he did appear in the street. Best die as he had lived, a fearless and reckless young man.

A further moment's hesitation, then, bracing himself, he picked up his hat and rammed it on his head. In two firm strides he reached the door.

Down the stairs and out on to the sidewalk, to be instantly met by a withering volley of revolver-fire that came from across the road.

So ended the reign of Louie Ricarno, no doubt the most clever and daring racketeer who ever menaced the city of Charlesworth. And, in due time, his life's history appeared on every book-stall in the city, and the books sold like hot cakes.

"The 'Doorway to Hell' is a one-way door. There is no retribution—no plea for further clemency. Louie walked through it with his head up and a smile on his lips to his doom." Thus ran the end, which had been written by Captain Pat O'Grady.

(Based on the film "A Handful of Clouds," by permission of Warner Bros. Pictures, Ltd., starring Lew Ayres as Louie Ricarno; Dorothy Mathews as Doris; Leon Janney as Jackie Lamarr; Robert Elliott as Captain O'Grady; James Cagney as Steve Mileaway; Noel Madison as Rocco.)



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December 19th, 1931.

"Caught Plastered."

(Continued from page 10.)

"We're going to be able to take up Mrs. Talley's note, too," confided Tommy. "Then everything will be hotsy-totsy."

Egbert, stealing a moment, greeted her cheerfully.

"By the way," said she, "where is Mrs. Talley?"

"Ah," chuckled Egbert, "that's a secret. Go ahead, son, you tell her."

"As a matter of fact," said Tommy, with pride, "mother's out buying a new frock."

"Yo; bet your life!" supplemented Egbert. "We said: 'Mother, business is too good around here—you go right out and get yourself all dolled up.'"

"That's wonderful!" declared Peggy. "You boys certainly are doing a big business."

"Another lemon soda!" howled a voice. And: "Two lemons!" insisted another.

"Yes, sir—coming right up! Coming right up in a glass!" responded Egbert, and he returned to the soda fountain and the bottles and glasses.

"It's the new lemon syrup we're serving," explained Tommy to Peggy. "Everybody's crazy about it. Want to try one?"

Peggy declared that she would love to try one, so Tommy filled a glass and put straws in it, and they both sipped. Egbert, in a momentary lull, sailed over to sip with them—and the new drink appealed so strongly to him that he promptly filled a glass for himself.

The stuff had less immediate effect on Tommy than it had on Peggy, who had never swallowed alcohol before in her life. She began to laugh rather unnecessarily and rather loudly.

"You've got the cutest little mole on your ear," she said to Tommy, pushing her little hat clean off her head on to the floor. "Ears are funny things, aren't they?" She pulled his ears playfully. "The way people have one each side of their face—don't you think they're funny? Oh, dear—I think they're so funny." And she laughed uproariously.

"What's the matter with you, Peggy?" asked Tommy in alarm.

"Nothing—I just feel lively. I want to sing and dance and—and everything." She began to wriggle about on her chair as though dancing the Charleston. "Hi, hi, yoo-doo, poop-a-doop—"

Tommy smelled suspiciously at the glass, which was empty, but he could detect no significant odour.

"A lemon soda, please!" shrilled a woman beside her.

Tommy went off to serve the required drink, and Egbert said in his ear (the one with the mole): "You know I think somebody's brought a flask in with 'em!"

The woman was supplied, and Tommy stared at Peggy, who was still swaying on her chair and humming a tune. She descended as he approached and began to dance between the show-cases, and Tommy would certainly have done something about it, only just then a buzzer on the wall drew his attention to the fact that the Y.M.I. Radio Station was ready and waiting for the afternoon transmission from the Sunshine Drug Store.

"There's the buzzer. Egbert," he called. "It's time for us to go on the air."

"Gosh, I almost forgot!" admitted Egbert, and addressed the crowd at December 19th, 1931.

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large. "Folks," he said, "we're about to start the Sunshine Hour now. Everybody's invited to watch the artistes at work."

"Hooray!" chorused the customers. The microphone, on its metal stem, was standing in a corner. Egbert lifted it into a clear space of carpet between the bar and the bookshelves and depressed a switch. The customers gathered round him and raised a cheer which went out on the air.

"Good-afternoon, ladies and gentlemen," began Egbert, addressing the mike. "You are about to listen to the Sunshine Hour. Your announcer will be that celebrated Master of Ceremonies, Doctor Egbert G. Higginbotham. Here he is!"

"Hooray for Hickbert Gee-gee Higginbotham!" shouted a tipsy fellow behind him.

"Howdy, folks," pursued Egbert. "This is Egbert G. Higginbotham speaking from the Sunshine Drug Store, home of the famous Pepo Lemon Syrup. We open the programme with that distinguished artist and popular favourite, Mister Thomas Tanner."

There was a piano near the microphone. Egbert sat down at it, discarded his coat, and began to play. Tommy, holding Peggy's hand, led her forward and began to sing.

It was supposed to be a sentimental song to the tune of a slow foxtrot.

But Peggy insisted on dancing with him, much to the joy of the inebriated onlookers, and at frequent intervals she interrupted the words with exclamations such as: "Boop-boop-boop-boop poop-a-dook."

He reached the end of the song, and straightaway Peggy lifted up her voice in a song that wasn't in the programme at all.

"What causes a shiver to run up my spine?"

And why should I quiver when your lips meet mine?"

Egbert looked round from the keyboard, but Peggy's voice was quite a good one, and the thing was a novelty, so he improvised an accompaniment for it. Tommy, equally quick to improvise words, chimed in at suitable intervals, and they sang the final chorus together, then embraced and kissed.

"Folks," boomed Egbert, bounding up from the piano and standing before the microphone, "you have just been listening to Mr. Thomas Tanner and Little Peggy Morton. Little Peggy Morton, the daughter—"

But he got no further. With one concerted movement the revellers behind him surged forward, singing an entirely different song with the utmost discord.

The Police Arrive.

NEVER, in all the chequered history of the town of Lockville, had such wild unseemliness occurred before. But Harry Watters had been banking upon its occurring on this particular day, and he was sitting in his office at the Lockville Trust & Loan Company, listening delightedly to a loud speaker.

Switching off the set, he rang up the Chief of Police, to whom he described what he had heard.

"Guess you'd better come right away, chief," he said. "I tell you the whole store is rip-roaring drunk! Absolutely! Eh? Sure I'll meet you there."

A car was waiting for him outside the building, and in it he was swept off to Allison Avenue and the Sunshine Drug Store. He found it difficult to enter the shop, because its doorway was blocked by scandalised members of the community and delighted small boys. But at last he managed to force his way in.

A grin of infinite satisfaction spread over his face. Fully thirty men and women were in there, some with glasses in their hands, all eapering about the floor and singing and shouting at the top of their voices. Peggy was ruffling Tommy's hair, and the two came swaying towards him.

"Having a little house-warming?" inquired Watters.

"No," said Tommy, "it's just a little extra attraction for the Sunshine Hour."

"Strikes me you ought to change its name to the Moonshine Hour," remarked Watters.

But Watters had timed his arrival opportunely, for at this moment there came the strident sound of a Klaxon horn, and a police-tender drew up outside the store with a grinding of brakes.

Half a dozen uniformed men and the Chief of Police. The people in the doorway were unceremoniously thrust aside, and the forces of law and order entered the premises. Egbert, who had long since cut off the microphone, advanced with a serenity he did not feel towards Morton, who snatched a glass from a man's hand and sniffed at it suspiciously.

"How are you, chief?" said Egbert with affected cheerfulness. "Glad to see you."

"Yeah?" drawled Morton ominously. "You only think you're glad to see me. What's going on here?"

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean this place is padlocked!" was the stern rejoinder.

The fat-faced man approached, waving a tumbler in which was a moderate quantity of Pepo Lemon Syrup and soda-water, decorated with two straws.

"What have you got there?" demanded Morton harshly, and seized upon the glass.

"Thash lemon soda—and itsh besh in

the town," declared the fat-faced man thickly.

"Hold on to that, Clancy," directed the Chief of Police, handing the glass to one of his subordinates.

Peggy pulled Tommy towards her father, and Peggy, whose eyes were un-naturally bright and whose hair was a little disordered, prodded her father in the chest.

"How-do, Pop?" she giggled. "How's everything?"

"I thought so!" said her father grimly. "I'll attend to you later." He gripped Tommy by the shoulder and Egbert by the arm. "I thought you two had criminal faces!" he barked.

An officer who had been prowling behind the bar came importantly forward with a glassful of neat syrup.

"Chief," he said, "this stuff is just full of booze."

"Booze?" gasped Tommy and Egbert in one agonised breath.

"Booze!" repeated the officer.

Morton swung his right arm in the direction of the door.

"Get out of here, all of you!" he shouted. "Go on! Out!"

The policeman rounded up the excited customers and drove them doerwards. Protesting, and in some cases struggling, they were thrust forth to mingle with the crowd on the pavement, and two officers guarded the door.

"Where did you get the stuff you put in that soda?" demanded the chief of police harshly of Tommy and Egbert.

"Honest, we didn't put anything in it," protested Tommy.

There occurred a diversion at the door. Mrs. Talley, returning from a dressmaker's establishment with a brand new hat on her head and a brand new coat over a brand new frock, had squeezed through the crowd in a

state of trepidation, only to find herself denied entrance by a burly policeman.

"But this is my drug-store!" she protested. "I'm Mrs. Talley."

The policeman, at a nod from Merton, permitted her to enter, and she ran anxiously to the group by the bar.

"Has anything happened, Mr. Morton?" she asked timidly.

"Anything happened?" roared the chief of police. "Mrs. Talley, you're the owner of this store, aren't you?"

"Of course."

"Then I arrest you for running a speakeasy!"

"If you'll just let me take charge of this situation," urged Egbert, but Tommy, who was standing between his dismayed partner and Peggy, promptly raised his voice indignantly.

"Wait a minute, chief!" he shouted. "You can't take her! She doesn't know a thing about this. She hasn't even been around here. We're the ones who're running this place, and I want to tell you—"

"Shut up!" bellowed Morton, and he pushed him and Egbert back while Sergeant Clancy towered ominously over Mrs. Talley. "She owns this place, and she's got to face the music."

"But mother had nothing to do with it," expostulated Egbert. "She doesn't know anything about the booze being there—she didn't put it there."

"No?" scoffed Morton. "Then who did?"

"Why — er —" Egbert looked at Tommy, and they both looked at the terrified face of Mrs. Talley—"why, we put it there, didn't we, Tommy?"

"Sure we did," agreed Tommy. "We're the ones to blame. Take us, and leave mother alone."

Peggy decided it was high time she

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intervened. The effect of the lemon syrup had been almost completely eradicated by this alarming crisis.

"Pop," she cried, "the boys are not telling the truth. They're just saying that to save Mrs. Talley."

"How about releasing Mrs. Talley on a bond?" asked Egbert.

"That's up to the judge," growled the chief of police. "About a thousand dollars. I guess."

Watters was hovering in the background, trying not to look as satisfied as he felt, and Tommy chanced to glance in his direction. "I've got it, Egbert," he whispered. "The fellow who sold us that Pepp Lemon Syrup."

"That's right," nodded Egbert. "Say, chief, we've got the answer. There was a fellow in here the other day left that stuff—"

"What's his name?"

They confessed that they did not know the vendor's name; he had delivered the cask for cash down. Chief Merton laughed scornfully in their faces, and Sergeant Clancy began to lead his prisoner away.

"Watters knows his name!" cried Tommy desperately.

"I don't know what you're talking about," declared Watters indignantly.

"You don't? I saw you shaking hands with him just like he was an old friend."

Morton glared.

"Are you trying to tie me up in this?" exploded Watters. "Say, chief, these fellows wouldn't stop at anything."

"I know where they're going to stop for a while!" was the grim retort.

"See you later, chief," said Watters, and he went off as though in a hurry.

"Egbert," whispered Tommy, "if we

don't do something, that bird's going to grab this store."

"Cut out that whispering!" stormed Morton.

"Pop," pleaded Peggy, "you've got to listen to me. I know who that lemon syrup fellow is. I mean I—er—I know where he is, I think."

"Where?" chorused Tommy and Egbert eagerly.

"Hi, hi, hi, I'll do all the questioning!" said Morton gruffly. "Out with it, Peggy!"

"Well, while I was driving by in Madison Street, I saw him in the doorway of the Sanderson Apartment House. A man was helping him carry boxes in there."

"Great!" cried Egbert jubilantly. "Come on, chief, we'll find that fellow!"

The red face of the chief of police went redder than ever.

"Wait a minute—wait a minute!" he howled. "Where d'you get that 'we' stuff? I'll find him, but you guys will have to go along with me, in case you've got sense enough to identify him."

"We'd know that face any place," declared Egbert. "Come on, Tommy."

"Mrs. Talley," said Morton, "don't forget you're under arrest. Clancy, you stay with her till we get back. Come on, Peggy!"

The four went out and climbed into the police tender, watched by an noisy crowd held back by the police. Tommy, Egbert and Peggy sat in the back with a sergeant; the chief sat in front with the driver, and the vehicle swept off down the long thoroughfare. Everybody imagined that Tommy and Egbert were being taken to gaol, and Watters, who was waiting and watching in a doorway, rubbed his hands with delight.

Merry Christmas!

AFTER the apparent arrest of the two drug-store keepers, the crowd on the pavement dwindled. Watters, deciding that the moment for action had arrived, strolled cut from his hiding-place and approached the premises.

The police permitted him to enter, and he made straight for Sergeant Clancy, who knew him well, though not nearly so well as he imagined he did.

"How are you, Clancy?" said the schemer pleasantly. "I want to have a talk with Mrs. Talley, if you don't mind."

Clancy raised no objection, and Watters went to the rear of the store where Mrs. Talley was sitting dispiritedly in a chair.

"This is an unfortunate thing," he said sympathetically. "I'm terribly sorry."

"I don't know what to make of it all," she faltered.

"Well, Mrs. Talley, I've always tried to help you out, and I don't intend to stop now," he told her. "Never too late to mend, you know."

He pulled up a chair and sat beside her, and he produced a legal-looking document from his pocket.

"Now you sign this paper," he urged, "turning the store over to us, and we'll saddle all your debts. And as far as the Old Ladies' Home is concerned—why, here's a cheque for the necessary two hundred."

She took the document and the fountain-pen he offered with it, and she looked hesitatingly at the cheque he held in his hand.

"I—I'll sign it," she decided.

The document was signed and handed over, and Watters presented her with the cheque.

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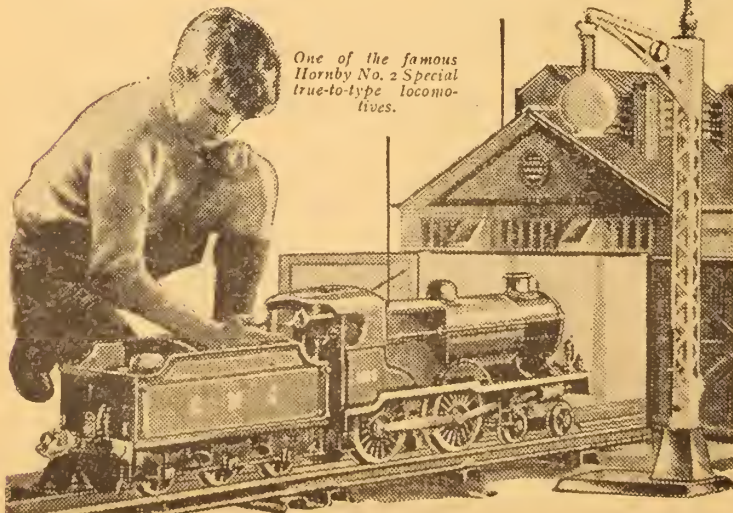
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"There you are," he said, "and I hope you'll be very happy in the Old Ladies' Home."

He went off, nodding to Clancy as he passed that officer, and Mrs. Talley, thoroughly upset, bowed her head in her hands and wept.

The police tender meanwhile had drawn up outside the imposing block of service flats in Madison Street, known as the Sanderson Apartment House, and Peggy, Egbert and Tommy had followed the Chief of Police into the building. But in the hallway on the ground floor the chief rubbed his chin and remarked gloomily:

"We can't break into all these apartments without any warrant, you know. We can only knock and ask questions."

Egbert promptly knocked at the front door of a ground-floor flat, and a middle-aged woman opened it and looked out.

"Are you acquainted with anybody who makes lemon syrup?" inquired Egbert pleasantly.

The woman stared at him, glared at the Chief of Police, gave vent to an emphatic "No!" and slammed the door in their faces.

A bad beginning, but worse was to follow. The quartet ascended the stairs, calling at all the flats on the way up to the smallest and cheapest set of rooms under the tiles, and they took it in turn to ask questions, but drew blank every time.

It was on the top floor that Peggy's father really lost his temper.

"Say, what do you mean by wasting my time like this?" he howled. "Come on! Let's get out of here!"

They trooped down the stairs—eight flights of them—and Tommy and Egbert were wretchedly silent during the descent, while Peggy declared at intervals that she was positive the man they sought had helped to carry boxes into the building.

They reached the ground floor again, and had they reached it two seconds earlier than they did, they would undoubtedly have passed straight out into the street. But as they were crossing the hallway to the front door, they were startled by a crash which seemed to come from somewhere below.

They had not thought of the basement before, and there was no visible staircase to the lower regions. Opposite the flat of the woman who had slammed her door in their faces, however, was another door, and they crouched before it in a row, listening intently.

It sounded to Egbert, who was nearest the door, as though someone down below was sweeping up broken glass.

He sniffed at the keyhole, and savoured the reek of spilled spirits.

"Follow your nose, chief!" he cried triumphantly.

The chief turned the handle of the door cautiously, and the door was opened on to an ill-lit flight of stairs. One after another the four crept down the stairs.

At the bottom was another door, wide open, and beyond it was a spacious cellar, lit by electric lamps, fitted with shelves, and furnished with a desk and chairs. In the cellar, busily engaged in sweeping up the fragments of a number of broken bottles, was Clarke, with a broom.

The chief sprang, and his hand encircled Clarke's throat, nearly throttling the startled bootlegger.

"Well, well!" cried Egbert jubilantly. "The old syrup king himself!"

Morton ran expert hands over the crook's person, while taking in at a glance the presence of a considerable quantity of unlawful liquor in bottles and casks upon the shelves.

"What a sweet session you're in for!" he said grimly, and he produced a six-shooter from one of his own pockets, which he dug into Clarke's ribs.

"Who else is in on this?" demanded Morton.

"Try and find out!" snapped Clarke.

"There's somebody coming!" exclaimed Peggy.

There *was* somebody coming. The door above had been reopened, and heavy footsteps were descending the ill-lit stairs.

"Get back there—get back!" hissed the Chief of Police. "And not a word out of you, either!"

Clarke dropped his arms and stood there, while the others backed hurriedly behind the door and waited. The door swung back, nearly knocking the gun out of Morton's hand, and Harry Watters burst excitedly into the cellar.

"Well, it worked!" he cried. "Chief Morton fell for the whole thing—and I've got the drug store!"

"Watters!" thundered Morton, emerging from behind the door. "So it's you, eh? Well, I always *was* suspicious of you!"

Watters gaped at the gun, became aware of the trio behind the Chief of Police, and made a rush at Clarke.

"So you squealed, eh?" he howled. "You rat!"

Morton thrust his weapon into Tommy's hand, ordering him to keep both the miscreants covered while he handcuffed them to one another.

The handcuffs clicked, the discomfited crooks glared at each other as if about to fight, and then Egbert perceived a legal-looking document projecting from Watters' breast-pocket. He grabbed it, examined it, and laughed mockingly.

"Ha, ha!" he jeered. "What's the difference between monoxide and dioxide, eh?"

"Yah!" snorted Watters savagely.

Chief Morton recovered his gun from Tommy.

"Come on!" he snapped. "Get out of here! March!"

The two prisoners moved reluctantly before him to the stairs, and up the stairs, urged forward by the barrel of the six-shooter.

"You go ahead, you three," said Morton to Peggy, Tommy, and Egbert when the doorstep was reached. "I'll send word to Clancy to release Mrs. Talley."

"Fine, chief—and many thanks," said Egbert. "Good-bye, benefactor! Good-bye, Lemon Syrup! Merry Christmas!"

Sergeant Clancy was at the door of the drug store, and two uniformed men were on the pavement when Peggy, Tommy, and Egbert burst into the premises. Utterly ignoring the astonished representatives of the law, they made for the chair in which Mrs. Talley sat weeping.

"Mother," cried Tommy ecstatically, "it's all over! Everything's okay, and you're free!"

"B-but I've sold the drug store," stammered Mrs. Talley in bewilderment, and she held up the cheque.

"Is that so?" said Egbert, and, with a flourish, he handed her the document she so recently had signed.

"B-but I—I've got his cheque!"

Egbert, with the unlighted stub of a cigar in his mouth, caught hold of the cheque and tore it in halves.

"Mother," he said, "you mean you *had* his cheque!" And he tore the halves into shreds and tossed the shreds into the air, while Tommy put his arm round Peggy's waist and hugged her.

(By permission of Radio Pictures, Ltd., starring Bert Wheeler as Tommy Tanner; Robert Woolsey as Egbert G. Higginbotham; Dorothy Lee as Peggy Morton; Lucy Beaumont as Mrs. Talley; Jason Robards as Watters; DeWitt Jennings as Chief Morton; Charles Middleton as Flint; Bill Scott as Clarke.)

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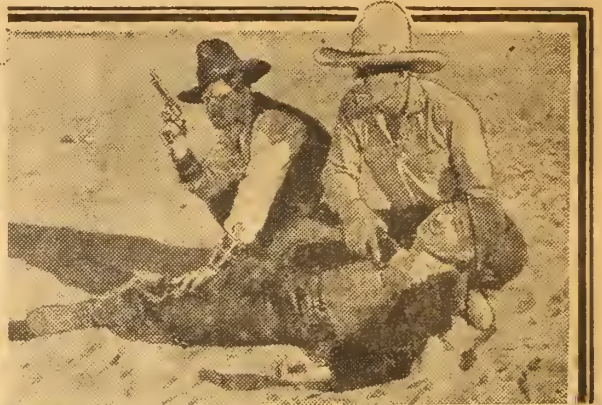
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A Hold-Up.

FROM Falls City to Westonville is a matter of forty-five miles, or thereabouts, and forty-five miles is not considered any distance at all in Texas. But Tom Dale had ridden out of Knox County with Olaf Jensen—and the Bar-C Ranch, in that county, is over eighty miles from either town, so that, aside from a brief night's camp in the hills, the two had been in the saddle for the better part of a day and a half.

Tom, however, had no complaints to make. He had made plenty concerning more important things the previous morning to the overbearing foreman of the Bar-C, ere demanding his pay and announcing his immediate intention to quit; but he was rather enjoying the ride. The day was hot, but not uncomfortable so, and Silver, his big and intelligent white horse, was still as fresh as paint.

It was Olaf Jensen—sometimes known as "Ole," but more frequently as "Swede"—who did all the complaining. Yet Olaf had accompanied Tom entirely of his own accord, preferring that young man's company in an uncertain quest to continued employment on the Bar-C without it.

As a matter of fact, it was largely over Olaf that Tom's quarrel with the foreman had originated. For Olaf was a queer fellow, a tall and powerful son of Swedish immigrants, who lacked the courage to fight his own battles, though physically capable of holding his own under the most adverse circumstances.

One of the things about him which irritated the foreman was his dogged devotion to a battered bowler of

Swedish pattern which he invariably wore instead of the regulation cow-hat. And the previous morning the howler had been knocked off his head, and Olaf himself had been knocked off his horse for persisting in wearing the thing.

Every bit as dogged as Olaf's devotion to his ancient bowler was his devotion to Tom, whom he almost worshipped. Consequently, the foreman had suffered severely at Tom's indignant hands, and Tom had unburdened his mind of many pent-up grievances while the foreman nursed an aching jaw and murdered the pair of them with his eyes.

Tom was like that—quick of temper, quick of tongue, and quick to champion the oppressed. His keen grey eyes gave witness to his indomitable soul—and he was as quick on the trigger as any man in Texas, if not quicker.

But if he was impulsive he was warm-hearted. Once upon a time he had put a man in bed for weeks for maltreating a steer; and more than once he had flogged a man for flogging a worn-out horse. He was an implacable enemy, but he was a staunch friend.

Half-way to Westonville, however, even he became impatient with Olaf, for the Swede, uncomfortably mounted on a bony brown horse, alternately filled the air with complainings about the heat and snatches of song rendered in a voice so raucous that it grated on one's nerves.

Together they breasted a hill out of a region of grassland and looked down upon the winding coach trail beneath

them. In the distance were the purple hills, while, nearer to hand, the roadway dipped down between a mass of tumbled rocks. Automatically they paused there, and the majestic scene appealed to Tom's sense of the beautiful. But Olaf, who had been grunting and groaning all the way up the hill, suddenly began to sing again.

"For the love of Mike, don't sing!" commanded Tom. "Just look at that road, winding its way among the rocks! Just look at them hills, all purplish-like! Just—"

"I hope we get to where we're going to soon," interrupted Olaf, with what he considered to be a touch of humour, "because my feet is gettin' awful sore!"

"Give the old pony a kick and let's get going," said Tom disgustedly. "You've got no sense of nature."

"If you was a-sitting on a bundle of bones—"

"Aw, come on, Ole!"

They were nearly at the bottom of the hill, when round a bend to the left the coach came into view, travelling from the direction of Westonville. It reached the patch of fallen rock, and there abruptly it came to a full stop, the four horses that were drawing it pulled almost on to their hind legs by the driver. For a solitary horseman had ridden out from the rocks, and a gun was in his hand.

At that distance, neither Tom nor Olaf could gain a very clear impression of the bandit who, in this wise, had held up the coach, but Tom immediately dug his heels into Silver's broad sides,

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shot over the roadway, and galloped towards the rocks. Olaf, emitting loud groans, followed his example.

Meanwhile, the bandit flourished his gun and barked instructions at the chagrined driver of the coach, a weather-beaten old veteran named Jed Knowles.

"Throw out that sack from under the seat, and no monkey business. G'wan—my partner's got you covered!"

Jed looked round, and saw the barrel of a rifle pointing directly at him over the edge of a boulder on his left. He abandoned his first idea of driving on and chancing the aim of the man on horseback, and, reaching down, pulled out the mailbag from under the seat and tumbled it into the dust.

Beside Jed on the box was seated an elderly rancher with a walrus moustache, and—at the moment—a very white face. Across this passenger's ample waistcoat stretched conspicuously a gold chain. The bandit looked down at the mailbag and up at the waistcoat.

"I'll have to trouble you for that watch and chain!" he shouted.

"Oh, mister," protested the shrinking passenger, "you wouldn't take a man's timepiece, would you?"

"Wouldn't I?" was the immediate retort. "Toss it over quick!"

Reluctantly the passenger removed the watch from his pocket and the chain from his waistcoat and threw them. The bandit caught the chain, but the watch dangled precariously for a moment.

"Be careful—don't break it!" cried the owner in alarm.

The watch was thrust into a pocket, the six-shooter waved to Jed.

"Get going!"

Jed spat, cursed, snatched up his whip, and flicked the leaders. The coach moved on, and the man who had held it up reached down from his saddle and picked up the heavy mailbag. With a sarcastic wave to the disappearing coach, he rode in among the rocks with his prize, retrieved a rifle which had been propped in position with the aid of stones, and sought a little nook between the rocks in which to open the bag and search for valuables.

He dismounted, squatted with his back to an upright boulder, and unfastened the bag; and he was emptying out the letters when Tom and Olaf looked down at him from behind a rock high above his head.

"It was a hold-up," whispered Tom. "We'll head that hombre off. You get over there."

They had dismounted, and their horses were nibbling the sparse herbage nearer the road. Olaf obediently crept behind another rock and drew his gun, but Tom picked up a lump of limestone, lifted it to the top of his hiding-place, and sent it hurtling down on the bandit beneath.

It should have hit him on the head, but a ridge deflected its descent, and it fell upon a pair of hands that were about to open an envelope. Immediately the bandit sprang to his feet, took cover, and fired upwards.

A bullet whizzed past Tom's big hat and struck another and higher rock behind him. Almost instantly he fired back, using a shoulder of rock to take aim. But the stranger provided for just such an attack by deserting the mailbag and diving between two needle-like stems of limestone.

Gun answered gun, but the

bullets spat harmlessly, splintering fragments of rock above and below. Olaf, scared almost out of his wits, sank down on his knees and fired mainly at the blue sky above him.

And then, because he imagined he was almost completely surrounded, the bandit abandoned his plunder, creeping away from rock to rock till he reached his horse, which he had left beneath a stunted oak near the roadway. Tom wasted a cartridge—or thought he had wasted it—then watched with a sense of disappointment a flying figure on horseback that sped up the winding trail towards Westonville.

"Come on, Swede," he shouted, "the war's over!"

Olaf's bowler appeared above the rock behind which he had been crouching.

"Has he g-g-gone?" he chattered.

"No," said Tom grimly, as he moved round to his kneeling ohum, "he's on his way back. Come on!"

They descended to the spot where the contents of the mail-bag lay strown upon the earth. The sun had reached its zenith, and was blazing down upon them.

"Pheugh," complained Olaf, viewing the litter, "anybody might have thought we was running a post-office! Say, there might be enough money in some o' these letters to keep us going for a bit!"

"You put those letters back in that bag," snapped Tom. "Come on—I'll help!"

In Gaol—and Out!

AS fate would have it, the coach had been held up four times in the past month near that particular cluster of rocks, and the sheriff of Falls City, stung into activity by the reproaches of the community over which he more or less ruled, had ridden out with a posse that morning on the off-chance of capturing a brigand.

Within half a mile of the scene of the hold-up he encountered the coach, and had word with old Jed and the passengers. What Jed had to say was almost enough to paint the purple hills a bright vermilion, and the man on the box who had been robbed of his watch, though less fluent in his language, was equally violent in his wrath.

"Oh, so you're a sheriff, are you?" he roared. "Well, I'm glad you've turned up. Held up, just like a lot of babies, about half a mile back on the road there!"

Explanations followed, and a description of the bandit which told the sheriff little, because the inside passengers were at utter variance with Jed and the passenger who sat beside him as to details. Some even described the supposed second man, though they had seen nothing more of him than the barrel of a rifle.

"Come on, boys!" shouted the representative of law and order. "We'll know what they're like when we get 'em!"

"Hi," yelled the outside passenger as they began to ride away, "don't forget I want my watch from them two thieves!"

The sheriff, concerned about the loss of the mail-bag, ignored the request, and, as a matter of regrettable fact, forgot all about the watch.

Among the rocks Tom and Olaf were busy picking up the scattered letters, but Olaf was slow because he persisted in studying every envelope before restoring it to the bag.

"We ought to get a good reward for this," remarked Tom.

"Oh, ya, sure," nodded the Swede, and suddenly gave vent to an exclamation of disgust.

"What's the matter?" inquired Tom. "Why, here's a fellow what's got the funniest name you ever heard," was the



"I just put it up," said Tom, "why take it down?" And he leaned insolently against the rail.

reply. "Cuthbert Chauncey Dale! Relative o' yours, d'you s'pose?"

"What's that?" cried Tom.

"Cuthbert Chauncey— Oh, but you can't do that!"

Tom had snatched away the missive and was tearing open the envelope.

"Can't I?" said he grimly. "Well, this letter happens to belong to me."

"But your name's Tom."

"Listen, Swede, my name is Cuthbert Chauncey Dale. But if you ever mention it to anybody, or chip me about it, you'll wish you hadn't."

"Why, boss," gasped Olaf, "I swear I'm never goin' to tell anybody such a terrible thing like that! But I'd just like to ask you how you came to get a name like Chaun—"

"Don't say it again!" hissed Tom. "My parents gave it to me, but I think it was the fault of an aunt who read books. I had an awful time trying to live it down when I was a kid, and as soon as I left home I took the name of Tom."

He had extracted a letter from the envelope while he was talking, and, opening it out, proceeded to master its contents.

"It's from a lawyer in Westonville," he informed Olaf. "You know I was aiming to look up an uncle who had a ranch there, in case he could give us both a job. Well, this lawyer says he's dead, and I've inherited a section of land up there, and what am I going to do about it!"

"By golly!" rejoiced the Swede. "I felt in my bones that something was coming our way!"

Something was coming their way with a vengeance; for the sheriff and his men had caught sight of Silver and the brown horse down by the roadway, and, dismounting, had crept in among the rocks to surround their quarry. The two were storing the remainder of the letters in the mail-bag when a stentorian voice immediately over their heads startled them.

"Up with your hands!"

"Boss," gasped Olaf as he got to his feet in a panic and raised his hands, "ho's come back?"

Tom stood beside him. His quick eyes had seen more than one gun pointed in their direction, but he said nothing. And then the sheriff came scrambling down to them, and his men closed in triumphantly.

"Got the goods on you this time!" barked the sheriff.

Certainly the evidence seemed clear enough. There was the mail-bag in the dust, and at the feet of the captives lay the last of the unreturned letters which they had dropped as they held up their hands. To make matters worse, Tom's indignant protest indicated a complete knowledge of the hold-up, for what he said was this:

"Why, you don't think we held up the stage, do you?"

"Wo ain't thinkin'," snorted the sheriff, "we know!"

"Oh, listen, you fellows. I can explain everything."

"You'll do all your explainin' at the end of a rope," retorted the sheriff. Whereupon Olaf, trembling like an aspen leaf, stammered:

"Aw, but say, mister, the—the—the—"

"Shut up!"

"I—I—I—I'm shut," faltered the unhappy Swede. But Tom was not to be silenced so easily.

"Say," he insisted, "we ran that bandit off, and was aimin' to bring that stuff to town."

The sheriff frowned. Certainly this captive looked honest enough, with his clear-cut, clean-shaven features and his keen grey eyes. But while the sheriff

was wavering, one of his men stepped forward and snatched the opened envelope from the pocket of Tom's shirt.

"If these guys didn't do it," he cried scornfully, "what's this letter doin' on him?"

The sheriff was convinced, refused to listen to any further arguments, and picked up the mail-bag. The prisoners were marched off to the spot where the horses had been left, and a few minutes later the whole party were on their way to Falls City.

It was late in the afternoon when the town gaol was reached. Tom demanded that the driver of the coach should be produced to establish his innocence, but the coach had long since proceeded on the second stage of its journey to distant Oak Springs, so the prisoners were marched through the sheriff's office to the barred cell beyond it.

"You hombres sure picked a bad day for a hold-up," said the sheriff sarcastically as he removed the key from the lock. "Friday, the 13th."

He strode back to the front doorway and addressed the members of his posse, who were waiting there.

"You fellows had better go and get some grub," he said. "Old Jed won't be back till day after to-morrow, so there's no hurry."

The men went off, and the sheriff presently devoured a meal which was brought to him by his red-headed deputy from the hotel over the way. The deputy went home to tea; the sheriff, tired with his exertions, put his feet on the desk, lolled back in his chair, tilted his big hat over his eyes—and slumbered.

Daylight was fading when he wakened with a start. Judging by the commotion in the cell the two prisoners were fighting! He rose heavily and went to the iron door. In the dim light he saw that Tom had got Olaf by the throat and seemed intent on choking him.

"What are you doing in there?" he roared. "Leave him alone!"

But instead of obeying the command, Tom forced his victim back against a wall, and the sheriff in a fury unlocked the door and rushed in to separate them.

Immediately Tom turned his attention to the intruder, and Olaf sprang for the open door and ran out into the street. A well-timed blow to the sheriff's scrubby chin sent that discomfited official sprawling backwards on the solitary bunk, and before he could regain his feet the door of the cell was locked on him, and Tom was half-way across the office.

Silver and the brown horse had been left tethered to the hitching-rail outside, and it was only a matter of seconds to unfasten them. But a man on the veranda of the Blue Boar saloon raised the alarm. Pushing open the swing doors, he cried excitedly:

"Bill! Mike! The bandits are getting away!"

Men came tumbling out into the street, and there was a rush for horses. The deputy sheriff scuttled over to the gaol and released the hoodwinked sheriff, but by the time the posse were in the saddle and creating a cloud of dust Tom and Olaf were out of sight.

It is no easy matter to pursue well-mounted fugitives in the dark, and there was as yet no moon. This way and that the pursuers rode, but by the time the moon came up over the hills the trail was cold, and the chase proved fruitless.

An Inheritance For Tom.

TOM and his companion deserted the road as soon as they were out of the town. A belt of long-leaf pines provided cover for the better part

of two miles, and then they galloped across a stretch of prairie and plunged into a gulch lined with rock.

They were in the gulch before the moon rose, and a brief pause convinced them that no one as yet had found their trail.

"Friday the thirteenth!" quoth Olaf dismally. "D'you know this is my birthday?"

"So it's you that's brought all the luck, is it?" growled Tom. "Pity I didn't really choke you, eh?"

They rode on without any particular hurry. Westonville beckoned, in view of the letter from the lawyer, but Westonville would do well enough in the morning. They reached the end of the gulch, and found themselves in a moonlit landscape of grassy slopes with a river gleaming in the distance.

"My, but I'm mighty hungry," remarked Olaf.

"Same here," declared Tom.

They breasted a little rise, and then he pointed. Down on the river bank, under a tree, a camp fire had been lit—a camp fire over which a dark figure crouched, evidently preparing some sort of a meal. They rode down, and as they approached the figure resolved itself into a man with a decided limp, who drew his gun and waited.

"How do?" inquired Tom pleasantly. "Stranger in these parts?" demanded the man.

"Yeah. Don't know this range very well," replied Tom. "In fact, we're trying to get out of it."

"Looking for someone?"

The voice was suspicious, almost treacherous, and the gun still threatened. But Tom replied, with an air of frankness:

"No one in particular. Just got out of a little trouble, and thought maybe I could get some grub up here."

"Well, I can stake you to some food," said the man in a more friendly manner, and put away his gun. "I'm in a little trouble myself. My horse stuck his foot in a gopher-hole yesterday and turned over on me. I can't get around very well. Still, maybe I can help you. All I've got is some beans and bacon, and some good Java coffee."

"That coffee smells good!" rejoiced Tom. "Swede, we eat! How far are we from Westonville, pardner?"

"Well, you're in Falls County now. Westonville is just the other side of the ridge. The grub's in the pack. Perhaps you'll help me cook it?"

Tom expressed his readiness, and he and Olaf dismounted, but it was Olaf who demonstrated his powers as a cook while Tom and the stranger conversed. Bob Starrett, it appeared, was the lone camper's name, and Tom decided that he rather liked him, despite his somewhat gruff voice and his dark features.

Over the meal that followed Starrett asked what his guests were doing in that particular part of the country.

"As a matter of fact," confided Tom, "I'm heading for the Dale ranch. It used to belong to an uncle of mine, and I've fallen heir to it."

Starrett stared.

"You don't mean old Tom Dale?" he exclaimed.

"I do. Did you know him?"

"Yes," replied Starrett warmly, "I knew him well. He did me a favour once. His was that stretch of land a fellow by the name of Moore tried to cheat him out of."

"Cheat him out of?" echoed Tom, to whom this was news. "Well, I guess that gives me two reasons for going to Westonville."

Starrett rolled cigarettes for himself

and his guests, then, fugging at his clipped moustache, he said diffidently:

"Couldn't use an extra cowhand, could you? I'm looking for a job, added to which I've got an old score to settle with that hombre Joe Moore myself."

Tom considered the suggestion.

"Well," he said finally, "I don't know about Moore, but I think I might be able to use a good cowhand."

The moon by this time had climbed high into the heavens, and it was almost like day by the river bank; but peace enfolded the world, and there was no sound of hoofs to disturb the silence of the night. The three curled up on the turf in their blankets and slept till day-break, Tom declaring that Silver would give them warning of the approach of any unwanted strangers.

There was just enough food to go round for breakfast, and afterwards they cauntered together, climbing the ridge and descending to the road outside the town of Westonville. Starrett, who knew the way, took them by the shortest possible route, and Tom's liking for him increased, though his expert eyes were not at all convinced about the alleged gopher-hole.

"That fellow," he said to himself, "has been shot in the foot or I'm a Dutchman; but it's no business of mine."

Westonville proved to be a town of considerable size, though mainly composed of wooden frame buildings and log cabins. Starrett directed Tom to the office of Jacob Hines, attorney-at-law, and Tom, tethering Silver, told Olaf to take the new cowhand to a doctor to have his foot tended.

He himself entered the building, which was on a corner, and climbed some rickety stairs to a door on the first floor. In response to the banging of his knuckles on the panels, a voice bade him enter, and he found himself in the presence of a lean-faced, white-

haired man, who looked up at him from a desk strewn with papers.

"My name's Dale," said Tom diffidently. "I've come about a piece of land I've fell heir to."

"Oh," said Mr. Hines pleasantly. "So you're Cuthbert Chauncey Dale, eh? Sit down! D'you know I've had a hard time finding you, my lad?"

"It hasn't been half as hard as the time I've had finding you," chuckled Tom, seating himself in a chair beside the desk.

"Of course," said the lawyer cautiously, "you're able to establish your identity?"

"Sure," responded Tom, groping in his pockets. "I did a stretch in the Service. I've got a discharge here." He held out an Army paper. "That ought to prove something."

Mr. Hines ran his eyes over the document and nodded.

"Cuthbert Chauncey Dale," he said, returning the paper and opening a drawer. "Quite a name, eh?"

"You can have it," declared Tom, with a grimace.

"Not at all, Mr. Dale—not at all!"

"That's the same way I feel about it," said Tom bitterly.

Mr. Hines produced a bundle of papers from the drawer, tied about with pink tape.

"Here are all the Dale ranch papers," he said benevolently. "You might look them over."

Tom took the papers and removed the tape. For the better part of ten minutes he was busy studying them. Then:

"Say," he exclaimed, with a frown, "what's this thing here about land rights?"

Mr. Hines explained that when Mr. Thomas Dale was alive he had leased a strip of land to the Preston family, who had the biggest cattle outfit in the country, but the lease had just run out.

"You can get a good price for that strip," he said.

"Yeah?" wondered Tom. "Why?"

The lawyer clasped his hands together and pointed his two forefingers at Tom.

"Well, you see," he said gravely, "the best grazing lands in this county are some little valleys that lie back of your land, and the only way into those valleys is through a narrow canyon located on your property."

"You mean," said Tom, "that I could fence off that canyon and cut 'em clean off, eh?"

"Exactly!" nodded the lawyer. "And since they need this land they'll pay plenty for your strip that gives them right of access."

"H'm!" mused Tom, pushing back his hat and knitting his level brows. "Say, just where is this Preston outfit located?"

"A little way up the valley beyond the range that is now yours."

"Oh! Then I guess when you've done with me my first job is to go out and talk turkey to the Prestons."

The lawyer smiled non-committally, and certain legal formalities followed. Ten minutes later Tom went down the rickety stairs into the morning sunlight and found Olaf standing between his brown horse and Silver.

"What did you do with that guy Starrett?" he inquired. "Take him to a doctor like I told you?"

"Well," said Olaf, with an ingratiating grin, "I couldn't find no doctor, so I took him into the saloon—and when I left him he was perfectly happy."

"Oh!" grunted Tom. "Well, we'll go out and take a look at the ranch—we can pick him up later."

The Building of a Fence.

THE Dale ranch was situated about three miles from the town of Westonville, and the ranch-house itself was at the end of a lane fringed with hickory, ash, and maple trees. It looked little more than a bunk-house, built of logs, with a narrow veranda in front of it, reached by four steps.



"Signs don't mean anything to the law, Dale," declared the sheriff. "I'm here to arrest you for cattle rustling."

Olaf contemplated the building with a crestfallen air, and rubbed his chin.

"You wasn't figuring on settling here, was you?" he said gloomily.

Tom looked away from the ranch-house to the pleasant valleys beyond it and the guardian hills that enclosed his valleys.

"Not on your life," he laughed. "I wouldn't settle anywhere. I'm going to sell this place and get out as fast as I possibly can."

He slid from the back of the big white horse and jerked a thumb.

"May's well have a look round the premises," he decided.

Together they entered the shack. Evidently Uncle Tom had lived a lonely sort of existence, and had not studied his comfort, for apart from a few moth-eaten rugs the floors were bare, and the furniture was of the roughest imaginable type. With growing disgust the two proceeded from the living-room to the kitchen, from the kitchen to the two bed-rooms.

Silver and the brown horse had been left to their own devices outside, and Silver promptly decided to investigate on his own account. The brown horse trotted off with him, and a hundred yards or so to the right of the ranch-house they crossed the strip of alkali that opened into the little valleys owned by Louise Preston, sole survivor of the Preston family.

Some horses were grazing just beyond the canyon, and Silver, in skittish mood, darted in among them and sent them running in all directions. The brown horse, inspired by the white horse's example, assisted in the rout.

Out from the little valley rode a slender girl on a big bay mare—a girl in riding-breeches with a felt hat perched on her bobbed brown hair. She viewed the stampede with feminine rage, and gave chase to Silver, snatching up her lariat as she rode.

On the fringe of the yard outside the ranch-house she sent the rope whizzing through the air with expert aim. The noose descended about Silver's proud neck, and was tightened, and the girl slid from her saddle while the big white horse ran indignantly round and round, trying to free himself.

Tom and Olaf, inside the shack, glanced out through the dusty panes of a window, and immediately Tom rushed out into the yard. He hadn't stepped to notice the sex of the lassoer, and, as he jumped the steps from the veranda, her back view appeared quite masculine. He gave her a kick that sent her sprawling on all-fours, then whistled to Silver and freed his neck of the rope.

An angry but distinctly feminine voice caused him to turn and to jump in horrified surprise.

"You big jackass, what do you think you're doing?" shrilled the girl.

He found himself staring into an enraged but beautiful little face and a pair of flashing brown eyes that were trying to annihilate him.

"Why—why—why, I'm s-sorry, miss," he said sheepishly. "I wouldn't have done that—"

"If you were a gentleman," stormed the girl, "you'd apologise—"

"Oh!" said Tom, recovering a measure of his self-possession. "But what would you have done if you'd caught some little sawed-off runt roping your horse?"

His words acted as fuel to the flame of the girl's temper.

"Sawed-off runt?" she shouted. "Say, do you know who you're talking to?"

"No, ma'am," replied Tom. "I don't much care, either!"

December 26th, 1931.

"Well, I'm Lou Preston, and I own all the country around here."

"Not this bit, you don't!" he retorted calmly.

"What do you mean?"

"He means," said a voice behind them, "that he's the new owner."

Unnoticed by either of them, a broad-shouldered and rather narrow-eyed man had ridden up. He looked about thirty-five, and a dangerous customer. A cruel mouth was twisted into a sardonic grin beneath a little brown moustache.

"Is that so?" exclaimed Louise Preston blankly.

Tom did not reply; he was studying the newcomer, whom he correctly judged to be Joe Moore, the man with whom Starrett had a score to settle. But Joe Moore nodded maliciously, and said:

"His full name, I believe, is Cuthbert Chauncey Dale."

"Cuthbert Chauncey?" echoed Lou with a mocking laugh. "Wow! What a handle! No wonder he's so bad-tempered. Cuthbert Chauncey—"

Tom, who had never been able to hear the sound of his own name, completely lost his temper. Striding over to Moore he said fiercely:

"Listen, you! Another little joke outa you, and I'll forget there's a lady present."

"Perhaps," retorted Joe Moore significantly, "we can continue this interesting conversation when there isn't a lady present, Mr.—Mr. Dale!"

He tugged his horse round, and Lou, vaulting into the saddle of the bay with a skill that compelled Tom's grudging admiration, re-coiled her lariat, replaced it on the saddle-bow, and called out:

"Bye-bye, Cuthbert!"

"Don't bother coming back this way," bellowed Tom as they loped away together, "cause there'll be a fence out there!"

Olaf had stepped out from the shack, but had not ventured any farther than the little veranda. Now he wandered down the steps and over to Tom.

"A fence?" he said. "What do you mean about a fence?"

"I mean just this," snapped Tom. "We're staying right here. Nobody's going to call me Cuthbert and get away with it!"

So Tom moved into the ranch-house with Olaf and Beb Starrett, and he bought a little extra furniture and a lot of wood, for the first thing he proposed to do was to build a fence right across the canyon, barring the way to the Preston valleys.

Most of his uncle's stock had been sold at his death, and Starrett looked after the few cattle that remained while Tom and Olaf toiled at the erection of the barrier, which was a long job.

A fortnight later the fence was complete except for three posts and a few rails, and Olaf was digging holes for the posts and wiping his streaming face with the back of his hand because the day was hot.

"Say, boss," he growled to Tom, who was nailing rails in position, "was there no place where you could buy ready-made pest-holes?"

"What's the matter?" Tom laughed. "Getting tired? Here, I'll relieve you."

They exchanged tools, but almost immediately Olaf hit his thumb instead of a nail, and danced about with pain, filling the air with complainings. Tom silently handed him back the spade and picked up the fallen hammer.

A few minutes later a trim figure on horseback appeared in sight. It was Lou Preston, riding to have word with Tom, and she was not in the best of tempers, because that morning Joe Moore, her range manager, had pro-

posed to her for the fifth time, and she had told him, as before, that she liked him very much as manager, but not enough to marry him.

She rode through the gap between the last two posts, curled round the workers, and pulled up. She was looking far more feminine nowadays, in a divided skirt and a fluffy blouse, with a gaily-coloured handkerchief round her neck, but Tom affected not to see her.

"Good-morning, Mr. Cuthbert!" she said mockingly.

"The name's Dale," he retorted, "and I'm busy!"

He fastened a rail across the solitary gap while she sat watching him with a frown.

"I made you a pretty generous offer for your place, young man," she said angrily. "You'd better accept it."

"I told you once before," he responded quietly, "this place is net for sale."

"All right, then. If you won't sell, I'll drive you out!"

"I'll be waiting for the fireworks, miss," he told her calmly, and picked up a notice-board and attached it to the fence. It read: "Dale Ranch. Private Property. Keep Out!"

He pointed to it significantly with the hammer, and it made her furious.

"Take down that fence!" she cried. "I want to get out!"

"I just put it up," said he, "why take it down?" And he leaned insolently against the rail while Olaf looked on in obvious enjoyment.

"Oh, leave it up, then!" she snapped, and rode off along the fence.

She came to another notice: "Dale Ranch. Keep Out! That Means You!" But she could find no other gap, so she set her bay mare at the railing. The mare shied, but Lou was determined. She rode back a few paces and made another attempt.

This time the mare jumped, but fouled the top rail, threw her heavily into a patch of scrub, and went galloping off across her own land.

Tom's temper, born almost entirely of her frequent use of the names he owned but hated, flew to the spot where she had fallen, dropped on one knee, and raised her gently in his arms. Her face was very white, her eyes were closed.

"Lou—Lou!" he said anxiously, but she did not answer, so he carried her over to a grassy bank beneath a spreading maple and laid her on the turf, then howled to Olaf to bring a water-bottle.

"Is she hurt?" inquired the Swede as Tom held the bottle to her lips.

"You get out of here!" barked Tom. "Go away! Leu—Lou!"

Joe Moore, following his young employer at a discreet distance, had met an assistant, Tex Howard, and was riding with him over on the Preston property. Tex, a swarthy half-breed, jerked a thumb in the direction of the maple-tree as he and Moore emerged from a clump of mesquite.

"Well, it don't take people long to get acquainted round here," he chuckled.

"Won't take me long to separate them, either!" snarled Moore, with jealous rage. "Let's get back out of sight."

Framed.

LOU had been stunned by the fall, but she was quite conscious when Tom picked her up. In spite of herself she felt fascinated by this self-possessed young man, and she found the experience of being held in his arms a pleasantly novel one. But when the water began to trickle between her lips

she could no longer keep up the pretence of having swooned.

She pushed away the bottle, opened her dark brown eyes, and put a hand to her brow.

"Oooh, my head!" she murmured, sitting up. "Where am I?"

"I—I think you're on the Dale Ranch," replied Tom, removing his arms with some reluctance. "You—you feel better?"

"Yes, thank you. Where's my horse?"

Tom got to his feet and looked across the fence.

"There he goes," he said, pointing. "Right up the hill there—I guess he's headed for parts unknown! And listen, young lady, that ought to be a very good lesson to you never to try to jump people's fences."

She sprang up indignantly at that.

"When I want a lecture from you, I'll ask for it!" she cried scornfully, and with that she dived between the rails on to her own land, and went off with her head in the air.

"I hope you enjoy your walk home!" Tom called after her.

On the following morning Joe Moore rode into Westonville to draw money from the bank, and Tex accompanied him, but repaired to the Lone Star Saloon to quench his thirst while the cheque was being cashed.

As fate would have it, Tom was in Westonville that morning. He had ridden in with Starrett, his object being to raise a loan on the deeds of the property in order to buy some stock, and he was in the bank talking to the manager when Moore entered.

That rascal overheard sufficient of the conversation to set his wits working, and as soon as a clerk had attended to him he went and called Tex out from the saloon.

"Listen," he said, "Dale's in the bank, raising some mency on that land of his. He wants to buy cattle. You get hold of him and tell him you've got fifty head you can sell pretty cheap."

"Me?" exclaimed the astonished half-breed.

"Yes, you. He hasn't seen you up to now—not to notice you. Tell him you're getting out of the country—tell him anything. Use a fake name. Saunders would do—Bill Saunders. That sounds honest."

"Yeah, but 'spose he says okay, where do I get fifty head?" grunted Tex. "Out of my hat?"

"It isn't a joke!" snapped Moore. "You make arrangements for him to see them to-morrow, and to-night get up and take fifty head from that herd on the mesa."

Tex stared.

"But they've all got the Preston brand on them!" he exclaimed.

"Exactly!"

Moore's elaborate wink made things plainer.

"Oh!" said Tex. "I—I get you."

The bank was on a corner, and they passed it slowly. Silver was waiting patiently by the kerb.

"There's his horse," said Moore. "You wait right here for him."

Tex nodded, and Moore went off to make some purchases. Five minutes elapsed, and then Tom emerged from the bank highly satisfied with the result of his interview. He was in the act of swinging himself into the saddle when Tex approached him, calling his name.

"What is it?" asked Tom, turning about.

"My name's Saunders," lied Tex. "Bill Saunders. I've been given to understand you're figuring on buying some cattle."

"That's correct," admitted Tom.

"Well, I've got fifty head I could let you have mighty cheap."

It had been Tom's intention to voice his requirements in the saloon, where several ranchers were almost bound to have congregated, but this seemed an easier alternative.

"What do you call cheap?" he demanded.

"Well, being that they're yearlings, I can let you have them for about twenty-five dollars a head."

"That sounds reasonable enough," conceded Tom. "When can I see them?"

Tex scratched his chin as though considering the matter.

"Well," he said, "I'll have to round 'em up to-night, and then you can see 'em in the morning. I'll run 'em on to your ranch about seven."

The suggested arrangement sounded eminently satisfactory, and Tom sought the saloon only to dig out Starrett, who had been imbibing. He rode back to the ranch-house well content with the morning's work.

But at nine o'clock next day a cow-hand galloped up to the wooden office of the Preston Ranch, swung himself to the ground, and rushed excitedly into the presence of Joe Moore, who was sitting at his desk conversing with Tex.

"Mr. Moore," cried the cow-hand. "rustlers have run cattle off the mesa!"

"Get a look at 'em?" asked Moore, concealing his satisfaction.

"No; but I followed their trail, and they're on that feller Dale's land."

"Round up the boys, quick as you can!"

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The cow-hand dashed out as precipitately as he had entered, and Moore grinned at his accomplice.

"Dale's going to have a pretty tough time trying to explain what he is doing with Preston stock," he exulted.

"Yeah!" agreed the half-breed. "That fake bill of sale you gave me was sure a big idea."

"I'm not so sure that wasn't a mistake," growled Moore. "Anyway, you keep out o' sight for a couple of days. Understand?"

"I'll appear after the funeral," chuckled Tex.

The office adjoined the manager's cabin; the cabin was across the yard from the big ranch-house, which was Lou's home. Lou herself was in the kitchen talking to her squaw housekeeper when a commotion in the yard drew her to the window. She saw to her astonishment that half the members of her outfit, instead of getting on with their work, were grouped together on their horses outside the office, where Joe Moore was addressing them. She ran out to them.

"What's happened, Joe?" she inquired.

"We're going to pick up some rustlers," replied Moore.

"It's that Dale fellow; miss," explained a cowboy.

Her brown eyes widened, then narrowed.

"I'm going to ride with you," she decided.

"Better not, Lou," urged Moore.

"You stay here."

"I said I'm riding with you," insisted Lou. "Fetch Nell for me, Fred."

The cow-hand thus addressed went off in a hurry, while Moore turned away to hide his annoyance. He did not want her with him on such an occasion.

The bay mare was brought, however, and she rode with the outfit away through a wooded valley and up a hill on to the grassy tableland, or mesa, whence fifty head of her stock had been driven by a circuitous route on to Tom's land. The trail was there for all to see, and they followed it easily enough, descending into a hollow near the Dale ranch.

So far as Tom was concerned the transaction was complete, and he and Starrett and Olaf were busy branding the new stock when Moore galloped up to the scene in advance of the rest, his six-shooter in his hand.

"Stick 'em up!" he shouted. "Stick 'em up, and keep 'em up!"

Tom dropped the branding-iron he was using, and raised his hands. Olaf, who was tending the fire of logs, gave vent to a frightened cry. But Starrett sowled at Moore. The rest of the riders approached, and nearly a score of guns gleamed in the sunlight.

"What's the idea?" asked Tom angrily, looking at Lou.

"You'll find out soon enough," retorted Moore. "Just whose brand were you putting on those cattle?"

"My brand," replied Tom. "Why?"

"You can't get away with rustling in this country any more," shrilled Lou with undisguised contempt. But Tom, defying the guns, reached to the pocket of his shirt and produced a sheet of paper.

"What do you mean by 'rustling'?" he scoffed. "Those cattle belong to me. I've got a bill of sale for them here. Take a look at that!"

Lou slid from her mare and took the paper and studied it.

"And just who is this fellow Bill Saunders, who sells my cattle?" she cried scornfully.

"Ask him!" retorted Tom, pointing to Moore. "He ought to know—his name's on it."

"The man's crazy!" roared Moore. "That bill of sale was never made out by me!"

He heaved himself from his horse to seize the paper, but Tom grabbed it back from Lou and struck out with his left, administering a blow to the manager's jaw that sent him reeling.

"Easy there, pardner!" roared a cowboy.

But Tom's blood was up, and he looked at Lou in a way that made her almost shiver.

"So that's it, eh?" he shouted bitterly. "Trying to frame me! You!"

Lou was upset and showed it; but Olaf, taking advantage of an opportunity which had presented itself, had made a bid for escape, and at this moment a stalwart cow-hand brought him back with a rope about his shoulders.

"Caught him sneaking off in the bushes, so I brung him back," explained Olaf's captor, and immediately Lou's pretty face hardened.

"Funny he should run away!" she flamed at Tom, "when you're so innocent!"

"Whitey! Clem!" bellowed Joe Moore. "Bring your ropes!"

But Lou was not going to be a party to any lynching.

"None of that, Moore!" she cried imperiously. "I'm running this affair." She turned to Tom, who had folded his arms defiantly. "If you're not out of the country in twenty-four hours," she said, "I'll turn you over to the sheriff!"

Moore, swallowing his mortification, added wrathfully:

"And my advice to you, buddy, is to leave while the leaving's good!"

Even then the plotter was reluctant to forego his plans. But Lou commanded some of the men to drive the cattle back to the mesa, and the rest to get on with their appointed tasks. Tom, Starrett and Olaf were left behind to discuss the situation at their leisure, and to do what they chose about Lou's ultimatum.

Found Out!

THE rest of the day passed quietly enough; but after darkness had enveloped the range, Tom set off upon a journey over unfamiliar territory, seeking the Preston ranchhouse.

He left Silver in a spinney and prowled around the buildings with the furtiveness of a burglar. He was looking—amongst other things—for the man who had called himself Bill Saunders, fully convinced by now that Bill Saunders was one of Joe Moore's creatures.

He came to the wooden office at last, and through one of its dusty windows he detected the glow of a lighted pipe. Tex, obeying Moore's injunction, was keeping under cover, but could not resist the luxury of a smoke.

The front door of the office was unlocked. Tom opened it stealthily and crossed the threshold. Tex was in an inner room, sprawling on a bunk, and in the first instance Tom did not go near the inner room. With the aid of matches he sought among the books and papers on Joe Moore's desk, in its drawers, and on a shelf behind it, hampered slightly by a gun in his right hand.

Evidently he found something in a book that gave him infinite satisfaction, for he had closed the book and tucked it under his arm when the door of the inner room opened and the moonlight that streamed in at the window gave shape to a form in the doorway.

"Stick 'em up!" rasped a voice. "I'm afraid I'm gonna kill you, mister."

"You'd better," retorted Tom, duck-

ing down behind the desk, "because if you miss I may return the compliment."

A gun spat fire, another gun responded, and then over the desk bounded Tom to grapple with the half-breed.

Two shots were wasted, and two bullets embedded themselves in the logs of the wall; then Tex went down in a heap on the floor, completely knocked out by a vicious half-hook that caught him clean on the point of the jaw.

A curious little whistle, emitted by Tom from the doorway of the office, brought Silver trotting out from the spinney, and the limp form of Tex was draped over the saddle while Tom swung himself up on to the broad back of the white horse.

Starrett was waiting up for the man who returned with a bound ledger and a bound and gagged prisoner, but Olaf had retired for the night and knew nothing of the occurrence.

In the morning, having washed and dressed, the Swede shaved and tried to sing.

Tom, aroused by the noise, looked into the bed-room, and saw Olaf prancing about the floor with lather on his face and a gun in each hand.

"You'd better go and saddle Silver instead of monkeying about with those guns, you square-head!" he said scathingly. "You can't fight, and you can't sing. Finish cleaning your ugly mug and try something you can do."

The three horses were saddled, breakfast was prepared, eaten, and cleared away, and just before nine o'clock Tom and Starrett were discussing their plans when Olaf burst in upon them.

"Say, boss," he cried, "that lady's here again—and she's got a whole crowd and a sheriff with her."

Tom glanced at Starrett, then rose to his feet. He peered out through the panes of a window. In the long fence he and Swede had built he had put a gate, and the gate had been opened, and a whole party of horsemen were streaming through it, headed by Joe Moore and Lou Preston. He smiled grimly and went out on to the narrow veranda.

Some of the riders were dismounting in the yard, and, tallest of all of them, was Sheriff Watkins of Weston County, a grey-haired veteran with a star upon his chest.

"That sign over there on that fence says—and means—"keep out!" shouted Tom, drawing his gun.

"Signs don't mean anything to the law, Dale," declared the sheriff, advancing to the foot of the steps. "I'm here to arrest you for cattle-rustling."

"By whose say-so?" demanded Tom, descending the steps with Olaf behind him.

"Mine!" declared Lou, and walked up to him with clenched fists.

"And mine!" bellowed Moore from the other side of the sheriff.

"Well, that's too bad," said Tom quietly. "But I wouldn't be hasty, sheriff, if I were you. Will you come inside?"

"Quite agreeable to that," decided the sheriff. "Wouldn't do any harm."

And he followed Tom up the steps into the living-room, followed by Lou.

Moore turned to the men who were with him.

"Two of you," he said, "had better go over there and start tearing that fence down—the rest can stay here."

Two eager volunteers went off to attack the fence. Moore mounted the steps and entered the ranchhouse.

"What's it all about, Dale?" asked the sheriff.

"I told you before," began Lou angrily, "he was caught—"

A sound as of a scuffle in the kitchen reached their ears.

"What's that?" the sheriff demanded suspiciously.

"A rat, I guess," answered Tom, and opened a book which was lying on the table. "Take a look at that, sheriff! These people have had their say with you—now I'm going to have mine. I've been framed!"

The sheriff looked down at the open book. He saw the jagged edges where a page had been torn from it, and he saw a sheet of paper, creased where it had been folded, but now smoothed out, lying beside the jagged edges. He read it through; he noticed that the number in its top right-hand corner was a number missing from the book itself. He turned back a page, and then abruptly he turned round on Joe Moore.

"How about it, Moore?" he said brusquely. "Your signature's on this!"

"It's a forgery!" shouted Moore.

"Did you ever hear of this fellow Saunders?" questioned the sheriff.

"Never!"

"No?" said Tom with an ominous grin, and strode over to the kitchen door, which he flung wide. "Bring him out!" he shouted.

Starrett, completely recovered from his limp, appeared in their midst, gripping the arms of Tex, whose eyes were downcast, whose hands were fastened behind his back.

"Tex!" gasped Lou, while Joe Moore brushed the back of his hand across his forehead because a cold sweat had gathered there.

"That's the fellow who calls himself Saunders," said Tom. "Miss Preston, I owe you an apology. I took the liberty last night of removing that man and this ledger from Moore's office."

"I think this is a dirty frame-up!" trumpeted the sheriff disgustfully.

The cowboys in the doorway looked at one another in dismay and shuffled off. Lou, in a passion, went up to the discomfited Moore.

"So that's where all my cattle have been going!" she cried. "You're fired!"

Joe Moore turned to hide his chagrin, and Lou looked at Tom.

"I suppose I ought to apologise to you," she said ungraciously.

"It kinda looks that way, miss," he admitted.

"Well, I won't!" she stormed, and ran out.

But at the end of the yard she received another shock; two of her men were tearing down the fence Tom had erected.

"Stop that!" she shouted. "Get back to your own work!"

The two cowboys slunk back to their horses and rode away, and Lou called the rest of her men round her and retired with them on to her own property.

"Dead or Alive"

IN the living-room of the ranch-house, meanwhile, the sheriff had been speaking his mind.

"You say the word, Dale," he wound up, "and I'll take these two fellows in with me."

"I'd a heap sooner you left them here, sheriff," said Tom, restoring the bill of sale to his pocket.

"All right," said the sheriff with a comprehending nod. "Just as you say, boy."

He went off, though he would dearly have liked to stay to see the fun, and Tom waited, gun in hand, till he had clattered out of the yard. Then he said to Starrett:

"Put your gun away, Bob. Now take

(Continued on page 25.)

Two rival gangs, hated and feared by the police—warfare of a fiendish nature and behind the scenes the law waiting for a chance to clean up the city. Starring Ricardo Cortez and Helen Twelvetrees.



The Recall.

A WHITE hulled steam-yacht rode at anchor in the sheltered bay. Nearby a seaplane floated on the oily water—a boat being rowed towards the yacht.

A young man in white ducks stood up and waved.

Over the rail of the yacht leant a number of young men and girls—a gay pleasure party. Some were garbed in bathing costumes, whilst, down below, several were swimming in the cool waters. Near the gangway stood a strong-faced man. His iron-grey hair gave him an austere expression, but though the eyes were twinkling and the mouth laughing there was something about him that was puzzling. What would Rex King look like without the twinkle and the smile—hard, determined and calculating!

By his side was a beautiful, fair-haired girl. She wore a gaudy, striped bathing wrap of blue and white over a blue costume. In her gentle blue eyes there was a look of love and affection as she watched the approaching boat, and in her joy slipped a shapely arm through that of the man. His smile was one of pride.

"So you've got your wish." His voice was rather gruff, though moderated. "I'm glad Steve could make it."

"So am I, Rex. Now my party is perfect."

They were brother and sister, though the difference in ages was more than ten years. Helen could never remember her parents, only the strong silent man who had been both father and brother to her since she was a kid. He had seen that she wanted for nothing.

Up the gangway came a round-faced, curly-haired youngster. He held a soft cap in his hand, and his neat blue suit spoke of business.

"Hallo, Helen! Howdo, sir?" he greeted them. "By gosh, what a beautiful day I've chosen for a holiday! Never thought I'd get away. Had to charter a 'plane to make it. You look fine, Helen."

The girl blushed and several of the guests nudged each other. They knew that Helen was very fond of Steve, but they didn't take notice too much, because they were all the guests of her brother on this floating palace.

"I'm glad you could come, Steve," was all Helen could think to say, but there was a message of welcome in her blue eyes.

With the excitement over, the guests went back to their various diversions. Helen found a swimming costume for Steve and soon they were both in the blue waters laughing, joking and playing around—one could not imagine any on board the Helena having a care in the world.

Rex King was sitting at a wicker table, drinking an iced lemonade and watching the bathers, when there was a touch on his shoulder. A tall man in yachting kit like his own was holding out a paper.

"Just come through, chief."

"Thanks!" King took the message and read it thoughtfully, laughed and screwed the paper into a ball. "Looks like the pipe of peace. What do you make of it, Barnes?"

"Wouldn't trust that snake an inch," was the crisp answer.

"I think this is on the level," decided his chief, "but you can never tell how long it'll remain that way. To-day's Friday; cable that we return on Monday and that I'll talk business any time. Now, Barnes, let's have no more of this sort of talk—I'm here on holiday."

"Okay, chief." The other touched his

cap. "I'll go and make all arrangements with the captain."

"Be careful how you step, Barnes," warned King. "Don't forget that Helen must never know or even suspect our business. Take every precaution."

A nod of understanding and the tall man turned on his heel.

There was dancing on deck after dinner. The couples looked ghostly in the strong moonlight as they slithered over the smooth deck to the music of the Argentina Dance Band.

In the bow sat a man and a maid. His arm was around her and her head rested against his shoulder. They sat there, reposing against a coil of rope, gazing thoughtfully towards the twinkling lights on the coast. A moment of great content.

Helen was smiling to herself. What a wicked girl she was. She had had to encourage Steve with many loving attentions and glances from her merry eyes before he could put his arms right round her and kiss her! They had met the previous summer and had been attracted to each other at once. Since then they had met often, and Helen would have said "Yes," if Steve had proposed. But Steve at times seemed strangely shy. The murmur of the waves, the power of the moon and her own bright self had at last forced Steve into a proposal. Oh, what a wicked girl she was!

Young Steve Carlyle should have been smiling; instead he stared at the dark outline of the coast under frowning eyebrows. He was happy, far happier than he deserved, and yet—a sigh escaped him.

"You're not cold, Steve?" she murmured. "You're not sorry, are you, Steve; because, if you are—"

"I love you like I shall never love anyone else," was his fierce answer. "I was

just thinking, that's all. You know nothing about me, Helen, and—"

"You're a very clever business man," was her gay reply. "You're trying to make pots and pots of money. What's it matter if you don't? Rex has more than he knows what to do with."

"A man can't live on his wife's brother." Steve kissed the soft forehead. "This has all got to be figured out, and—" His voice died away, and she felt his whole body stiffen.

"What's the matter, Steve?"

"Do you hear anything? Listen!"

Silence whilst they strained their ears.

"I can hear the splash of oars," said Helen softly. "Who could be out rowing at this hour of night?"

"Someone—I wonder why?" Steve craned his neck. "The sound seems to come from over there. Look, Helen, can you see a shadow—looks like a boat."

"It is a boat. Probably someone in love like we are."

But Steve did not laugh.

"I fear it means business," he grunted. "Gosh, I shall be mad if I'm wanted back!"

"Oh, Steve, you couldn't go back at this hour!"

The boy made no answer, but stared fascinatingly towards the approaching boat.

"Is that the Helena?" hailed a voice. "Wanna speak to Steve Carlyle, message for him."

"This is Steve Carlyle speaking." The boy cupped his hands as though he did not want to disturb the whole ship. "Come alongside the bow."

Helen saw a note passed up to Steve, and wondered why she should feel so cold and frightened. She knew what the message meant before he turned to her.

"You've got to go back?"

"At once, Honey," said Steve. "I'm terribly sorry, but this message is urgent. It's about some business that must be done at once. Helen, you'll forgive me for running off like this. I hate having to go, but there is no option."

"I understand, Steve," was her sad answer. "I knew this happiness of mine was too great to last."

Two men were waiting on the shore when Steve Carlyle stepped on to the shingle. Their coat collars were turned up almost concealing their faces.

"You gotta take a convoy—Lansen's sck," one of the men almost snarled his words.

"Why couldn't someone else have done this job?"

"Our orders were to find you. Gorio wouldn't trust anyone else," replied the other man. "What's more, he sends warning to be on the look-out, as McBaine's on the warpath. We'd better get moving."

"Lead the way." Steve nodded, and then turned to take a last look at the Helena. How peaceful and graceful she seemed, even in the moonlight she was a picture of grace personified. The faint sounds of music carried across the water and Steve clenched his fists. Almost savagely he turned and followed his two companions to a waiting car.

An Evil Power.

IN a magnificent room sat a dark, clean-shaven man. Very wide apart, jet-black eyes stared forth from a face that was too white. There should have been colour to the man's cheeks, but nothing save a faint darkening near the neck. Evidently there was Spanish or Mexican blood in his veins. He was in age about thirty-six, and wore a gorgeous coloured dressing-gown over pyjamas of maroon silk.

December 26th, 1931.

Goldie Gorio stared round his bedroom, and a smile of content made him show his gleaming white teeth. Kings and queens had never had bed-rooms as sumptuous as this. The pictures, rugs, and furniture had cost a fortune—he could afford it. He touched a bell, and a big man appeared, a clumsy, big-headed fellow with small beady eyes and a cruel mouth.

"Just coming, sir. I've got a fine breakfast for you, sir."

"That I'll judge for myself," was the curt answer. "Has Anderson brought my new suit?"

"Yes, boss—"

"Sir to me." Instantly the dark man's face twisted. "Now put that breakfast down."

His valet, butler, and right hand man placed the tray in front of his master. The big fellow stood there as if waiting to be hit. From a bottle Goldie took two tablets, placed them in water, waited till they had dissolved, and then swallowed the mixture. This done, he removed a silver cover and scowled.

"Kidneys and bacon," he snarled. "I can't eat kidneys when they're flavoured with bacon." He fingered some toast. "This is as hard as a board. Pour me out some coffee."

The big fellow hovered round whilst his master ate one of the kidneys and a portion of another. Gorio became interested in the paper.

"Demand by the citizens of Chicago for the cessation of gang warfare in this city," Gorio laughed. "Poor fools—as if what they want counts." He took a nibble at the kidney. "Why, this is cold—take it all away. Send Anderson in to me."

A frail little man appeared and bowed. Over his arm was a suit of clothes.

"Good-morning, sir!"

"Hope the clothes fit," cried Goldie Gorio. "That last pair of trousers were a quarter of an inch too long, Joe,"—he turned to the butler—"pour me out a glass of water in that wine-glass and squeeze some lemon—make it a good lemon. Now, Anderson, let's see what you've done."

The trousers seemed satisfactory, though Goldie said no word of approval, but a queer light came into the dark eyes as he inspected the jacket sleeves. Gorio let the sleeve fall, took a deep draught from the wine glass, and holding the glass up to the light, spoke without looking at the tailor.

"How many buttons on the sleeve?"

"Four, sir."

"How many did I ask for?"

"Three, sir, but—"

"Why did you disobey me?"

"Three buttons are out of date, sir," answered the old tailor. "So I put four buttons on, sir, because I thought you wanted to have the latest style."

"You heard my orders." Goldie was smiling in a queer way. "You will take that back and put on three buttons."

"But I couldn't do that, sir," quavered the tailor. "Four buttons is the present style, sir, and—"

"I said three buttons, you crawling little worm!" cried Gorio. "When I say three I mean three."

"But, sir, you can't ask me to do this." The tailor did not quite realise the kind of man to whom he spoke. "I must give gentlemen the latest style—"

A scream of fear and ghastly agony rang through the room. Goldie Gorio, with face twisted and contorted, held a broken wine glass in his hand, whilst blood streamed down the face of Anderson, the tailor. The old man touched his lacerated face, saw the blood, and then slumped in a faint on the floor.

"That's what happens to fools who disobey my orders!" The normal expression returned. "Joe, find the Doc. Tell him to sow this fool up. Three stitches!"

A sandy-haired, thick-set man entered, calmly studied the prone figure, and nodded. The Doc. swung the limp figure over his shoulder.

"Any other orders, sir?"

"Just sow him up," snapped Gorio. "And when he comes to, give him my definite instructions. Three buttons, and if it isn't done within two hours I'll have buttons sown to his bare skin."

The man called Doc. nodded and went off with his limp burden. Joe, the butler, appeared and scowled after the Doc.

"I'd like to bump that guy off," muttered the butler. "He scares ever talks. Makes me creepy does that guy, sir."

"I'm not interested in your opinions," was the answer. "He's a darn good doctor, and knows better than to play any tricks. Better get my bath ready." "Steve wants to see you, sir," said Joe. "Told me it was very urgent, or else he wouldn't have come."

"Steve?" His eyes narrowed. "All right, I'll see him later. My bath first, and if you make it too hot I'll flay you alive."

"Thank you, sir," answered Joe, and shuffled off.

Half an hour later Goldie Gorio sat before the solid oak table. He rang a bell, and Joe appeared at once.

"I'll see Steve now."

Goldie Gorio grinned a welcome as Carlyle stepped into the room. It was against orders to come to the private residence of Goldie Gorio, but who could imagine that smiling man was angry.

"Sorry I've had to come here to see you," said Steve. "But I'm in a jam, sir."

Goldie Gorio seemed to have recovered from his bad temper, for he smiled and waved the youngster to a chair.

"You have had trouble with the cops?" asked the gangster. "No, I don't think you would worry me so early—if it were the police. Let me so guess—a girl?"

"A girl is the main reason," Steve answered. "She is the reason why I want to get out of the game. I want my freedom, sir."

"You want to leave me?" The crook showed no sign of annoyance or surprise. "I should hate to part with you, Steve, because you are one of the few who are trustworthy. Why not marry the girl and remain in the game?"

"Because she's honest and clean." The boy spoke quickly. "She's never been sullied by anything underhanded or crooked. She comes of a decent family, knows the right sort of people, and does not realise what goes on in the—er—"

"Underworld," Gorio smiled. "Continue, Steve—do not spare me. This girl is beautiful, of course?"

"She is not only beautiful of face," was the earnest answer, "but she is beautiful of mind. It is impossible to tell her what I am, but if I could get out and make a fresh start, then I would ask her to marry me. She doesn't want to know what I have been, but if I told her I was a crook, I believe she would still marry me, even if her heart were breaking. Do you know why I joined in this game, sir?"

"I should love to hear."

Somehow the smile on the face of Goldie Gorio was not pleasant.

"A girl let me down, and I was convinced that life was finished for me."

Steve was intent on his explanation. "I decided that excitement and adventure might help me to forget. My senses returned slowly, and I realised what a fool I had been. But I stuck to my bargain with you, sir, though some of the jobs haven't been to my liking."

"One reason why I've liked you"—now the smile was pleasanter—"you're the first person who has ever refused to obey any of my orders. When we had that argument with the Marani gang you said 'Nothing doing!'" Goldie chuckled. "I believe I threatened you with a ride, and still you wouldn't give way. Steve, I'm glad I didn't send you for that ride. But you're treading on dangerous ground now. There are two reasons why I can't let you go. One is that you are far too useful, and the second is that it is too risky. You know far too much about me."

"But I would never breathe a word," argued Steve. "I would go away and swear never to come within a hundred miles."

"It makes no difference!" Goldie waved aside all argument. "The cops would follow. McBaine would jump at the chance to get one of Goldie Gorio's gang alone. They might find methods to make you talk, and I have no time for squealers. Once in my gang a person must stay. Whilst I command, there is only one way out." He smiled broadly. "That way lies via the morgue."

"Well, better that way and get back my self-respect!" Steve was getting angry. "I cannot go on pretending, and never to see Helen again would be worse than death. Now you see what kind of a jam I am in, and I reckon you ought to let me out. I've served you well, and you know I'm not the sort that squeals."

"McBaine has methods almost as pleasant as my own of making a man talk." Goldie shrugged his shoulders. "If every cop were a McBaine I would respect them. I'm sorry, Steve, but I must think of myself first. There are hundreds of other pretty girls—you can easily forget her. Take a vacation, and when you come back—"

"I shall still love her just as much." Steve squared his shoulders. "I shall always love her. If I cannot have my freedom, then—"

A door opened and someone came into the room. Steve broke off as he saw that Goldie was not listening to him. Curiosity prompted him to turn and see who could have dared to interrupt Goldie Gorio during an interview. His eyes opened wide with amazement.

The newcomer was King—Helen's brother!

The Peace Pact.

KING was equally surprised to see Steve Carlyle. His smile of greeting to Goldie Gorio gave way to a stare of amazement which the gangster did not miss.

"You two know each other?" Goldie spoke softly. "How very amusing. I hope, King, you know nothing against my young friend?"

"Friend?" King spun round. "Surely Steve isn't one of your men?"

Steve had no idea why King should be here, but it seemed that this encounter must ruin all his hopes. King would have to tell Helen, and that would finish their romance.

"One of my most reliable lieutenants," Goldie delighted in titles. "Perhaps you don't know each other properly. On my right, Steve Carlyle, trusted officer to Goldie Gorio, and on my left Hartley King, my most dangerous rival."

"Hartley King!" gasped Steve. "Not the man who runs the West Side?"

There was a gesture of sadness, almost of despair, in King's slight nod.

"It seems, Steve, we've been sailing under false colours. Was this fair on Helen?"

"Helen—Helen!" Goldie was surprised. "Steve, is the girl you've been telling me about King's sister?"

"Yes, sir."

"Carramba, but what a complex!" Goldie's eyes were dancing. "Steve comes to me and wants to leave me

because he is in love with a charming and honourable young woman. Now I find she is the sister of Hartley King."

"Helen has no idea what I am!" King spoke gruffly. "Anyone who tells her is likely to get hurt. She has been brought up imagining that I am a successful business man, and she has never had any association with the underworld. Steve would never have been encouraged as a friend if I had known he served Goldie Gorio."

"To try and get level I came here to beg for my freedom," answered Steve. "This seems like the curtain."

"The curtain on the final act." Goldie's voice was raised, and the man's eyes were blazing. "I am going to give you a play that will stagger Chicago. You and I, King, are the two powers in this city, and you came to see me to discuss a scheme to combine forces in order that gang warfare should cease. We will combine, and gang warfare shall cease. When two great rival powers, enemy powers if you like, come together, there is usually some kind of ceremony such as a wedding of the prince of one kingdom to the princess of the other."

King and Steve stared at Goldie. What was the man going to suggest?

"Let us call the princess by the name of Helen"—strange lights gleamed in the man's eyes—"and the prince shall be Steve. We will have a great wedding, and the marriage of Helen to Steve will be the link between the two kingdoms—you on the west, and myself on the east. How does the scheme strike you, King?"

"I hardly know what to say."

King stared at Steve. "I'm not marrying Helen under these conditions." Steve raved. "She must not be dragged into this sordid life. She—"

"Listen, hothead," argued Goldie. "If you marry Helen you get the girl you love. Also, gang warfare and bloodshed will cease, the cops can have a

Though there was the fear of death in all the faces of these men, not one stepped forward.



holiday, and you will have the great Goldie Gorio as your best man. I will stage a wedding that will make history. Think carefully before you say 'no' to this, Steve. 'No' would mean that bloodshed would continue; you would never get your Helen, and the morgue would be very busy. A 'yes' would be like the cooing of the dove of peace. Give me a month to stage this wedding, and it will be the greatest ever. Fix it with your sister, King, and then send her away, in case she should hear any talk. I can see, King, you favour the plan. How about you, Steve?"

There was no alternative for Steve. Besides, why should he die when a "yes" meant the cessation of gang warfare, even if it did mean deceiving Helen? And so the wedding was fixed for one month from that day.

A month later Steve Carlyle and Helen King were made man and wife.

It was the most elaborate and gorgeous wedding that Chicago had ever seen. It was too gorgeous. Several times Helen wanted to know why there was all this show and pomp, and Steve cursed because his tongue was tied.

Roses were thrown from windows on the bridal procession, the streets were decorated with bunting, the wedding was held at the chief church; there were a dozen bridesmaids, and the reception was held at the largest hotel. Hundreds of guests, grand entertainment, marvellous flowers, valuable presents—no expense was spared.

Among the uninvited guests was a thick-set wizened-faced man. He was one of the crowd, and he chewed the end of a long cigar as he watched the arrival of every car at the church.

"Wonder how long this is gonna last," sneered McBaine, head of the Chicago police. "Gorio reckons that, now he's in harness with King, he's got Chicago skinned. Guess he'd better take another think."

"They'll be a tough combination," murmured a trusted captain, who also wore civilian clothes.

"Gorio's screwy," McBaine laughed. "One day something will send him real crazy, and then the fireworks will begin. That will be my chance."

McBaine little knew how near he was in his prophecy. Goldie Gorio had never seen Helen until she came up the aisle on the arm of her brother. He had heard that Steve's future wife was good-looking, but Helen was the most divine creature that Gorio had ever seen.

His nails dug into his hands as he watched her approach. If he had known about Helen, he would have married her himself. A queer smile twitched his lips as he glanced at the exalted Steve. The great Goldie Gorio had made this marriage, and now it was too late to stop it, and the gangster wanted this girl for his own.

Gorio gave no clue to his thoughts as the wedding proceeded, though once Helen looked startled to find those piercing black eyes watching her.

And when Gorio talked to the girl at the reception afterwards his determination and admiration increased. His eyes narrowed as he glanced at Steve. Perhaps there might still be some work for the morgue.

The Trap.

ALL the while Helen and Steve were on their honeymoon Goldie Gorio's fertile brain was busy. All the while he prepared the home that was to be the Carlyle's. He had insisted upon finding a house for the young couple, and Steve had no option but to agree. King wished his new partner

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would not make such ostentatious show, but Gorio was a difficult man to deal with.

Before they sailed for the West Indies, Gorio lavished presents on the girl, who was bewildered by all this extravagance. Her brother explained that it was Goldie's generous nature. His new business partner was as kind-hearted as he was rich.

Bloodshed had not completely ceased, because a cop had been killed during the running of some illicit liquor, and McBaine had vowed to get Gorio. Then several smuggling ventures went astray, and Gorio began to suspect that someone inside was in league with McBaine. This led to the master-crook planning the end of Steve Carlyle. The plan materialised some four weeks after the return of the happy couple.

The Shark was a fast river-boat that could carry passengers and freight. Besides oil engines she carried masts and sails—a useful craft for all emergencies. Engines could be heard at night.

Gorio had so much money that he could buy most things—he had a city patrolman who took his money. This was how he learnt that McBaine had got wind of the fact that Gorio owned the Shark.

The ship was now an ambush. If Gorio attempted to take the craft on a run, then some guns would be loosened off. But the information that made those queer eyes gleam was that the Doc. was one of McBaine's men.

"Now we know why things have gone wrong of late," Goldie told his servant. "Let me bump him off!" demanded the bloodthirsty Joe. "I allus have hated that silent sucker."

"The Doc. is going to be useful to me—afterwards," Goldie Gorio gave his watchdog an understanding wink. "I want you to bring the Doc. to me just before dusk this evening. I am going to tell him that the Shark will leave her moorings at midnight. You will follow the Doc., and when you are certain he has sent the message through to McBaine you can act."

"Leave him to me," beamed Joe, rubbing his hands.

Two hours later Joe talked again to his master.

"You was right, boss," he began; and grinned sheepishly as he saw the anger in Gorio's dark eyes. "You was right, sir. He went straight to a telephone booth and spilt the whole story."

"You're sure, Joe?"

"One of the boys was in the next booth!" Joe chuckled. "It made me laugh to hear that guy telling McBaine how clever he was and how you never suspected him. He was still chuckling when he made to step out of that telephone booth, only he never stepped out. I gave one of them Lewis guns a try-out—acted beautifully."

"You removed the body!" snapped Gorio. "Usual place in the river? Good! Now go and get Steve Carlyle on the 'phone. He's taking the Shark out to-night."

"You're a genius, sir!" cried Joe. "McBaine will get Carlyle, and you'll get—"

"Still your fool tongue!" Goldie swung round on his cowering servant. "Or someone else will be found in the river. Now get Steve on the 'phone, you rat!"

Steve had planned an evening with Helen, and when Gorio issued orders for the taking out of the Shark the telephone protested. The crook smiled covertly at Joe and spoke with an oily tongue.

"I'm terribly sorry, Steve," he apologised. "First chance I've had of col-

lecting a cargo, and there's no one I can trust save yourself. If there were someone else, I'd send them; in fact, I'd go myself, only this confounded indigestion has got me again. Tell Helen how sorry I am. I've got a luncheon party arranged for her to-morrow, so get your job done quickly, Steve, and be back in time. Sorry—good-night—" He pouted to wink again at Joe. "Bon voyage!"

"That was a cute one about the luncheon," said Joe, as Gorio put away the telephone. "Any other orders, sir?"

"Arrange about the lunch for to-morrow—I don't want the least suspicion to rest on me. Don't forget to broadcast the news that I am indisposed. I shall stay in, eat nothing, and be very bad-tempered." He smiled. "You will know my bark is worse than my bite. Soon after midnight I shall expect news."

Helen was angry with Steve when she heard he had to go out that night. What right had Gorio to send him out and about at all hours?

"I can't understand your business," She frowned and stamped her foot. "I've never heard of business men running off at such ridiculous times on work. Last Sunday you were called away in the midst of our party, and now you've got to go off again. Tell Gorio you can't go."

Steve fidgeted uncomfortably. What a fool he had been to ever get lured into this rotten life! Could he always go on bluffing to his wife? This sumptuous flat was too vast and showy—why couldn't he have a quiet, homely place? Gorio's love for show robbed their first home of all its charm. Steve was restless and disturbed, and he knew that Helen often watched him with worried eyes. She was puzzled about his business, and, worst of all, she could not stand Goldie Gorio—why couldn't he get a job with someone else? That almost made the boy go crazy, and, when she suggested a talk to her brother, he had to beg her to say nothing. This midnight call on top of everything was just about the limit.

Helen was almost in tears, but Steve did his best to comfort her.

"It's a client who lives way out of town," she explained. "I must see him because another company aro after him. Dry those pretty eyes and give me a smile."

When Steve had gone Helen went into her husband's dressing-room. Why did she hesitate to open a certain drawer? Why did her hand almost touch the knob and then withdraw as if she were stung? At last the girl seemed to pluck up courage, for she wrenched open the drawer.

"The revolver's gone!" came her cry, and with blanched cheeks reeled back. A week previous she had seen that revolver and had not plucked up courage to question her husband. Already a suspicion of the truth had come to her. "I must ring up Rex!" she told herself. "Ho, will help me."

The deck of the Shark was deadly quiet. What were those vague shapes crouching in dark corners? One moved and slithered across the deck.

"He's on his way!" hissed a voice.

Another shape moved across the deck and disappeared down the companion-way.

"Chief," came a hoarse whisper, "he's on his way!"

"This is where we square one account!" rasped a voice out of the darkness. "You know your orders."

The figure disappeared, and McBaine of the police force drew a gun from

his hip-pocket. Two other figures crouching near the cabin table drew weapons.

"Directly he reaches the fifth stair," was the chief of police's order. "We won't let the rat slip through our fingers this time!"

Steve Carlyle found the Shark lying silent and deserted at the moorings. This caused him no particular uneasiness because the Shark never wanted to proclaim to the world that there was life on board. Directly Steve appeared men would materialise, and the hawsers would be thrown off; then, under a silent motor, the ship would work down-stream to the sea.

A high moon showed him up clearly. The hands of the men hidden on the deck trembled round the triggers of their guns. Goldie Gorio at last!

Down the companion-way stepped Steve, who was beginning to wonder why the ship was so quiet as this, and where all the men were hiding. He decided to call out as he stepped on the fifth stair.

"Where's everyone? What the heck—"

There was a blaze of flame and the crash of two explosions.

Steve Carlyle slumped in a heap to the bottom of the companion-way.

"What's the idea, chief?" cried a voice. "Why did you knock up my arm? Why—"

"Get a light, fools!" shouted McBaine. "And then you'll see! We've got the wrong man!"

When a light was brought a hard-faced, grim-jawed man knelt beside the prone figure. There was a gesture of sadness in that shake of the head as he looked at the blood on his hand.

"Couldn't divert both guns," McBaine muttered. "Looks as if one shot is mighty near the heart. Goldie got wise to our game."

"But, chief, this is Steve Carlyle, one of his best men."

"Shucks! Goldie is crazy with power,

and he'd do anything." The chief got to his feet. "Ah, there is the ambulance! See that Carlyle is taken to hospital, and that the very finest physician is put on the job. Right—jump to it!" Then he spoke, almost to himself. "I hope the poor old Doc. is all right."

And when McBaine learnt next morning of the Doc.'s body in the river his wizened face twisted into a fierce scowl.

"I'll get you, Goldie," he muttered. "and I think I've got the dope to call your bluff."

The Truth.

A WHITE-FACED, anxious Helen looked down at the pale wraith of a boy who was her husband. His eyes were closed, and he scarce seemed to be breathing. Behind Helen stood the grey-haired but anxious brother, whilst hovering close at hand was a white-robed doctor and a nurse. In her fear, Helen gave her hands to King, and her eyes sought those of the doctor in a pleading query. He touched his lips, then beckoned them out of the room.

"Your visit has done a lot of good, Mrs. Carlyle," announced the doctor. "He opened his eyes and recognised you. Now he will have the incentive to live. Don't worry, because, though it was a bad wound, the bullet has been extracted, and his strong constitution will pull him round. In a week he will be out and about."

As their car drove away, another drew up before the hospital, and Goldie Gorio stepped forth. He stared after the other car, and his eyes gleamed as they rested on Helen. Smilingly he turned and went into the hospital, and when he learnt Steve would live he still smiled, but none knew the rage in his heart.

So strong was his personality and so feared was his name that he was permitted to see the invalid. Steve opened his eyes and managed a faint smile.

"I can't think how this happened," Goldie spoke. "But I'm combing every

man of my gang to see if it were a frame-up. I'll not rest till I get the guy that put this across—and that other rat, McBaine! They have got to learn to treat the friends of Goldie Gorio with respect. Get well soon, Steve, because we sure miss you."

A weak nod, and then a doctor came into the room. The talk was at an end.

"I'll see Helen doesn't worry," promised Goldie, with a smiling good-bye.

Lucky for Steve that he could not worry, because at that moment, on the way home from the hospital, Helen was questioning her brother.

"I rang you up last night, and told you how worried I was, and you talked a lot of nonsense about duty. I am not quite a fool. Why did Steve go out and take his revolver? Why did the cops shoot, and why are the papers so quiet about the affair? I want the answers to those questions. You know Steve's business. I know this much—it isn't honest!" The girl stared accusingly at King. "He's in the power of some gang. You *know* he is!"

King could not deny it. What he had feared and dreaded was happening. The eyes of Helen were open.

"Who is this Goldie Gorio who employs Steve?" went on the overstrung girl. "Why does he lavish all this money on us? People I've met have talked, and I'm certain he's the head of some big gang, and that Steve is in his power."

"I'll send Steve away when he gets better," King clenched his fist. "Send you both on another honeymoon."

"You'll get Steve into another business," she demanded. "Get him into a straight business, where cops and thugs can't shoot at him. You've got to get him away."

"I'll do my best, Helen." King bowed his head. "But it won't be easy. You see, Goldie and myself are partners. I'm in the game myself. I guess, Helen, I'd better come clean. Steve's a gangster, and so am I."



With eyes wide with horror and amazement, Helen stared at the brother she loved and respected while he unfolded the tale of his life—how the war had left him a pauper, and of the tempting offer to run liquor for a livelihood; how he had been dragged more and more into the game until he had become one of the big men.

"The excitement and thrill were life to me," he told his sister, "and I wanted money. You would never have known if it had not been for this rotten shooting. But I promise you, Helen, that I will talk to Goldie Gorio, and try to persuade him to let Steve out. Steve belongs to Gorio's gang, and—"

"Gorio is cruel, callous, and evil!" Helen's eyes flashed fire. "I could kill that man!"

McBaine Severs a Partnership.

ON the day that Steve was allowed to sit up for the first time, McBaine started his attack. By careful detective work he had learnt much that puzzled him. When everything was ready he rang up King.

"This is McBaine speaking. Surprised? I've got a reputation for speaking plain, King, and to the point. As crooks go, you're a better specimen than most. You may steal, rob, smuggle, and indulge in other unpleasant actions, but you don't murder or shoot in cold blood."

"Thanks!" King's sharp mouth twisted in a wry smile. "You haven't forgotten the other night by any chance?"

"That's why I'm ringing you now. I want to tell you just what happened. It's my job to wipe out murderers and gangsters, and to stop the wholesale slaughter through gang warfare. I decided to do a little killing on my own. Don't interrupt, King, but just listen. Did you ever meet the Doc? He acted for Goldie."

"Sure I knew him," answered King. "You found his body. One of your scouts?"

"Sure he was," came the answer. "He was shot dead two seconds after speaking to me. He told me that on the night of the 17th the Shark was going out, and that Goldie Gorio was taking her."

"What's that?" King spoke sharply.

"Thought it would surprise you," came the grim chuckle. "They got wise that Doc was one of my men, but they wanted him to tell me about the Shark for some reason. Can you think of a reason, King? Can you think of one person who might like Steve to take a ride to heaven? I'm not asking for thanks, but I pushed aside one of the guns, or Steve would have been a corpse. I recognised him just in time. Steve had been sent as a deputy. That night Goldie Gorio was supposed to be queer with indigestion. Do you swallow that muck?"

"Are you hinting that Gorio sent Steve to certain death?"

"I am," answered McBaine. "I got the Doc to try and lure Gorio on board the Shark, and I also know that Goldie himself personally gave the order to Steve over the 'phone. Link all this up, King, and ask your nice, kind partner why he sent Steve Carlyle to his death."

"You meddling police cop!" shouted King. "Why ever should Gorio want to have Steve shot?"

"You've got a sister, haven't you?" The words were sinister. "One of the best-looking in this city. She's the wife of Steve. Has Goldie ever sent her any presents? This ain't a bluff on my part, King, but the truth. Why not find out for yourself?"

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King was furious with rage and hate as he paced his room. He was linking up small facts and details. Gorio had never seen Helen till the day of the wedding; now Gorio was always giving Helen some sort of present. Then there was the huge car, the amazing flat—and King's face hardened as he remembered that over the dressing mirror in Helen's room was scrawled in gold letters: "With the Love and Respects of Goldie Gorio." How Helen had hated that blatant advertisement of a rich man's generosity. McBaine was right when he said Gorio himself had spoken to Steve over the 'phone. Helen had told him so. Then there had been those strange, queer lights in Gorio's eyes whenever he had gazed upon Helen.

"McBaine's right!" King hit his clenched fist into an open palm. "Gorio framed Steve!"

King snatched up the telephone and put through a call.

"Is that Goldie Gorio?" He spoke quietly. "King this end." A pause. "Yeah, Helen's fine, and so is Steve. I'm gonna tell you something. I know how Steve came to be shot. Your murdering scheme did not quite succeed. No, I'm not crazy! I've learnt all about the Doc and how he died. I'm coming right over to discuss the matter. Reckon we ought to have a show-down."

"Anything you say suits me," drawled the tired voice of Gorio. "You've been listening to McBaine, but I'll sure be all prepared to see you. Step right over." His laugh was almost pleasant as he added: "Bring your friends along. You're all welcome."

King jabbed back the receiver. "The skunk did frame Steve!" He got to his feet. "This city isn't big enough for the two of us. The treacherous, murdering skunk!"

Murder.

IF one could have watched Goldie Gorio without his being aware of it, one would have noticed a queer change. His mouth kept on twitching, and the eyelids kept flickering; besides these two facts he had developed a habit of muttering to himself.

"That's queered me with Helen! Curses on the meddling fool!" He

paced his luxurious bed-room. "But I'm the big noise in this city, and King's a nuisance. If King goes, then Helen—" He grinned in a horrible manner. "And King is coming for a show-down. He's going to get a big surprise!"

In the ante-room to Gorio's bed-room was an invalid chair. The invalid was an old man much enfolded in rugs and scarfs. A grey-haired woman whose face was marked with years of suffering and worry hovered around. She was the wife of the invalid. There was fear in her eyes as she gazed at Gorio, who made a significant gesture for her to get out.

"King coming over with his gang—a show-down!" rapped out the crook. "Are you all set? The signal will be when I stroke my chin—get it? King believes you to be only an old invalid pal of mine, so it will be dead easy. Now I'll go and talk to the other boys."

Who would have imagined that the marble entrance hall of this big building was a death-trap? Slide back the pictures and small slits in the walls would have been revealed. Behind were "typewriters," the deadliest kind of machine-guns. Handling them were men whose eyes gleamed with the lust to kill. At most times Goldie Gorio used this building, known as the Regal, as his home and place of business. His gang were kept out of town, except for a few trusted ones, but Goldie had all the gang brought in as soon as he found King was planning a show-down.

King knew nothing of Gorio's hidden menaces, but he was so enraged with the treachery of his partner that he was blind to all danger. Boldly and fearlessly he went with half a dozen picked men to the Regal. As they marched across the entrance hall a picture slid back and a wicked, snaky barrel followed the procession with sinister alertness. One move by King and his gang and that "typewriter" would speak.

Joe met King. The big fellow grinned.

"Goldie is expecting you, boss, in his bed-room. Will you follow me?"

King gave his men a significant nod to be on the alert, and stepped after the burly gangster. They were shown into the ante-room. The invalid made a great effort and turned in his chair. He smirked at them, and then sank back limply against his cushions. Then a door opened and Goldie Gorio stepped out of his bed-room. He was garbed in a well-cut blue lounge suit. It had three buttons!

"Howdy, King! I see you've brought your friends."

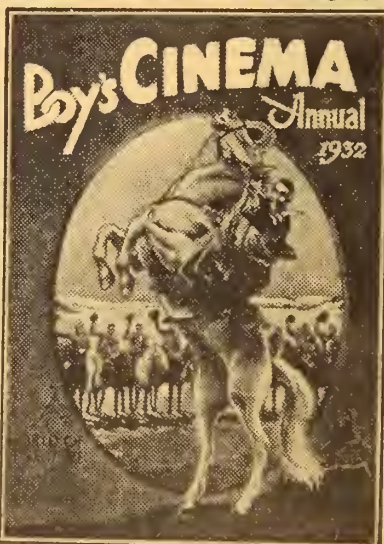
"I've had information passed to me that only you can explain away." King did not waste his words. "You heard what I said over the 'phone. Did you or did you not send Steve Carlyle to the Shark, knowing that McBaine and his men were waiting in hiding?"

"The Doc and McBaine had planned it all so nicely that it seemed a pity to spoil their plot." Goldie smiled pleasantly. No longer was it worth while trying to win Helen by gentle methods—force, power and money should achieve his ends. Therefore, why bother to lie? "McBaine wanted someone to shoot at, so I sent someone. Steve wanted to get out of the game, and I do not trust men who want to quit. I decided that by sending Steve I'd do him a good turn; but McBaine always was a bad shot."

"You murdering skunk!" shouted King. "So you boast about planning an innocent lad's death! And what do you think I'll be doing when you plan to send Steve for another so-called holiday? You're not the only person

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Roaring Guns.

It looked like being a hot day as Bill Dakers took his seat at the steering wheel of the Wyoming Development Company's pay car, and gently eased the clutch with his left foot.

A good seventy miles lay ahead of him. His destination was the company's vast cattle ranch at Twin Falls, and he reckoned to make it by four that afternoon. It was now close after twelve.

He engaged his bottom gear, and turned his head towards another man who sat in the seat by his side.

"All set?" he asked.

"All set," was the reply. "Go right ahead."

The pay car moved off, and the two men settled down to the long run before them.

An hour slipped by, and Cheyenne, the town they had just left, was twenty miles in their rear. The sun blazed down relentlessly as the car steadily climbed the dusty trail that led over the Colorado Mountains, skirting the boundary line between the State of Colorado itself and Wyoming.

Bill Dakers found the heat oppressive. Waves of shimmering air came back to him from the engine, causing beads of sweat to drip from his forehead on to the steering-wheel.

He endured it for another half an hour, then abruptly drew the car to a standstill at the side of the trail.

"Gosh, it's stewin'," he said, and wiped his forehead with the back of his hand.

His companion glanced about him nervously, and touched a brown leather bag that lay under the dashboard with his foot.

"Better keep goin', Bill," he advised. "There's been several hold-ups hereabouts in the last week or two, and I calculate we oughtn't to take any risks.

There's ninety-five thousand dollars in our charge, and it's a tidy sum."

"Maybe," replied Bill Dakers phlegmatically, "but that ain't going to stop me havin' a smoke."

He produced a small sack of tobacco and a packet of cigarette papers, and deftly teased out a finger of brown strands into one of the papers. Neatly he rolled his snoko, running his tongue deftly along the gummed edge in completion of his task.

"Hold-ups, eh?" he mused as he flicked a match into a flame, and lit up. "Waal, I guess your two sixes and the engine in this old tub will keep us out of any trouble. The hombres have only tried it on us once, you will remember, an' we shot one into a fair imitation of a griddle-cake, and ran the other down."

He chuckled at the memory as he engaged his gears once more, and resumed the journey.

For another two hours things were uneventful, and by then they were within fifteen miles of Twin Falls, the only excitement being a cloud of steam from the radiator owing to the cap having blown off under pressure.

Suddenly, at the end of a sharp twist in the trail, they saw a rope. It was stretched taut across the trail from trees on either side, and was about the height of the windscreen.

Neither Bill Dakers nor his companion said a word, but they acted in unison. Bill crouched low over his wheel, and rammed his foot down hard on the accelerator, while the other whipped a pair of six-guns from their holsters, and tensed himself in readiness for a fight.

Bill's mind worked with the rapidity of lightning. He knew full well that the rope had been stretched across the trail for his own especial benefit, and he knew, too, that somewhere behind the rocks on either side of him were

men who wanted to split the Wyoming Development Company's pay-roll between them.

The speed of the car rose from twenty to thirty-five miles an hour as he swung over the steering wheel. The wheels left the trail for the hard, rocky ground by the side of it as Bill raced round the outside of the obstructing rope.

At the same moment that he regained the trail again, he heard a sound like the swish of a stock-whip, and his hat vanished from his head. The next second, the six-guns of his companion roared and flashed their challenge and defiance.

Bill paid no attention to what was going on. He kept his foot hard down, and his eyes on the trail ahead, knowing that he would need all his driving skill for what was coming.

The trail altered direction sharply a bare two hundred yards further on, one side of it bounded by a sheer wall of rock, and the other falling away abruptly in an embankment that dropped fifty feet to the bed of a dried-up river.

Bill clung to the wheel grimly, steady-ing the bumping vehicle over the pot-holes in the trail. The speedometer was showing about forty.

Suddenly above the harsh thundering of his companion's artillery, he heard another sound—a sound that froze him with momentary fear.

A tire had burst!

The back part of the pay car seemed to rise up a few feet from the shock of the burst, and then crash back on to the rocky surface. In the same second, Bill Dakers saw the bed of the dried-up river yawning beneath his front wheels like some giant monster waiting to devour him.

"Look out!" he roared. "Jump for it!"

There was no time. The car tilted to a sickening angle. Then, as it started its headlong plunge downwards, the front of it ploughed into the crumbling dirt of the embankment. The back of it came over, and it started to roll.

With a horrible crash, it struck a
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group of rocks at the bottom, and came to a standstill. Bill Dakers groaned as the steering-wheel smashed against his broad chest and part of the splintered body work hit him on the back of the head. Slowly, dazed almost into unconsciousness, he crawled from the wreckage, and staggered to his feet.

Two horsemen stood on the trail above. One of them carried a rifle, and as Bill Dakers straightened himself, the rifle came swiftly to the ready.

Bill saw this foggily, and knew that his life could be measured by seconds only. With fingers that were numb and uncertain, he groped towards his holsters.

The rifle above spoke, and Bill felt something which seemed like a hammer smash into his right shoulder. He spun round completely from the impact.

"You darned murderers!" he tried to shout. "I'll—I'll—"

The rifle spat again, and half an ounce of hot lead buried itself in his chest. He threw up his hands and toppled backwards, tried to shout once more, then lay still upon the dirt—dead!

The Cheyenne Kid.

IT was two boys from the Development Company's ranch who discovered what was left of the pay car. When the car became overdue, the foreman sent them along the trail with lanterns the same night to see what had happened, thinking that the delay was due to a simple breakdown.

But when, the next day, the foreman saw two bodies laid out side by side in a buggy, riddled with rifle and forty-five bullets, he started to bring the whole influence of the great Wyoming Development Company to bear upon hauling the murderers up to justice. The single-line telephone to Cheyenne, the company's headquarters in Wyoming, started to hum with the news, and the company's president at once got into touch with the State Department of Justice.

Nothing happened for three whole days, and the township of Twin Falls, having received another consignment of pay by the express armoured car settled down to the contemplation of yet another unsolved mystery.

Then, on the morning of the fourth day, shortly after the cattle hands had spread themselves over the surrounding landscape on their routine work, the trail from Rawlins, fifty miles north of Twin Falls, became alive with flying lead. Two riders bore down upon Twin Falls, one a hundred yards ahead of the other.

It was a pursuit. The foremost rider switched round in his saddle every few seconds, and loosed off a stream of shots at the rider behind. At such times, the rearmost rider would crouch low over his animal's back, waiting for the other to reload. Then he would straighten himself, and his own six-gun would blaze a reply.

The sheriff of Twin Falls, his hoary beard bristling with wrath, heard the shooting, and charged out of his office on to the veranda which marked the entrance to his domain. He saw the two riders hurtling down the street, and charged back into his office again, to reappear with a shot gun of doubtful age.

He was too late to stop the first of the two riders, but he sent the second back on his animal's haunches at the sight of the old muzzle-loader, and compelled him to dismount.

"You'll stay right here, by gun," said the sheriff fiercely, "or I'll scatter you all over the street!"

The other gave one fleeting glance at the rapidly disappearing rider he had

been pursuing, and shrugged his shoulders by way of agreement.

"That's better," said the sheriff. "There's been too much shootin' round here lately, and I'm goin' to put a stop to it. Now just exactly who be you, and why?"

The other looked him up and down amusedly and grinned.

"Well, an' just exactly who be you—and why?" he countered.

"I be Hank Bates, Sheriff of Twin Falls, and all the law there is around here, I guess," replied the sheriff.

"Huh!" The other whisked a disc of metal from his pocket and held it out.

"Well, Mr. Bates, I'm Utah Kane, United States Marshal. Here's my badge. An' right now I'll tell you that you've assisted the escape of one Buck Allen, otherwise known as the Cheyenne Kid."

The sheriff started violently and dropped his gun. It hit the roadway with a clatter and exploded, sending a charge of buckshot into a nearby water-butt. He jumped again.

"Well, I'll be gosh-darned!" he belated. "The Cheyenne Kid! Say, there's five thousand dollars reward on him, dead or alive!" He scratched his head exasperatedly. "But listen, mister. I've heard of you, an' I reckon Utah Kane's the man for any roundin' up of toughs that's goin'; but you've got it all wrong this time. I know Buck Allen—we all do round here—an' I reckon he's all right."

"Is that so?" replied Kane sarcastically. "Well, Mr. Clever Bates, tell me how it was he was runnin' from me? Tell me why, if he was innocent and found me after him, he didn't stop right here an' get you to vouch for him."

The sheriff tried to think of a reply, but couldn't find one.

"Listen, sheriff!" Kane went on. "I'm callin' on you now to help me round up this Buck Allen. That pay-car job was done by the Cheyenne Kid, and the Cheyenne Kid is someone who lives in Twin Falls an' knows all that goes on."

"How do you know?" "Because the Development Co. had an idea that there might be a hold-up, and sent a dummy car along the trail back here only ten minutes ahead of Bill Dakers. Only two men knew about it—even Bill himself didn't know—yet the dummy car wasn't stopped. One of the men who knew was Buck Allen. Get me?"

"Yeah, but that don't signify nothin'," said the sheriff. "That don't make Buck the Cheyenne Kid."

"Then," asked Kane patiently, "why was he runnin' away?"

"H'm, there's something in that," muttered the sheriff, finding Kane's argument unanswerable. "But I didn't think Buck—"

Kane cut him short bitingly as he turned away in disgust.

"I reckon that's your trouble," he said. "You never did think—cept, maybe, in your sleep!"

The Traitor.

MEANWHILE, far down the trail leading from Twin Falls into the heart of the Colorado Range, Kane's quarry was riding hard. Suddenly he slowed up and wheeled his mount until he was facing the way he had come.

He thrust his white stetson to the back of his head, and gazed steadily along the trail, waiting. For perhaps ten minutes he did not move; then, satisfied that he was no longer being followed, he urged his horse into a gallop once more, and started back for

Twin Falls, keeping to the low scrub by the side of the trail.

Soon he came to a whitewashed timber-house on the outskirts of the township. He drew rein some distance from it, keeping himself hidden by the overhanging branches of a tree. As he watched he appeared to be thinking, but no change of expression altered the set of his stern, determined profile.

Suddenly, as though tired of inactivity, he dismounted, and made his way towards the house, keeping low to escape observation.

When he reached it, he swung on to the sloping roof of an outbuilding and gained the sill of one of the upper windows. He clambered through it, but as he did so a man's voice pulled him up dead.

"Who's that?"

He swung round in the direction whence the voice came, gun in hand. Then he laughed, spun his weapon on his trigger finger, and thrust it back into its holster.

"Hallo, Duke!" he said, with a grin.

Duke Porter was foreman of the Wyoming Development Co.'s ranch at Twin Falls, and up to four days ago—until, in fact, the day of Bill Dakers' murder—he had been Buck Allen's boss. And now Buck stood before him, an outlaw.

Duke was not too pleased to see him, but he forced a greeting.

"Gosh, though, Buck, don't you know the whole town's after you?" he said. "Don't you realise that if you're caught it means a trial and the rope? Why did you come here?"

"To see Betty."

They were in one of the living-rooms of Betty Thorpe's house, and even as Buck spoke a light footstep sounded on the stairs. The door opened, and a girl stood framed in the doorway.

At the sight of Buck her face went dead white, making the blueness of her eyes and the flax colouring of her hair seem more intense than usual. She stumbled towards him and gripped his hands.

"Buck—you!" she cried. "Oh, why did you risk coming back here?"

"Utah Kane is out after me, and he cut my trail to the north, so I had nothing else left but to return here again." His voice softened. "Before leaving for the south, I reckoned I'd see you again. That's all, I guess."

Duke Porter shuffled awkwardly, and as he watched Buck and Betty together he remembered that the State Department of Justice had placed five thousand dollars on Buck's head. He fingered the butt of his gun thoughtfully. It would be easy to stick Buck up now, send for the sheriff, and collect that five thousand.

He checked himself. There was Betty to think about. He, too, wanted to marry her, and if he gave Buck over to the sheriff, Betty would regard him as a traitor, and refuse to have anything to do with him.

He had to play his cards carefully. If he could fix it so that Buck was placed under arrest without the suspicions of Betty being aroused, Buck would eventually hang, and both the girl and the reward would fall into his hands.

These things flashed quickly through his mind before he spoke again.

"Say, Buck, I hope you don't misunderstand my being here like this—with Betty, I mean," he said, with the intention of making fresh protestations of friendship.

Buck turned to him, smiling.

"Aw, now, don't be foolish, Duke," he replied. "You're the best pal a guy

ever had, even if you are in love with her."

Duke again shuffled his feet awkwardly, and opened his lips to protest. Buck cut in:

"Don't deny it, Duke. I know. You see—"

A horse whinnied in the corral below, and he stopped speaking abruptly, every nerve tense.

"What was that?"

"Nothin'," Duke replied, going over to the window. "One of the animals gettin' restless, that's all."

"Go and look round for me, Duke," said Buck, looking over his shoulder.

"If anyone thinks I'm here, say I'm not—see? Say you haven't seen me."

"Okay, Buck," replied Duke, and went out.

Buck waited until the door shut behind him; then, putting his finger to his lips so that Betty would keep quiet, he softly opened it again and listened. He stood there, motionless, for a minute or two before turning back to her.

"Listen, Betty," he said quickly. "I can't stay here with you much longer, an' there's somethin' I want to say to you before I go."

"What is it?" she asked eagerly.

"Will you trust in me and believe in me until everything's cleared up?"

"You know I will, Buck," she replied. Then a puzzled expression came over her face. "But, Buck, the boys say you're the Cheyenne Kid, an'—"

"It's no use," he cut in, "I can't explain now. Just forget it until I come back."

They were interrupted by the distant pounding of hoofs. Buck rushed to the window and looked out.

There, far down the trail that led from Twin Falls, was a posse approaching, and in spite of the distance Buck easily recognised Utah Kane and the sheriff leading. He turned back to Betty quickly.

"I must be goin' now," he said. "They're after me. Good-bye, Betty. Don't forget what I said."

Betty stood before him, her face blanched of all colour, hesitating. Then she flung her arms round his neck, kissed him, and was gone.

Buck stared after her, more dazed than if he had been thrown from a wild bronco. The noise of the clattering hoofs became more distinct in the seconds that followed, and he roused himself for action.

With a light spring he gained the window-sill and dropped on to the sloping roof outside. The posse was close now, and an enormous report told him that the sheriff had loosed off with his shot-gun.

Buck laughed as he vaulted to the ground and started running towards his horse. Then as a spurt of dust rose close to his feet he realised that he could never reach it. He wheeled about, running hard for a thick expanse of bush a hundred yards to his right, and reached it amidst the whine of bullets all about him.

He knew then that he was safe.

Meanwhile, Kane, watching him vanish, made no move to follow him. Instead, he reached out his hand and laid it on the sheriff's bridle as the sheriff urged his bronco forward.

"Go easy, sheriff, unless you want the top of your head blown off," he said easily. "You'll never find him in there, and he could turn you into cold meat from his hiding-place before you knew he was within yards."

The sheriff checked his animal abruptly, grumbling into his beard the while.

"Heck!" he said, disgruntled. "It's sure funny how I missed that hombre! And it's plumb hilarious that you did the same, Mr. Utah Kane."

Kane smiled enigmatically.

"It was your fault, sheriff," he said. "You kept gettin' in my way."

The sheriff snorted angrily.

"Now that I come to remember, it was you that got in my way," he retorted. "Every time I tried to fire you rode across me. Well, he's afoot, anyway, an' that's somethin'."

At that moment Duke Porter appeared

out of Betty's house, and strode towards them.

"Hey, Kane, how do I stand for that five thousand?" he asked. "It was me that gave you the low-down."

Kane looked at him levelly.

"Darn good of you, Porter," he said shortly, "but we didn't get him, and the conditions of the reward are—captured, dead or alive. Besides, I didn't recognise your voice over the 'phone." He shot a glance at Betty's house. "Say, ain't you supposed to be a pal of Buck's?"

"I was, but I don't stand for murder from no one."

"Is that so?" Kane's eyes shifted back to Duke thoughtfully. "Well, that's plumb law-abidin' of you, Mr. Porter! I'll not forget it!"

He wheeled his horse abruptly and rode back to Twin Falls.

At the Old Barn.

Buck was not seen for the remainder of that day, but Utah Kane did not seem to worry much. He occupied his time by sitting on the sheriff's veranda, chewing peanuts and gazing enigmatically into the distance. He seemed to have something amusing on his mind, but what it was even the sheriff himself couldn't find out.

The following morning he was astir early, and ate more peanuts until breakfast-time. He seemed to be waiting for something, but neither in action nor speech did he give the slightest hint of what it was.

Nothing happened until just as he was finishing his breakfast. Then on the crisp morning air was borne the sound of a distant shot.

The sheriff, sitting on the other side of the table, slammed down his cup of coffee and got to his feet.

"What was that?" he said tensely.

His six-gun was in his hand and in his eyes was a gleam that meant business.



"Someone doin' some target practice," replied Kane amiably, stuffing another wad of salt pork into his mouth.

One of the boys from the Development Co.'s ranch thrust his head in at the door.

"Shootin' down at the big barn," he said breathlessly. "It's the Cheyenne Kid!"

Both Kane and the sheriff forgot breakfast and charged into the street. Their mounts were standing at the end of the veranda, and they leapt into their saddles and galloped off in the direction of the Development Co.'s ranch.

When they reached it they found a crowd outside. Thrusting their way through, they got close to find Duke Porter, gun in hand, shouting to someone inside the barn to come out.

Kane rode up to him.

"Hey, what's the yellin' for?" he demanded.

"Buck Allen is in there," Duke explained. "Gorman, my assistant, was in there talkin' to Madge, and Buck bust in on them. He stuck Gorman up, and when Madge tried to stop him shootin' he plugged her."

"Buck shot a woman?" said Kane incredulously. "I guess I don't quite believe that."

"It's true," said Duke. "What's more—"

Kane silenced him with a gesture, and turned his attention to the barn.

"Come on out, Buck!" he called. "The game's up!"

He reached for his gun, expecting a rush, but his fingers never closed over the butt. The door of the barn remained shut, but a trap-door in the roof swung back, and Buck leapt on to the weather-boards. His six-gun was in his hand, and in his eyes was a gleam that meant business.

"I'd have shot it out with you, Kane," he said quietly, "but there's a woman in there that needs attention pronto. You'd better send one of the boys for Doc Stevens."

Kane, his hands above his head for safety's sake, nodded.

"Okay!" he said calmly. "Wurdy, ride to the doc's house an' bring him back. And now, Buck, I reckon you'd better surrender. You're surrounded, an' we'll get you sooner or later."

"I'll surrender all right," said Buck. "But before I do, there's something I want to say. I just heard what Duke Porter said. I met Madge here by appointment. She used to be Duke's girl, and he threw her over. Well, she said she had got something important to tell me, but before she could begin someone shot her from the doorway. It looked uncommonly like Gorman, from the glimpse I caught of him before he bolted."

"Where is he now?" asked Kane, eyeing Buck's gun steadily.

"I don't know."

Kane frowned, and he shifted uncomfortably in his saddle.

"All right," he said. "I'll talk to Gorman later. An' now, what about surrendering? I've a perfectly good breakfast to finish back at the sheriff's place, an' I guess I'm still hungry."

There was a tense silence while Buck hesitated. He glanced over the group thoughtfully, and the sheriff began to quail at the thought of him trying to shoot his way out.

Then with a short laugh Buck flung his gun to Kane, and leapt down from the roof.

"Here I am, Kane," he said. "I reckon you've got me."

A wave of relief swept over the watchers behind Kane, and everyone

lowered their hands. Then as Kane marched his prisoner off, a babel of talking broke out. Buck—the Cheyenne Kid—had surrendered! Almost without a fight he had calmly given himself up to justice.

It was a mystery, and no one seemed able to throw the least light on it. The boys gave it up.

Kane Gets Busy.

KANE put Buck in the lock-up behind the sheriff's office, and quietly settled down to his breakfast again. The sheriff sat down opposite, but not to eat. He wanted to know things, and judging from the expression on his face, he wanted to know them pretty badly.

"See here, Kane," he said suddenly, "I reckon I don't quite understand all this. I thought that, seem' how the Cheyenne Kid is dangerous, you'd be takin' him to the County gaol right away."

Kane emerged from a plateful of whaffles, and fixed the sheriff with an expressionless stare.

"Mister Hank Bates," he said with solemn politeness, "you belong to a past age—an age of lynchings and shootin' on sight. When someone's done a crime, you jest pick on the first guy that seems suspicious, and stick him up for trial, an' he's generally dumb enough to say things that'll get himself convicted, whether he's guilty or not."

"But—"

"Don't interrupt. It's me that's doin' the talkin'." Kane stuffed his mouth full once more, and set his jaws to clearing a space through which he could go on.

"In the West to-day we still carry the outward trappings of the days of lawlessness, but hombres who get arrested now shout loud for a lawyer as soon as they find themselves in the calaboose. We ain't quite got to the complications of finger-prints an' other horrors of civilisation, maybe, but we do have to use brains. Ge' me?"

"Meanin' that I haven't got any?"

Kane shrugged his shoulders.

"Meanin' that I have," he countered politely, "an' that's upsettin' nobody's feelin's, I guess. Anyway, jest for the time bein', I want you to do things for me, and not ask questions. You'll see why, when it filters into that block you call a brain."

The sheriff subsided, disgruntled. "What do you want me to do?" he asked surlily.

"Bring Gorman to me here in an hour."

"But Duke Porter said—"

Kane threw up his hands in despair. "By all the powers," he swore, "stop that thinkin' you keep indulgin' in! It'll be getting you into trouble. Do as I say, and quit stallin'!"

"Okay," said the sheriff.

The conversation ended by the sound of Kane swilling hot coffee as though he were giving an imitation of Niagara in a music-hall.

A quarter of an hour later he wandered out into the one main street that ran through Twin Falls, resumed the chewing of peanuts that had been interrupted by breakfast, and strolled off towards the hospital.

He disappeared inside, and after a brief altercation with Doc Stevens because the doc didn't want Madge, the shot woman, disturbed, went in to see her. He was with her a bare ten seconds; then he came out again, a broad grin on his face.

He met Betty in the porch. She caught hold of his arm as he went past her, and stopped him.

"Mr. Kane!"

"Yeah?"

"How is she?"

"Who—Madge? Oh, she's fine! The doc reckons she'll get better all right." He flipped a peanut shell at a bucket, and scored a direct hit. "She'll be about again in time to give evidence at the trial."

Betty's face changed colour.

"Mr. Kane, you don't believe that Buck really committed those crimes, do you?" she implored. "He—he couldn't."

"No?" Kane glanced at her kindly.

"Well, maybe I think he did, and maybe I think he didn't. Come along to the sheriff's place this afternoon, an' I'll let you know definitely."

He wandered away, his head bent in thought, and an expression of intense satisfaction on his face. Several men greeted him as he passed back along the main street, but he neither returned their greetings nor looked at them.

Eventually he reached the office again, and went inside. He grinned inscrutably at Buck, who watched him from behind the iron bars of the lock-up.

"Say, Buck, here's the keys!" He took them off the nail on which they hung, and tossed them into the lock-up.

"Come on out—company's comin'!"

Buck looked hesitatingly at the keys, then at Kane, unable to fathom what Kane was getting at. Then he picked them up, and started unlocking the door.

"Company? Who?"

"Gorman. I told the sheriff to send him." Kane looked out of the window.

"Ah, I guess he's arrived! Come in, Gorman!"

Gorman entered, his close-set eyes looking shifty about him. He was the assistant-foreman down at the Development Co.'s ranch, and not too popular with the boys.

"The sheriff said you wanted me," said Gorman. "What about, anyway? I'm busy, an'—"

Kane smiled at him disarmingly.

"Gorman, Buck here says he reckons it was you who shot a woman down at the barn this morning, an' you say it was him. Ever had much to do with Indians, Gorman?"

"Now look here, Kane—" began Gorman.

Kane interrupted him a second time. He reached over, and jerked the gun from Gorman's holster.

"Nice-lookin' gun that, Gorman," he said absently. "Oh, about them Indians! Well, Indians used to have a great way of gettin' at the truth of a thing like this. They gave the two men one weapon, and they figured that the survivor was innocent. Now I don't want to see either of you two boys get killed, so I've picked my own weapon—that short cattle-whip on the wall over there." He turned and strolled towards the door. "Fix it between yourselves. I'll be back in ten minutes."

He went out, shutting the door behind him.

The Fighting Test.

BUCK faced Gorman and waited. He had no intention of making the first move, knowing that once Gorman started anything, he would have him at a disadvantage.

Gorman watched Buck craftily, crouching low. Suddenly, without warning, he made a break for the door.

Buck stepped across his line of flight, gripped him by the shoulders, and hurled him backwards. Gorman lit the wall behind him with a crash, and leaned against it, gasping for breath.

"I'm not lettin' you get away, Gorman," said Buck. "Not before you are ready to tell Kane who shot Madge. Now, are you goin' to tell decently, and in good order, or do I have to lam it out of you?"

"You can't do that!" squeaked Gorman, scared stiff. "It ain't law!"

"Nor's shootin' a woman," replied Buck. "Come on, now—I'm waitin'!"

Gorman stayed close to the wall, making no attempt to move. Buck waited for a few moments longer, then became impatient.

"All right," he said finally. "You've had your chance. Now I'll force it out of you."

He made a move towards where the whip hung, and his action compelled Gorman into movement. The assistant-foreman, taking advantage of Buck's temporary lack of watchfulness, took a quick pace forward, and swung up the chair in front of the sheriff's table.

Buck swung round to meet the attack, and bent low to take the weight of the chair on his back. It landed with a sickening crash and splintered, but without doing much damage.

Buck straightened himself abruptly, lunging upwards with his fist as he did so. The blow took Gorman under the chin, sending him staggering backwards a second time.

The next moment Buck had the whip in his hand.

"For the last time, Gorman—" he began, and broke off as Gorman, desperate, leapt at him.

He cannoned into Buck, and the two clinched, fighting hard for possession of the whip. They swayed backwards and forwards, crashing into the rough furniture about the office, each maintaining a firm hold of the other for fear of losing the advantage.

One of Gorman's heavy riding-boots caught Buck on the shin, making him wince with pain. His leg began to go numb, and he realised that he could not hold on much longer.

He twisted sharply in Gorman's grip as the boot landed again, this time with a glancing kick. Jerking backwards, he brought his knee upwards and drove it hard into the pit of his adversary's stomach.

Gorman relaxed his hold and began to gasp for breath. Buck tore himself clear, and raised the whip.

"Now, Gorman," he said, "are you goin' to speak?"

Gorman's eyes glinted, and he made to rush again. Buck brought the whip down across his shoulders heavily, and the contact of the lash made a noise like a pistol-shot.

"Ah!" shouted Gorman in agony.

"Who shot Madge, Gorman?" Buck demanded.

Gorman's eyes roved about the office treacherously, and picked upon a leg of the broken chair lying on the floor not a pace away. He dived for it quickly.

Again the lash whined through the air, and landed across his shoulders. He fought back the weakness the pain caused, and picked the chair leg up.

Crack!

Gorman let out a howl, and dropped the chair leg. He staggered to a corner, and crouched into it in an effort to avoid the deadly thong that bit into his flesh.

Buck followed, and stood over him.

"Ready to talk yet, Gorman?"

"No," gasped Gorman weakly.

The whip descended once more, making a vivid red weal across his chest. He cried out again, and sank to his knees, whimpering. Buck raised the whip yet again.

Gorman's face went dead white, and

he put up his arms in a vain effort to shield himself.

"Buck—no—no!" he implored.

Buck checked his arm.

"Who shot Madge?" he asked relentlessly.

"I did. Put up that whip."

Buck turned and went to the door. He flung it open, and found Kane outside, leaning against a corral-post, thoughtfully chewing his eternal peanuts.

"All right, Kane," Buck said. "We've agreed."

Kane nodded amiably, and followed Buck back into the office. He looked at Gorman, and did his best to stop himself from grinning.

"Fine!" he said enthusiastically. "Now you've agreed, perhaps I can get the information I want. How about it, Gorman?"

"I shot Madge," Gorman whined. "I shot her accidentally, tryin' to capture Buck."

"H'm!" Kane considered the point. "Well, I calculate that don't sound much like the truth—especially after what Madge told me—but it'll have to do for the time being."

"I swear it."

"Don't swear. Be a gentleman," said Kane. "Now tell me something else. Who held up that pay-roll car and plugged Bill Dakers?"

"I don't know."

Kane glanced at Buck, and Buck raised the whip again.

"I don't know, I tell you!" screamed Gorman. "You can cut me to ribbons, but I can't tell you something I know nothing about."

Kane put out his hand and checked Buck.

"Well, maybe you don't want to tell me," he said. "It would only mean using you as State evidence, and that would mean a lighter sentence. I reckon I can find out without your help."

He grinned, and turned his back on Buck, intending to help Gorman to his feet. Buck flung down the whip and, with a lightning movement, jerked the gun from Kane's hip.

"Stick 'em up!" he said sharply.

Kane obeyed slowly, and turned with a look of reproach in his eyes.

"Say, Buck, I've been tryin' to help you," he said. "You ain't goin' to break gaol on me, are you?"

"Don't argue, Kane," Buck replied. "Do what you're told, an' no harm'll come to you." He reached to a nail on the wall, and pulled down a pair of handcuffs. "Chain your two selves to the bars of the lock-up, and be quick about it. I'm not riskin' pursuit."

"But, look here—"

"Get busy!"

Kane got busy, but the order did not ruffle his placidness of temper. He took Gorman to the lock-up, passed the chain of the handcuffs behind one of the bars, and fastened one end to his own wrist and the other end to the wrist of Gorman.

Buck backed to the door, and gained the open. The next minute he was astride one of the horses that stood against the corral-post, and galloping down the street in full flight.

A Warning.

TEN minutes later he halted in front of Duke Porter's house, and dismounted. In his approach he made as little noise as possible, and now he



Buck closed with him and forced his gun hand high into the air as he pressed the trigger.

crept up to one of the windows and listened.

Duke was inside, and Betty was with him.

"Duke, you must do something," Betty was saying. "If you don't, they'll take Buck away and hang him."

"Nothing can be done, Betty," Duke replied. "It's no good worrying about him, Betty—he's finished." He paused for a moment, and when he spoke again his voice had changed. "Why don't you forget about him? I always said that if anything happened to him I'd look after you, and I'll keep my word. I've got enough money for us both."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Marry me, and we'll go away to New Mexico, where there's a ranch I intend to buy and run on my own. What do you say?"

Buck nodded, satisfied with what he had heard. He went to the door and opened it.

"Duke! Duke!" he called out. "Where are you?"

He went inside, and found Duke and Betty in a small living-room. Chairs and a table formed the main furniture, while against the left wall was a bookcase, and over in a corner was a large cupboard.

When Betty saw him she went to him quickly.

"Oh, Buck!" she cried happily. "Have they let you go?"

"No," replied Buck. "I broke gaol."

Duke looked quickly out of the window to see if there were any signs of pursuit, and was disappointed.

"You're crazy to head this way," he said. "Why don't you head south and make your get-away?"

"I came to warn you," replied Buck. "Kane's been askin' Gorman a lot of questions, and Gorman handed out some story that you shot Bill Dakers."

"I held up the pay-roll car?" Duke looked incredulous for a moment, then let out a shout of laughter. "Gosh, that's funny!"

"Funny or not," said Buck, "Kane fell for it, and he's on his way out here now, with a posse behind him. They're goin' to search this place for the stolen money."

Duke hesitated for the merest fraction of a second, but his face was expressionless.

"That's just too bad!" he said. "They'll be wasting their time."

Buck made no reply, but turned away to talk to Betty. He took her away to the other side of the room, pretending not to see what Duke was doing.

Duke looked round furtively and, thinking that he was unobserved, moved step by step to his bookcase. Casually, as though unmoved by Buck's warning, he drew a volume from the shelves. Calmly he opened it and started to read.

But Buck, watching, saw him take something from the book and stuff it into the opening of his shirt. He swung round, strode across the room quickly, and jerked the book from Duke's hand.

"Hollow, eh?" he said. "So that's where you had the money hidden, was it, Duke?"

Duke's face changed. Hate smoldered in his eyes as he reached for his gun.

Buck closed with him and caught hold of his wrist, forcing his gun hand high into the air as he pressed the trigger. The gun exploded and the bullet buried itself harmlessly in the rough timbers of the ceiling.

"You're too darned smart to live, Buck Allen!" swore Duke, and dashed his fist into Buck's face.

Buck released his hold and staggered backwards.

Duke saw his advantage, and brought his gun hand down quickly.

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Buck knew that he stood no chance, unless he could shield himself. He dodged sideways, grabbed the door of the cupboard, and swung behind it.

Duke fired. The bullet struck the door and ploughed into the stout wood, spending itself without damage. He started to change position, in order to get a clean shot, and in that moment of delay Buck slammed the door.

With a snarl of rage Duke pressed the trigger again and again, while Buck crouched flat on the floor of the cupboard. A succession of shots rang out.

Suddenly there was a metallic click. Duke's gun was empty!

Buck leapt to his feet and flung open the door. As he did so, Duke raised his right hand and hurled the empty gun straight at Buck's head.

Buck ducked, but not quite in time. The butt caught the top of his scalp, temporarily dazing him. He clapped his hand to his head, and tried to shake off the blur before his eyes.

Buck shook himself and regained possession of his senses.

He rushed to the door in time to see Duke, his horse in full gallop, racing down the south trail as hard as he could go. He jumped into the saddle of his own animal, and bent low over the mane as he followed.

A Running Fight.

GUN in hand, he pounded along, now and then, when conditions seemed favourable, taking aim and firing. But the motion of his horse, made any chance of success seem remote at that distance.

He emptied the gun; then, finding that he had no other weapon but his own bare fists, he flung it aside and settled down to a steady chase.

Slowly, foot by foot, he overhauled Duke Porter until he was almost on top of him. At last they were galloping neck and neck, and Buck saw his chance. He raised himself in his saddle, keeping only the extremities of his riding boots in the stirrups.

He launched himself full at his quarry, and wound his arms round the other's body. The two horses swerved dangerously, and for a sickening moment it looked as though they would both come down.

"Let go, you fool!" Duke cursed. "Can't you see where we are going?"

Buck saw, but too late. A steep precipice at the side of the trail yawned under them suddenly, and they found themselves hurtling downwards.

Buck released his hold on Duke and tried to dig his fingers into the dirt and rock over which he was sliding.

A clump of bushes checked him, and he came to a halt. Looking about him, he saw that he had pitched into a thick evergreen; while, not ten paces away, Duke Porter lay on the ground, groaning.

He extricated himself and crawled over to his quarry. Then, realising that Duke was not likely to make any further attempt at escape owing to his injuries, he sat down by his side to await the arrival of Kane.

Not more than five minutes passed before Kane appeared on the trail above, accompanied by the sheriff, Betty, and several others. He set his horse to the steep gradient, and rode down, finally dismounting at the bottom. The others followed his lead.

"Heh!" said the sheriff gleefully. "I guess we've got you now, Buck Allen. I arrest you in the name of the people. Stick 'em up!"

Kane came forward, and knocked the sheriff's gun aside.

"Hey," he said, "leave my deputy alone!"

The sheriff blinked in astonishment.

"Your deputy," he stammered.

"Yes, my deputy," said Kane, mocking him. "There's the man you want—Duke Porter. And I guess you don't need any handcuffs."

"You mean to say that Duke Porter held up that pay-roll car and killed Bill Dakers?" said the sheriff incredulously. "Say, what are you tryin' to do—make a fool out of me?"

"Nature saved me that trouble," replied Kane calmly.

The sheriff shook his head sadly.

"I guess you're right," he said. "I might have known there was something phoney in the way you kept lettin' Buck Allen escape the way he did—an' you the best shot and the plumb-cussodest man-hunter in three States. Even so, I still can't believe it."

Kane made no reply just then. He motioned to Buck, and Buck produced the wad of money from Duke Porter's shirt.

"Maybe this'll convince you," said Kane, holding the wad out. "An' perhaps you'll remember what I said about not jumpin' to conclusions when a man first comes under suspicion. Two men could have done that murder job—Buck here, and Duke Porter, because they were the only two who knew that two pay-roll cars were being sent; one as a dummy. See?"

"Yeah, I see. But why Duke?"

"Because Buck is my personal deputy hereabouts, and was put in the employ of the Development Co. specially to stop the robberies that had been goin' on in this district for some months past. I already had Duke under suspicion, you see, but I couldn't fix anything definite on him. It wasn't until Gorman, who gets a split from Duke, tried to kill Madge as she was goin' to tell Buck all about it, that I got the real low-down on the whole affair. Even so, what she said wasn't enough to bring Duke to justice, because she'd only heard about the killing of Bill Dakers from Duke and Gorman talkin' together."

"Gosh, then my chasin' after Buck was all hokey!" said the sheriff disgustedly.

"I guess so," said Kane, with a grin. "You see, I had to make Duke convict himself, an' that's where Buck came in. By pretendin' friendship an' bein' suspected himself, he'd never rouse Duke's suspicions that he was really my deputy. You see, Mister Hank Bates, it wasn't Duke I was scared of, hut you. You do too much thinkin', an' that always starts trouble. I found that out the first day I met you."

"Is that so?" replied the sheriff, riled. "Well, let me tell you—"

"Aw, give it a rest!" said Kane.

"Get your prisoner an' come away. Can't you see Buck an' Betty want to talk to each other?"

The sheriff looked and saw. Solemnly he closed one eye, and what he thought this time was right.

"Heh! Heh! Heh!" he guffawed.

"I get you, Kane. Gimme a peanut, an' we'll be goin'."

The posse rode away, leaving Buck and Betty alone.

(By permission of Butchers' Film Service, Ltd., starring Buffalo Bill, Jun., as Buck Allen; Joan Jaccard as Betty Thorpe; Yakima Canutt as Utah Kane; Jack Mower as Duke Porter; Frank Ellis as Gorman; Fred Burns as Hank Bates; Violet McKay as Madge.)

Follow a two-fisted sea-captain and the beautiful daughter of a brave explorer as they sail on a perilous trip to a forgotten cannibal island, where they defy storm, fire and water, man and beast on a search for a fortune in radium! Starring Kenneth Harlan and Lucille Browne.



DANGER ISLAND



READ THIS FIRST.

In search of pitchblende deposits containing immense quantities of precious radium, Professor Adams and his companions are beset by savages on a volcanic island off the African coast, and Adams escapes with one surviving follower, Cebu, his giant negro guide.

In America his daughter Bonnie and her uncle, Dr. Anthony Adams, have become alarmed at his failure to communicate with them. Ben Arnold, an adventurer professing friendship, offers to fit out a relief expedition.

His ship, the Lottie Carson, sets sail under the command of Harry Drake, a young Englishman, and for companion Bonnie engages Arlene Chandos, who is in league with Arnold.

Professor Adams and Cebu are picked up by the Lottie Carson off the coast of Africa. The professor is dying, but before passing away he gives Bonnie a chart and charges her to secure the radium for the benefit of humanity.

After a storm in which Dr. Anthony and Cebu are washed overboard, the ship puts into Twamballa, where Harry is paid off. But, thinking he knows too much, Arnold and Black plan to kill him.

They bribe a Portuguese saloon-owner, Lascara, who arranges for the Zarbessa, a tribe of jungle devil-worshippers, to kidnap Harry and sacrifice him to their idol. Harry is attacked while he is with Bonnie, and is carried off.

Now Read On.

The Jungle Track.

SHORTLY after Harry Drake left Lascara's bar-room to join Bonnie Adams, Briney and those sailer-men who had remained loyal to the

young English sea-captain might have been seen strolling along the seashore.

They had decided to enjoy the cool of the night, and also to discuss the plan Harry had formed in order to baffle Ben Arnold's nefarious designs.

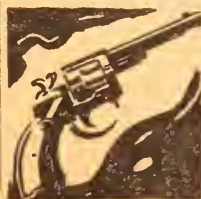
"You know," Briney was saying, "we got fired off the Lottie Carson along with the skipper, but we ain't gonna be so very far away from the craft when she weighs anchor an' sets sail for Danger Island."

"I understand Bull Black's been made captain," put in Burke, "and has signed on about eight new men. I reckon Arnold don't mean to tacklo Danger Island shorthanded, but all the same a couple o' dozen ain't too many for a place like that."

The seamen strolled on, and were at least a mile from the port when they decided to turn back. The beach took a wide curve, however, and it seemed plain folly to make so long a business of the return journey when a short cut was available.

Briney pointed to the jungle, which creuded down to the very edge of the sand and ferned a vast semi-circle about Twamballa. A path was visible, running like a dark scar through the tangled masses of vegetation and flora.

"Don't let's walk round by the



EPISODE 5.

"MUTINY."

beach," the big fellow declared. "This track through the bush looks as if it oughta take us near the town."

Burke, Collins and Connor agreed, but the last-named had a word of warning to add.

"The Zarbessa are around," he reminded his companions. "An' don't forget what Captain Drake said about them takin' white men as a sacrifice to their jungle gods. Stick together, boys, an' keep your eyes peeled."

"Aw, we've got guns, ain't we?" Briney scoffed, tapping his hip significantly. "If them black swabs tried to grab any one of us, we'd fill 'em so full o' holes that the wind would play tunes in their dirty carcasses. Come on, you fellers."

And he led the way into the bush. They marched in single file, and had been tramping the jungle path for five minutes or more when they saw that it joined another track, and they were approaching the fork when the swift padding of naked feet reached their ears.

Briney suddenly came to an abrupt halt and creuded down, signing to his shipmates to imitate his example. A moment later they perceived a number of dusky forms hastening past along the other track.

"Shiver me timbers!" Briney whispered. "If it ain't them inhuman fiends the Zarbessa, I guess they're the bunch that came to Lascara's dive, and they must be on their way back to their kraal."

Even as he spoke Burke clutched his arm, and:

"Look!" he said. "They've got some poor guy a prisoner."

His companions realised that he was right, for three or four of the blacks

were now moving by with the limp figure of a white man in their arms. Knowing what they did of the Zarbessa, the spectacle made the blood of the sailors run hot in their veins, and their mood instantly changed. A second before they had been prepared to lie low and allow the savages to pass without hindrance, but now they were of a very different mind.

"Say, are we goin' to let them get away with this," Collins demanded, "or are we gonna rescue that feller from their clutches?"

"You bet we are," said Briney. "Come on, boys, after 'em!"

The sailors were outnumbered, but the revolvers with which they were armed gave them an advantage that balanced the odds, and without hesitation they sprang to their feet.

The Zarbessa and their captive had proceeded along the other track, and those in the rear were thirty paces away when Briney and his shipmates reached the fork.

Briney uttered a stentorian bellow that brought the blacks to a standstill. They wheeled, and raised a fierce outcry at the sight of the white men.

The savages were armed, but in taking their prisoner had refrained from using any weapons, for their creed demanded that the victim should be brought to their gods alive, and sacrificed only after ghastly tortures had been inflicted. But at the first sign of attack half a dozen spears were raised against the sailors.

"Give 'em lead, boys!" roared Briney.

The white men poured in a volley, and the withering blast of gunfire woke a thousand echoes in the jungle. A troop of monkeys dashed screeching through the festooned foliage of the trees, and their strange cries mingled with the agonised shrieks of wounded men.

The sailors dashed forward, and the blacks threw their captive to the ground and tried to muster for the onslaught. A spear grazed Briney's body and ripped the sleeve of Collins, who was immediately behind him. Next second the white men and the devil worshippers had clashed.

Briney found himself face to face with a negro of his own bulk, and slammed his left to the ribs with a force that staggered the black. Another pounced on the seaman and almost took him unawares, swinging aloft a deadly war-club in an attempt to bludgeon him. But Briney still grasped his gun, and he twisted the muzzle and shot the native at point-blank range.

The other sailors were blazing their way through the swarm of savages and, with several of their number lying dead, the Zarbessa suddenly gave way and fled through the jungle.

Briney and his comrades would have pursued them impetuously, but the white man whom they had rescued now picked himself up with an effort, and planting himself in their path, he restrained them.

"Wait a minute!" he said, in a voice that was familiar to the seamen. "There's no sense in following them, boys. They know the jungle tracks, and they'll get you into an ambush!"

An exclamation escaped Briney. "Hully gee!" he blurted. "We didn't know it was you, captain!"

"Yes, it's me all right," said Harry, "and I'm lucky to be alive. If you fellows hadn't come along I wouldn't have lasted till sunrise. But, listen," he added anxiously. "Miss Adams was with me when I was attacked, and we'd better go and find her—"

December 26th, 1931.

The Return.

WHEN the Zarbessa had disappeared into the jungle with their captive, Lascara had slipped through the gloom to where Bonnie lay senseless.

He picked the girl up in his swarthy arms and made for the town. He had reached his premises by the time Briney's party fell in with the devil-worshippers, and so heard nothing of the commotion that arose in the heart of the bush.

Carrying Bonnie through the side-door of his disreputable hotel, he asked a waiter if he had seen Arnold, and he was informed that the owner of the Lottie Carson was in the back room with Bull Black and Arlene Chandos. A minute afterwards Lascara was stumbling across the threshold into their presence.

"Bonnie!" Arnold exclaimed, as he saw the girl in the dago's grasp. "Good heavens, what happened, Lascara? Where did you find her in this condition?"

The dago laid her on a couch. "She with Drake," he explained. "The Zarbessa, they take heem—threw girl to ground. I bring her here."

He had hardly completed his brief narrative when Bonnie opened her eyes, and, after staring around the room blankly for a moment, she suddenly uttered a sharp cry of horror and clutched at Ben Arnold's sleeve.

"Oh, Ben, Ben," she sobbed, "they've taken Harry Drake away— Those awful savages— Oh, we've got to do something!"

"Take it easy, Bonnie," Arnold told her, in a tone that was meant to soothe her. Then, turning to Lascara and eyeing him meaningly: "You saw the thing happen," he said. "Can anything be done?"

Lascara lowered his glance. "I hear girl's scream, senor," he replied, "and when I run to help I see Zarbessa warriors taking Captain Drake into bush."

"Well?" Arnold murmured, and with that Lascara gave an expressive shrug. "Nothing can be done," he said. "When Zarbessa take white man, nobody ever see him again—"

At that particular moment Captain Harry Drake was far from being in danger of his life, for, in company with his rescuers, he was examining the spot where the devil-worshippers had surprised him.

"It was right here that these fiends attacked me," he declared to his companions, "but Bonnie has gone. You know, boys, I'm certain this was another frame-up, staged by Lascara at the instigation of Arnold and Black. The Zarbessa came to Lascara's dive, and that dago rat must have put them on my trail. Come on, we'll go back to the saloon, and perhaps find some news of Miss Bonnie there."

They made tracks for the premises of Lascara, and, marching into the bar-room formidably, demanded an interview with the proprietor. Lascara had left the door of his office wide open, however, and as Harry caught sight of Bonnie in the midst of the group of conspirators, he took the liberty of entering without "by your leave."

The party in the room turned their heads, and if Arnold and his hirelings had been a ghost they could not have looked more startled. Next second Bonnie was running to the young Englishman's side.

"Harry!" she cried. "Are you all right?"

"Yes," he answered; "and thank Heaven you're safe, too!" Then he put her gently to one side and faced Ben Arnold grimly.

"Listen, you," he went on; "it's about time we had a show-down. Your several attempts to get rid of me have failed, and I'm warning you that I'll take steps to retaliate pretty effectively if there's anything else of the kind—"

"Wait a minute, Drake!" Arnold cut in harshly. "Before you start pulling any more heroics in front of Miss Adams, let me tell you something. You accused me of holding on to Professor Adams' chart for my own ends, and I proved you were wrong! You started a bar-room fight over a native girl, and accused me of being responsible—"

"You're lying to save your face, Arnold!" Harry blazed. "But Miss Bonnie knows the truth about that business!"

Arnold glared at him. "If she cares to believe your glib explanation, it's her own affair," he ground out. "But I'll say this much: I promised her father that I would carry out his last wish by taking this expedition to Danger Island, and ever since I made that promise you have done your utmost to stand in my way."

"That's right, Arnold," Bull Black put in curtly. "He managed to split the crew into two factions, anyhow!"

Harry started forward to challenge that lying slander with a blow, but, as Bonnie checked him, Arnold went on speaking.

"In any case," he said, "the Lottie Carson is my ship, manned with my crew and fitted with my equipment. This expedition can't go on without me, but it can go on without you, Drake, and it will go on in spite of you! And if Miss Adams has the respect for her dead father and uncle that I know she ought to have, she will not allow you or any other man to interfere."

With fine words and a sly touch of righteousness, Arnold had made a bid to turn the altercation in his favour. He succeeded, at any rate, in convincing Bonnie that she must go on with him for her father's sake.

Harry stepped close to Arnold. He could not lawfully dispute the man's ownership of the Lottie Carson, but he had made up his mind that, if need be, he would use force to dispute his control of the expedition. For the moment, however, Arnold seemed to hold the whip-hand.

"Listen," Harry stated, "your expedition could sail without me over all the Seven Seas, and I wouldn't kick. But I distrust you, Arnold, and before I leave Miss Bonnie entirely in your care I want to warn you. If any harm comes to her, or if her father's wishes are not carried out to the last letter, I'll know it—and you'll answer to me!"

He turned and held out his hand to Bonnie.

"Good-bye!" he said, and, grasping her fingers for a moment, he finally wheeled and made his way into the bar-room to rejoin Briney and the boys.

His manner as he encountered them seemed to belie his apparent acceptance of the circumstances in which Bonnie was to sail away under Arnold's doubtful protection.

"Come on, you fellows," he announced curtly. "We've got to get busy."

Towards the Island.

THE Lottie Carson was three hours out of Twamballa Bay, ploughing a course towards the south-west and her grim destination.

With Bull Black in command, her crew was composed of that worthy's fo'c'sle minions Dempster, Gavigan, Markham and Baxter, together with some eight or nine new hands.

There was one other man who had belonged to the original personnel. He

was a seaman named Rogers, and at the time when Harry had fallen foul of Bull Black on the voyage to Africa he had been on the sick-list, and therefore unable to play any part in the free fight that had ensued.

Had he been fit he would have joined forces with those who had been loyal to Harry Drake. Suspecting this, but not certain of it, Bull had kept him on chiefly because he was a skilful carpenter and a useful man to have aboard.

Descending from the bridge and walking forward after some conversation with the helmsman in the wheel-house, Bull Black came upon Rogers and a new hand known as Dennis. The two seamen were stooping over a hatch that they had just lifted, and Bull fired a gruff question at them.

"Hey, what's goin' on here?" he demanded.

It was the man Dennis who answered him.

"Goin' below to get some rope," he said, and with that Bull's eyes glittered ominously.

"Say 'sir' when you're talkin' to your captain, you scum!" he snarled, and took the back of his hand across the sailor's face.

Dennis recoiled, and as Bull Black moved on he made as if to stride after him angrily. But Rogers held him back.

"Wait a minute," he said. "You'll have the chance to get even with him yet."

"Get even with him!" Dennis echoed bitterly. "I'll get even with him. I'll take that kind o' treatment from no man!"

Rogers urged him down into the hold, and then descended the ladder after him. When he stepped to the floor beside Dennis he saw that the latter was looking round on several piles of cases that bore the inscription "Dynamite."

"What kind of a cruise is this I signed up for?" Dennis growled. "Both skipper an' cargo are high-explosive!"

"This is a death-ship, matey," Rogers answered ominously, "with the devil in command. Say, never mind that rope. I just wanted to open up that hatch an' show you something."

He moved towards the cases of explosive and gave a low call. Instantly five heads rose into view from behind the deadly cargo—the heads of Harry Drake and the shipmates who had

remained loyal to him through thick and thin.

"Here's one of the new men, captain," Rogers told Harry. "Name of Dennis, sir."

"Good!" said Harry. "Listen, Dennis: Rogers smuggled us aboard. In a couple of hours from now I'll be in command of this ship. Which side are you on?"

Dennis had recovered in some measure from his bewilderment.

"I don't know who ye are," he made answer, "but I'm on any side that's agin Bull Black."

Harry proceeded to let him fairly into the secret, and had soon explained all.

"Rogers, get Miss Adams down here for a moment if possible," he added. "And don't forget, Dennis will talk to any of the new men he feels he can trust, and will give the signal two hours from now. One blast on this whistle."

A silver object changed hands, and Harry and his comrades ducking out of sight again, Rogers and Dennis made their way up on to the deck.

They paused by the hatch for a moment to consider which men should be approached. Dennis himself was able to vouch for two friends who had signed on with him, and Rogers suggested a likely third who might be spoken to immediately before the signal was due to be given, so that in the event of the fellow refusing he would have no time to raise an alarm.

Rogers and Dennis now parted, Rogers to seek out Bonnie, and Dennis to pass on the word of Harry Drake's project.

Shortly afterwards Dennis might have been seen near the bow with a sailor known as Floyd, and he had made the situation plain to the other man, when he noticed Bull Black approaching him with an ominous scowl. He at once changed the subject, and spoke in an audible tone.

"As I was sayin', Jim," he told Floyd, "I've seen some sharks, but—"

"Oh, 'as you were sayin', huh?" Bull rapped out, bearing down on him. "Well, if you've got anything to say, say it out loud. No more whisperin' aboard this ship, or I'll feed yuh to the sharks! Get aft there, and, Floyd, don't let me catch yuh talkin' to this guy Dennis again."

The two sailors moved away

separately, and Bull kept his lowering gaze fixed on Dennis. He decided that it might be advisable to watch the fellow.

The Whistle.

ABOUT the time that Bull Black was breaking in on the conversation between Dennis and Floyd, Arleno Chandos made her way to Ben Arnold's state-room.

"I want to talk to you, Ben," she said. "You've got Drake out of the way. New what about getting rid of Bonnie Adams?"

"Listen, Arlene," Arnold retorted with some impatience. "I'd like you a lot better if you'd mind your own business."

The girl coloured hotly at his curt words.

"Don't you talk that way to me, Ben Arnold!" she snapped. "You told me you were in love with me, and if I thought you were sweet on Bonnie Adams I'd start something that mightn't be to your liking."

"Who said I was sweet on Bonnie Adams?" Arnold demanded. "I'll handle her, but in my own time. And I'm not standing any interference from you!"

He paused, for Bull Black had opened the door. The newly-promoted captain looked at Arnold and the girl sourly, for he had entered in time to hear the tail-end of his accomplice's angry outburst.

"Arnold," he stated, "you've no time to raise any shindy over womenfolk. There's trouble brewin' on this ship."

"Trouble?" Arnold reiterated.

"What do you mean?"

"Whisperin' among the men we signed up at Twamballa," Bull announced. "Keep your weather eye pceled, and, if anything starts, use your gun and shoot straight. This crew of ours is a rum bunch."

Arnold pursed his lips.

"I thought you knew sailors," he ground out, "but it looks to me as if you've picked a lot of cut-throats."

"Well, what do you expect for a cruise like this?" Bull growled. "A lot of naval college cadets? Listen, Arnold, I've been watching a guy named Dennis. I don't know what his game is, but he's up to something, and we've got to stand by fer action."



Harry and his men advanced along the deck and then came to a halt.

"In that case," said Arnold, turning to Arlene, "you'd better go to your cabin and stay there."

Arlene took his advice and departed, and when she had gone Arnold glanced at Bull.

"That girl may make herself awkward yet," he muttered. "She thinks she's got reason to be jealous of Bonnie Adams. Well, maybe she'll have reason yet. I've been thinking, Bull, that if Bonnie was to marry me there wouldn't be any need to get rid of her. For I'd be in full control then, and I'd see that she realised the folly of making a free gift of this radium to science."

At that moment Bonnie was leaning against the bulwark and staring thoughtfully across the vast expanse of ocean, and she was still in this pensive attitude when Rogers discovered her.

He touched his cap and spoke to her in a guarded tone, and, wondering at his manner as much as his words, Bonnie followed the man forward to the hatch. He conducted her down to the hold, and uttered a low call, which was immediately answered by Harry and his fellow-stowaways.

"Harry!" exclaimed Bonnie, as the Englishman stepped from his hiding-place. "And Briney and the boys! How did you get here?"

"I told you the ship that carried you away wouldn't leave me far behind," Harry answered, with a grin. "Bonnie, we're here because we considered you were in danger. We've got friends among the new hands, and pretty soon one of them will give us the signal to cut loose. It may mean a desperate fight, but I'm going to regain command of this ship, and I want you to promise me that you'll stay in your cabin till it's all over—"

He got no farther, for at that instant the very sound that they awaited rang out clear and shrill upon the deck overhead.

Harry at once gripped Bonnie by the arm.

"That's the signal," he said. "On second thoughts you'd better stay down here. Come on, boys," he added to his men. "Up we go, and, remember—don't shoot unless you have to."

Harry was the first to ascend, and he was closely followed by Briney and Burke. The last-named had been pulling surreptitiously at a cigarette, and flung it to the floor as he set foot on the ladder.

The glowing stub fell among some straw and sacking, and remained there unheeded. The men, climbing eagerly to the deck in response to the blast of that whistle, were too intent on their bold venture to notice the circumstance.

The signal had been heard all over the ship, and it had not escaped the ears of Ben Arnold and Bull Black. They came striding from the state-room where they had been in conversation, and, looking forward, saw Harry and his party clambering from the hold.

The faces of Arnold and Bull became a dual study in amazement.

"Drake?" gasped Arnold. "What's he doing on board this ship?"

Harry and his men advanced along the deck, and then came to a halt. At the same time, Bull Black's minions gathered aft, and were joined by those of the new hands who had not been trusted with the secret of the stowaway's presence.

Briney and the boys kept their eyes on the rascals, but they did not see a man perched in the cross-trees up above them, a man who began to descend the rigging stealthily.

"Mr. Arnold," Harry called. "I don't like to flout the letter of the law, but I feel compelled to do so. I'm going to

take command of this ship, and if you don't hand it over peacefully we'll fight for it!"

There was a sharp, mocking cry from aloft, and Harry looked up to see the man in the rigging. The fellow was in the act of plunging through mid-air, and he dropped feet foremost into the midst of the Englishman's party, scattering them for an instant.

Arnold and Bull Black were not slow in seizing their opportunity, and, with a roar, Bull led an ugly rush across the deck. His pack of ruffians clamoured at his heels, and next second they were at grips with Harry's followers.

As regards numbers, the two factions were fairly evenly matched, with the odds slightly in favour of Arnold's hirelings. Yet it was soon plain that Harry Drake and his staunch band of honest sailor-men were likely to do more than hold their own. Harry himself was a trojan who carried a devastating punch in each hand, and Briney's fists fairly played havoc with those of Black's cut-throat gang whom he singled out for punishment.

It was Briney's ambition to tackle Bull Black in person and avenge himself for the ill-treatment he had received when serving under the man. He hammered his way to where Black was overwhelming Rogers with a shower of blows, and, intervening between them, he soon had the tyrant fighting on the defensive.

Briney was on the warpath, and he battled with a fury that taxed Bull's stamina to the utmost. It was a conflict of heavy-weights, and, though Harry Drake had previously shown that Bull Black was by no means invincible, he had done so by superior speed and skill.

Briney was as cumbersome as his opponent, and as ignorant of the fine art of boxing. They were fighters, the pair of them, giving and taking punches that a man with any sense of ring-craft would have had no difficulty in avoiding. Their conflict was a sheer bombardment of bunched knuckles, and he who survived the battering would prove himself beyond all question the stronger and more determined man.

Bull took heavy punishment during the early stages, but managed to rally, and he launched a counter-attack that would have crushed anyone of normal physique, yet Briney fought back doggedly.

In the meantime, the rest of the men were engaged in a desperate mêlée. Fists alone were used, for in that fierce mix-up there was no chance of gun-play, but the scenes enacted on the deck of the Lottie Carson were none the less violent.

Fire!

STANDING in the hold at the foot of the ladder up which Harry and his companions had climbed, Bonnie Adams listened anxiously to the tumult of the strife that was going on over her head.

Now and then men lurched close to the hatch, and for a blink of time she caught sight of them as they fought. But she could not guess how the battle was faring, and, though she was not yet fully convinced of Arnold's villainy, her fears were for the young Englishman who had championed her.

She was waiting there in suspense when a faint, crackling sound arrested her attention. It was accompanied by the smell of smoke, and as she turned her head quickly she saw the gleam of flames a few feet away from her. The cigarette-end, so carelessly thrown aside by Burke, had set fire to the straw with which the floor of the hold was covered.

A cry of consternation escaped Bonnie, and she tried to stamp out the

blaze under her heel. But it was spreading swiftly through the dry straw, and her efforts were futile. As she endeavoured to trample it down, the fire baffled her and sent out tongues of flame.

A considerable blaze was soon raging in the hold, and it reached the pile of boxes behind which Harry and his fellow-stowaways had earlier concealed themselves. Next moment Bonnie caught sight of the inscription that had been painted in red letters on every one of those crates, and as she spelled out the word "Dynamite," a thrill of horror ran through her.

She turned and made for the ladder again, and scrambled frantically towards the deck. Her foot slipped on one of the rungs, and she almost tumbled back into the hold, but saved herself from falling and climbed on.

Her head rose above the hatch-opening, and a thin spiral of smoke drifted aloft. She looked round at the mob of sailors who were struggling close by and called out frantically in an attempt to give the alarm.

"Fire!" she screamed. "Fire!"

The men paid no heed, for none heard her in the stress of the moment. The ship might have been sinking under them for all they knew. Indeed, it was in a worse plight—it was in danger of being ripped open from stem to stern by the terrific explosion of several tons of dynamite, and every soul aboard her stood on the brink of doom!

"Help!" Bonnie shrieked again. "There's a fire in the hold!"

Still there was no response to her terrified cry, but all at once she saw Harry and Ben Arnold grappling fiercely at the other side of the hatch. She clambered on to the deck and ran round the opening in the hope of separating them and forcing them to listen.

The hulking form of Bull Black stumbled into her path. He was striving to ward off a regular tornado of blows that Briney was aiming at his head, and was meeting with no great success, for as he loomed up in front of Bonnie a punch crashed into his jaw and hurled him to the planks.

Bonnie dodged past his prone form even as Briney was assailed by one of Bull's minions. But again the girl was balked, this time by Collins and an assailant of powerful physique who were hammering at each other lustily.

Bonnie managed to avoid them, and in another instant she was close to Harry Drake.

"Harry!" she cried, tugging insistently at his sleeve as he wrestled with Arnold. "HARRY, THE SHIP'S ON FIRE!"

Even now the young Englishman seemed scarcely aware of her presence, and as she was about to repeat the words, Collins and his assailant blundered close to her.

Collins swung a right to the other man's chin. It landed with shocking force and knocked the fellow staggering, and he came up sharp against Bonnie as she was making her frantic attempt to attract Harry Drake's attention.

The collision threw the girl off her balance. She reeled towards the hatch, tottered precariously on the edge of it for an instant, and then plunged into the hold.

A swirl of flame and smoke closed over her as she dropped. She struck the floor with an impact that stunned her, and rolled aside on to a patch of straw that had not yet caught fire.

(Don't miss next week's enthralling episode of this grand serial. By permission of Universal Pictures, Ltd., starring Kenneth Harlan and Lucille Browne.)

"BRANDED"

(Continued from page 8.)

his gun and belt off him—one of us is going to get an awful whipping! Swede, get outside! Bob, take that half-breed away!"

Moore's belt fell to the floor and was removed. Tom shed his own belt and clenched his fists.

"I'd like to have a share in this, Dale," said Starrett.

"No," decided Tom. "This particular argument is between him and me—you can settle your own score some other time. Take Mr. Bill Saunders with you, and hold him tight!"

The fight that followed was one of the fiercest ever waged between two men in the whole of Texas. Moore, with the roar of an animal at bay, snatched up a chair and hurled it at his enemy; but Tom dodged, the chair sped harmlessly over his head, and the conspirator received a sledge-hammer blow between the eyes that sent him staggering against the table.

From the table he made an ugly rush, and Tom found that he was no mean opponent. The way and that they swayed about the room, giving and receiving blows. Olaf, who had gone no farther than the veranda, glued his frightened face to the window-pane and watched the battle with bulging eyes.

Twice Tom went down, and if Moore could have had his way he would have choked him; but he had met his match in physical strength and his superior in tactics. Each time Tom brought his opponent down with him and was the first to rise.

The room became an utter wreck; even the solitary picture on the wall fell from its nail upon them; and at last Moore picked himself up from a corner, breathing heavily, with only one idea in his head—to escape.

Inch by inch he fought his way to the front door, and there lashed out with a vicious left that caught Tom in the mouth—and managed to get the door open. But even as he was about to back out through it Tom was on him, and a terrific punch caught him with such force under the jaw that he was lifted clean over the veranda, lost his balance on the top of the steps and crashed backwards down them with his head on the ground and his arms flung wide.

Tom leaned against the rails to recover his breath, and Olaf went anxiously to him.

"Say," he faltered, "w-w-was you all right?"

"Sure!" nodded Tom. "Wait—till—I get my—breath."

Starrett was waiting in the yard with his prisoner Tex, who was looking distinctly the worse for wear.

"Made him cough up that money, Tom?" inquired Starrett.

"Yes," nodded Tom, "I've got it. And now they can put that fence up again."

He descended the steps and jerked Moore to his feet.

"Come on, you hammerhead!" he said masterfully. "Olaf, bring some tools."

The prisoners were marched over to the wrecked portion of the fence and provided with hammers and nails.

"When you're through with this line," Tom informed them grimly, "you'll know all about fence-building."

It took far longer to re-erect the fencing than it had taken Lou's men to knock it down, but there was no rest for Moore and Tex till the task was

accomplished. Tom, Starrett and Olaf squatted on the turf beneath a tree, nursing their guns, and Olaf lifted up his raucous voice in a song about a Texas cowboy which seemed to consist of innumerable verses.

When the fencing was restored, Tom inspected it, and nodded his approval.

"Thanks, boys!" he said cheerfully. "Couldn't have done it better myself!"

"Yeah?" rasped Moore. "Well, we'll be back."

"Call around any time!"

The worn-out pair made wearily for their horses, and it galled them that in order to go back to the Preston ranch to collect their belongings they must follow a roundabout route.

They were almost in sight of the ranch-house when they fell in with the sheriff of Falls City, who was riding that way, and Moore greeted him as an old acquaintance.

"Why, Mack, you old son-of-a-gun," he exclaimed, "how are you? What are you doing up in our country?"

"Oh, just a little errand," responded the sheriff, "decorating trees and things. Ever seen these hombres before?" And he passed over one of a sheaf of posters.

Moore took the sheet and opened it out, and as he did so his narrow eyes gleamed with evil satisfaction. For the poster contained pictures of Tom and Olaf, and announced a reward for their capture, dead or alive—a reward of five thousand dollars!

"Let's get into the office," he suggested, and they proceeded to that building.

Lou, from the ranch-house, saw them arrive with a man who was a stranger to her, and, wondering what fresh mischief was afoot, stole out to find out. A window was open, and she crouched beneath it, listening.

Inside the office Moore passed the poster to Tex with a grin.

"Have we ever seen these guys before?" he said.

Tex looked at the pictured faces, raised his heavy brows and whistled.

"Have we not!" quoth he.

"Well, that's good hearing," declared the sheriff of Falls City. "Nice old time I've had fixing their identity and gettin' picters of 'em from over in Knox County, where they come from. I'm here to get that feller Dale and his man Olaf for the stage hold-up mentioned there, dead or alive."

"Dead or alive, eh?" said Moore.

"That's what I said."

"Well, listen—will you let me select my own posse to round these babies up? I know where to put hands on 'em, but they're tough hombres."

The sheriff considered the suggestion. "Why not?" he decided finally. "Go ahead—and I'll ride into town and

notify the Weston county sheriff that I want these men. But don't let 'em get away from you."

"We won't!" promised Moore.

"And Sheriff Watkins will bring you straight to their hang-out."

The sheriff presently mounted his horse and departed in the direction of Westonville.

"This'll be the first time I ever put lead into a fellow and got a reward for it!" chuckled Tex.

"That's the idea!" nodded Moore. "We'll say they tried to make a getaway and we had to shoot. It'll be too late to argue by then!"

Lou did not linger to hear any more; she darted down the yard to the stables, saddled the bay mare, and set off at a frantic gallop in the direction of the Dale ranch only a few minutes before Moore called a passing cow-hand to the door of the office and instructed him to get some of the outfit together as quickly as possible.

Starrett Tells the Truth.

LESS than half-way to the Dale Ranch, Lou caught sight of Tom.

He and Olaf and Starrett were driving back to the mesa some over-looked cattle he had innocently acquired from "Bill Saunders." She flew to him in a panic as fast as the bay could carry her.

"You've got to get away at once!" she cried. "They're coming to kill you!"

"Kill me?" echoed Tom. "Who are?"

"Moore and Tex—they know you're wanted for a stage hold-up."

"We didn't hold up any stage! That can be proved!"

"Not in time," she said, and put a hand pleadingly on his arm. "Oh, please go—oh, do! For—for my sake!"

"For your sake?" he repeated, scanning her face. "What do you care?"

"Everything!"

"Oh, Lou!" he exclaimed joyfully. "Do you mean that?"

"Can't you see I do?" she faltered. "Now, please go before they come."

But Tom, resisting an impulse to put his arm round her, set his jaw, and said:

"I'm sorry, Lou, but I—I wouldn't run away from anybody."

"All right, then," she cried desperately, "if that's the case, I'm going to get the sheriff to straighten this thing out." And she shot off in the direction of Westonville.

Tom whistled to Olaf and Starrett, and they rode over to him.

"Never mind the cattle," he said. "Moore and that gang are coming to clean us out. They've heard about the stage hold-up. Let's get back to the ranch-house and make a stand for it."

Olaf's face was a picture of consternation, but Starrett nodded grimly, and they rode. Long before they came to the yard, however, they saw that they were too late. Moore and nearly a dozen men were already grouped round the shack, brandishing their guns.

"I hate to do it," growled Tom, "but we've got to go!"

They swung to the right, making for the road that stretched between Westonville and Falls City; but Moore caught sight of them as they went tearing

(Continued on page 28.)

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"BAD COMPANY."

(Continued from page 14.)

who can shoot!" All King's men had their hands near their hip-pockets.

Goldie Gorio stroked his chin.

"You should look about you," was all Goldie said.

They turned to see that the invalid had flung aside his rugs and was covering them with a "typewriter."

"Stick up yer hands!" The invalid's face was contorted with rage. "I was paralysed by a slug from one of your men, and I'm just itching to square accounts. I've been waiting—"

"Enough!" snapped Goldie. "Keep them covered. If you look at the walls you may observe certain slits. Can you see anything beyond? I leave it to your astute brain, clever Mr. King! So you want a show-down?" Goldie walked across and took over the machine-gun from the invalid. "Here's my answer. Raise your hands high!"

"You're murdering us in cold blood!" King showed no sign of fear. "You treacherous yellow curl! You can murder us, but you'll only sign your death-warrant. It'll give McBaine the chance he's waited for months!"

"I fear no one!" Goldie Gorio's eyes were flickering, and his mouth was twitching in a most horrible manner. His voice was almost a scream. "I am the ruler of this city! If they try any tricks I'll make it so hot they'll howl for mercy! Would any of you guys like to beg for your lives? You haven't got long to live!"

Though there was the fear of death on all the faces of those men, not one stepped forward.

"You're murdering yourself," spoke King. "You're mad! You think you hold all the power, but now you're destroying what little power you ever held. Kill us, and you sign your own death-warrant. You won't die so very nicely, Goldie Gorio!"

A grey-haired, haggard, terror-stricken woman faced a ring of grim faces. McBaine's gimlet eyes seemed to bore into her.

"I've seen crime, but never anything like this," quavered the woman. "For years and years I've been true to my husband, but this terrible murder is more than I can stand. I've got to speak the truth. King and his men were shot down in cold blood."

"The Regal has been under observation for weeks," McBaine spoke to one of his men. "I saw King go there with his fellows, and that was how I guessed what Gorio might do. This woman's tale is the proof. We have enough evidence to take Goldie Gorio. Sound the alarm."

Helen Seeks Vengeance.

WHAT a change in Helen Carlyle from the gentle, sweet-faced girl.

Though her face was white and drawn, the eyes seemed to blaze out of her face. From one of her brother's men she had guessed what must have happened.

"I warned your brother he was walking into a death-trap," the man had panted out. "But he would go. It was a show-down—your brother had learnt that Goldie framed your husband on the Shark."

That news had made the girl cry out, but the iron will that had driven her brother was not lacking in his sister, and she fought back her hysteria.

December 26th, 1931.

"King decided to thrash it out with Goldie, and took six of the boys," went on the gangster. "They went in, but they haven't come back. I trailed them, and I was watching from a building across the street. There was firing in one of the rooms, because I could see the flashes. I reckon something bad has happened to your brother and the gang. Can you tell us what we ought to do? We aren't strong enough to attack the Regal, and it would be playing into the hands of both Goldie and the cops."

Helen sent the gangster away and paced her bed-room.

Then the telephone had rung, and when she heard Goldie Gorio's voice she decided to bluff.

"Hallo, Helen, how's Steve to-day? Hope he's better?"

"Hallo, Goldie, glad you rang up!" Helen made her voice soft and rather pathetic. "Very dull sitting at home doing nothing. My brother is out somewhere."

"King's gone out of town on a job," lied Goldie. "I wonder if you could come over to the Regal, as I want to discuss plans for Steve's vacation. Where you'd like to stay, and all the rest. Could you come over now? We might have some dinner."

"I should love to come, Goldie," answered the girl. "Steve is better and so grateful for all you've done. He'll be about soon—and I shall no longer be a grass widow. Two's company and three's a mob. I'll come right away, Goldie."

How hard and grim was the young face as she replaced the receiver. From a drawer she took out a gun, slipped it into the pocket of her coat, and, after a few words to the maid, hurried off to keep her appointment.

The Regal looked just like an expensive hotel, but the men behind the hidden partitions winked when they saw the girl arrive. They knew of their leader's infatuation for the sister of his enemy.

"He'll get the girl now he's got King," opined one. "Don't reckon young Steve has much chance. Wonder what scheme the boss will choose to bump him off? The poor skate!"

Helen was shown into the ante-room adjoining Goldie's bed-room, and, while she did not appear to take much interest, her eyes searched everywhere. There were too many pictures on the walls and too many curtains—did they hide anything? If there had been a show-down, it must have been on this floor, because the gangster had described the position of the building from which he had watched. On a table was a cigarette-holder, and her eyes narrowed—it was one her brother always used. Perhaps he had put it down and it had been overlooked? There was a peculiar stain on some of the floorboards that had been recently polished, and she glanced at the carpet. Helen had been in this room before—it was a different carpet.

Goldie Gorio appeared and held out welcoming hands to her.

"Come right inside, my dear!" he cried. "This is a pleasure I don't often get."

"So kind of you to ask me," was her answer, and gave him her hauds. "I have never seen your own apartments. What a magnificent place you have, and what a touch you have for the artistic. My brother admires this place very much. Have you seen him at all to-day?"

"I don't think he'll be back for a night or so." Goldie Gorio produced his best smile. "It was very urgent business that took him away. He told

me to ring you up, as he knew you would be lonely." He pointed to a huge mahogany table desk and a bust. "See that? What do you think of it?"

"Who is it?"

Helen touched the gun to keep up her courage.

"I had that constructed to my own idea." He touched the carved face. "It is a mixture of Washington, Napoleon, Lincoln, and—your humble servant! I have put in my own features wherever the bust lacked strength and character. Now it is the bust of a very great man. I would have had a bust of myself, only I feel my jaw is a little too heavy and my eyes too compelling. What do you think?"

"I think you must be mad!" the girl's voice rang out. "My brother came here this afternoon. Where is he?"

"But what a queer way to address your best friend and devoted admirer." His eyes were twitching curiously. "My feelings are more than that of admiration. You and I could be King and Queen of Chicago, and—"

"Where is my brother?" said Helen again. "Do not waste time by pompous, bombastic nonsense. Where are my brother and his men?"

"They haven't been here." Gorio edged nearer to her. "You're upset over something, my dear child. What is it—tell me?"

"Has my brother been here within the last few hours?" she rasped out the question. "I know he has, and I know he never left. Is he alive or dead? Don't lie to me, Gorio, because I know that it was you who sent Steve to almost certain death."

"You're crazy, girl—crazy!" His whole face was contorted. "In time you will learn to love your master. We will rule together, and you will forget all these others. I am the greatest man in Chicago. I would do anything for you."

"Now I know you are mad! Something has happened to my brother." Her hand gripped the gun in her pocket. "Did you kill him? I can see guilt written on your twitching face. You murdered them all!"

"Supposing I did." He laughed like a maniac. "I will not kill you, my beautiful queen, although you are in my power."

"Am I?" From her pocket came the gun. "I have never shot a man or

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harm an animal, yet the killing of a fiend like you will give me no compunction. Don't come any closer, Gorio, or I will shoot!"

"You haven't the courage. You would not dare to shoot at me!" Again the insane laugh. "I shall kill Steve very soon—perhaps he shall choose his own death. Yes, I killed King and his dumb gang—it gave me pleasure. Put down that gun and tell me how much you admire me for my courage and daring."

Though her heart was sick, the girl's eyes never wavered from the scoundrel's face.

"You are the most loathsome reptile that ever existed!" she said in hoarse tones. "You have become crazed with power and the lust to kill. But now you must pay the penalty!"

The rat-tat-tat of machine-gun fire startled them both. The attack by the police had commenced.

The Final Conflict.

STEVE was restless and disturbed. Why hadn't Helen been round to visit him since the early hours of the morning? He had a telephone call put through to the flat, and learnt that she had gone out. The maid explained that it was to the Regal to see Mr. Gorio.

What for? For some while Steve had been getting suspicious of Goldie Gorio. He was still wondering when the gangster who had warned Helen was announced. In a few words he told the dread truth.

"King knew you had been framed and went to the Regal with his fellows for a show-down. They haven't come back, and I'm certain they're all dead. Not knowing what to do, I went to see your wife, and when I came back, after seeing the rest of the gang, I found she had gone to the Regal. The maid tells me she is packing a gun. What will you do, Steve?"

"Go to her!" raved the invalid, and limped out of his chair. "Help me get out of this place. No one must stop me. I'll tell the doctor—"

He broke off as he heard a nurse speaking excitedly in the next room.

"The police are attacking the Regal. They're after Goldie Gorio for murder!"

The two men looked at each other and then ran for the door. They hurled a doctor aside in their haste. Seconds later a hired car was taking them towards the Regal.

In a side street Steve found McBaine, and in a few words learnt of the confession.

"Give me a gun, McBaine!" shouted Steve. "My wife's inside—"

"Better stay with us, Steve," cautioned McBaine; then, seeing the boy's determined jaw, laid a hand on the young fellow's shoulder. "You can't do anything, lad. Guess Gorio won't harm your wife."

"I'm not taking any chances," Steve shouted, and sped away.

The police were slowly working towards the chief entrance of the Regal. The building was off the main thoroughfare, but all traffic down this side road had been diverted. From corners and from behind some old wagons the police fired towards the great door. Already all the glass was smashed and the beautiful statues and huge palms riddled to dust and ruin. From hidden loopholes the gangsters returned the fire.

Steve found a plain-clothes man hiding behind an old car.

"My wife's in that hell," raved the youngster. His anger lent him strength. "You're bringing up racket guns—let

me use one. I know where those skunks have their loopholes."

"You go to certain death!" was the answer.

Steve snapped at him. "You'll never get them out of that warren otherwise!"

"Go to it, kid!" the detective nodded. "I'm taking a chance on you."

Racket guns are long-barrelled machine-guns mounted on a wheeled trolley and having an armour-plated shield. The barrel goes through a hole in the shield, and it is possible for a man to crawl along, pushing the machine-gun before him. The chief danger was in Steve's leg.

Through the shattered door the racket gun was slowly pushed, and behind the gun was Steve Carlyle. The gangsters grinned fiendishly at seeing such an easy victim. Little did they guess who manned the gun, or that he knew most of their secrets.

Crack! Crack! Crack! One of the men behind the loophole gave a sobbing cry and slumped to the ground. His companion stared in horror; then a look of agony creased his face as two bullets found their mark.

From the stairs a man opened fire on the protected attacker, and instantly Steve swung round to deal with this new danger. Deadly was the fire of Steve Carlyle, and the man came tumbling down the stairs to lie a crumpled heap.

Two more loopholes opened fire on Steve, but they found shooting difficult, as bullets were now blazing through the door from two more racket guns. Then Steve located the small aperture through which the gangsters' guns were spitting fire—and his weapon answered viciously. Those behind the loophole fell silent, and a ricochet smashed the last gun. Two men on the stairs tried to hold back the attackers, but fell riddled with bullets.

Dashing out of hiding, Steve picked up one of the gangsters' guns and charged up the marble stairs. A bullet whined past his ear as he dodged behind a statue. A hand protruded holding a gun—but instantly Steve fired. A howl of pain was his reward. Steve's clenched fist flattened out the man as

he reached for a gun with his unhurt hand. He thrust the fellow aside as if he were a child.

Joe tried to stop Steve, and was foolish enough to threaten.

"I'm gonna kill you, Steve Carlyle!" He was as mad as his master. "Straight through the heart!"

A wild leap and Steve was behind a pillar. The bullets sprayed all round but he was unhurt. He had picked up another gun, and with a cry he threw his emptied gun from him. Steve made that cry sound like one in terrible pain. It bluffed Joe—and Steve, from behind that pillar, got Joe as he half lowered his weapon. Over and over down the stairs rolled the body of Goldie Gorio's ablest servant.

Goldie's apartments at last! A rush and they were open.

Steve pulled up with a jerk. By a table stood Helen, and she stared down at something that lay at her feet. The girl seemed in a trance. Comforting arms were at once thrown about her.

"Steve! Steve!" She clung to him. "He rushed at me and I shot him!"

A head peered round the corner, took in the scene at a glance. A smile spread over the lined, grim face of McBaine.

"Who killed Gorio?" His sharp question made them jump.

"I did!" gasped Helen.

"Oh, no, you didn't!" McBaine laughed as he took the gun from the girl's nerveless fingers. "I killed Gorio."

They stared at him with dawning hope. "After I've been trailing him for nine months I'm not going to let a woman take him from me." He winked broadly at both of them. "This is my funeral! This show's over bar the shouting. By to-night you two kids are going to be well on your way to Florida. As far as McBaine is concerned you ain't ever been in this dive!"

(By permission of the Producers' Distributing Company, Ltd., starring Ricardo Cortez as Goldie Gorio; Helen Twelvetrees as Helen; John Garrick as Steve Carlyle; Paul Hurst as Joe; Frank Conroy as Hartley King; Harry Carey as McBaine; Frank McHugh as Doc.)

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"BRANDED"

(Continued from page 25.)

across the rolling grass-land and, with a shout of baffled rage, set off in pursuit, followed by the rest, firing as they rode.

Over the crest of a hill and across a stretch of waste the fugitives rode for dear life, and they struck the road close to the region of the fallen rocks beside which the stage-coach had been held up. They swept across the dusty roadway and plunged in among the protecting crags, dismounted, and took cover.

But they had not been able to reach their hiding-place unscathed. Their pursuers streamed into the roadway, left their horses, and advanced cautiously to surround and close in upon their quarry. The air became acrid with the smoke of six-shooters; bullets spat against the boulders.

The three separated to present less of a target, and each behind a protecting mass of limestone fired and ducked and fired again. Olaf, waxing suddenly valiant, exposed himself to take aim at the ugly face of Tex, which rose up over a ledge less than ten yards.

His gun and the half-breed's barked simultaneously, and the face vanished—but Olaf fell groaning to the dust.

Tom came scrambling down from his loftier retreat to raise his henchman.

"Where'd they get you, Swede?" he asked anxiously.

"My arm," groaned Olaf.

Starrett crept round to them, a six-shooter in each hand, and he insisted on mounting guard while Tom hastily bound up the wounded arm.

Bullets were spattering all about them, but Starrett asked quite calmly: "You said something about a stage hold-up—when and where did it happen?"

"Just around here, about three weeks ago. This fellow Moore is trying to frame us."

A volley rang out, putting an end to talk; the encircling movement was nearly complete now, and the attackers were close.

But Lou had reached the sheriff's office in Westonville some little time before Tom and his companions had reached the rocks. She burst into the little office and, without any preliminaries, she cried wildly:

"Moore and Tex are going to lynch Mr. Dale for a hold-up he didn't do!"

"Moore, eh?" snorted the sheriff, and looked at his colleague, Sheriff Dawson, from Falls City, who had been talking to him when Lou so dramatically appeared. "Well, you may be right, Mack, but there ain't goin' to be any lynching in my country!"

He sprang up from his desk and went to the door.

"Ben," he bellowed to a passing cow-puncher, "get the boys together—quick!"

Ben wanted to know why, and was briefly informed. He darted over to the saloon, outside which many horses were tethered to the hitching-rail.

"Come on, boys!" he shouted in at the doorway. "We gotta stop a lynching!"

There was quite a stampede from the bar, but outside the building an elderly rancher with a walrus moustache gripped the cowboy's arm.

"Who's being lynched now?" he demanded.

"Some bandits that held up the Falls City coach about three weeks ago," was the hurried reply.

The others were already on their horses—fully a score of them. The rancher followed suit; the two sheriffs came galloping up with Lou, and the whole party went off out of the town in a cloud of dust.

Lou led the way, assuming that the scene of combat would be the Dale ranch; but as the riders approached the rocks the incessant noise of gunfire on their right told its own story. Sheriff Watkins barked commands, and the horses were left on the fringe of the road while the posse plunged in among the rocks.

A rain of bullets informed the surroundings that they were surrounded; the stentorian voice of the sheriff of Westonville was heard bellowing:

"Stop there! Hold everything!"

Most of the besiegers, realising that they were outnumbered by the forces of law and order, stopped obediently enough; but Moore, enraged at the prospect of losing his prey, crept towards the cluster of rocks that screened the three.

Starrett, catching sight of him, ran out to take aim; Tom, with a warning cry, looked round a projection and fired. Three guns barked as one, and Moore threw up his hands and collapsed, shot through the heart. But Starrett, tottering backwards, fell in a huddled heap, and Tom, regardless of danger, was raising him up when the two sheriffs came forward.

One of Moore's followers, darting ahead of them, flung a noose over Tom's head, and the sheriff from Falls City cried triumphantly:

"There's your man!"

But the rancher with the walrus moustache shouted over the top of a rock which was in his way:

"That's not the man that stole my watch!"

"What?" barked the sheriff.

Starrett, leaning feebly against Tom's shoulder and breathing with difficulty, opened his eyes and looked at the gesticulating rancher.

"He's—right," he said gaspingly. "Dale had nothing to do—with it. I help up—the stage—alone."

"That's the man right enough, sheriff," declared the staring rancher. "I never forget a face."

But Starrett, summoning the last remnants of his breath by sheer will-power, said faintly:

"Got a smoke, pal?"

Tom, holding the self-confessed bandit with one arm, found a cigarette with his free hand, put it between the dying man's parched lips and lit it. But Starrett hadn't enough breath left to draw in even a wisp of smoke. The cigarette fell to the ground, and he was dead.

Lou had remained in the roadway with the horses, commanded to stay there by Sheriff Watkins, and she was patting Silver's white neck when Tom eventually climbed down to her. His face was strained and there were tears in his eyes.

"Here's your horse," she said gently. "I'm awfully sorry, Cuthbert."

"Th—that's all right," said Tom with an effort at cheerfulness. "And I guess I'll be riding your way directly. Only don't call me Cuthbert any more."

She gazed at him with a tender expression in her brown eyes, but she could not resist the opportunity.

"I never will," she said. "Never—Chauncey!"

(By permission of Columbia Pictures and United Artists' Corporation, Ltd., starring Buck Jones as Tom Dale; Ethel Kenyon as Lou Preston; Wallace McDonald as Bob Starrett; Al Smith as Joe Moore; John Oscar as Olaf (Swede); Clark Burroughs as Tex; Philo McCullough as Sheriff Mack Dawson; Fred Burns as Sheriff Watkins.)

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