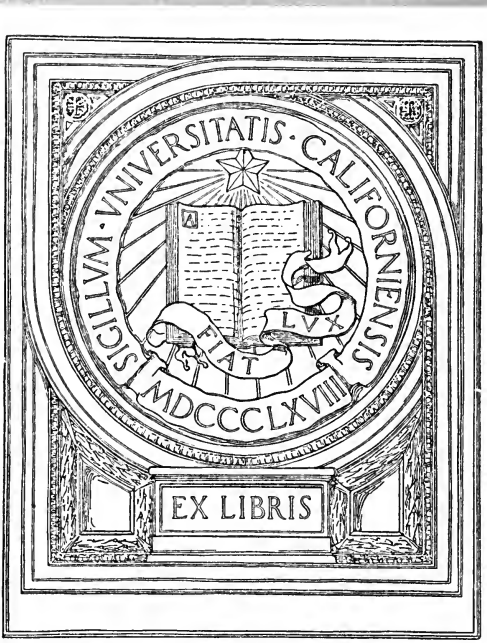
SIGILLVM · VNIVERSITATIS · CALIFORNIENSIS
FIAT LVX
MDCCCLXVIII
EX LIBRIS

STORIES WITHOUT WOMEN

(And a Few With Women)

Other Works by Mr. Donn Byrne.

THE GOLDEN GOAT
THE POWER OF THE DOG
DESTINY BAY
HANGMAN'S HOUSE
BROTHER SAUL
MESSER MARCO POLO
CRUSADE
THE WIND BLOWETH
THE FOOLISH MATRONS
CHANGELING
BLIND RAFTERY, AND HIS WIFE HILARIA
AN UNTITLED STORY

* * * * *

IRELAND, THE ROCK WHENCE I WAS HEWN

First Impression

STORIES WITHOUT WOMEN

(And a Few With Women)

BY

DONN BYRNE

LONDON
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & CO., LTD.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY PURNELL AND SONS
PAULTON (SOMERSET) AND LONDON

CONTENTS

I

BIPLANE NO. 2

THE BURLY sergeant of sappers gave the propeller a few violent twists, and jumped quickly to one side. The propeller revolved with a weird flapping that turned to a quick, loud hum and then to a buzz as of a myriad hornets. A little bugler ran alongside for a few yards; then the biplane rose.

From the firing-line a mile and a half ahead the rifles sounded like the ripping of a gigantic piece of silk. Orderlies' horses drummed the ground on their way to and from the commander-in-chief's headquarters. The report of the nine-inch gun burst like claps of thunder. As the biplane passed, a squad of artillerymen looked up and cheered. From one hundred yards below their cheer resembled the thin shouting of boys.

Stanton looked at his pilot, huddled over the steering-wheel. In his thick woollen hood he had the appearance of an immense grey rat. The aeroplane went up steadily like a mounting bird.

They were to reconnoitre the enemy, whose position they were attacking, and report by wireless. They were to make a general reconnaissance of the firing-line and of the reserves, and to find out where the definite intrenched works lay.

It was Stanton's first aeroplane reconnaissance in combat, and he felt confident. He had examined his machine and wireless equipment thoroughly before starting. His pilot was one of the best fliers of the corps.

They were rising steadily still, going up in spirals. The clamour of fighting had faded into a faint murmur. There was a tang of gunpowder in the air. The machine quivered like a ship at sea.

They had now gone up three thousand feet. The pilot swung round in a circle and flew eastward. The sun was directly overhead. The quiver gave way to a fierce shaking and jolting. The motor chugged with hoarse, vibrant coughings. The framework of the machine rattled like a cart over a stony road. They were flying easily. Little puffs of wind struck them from time to time with playful buffets. There was an undulation from right to left.

The machine again began to mount steadily, and the pilot swung to the right. He throttled the motor and volplaned in a long gliding swoop. Then Stanton looked downward.

There was an immensity of green in wide, rolling billows and in little hills and hummocks. Here and there it swirled into a clump of trees or a group of houses. A village stood in the distance, like the centre of a whirlpool.

As they came nearer, Stanton could distinguish the batteries and guns and massed reserves, and

then he saw the firing-line, like a piece of loosely laid rope, stretching ten miles. He saw the redoubts and batteries, breaking it up into a grotesque pattern that a child might have conceived at play. Over it all there hung a faint bluish haze.

He got out his binoculars and swept the position. Along the flanks he could see dark blotches that were dismounted cavalry, and far in the rear the lines of ammunition and supply and hospital wagons massed like a little city. Between the flanks and the firing-line there were dark splashes that were reserves, and there were the huge nine-inch guns, and little black dots running to and fro in circles. It looked like jumbled pieces in an immense puzzle.

The biplane was rushing forward. The landscape flashed by underneath in a hazy blur. They wanted to get a general view of the field before reconnoitring in detail.

Stanton turned to his wireless and reported he was above the firing-line. He carried half a dozen carrier-pigeons in case of accident to the wireless. He glanced around at their cage. A grey tumbler returned his look with a pert, shining eye.

He felt somehow laden down with the importance of his mission. For one man to report on the position of an army of fifty thousand men, with their horses and material of war, seemed absurd. He wished he could talk to the pilot, but the noise of the motor and the rattle of the framework made it impossible.

And somehow he felt, too, that this should not be done, this spying from above. It seemed as though an unfair advantage were being taken. It was as though one kicked an opponent in the shins in a boxing-match. It was not playing the game.

The pilot throttled the motor and dropped a thousand feet. The air rushed upward in a steady blast. The canvas wings of the biplane shuddered with a creaking rustle.

Stanton could now see the firing-line plainly. With his binoculars he could distinguish every man. They cuddled into the long trench, and fired like so many automata. They shoved fresh clips of cartridges into their magazines and changed the sights mechanically. Officers dashed back and forward behind the men, shouting and gesticulating.

From time to time something would pass underneath that flashed as it went towards the redoubts. Shrapnel would shoot over in a long graceful curve, hang for a moment in the air, and burst in a flaming crimson rosette. The shells seemed to radiate sheaves of flame.

And there would be a long gap in the firing-line. The little black figures were scattered as though they had been thrown carelessly out of a box. Some lay on their faces as if asleep, some sprawled on their backs as if taking the sun, some were curled up like dogs dozing, and some figures were incomplete.

Then the corps would hurry along with their stretchers, and take the huddled figures and bundle them in and hurry off. And a squad of reserves would come to take their places, and all would be as before.

The biplane had reached the middle of the line and was flying steadily forward. Occasionally a current of air brought them some of the din that was going on underneath. Once it was a sound as of drums beating, and a second time it was a crash as of a great house falling, and a third time they heard a shell burst with a thunderous roar.

But these noises came seldom. Most of the time they heard nothing. The figures and action moved as in a cinematograph.

In the distance Stanton could see the firing-line of the attack. They lay on their stomachs in the short grass and crept forward. The line seemed to bulge and curve like the writhing of a giant worm.

Occasionally a platoon would dash to its feet and rush forward for fifty yards. Then they would fall flat and begin firing. Stanton could see the officers shouting, and throwing out their arms like semaphores. He could see the platoon leaders raise their whistles to their mouths. He could hear neither order nor blast. From the muzzles of the guns there came pin-points of bright yellow fire.

The firing-line was losing heavily. Men were dropping all around. Some of them would spring

to their feet, straighten themselves out with a jerk and topple backward. Others would struggle to their knees, and collapse in limp, shapeless heaps. Others would lie down across their rifles as if they were tired and could not go on. Stanton knew they were dead.

The line would close up and move onward. Here and there a platoon of reserves rushed forward and scattered into the vacant places. The men were firing calmly and steadily, thrusting the cartridge-clips firmly into the magazines, and changing the sights of the rifles every third or fourth rush. Occasionally a man left the line and crept back to one of the huddled figures; he would take the dead man's cartridge-belt and dash to his place.

To Stanton there was something lacking. He missed the crackle of the rifles, the shriek of the shells as they passed, and the crash of their explosion. He missed the hoarse shouting of the captains and the yells of agony when the shrapnel burst. He missed the blasts of the whistle and the buglers' call. Below there was no passion of combat. Each man seemed actuated in cold blood to kill some other man. They seemed to calculate silently. There was something horribly sinister about it. His skin contracted at the back of his neck.

The redoubts were perspiring hells. Men rushed to the ammunition-cases and returned, tottering under loads of shrapnel. The men at the howitzers

took them eagerly, slapped the shells into the breech, and fired. Flames licked in and out of the muzzles in little crimson tongues. Occasionally an officer would pick up his field telephone for instructions. They could see him shouting and gesticulating. Then the gunner would change the sights.

The men rushed faster and faster to the ammunition-boxes. The howitzers were like ravenous animals that demanded feeding. Piles of empty yellow cartridge-cases grew beside every gun.

Until now they had been working calmly and collectively. The attack was pressing relentlessly onward. They scurried about like mice that were stalked into a corner by a cat.

A battery of four guns dashed forward behind the firing-line. Stanton could see the six horses at each gun straining like dogs. Their legs curved in the air. Their necks were distended. The riders stood in their stirrups and lashed at their flanks.

The first rider on one of the guns twisted about in his stirrups and dropped his whip. He dived suddenly over his horse's neck. The limber jolted as the wheel passed over him.

A chaplain passed along the firing-line; suddenly he crumpled up and fell forward. An officer tripped over him in running.

The pilot had come to the end of the firing-line and was rising. Stanton turned to his wireless and began rapping out his message. The mechanical

tapping of the key soothed him. He was glad he was no longer looking down. He wondered if the grim old chief in his trench would press that terrible attack if he could see the whole panorama of battle.

Stanton doubted if he knew the human end of it at all. To the old marshal war was a thing of blue-prints and telephones, and mechanism that pulsed by well-oiled levers when a trigger was pulled, and struck the cap on a shell with a sharp little hammer. He saw the firing-line only as a long, straight line that advanced relentlessly and that curved around like pincers.

Stanton could picture him standing in his great-coat, scratching his short grey beard, and waiting while the telegrapher typed the aviator's message.

They were now turning the flank of the line. Stanton could see his own men creep nearer and nearer the glacis. The edge of the line seemed in a frenzy.

The pantomime beneath grew faster. The men's arms moved with jerks as they loaded and fired. Stanton could imagine the glistening beads of sweat on their foreheads, and their cursing as they slammed the cartridge-clips into the magazines.

A machine gun squad dashed over the line. The men pulled at the spokes of the wheel with short, spasmodic jerks. They trained the gun and began firing. A shrapnel hung in the air for a moment and burst. When the flash cleared, there was a

jumble of stiff bodies and twisted steel. One man limped away, using his rifle as a crutch.

The scene grew blurred. The pilot was mounting. Cold air swirled about Stanton's legs. The sun struck at the back of his neck in pin-pricks. The frame of the biplane pulsed with the vibration of the motor. A bird flashed by like a bullet.

Here in the air it was hard to understand the reason for fighting. Stanton could not associate himself with the frenzied troops. Up among the winds it was impossible to conceive the pitting of muscle against muscle. It seemed a petty business. It was like two school-boys punching each other's heads. It was as a battle of ants.

The air encompassed the steel fabric of the biplane with a firm, steady grasp. At times it was as if they were gliding down a well-oiled plane, and again as if they had been shot from a rifle, and again as if they were bounding on a springboard.

Stanton was enjoying himself. Life exuded from every pore. All trammels seemed to have been removed from him. Beneath him lives went out like snuffed candles every time a platoon fired or an artillery-man braced himself against the lever of his gun.

They began dropping in a spiral. The air rushed upward like the blast of a furnace. It whined through the stanchions of the wings. Underneath they saw the masses of cavalry along the flanks of the defence. They stood out in a dark blot. The

men were dismounted, ready to jump into the saddle at the bugle. The guns were harnessed to the teams, and the riders were in position, like charioteers waiting the signal to race.

Stanton mapped out their position and began tapping his key. In a few minutes the message would flash from the commander's trench to the batteries, and shells would burst over the massed hussars and dragoons. Stanton could picture the panic that would follow. Horses would rear and scream in agony, and paw the air with their hoofs. Troops were scattered right and left. The wounded chargers would bolt or fall backwards, or sink heavily on their sides. Men would be caught beneath them.

As they veered towards the centre of the field, there was a flash, and the first shell broke. In the distance Stanton noticed a dismantled windmill. Groups of officers hung about it. Every minute an orderly rushed from it, and took his saddle with a leap. Figures moved in and out like bees in and out of a hive. An officer stood in the balcony and watched a distant heliograph that twinkled like a lighthouse.

Stanton knew it was the commander-in-chief's headquarters. He wondered what chance there was of dropping a shell over it.

From a clump of trees near the mill six sharpshooters scurried out. They dropped on their knees and fired upward. Then they sprang to their feet and ran forward, knelt and fired again.

Stanton knew they were aiming at the biplane.

He couldn't help grinning. They looked so ridiculous. As the machine whizzed out of range they stood and gaped.

Stanton wondered how they expected to hit a machine moving at fifty miles an hour one thousand feet above them. He noticed an automobile lurching over the grass ahead of them. From above it looked squat like a crab. It swayed from side to side as it advanced.

The chauffeur stopped his machine with a jerk. A couple of khaki-clad figures sprang to the ground and busied themselves with the body of the car. They moved about deftly and quickly. Stanton wondered what they were doing.

They stripped off a canvas cover. A long, black gun thrust its snout skyward. The pilot of the biplane swung around and sped back on his course.

Stanton covered the gun with his binoculars. It crept around on its tripod in a dead line with the biplane. Suddenly the shell shrieked past them.

If it had struck them, Stanton knew, little pieces of steel would have dropped like snowflakes, strips of grey canvas would have eddied among the air currents, and two crushed bodies would have plunged downward in two black streaks.

They were out of range now, but Stanton was badly shaken. He wished he were on earth again.

He would like to have led a company against the

trenches. There was some glamour left in a bayonet-charge. The last fifty yards dash, the figures in front rising and clubbed rifles, the minute's panting, sweating, cursing mêlée—that was a man's work.

But this was a battle of mechanisms, the squat, sinister machinery below and the flying racer above. He felt that he was no more than a necessary screw or nut in the fabric.

They had risen well above the field now. The action spread itself out in a definite geometric design. Stanton knew the crisis was at hand.

The attackers had gained the glacis, and were dashing forward in quicker spurts. Another two hundred yards and they would fix bayonets for the final rush. The line was curving about the defence's flank. Cavalry was being massed to support the rush.

The defence had now no time to remove dead or wounded. The stretcher squad had given way to men racing from the wagons with cartridges. As a man fell, his file thrust him aside, and an ammunition-bearer crawled over him to take his place.

Stanton could see that the attackers' artillery was smashing up the defence. The field was spangled with shrapnel. Shells threw up clouds of dirt as they crashed into the redoubts. An ammunition-wagon exploded in a red blotch.

Reserves were hurrying to the firing-line in dense, black swarms. Batteries raced from the centre of

the field, dismounted, aimed, and fired. Shrapnel burst over a gun as the biplane passed, and Stanton saw a wide, black circle and curling wisps of brownish smoke where the woodwork had taken fire.

The biplane swept backwards over the field. The pandemonium of fighting had passed. They whizzed over the reserves. Stanton was looking for the road that was marked on his map.

Squads of sharp-shooters scurried along the ground and fired upward. They were running as fast as they could, but they seemed to crawl.

To the right, near a clump of trees, a dirigible was anchored. From above it looked like a monstrous caterpillar. It had moved over the attackers' camp the night before under cover of darkness, dropping tons of nitro-glycerine, and where brigades of men had been, and accoutred horses, and batteries of shining guns, there were now a dozen yawning holes.

From below came a continual fire upward. They knew that the aeroplane was sending wireless information to headquarters, and that it was directing the terrible fire from the batteries. The sharp-shooters hurried from the reserves. Away in the distance the Krupp gun was racing forward on its automobile.

Stanton was no longer amused at the frenzied scurrying of the sharp-shooters. They gathered below like midgets. He could see little pin-points of flame from the muzzles of their rifles. The pilot

made half a circle, and began racing towards the firing-line.

A bullet tore by with a zip. It was like the angry humming of a bee. Stanton noticed little round holes in the canvas wings.

The aeroplane bounded forward like an animal whose feet touched the ground. Once it lurched perilously as it skirted an air-pocket. It righted itself in a moment.

Stanton began tapping his notes. It would be his last message. In a minute and a half they would be over the batteries; in five they would be past their own firing-line; in ten they would descend.

He noticed that the rattle of the frame was not so loud now. The motor seemed to chug with less violence. The pilot throttled his engine and began to volplane. He turned around.

"Bullet through the petrol-tank, sir," he shouted.

Stanton could hear him. The rattle of the frame had given way to a sharp metallic quiver. The tearing force of the air became a gentle fanning.

"Can't you reach the lines?" Stanton asked.

"No, sir! I can only volplane down."

They were now nearing the batteries. If they volplaned, they would drop well within the firing-line.

They were moving forward slowly, using up the last few drops of gasoline. The pilot was still turned, waiting orders.

Behind him Stanton heard the cooing of the pigeons. He leaned back, and opened the bars of

the cage. They fluttered out with a quick whirr of wings.

They could reach the ground, of course. The pilot was one of the best in the corps. He had raised his goggles, and his keen grey eyes bored through Stanton.

After all, there was no disgrace in being a prisoner of war. What else was there?

The biplane was beginning to settle now. He would have to decide at once. He looked at the pilot's eye again. It was very like the eye of the grim old commander in the trench.

He wondered how he would act. Then he knew.

"Shall I volplane, sir?" asked the pilot.

"No," he said, "no; turn her over."

There would now be no chance for the enemy's mechanics to patch her up. He was glad he thought of that.

Anyway, if he were leading a charge, there would be an even chance against his life. He wished the wireless were working, so that he could have wired good-bye.

The field beneath was floating upward. They sank through the air as into a cushion.

The old general, he knew, would be sorry. He was one of his favourites. If the old chap knew what Stanton was doing, Stanton thought, he would have nodded his head in grim approbation.

The pilot nestled himself in his seat and grasped the steering-wheel. Then he threw himself sidewise with a quick lurch.

Stanton was looking downward. The field swung around like a pendulum. He felt violently sick. He braced himself and looked down again. Batteries, horses, and men flew upward as from a catapult.

II

SLAVES OF THE GUN

A SHELL, Litvin knew, would burst over the quick-firer at most within the hour, but before that he wanted to empty his automatic into the lieutenant's neck.

Or, if he didn't get the chance to do it, Gorkoi, who was oiling up the breech-block, would do it for him.

The crew of the quick-firer were lazing in the redoubt, waiting for the jangle of the telephone at the lieutenant's elbow. The sight setter was poring over his chart. Moriarity, the black-haired Irishman with the flags tattooed on his chest, stood ready to heave at the lanyard at the word of command. The huge disappearing gun seemed to doze with the men. A word from the lieutenant and it would rise with the quick, easy action of a cat, peer over the parapet of the redoubt, cough its shell out with a vicious bark, and slip back into position again in less than half a minute.

The attacking fleet had passed Point Toro by now and were well into the bay. At five miles' distance, the squat grey cruisers and dreadnoughts looked like corks bobbing on the water, even through

glasses. Before them threads of heavy black smoke poured from the funnels of the torpedo boats. Over it all hung a blue heat haze.

It was hard to believe that the crawling grey specks in the distance would soon vomit shell and shrapnel at the forts along the canal bank. It seemed impossible that in a few minutes the bloated mortars in their pits, and the long, graceful twelve-inch guns on their pivots, and the short, vicious quick-firers would shell the moving grey spots. There was a lull in the air, a feeling as if life had passed through one period and was resting for a moment before taking up the next.

Six weeks ago Litvin and Gorkoi had been in the steerage of a liner bound from Petrograd to New York, coming to America to make their fortunes. Now they were in a redoubt by the Panama Canal and within a few moments of battle.

What the war was about they had no idea. The policy of the nation towards contiguous countries had aroused the enmity of an European power, but what had that to do with them? Their work was to carry shells and heave the lanyard.

And ten weeks before they had both been privates in the Grodno Artillery Corps, working off their conscript period by tending the giant Krupp guns. Their service had been one long nightmare of drilling, oiling the steel monsters, pulling at the heavy breech-blocks, obeying the barked commands of the brutal, red-faced sergeant from the Dneiper country and the whims of the tall, tanned captain.

from Moscow, who would lash his men in the face with his riding crop when the weather was bad.

They had one week around Second Avenue and the wharves of the North River, fruitlessly looking for work, when they fell into the hands of the trim infantry sergeant in City Hall Park. After all, to enlist was better than to starve.

A few weeks' vigorous drilling in the new words of command, a rigid disciplining from Lieutenant Monahan, and here they were, crouching behind the shield of the nine-pounder, ready for Moriarity's quick lurch of shoulder and the crashing boom of the gun.

The fleet was closer now. Their greyish hulks against the blue and green of the water gave them the appearance of sinister sea animals. White smoke trailed in thin wisps from their stacks, broke into elusive puffy clouds and blotches, and then disappeared. Microscopic blurs of white showed where the bows cut the water into foam.

Against all this Litvin felt a fierce dull surge of anger. Gorkoi felt it, too. They had come to the new country to make their fortunes, not to lose their lives. They had left one purgatory to drop into a hell. What had they to do with all this? All they wanted was something to eat and a place to sleep. They were warring against no one.

The lieutenant shut his binoculars with a snap. They wouldn't have to wait much longer, he knew. The fleet was within effective range.

To the right and left men were scurrying to and fro in the sixty-foot-deep concrete pits where the mortars were concealed. Men were busy around the twelve-inch guns, examining lights, placing shells, oiling bearings. To their right on the hill a head bobbed up and disappeared where another quick-firer was hidden. Somewhere in the background the electricians sat before their key-boards, ready to press the buttons that would fire the submarine mines. Somewhere in the background the range finders spied from clumps of trees, figuring out to the yard the distance of the grey hulks. Somewhere farther back were the commander's headquarters. No sign of life was anywhere. Down the bay the periscope of a submarine showed for a moment. A fish flashed in the sun as it leaped where the submarine passed. Beyond the shield of the quick-firer a grasshopper broke into a resonant trill.

The fleet began to take definite shape. They were no longer grey blotches on a blue field; they were behemoths of forged steel. In the distance Litvin could see the short, bulky smoke-stacks and the vague, graceful lines of the solid turrets. They stretched out in a long, sweeping curve. There was no blotch of white at their bows now. They were motionless.

The small black specks that were torpedo destroyers began racing in front of the fleet. They slid around and about each other as in some figure of a grotesque dance. Heavy, viscid smoke poured

from their funnels like flying black banners. They were making the smoke screen through which the fleet would fire.

Around the nine-pounder the crew were passing the time easily enough. The sight setter leaned over and passed a packet of cigarettes to Moriarity. Big, blond Schmidt pottered around the bomb-proof ammunition case. Gorkoi leaned against the shield and looked at the lieutenant with heavy, sullen eyes. His stupid, moonlike face was dilated into a strained scowl. Litvin knew he would do the trick if he got the chance. Litvin would rather do it himself. The lieutenant lounged near the telephone and listened.

If, argued Litvin and Gorkoi, anyone were to blame for their position, it was the authority of which this lieutenant was the symbol. They had served five years in an artillery regiment in Russia. Good! They had patience to stand that. They had come here to live. They had asked for bread—they had been given flaming shrapnel. They were not going to stand that, by God! they said, as they fingered the Colts in their holsters. There were officers' graves in Manchuria for which the Japanese were not responsible.

The telephone broke into a subdued jangle.

"Ready there, boys," the lieutenant called. The muscles of his cheek bones began to bulge.

He talked into the instrument in staccato jerks.

Over where the fleet was, there was now a cloud of brownish smoke. It stretched in a long sweep

on either side, and rose like a wall vertically. It looked as if an immense piece of black cloth had been hung half-way across the bar. At the top it broke into thin wisps and floated upward. From below billows of smoke rose to repair the frayed edges. Here and there a torpedo boat dashed in and out of the screen, like a rabbit scuttling in and out of a hutch.

Away back in the Mindi Hills, Litvin knew, infantry were crawling forward on their stomachs in the grass, ready to repulse with the edge of the bayonet any attempt at landing. He knew they were swarming along the canal banks that swept in a zigzag behind him.

The feeling of rage that possessed him was passing off somewhat. Though he still burned with resentment at what he felt was a wrong done him, and though he still fiddled with the revolver at his belt when the lieutenant's back was turned, what was acting on him was the feeling of hopelessness the artilleryman has in combat. He felt as if he and the rest of the crew and the men in the mortar pits were only helots to the pulsing iron engines that fought each other with flame and steel, and that boomed and thundered and crashed with the rage of battle.

The smoke screen in the distance had become darker. It hung over the bar like a pall. One felt as if something horribly sinister lurked behind it, ready to spring out in an instant. It was as the mouth of a hole in which there were terrible

writhing reptiles that would strike with venomous fangs.

The strain of waiting was beginning to tell on the men in the redoubt. The lieutenant walked about the gun with nervous, hesitating steps. Litvin noticed that Moriarity's cigarette had gone out, but that he still held it tightly clenched between his teeth.

And then the twelve-inch gun on the right went off with a deafening crash.

There were two more muffled reports from the mortar pit up the hill. And the twelve-inch fired again.

In the middle of the black smoke screen there were two violet spots that flickered for a moment and went out, like electric bulbs. The shells passed overhead, screaming as they went.

Litvin turned around and looked; there were two yawning holes up the hill. From the distance the report of the naval guns came like dull thuds on a bass drum.

The smoke screen was spangled with little crimson and violet spots. The air overhead was filled with the noise of the shells passing. Sometimes there was a fierce, vicious hum as of a top spinning, and again a shrill whistle such as a boy would make, and again a shell would pass with a heart-breaking scream. Then the sounds would be blotted out by the deafening crash from the forts.

Around the quick-firer there was nothing to do yet. They would have to wait until one of the

slim, grey torpedo boats tried to slip past, or until the cruisers edged along with the tanned, hawk-faced sharpshooters fondling their heavy-bore rifles in the turrets, or until the fleet had landed a battalion of devil-may-care infantry that would storm the hill with cold steel. Then the crew of the gun would become perspiring, fighting devils, and Litvin and Gorkoi would get their chance.

Along the hill heavy smoke rings rose in the air gracefully from the mouths of the twelve-inchers. They ascended in perfect white circles, widened and broke into fantastic whorls and graceful arabesques. Occasionally a puffy cloud of smoke sped upward like a gigantic baseball. Little wisps of white vapour sailed by like detached pieces of cloud.

All forts and ships were in action now. The twelve-inch guns and the mortars fired with ear-splitting crashes and in resonant booms. Shells would flash overhead like monster birds. From the distance the firing of the fleet resembled the popping of corks.

The fleet was drawing closer. Their spars and turrets showed through the smoke like trees in a mist. Crimson flashes flicked in and out of their sides.

Back along the canal bank an armoured train puffed slowly. It seemed to advance with nervous, spasmodic jerks. Its square, squat carriage and dwarfed engine gave it the appearance of a child's toy in the distance. As it stopped, men emerged in hordes like swarming bees. They lined up

rapidly and disappeared into the undergrowth. Litvin wondered where they were going. The train backed off with queer spats of smoke from the funnel of the engine.

No one spoke in the redoubt now. The sight setter had clamped his telephone receiver to his head and had sunk into his seat. Litvin thought somehow of a picture he had seen of a man in the electric chair. Moriarity had taken off his tunic and slouch hat and crouched by the lanyard, a curly-headed, muscular figure in his singlet. Schmidt stood by the bomb-proof ammunition wagon. The lieutenant poked about the mechanism of the gun with an electric torch. Gorkoi still looked at him stupidly.

Once the nine-pounder began firing, Litvin knew, it would not be long until the fleet spotted it. One piece of shrapnel would finish both gun and crew. If he and Gorkoi could only act immediately, they might have a chance of escape.

The fleet was nearer. A shell passed close overhead and buried itself a hundred yards farther on. The ground shook as if someone were beating it with a gigantic club. A fierce hissing sound was heard. Litvin shivered spasmodically.

The lieutenant turned around, and looked at him.

"Steady now, steady there, boy," he laughed.

Litvin didn't understand, but the tone surprised him. If a man had shivered in Cronstadt, he would have been struck in the face with a heavy metal scabbard.

The fleet was within two miles. They steamed forward in a crescent, the small, vicious torpedo boats running in front, as a terrier trots in front of a mastiff. The bay was covered with fleeting blotches of black and drab smoke. Around the bows of the cruisers was a dense grey covering from the fire of the heavy turret guns.

The telephone jangled again. The lieutenant picked up the receiver, and a few minutes later hung it up with a click. He spoke to the sight setter a moment. The sight setter leaned forward and fiddled at his wheel.

"Ready there?" he shouted.

"All ready," Moriarity answered. His voice rose in a sort of chant.

"Let her go then."

Moriarity spat on his hands and heaved at the lanyard.

Litvin never knew what happened afterwards. He found himself passing cordite shells from Gorkoi to Schmidt, who opened the breech-block, slammed them in and locked it again. The roar of the gun seemed continuous.

The bay was one mass of mist. Overhead a shell burst with a shriek. Chunks of metal flew around, carrying tiny smoke trails. A heavy smell of burnt gunpowder was in the air. The figures in the redoubt took on the appearance of hazy phantoms.

In the bay Litvin could see the turrets of the fleet. They seemed to oscillate in the mist. The heavy naval guns fired in sheets of flame.

The big twelve-inch gun on the left was silent. Its long barrel and heavy carriage were now a mass of charred and twisted steel. Its delicate mechanism was a heap of scrap iron. Its crew were lying in distorted, grotesque attitudes about the ramparts of sand bags that had protected them.

Around the quick-firer the men were working in a frenzy. Moriarity had thrown off his singlet, and stood by the lanyard naked to the waist. The sight setter steered frantically as he studied his chart. The lieutenant glared through his binocular at the mist on the bar.

Now, thought Litvin, would be a good time to act. But he was too busy passing the shells.

Something grey glided through the mist on the water. It scurried around the columns of blue smoke. The lieutenant began shouting wildly. Litvin saw it was a torpedo destroyer.

The sight setter swung the nose of the gun to the left, and then downward. Litvin saw the boat creep for a moment in the space between the clouds. Then they fired.

"At the funnels! At the funnels! At the funnels!" the lieutenant yelled.

They fired again.

Through the mist Litvin saw a burst of flame from the deck of the destroyer. It licked upward in a broad red flare. Then the smoke swallowed it.

Litvin was becoming accustomed to the sounds. There was the terrible crash of the twelve-inch

guns and the deep bass boom of the mortars. Somewhere up the hill something exploded every minute with claps of thunder. The quick-firer had a sharp, vicious crackle. The guns of the fleet thundered with the boom of great waves lashing rocks.

They stopped firing to clean out the gun. The wet mop struck the barrel with a series of violent hisses. Steam rushed out in clouds.

Litvin had no longer the nerve to carry out his plan. The lieutenant was safe from him, at any rate. He felt only an immense pity for himself.

Gorkoi was still resolute. As the lieutenant flitted by in the steam, he lugged out his automatic. He swung it up to his hip.

The redoubt seemed to jump clean up in the air. It rocked backward and forward. There was a gigantic bulge inward on the earthworks—a heavy, sulphurous smell.

Litvin's knees gave way. The nine-pounder seemed to tilt vertically. The redoubt, too, was swinging like the weight of a clock. Battle was a half-forgotten dream.

The lieutenant was shaking him by the shoulder.

"You're all right," he was saying. "You're all right, do you understand? All right!"

His voice seemed to come across illimitable distances.

Litvin pulled himself together.

"You're not hit," the lieutenant repeated. "Do you understand, you're all right!"

Litvin wished he had died.

He looked around. Gorkoi was huddled up by the broken earthwork. There was a red stain where his face had been.

The lieutenant stopped as he passed and put his handkerchief over it.

A little farther on Moriarity lay at full length across his mop. There was a heavy, irregular scarlet splotch across his bared back.

Schmidt staggered from the bomb-proof ammunition case to the gun, with a cordite shell. The gun setter was leaning back in his seat.

Litvin was shaking terribly. He knew Gorkoi was dead. He felt as if he had lost all anchorage. He wished he were up in the clouds of smoke, where the shells and shrapnel lashed past.

The lieutenant turned around and smiled at him.

"You're all right, boy," he said; "you're all right."

Litvin felt a warm splash on his hand. He looked down. There was no stain where he expected blood.

He put his hand up to his face. He found he was crying.

Two figures crept through the grass. They jumped into the redoubt. Litvin saw the lieutenant giving orders.

He staggered forward and picked up the lanyard. Schmidt rammed in the shell and locked the breech.

The lieutenant rapped a crisp command, and Litvin heaved as he had seen Moriarity do.

He went on heaving, time after time. The figures passing the shells worked with the speed and accuracy of mechanisms. As Schmidt opened the breech, Litvin caught for the moment a glimpse of tousled yellow hair and bloodshot eyes.

To Litvin the battle had taken on a vague, unreal aspect. He felt that the lanyard he was pulling was his only protection against the flashing, screaming, reeling monsters into whose quarrel he had intruded.

Down the hill smoke rolled in billows like a fluid. At other times it rose like an evaporation from the ground. Sometimes there was an open space. Across the smoke, three miles to the front, the waters of the bay splashed under the sun in tiny, flashing pin-points. Back of him, the canal, with its clearing and fringe of forest, stood out like a picture in a book.

Out in the bay boats were reeling in a drunken frenzy. They swayed from side to side and seemed to plunge in and out of the smoke chasms. Once Litvin saw a cruiser drift by in a splash of flame. Half a mile out a dreadnought sank placidly into the water, and as Litvin looked she was gone. Boatloads of sailors and marines drifted about like pieces of wreckage.

From the heaving on the lanyard, Litvin's arms had become heavy as bars of lead. There was a dull ache to his back when he bent to the pull. His eyes were blinded with sweat.

Occasionally the lieutenant would look towards him.

"Good boy," he would shout; "good boy!"

Then Litvin felt as though his heart would burst.

The lieutenant's smile and words were all he had to cling to now. He once touched the automatic in its holster, and recoiled as from a shock.

He braced his shoulders and heaved time after time.

All the action appeared to him as a wild nightmare from which he would soon wake up. The incidents of battle were as strange and disjointed to him as the action of the Apocalypse. They were as things he might have read in school, distorted and set awry by years of forgetfulness.

Once a dirigible passed overhead from its shelter on the hill. From below it looked like a monstrous caterpillar. The whir of its propellers struck him as the humming of a thousand fans. It seemed to glide through the air as on rollers.

It passed over the bay and veered around. A pair of torpedo destroyers raced after it like greyhounds. Litvin could see small figures scrambling over the whaleback decks.

The dirigible hung over a cruiser for a minute, motionless. Clouds of smoke poured from the cruiser's smokestacks. The bow cut through the water like a giant knife. The cruiser made straight for the shore.

"Look! Look!" the lieutenant yelled. "Oh, my God!"

The dirigible followed lazily.

The torpedo boats cut through the water. Smoke came from their funnels horizontally.

Something like a black speck dropped from the dirigible. It was like a drop of ink against an immense background of sky.

"Hi, hi, hi!" The lieutenant raised himself on his toes and flapped his arms.

The cruiser crumpled in a blinding crimson blur. Wisps of black smoke curled upward. There was a forest of specks where it had been.

The dirigible turned around and made for the centre of the bay. The torpedo boats seemed to heel over as they turned to follow. They pivoted around in a swirl of white foam.

The dirigible floated slowly towards the flagship of the fleet.

A puff of white smoke came from the forward deck of the first torpedo boat. Something seemed to flash upward. A moment later the second torpedo boat fired.

There was a speck of flame like the flash of a lighting match along the dirigible's flank. The speck widened with a report like a gigantic firecracker. There was something like a huge flaming comet in the sky.

The dirigible plunged downward in a crimson blaze. A pillar of steam went up where it struck the water.

Litvin could hardly keep on his feet now. Only the lieutenant's smile and cheery yell kept

him from dropping. His knees were giving way. Huge weights seemed to pull his shoulders down. There was a dull, insistent ache between his eyes.

He was no longer afraid. He was just dead tired. He could not believe that he had started out to shoot the lieutenant that morning. Why, it was only the sight of the lieutenant kept him standing by his post.

He had forgotten Gorkoi, lying crumpled up at the rampart, with his smashed face showing red through the handkerchief.

He felt as though he were at a theatre, and as if he were sleepy. What was happening took place vaguely. It had no interest for him. An aeroplane crept above them, whirring like the wheel of a lathe. It had come out of its small hangar on board the flagship's deck. As it passed over a mortar pit, a shell caught it flush in the chassis. Pieces of metal and strips of canvas swirled down like monster snowflakes.

Another time, out of the mist at the foot of the hill, a battalion of infantry dashed forward rapidly. Their bayonets were fixed.

"Shove her down," the lieutenant ordered.

The gun setter dropped the muzzle into range.

Schmidt hurried to the ammunition case.

"Shrapnel, you fool!" the lieutenant snapped.

The battalion was a thousand yards away.

Litvin heard this order. He set his feet apart and fired.

Shrapnel burst over the platoon like a Bengal light. There was a twenty-yard gap in it when the flash cleared.

They fired again and again. The line closed up and rushed. There was hardly a company now.

Then grey, silent figures sprang up in front of the redoubt. They fixed up the tripods of machine guns, and squinted at the advancing line. In the haze the guns had the appearance of top-heavy insects.

The guns began to splutter and hiss.

"Good work, good work," the lieutenant was cheering.

There were not more than twenty men charging now, and now not more than a dozen, and again only six, and then none at all. The machine guns stopped their vicious barking. The squad took them down and disappeared again.

There was another vague period. A mine went up in the bay in a black column of water, mud and metal. Spars shot into the air. Then it seemed to Litvin that they weren't firing so often now.

Then somewhere there was a bugle calling.

He stood still by the lanyards until the lieutenant walked over to him and thumped him on the shoulder.

"It's over now," he said. "That's 'cease firing'."

Litvin looked around. There was still the hazy mist of smoke. In the bay two ships drifted helplessly, with their flags down. Along the shore there were others beached. In the distance a hulk burned dully.

In front of him he could see the water sparkling under the sun. Then there was the hazy fire zone. Then behind was the riotous green of the jungle and the silvery white line of the canal.

He remembered them little by little.

The lieutenant was grinning at him.

"You pulled that lanyard finely, young fellow."

Litvin tried to speak, but his throat seemed like a piece of hard leather. He raised his hand in salute.

The lieutenant began kicking the empty brass cartridge cases away from the gun.

"Bully little fellow, that Russian," he thought. "Fine little chap. Wonder why the deuce he is looking at me so queerly?"

III

IN A CELLAR

They remained in the room behind the shop until the third volley of riflery crackled on the other side of the bridge. Even then they might have stayed, but they heard several half-choked shrieks, and suddenly the shop door burst open and a woman rushed in. She took three little steps forward and tumbled headlong.

Then they knew they had better go downstairs at once.

The little woman on the floor made no movement. She was lying on her face. Her short, bushy black hair had become loosed from its net. The heavy red stain on her blouse, just beneath the shoulder blade, was widening rapidly. They knew she was dead.

Then suddenly the rifles began, and a dog out in the street howled in panic.

Sonia laid down her baby. She crossed to the sofa near the door and attempted to pick up the little withered body of the old shopkeeper. None of them made a move to help her. She found she couldn't lift him. She dragged him to the door and towards the cellar steps.

The red-bearded ragpicker was past her in an instant. His iron-shod heels clattered on the stones. The fat woman who had the old clothes shop up the street hesitated a moment and came after her. The big, black-bearded cantor picked up the child and followed.

She got him down at last and dragged him to the darkest corner. A sombre yellow light trickled through the grating. The ragpicker crushed past her and squeezed himself between the walls.

The old man was very weak. Beyond a stifled groan and the wheezing in his throat, he had uttered no sound for hours. He kept his eyes closed.

The second-hand clothes dealer came down the stairs with the caution of a cat. She held her skirts up with her right hand. Her left clutched a little parcel of clothes. The cantor was stumbling down behind her. Sonia could see the child's white face against his big black beard.

Outside, the streets were deserted. Only those who were old and helpless were left in the houses. Some were flying along the country roads. Others were hiding in the hedgerows. The rest were being shot and stabbed and clubbed and trampled to death in the alleyways.

It had all started trivially. An officer of Cossacks had been riding through the Ghetto. His horse had stumbled on the cobbles and a group of schoolboys laughed. The officer lashed at them with his riding switch. A crowd gathered and he had to sabre his way out. In an hour the Black Hundred had struck.

Sonia's district was far from the spot where the pogrom started, but the Hundred and the peasants were swarming in every street. Sonia's husband had gone over the bridge. She knew he would never come back. She never expected him. She hoped he had been shot clean through the forehead and had been thrown in the canal. Most of the victims would have their heads crushed like eggs and fall under the heavy iron-shod shoes of the peasants, or under the hoofs of the dragoons' chargers.

There were now only Maxim Litvin, the old storekeeper, her father and the six-months-old child. The cantor and the ragpicker and the woman from the second-hand clothes shop had rushed in when the dragoons had thundered by the bank of the canal.

They had been together a half-hour in the back room before they moved downstairs, and no one had spoken. The ragpicker was the first to enter, and he snarled when the cantor came fussing in, and tried to bar the door against the old clothes dealer. He believed that the fewer there hid together, the more chance there would be for escape. None of them had been in a pogrom before. All had suffered the extortion of the Black Hundred, the unscrupulous grafting of the police and the hatred of the moujiks. They had read and heard of the massacres in Nijni Novgorod and in Odessa, and they knew what to expect.

The ragpicker had scurried around and around

the room, listening at the door, peeking through the windows, looking even up the chimney; the cantor stood in a corner, motionless and eagle-eyed. The clothes dealer had plumped into a chair and rocked silently to and fro.

Sonia spent the time walking the floor with the child and watching the old man. She couldn't tell him what was happening, but she wondered if he knew.

They could hear sounds from the bridge faintly when the door was closed. The rumble was like very distant thunder. When the door was open, the gunshots and screams were quite distinct. The ragpicker had opened it once and shut it quickly. He would go over every few minutes and press his ear against a crack. Then he would run around the windows.

Back of the houses were the country roads. In front the canal crept in a half-moon. Along the canal bank a band of students lined up with rifles, to pick out heads in the water. The rioters were shutting off any escape by the bridge. Companies of armed peasantry closed up the roads, urging their shaggy ponies along with long, whining whips. Members of the Hundred flashed in and out of the surge, knifing, shooting and vanishing.

The six in the room knew little of what was going on at the bridge. They knew that there was killing, and that the Moldavian and Albanian peasants were at work in the alleyways. The door was closed when the rifle fire began.

The ragpicker opened the door, and they could hear shrieks and groans in the distance. Above the babble arose the angry chatter of a machine gun that had been captured from the infantry. The mob had cornered a crowd of Jews in a *cul-de-sac*. Then a few flying figures had dashed down the street, and the little woman had tottered in. And they had gone downstairs.

In the cellar it was worse than upstairs. Through the grating to the street they could hear everything. One long shriek predominated. It began with a short sob and ended in a wild crescendo and paused, and then it began and ended, and began and ended again.

The child woke up and commenced whimpering. Sonia took it from the cantor and nestled it close. It fell asleep again. The cantor squeezed himself back to the damp wall.

They heard steps flying down the pavement, followed by the drum of a horse's hoofs on the hardened clay. Two staccato cracks from a rifle, and the rider returned leisurely up the street.

Sonia stole up the cellar steps and into the shop. She opened the door cautiously and looked out. The butcher from two doors down lay on his back in the sunlight, with his big carving knife in his hand. His head was twisted curiously to one side, and his black beard was grey with dust. His sheepskin cap lay a few feet farther on. Up the street a woman was crawling slowly on her hands and knees towards an open door, and as Sonia looked the

woman lay down and curled herself up like a child going to sleep. From the bridge there came a sound like the beating of waves on a strand.

She went back to the cellar. The cantor had taken the child up from where she had laid it, and was rocking it in his arms. The clothes dealer was muttering to herself. She went over and felt the old man's heart. It was beating very faintly. She took off her knitted jacket and laid it under his head. His eyes flickered for a moment.

The ragpicker roamed about the cellar as he had about the room above. He stood under the grating and looked up. In the light, his short red beard and skinny neck above his filthy grey muffler showed in a saturnine silhouette.

Sonia felt a rising anger against her husband. Why had he gone out when he could have stayed in and perhaps saved them? He might have hit upon some plan to foil the rioters. Even if they did escape, what could she do, with the child and the old man?

She stole upstairs again and looked out. The sounds seemed somewhat fainter. She thought of venturing the two streets to the canal bank, but she remembered the child.

The cantor had again taken it up. He seemed to get comfort from the little body.

He gave it back to her reluctantly. The ragpicker looked up the grating again.

"Is it over yet?" asked the cantor.

"Don't talk to me, you! Do you hear?"

The cantor sank back in his corner. He gave a sudden sob.

Nobody paid any attention to the clothes dealer. She lay huddled up against the wall. The child slept peacefully. Sonia put her hand over its mouth to feel if it breathed.

They heard staggering footsteps somewhere. Sounds appeared to magnify in the house. Sonia could hear the ticking of the clock two flights above. She put down the child again and ran upstairs.

Little Mendel Husik, the tailor, was reeling down the street. His cap was awry and his caftan open. He was drunk. Suddenly he saw her and began singing: "There once was a widow in Little Russia. She had eighteen children." He took off his cap and bowed grotesquely to her.

Sonia slammed the door and ran downstairs. She could hear him reeling along and singing. He would go along like that, she knew, until he walked into the waiting Hundred.

"Is it over yet?" asked the cantor.

"I don't know, little father," she answered. He looked so white that she left the child with him.

People came running down the street. There were a few shots. Some passed the house. They heard a scramble in the next house, followed by crashing blows. Steps went out again. Something groaned next door, with a rattle in the throat. Then more fugitives and cracks like the lashing of whips. A body fell over the grating and obscured the light. There was a drip, drip, drip, to the cellar floor.

A pause, and the dog outside began a long, heart-broken howling. Sonia felt a shiver in her breast and cold on her cheekbones. Her breath seemed to stop.

Sonia knew the Christian better than the others, and she couldn't conceive how they could take part in the butchery—they seemed so gentle and good-natured. She had once met a sergeant of Grodno Hussars while on a visit to her grandmother. He would come around to the kitchen and sit and look at her. He seldom said a word except "Good afternoon" and "Good-bye." He drank huge quantities of tea from the samovar, and sat stroking the hilt of his sabre. When her grandmother's cow foundered, he tramped seven miles for a veterinary surgeon. When she went to the well for water, he would take the pail from her and walk beside her, never saying a word. When she was returning to the city he caught her hand and said: "Become a Christian and I will marry you," but she laughed. He seemed a nice, heavy kind of fellow, who wouldn't hurt a fly. She had also known two Cossacks who always laughed to her when they passed the door, and they seemed much too good-natured to be real soldiers.

And now they were massacring her kinsfolk in the alleys. She couldn't understand it.

The little old clothes dealer stirred against the wall and began whining.

"Fifteen years ago we came here, Yetta Gersten and myself, and fifteen years we worked by daylight

and candlelight. Every Friday, when we closed up, I put a rouble into a bowl, and it's all gone now. Who will marry me now with my bowl gone?"

The ragpicker spat at her in disgust. The noises seemed farther off. In the distance a bell began tolling with deep, sonorous notes.

"What is that for?" asked the cantor.

Nobody answered.

The old man began to stir. Sonia turned him on his side. The movement wakened the child, and it cried fitfully. In the distance the bell gave another rich, reverberant note. Someone ran down the street.

The darkness and noise were frightening the child. It cried louder than ever. The old man's heel scraped along the floor. The child began to scream.

"Damn you! Can't you keep her quiet?" snapped the ragpicker.

Sonia said nothing, but held the child close and rocked it. The screaming gave way to explosive sobs. Every time the bell clanged they shuddered and waited, and held their breath for the next stroke. The clang affected them like a heavy blow.

The cantor moved in his corner. A piece of mortar became detached and fell on the floor. They all jumped.

"It's over, perhaps," said he.

The bell gave another stroke. Sonia wished she knew what it was about. She thought there was a faint smell of smoke somewhere.

She was very tired now. The child was heavy, but she felt she oughtn't to sit down. The thought of her helplessness sent tears rolling down her cheeks. They splashed on the child's face. She wiped them off and turned her head to one side so that the tears could fall to the ground.

She felt a tug at her dress. The old man had turned over on his face. She turned him back on his side. She knew that he wanted to tell her something, but she couldn't understand. His eyes opened and shut spasmodically. Only husky sounds came from his throat. She arranged the jacket under his head again and felt his lips. They were moving rapidly. She put her ear to his mouth, but could not distinguish what he was whispering.

The clothes dealer was still whimpering in her corner. The ragpicker flitted in and out of the murky light that came from the grating. He found a stick and began pushing through the bars at the body lying there. He managed to move it on its side several times, but it fell back with a dull thud. Something splashed and squelched under his boots.

The cantor crouched in his corner. Every few minutes he gave a gasping sob. Sonia remembered the last time she had heard him in the synagogue. His long black beard had stood out in sharp relief against his white surplice, and the worshippers found themselves in tears as he chanted the Kaddash in his sonorous baritone.

Sonia felt they had been there for years. She had seen the ragpicker only once before, but it

seemed as if they had been intimate from birth. The husband who had gone out that morning and never come back was like a figure in an old history. She wondered why the child slept so long. They had been only twenty minutes there, but a cycle of days and nights appeared to have passed. What life remained to them, she felt, would be spent in the cellar.

Outside the clamour grew worse. The bell's ringing was faster. Shrieks were louder. She could hear sharp, crackling reports, which were of rifles, and more muffled ones, which were of automatics and revolvers. There was an angry murmuring and a faint, thin cheering, and some were singing a song she didn't recognise. The machine gun's chatter had ceased.

She couldn't picture to herself what was happening. She thought of an illustration in a school book of men in armour, cutting down men in white garments, with short, heavy swords.

Someone had opened the door upstairs and was moving around with cautious steps. The fugitives in the cellar crept close to the wall and cowered against it. Sonia could hear the beating of the hearts in the stillness. The old man did not stir. The steps moved from the shop to the back room, and stayed there a minute; then they ascended the stairs. They came down again and they passed the door to the cellar. They heard them going to and fro in the shop. The front door swung open; there was a sound as of a match struck against the lintel

of the door. Then the steps moved up the street. Everyone breathed with a sobbing catch in the throat.

The ragpicker darted up the cellar steps and barred the door. Sonia felt as if that ended things. The outer world was cast off. They were doomed irrevocably to the darkness and the dank smell. She wanted to dash upstairs and out in the streets, and give herself up to the mob around the corner. She smothered a wild desire to scream. As the bar slammed to, the cantor dropped on the floor and buried his face in his arms.

The mob was coming closer. They could hear the cries of, "Kill the Jews!" in the distance. Yells of rage rose like the bellow of angry cattle. Occasionally there was a tinkle of broken window glass. Dust began to filter through the grating. They saw each separate particle flicker in the sunlight.

Their terror was more acute now. Sonia remembered tales of the pogrom at Kishineff. A cantor's head had been carried around on a pole, and they had struck the face, asking it to sing. The ragpicker would be torn to pieces before their eyes. The child would be thrown about from one to the other. The old man would get the easiest death of all—one blow would kill him. But what would happen to herself and the old clothes woman?

The Russian artisans were bad enough, but the rioters were in the main Moldavian and Albanian peasants, with wild, rolling eyes, and crowbars in their hands.

They were turning the corner to the street. Shrieks of agony split the air. A child was screaming. The trample of the feet overhead was like hammers pounding on a hundred anvils.

The crowd swept into the street. Noise seemed to cover noise. Sonia was deafened. The clothes dealer shrieked at the top of her voice. The cantor cried with loud, insistent chokes. The ragpicker clawed nervously at the wall. The old man lay on his back with his eyeballs fixed. The child was sticking her nails into Sonia's neck. Sonia pressed it closer. She wanted to shriek, too, but was afraid of terrifying the child more.

How long the uproar lasted she did not know. She could hear people rushing into the house. Other people followed them. Someone banged at the cellar door. Then there was the sound of something falling loosely and heavily, and the banging stopped. There was a long-drawn, shuddering groan.

The grating was darkened by running feet. They paid no attention to the figure on the bars. The window of the shop broke with an ear-splitting crash.

Above the turmoil, one insistent shriek rose in a sharp soprano: "Kill them! Kill them! Kill them!"

Down the street farther a woman cried: "Oh, God! Oh, God! Oh, God!" Her voice was hoarse from shouting.

Several feet dashed up the staircase and into Sonia's bedroom. They were moving something

heavy. Sonia thought it was her big iron chest. They staggered with it to the window and hoisted it over. The window panes tinkled and the box fell with a dull thud. Bellows of rage filled the street. Someone cheered faintly.

There was no light in the cellar now. Sonia heard a scuffle and dull blows like kicks somewhere near the wall. The ragpicker was attempting to stop the crying of the clothes dealer. God, she felt, if that ragpicker should lay a finger on her, or on the child, or on the old man! She would tear him limb from limb.

The trampling became faster. The feet on the grating moved with the tapping of step dancers. The mob seemed to heave and surge overhead. Then light flashed through the mass of legs and into the cellar. Sonia could see the white face of the ragpicker moving convulsively. A deafening explosion followed. Someone had thrown a bomb.

The noises that had filled the street before were nothing to the babble now. It seemed as if everything had crystallised into one malignant sound. She wished she could close her ears with her fingers, but she couldn't lay down the child.

She thought she was fainting. She wanted them to come into the cellar and finish it at once.

Her knees were growing weaker and weaker. The sound of the explosion seemed to have cut her heart adrift, and it was floating around on air. Cold sweat was pouring from her forehead into her eyes. She felt perspiration from her whole body saturate

her clothes and dampen the child's clothes. Her teeth clicked together with a rapid clatter.

The feet moved off little by little from the grating, and light began to trickle through. She could distinguish the other forms in the cellar. The old man was still rigid. Only for a slight wheeze she heard when she bent down, she might have thought him dead. The cantor was taut against the wall. The clothes dealer's eyes protruded like those of a fish. The ragpicker's face dilated in a horrible grin. Every time a noise was made their bodies quivered.

Each of them would have preferred certain death in the street to uncertain safety in the cellar. Their eardrums were tingling. Their hearts were thumping with the boom of bass drums. They conjured up grotesque visions of the fight in the street. Red spots flickered to and fro and around and up and down before their eyes.

God! how long would it last? Was there no chance of the troops coming? And Sonia brought up for herself a vision of blue-coated Cossacks advancing down the street, three abreast at a gallop, with their knouts swinging and whistling, their shaggy mounts dashing against the rioters. The mob would give way like a flock of sheep. But the troops were in their barracks. They had no orders to act. They would stay there.

The mob had nearly passed now. Sonia felt they were dragging bodies along with them. Thick, drunken voices yelled: "Crucify them! Crucify them!"

Then a sort of rearguard swept by, howling like wolves.

The street was deserted again. Sonia found herself half sitting, half lying, on the floor. The child was wide awake. Nervous shivers ran up and down its body. Its heart was fluttering. Sonia scrambled to her feet and ran over to the light under the grating. Its face was white and its eyes closed. Its teeth chattered convulsively. A slight froth was on its lips.

If she could only get it warm somehow, she thought. If she could get upstairs and light the stove!

Up the street doors were banging. A shiver of broken glass, and something struck the street with a thud. Somebody laughed.

Sonia felt her skin prickle suddenly. Something mysterious and terrifying was happening up there.

She pressed the child as close to her as she could, and hurried back to the wall. As she ran a rifle shot cracked, followed by two others. The mob was still murmuring angrily in the distance. They were several streets away.

The cantor staggered to his feet. "I think it's over now," he said. His voice sounded thin and weak. It was like the voice of the child. It cracked on the last word. He fell forward on his knees and crumpled up. Neither the ragpicker nor the clothes dealer moved.

Sonia blew softly in the child's face. She thought

that might warm it. She opened the front of her bodice and nestled it.

There was a curious smell of smoke in the air. She had noticed it before, but it was stronger now. She wondered if the others had smelt it.

The doors were banging again. A scream rang out, and broke off with a catch.

Cold, deadly fear seized her. She was in a panic when the mob had rushed down the street, but this was something sinister. She felt the fear she had often felt in the dark, of having a dead hand touch her in the night.

The smell of smoke was becoming more noticeable. Little rasping wheezes came from the old man's throat. The others seemed not to have noticed it. She suddenly saw the ragpicker cross the floor. He looked around.

"Over now, I think," he cackled. "Well, I think I'll be going."

Sonia rushed forward and clutched his arm. A door slammed to. Footsteps came along the street. There was the rasping sound of rifle butts being dragged along the pavement. The ragpicker scurried back to the corner.

Little wisps of smoke crept through the grating. There was an acrid taste in the air. Faint, far-off mumbles sounded in the old man's throat.

The steps stopped in front of the house. They turned into the shop. They were in the back room. The floor creaked under heavy boots. There were four or five men there, Sonia thought. They worked

around silently, except for the falling of their feet. One knelt down and poked under the sofa. Then they went upstairs.

The smoke was thicker now. It seemed to fall into the cellar. It hung half-way between the grating and the floor, in grey whorls. It spun in and out in figures of eight, and took the shape of faces Sonia knew. The old man moved from side to side. His breathing was very heavy, with little snorts he attempted to control.

The men upstairs were moving from room to room. They could hear them distinctly in the cellar. They were arguing. Objects were being kicked about, and tables and chairs overturned. Curtains were torn down with whining zips. When they went, Sonia thought, she could get the child where it was warm.

The old man's chest moved up and down in spasms. Smoke was getting into his throat. He began short, feeble, staccato coughs. Sonia's heart stopped beating. She knew his coughing attacks. They began like that. If the men above should hear!

She knew who they were. They were the jackals of the Black Hundred who cleared up what the mob had left. They spied out the fugitives. She knew the meaning of the slammed doors, and of the choked screams and of the rifle shots. The mob were peasants in fanatical exaltation; these were the demons, the executioners, the plotters of pogroms in the night time. The mob were the artisans;

these were the masters of the craft. There was something horribly workmanlike in their brusque steps and in the silence in which they went about.

The old man began to cough violently. Sonia felt her hair quiver. God, if there were only some way to make him stop! For herself she didn't care; they could do what they liked with her. The others could take care of themselves; two of them were strong men, and the other woman was better off than she. But if she didn't get the child upstairs and warm it, it would die.

The steps shuffled about upstairs. They were preparing to come down.

She put the child down on the floor, and knelt by the old man. His coughing was more frequent now. It came in short, rattling gasps. She put her hand over his mouth.

Something was delaying them. They were perhaps looking in one last hiding place. She pressed her hand closer.

The old man was squirming from side to side. He tried to shake the hand off. His eyeballs dilated. His body grew rigid. He beat at her with his hands. His knees moved up and down with spasmodic jerks.

They were coming down the stairs. They were talking in grumbling whispers. They would have passed in a moment.

The old man arched his body. Then he suddenly went limp. Sonia felt numb and dazed. She took the jacket from under his head and put it over his face.

She went over and picked up the child. The smoke had darkened the cellar more, and she had to grope for it. It seemed warmer.

The steps were passing the cellar door. She knew they would overlook that. In a few moments she could bring the child upstairs. She wondered if the stove had been injured, and if anybody had taken the matches.

The child suddenly broke into loud sobs.

The footsteps upstairs paused for a moment.

The sobbing grew louder.

Then the rifle butts began to smash the panels of the door.

IV

BOW SING LOW AND THE TWO WHO WERE THIEVES

ALONG Seventh Avenue it was known as "Bow's Joint," and in the daytime in white letters and at night in gilded electric ones it proclaimed its purpose to all the world in the two words, "Chop Suey." If you mounted the rickety and dirty stairs and paused for a moment before entering the superlatively clean and very gorgeous black, gold and red dining-room, you might have noticed above the lintel of the door six inches of peculiar, angular Cantonese writing. And if you knew Cantonese, you would translate it as "the garden of nine thousand jasmine-buds and nine purling brooks, which is Bow Sing Low's."

You would not have cared for Bow Sing Low. No one on Sixth, Seventh, or Eighth avenues did. He was not one of those very fat, scrupulously clean-shaven, bronze-faced Chinamen, with the look of unutterable wisdom in their eyes, whose very appearance warns you against them. Neither was he one of those lean, slant-eyed, infantile-looking Chinamen with the rumpled hair and the worried expression, whom you always imagine in a difficulty and want

to help. Bow Sing Low was thin, compact, of medium height, with the slim strength of a heron or a greyhound. His bronzed face had all the peculiar characteristics of the Chinaman—slanting eyes, high cheek-bones, wide forehead, black eyebrows. He wore a short-cropped moustache, tortoise-shell spectacles, and a black silk biretta-like hat, from under which four feet of glossy queue hung like a slim reptile.

But the most remarkable thing about Bow Sing Low was the look of asceticism on his face, the look of high and devout purpose, of aloofness from earthly things that a young priest might have worn. You never saw Bow Sing Low in anything but his black coat of quilted silk, his black skirt richly embroidered with gold, and his biretta-like cap. Nothing more Chinese could be imagined. Bow Sing Low, if we are to judge the age of a Chinaman by the same characteristics as we judge the age of Caucasians, might have been thirty-five years old.

A motley collection of customers came to Bow Sing Low's Jasmine Garden on Seventh Avenue; gunmen, members of the Gophers and of the Happy Gang; smooth confidence men from Broadway; slim, incredibly light-fingered pickpockets from the department stores of Herald Square; actresses and chorus men; occasionally a party of slummers dipping fearfully and delightedly into the underworld of New York, and now and then a suburbanite from the Pennsylvania Station with a couple of hours' wait on his hands.

Bow Sing Low appeared rarely in his restaurant. He kept close quarters in the back of the house, and when he did show himself it was to flit for a moment only through the corridor between the tables. The care of the restaurant, with its ninety-and-nine varieties of strange-looking and aromatic foods, its queer, lugless cups of golden tea, its Oriental confections, its marble-topped tables and hidden nooks, its black and red cloth screens and hangings with cleverly wrought figures and Chinese mottoes in gold, was left entirely to Wung Hu, a fat, laughing Cantonese with the stocky build of a Nipponese wrestler, and to Mon Wah Lee, a thin, skeleton-like waiter from Shanghai, of wonderful deftness of hand and woebegone quality of face. Bow Sing Low found it more to his advantage to keep out of the dining-room, for with his passing through it a current of cold wind seemed to swirl about the place, and the diners stopped their quick chattering and the laughter broke.

"Begor," said Hennessy, the big Mayo policeman on peg post outside the restaurant, as the ascetic Chinaman went by, "there's a chink I wouldn't like to be alone in a dark room with."

At six o'clock every morning Hoy Mon, the cashier, brought him the night's takings, in smooth and crumpled green and yellow bills, in shining quarters and half-dollars and dimes, and in dull nickels and brown pennies. And every Saturday morning, after the weekly advance to the men on peg post and the men on the beat had been made,

and twenty dollars tribute had been handed over to "Chick" Donnelly, Bow Sing Low counted three hundred dollars, more or less, and, putting the money into a black satchel and hitching a heavy automatic up his sleeve, he brought it down to Wall Street and deposited it with the teller of the International, who entered it calmly into a pass book, and looked enviously at the lean Chinaman with his tell-tale occidental eyes.

And yet Bow Sing Low was not happy. An ugly black blotch hung over the serenity of his existence, as a dirty yellow cloud will mar the blue stretch of the sky.

He could understand why the blue-coated giants on beat and on peg post should get their tribute every week, for policemen are temperamental creatures, and if they are not kept in good humour they may make trouble when a joyous customer feels compelled to shout ragtime, or an elevated chorus lady decides to try a new fox trot step. This little drain on his resources Bow Sing Low did not mind at all, but what did irk him sadly was the payment of twenty dollars a week, representing many gold and silver coins in the currency of Canton, to Jim Chick Donnelly.

At the age of eighteen James Chick Donnelly had driven an auto-truck with distinction and daring for the United States mails, for Donnelly was strong of arm, keen of eye, and quick of head. Being a thinking man and not at all afraid of a few taps on the head and body, he forsook the driver's wheel

for the boxer's gloves, earning as much in thirty short minutes as he had done formerly in six days of eight hours each. In another session of silent thought he had decided that he could gain quite as much money by merely threatening to fight and not fighting as by enduring the thundering rushes of an opponent in a roped ring. He became a member of the Gopher Gang and rose to be a shining light among them.

The Gophers are not pleasant folk to be at odds with. There came a day when Chick Donnelly climbed up the rickety stairs of the Chop Suey, went to the rear where Hoy Mon sat like a Buddha behind his cash-desk, and disclosed to his inscrutable eyes an automatic pistol that resembled a miniature field-piece.

"Kick in with twenty bones," demanded Jim Chick Donnelly.

"I see the boss. Wait," Hoy Mon parleyed, and he did.

He returned with the comforting news that Chick might have his twenty. Accordingly on every Saturday morning at eleven o'clock the Chick got his.

Bow Sing Low may not have known of Solomon, but he heard wisdom cry to him, and understanding put forth her voice. For the Gophers are a turbulent people, to whom life and property are trifles thin as air, and the police do not prevail against them. But Bow Sing Low began to hate with a deadly hatred this bull-necked, stocky, bullet-

headed, sharp-eyed vampire, who demanded and got yellow blood from his commercial body. He hated every item of his appearance: the wiry, colourless hair, the low forehead, the flattened ears, the thin-lipped, hard mouth, the truculent jaw like the prow of a battle-ship. He hated his natty blue serge suit, his modish, buttoned boots, his fine grey flannel, soft-collared shirt, and the rich knitted tie that went with it. He treasured up silently every payment made to Chick, every meal which Chick ate, without a thought of paying for it, every service done for him by the fat and lean waiters in the dining-room. These things would have been nothing to Bow if he had not wanted the money which the gunman had demanded and got with the regularity of a fine chronometer every Saturday morning.

For Bow Sing Low had dreamed a dream. And for the sake of the dream he was sacrificing the honour of a Manchu gentleman by the keeping of an eating-house for the riff-raff of Seventh Avenue. For Chinamen dream dreams not induced by the soothing odour of the poppy pipe. They have great vistas, great ambitions. The laconic Celestial who helps you wrestle with a dress tie may see himself leading the Yellow Hordes into the plains of Europe, as Genghis Khan dreamed; and Tamerlane. The bronze cook slaughtering a chicken may have a vision of himself preaching the word of the Lord Buddha from Vladivostok to Samarkand, and from Irkutsk to Cambodia. You can never tell what

mighty canvas is being painted behind the cubic foot of yellow skin that veils a Celestial's brain.

For Bow Sing Low had seen in himself a poet, and a patron and entertainer of poets. In his mind's eye he saw himself owning a palace and gardens outside Canton, and being visited there and lauded by the literati of the three great Chinese universities. And for the sake of realising the dream he had consented to tickle the palates of the prize-fighter and the actress, and the gangster and the chorus girl, "May whose souls," he remarked piously, "abide for ever in the ninety-ninth place of torment, reserved for unruly children and degenerate men."

Now, Bow Sing Low's verse was poetry, if the opinion of Chinese critics is to be taken. Already two books had been published, *The Book of Blossoms* and the *Repository of Choice Aromas*, and had been commented on with favour in the seats of learning. A third book was nearly finished, as yet unnamed, and the last poem was half done—the return of the exile to his house in Wang He-i.

The pool is there; the hibiscus plant is there, and eighteen willow trees.

In the hibiscus I see her face; in the willow trees I see her eyebrows;

Ee-yah! my soul clouds; my eyes grow humid!

And after this Bow Sing Low would go home to Canton, for in ten years Bow Sing Low had

amassed over one hundred thousand dollars—if you take in three hundred every week it is a perfectly simple matter—and while it would fall short of the tremendously high state which was the pinnacle of Bow's dreams, still one could live very well on it as a country gentleman and a patron of letters and as a poet. So, day after day, and night after night, Bow Sing Low laboured on his last poem in his sitting-room behind the restaurant, a place furnished with an immense copper brazier for the burning of sandal wood perfume, a few Chinese water-colours on the wall, a little rack of books, a chair and a table with the implements of his craft, ink, small camel-hair brushes, and paper.

Occasionally, when he was weary of composition, he would slip to the wall, slide a small wicket and watch the faces of the customers drinking golden tea or eating the luscious dishes his cook compounded. They interested him, as the sight of wild animals in a cage interests us. He looked at their debauched, at their evil or foolish faces, as a surgeon might regard pathological specimens. He saw Gophers there, and members of the Happy Gang of Ninth Avenue. He had little to do with the Happies, for he was outside their territory, but he amused himself by speculating whether individual Happies measured up in physical bulk and evil qualities to the level of the Gophers. He decided that they did not, unless, perhaps, the "Dutch Kid."

As a fighter the Dutch Kid could out-point and knock out Chick Donnelly; as a shot he could hit his bull's-eye ten times where Donnelly could only make six, but he lacked the cool daring, the unruffled nerve of the Chick. He would blackjack a man in a side street, but he could never shoot him on the avenue in broad midday. The Kid was of the same build as Donnelly; his forehead was lower, but his chin was not so truculent; a mop of black hair and a blue-shaven cheek and jowl showed up darkly against the colourless locks and fair cheeks of the Kid, and the Kid's eyes shuffled when you looked straight at him, where Chick's looked back at you, threatening evil.

By himself the Kid could not measure up to Donnelly, but Bow Sing Low kept his eyes on the Happy Gangster, reckoning that in good time a situation would arise when Donnelly would be taken at a disadvantage, and the Kid would be a weapon ready to the Chinaman's hand, directed by all the wisdom and cunning and nerve of the Chinaman's brain.

There came a fine spring morning when Giovanni Todisco, ward-heeler of Ninth Avenue, went out to breathe the April air, and the Dutch Kid, who had accepted a retainer of fifty dollars from a progressive supporter of reform government, followed him with a .45 automatic in the right-hand pocket of his coat. The ward-heeler entered the hall of a tenement. The Kid entered also. There were four dull, resounding explosions, and the slushy

thump of a heavy Italian body on the granite parquetry of the hall. There was a blur of grey as the Kid flashed like a squirrel across Ninth Avenue, then to Eighth; the crack of Patrolman Moriarity's service pistol; a swing to the right; a couple of hundred yards' dash into Seventh. In the distance police whistles cut into the air like sirens. The Kid decided suddenly that the best place to look for sanctuary was at Bow Sing Low's, for he knew that a Chinaman would never turn over a fugitive to the police. He strolled nonchalantly for a quarter of a block, and dashed up the stairs of the Chop Suey like a cat up a tree.

"Where's the boss? Quick!" he demanded of Mon Wah Lee.

From behind his study door Bow Sing Low came like an apparition.

"I've croaked a guinea on Ninth," the Kid announced, "and there's three bulls on the job. Got any cover?"

He was conducted by Mon Wah Lee through a maze of back stairs; through an invisible door in the wall into a little room where the acrid tang of rice-gin and the soft, flower-like odour of fresh opium struck his nostrils like a south wind; through a trap-door and a length of rickety stairs into the dull coolness of a cellar.

"You stay," Mon Wah Lee directed, "me tellee come out."

Overhead he could hear the heavy tramp of feet, the hoarse, rasping voices of policemen, the

guttural croaking of the Chinese. In three hours Mon Wah Lee returned and conducted him to the restaurant.

"Italian dead," Bow Sing Low explained, with the least sing-song intonation. "Police no savee who kill. Safe go away. Thinkum so?"

"You certainly did me a good turn then, Charlie," the gunman remarked effusively. "You're certainly one game little sport when it comes to helping a guy."

Bow Sing Low smiled a little deprecatory smile. He uttered a sentence or two in Chinese, which the Kid took to be a polite depreciation of the kindness done, but in reality was a philosophic reflection on Bow's part to the effect that when there are many lice in woodwork, what matters one more or less?

After that the Jasmine Garden, which was Bow Sing Low's, found a kindly critic and a pleasant friend in the person of the Dutch Kid. He took to frequenting the place with regularity, and to bringing friends there. He always had a cheery word for the waiters, calling them Charlie or Louie, and praising the cook whenever an especially appetising dish of chop suey was sent up. With warmth and with a genial friendliness that might have been the outcome of five years of intimacy, he asked every day after the health of Bow Sing Low.

And then one day some untoward incident had disturbed the peaceful tenor of James Chick

Donnelly's existence. At six o'clock he came into the Chop Suey fuming, his face awry with rage, his eyes burning dully. He jostled Pete Kelly, the Herald Square con man, who was going out at the door. He lurched down between the tables and seated himself with a crash.

"One of you yellow-faced warts," he shouted, "bring me some eats, and bring them quick. Do you get me?"

Mon Wah Lee, thin, skeleton-like, lugubrious of visage, hurried to the kitchen and returned in an incredibly short time with a bowl of steaming meat and a pot of simmering tea.

"All right. All here," he smiled friend-like at Chick.

Chick surveyed him for a brief instant between slit eyes.

"Shut your yellow mouth," he snarled.

There was a sharp crack and Mon Wah Lee spun backward against a table. A little trickle of blood ran from the corner of his mouth. He retired to the end of the room with slow, shuffling steps. Chick ate ravenously, with his acid eyes roving in all directions.

From his little grating Bow Sing Low had watched Chick enter and had seen Mon Wah Lee reel back from his crashing right. His eyes distended a fraction and his brows knitted lightly. Chick sat in his place inhaling great whiffs of acrid cigarette-smoke.

He raised his eyes for a moment and caught the

half-contemptuous, half-inimical glance of Hoy Mon behind the cash-desk. He rose and swung over.

"Who're you looking at?" he demanded.

"Lookee no one no time," the cashier replied blandly.

"Yes, y'are, you chink bum. You were looking at me." He reached out his heavy prize-fighter's hand, laid it on the Chinaman's face, and pushed it sharply backward. "You keep your yellow lamps to yourself or you'll get all that's coming to you. Do you get that?"

He walked half-way across the floor. He stopped suddenly and turned around.

"I'll teach you chink hoboes how to treat a white man," he snarled, and sat down.

Bow Sing Low pondered deep and long in his mind as to what he should do. If he were to enlist the aid of Hennessy on peg post outside, Chick would be arrested and would reside, for a long or a short time, according to his record in the hands of the police, in the healthy but confined precinct of Blackwell's Island. But the Gophers are a dangerous folk, and as sure as Chick Donnelly was arrested, so surely would the dining-room of Bow Sing Low become, one morning, a scene of shattered wood and broken marble, of torn hangings and smashed panes and broken dishes—a calamity for which Bow Sing Low would have no redress. So once again Bow Sing Low heard understanding put forth her voice, and he decided to wait.

People trickled in and out of the restaurant—prize-fighters, crooks, thieves, gangsters, actresses, chorus men, show-girls. Some of them grinned at Chick's manifest ill-humour; some of them grew afraid and went out again. There was little chattering. There was little laughter. About eight a tall, thin boy came in, dressed in a suit that betokened a country tailor. He looked about the place with wide, surprised eyes. Evidently he was visiting New York for perhaps the first time, and was having a taste of the underworld. With manifest embarrassment he ordered a dish of chop suey and tea.

Wung Hu, the fat Cantonese, brought it to him. The boy put his hand into his trouser-pocket to pay. There was the tinkle of coins on the floor. There was the gilded flash of a five-dollar gold-piece as it rolled across to Chick's table. Chick bent down and scooped it up with a grunt. He held it for a moment between finger and thumb.

"Gee," he laughed, "that's a soft way of getting money."

The door opened with a bang, and the Dutch Kid entered. He surveyed the room with an easy, nonchalant smile.

"The quickness of the hand deceives the eye," he quoted.

The boy walked over to Chick's table. There was a look of embarrassment on his face. He held out his hand.

"Guess my fingers are all toes," he stammered. "Thanks for picking it up."

"Picking what up?" Chick demanded.

"The five dollars." The boy was a little red in the face. "The five-dollar gold-piece."

Chick looked at the coin in his hand. He placed it with an easy movement in his vest-pocket.

"You're off your nut, kid," he said. "I ain't got any five-spot of yours."

"But you picked it up. I saw you put it in your pocket."

Chick rose. His jaw protruded. The muscles about his shoulders hunched.

"What do you mean, five dollars?" he demanded truculently. "What are you trying to pull off? Do you want it in the face——"

"Good stuff. Good stuff," murmured the Dutch Kid.

Bow Sing Low crossed the room with rapid, nervous steps. There was a crumpled green bill in his fingers.

"You makee mistake. I have one-piece money alleesame," he purred. He conducted the boy back to his seat. "Everything alleelight." He pressed the five-dollar bill in the boy's hand. "You no pay chop suey."

And with his rapid, shuffling step he prepared to go back to the study. The Dutch Kid intercepted him with a cynical laugh.

"Gee," he murmured, "Chick's certainly one tough little guy. Hard luck on you, Charley."

"Me no likee," commented Bow Sing Low.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" the Kid laughed.

Bow Sing Low looked at the gunman with eyes closed until they resembled black slits.

"Everything all light. Some day fight. Maybeso Chick killed." He spread out his hands blandly. His eyes became narrower still. "Maybeso you kill Chick. You take Chick's place." He waited for a moment, and smiled good-humouredly. "Then you get ten dollars a week. You get chop suey. You have one piece good time."

The Kid turned on him with a look of distrust. He gazed at the Chinaman with an expression of annoyance.

"Ah, quit your kiddin'," he snapped. "Me stop Chick having his fun? Why, Chick's a good friend of mine. Besides, he ain't doing any harm. What are you kicking about?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," said Bow Sing Low, and he smiled genially on the gangster. "Me make one piece joke. You havee one piece dlink?"

But the heart of Bow Sing Low was far from duplicating the smile on his lips. A second and equally deadly hatred was added to his one against Chick Donnelly. He had rescued the thug from Ninth Avenue from the hands of the police with the hope of using him, and now he had found that his work had gone for nothing. He motioned to the lean waiter.

"Mon Wah Lee," he directed in his fluting Cantonese, "you will bring a flask of rice wine, of the potent liquor of the Three Rivers to the guests. You will say to the guest Donnelly that I hope that disappointment and disgust will pass from him while drinking it, and that for him all shall be harmony as before."

And then, with a soft padding of felt slippers, with the rapidity of a conjuring trick, he whisked into the sitting-room. From the tables in front, through the little grille in the wall, he could hear the chut-chut of conversation, the light tinkle of crockery, the muffled or explosive or repeating laughter of the diners, the boisterous voice of the Dutch Kid greeting Chick Donnelly, the laconic but gratified tones of Chick in reply. He took down the long, thin sheets of manuscript with their startlingly black, weird letters. To-night the work would be done, and to-morrow he might go. Hoy Mon, the thin, cynical cashier, son of a Manchu prince and a peasant woman of Yang-tse, would buy the shop from him. His jet eyes sparkled with pleasure as he thought of the conferences with the learned ones in Canton, night-long discussions over the poetry of Chung Zu, the T'ang poet, or Li-Po, the Drinker of Wine. And then his eyes hardened suddenly, for there was still something to do.

He took out the last sheet and read it:

Do you remember how I knocked at the jade portals when the thin moon rose? And you came to me

swathed in a veil of silver. Your voice as you greeted me was like the voice of a dove at mating time. Do you remember the burden I laid at your feet that night? Pearls from the Outer Sea, and peach blossoms from the hidden gardens of Chee-Poo, and poems that had come to me with the dawn. Do you remember, ah Little Golden One, do you remember?

From the dining-room he could hear the sonorous baritone of Chick Donnelly boom out like a bass drum:

"'There's a little spark of love still burning and yearning
down in my heart for you.
There's a longing for your returning. I love you. I do.'"

The voice of the Dutch Kid broke in raucously:

"'Come, come to my heart again;
Come, come, set that spark aflame.'"

Then both rang out in unsteady unison:

"'For there's a little spark of love still burning and
yearning for you.'"

Their voices ended off in a weak treble. Then came a gurgling, inane laugh. The potent liquor of the Three Rivers was doing its work.

He poised his brush over the paper for a moment and then wrote in a steady, confident hand:

The hair of the musicians is grey and silver. Cold settles on the blue and white tiles.

There was less chatter in the room. From a church-steeple ten strokes rang out, resonant, concerted, like a bar on a 'cello. There would be nobody in the restaurant now but the two gangsters. The dinner custom was past. The after-supper rush was not due for an hour yet.

Bow Sing Low looked hard at a water-colour of Wa Hei's on the wall opposite. Words were not coming easily to him. He heard the raucous tones of Chick Donnelly's voice raised in drunken reminiscence.

". . . says I, and feints with the left. He ducks and then, bingo! I gets him with the right in the jaw. Kid, you ought to have seen that guy fall. He . . ."

There was another long silence. The Kid's voice lisped maudlins:

" ' Your lips were like julep, when you wore a tulip, and
I wore——'

"Ah, what the hell did I wear?" And then another silence.

The door opened noiselessly; the lean, cadaverous face of Mon Lee appeared.

"They are both drunkenly asleep, most Excellent One," he said, "and there is no one in the Jasmine Garden."

"Get your whistle, Mon Wah Lee," said Bow Sing Low.

They went into the dining-room. At the farthest

corner Bow Sing Low could see the forms of the two gunmen, huddled in drunken sleep over the marble-topped table. His eyes glistened. There was Chick Donnelly, to whom he had paid hard-earned tribute for eighteen months, in consideration of nothing but the right to live and make a living. There was the Dutch Kid, whom he had once saved from the horrible harness of the electric chair, and who had gone back on him. He shuffled silently up to them. Chick was sitting hunched forward, his head wagging, his shoulders moving slightly. His cap was on one side of his head, disclosing one flattened ear in all its scarred horror.

The Dutch Kid slept with his head on his arm, the high, shaven neck showing whiter against the black of his close-cropped hair. His coat on the right side hung to the ground. Bow Sing Low put his hand in his pocket and took out a black, vicious automatic, with a massive haft and hypnotic muzzle. He leaned his forearm on the table. Chick looked up, swayed in his chair, and laughed maudlinly.

"Hands up," Chick gurgled. "Here's a nickel."

Bow Sing Low trained the muzzle right between his eyes. There was a sharp, hollow explosion, like the bursting of an inflated paper bag. There was a flick of red flame, like the lighting of a Bengal match. There was the acrid tang of burned black powder. Chick Donnelly toppled back to the floor with a crash as if he had received a smashing blow in the face. The Kid looked up vacantly. Bow

Sing Low laid the automatic beside him, and walked back to the sitting-room.

From the window came the sharp, fluting call of the police whistle. Bow Sing Low looked back. The Dutch Kid was holding on to the table, swinging the automatic in his right hand, a look of surprised horror on his face.

"Hey, Chick," he was shouting, "what, what?" He walked around the table and bent down. "Chick, Chick," he shouted again. "What the hell——?" he gasped. "Chick's stiff. What do you know about that?"

Bow Sing Low walked into his sitting-room. He listened for a moment as he took up his manuscript. Police whistles answered one another like the sirens of steamers. There was the hollow tattoo of night-sticks on the kerb. There was the thunder of feet on the stairs.

When fireflies flit through the hall, I sit in silent grief.

He poised the brush in mid-air. He was dissatisfied with the sentence. He changed it.

The red sunset turns to yellow. I sit silent, brooding.

The thunder on the stairs became louder. There were the hoarse, rasping voices of patrolmen; the sound of a table being pushed aside; the guttural tones of Mon Wah Lee.

"I don't remember. I don't remember," the Dutch Kid was whining.

Handcuffs clicked like the catch of a door.

"Come on, Kid," Bow Sing Low could hear the satisfied voice of a policeman command. "It's the chair for you this time."

A burst of inspiration came on Bow Sing Low. His hand flashed over the paper.

Slowly pass the watches. The nights are now too long.

Never once does her spirit come to colour my dreaming.

V

DONOGHU'S HOUR

"YOU WILL take fifty of your Senegalese. You will take a machine gun. You will be out of the camp in ten minutes."

"Yes, sir."

"You know the oasis at Bir Nara? Yes? You will be there at daybreak."

"Yes, sir."

"You will hoist the colours at the line due south if you are there first. If a British detachment is there before you, you will take the position and then hoist the colours."

"Yes, sir."

"You will then hold the position until the battalion arrives. You will do everything possible to get there first. If you are there first no hostilities will occur. You understand what to do if you arrive second. That's all, I think. Good luck! Good-bye! And, oh, Captain Donoghu!"

"Yes, Colonel."

"Report by runner, will you?"

"All right, sir."

The old colonel was always brusque when anything untoward happened. He usually carried the

suavity of his days in the Ecole St. Cyr on all occasions, exactly as he never changed the cut of his Napoleon. Donoghu knew that to get to the questioned frontier before the advance guard of the British column, his Senegalese would have to march quick time nearly all the thirty miles. They had already done eighteen that day.

The Senegalese were already being lined up by the young Dahomey sergeant; the machine gun men were raising the tripods. Their long, vicious Lebel rifles were shouldered. Swarthy Kabyles and Berbers of the Turco companies raised their hook noses and spat at the negroes in disgust. A group of Foreign Legion men grumbled at ceding the advance guard to the Senegalese.

The battalion raised a cheer as the quarter-company started off. The Legion men gave a delighted shout of "*Ce bon Irlandais!*" The officers whispered "Remember Fashoda" as Donoghu swung past. He nodded.

Then they stepped out into the desert. The men were all delighted—Donoghu could see that. They had had no real fighting for years, beyond an occasional punitive expedition against remote Kabyle tribes, or hunting down slavers along the frontier of the Belgian Congo. They were off to fight organised troops, as the Zouaves went to the Crimea. The little corporal who was carrying the colours in their oilskin case forgot discipline for a moment and grinned delightedly at the captain. The young Dahomey sergeant had thrown back his shoulders

until his blue Zouave jacket was near to bursting. He whistled "The Marseillaise" viciously between his clenched teeth.

Donoghu knew every man of his troop. His sergeant he had captured from an Arab slave trader when he was a *sous-lieutenant* of Turcos. He had trained him until he was the best sergeant of the native regiments. His little corporal he had saved from the stake at the hands of Ugandese raiders. Nearly every one of the men had come into the fortress a naked savage, and been transformed under his eye into an efficient infantryman in baggy blue pants and red cummerbund and *chechia*. And they looked on the tall, hawk-nosed, grizzled Irish officer as nothing short of a deity.

The column had moved on from Abecher on instructions from the Quai d'Orsay. One of the periodical frontier problems of the hinterland of the Sahara had arisen, and a battalion had been dispatched to hold the line. Hostilities would precipitate an international conflict that might develop into a Continental shambles. If Donoghu won his race against the advance guard of the English force that had left Khartum on the same errand, he would obviate most of the difficulties. Smooth-shaven, shifty men would parley in the chancelleries of Europe, and settle the question according to the dictates of diplomacy. If he arrived too late, his orders were explicit: he was to attack. Messages would rip and crackle along thousands of miles of telegraph wire, and within a day troops would be

mobilising along the Breton dunes, and squat grey cruisers would hurry from the slips of Portsmouth.

The camp was lost behind the waves of white sand. The troop tramped forward with the rapid, nervous step of the African of the desert. The long midday rest had refreshed the men, and they were as strong as though they had just left their barracks. Donoghu could see that they wanted fight. They would strain every nerve to win, but they hoped to arrive too late. Their footfalls sounded in unison, with the dull thud of a mallet beating clothes.

"Attention. Rout step."

They could get along faster now. Their captain would utilise their native instinct of hunting. That would help in reaching the oasis first. The men broke the formation with a shuffling sound as of dancers on a sanded floor. They spread out like a pack of hunting wolves.

They were barely twenty minutes out of camp, but they had gone nearly two miles. The sun would go down in another forty minutes. It hung in a vague scarlet blotch behind them, and coloured the white sand yellow before them. It was as though they were dashing through a limitless field of ripening wheat. The desert rose in waves as far as they could see, and in little hills and in gullies and chasms. There was a long, clear rift where a sandstorm had passed. Heat struck upward.

At sundown the men would stop for evening prayer, and for their quarter-hour rest after the

hour's march. Then Donoghu planned another hour's burst before nightfall.

"Attention. Quick time."

The shuffle grew faster. They bent forward like hounds straining at a leash. They closed up into a blur of blue. In the middle of the troop the black cover of the standard rose like the mast of a ship. There was no hard breathing. There was no sound at all beyond the soft, crumbling pad of the hundred white-clad feet and the flap of the bayonets against the men's thighs.

The young sergeant was several yards in advance of the troop. Occasionally he would break into a lope and gain on the men, and then slow up until they were just behind him. Then he would lean forward and begin his lope again. He had taken his rifle from his shoulder and was carrying it in his hand.

Donoghu looked back at the sun. Only half of it was above the violet horizon line. The yellow was changing to pink along the sand hills. Muezzins would now be chanting from the minarets of Algiers. It was time for prayer.

"Halt. Fall out."

The line broke its step, wavered and stopped. The Senegalese split up into groups and knelt with their faces eastward. A tall private chanted the verses.

Donoghu turned and looked back at the sun. He always felt an intruder at the prayers of the troops, though they never seemed to feel it. He had become

so much a part and parcel of his company and they of him that it seemed as if he should join in. He took off his *képi*.

To-night they were reciting the verses on battle. It struck him for a moment that, in spite of every effort they would make, they knew they were going to fight in the morning. The prayer rose in a sonorous, triumphant murmur. He wondered what really would happen.

They had broken up now, and were sitting cross-legged, talking in subdued murmurs. They were debating the prospects of meeting the British. He saw the tall private who had acted as muezzin inflaming their Mohammedanism.

God, if these Senegalese were unloosed against an enemy, they would tear them limb from limb! He had seen twenty-five of them once attack two hundred armed Kabyles, and remembered how no Kabyle captives were taken and no Kabyle combatants escaped. What chance would the debilitated Hausas have against troops of whom even the Foreign Legion was envious? What chance would an English detachment have against those savages with the promise of the Prophet rising like a flame within them?

Darkness was creeping up now. He would make another dash before night broke, and then rest until moonrise. He gave the order to fall in. The sergeant repeated it with a snap like a snarl.

Shadows were closing around. The men moved as in a huge spot of light that would contract little

by little. Darkness crept on like a cloak of soft black velvet. Donoghu could merely feel it fall about them. The men moved onward in a blot of dark colour. They changed rifles from one hand to the other with a soft click as barrel struck against palm. They resembled a huge insect crawling forward. The Dahomey sergeant was still in advance. The staff of the standard towered up from the mass like some grotesque weapon. There was the soft glug of water in canteens.

The prospect of action in the morning affected Donoghu with a wild feeling of elation. Queer spasmodic shivers ran through him. He had a desire to sing. The crumbling sand sprang under his feet like elastic.

His fifteen years in Africa had shown him much fighting: sharp night attacks against Moorish tribes, stealthy jungle stalking for raiders, and occasional campaigns into the desert; but, like his men, he had had no hostile contact with foreign troops.

Fifteen years before, he had arrived at the headquarters of the Foreign Legion in Algiers, had been cursorily examined and thrown a uniform. To the glowering old sergeant who received him, he was just more meat for the Moors, like any pickpocket from Whitechapel or remittance man from Europe. For his five years of service his daily five centimes pay went for pipe clay. He got his promotion to non-commission rank in his first enlistment. In his second term he got his sub-lieutenancy of Turcos, and later his lieutenancy and transfer with the grade

of captain to the native regiment—all, as the regulation for foreigners demands, *pour faits de guerre.*

The fifteen years had changed him. When he came to Algiers he was a chubby youngster of twenty-three, ruddy in the face, with a small moustache. Now he was as lean and bronzed and lithe as an Arab cavalryman. The hair was grey about the temples and beginning to thin. He had a ready smile, but seldom spoke.

They liked him in the African service. His commission as *chef de bataillon* was in a pigeon-hole of the governor-general's desk. He might reasonably expect his colonelcy within ten years. In the old days of McMahon, *roi d'Irlande*, he would have gone to Paris later, and might even eventually have fingered a marshal's baton.

He was satisfied, though. They knew that his enlistment in the Legion was not due to any offence or shady affair at home. What gave him more satisfaction was that his record was in the British war office as one of the most dangerous men in the African service.

He was known in Trinity, Dublin, as Patrick Sarsfield O'Connell Donoghu—Donoghu without an "e." His father had held a majority in the Enniskillen Dragoons, and he was intended for an infantry or artillery regiment. He failed in every examination in every subject but mathematics, and left for Aldershot without a degree.

But he left for Aldershot with the good will and good wishes of every man, professor and scout in

the university. Even the worm-eaten old lecturer in Greek history left his rooms to give Donoghu a mouldy monograph on the campaigns of Alexander on the day of his departure.

His father was retired then, and had a little country place near Sligo. He used to play golf with the then attorney-general, whom he would beat regularly. He rode to hounds with a member of the Cabinet, who used to visit the town. Between the golfing and the fox hunting and the old man's faith in his son, Donoghu was one day apprised that a commission was open for him in a Guards regiment.

At the most he had hoped for the Connaught Rangers or the garrison artillery. To belong to one of those magnificent regiments, whose officers wear bearskins and scarlet and gold sashes, seemed a wild dream. It was some time before it assumed the proportions of reality.

In Ireland they were overjoyed. They never doubted for an instant that his career was made. They expected him to follow in the path of Wellington, Roberts and Kitchener, and Dillon, who led the Irish Brigade in France, and O'Higgins, captain-general of Chile.

And against the purple sand dunes of the Sahara he saw the little grey, rambling house that had been battered by the Atlantic storms for three hundred years. He saw himself, striding out to show his brave Guards' uniform to the fox-hunting parson at the end of the village. And he could hear the cackle of the old housekeeper:

"A great pity it is, him to be going with the bloody English when he should be drillin' by the riverside in the moonlight, with his pike in his hand and in his jacket green."

His friends somehow gave him the same impression. While it seemed all right to go into an Irish regiment, it struck him as something like arrant treachery to be in one that was entirely English. Even the major of the Enniskillens felt that.

But all qualms vanished under the glamour of the sash and bearskin. The boys in Dublin examined him as if he were a prehistoric exhibit. They appeared surprised that he could move and walk, and even speak, in his new finery.

His feelings were of complete elation. He noticed how the passengers on the mail boat had gazed at him in awed admiration on his way back to London. One man seemed surprised at his own temerity in asking for a match.

He was rather taken aback at his reception at barracks. There didn't seem to be any hearty welcome for him. The old colonel had a look of icy coldness that surprised him. But he thought this must be the reception of every subaltern.

The frigidity continued through mess that night and in the morning when his captain brought him the rounds of the company. It continued for several days. He tried to engage his brother officers in conversation, but they were coldly and peremptorily polite.

It was only after a couple of weeks that he got his inkling of how matters stood. The company was falling out. He said something to the first lieutenant. He received a scant answer.

"Oh, by the way, Mr. Donoghu"—that "Mr." was like gall—"haven't you got some Irish regiments over there, militia and yeomanry and things like that?"

"Oh, yes, a lot," he answered. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh, merely curious," the second lieutenant replied, "merely curious."

He didn't understand him for a minute. Then it broke in on him. The bearskin felt like a ton of iron on his head. The red tunic swelled under his chest. His cheeks flamed like fire. The lieutenant was walking off. He felt he wanted to run after him and plunge his sword into his neck. A corporal standing near laughed. He turned around suddenly and the laugh broke off.

Whenever he thought of the incident he grew as red as he was that day on the drill ground. His long discipline in the desert could not master that. He would stop in the middle of his stride and grasp his sabre. His eyebrows would contract. He would curse long and viciously under his breath.

He was thinking of it now as he strode along by the troop. His chin had fallen on his breast. He marched mechanically. The moon had risen, and he was making out the course by compass.

The troop was swinging forward in step. The moonlight gave the dunes a white, leprous look. The men had the appearance of giants in the *Thousand and One Nights*. They threw gigantic shadows behind them. The standard pole cast a long black line that ended in a faint thread fifty feet behind. The moonbeams drew little glints of silver from the barrels of the rifles. They struck flashes from the Maxim that was being carried on its tripod in the rear, like some horrible, squat serpent, borne by priests in a barbaric processional.

A faint breeze had risen and was stirring the fine sand with a noise like the rustle of dry leaves. A little sand owl hooted derisively in the distance. Now and again the machine gun carriers gave grunts of effort.

From a clump of palm trees in front a marabout bird, that had strayed far inland from the marshes, rose with a raucous caw. They could see its long bill in the moonlight. It threw back its legs and flapped off eastward. It seemed to be flying straight into the white disk of the moon.

Donoghu's *képi* was pulled forward. He was holding his sabre by the middle. He was going over every little detail of his life in the Guards.

He had endeavoured to conquer the antipathy towards him by dint of work. Beyond the necessary presences at drill and mess he meddled no longer in the regiment's affairs. He was slowly and surely being pushed to the wall.

He brought the colonel what he thought was a

perfectly new idea for a company advance under fire. The colonel heard him to the end.

"As tactics," he had said, "as tactics, Mr. Donoghu, your proposal might be looked on with favour by a horde of Fenians with bludgeons, or by the irregulars of His Majesty of Abyssinia. Why not forward it to the headquarters of either?"

That ended that course of action.

If it had not been for his father, who was telling every one who would listen to him of the magnificent career his son was making for himself, and for the boys, to whom he had given photographs of himself in full dress uniform, he would have asked for a transfer to another regiment. But there had been too many dreams woven about him.

The atmosphere of it all stifled him. The salutes of the lumbering Cornwall men and the cockney prize fighters seemed to veil jeering insolence. The men had noticed their officers' attitude, and were coming as close to actual insult as they dared.

Even in spite of all, he would have stuck it out and tried to conquer. But there was the episode of Edith Grierson. That was the part of it that made Donoghu spit gall.

It was asinine, purely asinine. But Donoghu was twenty-three. He met her at a couple of dances. She was fair and tall and caustic.

Donoghu was in need of sympathy. He didn't tell her his troubles. He would tell her afterwards.

The more difficult his position became, the more serious grew his attachment. Normally it would have been a passing psychological phase. In Ireland the mess would have discovered it, and bantered him good-naturedly until the affair had passed over.

They met again at a dance. They danced. They went out to the conservatory. They talked for a few minutes. There was a flutter at his throat. He attempted to take her hand.

She drew back and eyed him. There was a mean, hard laugh in her eyes.

"How you Irish do love to flirt!" she said, and moved off.

He got hot and red, and then very cold. He went out into the garden and cursed her and himself and the regiment and the day he entered it.

Within a day his resignation was in. Within a week it was accepted. No one said good-bye to him. He felt that they all knew about the Miss Grierson incident, and would laugh over it that night at mess.

Next day he was in Havre. Two days later he was in Marseilles, under the care of a corpulent sergeant of Zouaves. Five days later he was in the quarters of the Foreign Legion at Torrens, being licked into shape by a cadaverous corporal with a voice like sulphuric acid.

The only regret he ever had was for his father, to whom he had never written and from whom he had never received a line. The old soldier's heart

he knew, must have been broken. He wondered how he played golf and went fox hunting after.

Over in Algiers they liked him from the day of his arrival. The cadaverous corporal, who had threatened to boot him at his first drill, nursed him for days when he was down with sunstroke. The Spahis and Zouaves had always a chair for him at their tables in the cafés. Even the saturnine Kabyles met him with a grunt of welcome when he strolled through their tents.

He liked the life there: the colour and glamour in the barracks, and the fierce, reckless spirit of the men. He enjoyed himself, except when he went out into the sand dunes and thought of the four months he was in his Guards regiment and wore his bearskin and his sash of scarlet and gold.

It was midnight now. The men had come fifteen miles. That made thirty-three that day. They were shuffling on in a rapid trot. The Dahomey sergeant still kept ahead of the troop, like the bell-wether of a herd of sheep. Only the frequent shifts at the machine gun and the standard showed that the troop was tired. They were near a group of stunted palm trees and a little spring.

Donoghu gave the order to fall out and bivouac. They were due two hours' sleep now. Then they would have to be up and on the march if they were to keep in the race.

Arms were stacked with a clashing rattle. The troop sat down and munched the rations from their haversacks. The six sentries took up their posts.

The sergeant made his rounds. Somewhere a pair of jackals howled.

The moon was high now. Against the black of the sky stars stood out like patches of white fire. Faint silver twinklings came from the dusty leaves of the palm trees. Water rose from the spring in a soft bubble. It flowed out in a little silver river that grew fainter and fainter and finally disappeared in the sand.

Donoghu wondered how the English detachment was getting along. He knew now how a cat felt while it waited for a mouse.

The men had unrolled their blankets and lain down on their faces. In their centre were the machine gun and the stack of rifles. At intervals the sentries stood bolt upright, with their fingers on their triggers.

Donoghu hollowed himself a place in the sand and settled himself in it. He could not sleep. He felt that the next day was too big. He remembered he felt like that going over on the mail boat to the Guards' barracks. He wanted to save himself as much as he could. He crushed his *képi* down over his eyes and lay still.

And then forms and faces rose before him. There was the old colonel of Guards, sitting stiffly before his desk, and a first lieutenant of Guards. And there was Edith Grierson. And there was an old fox-hunting major of Enniskillen Dragoons, and a group of Trinity students, and an old lecturer in Greek with a stained monograph in his hand.

And there was a thin line of khaki troopers, centred about a marabout's tomb with a few stunted date palms and a brackish stream.

Occasionally he heard a soft thud as the sentries grounded arms against the sand, and a few stifled yawns and a shuffle as the guard changed.

The moon had passed well overhead now. The men had had their two hours' sleep, but Donoghu gave no order.

He felt the young Dahomey sergeant pat him on the shoulder.

"Are you asleep, Captain?" he asked.

"No, I'm not."

"Shall the men fall in?"

"Go back and lie down," Donoghu directed.

Another hour passed. Donoghu looked around. Most of the men were awake. They lay around, squatting on their haunches and lying on their elbows, and waited.

Donoghu still gave no order.

Four hours had passed before they were under way again. The air was raw. The horizon was touched with faint splotches of grey.

The troops moved forward rhythmically in step. The sergeant paced alongside with quick, nervous strides. Donoghu noticed that his bayonet was fixed. A sharp breeze moved westward. From behind a clump of scrub there came the twitter of a sand partridge.

Donoghu felt calm now. It was as if, after countless ages, a scale that had been jolted had

come to perfect balance. He threw his shoulders back and looked straight forward. About his troops was the dignity of men going into battle.

Tints of rose and grey and emerald were filling the sky. A flock of starlings passed high over their heads. They could hear the rapid pit-a-pat of wings. In the east the sun rose in a crimson blotch. Clouds took the shape of heavy artillery and of massed regiments. They hovered to and fro like smoke from heavy ordnance. Then they suddenly parted and the sun flashed out like a huge crimson balloon.

They lost sense of time and space. Distance became so many steps to be taken, until they met a thin khaki line.

The troop routed step and scattered. The sergeant ran forward with nervous steps and whined like a bloodhound. The machine gun was dropped every quarter of an hour by its bearers, and others rushed to it and carried it forward. Every quarter of an hour the pole would be wrenched from the hands of the standard bearer.

Donoghu glanced at his troop from time to time. Their faces were set and rigid. Teeth were clenched. Furrows ran down glistening black jaws. Huge white eyeballs rolled.

He himself felt as if his fists grasped thunder-bolts. He was an irresistible power, hastening down the alleyways of the world to avenge woeful centuries.

The corporal at his left was gibbering in Arabic. He was reciting verses from the Koran that told

of the conquest of the Feringhee and of the victory of Islam.

Occasionally they rested mechanically. Then they stood rigid and looked eastward. No one spoke.

Hammers seemed to clank in Donoghu's brain. There was a singing in his ears. Above all he could distinguish a well-modulated voice drawling: "How you Irish do love to flirt!"

Then they saw the khaki line.

The black sergeant raised his voice and howled like a wolf.

The troop was running now. Three more helped to rush the gun. They took the standard on their shoulders.

Donoghu halted them and drove them into rank. He knew they needed a rest. They stood tense and quivering, with teeth bared.

He was near enough now to distinguish the British advance guard. They had scattered out over two hundred yards. A trim, slight officer was walking up and down. He could see that it was an English, not a native, detachment. He wondered how they would face these black fighters, whose bulk and uniform made them look like old-time *djinn*.

He marched them forward in quick time. The line grew more distinct. He could see the khaki caps. They were the type whose salute had seemed insults. He had no redress then. He was going to have it now.

The khaki line had dropped on their stomachs and were fingering their Lee-Enfields. They were taking no chances.

If Donoghu did not attack, he could imagine his reception. The young officer would come forward with a smile. "Sorry, old man. Here first, you see. Fortune of war!" The khaki troops would examine his Senegalese curiously and then draw aside with a snicker.

The line was lost to view behind a sand ridge. In a minute they would top it. The defence would not be more than one hundred and fifty yards away.

The Senegalese were drawn up in a quivering line. The teeth of the little corporal were chattering in frenzy. One or two of the men were frothing at the lips. They fixed their *chéchias* and tightened cummerbunds.

Beyond the ridge they could hear the young officer and his sergeant deliver quick orders. Donoghu wasn't listening to them. He was listening to the voice of a young woman in a conservatory at a ball fifteen years ago.

The Senegalese were waiting impatiently, their eyes focused upon him.

"Fix bayonets," he rasped. His throat seemed to have gone dry.

There was a swish as the blades left the scabbards and a succession of sharp clicks as they were locked on the rifle barrels.

The young Dahomey sergeant was poised on the balls of his feet. His bayonet was at the charge. He swayed backward and forward. He looked at Donoghu. Donoghu nodded.

They topped the ridge and raced downward.

VI

AN AFRICAN EPIC

THROUGH the open door of the dressing-room the shouting at the ringside could be heard distinctly. The preliminaries had been excellent. The middleweight bout had been a marked success. At that moment the lightweight champion of Bloemfontein and the Enniskillen Dragoon were battling the eighth round of a spite fight, and the hypercritical audience of diamond merchants, soldiers and miners were shrieking themselves hoarse at a rally.

It was by far the best card that had ever been staged in Africa, but the titbit of the evening was still forthcoming. Frank Selby, the big negro who had risen like a comet in the Cape Town ring, had challenged Jim Muller for the heavyweight championship of the continent, and the men were to go twenty rounds that night.

Muller sat in his dressing-room, listening to the advice of his trainer. As yet the negro was too much of an unknown quantity to occasion Muller and his training stable any serious qualms. But they had been pretty careful. The champion, with Dutch caution, had trained to a hair. Besides, it

was the first time in his ring career he had ever met a black fighter.

Until now he had always drawn a rigid colour line. The blood of the old Dutch pioneers, who had hurled the Matabele and the Mashona back from Table Mountain, rebelled at the thought of matching brawn and skill with blacks. But things had grown dull in the fight game. An astute manager had traded on the sensational value of a black and white match, and offered the biggest purse in African ring history, and Jim Muller and his manager had accepted. After all, knocking out a black could only make him the more popular in Kimberley.

But here in the dressing-room, as his hands were being bandaged, the matter did not appear so simple at all. The old Dutch trekkers, whose life had been one struggle against the black spearmen from the North, and who had learned their diabolical cunning and had shot the blacks on sight, woke up in him and, for the first time in his life, he began to have misgivings as to the outcome of a match.

It was ridiculous, of course. Here was he, Jim Muller, six feet two, one hundred and ninety pounds, in the pink of condition; the champion of Africa, one of the cleverest boxers in the empire, surrounded by skilled seconds. Somewhere in the back of the club, this fetid black was undressing, surrounded by filthy helpers, hangers-on in dives, wharfingers, God-knows-what scum. Fellows of

the type of his opponent removed his shoes, pulled his rickshaw, did all menial services for him. A moment's spar, a feint, a right hook and the bout would be over.

Still and all, he'd rather he hadn't taken it on.

Outside, the dragoon and the pride of the Free State were making the most of the minute's respite between rounds. The comments of the spectators were like the buzzing of an enormous swarm of bees. Above it could be heard the raucous cries of peanut sellers and the voice of the announcer calling the round.

Then silence for a moment, and thunderous shouting. Muller knew what had happened. One of the men had gone weak, and the other was finishing him. Another spell of silence and the timekeeper began counting. A second slipped out of the room and came back. "The Enniskillen's out," he said. "We're next."

The crowd outside was satisfied. The fight had gone twelve rounds, with action in every second. And the home man had won. The star bout was on next. Apart from its championship attraction, it was between black and white heavyweights, and one of the contestants was their own Jim Muller, of Kimberley. Black and white boxers had clashed frequently before the club, but never such important figures in the fancy as to-night. And certainly until to-night no negro in Africa had aspired to the championship.

Up and down the aisles were peanut sellers, sandwich boys, paper boys and men with soda-water baskets, all calling their wares. One of the club stewards climbed into the ring and began covering the bloodstains with sawdust. Another shook resin at the corners. From the gallery and pit came the monotonous chant of the bookmakers. The odds were three to one against the black.

As Muller appeared, on his way to the ring, the packed hall rose to its feet and cheered as one man. The shout was taken up by the thousands standing outside the club in the drizzling rain, and was re-echoed through Kimberley. It was the champion's first appearance in the ring since he had put away Tom Jennings, the Australian heavyweight, seven months before, and the thirteen rounds of that terrific, gruelling mill were still fresh in the spectators' minds.

Overhead the big incandescent arc light spluttered and flared. All the old fight followers of Kimberley were present. At the ringside he could distinguish mining magnates, Colonial officials, boxers and their managers. There was old General Baines, who had never missed a fight in forty years, with double glasses on his nose, propped up by cushions in his seat. There was the civil governor and the colonel of the Rifles. Even from the jaded Press table there came a volley of clapping. It was certainly Muller's house.

But in spite of all, there was no feeling of elation in him in response to the welcome. He had been

overtrained, he thought. Yes, that was it. He had been overtrained. He turned on his seconds with a snarl.

Picking their way down the aisle came the negro fighter and his seconds. The flaring hues of his dressing gown were distinguishable even far beyond the circle of the arc light's glare. There was no clapping for him, no cheering, no welcome. The crowd was not even inimical to him. They had the same dispassionate feeling as they would have had for a covey of birds beaten up for the guns.

There was no choice of corners or gloves for him. His seconds took what they got. Had Muller felt like fighting with bare knuckles, they wouldn't have dared dispute. They were a quiet, workmanlike, undemonstrative quartet, grouped around the impassive bulk of the huge challenger in the corner.

Bandages had been examined. Gloves were tugged on. The pursy Scotch doctor, with his stethoscope, had clambered in and out of the ring. The club announcer was shouting the length and conditions of the fight and introducing challengers. Occasionally a burst of handclapping would break out like the crackle of rifles. White-sweatered seconds flitted around the posts, arranging smelling salts, water, sponges and towels.

And in Jim Muller's mind the scene took on the proportions of an ancient masque. There was no more of the sordid details of the prize ring. There

was a jousting of humanity. It was no longer a twenty-round bout between hired pugs. It was no longer even a championship at stake. It was a struggle of strength between the attacking white and the resisting black, between the hordes who had come journeying over the sea and the natives to whom they grudged even the wilderness.

Had Muller been the scum of the dive, the fighter of the pothouse, the low-browed, dull-witted, atavistic plug-ugly, fighting with brute strength and low cunning, this phase would never have occurred to him. But he was a son of the veldt, tanned by the breezes of Africa, a descendant of the old Amsterdam burghers, who had fought their way inwards, inch by inch, into the country, against the battling Zulus. They had relied on bullets and powder and strategy for their success, but their descendant must defend himself to-night with elemental brawn.

And it filtered into Muller's mind, thought by thought, that it was a battle of races and of continents he must fight. He stood for the race that filled the hall and the town, and that was eternally inspanning on the trail northwards, and for forgotten graves on the veldt, and for brave dead companies ambushed by Zulu impis.

And the battle he would fight to-night, in a twenty-foot ring with gloves, should have been fought by armies of hundreds of thousands, and iron behemoths on the high seas, and batteries shooting from hill to hill.

The last of the challengers had been introduced, and the referee was clambering through the ropes. He was the editor of a famous sporting weekly, and his black frock coat, bowed back, white moustache and benevolent features looked out of place in the prize ring. He looked like the officiating priest at the ceremony of an antique religion.

The men had come together into the middle of the ring for the final instructions. The black fighter had thrown aside his dressing-gown and stood up, a huge, swift-moving figure, with shaven head and a bull neck. Under the champion's bathrobe the crowd caught white flashes of skin. He had little healthy hollows on his tanned cheeks and his hair was beginning to thin prematurely at the temples.

The crowd was too interested to talk. They craned forward towards the black fighter and the white-moustached referee and the tall, lithe figure of the champion. The hush was broken only by the clatter of telegraph keys.

Muller had underrated his man. He knew it. He noticed the enormous barrel of chest, the deep welt of muscle on the shoulders. He noticed the soft look of the biceps that promised to send home punches like darts of lightning, and the slender, well-knit legs that could move like a flash.

And, moreover, he noticed the negro's eye. It was keen as a kukri knife. There was none of the shiftiness that marked the debased Kafirs. It was an eye that had looked over rolling hills and followed

the flight of hawks. This was none of the degenerate hangers-on of the "coke" dives of Capetown. This was the type that fought Leopold's men on the Congo, until the oily Belgians had enlisted in their aid the Maxim and the Hotchkiss and the river gunboat. And then that type retired to the unblazed forests of the interior, and were waiting there patiently for a day to come.

More and more convinced Muller became that this was a tournament of races, and he felt that only his superior knowledge of the game would pull him through.

The referee had finished his monotonous instructions and the men had retired to their corners. The bookmakers raised their voices in a frenzy to make the most of the last minute before the fight began. The negro was sitting im assive as ever in his corner. Muller waxed his shoes carefully on the resin board.

The seconds were ordered from the ring. There was a sort of surge over the house as the spectators settled themselves in their seats. The gong gave out a reverberant brazen trill, and the fight was on.

Muller had somehow expected his opponent to rush from his corner at the bell and try to sweep him from his feet with a storm of hooks and swings. Instead, he was circling around with a barely perceptible movement, slightly crouched forward, the brown gloves at the end of the glistening forearms sawing the air, or flickering in and out in a feint, or ready to block the smashing left lead that Muller would sooner or later let go.

But the point of the black chin was never left unguarded a moment, and the black arm flitted to and fro over the ribs, where Muller would follow up with his murderous right-hand drive.

For a tenth of a second the champion got his opening. He jumped in with vicious right and left swings from the hips. The negro covered up and clinched, and the ropes creaked under the impact of the wrestling bodies.

But in that brief lead and clinch Muller knew he had met a consummate ring general. Then the bell clanged.

The spectators had no angle on the fight from the first round. That spring of Muller's had failed to crumple up his opponent, and they felt more than relieved. Jim had a habit of finishing his man in a round or two, of which they heartily approved, but which they didn't very much enjoy. They liked a good smashing fight, with a little claret on tap. They liked to see a tottering man last the round out. They liked to be brought to their feet by a slashing rally. They liked to see a clean *coup-de-grâce* administered to the staggering loser. A knock-out was timely from the seventeenth round onwards, but fifteen shillings was too much for a moment's spar, a left lead, a right uppercut and a huddled figure on the canvas.

As Muller rose for the second round, his jaw was tucked a little closer to his shoulder and his left hand was thrust forward a little more carefully. The ducking and blocking of his swings in the first

round had taught him that he wasn't in for a sparring exhibition, but a fight in which he had to bring forth all his cunning and caution, and husband every ounce of strength for the last rounds.

A brief fence, a flutter of flying gloves, a clinch, and the man broke away. A few light passes to the head and face, and the champion drove home with the right. It caught the black clean under the ribs. A quick feint, a left hook, and the champion's right went out again. This time it didn't go home.

Rapid lefts and rights in the third round. A few hooks and swings ducked and blocked. The men were warming up. The boards creaked under the shuffling feet. The gloves met with little explosive noises. Punches went home with sharp, resonant cracks. The ringside was leaning forward with necks craned. Breaths were taken in over the house with a sound like the hissing of a small furnace.

Muller didn't like the frequency with which that left hand was shooting into his face. And he didn't like the weight of the black fighter in the clinches, or the sharp tattoo of the kidney punch, or the ease with which he was swung around when their arms locked.

He knew the black was playing a waiting game, playing to cut him up and tire and weaken him. But he thought of a white läger in the up-country, and the patient waiting of ambushed blacks through the daytime, and through the evening, and into the night, and he pictured the irresistible, victorious rush just before dawn.

There was a little lump under his right eye, where that shooting left had gone home, and his lips were beginning to swell, and there was an angry red blotch on his back and side where the kidney punch was doing its work. His seconds glanced curiously at him when he walked to his corner at the bell.

In the eighth round he rushed in, swinging both hands heavily. The black rammed home a vicious right uppercut as he came. For a second the hall became an unmeasurable black void and the blazing arc light a tiny glimmer in the darkness. He managed to clinch and hold on until his head cleared, and, by clever footwork and a long left jab, saved himself until the gong called the end of the round.

Between the rounds the house was now a babel. It hummed like a nest of hornets. The men at the ringside sat very still and white-faced. In Muller's corner the seconds worked like fiends. The towels flapped like gunshots in the hands of the helpers. Water splashed from the corner on to the shirt fronts of the spectators. And the spectators made no grumble.

The canvas was now spattered with blood, red with the drops from this bout and brown where the sawdust had been kicked away from the old stains. Muller's eye was beginning to close under the blue lump, and his mouth was swollen purple. A cut on the left shoulder was numbing the arm; bit by bit. His knees had begun to sag ever so little.

How the black was he couldn't tell. No bruises appeared under that glistening skin. Muller was depending on swinging, circular blows, hooks, jolts and swings, punches that might connect with nerve centres and end the fight then and there. The negro relied upon the repeated jabbing that cut and bruised, and that brought weakness and stupor in the end.

The house was shrieking to the champion to rush in and fight, to risk all in one smashing attack, but Muller remembered the uppercut in the eighth round, and knew the mettle of the man against him. His strength and skill were his in trust, and he must conserve them. He was fighting Armageddon, and every blow must count.

The house didn't know yet. They thought their champion was off colour, was not in the vein. It never occurred to them for a moment that he might be beaten. They felt he must win in the long run, but they changed their viewpoint about the length of the bout, and wondered why he took so long to finish it. They were beginning to be somewhat disappointed in Jim Muller.

The bookmakers were in a frenzy. Right and left they were offering even money. The news trickled down to the ringside and into Muller's corner. He had forgotten about the prize money that was his, win or lose. He had forgotten his side stakes. He forgot all but the huge iron figure he must beat for the sake of his own people.

The long-range, flicking lefts were less frequent

now. The black was handing out quick, swinging hooks and jarring uppercuts. He was taking more of a chance. But never for a moment did he grow reckless. At any instant the champion's hand might cross to his jaw with that crashing trip-hammer punch that had ended the ring career of Frank "Pug" Murphy, and of Cyclone Kennedy, and had taken his title from the old champion in the twentieth round.

But Muller could never send over that punch now. The spring that would put his whole body behind the blow had gone out of his legs. His arms were growing heavier. His breath came and went in quick gasps. It was only the long discipline of ring punishment that kept him up under the never ceasing volley of rights and lefts; only the hard road training kept his legs from faltering under him, and the routine of the punching bag guided his hands.

In the twelfth round he led with a swing for the head and missed. He fumbled for the ropes and held on to them to steady himself for an instant. And in that instant the house knew he was a beaten man.

They sat very still at first, very still and stricken. It looked like an absurd joke, a prank a child might play. Then it broke in on them, and the house went mad. Jim Muller was being cut to pieces before their eyes.

The champion was very tired now. He heard the wild shouting, but what could he do? Couldn't

they understand that he was doing his best? He knew he was beaten, but there was always a chance. The bookmakers were offering odds against him. That was all that roused him. And he thought of the life that thirty pieces of silver bought, and of the chafferers who changed money in the Temple.

To-morrow the news would be all over Africa. The sweating Kroo-boy in the mines would add up his account against the white overseer. The tale would go to the hawks' nest in the Congo swamps, to the Matabele who sharpened assegais by stealth in the Matoppo hills, and the white-burnoused figures who hid behind rocks in the desert and waited for the brown-faced, singing Zouaves.

To-morrow the Egyptian fellaheen would read words of hope from the Koran when the trim British boy officer's back was to them. And to-morrow swarthy, green-turbaned priests would preach in angry whispers in the mosques of Khartum.

The quick, jarring taps the black drove to the base of the skull in the clinches were taking effect. He could hardly understand he was fighting. There was a white mist swirling around his knees and stretching for miles in every direction. Little red lights flickered and went out. Above him towered a wall of black marble, at which he struck with puny, futile blows. Somewhere was the bellowing of a mob in frenzy.

Through his head ran the song of stiff, huddled figures on lost fields, and of champions stricken in the lists, and of captains dying.

The angry shouting stopped, and a great silence fell about him. He knew he was on his hands and knees.

And from someone at the ringside came the sound of hard, dry sobbing.

VII

A MAN'S GAME

THEY might have kept their eight thousand dollars, Doran thought bitterly, as he went back to his corner after the first round; they might have kept their eight thousand in their pockets. If he hadn't agreed to lie down in the twelfth round, he would have been put out in the eighth. Good heavens! Couldn't they have left him at home in peace, and not have brought him back to shame and humiliation to-night?

The house settled down to a humming criticism of the round. There had been nothing in it but slow, shuffling footwork, careful sparring, and a few light taps to head and chest. That was the way good fights began, they said; and this ought to be a good one, if the length they had waited for it were anything to go by. They had seen young Nelson, the Swede, rise from preliminary to star bout, and to-night he was getting his chance at the world's championship. But old Dan Doran —how hard it had been to get him back into action! Here they were at last. Nelson was getting his chance at the title, and it looked as if it were going to be a corking good fight.

From his corner Doran was taking in every detail of the setting with a feeling of curious satisfaction. It was two years since he had fought, and put out Humphreys, the slogging New Zealander, in the eighteenth round of a terrific battle. He remembered how the house had staggered to its feet at the last slashing rally, and how they had held their breaths when he had finished the fight with a smashing right across to the jaw. And here to-night was the same white canvas floor beneath him, and stout hempen ropes about him, and good oak planking that gave to his feet like a spring-board. And overhead was the gigantic arc light that hissed and sputtered like an engine. And on all four sides of him lay the sea of white faces, stretching into the distance like blurs of linen cloth. Old memories of forgotten fights welled up in him. There was the familiar, hoarse shouting of peanut men and lemonade boys and programme sellers. There were the tense, expectant faces of the newspaper reporters, and the cheery smiles of old devotees of the ring, who had seen him win his title and fight for and hold it time and time again. He felt as if he were coming home after a long journey, and that little landmarks were recalling themselves to him and welcoming him among them again.

There was a sharp-barked order from the referee. The seconds clambered out of the ring. There was a long shudder and shuffle as the audience settled themselves back in their chairs. Clouds of

blue tobacco smoke eddied and swirled towards the ceiling. The gong rang out like the bell of a church, and the second round was on.

As Doran rose and walked forward, the pleasure of the old surroundings faded off, and he felt bitterly that this was his last fight and that he was faking it. Old champions must go and new champions come, he knew; but this lad might have had the title for all he cared. When he put out Humphreys he had sworn it would be his last fight, but they wouldn't leave him alone in his New Jersey farm. They had to drag him out to satisfy the public that Nelson was the better man. And, not content with that, and knowing he was hard-pushed for money, they had bought the honour of his ring career as a pedlar buys old clothes.

They were sparring now. Doran noticed, with a tinge of envy, the huge shoulders and tapering waist of the challenger. How easily his arms moved, he thought—like a piece of well-oiled mechanism! There wasn't much brain behind the bulldog face and closely cropped forehead, but the man could move as lightly on his feet as a dancer, and there was the rosy tinge to his skin that told of youth and unspent energy, and of huge reserves of strength. He remembered the glimpse of himself he had caught in the weighing-in room that morning, the bulging, knotted muscles that years in the ring had set and stiffened, the great veins standing out on his forearm that showed he was past his prime, the deep-set eyes that should

have been reading a farm journal instead of probing the mind of a ring opponent, the little hollows in his cheeks, the hair beginning to grizzle and thin at the temples.

The Swede's right went out in a quick feint, and Doran dropped his head to avoid the smashing left lead that followed. There was a blow along his ribs like the stroke of a giant hammer. His right snapped home a short uppercut to the body, and they reeled to the ropes in a clinch.

He ought to have blocked that right-hander, he said to himself, with a quick flush of shame. He wasn't thinking fast enough—he was stale. They might have kept that eight thousand dollars.

The house had half-risen to its feet at Nelson's rush. They had seen that before. That had finished the ring career of Sapper Murphey, and of Frank Boyd, and of Battling Hughie Madden—that vicious left drive to the jaw and right swing to the ribs. They hadn't expected to see Danny Doran go under to it, but they couldn't sit still while it was being tried. They were relieved to see Danny pushing against his man in the clinch. They settled down again. This was going to be a fight.

The referee pried the men apart, grunting with the effort. The Swede was grinning behind his guard. If he could put out the old fighter before his time, why, so much more credit for him. If he couldn't, there was the agreement that the champion would lie down in the twelfth round.

At any rate, he was safe. The title was his. But he had felt his right go home to the ribs true and heavy. He would put out this old champion, he felt, whom the world's best men had battered at and left standing for seven years, while they had succumbed to his ring generalship and craft one by one; he would show them that the fighting Swede was all that his backers said of him.

Doran wished he could put it all out of his head. He wanted to concentrate on the flicking, flying brown gloves in front of him. He wanted to keep his eye on the point of jaw that peeked in and out of the challenger's left shoulder, and on the challenger's ribs, and on the little knot of muscle below his breast-bone. He must put up some kind of a fight, even though he was to lie down.

The Swede's long left lashed out like the kick of a horse. The champion caught it on his right wrist and countered heavily on the mouth. A couple of muffled hooks and jabs at close quarters, and they were in a clinch again. The boards groaned beneath their wrestling steps, and the hemp ropes strained and creaked. There was the gruff command of the referee to break away, and the gong clanged the end of the round.

Even Dave Rogers would hardly speak to him —"Red" Dave, who had trained him for a hundred fights. He remembered every fight when Dave had knelt by his side in the corner, advising, directing, telling him the weak points of an opponent, explaining to him the secret of a guard, or

how to lure his man on to the pile-driving right cross that had won him so many battles. Dave was waving a towel in front of him to-night, but there was no advice or encouragement or praise from him. He was afraid to look up and see what was in Dave's eyes.

What the devil had he ever done it for? he asked himself savagely. Why had he ever been tempted? He remembered the Sunday they had crowded into the farm parlour, big and burly and prosperous looking—Brogan, the sly theatrical man; Collier, who owned the boxing club and Barton, the Swede's manager.

"Give the lad a square deal, Danny," they had said; "let him fight you for it. Don't let it be said you threw him the title for charity. 'The Charity Champion' they're calling him already. Be a sport, Danny. You were always square. Be it now."

And that was the way they had got him to fight again. If he had only stuck to that!

The announcer called the third round. There was a moment's pause, and the referee ordered the seconds out. The gong broke into a reverberant trill, and the men shuffled forward to the centre of the ring. There would be no action for a few rounds yet, the house agreed; they hadn't felt each other out sufficiently. When the real fighting came, it would be a story to go down in ring history. It would be the story of the old champion, with his craft and his caution and his science, calculating

time and distance to the slightest fraction, conserving every ounce of energy against this turbulent, bull-necked fighter, throwing away strength and stamina riotously, boring and rushing and taking his punishment, and relying on brute strength and punch to win.

The men shuffled around the ring in the opening spar, the old champion crouching well forward, his hands open and hardly moving; the challenger upright, his left well out, and fiddling with both gloves, as if they were operated by a set of wires. The house rose to its feet with a shout. Doran's left had snapped home clean and straight to the challenger's head, flicked out again, and driven it back between his shoulders a second time. A fierce rush from the Swede, and the champion had rushed home an uppercut to the jaw and slid into a clinch. The house roared with applause as his right glove cracked twice into the kidneys before they broke away.

A short, rapid spar. A vision of four brown gloves cutting through the air like the lashes of whips. Light leads and counters muffled and blocked. The monotonous shuffle of the men on the resined floor. The clatter of telegraph keys reporting the round over thousands of miles of wire and cable. An ineffectual clinch or two in which the boxers swayed to and fro and the boards groaned and the ropes creaked. A grunt as a right went home, and the bell ended the third round.

That wasn't so bad, Doran thought; he could

still box. The old timing and science that had kept him his title were his yet.

"Good old Danny!" somebody shouted from the ringside. "You've got him going."

Then despondency fell on him like a pall. He had no right to praise or encouragement. He was cheating all these people. He was faking the fight. What the devil ever prompted him to come back? The boy could have got along without the money.

It was for the boy he had wanted it. He was to get the chance Danny never had. In a few years he would be through at high school, and would go up to college to study law. The meagre thousands Danny had saved wouldn't go far when the five years' course was paid for, and there was still the interim to be taken care of between the time he got his degree and the time he collected a practice.

It was this that had weighed with Danny when the promoters came to lure him back for the fight, and it was this that had weighed with him when the Swede's scout had slipped into his training quarters, with a shifty glance in his eye and an evil smile on his twisted face.

The training had been going badly. The punching bag would not dance and drum under his hands as it had done two years before. His step was not so springy when he set out for the morning trot. He tired too quickly under the medicine ball, and his sparring partners complained that his punch had not the snap and sting that had made

their job such a hard one when he was training for Humphreys.

The scout had been thrown out on his head the first and second times, and then Danny had listened to him, and he was thrown out again. And then Danny had agreed to it. Eight thousand dollars and a chance for the boy on lower Broadway!

He couldn't win; he knew that. The old fire had gone. And why, he argued to himself—and he knew he was wrong—shouldn't this young fellow pay well for it if he wanted so badly to be champion of the world? It was worth something in these days of vaudeville exhibitions and theatrical circuits.

He had told Dave, the trainer, of it shamefacedly the day before the match.

"I never thought you'd do it, Danny," the trainer had said; "I never thought it was in you."

Dave had hardly spoken two words to him since. Only the memory of the very old days, when the champion had fought ten rounds for a five-dollar bill, brought the trainer to the ring to-night.

His seconds pulled the stool from under him, and he dropped into his crouch, barely in time to avoid the challenger's thundering rush. Hooks and jabs pelted home on his ribs like rain. He was giving ground. He tried to cover up and fall into a clinch. A right hook went home to his neck with a force that jarred him from head to heel. A left swing blocked, and he was holding on. The house gripped its chairs in wild excitement. This new challenger was a terror; even Danny Doran couldn't

stand punishment like that. There was a humming buzz of comment as the men broke away.

Doran felt strangely out of it. It was as if he were at a preliminary where an inexperienced novice was being cut to pieces. There was a time when he could have met a rush like that with stinging rights and lefts to the face that would have taught his man to keep his distance. A half dozen more rushes like that, he felt, and he would be out.

The Swede was sparring now, his huge bulk thrown slightly backward, his massive left arm moving in and out like the crank of a piston. His feet tapped the floor like drumsticks. His right glove, close to his ribs, suggested a coiled-up spring. His shoulders jutted backward and forward in nervous, threatening feints. He was working Doran into a corner, where he could volley down on him with another terrific rush.

What was Doran doing? the audience wondered. He wasn't fighting, that was sure. Why, there was the Swede on him again, carrying him towards the ropes, pelting him with a shower of hooks and jabs. And Danny was covering up and looking for a clinch.

"Fight him, Danny!" somebody yelled. "Wake up! You're asleep." Somewhere back in the hall a boy hooted. He tried a feeble lead as they broke away, and the bell ended the round.

He couldn't fight. Somehow he hadn't the heart in him. There was something wrong. It was as if

he had come into the ring with his hands tied, to be knocked out, to have nothing to do but to lose. He was just a piece of machinery by which the Swede was to become champion of the world; just something necessary to the battle, like the panting seconds, or the timekeeper's bell.

When he entered the club that night, he had thought of his return home to the farm with a feeling of warm satisfaction. His wife would be there waiting for him, and the boy. He pictured them sitting in suspense in the parlour; his wife, big, capable, brown-haired, brown-eyed, firm-mouthed, silent; the boy lank, loosely built, red-haired, excited. How often she had waited up to welcome him back in her warm, silent way, and to dress the big blue bruises and the angry red cuts! This would be the first time he had come home beaten in ten years. There would be a warmer welcome for him than if he had won, but the boy would be broken-hearted. But the price of his championship would be in his pocket, and the price of the boy's chance. At home they didn't know.

He wasn't so sure of the satisfaction now. He felt he would be more ashamed to meet their glances than to meet the eyes of Dave. If ever they got to know about it—— Good God! If ever they got to know about it!

He felt a wave of heartsickness sweep over him as he got up for the fifth round. His pink-skinned, swaying opponent took on the aspect of an executioner about to mete out justice to his criminal self.

The roped ring reminded him of a picture he once saw of the gallows of a guillotine. The timekeeper and the referee were presiding officers of the law. The tense, white-faced audience were citizens come to see justice consummated.

His head was rocked backward and sideways with long-range, welting swings. A mass of pulsing, irresistible rock bore down on him. His neck and sides seemed to quiver under the strokes of a Nasmyth hammer. Unspeakably racking blows smashed home to his jaw and head. People were shouting in an immense, swelling volume of sound. The floor of the ring swayed like the deck of a boat; the flaming, flashing arc light became a lone star in a black sky. He was plunging forward into dark space, and then grasping and holding on to something as a swimmer grips a piece of driftwood. Consciousness came back to him little by little, and he noticed, in a dull, surprised way, that he was holding his man off by long left jabs and mechanical footwork. The bell rang in a faint, distant murmur, and he staggered towards his seconds.

The crowd was strangely silent. A sort of heavy gloom seemed to have fallen over them. They were seeing a champion passing; they were witnesses at the beating of the old ring general, who for ten years had beaten the best men the world could produce. There was something terribly big about it, something infinitely pathetic.

"Poor old Danny!" he heard someone at the ringside say. "He's done for."

The flap of the waving towels rang out like gunshots. He could feel the cold comfort of the sponge passing over his face, and the slice of lemon between his lips. Somehow he felt that the crowd were sorry for him, that their sympathy had passed from the turbulent Swede, adventuring for a championship, to the tired old boxer defending it. If they knew what he was doing they would hail him with hisses and catcalls and execrations; they would have nothing for him but anger and contempt.

Back in the hall he could hear the hoarse, monotonous chant of the bookmakers:

"Two to one against Doran! We'll give two to one against Doran! Two to one! Two to one! Two to one!"

A wild panic seized him. People were betting on him—old ring followers, boxers, and sportsmen. He felt suddenly like a thief. He wanted to get up and shout to them that they were losing their money. He couldn't win. It was as much as he could do to last to the twelfth round for the price of his championship.

There was a commotion behind him. He heard a faint cheer and a volley of handclapping. Davy, the trainer, looked away. He heard his name called:

"Hey, Danny! Danny Doran!"

He looked down. Peering up at him from the corner, he saw a broad, tanned face, with a broad, kindly mouth, shrewd blue eyes, and a nose slightly twisted to one side. There was a closely cropped head that was going bald and grey at

the temples. There were two ears battered out of recognition.

"What's wrong with you, Danny, man? What's happened to you to-night?"

Doran could hardly believe his eyes. It was Tom Squires, Tom Squires from whom he had won the title ten years ago—"honest Tom Squires" they called him then. It was like seeing someone from a dead world. Why, Tom had disappeared five years ago, no one knew where. They said he was down and out, that he had no money, that he was earning a few dollars coaching schoolboys.

"Here, let me up in that corner! Hold this coat, will you?"

Danny saw him clamber into the ring. There was something uncanny about him. It was like a ghost walking into a warm, lighted room. Danny saw him take the sponge and smelling salts from a white-sweatered second, and bend over him. The house was roaring itself hoarse with excitement. Some of the older patrons had seen Squires lurch, reel, catch the ropes, and slip to the canvas in the thirty-fifth round against Doran, more than ten years ago. By God! they said to themselves; there were fighters in those days; they were no vaudeville boxers.

Danny could hear the old fighter purring away as he held the salts to his nose:

"Why, Danny, you ought to put him out in a round. Get into it! Show them how we used to box. I came a hundred miles to see you fight

to-night. Wait a minute! I was forgetting something. I want to do a little betting."

He dug his left hand into his trousers pocket. A roll of small bills came out. Danny could see that they were pitifully few. There could hardly have been more than fifteen dollars there; perhaps not that much. Squires turned to a second.

"Put that on Danny for me," he said, "and see that you get good odds, young fellow!"

The gong clanged out, clamorous, vibrant, imperious. Doran saw the huge bulk of the challenger rise slowly from his stool. He felt Squires slap him smartly on the shoulder.

"Go in and win, old champion!" he was saying. "Go in and win!"

The house thundered applause as Doran rose. He saw figures rising at the ringside and cheering wildly. There were men he recognised, old backers, old fighters, old followers of the ring. There were Colonel Knox, who had helped him when the boy was born, and Jim Mann, who had backed him against The Kangaroo, and Gentleman John Brady, whose ring career he had finished seven years before, and Tony Lavigne and Cyclone Kenny, and other old, forgotten faces. They were cheering the rafters off the club.

The Swede feinted with the left glove. In a moment he would feint with the right and come rushing in, swinging both hands. The right feint came. Doran braced himself and lashed out with

right and left. He ducked the flailing swings, and drove a hook to the stomach.

"That's the stuff, Danny!" someone shouted. "Keep it up!"

They sparred a few moments. Doran could see two red spots on the challenger's cheek bones, where the stinging hooks had caught him. He was excited and annoyed. The easy, contemptuous smile had gone from his face. There was a hard, flashing glitter in his eyes. Doran saw him bend slightly at the knees. He was getting ready to spring. The champion shot out his left.

Then again the trip-hammers smashing down his guard and ripping it up from below, the thrusting of the rock-like, fighting machine against body and head and jaw, the merciless crushing of the massive arms, the sharp, nervous jar of the kidney punch, a sharp blow from the Swede's shoulder to his mouth.

The referee slapped them on the backs.

"Break away, there!" he cautioned. "Break away! Take care, Nelson; this is a boxing match, not a free for all!"

They sparred again. Doran could not get out of his head the figure of old Tom Squires clambering into his corner, and the cheering, friendly faces at the ringside. There were thousands present tonight who had cheered him to victory in the old days, who were trusting him, who were laying money on him. And he was going to lie down. He felt dull and dazed.

What did they want him to do? he asked. Did they want him to win? He couldn't do that. His science and craft were nothing without the snap that sent a punch home like a rifle bullet, and the stamina that would freshen up in the minute's rest after three minutes' slogging punishment. He couldn't do anything without them, and they were gone.

The challenger's left caught him lightly on the temple, and he slid to the right in time to avoid the murderous drive to the ribs. Old Tom Squires at the ringside had brightened him up. The old tricky footwork was coming back to him. Mechanically his eye saw an opening, and mechanically his left shot out to take advantage. There were a few snappy jabs to jaw and neck, a few swings ducked, uppercuts missed and hooks muffled, and he was in his corner again.

What did they want him to do, if he couldn't win? he asked himself. He looked at Dave flapping the towel in front of him, and at Squires whispering unheeded advice into his ear, and suddenly the answer electrified him: To fight, if only to lose; to fight, as doomed defenders of a fortress fight; to fall, as soldiers on a forlorn hope fall; to go down as a champion should, fighting; to play a man's part in a man's game, and to lose like a man.

To the devil with their eight thousand dollars! To the devil with themselves for sneaking, evil-minded, trafficking thieves! He was fighting his

last fight, and he'd fight it square. He would play the game, the big game, a man's game.

He motioned Dave down with his gloved right hand. The scarred, badger-like trainer leaned towards him.

"What is it, Danny?"

"I'm going to fight, Dave." He didn't know how to put it. "This lying-down business is off."

"Why is it off, Danny? Do you think you can win?" Dave's eyes were as hard and steely as before.

"No, I don't think I can win. I'm going to lose, but I'm going to lose fair."

Dave was down by his side like a flash. Squires caught his towel and began cracking it like the lash of a whip.

"Get down lower!" Dave was directing. "Keep down, and he can't get you with that left swing!" Oh, it was good, Doran felt, to have him kneeling there in the corner, advising and nursing him as he had done in every fight until now.

As he rose at the bell, it seemed to him that the thousands of closely packed, dim figures in the hall were men supporting him in the fight; that Dave and Squires in the corner were lieutenants of his; that the timekeeper's bell and the spluttering arc light were standards of battle. By Heaven! he'd show him; he'd show this peddling boxer how champions lose!

The house had grown still and tense—the great fight they had expected was in full swing, the fight

between the crafty old ring general and the hurtling challenger. The waxed shoes of the boxers slid over the canvas like the rustle of silk. The referee's feet pattered as he sprang aside from the feinting, shifting fighters. The staccato rattle of the telegraph keys rang out like the beating of hammers. The pulsing, hissing breath of the audience suggested the winging of birds.

Again the swinging, thundering rush. Doran struck out savagely with both hands, and covered up. They swung around the ring in a clinch. Over the Swede's shoulder, Doran could see the figures in his corner leaping with excitement. Squires was sparring viciously at an imaginary opponent, his eyes blazing, his grim, rugged jaw thrust forward. Dave was signalling to uppercut. He worked his right arm free cautiously, and lashed upwards. There was a sharp, resonant crack as the punch went home.

"That's the style, Danny!" Squires was yelling. "Send them in! Send them in!"

The voice of Squires raised a cold fury in him. He remembered in a flash the little roll of shabby dollar bills. So they were to cheat old Tom out of that! He was to go home to his wife and boy with eight thousand dollars, and Tom was to go home without his last fifteen! His left thudded home on the face, and his right thundered over on the temple like a trip hammer.

They were struggling in a clinch. The Swede was snarling in his ear:

"What's this? The double cross?"

Danny wanted to answer. He groped for words.

"No!" he gasped. "No! It's the square deal. That's what it is."

The referee wrenched them apart. The Swede was balancing himself on his toes and swaying his shoulders threateningly.

"All right, you faker!" he shouted. "Just wait!"

Then it seemed to Doran as if great waves lifted him and smashed him up against the ropes. Giant drumsticks were beating a tattoo on his head and shoulders. He fought back gamely with right and left.

The end was near, he felt. All right, he would meet it as a man should. The thought of the boy at home ticked into his mind like a message. He had been wrong. The boy should fight his own battle. That was what he would have wanted himself. He would fight as his father was fighting now. He would win if he had the stamina and strength and skill; if he hadn't, he should lose like a man. There should be no shameful secret conferences behind locked doors, no passing of soiled money between furtive hands—a clean ring, and the prize to the winner, and might the best man win!

Rounds and rests were lost for him. He dimly heard the gong, and went to his corner, and rose when the gong crashed again. He was no longer conscious of the even voice of Dave, of the presence of Squires, of the panting, sweating seconds. He was at times sparring; at times leading snappy,

smashing blows to head and jaw and body; at times clinching; at times reeling from the impact of jarring, deadening swings and hooks, and sending home counters like sword thrusts.

The house was too tense for shouting now. This was too great a fight to be true. Surely, they thought, no man could withstand those hurtling, cyclonic rushes of the giant Swede, with his arms swishing home like flails, and his great body behind them, giving murderous force to every blow. And still there was the old champion crouching stealthily about the ring, his jaw and stomach well covered, his great, gnarled arms shooting out now and again like the paw of a cat, and sending home those stinging, lightning punches that had made him so terrible in the old days. Neither of them could stand the pace long. Already the challenger's mouth was beginning to sag from the champion's flashing leads. And old Danny's ribs were angry and red from the crashing force of the kidney punch. There was a scarlet weal on his cheek bone, where an old gash had opened, and his stomach and chest were purple from the Swede's short, in-fighting uppercuts.

Back in the hall the bookmakers were shouting in a frenzy. Doran heard them faintly, as through a wall:

"Even money! We'll give even money! We'll give even money!"

He felt a warm glow through him. He had been fighting, then, and fighting well. When he did

go down, they couldn't blame him. He had done his best. He had played the game.

The seconds dashed water at him as he staggered to the corner. Things cleared as the sponge passed over his forehead. The air from the flapping towels gushed into his lungs as from a blast pipe. In the opposite corner he could see the Swede's seconds working like fiends. They were slapping and pummelling the challenger's legs. The Swede must be feeling the pace, too, he thought. That was all right.

"What's the round?" he asked.

"The twelfth," a second whispered.

He felt himself go taut like a rope. This was the round in which he was to have lain down. He felt a great impatience while he waited for the bell to ring. This was the round he would probably be knocked out in, but this was the round he must fight above all others. He waxed his shoes carefully on the resin board.

And then suddenly he was sparring, his eyes focused on the blazing grey eyes of the challenger. He forgot the brown gloves and the swinging arms and the pulsing, iron body. To keep his eyes on his man and to go down fighting, that was what he must do—to go down fighting, like the old heroes of the ring, as old John L. had gone down, and Peter Jackson, and the fighting "Fitz." One last rally, and then defeat! And to have played the game, the big game, a man's game!

He met the rush with a rain of jabs, and then the ropes cut into his back. He was being swung around and pushed mercilessly towards a corner. There was a jarring smash to his head. He shook it off like an insect and flailed back.

The house was on its feet. He could hear them shouting like the beating of great surf on rocks. The sound seemed to quiver and vibrate. The ring beneath his feet trembled like a springboard. He lashed out blindly again and again. He knew nothing but that he was fighting the last round of his last fight. His knees were sagging. Huge waves of crimson seemed to roll in, curl, and break before his eyes. His arms went out in great, titanic blows. There was a shock in his shoulders as his gloves struck home. The yelling of the audience crashed in his ears like volleys of thunder.

There was a heavy thud, and the ring seemed to rock beneath his feet. His right hand lashed through empty air. He caught the ropes, and staggered around again.

The referee was pushing him back.

"Stand away, Danny! Stand back! One! Two——"

Where was Nelson? He looked around stupidly. Why wasn't he fighting? What had happened? He caught sight of a huge, huddled figure, lying crumpled on the canvas, as through a haze of smoke. The thunderous shouting had ceased. In the dead silence he heard the voice of the referee count, like the slow ticking of a clock:

"Five! Six! Seven——"

He couldn't understand it. He should have been knocked out. And there was the Swede sprawling on the floor of the ring, and the count nearing the close.

"Nine! Ten! Out!"

Dave's arms were around him, he felt dully. They were leading him to his corner. The audience seemed to have suddenly become a horde of shrieking madmen. People were swarming into the ring and grasping his hand. He tried to pull himself together.

Now they were bathing his face; now they were taking his gloves off; they were helping him down from the ring and towards the dressing-room. They were in the dressing-room now, Dave and Squires and he. They were cutting the bandages from his hands. He could hear Dave grunt as he bent over them. Squires was talking to himself quietly, in low, rambling tones.

There were the voices of seconds in the corridor outside. They were raised for a moment in high-pitched argument:

"Well, I got the tip that Danny was going to lie down, I tell you!"

"For Heaven's sake, don't make a fool of yourself! Danny Doran lie down? Why, man, you're mad! You ought——"

The tension inside him seemed to snap like a string, and to leave him weak and helpless. His head fell forward on his chest. There was a choke

in his throat, and a warm trickle from his eyes that reached the cuts on his cheek bones and set them smarting furiously.

Dave looked up at him.

"Ah, don't, Danny!" he said. "Ah, don't!"

The choke became a sob. The warm trickle on his cheeks a stream. Dave began patting one shoulder, Squires the other.

"Ah, Danny, boy!" Dave was saying. "Ah, Danny!"

He couldn't stop the sobbing; he didn't want to. It seemed to him that all evening lean, sinewy fingers had been clutching his throat, and were now loosing hold. He felt somehow that he was being relieved, that the tears running into the open gashes on his cheek bones were healing waters, and the patting of the trainer's hands the touch of a kindly physician.

VIII

JUNGLE BULLS

NOW, WHEN Captain Patrick Burgoyne returned from the heart of Africa to New York, after a two-year hunting trip, he found a not unusual situation confronting him. He found his fiancée, Edith Anderson, engaged to one John R. Collins, broker, of something Broad Street. Whereupon Captain Patrick Burgoyne followed a not unusual course. He promptly went to the dogs for three months.

You would have liked Patrick Burgoyne. He stood six feet in his socks and tipped the scale at one hundred and seventy pounds. There was something about him that suggested an ocelot—lean, lithe muscles slipping underneath a satin skin. His face was strongly marked and bronzed like a Malay's. His hair was straight and black, and was brushed clean back from the temples. His black eyes looked at you with an air of interested intensity. His chin curved forward with determination, not with truculence. His mouth was firm-lipped and had a sort of triangle about it. The head rested on a neck that resembled a pillar of warm stone. But what was most remarkable about him was a wonderful vibration of baritone voice, a sort of

humming like the string of a 'cello, like the throb of a drum. He moved with unstudied deliberation, without an atom of energy wasted, yet with the flashing quickness of a wild animal.

There was a great deal of the wild animal about Burgoyne, of the wild animal of the jungle, not that of a citizen's imagination—the animal that flings itself in melodramatic fury against the bars of a circus, and rends great gobbets of raw meat. And when you come to think of it, that he should resemble something of the jungle was only natural, for man tends to absorb the colour of his surroundings, in the manner of the chameleon. The cowherd's face becomes bovine. The eyes of the master mechanic look at you with the metallic expression of a steam gauge. The bearing and being of the big game hunter resemble those of the great wild, free things whose trail he follows.

Which explains in no small part the going to the dogs of Captain Patrick Burgoyne. You can tame a wild animal and make it care for you. You can tame a Sahara lioness—Bonavita has done it. You can tame and make an intimate of a Punjab tiger, as Suade has done. But you can't then turn on it, and without rhyme or reason, for nothing but your own whim, lash it across the muzzle, and drive it from you. The wild animal has a sense of justice and a sense of dignity to which not even Solomon the King ever rose. And that was what Edith Anderson did to Burgoyne.

Aflalo, the veteran shikari, foresaw this when he heard of the engagement two years ago in Somaliland. Aflalo, not wiser than the Hebrew poet, could not understand the way of a man with a maid, but, worldly enough, he understood the way of a maid with a man.

"It's just an infatuation of this girl's," he had said, "and it will pass, but it will be rough on Burgoyne. What the devil does a big game hunter want with a wife? If he must marry, why doesn't he take some plump, comfortable, little widow, who can run the place when he's away? When the jungle gets into your blood and the trail's always calling you, what you want is a good gun, and not a snivelling bride."

And all the shikari camp, from Fernando Po to the Gulf of Aden, and from Cairo to Capetown, agreed with him emphatically.

You will find fifty Edith Andersons on Fifth Avenue between Forty-second and Fifty-ninth streets any afternoon between three o'clock and five. She was tall; she was fair; she was graceful. There is no denying that she was a beautiful woman, which was sufficient excuse for Burgoyne, for after many years among the worthy but uncomely daughters of Africa, and the dwarfed, suspicious-eyed wives of Hindu villagers, and the incredibly hideous women of Borneo and Sumatra, the beauty of white women bursts on one with the force of an obsession. Edith Anderson's face was oval, and her cheeks were like tinted ivory. Edith

Anderson's eyes were blue, with the blue of a Pacific lagoon and the sun shining on it. Her mouth somehow suggested ripe strawberries. There was something about the line of her figure and her graceful movement that brought to mind a stream curving and twisting down a mountain-side. Her voice was low and soft, like that of Cordelia, the daughter of Lear.

She had gone, at the request of a Bryn Mawr cousin, who seemed unnecessarily excited at the prospect, to hear Burgoyne speak one afternoon at an Institute of Letters and Sciences. She hadn't wanted to go and she hadn't the least interest in Africa. Her mind was running on fox-trots and cotillion favours, and the respective merits of French and American automobiles. Africa was nothing to her but a multi-coloured blot on the map of the world, and big game recalled to her mind the intelligent antics of certain lions and elephants she had seen in a mammoth circus many years ago. But the Bryn Mawr cousin had attacked her enthusiastically, and would hear of no reasonable excuse. So she went.

She saw a tall, lean, bronzed man, who looked hot and angry and resentful in correct morning clothes, who spoke in staccato accents and didn't seem to know what to do with a pair of muscular brown hands. She was inclined to be amused slightly, and, for lack of something better to do, began to listen. Then the throb of the wonderful baritone voice attacked her, fought her, compelled

her. And as she sat back in her chair the staccato words began to take form and colour, and she saw Africa. She saw its great, black-green forests, its brown, rolling veldts, its queer, hidden villages with huts like beehives, its great rivers, its winds, its suns and its moons, its jungle people and its people of the plains, its huge beasts flitting about like shadows in the night time, or lying concealed in the green lush during the day. And through it all she saw the lean, bronzed man walk like a giant, and the continent answering him as the strings of the violin answer the bow of the player.

She met him after the lecture, and she was pleased when she saw the shock of pleasure that passed over his face as he looked at her. They met again at a dance, whither some scheming, lion-hunting matron had enticed him, and she took pity on his evident discomfort and ignorance of dancing and sat out with him. She went again to hear him lecture. She met him at another dance. She watched him as he looked at her, and she knew that he was in love.

It sent a great thrill of pride through her. There was something gigantic about this man, something that pictured the son of Cush, the mighty hunter before the Lord. She thought of him in the jungle, following lone trails, and daring deeds that no other but he could do, and through her veins went the exultation of a captain who has taken an impregnable fortress.

The end came quickly. It came one evening at a dance in Sherry's. They were standing in a conservatory, chatting. Outside, in the ballroom, dancers glided and whirled to the thumping rattle of a fox-trot. He was looking at her with vague, troubled eyes.

"My dear," he said suddenly, "I love you. Will you come to me?"

And she, not knowing why, but thrilled by that wonderful voice, allowed herself to be folded in his sinewy arms, as by the wings of a bird.

He was clumsy in his love-making. He was silent. He was self-conscious. He seemed to regard her as something inexpressibly fragile, of inexpressible value, that a wisp of spring wind had wafted to him from heaven. He could not express his love for her in any other way than to tell of the things that were nearest to his heart. It is the way of big men. It was Othello's way.

He told of the animals he knew, queer little intimate histories that only the man whose heart is in them can see and understand. He depicted for her their tender love scenes, their quarrels, their jealousies, their courtships. He told of the stately giraffe and his mate moving through the grey dawn to the drinking pool, their muzzles touching in fondness; of the lion's courtly deference to the lioness, and his assiduous care for her; of the hippopotamus and his mate and cub playing boisterously together in a pool, like human infants. And all the time in his heart he saw visions and dreamed

dreams. He saw himself and Edith Anderson together, with the blue hazy glamour of Africa about them, and the romance of the trail ahead. He saw them together in the vast sea of the Sahara, striking southward for the Walled City. He saw them in the barbaric colour of Cairo, on the banks of Nyassa, amid the primitive splendour of Zanzibar. He would show her life as she had never seen it, dreamed it, before. In his mind's eye Africa became one small desert island of intense charm, peopled only by them two.

Things ran smoothly with them, which is not the course of true love. They were affianced, and various sob sisters and Sunday newspaper specialists revelled in the story of their romance. The mighty hunter before the Lord was to go on a two-year trip to Africa in an effort to locate the pygmy tribes of Nyassa, and when he returned he was to marry the Madison Avenue beauty. To this old man Anderson, who sat in an office in Wall Street and manœuvred with railroads as a chief of staff manœuvres with regiments, seemed to have no objection to offer.

"It will pass," he told himself in the privacy of his Wall Street office, "so what's the use of worrying. Edith's no fool."

For six months he left her to herself, and to her dreams of the son of Cush. There was little in the way of correspondence to feed her fancy, for runners to carry messages are hard to find in the vast alluvial forests of the Congo. Burgoyne

soon became a vague, gigantic figure, a legend, a god who walked the earth in old forgotten days.

The eye of old man Anderson was always open, which explains to some extent his international success. It saw everything. It saw Burgoyne becoming blurred on the screen of his daughter's mind. He sent for John R. Collins, a young man who had had previous conversations with him, and whose cool brain and business ability had impressed the magnate mightily.

"Go to it, son," he said.

John R. Collins went to it. We will not go into detail about him, for he merely flits into the story and out of it again. It will suffice to describe him as a young man, prematurely bald, with a cold eye, a certain comeliness, and a that-may-do-for-a-sucker-but-it-don't-get-over-me manner, which was generally true.

"Now listen to me, little girl," he began, and she listened.

The fool's eyes are on the ends of the earth, which proved that Edith Anderson was not one. For Collins found little difficulty in diverting her gaze from the blue heat-haze of Africa and a suit of hunting khaki, and in focusing it on the keen glitter of Fifth Avenue, with its jewellers' and modistes' shops, on country clubs and opera nights, and Palm Beach. In virtue of which, when Captain Patrick Burgoyne sighted the Scotchland Lightship, and the pilot came aboard with mail, he found among his parcel a neatly engraved notice expres-

sing the pleasure of Mr. and Mrs. Anderson in announcing the engagement of their daughter Edith to John R. Collins. Burgoyne, with his hunter's intuition, sensed what had occurred. He accepted the matter calmly, with the fatalism of the Yellow Lands. He turned over the animals he had brought back with him to the curator of the Bronx Zoological Gardens, presented his trophies to the Harvard club, and dropped out of the society of his kind like a stone out of a window.

In going to the dogs in New York, you begin on Fifth Avenue. You can do it very successfully between Fifty-ninth street and Forty-second. Then you move over to Broadway. It will take some time to exhaust Broadway, but eventually you will. Then you move over to Seventh Avenue, and then to Eighth. In some queer way you return on your tracks and wind up at Third. Third will occupy the normal attention for some weeks. Then Second claims it. If Aflalo had been told the facts of the case he would have looked for Burgoyne on Second, but Aflalo never heard.

No one is ever recognised in New York. It would seem as if everyone wore a sort of Solomon's ring, which confers invisibility. No one recognised Burgoyne. Few knew him by sight, and the usual newspaper pictures of him which had been published were, as newspaper pictures usually are, like any tall, dark-haired man except Burgoyne. His friends and acquaintances accounted for his

disappearance by saying that, taking the jilting very much to heart, he had gone off on another expedition. He had gone hunting with cheetahs in Kurdistan, or was in Tibet tracking the snow leopard. He was known to be interested in both projects. He had once said something about going to Patagonia after jaguar. They were accustomed to his mysterious disappearances. He was all right.

"Burgoyne," they said, "he's a queer fish. Now, I remember at Harvard . . ."

Burgoyne was quite near them, nevertheless. Burgoyne had reached Second Avenue, his nerves shot with every variety of liquor to be found in New York, from the samshu of Chinatown to the mescal of Pearl Street. In his journey to the dogs Burgoyne used no other vehicle but drink. Light women disgusted his clean hunter's soul, and his clear hunter's brain could see nothing but absurdity in gambling. But he drank thoroughly. He sampled the acrid tang of Scotch whiskey, and the murky odour of Irish, and the insidious taste of rye. He caused to be compounded for him an enormous series of explosive cocktails, inventing, as his experience in them increased, new ones of unheard-of virulence and effect. He sampled the imported vintages of Fifth Avenue and the rot-gut of the wharves. He called for and obtained vodka, and white, insipid Amsterdam gin. In the French quarter he dallied over dripped absinthe. In intervals he drank many and vile wines in Italian cafés, and honest beer in German ones. He drank golden sakè in chop sueys,

and on Second Avenue he made the acquaintance of plum brandy. Hennessy, a bar-keeper of St. Mark's Place, watched his progress with troubled eyes.

"Get wise, kid, and cut it out," he advised. "Can it, or the bug-house for yours."

But Burgoyne only laughed and ordered them set up again.

To the city man it may seem an exceedingly puerile thing to become protractedly drunk when a woman jilts you. The city man's life is a complex one, and a thousand small factors divert his mind from a main issue. He has lost the habit of long and concentrated thought and feeling. Soldiers and sailormen and hunters are simple people. There are no complex reactions in their minds. They see things in a straight line, as a Chinaman does. For two long years Burgoyne had thought of nothing but Edith Anderson. She had been everything to him. The two years had been an endless succession of days in which he chafed to get back to New York and to her. There had been days when he faced life with avidity and he saw in it a sparkling, effervescing thing, and he saw the face of Edith Anderson as the sun of the world. And there were other days when he tackled life with a cheery, sound philosophy, glorying in the strength her caring gave him. And then to have it all shut off suddenly by that horrible, heartless, dumb announcement. There were no complex factors to draw his attention from what had happened to him. He thought of it all the time. He was like a man undergoing an operation

of intense pain demanding chloroform. Hennessy, the honest bar-keep, saw the brooding in his eyes.

"Why don't you beat it into the fresh air, and fix up whatever's eating you?" he exhorted. "There ain't anything to this booze-fighting game. Cut it out, or you'll find yourself in the ice-box. Surest thing you know."

Burgoyne had thought of that, but the open spaces appeared to him as great defenceless plains, where thoughts would come attacking a man, and there was nothing to protect him.

And so things went on for two months, and for three months. The madhouse or the hospital didn't claim him, to the intense surprise of Hennessy, but it was only his iron constitution, and the training of years in the open air that saved him. It waited for him surely around the corner, but he was saved from it.

He had picked up on Front Street with a pair of interesting characters, one of whom looked like a prizefighter and the other a sea-faring man. They had several drinks, in a sailors' saloon, to the musical accompaniment of chanteys from a Banks fisherman down in New York looking for a coasting berth. Then Burgoyne dozed off.

He woke up several hours later. He was sleeping over a table in the rear of the saloon. Dawn was coming murkily through the window panes, and the proprietor was shaking him by the shoulder.

"Get up and get out," the proprietor was shouting. "What do you think this is? a lodging house?"

Burgoyne rose unsteadily. He stretched himself. He put his hand in his pocket and his watch wasn't there. He put his hand in another and his wallet was gone.

"Where's my watch?" he asked. "And my money?"

"I haven't got it," the saloon keeper replied wearily. "Are you going to get out?"

"But I've lost four hundred dollars."

"Well, if you go around with a pair of crimps like 'Bull' Kelly and 'Seattle' Jim, you don't expect to find it, do you?"

Burgoyne looked at the proprietor between the eyes. Again his intuition served him. The proprietor had had no part in it.

"I suppose you're right," he answered, and he went out.

You would hardly have given a second glance to Patrick Burgoyne as he emerged into the cold April dawn on Front Street. You would have labelled him as a drunken fool, whom the police should have gathered into their night net many hours before. His walk had lost the light, lithe spring, and his shoulders drooped. His face was that revolting drunkard's colour between pink and grey. Alcohol had put fat, flabby, unhealthy fat, on his shoulders and waistband and neck. His eyes had no longer that long range look that saw the trail for a mile ahead. They sought the ground, and there was the promise of trouble in them, trouble for "Bull" Kelly and for "Seattle" Jim.

At ten o'clock that morning he found "Bull" Kelly. The "Bull" was in the back room of a saloon, relating to an interested barman with manifest gusto how last night he had caught a come-on, got him tanked up, slipped K.O. into his booze and nicked his roll.

"There was nothing to it, doctor," he commented. "Easiest bunch of kale I ever laid mitts on!"

Burgoyne walked into the room glidingly. He walked forward to the "Bull." The "Bull" rose and his shoulders hunched.

"I can forgive a mistake, my friend," he began. "I can even understand a joke. This is neither. Kindly hand over my watch and my money."

"What do you mean? Your watch and your money?" queried "Bull" Kelly.

"I want that watch and that money you took from me after you drugged me."

The innocent, aggrieved manner of the crimp gave way to a torrent of vicious vituperation.

"Why, you big souse!" he began, "you whiskey-soaked bum, I ain't got your watch and money. Go and sleep it off."

"If you don't stop your talk and hand over those things," Burgoyne urged icily, "I'll give you the worst beating you ever got in your worthless life."

Burgoyne meant what he said, but it was not a tactful remark. Before he had embraced the ancient and lucrative profession of crimp, "Bull" Kelly had hopes, and well-founded hopes, of being called

the middleweight champion of the world. His hopes were blasted in the nineteenth round of a terrific battle, but it was agreed that Kelly was in the star class of middleweights. Barren years in the fight game and an added fifteen pounds of flesh had terminated the ring career of the near champion, but for a short fight his skill, speed, and hitting power were as good as in the days men cheered themselves hoarse as he slashed his way to victory in a twenty-round mill. Burgoyne knew nothing of this. Even if he had, his intentions and speech would have been the same.

"Come outside here," said the "Bull."

They went out to the little cobblestone yard behind the saloon, and they faced one another. Burgoyne noticed, as he got ready to rush, how the "Bull" dropped into fighting pose with the ease of long custom. The crimp's broken-nosed, bullet head disappeared behind the reach of his long left arm. The crimp's right hand hovered over his jaw. The crimp crouched like a panther about to spring. There was a moment's spar, a rapid feint of the pug's right fist, and Burgoyne felt something strike his neck with the force of a horse's kick. He rushed in, lashing out blindly. Both hands struck empty air. There was the crash of a fist to his jaw. The yard wobbled, reeled, and grew black suddenly, and there was the jar of his fall.

He came to hazily. In the back room of the saloon he could hear the crimp address the barman.

"Throw a bucket of water over that mutt and pitch him into the gutter, Pete." A door slammed.

He picked his way out to the street without the proposed first aid of the barkeeper, and made his way towards a dock opposite. A dirty white fruit boat was unloading bananas at the wharf, and a hundred men of fifty nationalities and a dozen shades of colour were scurrying like ants. He passed through them unnoticed and made his way through the dark tunnel of the pier, and out upon the foot of wooden ledge beyond it. Before him lay the opaque pond of the East River, with its three giant bridges spanning it, looking fragile as children's toys. Tugs passed up and down, racing like sprinters. Shapeless ferry-boats moved awkwardly about. Schooners under stretches of dun, patched canvas tacked to the right and left as they fought their way up-river. A trim steam yacht flashed past, its spotless white and knife-like lines giving it an unaccountably patrician air, and around the lee of Governor's Island a liner hove majestically. A little breeze came up from the bay and stirred the hair about Burgoyne's temples.

A tempest suddenly broke in the soul of Patrick Burgoyne, and self-disgust swept over him, like torrential rain. The words of the crimp bit into him as acid bites into an engraver's plate. Souse! Whiskey-soaked bum! What had happened to him, he asked fiercely, that he should become like this? A waster! A drunkard! The prey of the wharf hawks. What had become of his fitness and muscles

to be knocked out by the first blow of a sailor's bully? Throw a bucket of water on his head and kick him into the gutter, Pete! Good God! Was it possible! Had he sunk as low as that? A great flood of shame overwhelmed him. Waves of crimson suffused his face. He crouched as though to hide himself from a looker-on. He felt somehow like a tiger whose splendid coat of black and gold has been bedaubed by mud and mire.

And all because a woman had jilted him, he muttered viciously, damn it! All because a woman had jilted him!

Well, what was there to do? he asked himself. Look at the matter squarely. He had lost his physique. He had lost his self-respect. He had lost everything. He was a windrow, a derelict.

Suddenly a great yearning took him. He would go up and look at his old friends of the swamp and the jungle. Something drew him towards them in his crisis. It was somehow like a lover returning heart-broken to his first sweetheart after placing and losing his faith in another woman. He left the dock and picked his way intricately through the crazy-quilt of the down-town streets to Park Row. He descended into the mouth of the subway cavern and bought his ticket. The ticket seller looked suspiciously at his blood-shot eyes and the red bruise on his jaw as he walked towards the up-town trains.

"Highballs," the ticket seller told himself, "highballs and loose living, they ruin a fellow."

In what is affectionately termed the Bronx Zoo, there is, a mile from the gateway, a rectangular high building of stone given over to the largest herbivora. Two elephants, a vicious old Indian tusker and an irresponsible youngster from Africa, return placidly the interested gaze of the visitors. At the bottom of his tank, a hippopotamus conceals himself, with a supreme contempt for human curiosity. Beside him his cousin and neighbour, the Liberian pygmy, sleeps peacefully in a straw-filled cage, while nearby the tapir ambles around on his ungainly limbs, to the unrestrained merriment of children and their nurses.

In one cage of the building, a card informs you, is "The Mahdi," a two-horned rhinoceros, six years old, taken in Mashonaland. The card furnishes several lines of recondite zoological information, and finishes by curtly acknowledging the Mahdi to be the gift of Captain Patrick Burgoyne.

The Mahdi, for all his meagre years, stands six feet high at his shoulder blade, and from his three-toed pads to the double horn on his snout is as perfect a specimen as there is to be found in the White Nile country. There is something peculiarly human-looking about the Mahdi. From the side his head suggests to you the head of an enormous negro, and his small black eye is the eye of a child, of an entirely good-natured but utterly mischievous child. Brown, his keeper, whom Aberdeen claims for her very own, has to be agile when the Mahdi is feeling sprightly. The Mahdi, with an erroneous

idea of what will amuse James Brown, launches his manifold hundred-weights of bone and black muscle across the cage after him in a playful game of tag. It cannot understand the keeper's reluctance to join in.

"He's a braw wee beastie," James Brown tells himself every time he leaves the Mahdi's cage, "but some o' these fine days, he'll be the daith o' me."

There was little fear for the death of James Brown, however. If anyone knew all there was to be known about the temperament and habits of the great jungle beasts, it was the Scots keeper. He had served a long and arduous apprenticeship to his craft with Hagenbeck and Hamburg, which is the doctorate of animal-keeping. He had taken post-graduate courses with Suade and Bonavita. The Scotsman's long, lanky body, his sandy hair, his face cut into rigid angles, his air of watchful righteousness, had aroused in all of his masters a feeling of affectionate merriment, but the beasts had taken his appearance more seriously. They found him good to look upon, and photographed his image in grateful hearts.

If you were to ask Hagenbeck or Bonavita, snap, whom they considered the most careful keeper they had ever met, they would answer, snap, that it was James Brown, and if they had the time to expatiate on his qualities, they would tell you that the only thought that ever entered the canny Scots skull of the keeper was that of the animals under his care.

They would further tell you that they believed his days-off to be spent in rounds of menageries, zoos, circuses, botanical gardens, and other places where animals are held in captivity. He had been seen reading reports of zoological societies in the public library. Such was James Brown.

But for once James Brown had been untrue to his gigantic loves. Her name he did not know. She was a French nursemaid, dark-haired, chic, with the warm colouring of the Midi women, and there was something in her voice like the note of a bird. For two days every week, for several weeks, she had accompanied a pair of small children to the Park, and had shared their thrills and merriment at the sight of the animals. To answer the manifold questions addressed her by her charges, she had to enlist James Brown, and as he helped her, James Brown thought he had caught something in her eye, something appreciative and inviting, which betokened that advances by the keeper would not be resented.

James Brown may have been mistaken or he may not. He was probably not, for a man of his cautious race looks long and often before he leaps. The little French nursemaid may have been merely practising her hobby of breaking hearts, or there may have been some mysterious attraction for her in his unrelieved ugliness. Beautiful women have been known to mate with inconceivably uncomely men. She may have been infatuated with his prowess, for she had one day seen him slap a too

attentive elephant sharply on the trunk, and another catch a stubborn hippopotamus along the ribs with a stave. But at any rate the heart of James Brown answered the glance of the nursemaid's eye as one tuning fork answers another.

It was a warm April afternoon and a breeze was stirring. The sun came gently in a golden shower. One o'clock had just struck and the Park was practically deserted. James Brown had put fresh straw in the open enclosure attached to the Mahdi's cage. He had filled the Mahdi's well with water, when, suddenly, walking in the direction of the lion-house, he saw a trim black figure with a small boy on either side of it. It was spring time, and James Brown was still of the years when one's fancy pirouettes. He had been thinking of domesticity latterly, since the advent of the French nursemaid, and there was a project in his mind for spending his next day-off which embraced dinner with her and a visit to a playhouse. James Brown became suddenly excited. He walked towards the opening in the enclosure and unlocked the gate. He remembered that he had not opened the door between the Mahdi's cage and the enclosure. He walked towards it and opened it quickly, keeping an eye all the time in the direction of the lion-house. He crossed the enclosure and opened the gate. He pulled it behind him as he stepped out, heard the clang, and hurried off. By right the gate should have been closed automatically. This time it didn't. It swung half-open.

It was one o'clock in the gardens, and there were few people. Somewhere in the bird-house a cockatoo screamed raucously. Somewhere a lioness roared in a deep bass rumble. There was a whirr of wings as a China duck passed overhead in a streak of silken blue.

Slowly and ponderously the Mahdi pushed open the door of his cage and entered the enclosure. He looked out into the sunshine and blinked lazily, took a turn in the enclosure, and nibbled the straw. He walked about the hedge of iron bars slowly, until he came to the half-open gate. He stopped for a moment. Then something like the twinkle of a mischievous child's came into his small black eyes. He pushed the gate fully open with a heave of shoulder. Cautiously he passed through it. He stood outside on the asphalt walk for a moment, sniffed the air daintily and began to move, slowly, and then with ungainly rapidity. He swung away from the granite buildings and down the path to the gates, his pads striking the roadway with the sound of a mallet beating clothes. As he went he suggested, somehow, the passing of an armoured train along a peaceful countryside.

When she started out from Madison Avenue, Edith Anderson had no intention of visiting the Bronx Zoological Gardens. She had ordered the chauffeur to go in the general direction of the Bronx merely because she had exhausted the scenic possibilities of every other route about New York City. When they passed the terminal of the "L" station

and the rolling hill of the Park started up abruptly before them, she whimsically had the car stopped, got out and entered the gate. The remembrance that there were animals there brought to her mind the image of Captain Patrick Burgoyne. She was to be married in four days, and the motor ride was a brief recess from the bustle of getting ready for it. The thought of Burgoyne came into her head like the return of a passage of poetry remembered after many years, something pleasantly romantic to dream over, but the enjoyment of which must be kept to one's self, for fear of the cynical laughter of one's friends and associates. She went into the gardens that she might savour the memory to the utmost.

What had become of him, she asked herself, as she swung up the hill? She had expected him to return and make a dreadful scene when the news of her engagement had reached him, but his silence and disappearance had puzzled her. She had been afraid of what would happen when he came back, afraid of Heaven knows what. She had fancied him administering a drubbing to John R. Collins, even of beating herself. Nothing had happened, and, she confessed to herself, she was feeling disappointed. He was out now in the jungle, tracking the lion and the tiger and the elephant to their lairs, and eating his heart out for hopeless love of her. He had grown cynical, she imagined, and spoke viciously about the faithlessness of women, but in the depths of his soul he still carried her memory. The thought gave her a shameful sense of pleasure.

As she walked along, trim in grey, and with a warm glow to her cheeks and a glint in her eyes, Hayes, the policeman on patrol at the Bronx Road entrance, looked after her with grudging admiration.

"There's a dame knows what she's about," said Hayes.

Hayes was an amateur of personality, in spite of his twenty-seven years. To look at his well-set-up form, his tanned face, his humorous grey eyes, his tow-coloured hair, one would hardly imagine that anything interested him beyond the routine of his police work and possibly athletics. But a policeman's work is the most monotonous work in the world. They cannot read on duty, and few people speak to them, so they are reduced for amusement to the examination and gauging of every passer-by who catches their eye. It is an engrossing game, when once you become accustomed to it. And Hayes reckoned his day dull when few people with possibilities went by. He recognised possibilities in Edith Anderson. She had common sense and beauty, and Hayes in his heart paid homage to her.

It was an interesting morning for Hayes. Not fifteen minutes before, another figure had passed along the same path who had intrigued Hayes greatly. The first holder of Hayes' interest was tall, dark, sinewy, with signs of a recent debauch.

"Outdoor man," Hayes diagnosed. "Money enough for himself; brains; nerve. Been hitting the high spots. Trying to get hold of himself."

It was a hobby of Hayes' to watch people coming into the park to get a grip on themselves, and to watch them going out again with a look of firm strength on their faces or of settled despair. The Bronx Park is a favourite place for people with a problem. People with problems want the open air.

Hayes looked at his watch, started, and moved up the path. Men and women may come and go at random, but there is a certain ground which policemen must tread at certain times, and there was a half-mile in front of Hayes. In front of him the wide path ambled as if it were on a holiday. To his left, across the road through the grille of the palings, the grim windows of a block of flats rose tier on tier like cells in a prison. To his right, a hill swelled like a giant fortification, and inside an enclosure a brace of Rocky Mountain sheep roamed aimlessly, pecking at the grass. A Tibetan yak stood immobile as a stone thing. In the distance a herd of buffaloes lay, huge, ungainly, grotesque things, suggesting great brown shrubs. A fresh spring breeze played over the park, like a shower of fine rain. There was a faint blue tinge to the grass and trees, and the sun came down pleasantly.

Hayes passed the lady in grey as he walked ahead. She was leaning on the iron rail, looking into the enclosure, and there was that appearance of rigidity about her pose that betokened her mind was far from the place of her body. Far ahead of him, Hayes could see, sitting relaxed on a bench, the figure of the man who had passed that way fifteen

minutes before. His eyes were on the ground, and his elbows were on his knees.

There was something ineffably peaceful about the whole scene, Hayes felt. A squirrel skipped across his path, with its tail in the air like the mast of a ship. He made a playful pass at it with his billy. A sort of April youthfulness was creeping into his veins. He began singing lightly:

> "Good-bye! I'm on my way
> To dear old Dublin bay.
> That's why I'm feeling gay—
> Because I know——"

The song broke off in mid-air and Hayes stiffened like a hunting dog. Ahead of him, slipping down a by-path, and through a screen of trees one hundred yards away, was some black mass that the sun seemed to flash on. What it was Hayes had no idea, but that such a thing should happen was not as it should be. Instinct quickened his steps.

The black mass emerged from the screen of trees, swung to the right, and came down the path. It was massive, ungainly, of apocalyptic breadth. It trotted like a dog returning home. There was a faint, rhythmical patter, like the sound of a step dancer on a wooden floor. Hayes gazed at it stupidly, as if at something in a play in a strange language in a strange theatre. As the mass came along, it tossed its head playfully, a triangular head, with two horns on the snout of it, like grotesque additions to a child's toy.

"By God!" Hayes gasped. He hesitated. It seemed to him that he was about to utter something patently incredible. "By God! It's a rhinoceros!"

Automatically Hayes broke into a run forward. Panic seized upon him. What was he to do? If it were a murderer let loose, or a runaway horse, there would be some distinct course to follow. But what was one to do with a wild beast bearing down the path at large? He lugged out his revolver and began firing as he ran. The shots rang out dull and explosive, like the bursting of automobile tyres. Somewhere down the path a woman's shriek cut into the air like a knife. The huge animal still kept up its swinging trot. The bullets had gone wide.

The noise of the plumping shots roused Burgoyne, where he sat on his bench with his head on his hands. He looked down the path. A policeman was racing up it, with a smoking revolver in his hand. As he ran, he shouted something that the wind carried away, and he gesticulated wildly with his unarmed fist. Half a mile farther down a woman scudded along the road in a streak of grey. Burgoyne was puzzled. Somewhere near at hand there was the rhythm of giant pads. He turned about and saw the black mass ambling along.

"Why—why—why——" he babbled. "Why, it's the Mahdi! What the devil!"

He looked down the road again. The policeman had stopped in his tracks and was kneeling in the roadway. Something gleamed brightly in the crook of an upheld arm. Burgoyne suddenly understood.

"Put up that gun, you fool!" he shouted. "Put it up, do you hear?"

There was a red pin-point, another plumping crack, and a little cloud over the policeman's arm like an exhalation of cigarette smoke. The Mahdi stumbled in his pacing, stopped, threw his head up. A rumble came from his throat like the roar of a distant train.

"Now he's done it," Burgoyne muttered, "the damned ass!"

The Mahdi bellowed again. He lowered the great triangular head, like the head of a swimmer about to dive. He began to move slowly at first, like a boat moving into a river from its dock, then gathered speed, like an advancing train. His pads struck the asphalt with the sound of gigantic drumsticks beating a giant drum. He flashed up to the bench and passed it. Burgoyne broke into a quick run alongside. Burgoyne's voice rang out like a great bass chord.

"Oh, el Mahdi," he chanted, "ah, el Mahdi!"

The policeman in front stood as if paralysed. He raised his revolver, and his finger pulled nervously at the trigger. He flung it away in petulant disgust.

"Jump," Burgoyne shouted. "Jump. Jump."

Hayes suddenly understood. He took the iron bars like a hurdle.

They flashed down the road at a thunderous clip, Burgoyne edging nearer as they ran, his voice purring in a great baritone volume of sound. Burgoyne's

brain was working like a telegrapher's instrument. The Mahdi must have recognised him and his voice or he would have been turned on and tossed in the air and trampled in the gust of the animal's rage. Ahead of them the flying figure in grey, now barely five hundred yards off, was beginning to falter in its stride. Short, spasmodic bellows of rage came from the Mahdi's mouth, like the warnings of a locomotive.

"Easy, boy," Burgoyne's voice came throbbingly, like a musical instrument, "easy, lad. A-loa-a-loa-a-loa-a-loa, el Mahdi."

They were flashing down the brow of the incline now, like athletes on skis. The sound of the Mahdi's gallop struck Burgoyne's ear-drums with the force of an artillery discharge. A sharp, hot pain streaked across his chest from the terrific pace.

"A-loa-a-loa, boy," he kept repeating, "easy there, now. Ease up."

They were gaining on the figure in grey with every stride. She was weary, Burgoyne could see, but she was putting up a good fight. If he couldn't divert the Mahdi's rage before they reached her, the figure in grey would soon be hurtling, a bruised, inert thing, through the air like a tossed ball.

He put forward another spurt. The ache across his chest seared him like a hot iron. His hand went out. Gently, as though he were appreciating the quality of silk, he laid it on the massive leathern back. His voice came in vibrant gasps.

"Easy. Easy there, lad."

As he ran he laid the hand more heavily. He lunged into the air as if charging something, and gained a couple of feet. The hand rested on the neck. The figure was not more than thirty yards ahead. Towards the gate of the park he could see blue-coated men running, with bright steel flashing in their right hands. The angry bellowing of the great bull had ceased, but he still kept up his tempestuous charge.

"El Mahdi," Burgoyne's voice still pleaded. "Easy, lad."

The thud of the Mahdi's pads seemed to strike the ground with less violence, Burgoyne thought, and the stride was slowing up. He decided to play his last card. His own feet were stumbling, and crimson waves were undulating before his eyes. He brought his right hand to his left shoulder as he ran.

"Hip ho!" he shouted. His voice rang clear and compelling, like a bugle. "*War joga!* Stop!" His hand came home sharply on the great barrel of a chest. The palm smarted as it struck.

There was a falter.

"*War joga!*" he snapped again.

The great black mass seemed to slither, like a racing car with the brake jammed home. It trotted heavily for a couple of yards and stopped short, trembling. Burgoyne found that his knees were knocking together, and that a cold sweat was breaking out on his brow. He leaned forward on the massive chest, and began to laugh. It came first in

choking sobs, as if he were fighting for breath, then it became clearer until it rang full and true, like the note of a great bell. He ran his hand down the Mahdi's sloping head.

"Good old boy!" he said. "Good old lad!"

The figure in grey was standing ten yards ahead, holding on to the massive iron railings of the park. Her face was white, and her bosom rose and fell violently, like a tumultuous wave. Her eyes watched the hunter and the great beast with a queer, scared look in them—a look that was blended of terror, and of admiration, and of suppressed eagerness.

Men had rushed up from all quarters, blue-coated policemen and keepers. A squad ran down the hill with long, thick, hempen cables. The Mahdi stood trembling while they bound him up. An attendant raced away for straw to entice him back to the cage. Burgoyne bent over the wounded knee. He straightened up.

"It's only a flesh wound," he announced. "It will be all right in a week. It won't even leave a scar." He patted the huge river-bull on the muzzle. "You'll be all right, lad."

The crowd fell back suddenly. He felt a hand laid on his sleeve.

"Patrick."

Burgoyne whirled about suddenly, and stiffened like a statue. A wave of red swept over his face, and his eyes narrowed.

"Patrick."

She advanced a step nearer. Her eyes fell. Her voice faltered.

"Patrick," she began, "you saved my life——"

"I'm awfully glad," Burgoyne's tones came even and cold, "but I can't take much credit for that. I was thinking only of the Mahdi's. His life is a very valuable one."

As Burgoyne watched her a great sense of surprise swept over him. It was as if he had met a total stranger. What had become of the girl he had wanted to marry? This was an exact replica of her, but the light and soul he had put into the girl he wanted were lacking here. Two years and four months ago he had been content to gaze on her face. To-day his eyes peered through hers into the place where her soul should have been, and the place of it, it seemed to him, was empty.

"Patrick," she broke in nervously, "I want to talk to you. There's something I want to explain——"

"I'm sorry," Burgoyne apologised. "It's too bad. But I'm leaving for Africa to-morrow and I haven't got a free moment to-day. Kit and all kinds of things, you know." He turned to the Mahdi and smiled as if at a friend. "Yes. Off to-morrow, lad."

He looked at her keenly, through eyes focused into slits like the eyes of a great jungle cat. No, there was nothing much to her. Had she been true to him, and met him on the pier with a lover's welcome, he might never have seen, he might have looked at her for ever with the blind orbs of infatua-

tion, but the four months of dissipation had set them wide apart, and he could see her from an unbiased angle. His brain was working, keen and trenchant, as a man's brain is after some terrific physical ordeal. He could see the shallowness of her, the unfaithful quality, the huckster strain. Why, even now, blinded by the sight of his taming the furious river beast, she would throw over the man who had won her with money and prospect of comfort. This was no woman for a man of spirit, a free man and a man's man. Explain? There was no explanation for unfaithfulness. Even the wild beasts of the jungle had remained faithful to him, while she—— A great feeling of relief seized on him, that even through fire and degradation he had come to see her as she really was, before it had been too late.

"Patrick." There was a new note to her voice, something coy, something seductive. Her left hand went up to her cheek. Burgoyne followed it unconsciously. There was no ring on it. She was not married yet. A fit of rage burst in on him. He understood the gesture was made to signal a message.

"My car's at the gate," she said. Her head tilted slightly to one side, and a little smile came into her eyes.

Burgoyne turned around. Her chauffeur stood at a little distance off. Beside him was Hayes the policeman, with an empty revolver in his hand. Burgoyne motioned the patrolman over.

"Put up that gun," he snapped. "You've done

enough harm with it already. And see this lady to her car. Her nerves are all shot up." He turned to her. "You'll pardon me, I hope. I'm afraid I'll have to say good-bye right here."

"Good-bye," she said. She looked at him for a moment. A mist came into her eyes. She turned slowly and walked down the hill.

The keepers began taking the Mahdi back to his cage. He went slowly, with drooping head and slow, shuffling step.

Burgoyne swung around to go out. A thin, lanky man in the uniform of a keeper rushed after him. Burgoyne stopped in his tracks. The keeper overtook him.

"Captain Bur——" the keeper stuttered in surprise.

"Mr. Smith, if you don't mind, Brown," Burgoyne smiled in recognition. "By the way, you were the Mahdi's keeper, weren't you?"

The Scotsman shifted guiltily under his look.

"Yes, sir," he confessed.

"Well, if I know anything about this place, you'll be out of a job to-night, Brown. I'm off to Africa in the morning and you might as well come along. Yes? All right. Report at the Knickerbocker at six this evening."

Burgoyne stopped a moment before starting off. In the road a chocolate-coloured limousine was turning about, preparing to return to New York. Burgoyne looked after it with a queer inward look in his eyes.

"Thank God!" he muttered cryptically. "Thank God!"

He walked down the hill with his shoulders thrown back, his head high. The memory of Edith Anderson had left him like the remembrance of a casual word. As he walked a vision rose before him. He could see the African night, a great stretch of black sky like an ocean with a moon that suggested an immense silver coin. On all sides the forest flowed, bluish-black. The night noises of Africa came to him. There was the bass rumble of a lioness. There was the hoarse trumpeting of elephants. Monkeys chirruped like birds. Jackals barked. Hidden things slipped through the undergrowth with a rustle. There was a warm scent to the air. A breeze swept in from Asia and the tree-tops murmured. And it seemed to him that he was stepping into this vast freedom out of an iron cage.

IX

THE WAKE

At times the muffled conversation in the kitchen resembled the resonant humming of bees, and again, when it became animated, it sounded like the distant cackling of geese. Then there would come a pause; and it would begin again with sibilant whispers, and end in a chorus of dry laughter that somehow suggested the crackling of burning logs.

Occasionally a figure would open the bedroom door, pass the old man as he sat huddled in his chair, never throwing a glance at him, and go and kneel by the side of the bed where the body was. They usually prayed for two or three minutes, then rose and walked on tiptoe to the kitchen, where they joined the company. Sometimes they came in twos, less often in threes, but they did precisely the same thing—prayed for precisely the same time, and left the room on tiptoe with the same creak of shoe and rustle of clothes that sounded so intensely loud throughout the room. They might have been following instructions laid down in a ritual.

The old man wished to heaven they would stay away. He had been sitting in his chair for hours,

thinking, until his head was in a whirl. He wanted to concentrate his thoughts, but somehow he felt that the mourners were preventing him.

The five candles at the head of the bed distracted him. He was glad when the figure of one of the mourners shut off the glare for a few minutes. He was also distracted by the five chairs standing around the room like sentries on post, and the little table by the window with its crucifix and holy-water font. He wanted to keep thinking of "herself," as he called her, lost in the immensity of the oaken bed. He had been looking at the pinched face, with its faint suspicion of blue, since early that morning. He was very much awed by the nun's hood that concealed the back of the head, and the stiffly posed arms and the small hands in their white cotton gloves moved him to a deep pity.

Somebody touched him on the shoulder. "Michael James."

It was big Dan Murray, a gaunt, red farmer, who had been best man at his wedding.

"Michael James."

"What is it?"

"I hear young Kennedy's in the village."

"What of that?"

"I thought it was best for you to know."

Murray waited a moment, then he went out, on tiptoe, as everybody did, his movements resembling the stilted gestures of a mechanical toy.

Down the drive Michael heard steps coming. Then a struggle and a shrill giggle. Some young

people were coming to the wake, and he knew a boy had tried to kiss a girl in the dark. He felt a dull surge of resentment.

She was nineteen when he married her; he was sixty-three. Because he had over two hundred acres of land and many heads of milch and grazing cattle and a huge house that rambled like a barrack, her father had given her to him; and young Kennedy, who had been her father's steward for years, and had been saving to buy a house for her, was thrown over like a bale of mildewed hay.

Kennedy had made several violent scenes. Michael James remembered the morning of the wedding. Kennedy waylaid the bridal-party coming out of the church. He was drunk.

"Mark me," he had said, very quietly. for a drunken man—"mark me. If anything ever happens to that girl at your side, Michael James, I'll murder you. I'll murder you in cold blood. Do you understand?"

Michael James could be forgiving that morning. "Run away and sober up, lad," he had said, "and come up to the house and dance."

Kennedy had gone around the countryside for weeks, drunk every night, making threats against the strong farmer. And then a wily sergeant of the Connaught Rangers had trapped him and taken him off to Aldershot.

Now he was home on furlough, and something had happened to her, and he was coming up to make good his threat.

What had happened to her? Michael James didn't understand. He had given her everything he could. She had taken it all with a demure thanks, but he had never had anything of her but apathy. She had gone around the house apathetically, growing a little thinner every day, and then a few days ago she had lain down, and last night she had died, apathetically.

And young Kennedy was coming up for an accounting to-night. "Well," thought Michael James, "let him come!"

Silence suddenly fell over the company in the kitchen. Then a loud scraping as they stood up, and a harsher grating as chairs were pushed back. The door of the bedroom opened, and the red flare from the fire and lamps of the kitchen blended into the sickly yellow candlelight of the bedroom.

The parish priest walked in. His closely-cropped white hair, strong, ruddy face, and erect back gave him more the appearance of a soldier than a clergyman. He looked at the bed a moment, and then at Michael James.

"Oh, you mustn't take it like that, man," he said. "You mustn't take it like that. You must bear up." He was the only one who spoke in his natural voice.

He turned to a lumbering farmer's wife who had followed him in, and asked about the hour of the funeral. She answered in a hoarse whisper, dropping a curtsy.

"You ought to go and take a walk," he told Michael James. "You oughtn't to stay in here all the time." And he left the room.

Michael James paid no attention. His mind was wandering to strange fantasies he could not keep out of his head. Pictures crept in and out of his brain, joined as by some thin filament. He thought somehow of her soul, and then wondered what a soul was like. And then he thought of a dove, and then of a bat fluttering through the dark, and then of a bird lost at twilight. He thought of it as some lonely, flying thing, with a long journey before it and no place to rest. He could imagine it uttering the vibrant, plaintive cry of a peewit. And then it struck him with a great sense of pity that the night was cold.

In the kitchen they were having tea. The rattle of the crockery sounded very distinctly. He could distinguish the sharp, staccato ring when a cup was laid in a saucer, and the nervous rattle when cup and saucer were passed from one hand to the other. Spoons struck china with a faint metallic tinkle. He felt as if all the sounds were made at the back of his neck, and the crash seemed to burst in his head.

Dan Murray creaked into the room. "Michael James," he whispered, "you ought to take something. Have a bite to eat. Take a cup of tea. I'll bring it in to you."

"Oh, let me alone, Daniel," he answered. He felt he would like to kick him and curse him while doing so.

"You must take something." Murray's voice rose from a whisper to a low, argumentative sing-song. "You know it's not natural. You've got to eat."

"No, thank you, Daniel," he answered. It was as if he were talking to a boy who was good-natured but tiresome. "I don't feel like eating. Maybe afterwards I will."

"Michael James," Murray continued.

"Well, what is it, Daniel?"

"Don't you think I'd better go down and see young Kennedy, and tell him how foolish it would be of him to come up here and start fighting? You know it isn't right. Hadn't I better go down? He's at home now."

"Let that alone, Daniel, I tell you." The thought of Murray breaking into the matter that was between himself and the young man filled him with a sense of injured delicacy.

"I know he's going to make trouble."

"Let me handle that, like a good fellow, and leave me by myself, Daniel, if you don't mind."

"Ah well, sure. You know best." And Murray crept out of the room.

As the door opened Michael could hear someone singing in a subdued voice and many feet tapping like drums in time with the music. They had to pass the night outside, and it was the custom, but the singing irritated him. He could fancy heads nodding and bodies swaying from side to side with the rhythm. He recognised the tune and it began

to run through his head, and he could not put it out of it. The lilt of it captured him, and suddenly he began thinking of the wonderful brain that musicians must have to compose music. And then his thoughts switched to a picture he had seen of a man in a garret with a fiddle beneath his chin.

He straightened himself up a little, for sitting crouched forward as he was put a strain on his back, and he unconsciously sat upright to ease himself. And as he sat up he caught a glimpse of the cotton gloves on the bed, and it burst in on him that the first time he had seen her she was walking along the road with young Kennedy one Sunday afternoon, and they were holding hands. When they saw him they let go suddenly, and grew very red, giggling in a half-hearted way to hide their embarrassment. And he remembered that he had passed them by without saying anything, but with a good-humoured, sly smile on his face, and a mellow feeling within him, and a sage reflection to himself that young folks will be young folks, and what harm was there in courting a little on a Sunday afternoon when the week's work had been done?

And he remembered other days on which he had met her and Kennedy; and then how the conviction had come into his mind that here was a girl for him to marry; and then how, quietly and equably, he had gone about getting her and marrying her, as he would go about buying a team of horses or making arrangements for cutting the hay.

Until the day he married her he felt as a driver feels who has his team under perfect control, and who knows every bend and curve of the road he is taking. But since that day he had been thinking about her and worrying, and wondering exactly where he stood, until everything in the day was just the puzzle of her, and he was like a driver with a restive pair of horses who knows his way no farther than the next bend. And then he knew she was the biggest thing in his life.

All there was left of her now was a pair of white cotton gloves, resting stiffly on a bedspread, with ten cramped, blue fingers inside of them.

The situation as it appeared to him he had worked out with difficulty, for he was not a thinking man. What thinking he did dealt with the price of harvest machinery, and the best time of the year for buying and selling. He worked it out this way: here was this girl dead, whom he had married, and who should have married another man who was coming to-night to kill him. To-night sometime the world would stop for him. He felt no longer a personal entity—he was merely part of a situation. It was as if he were a piece in a chess problem—any moment the player might move and solve the play by taking a pawn.

Realities had taken on a dim, unearthly quality. Occasionally a sound from the kitchen would strike him like an unexpected note in a harmony; the whiteness of the bed would flash out like a piece of colour in a subdued painting.

There was a shuffling in the kitchen and the sound of feet going towards the door. The latch lifted with a rasp. He could hear the hoarse, deep tones of a few boys, and the high-pitched, singsong intonations of girls. He knew they were going for a few miles' walk along the roads. He went over and raised the blind on the window. Overhead the moon showed like a spot of bright saffron. A sort of misty haze seemed to cling around the bushes and trees. The outhouses stood out white, like buildings in a mysterious city. Somewhere there was the metallic whirr of a grasshopper, and in the distance a loon boomed again and again.

The little company passed down the yard. There was the sound of a smothered titter, then a playful, resounding slap, and a gurgling laugh from one of the boys.

As he stood by the window he heard someone open the door and stand on the threshold.

"Are you coming, Alice?" someone asked.

Michael James listened for the answer. He was taking in eagerly all outside things. He wanted something to pass the time of waiting, as a traveller in a railway station reads trivial notices carefully while waiting for a train that may take him to the ends of the earth.

"Alice, are you coming?" was asked again.

There was no answer.

"Well, you needn't if you don't want to," he heard in an irritated tone, and the speaker tramped down

towards the road in a dudgeon. He recognised the figure of Flanagan, the football player, who was always having little spats with the girl he was going to marry. He discovered with a sort of shock that he was slightly amused at this incident.

From the road there came the shrill scream of one of the girls who had gone out, and then a chorus of laughter. And against the background of the figure behind him and of young Kennedy he began wondering at the relationship of man and woman. He had no word for it, for "love" was a term he thought should be confined to story-books, a word to be suspicious of as sounding affected; a word to be scoffed at. But of this relationship he had a vague understanding. He thought of it as a criss-cross of threads, binding one person to the other, or as a web which might be light and easily broken, or which might have the strength of steel cables, and which might work into knots here and there, and become a tangle that could crush those caught in it.

It puzzled him how a thing of indefinable grace, of soft words on June nights, of vague stirrings under moonlight, of embarrassing hand-clasps and fearful glances, might become, as it had become in the case of himself, Kennedy and what was behind him—a thing of blind, malevolent force, a thing of sinister silence, a shadow that crushed.

And then it struck him with a sense of guilt that his mind was wandering from her, and he turned away from the window. He thought how much

more peaceful it would be for a body to lie out in the moonlight than in a shadowy room with yellow, guttering candlelight, with a sombre oak bedstead, and five solemn-looking chairs. And he thought again how strange it was that on a night like this Kennedy should come as an avenger seeking to kill rather than as a lover with high hope in his breast.

Murray slipped into the room again. There was a frown on his face and his tone was aggressive.

"I tell you, Michael James, we'll have to do something about it." There was a truculent note in his whisper.

The farmer did not answer.

"Will you let me go down for the police? A few words to the sergeant will keep him quiet."

Michael James felt a pity for Murray. The idea of pitting a sergeant of police against the tragedy that was coming seemed ludicrous to him. It was like pitting a schoolboy against a hurricane.

"Listen to me, Dan," he replied. "How do you know Kennedy is coming up at all?"

"Flanagan, the football player, met him and talked to him. He said that Kennedy was clean mad."

"Do they know about it in the kitchen?"

"Not a word." There was a pause.

"Well, listen here, now. Go right back there and don't say a word about it. Wouldn't it be foolish if you went down to the police and he didn't come at all? And if he does come I can manage

him. And if I can't I'll call you. Does that satisfy you?" And he sent Murray out, grumbling.

As the door closed he felt that the last refuge had been abandoned. He was to wrestle with destiny alone. He had no doubt that Kennedy would make good his vow, and he felt a sort of curiosity as to how it would be done. Would it be with hands, or with a gun, or some other weapon? He hoped it would be the gun. The idea of coming to handigrips with the boy filled him with a strange terror.

The thought that within ten minutes or a half-hour or an hour he would be dead did not come home to him. It was the physical act that frightened him. He felt as if he were terribly alone, and a cold wind were blowing about him and penetrating every pore of his body. There was a contraction around his breast bone and a shiver in his shoulders.

His idea of death was that he would pitch headlong, as from a high tower, into a bottomless dark space.

He went over to the window again and looked out towards the barn. From a chink in one of the shutters there was a thread of yellow candlelight. He knew there were men there playing cards to pass the time.

Then the terror came on him. The noise in the kitchen was subdued. Most of the mourners had gone home, and those who were staying the night were drowsy and were dozing over the fire. He felt he wanted to rush among them and to cry to

them to protect him, and to cower behind them and to close them around him in a solid circle. He felt that eyes were upon him, looking at his back from the bed, and he was afraid to turn around because he might look into the eyes.

She had always respected him, he remembered, and he did not want to lose her respect now; and the fear that he would lose it set his shoulders back and steadied the grip of his feet on the floor.

He could not remember what Kennedy looked like. His fancy distorted his enemy's countenance into a thin, grim-lipped face. There was a horrible unreality about him, as about a djinn in the *Thousand and One Nights*.

And then there flashed before him the thought of people who kill, of lines of soldiery rushing on trenches, of a stealthy, cowering man who slips through a jail door at dawn, and of a figure he had read of in books—a sinister figure with an axe and a red cloak.

The moon was well to the westward now. There was still the white, blinding look about the outhouses. They threw heavy, angular shadows. Trees appeared as if etched in black on the ground. There was a chill in the air.

As he looked down the yard he saw a figure turn in at the gate and come towards the house. It seemed to walk slowly and heavily, as if tired. He knew it was Kennedy.

He turned and walked to the door. As he

walked he felt he was being watched from behind. In the kitchen someone was speaking slowly and emphatically, as if driving home a point. He opened the kitchen door and slipped outside.

The figure coming up the pathway seemed to swim towards him. Then it would blur and disappear, and then appear again vaguely. The beating of his heart was like the regular sound of a ticking clock. Space narrowed until he felt he could not breathe. He went forward a few paces. The light from the bedroom window streamed forward in a broad, yellow beam. He stepped into it as into a river.

"She's dead," he heard himself saying. "She's dead." And then he knew that Kennedy was standing in front of him.

The flap of the boy's hat threw a heavy shadow over his face, his shoulders were braced, and his right hand, the farmer could see, was thrust deeply into his coat pocket.

"Ay, she's dead," Michael James repeated. "You knew that, didn't you?" It was all he could think of saying. "You'll come in and see her, won't you?" He had forgotten what Kennedy had come for. He was dazed. He didn't know what to say.

Kennedy moved a little. The light from the window struck him full in the face, and Michael James realised with a shock that it was as grim and thin-lipped as he had pictured it. A prayer rose in his throat, and then fear seemed to leave

him all at once. He raised his head. The right hand had left the pocket now. And then suddenly he saw that Kennedy was looking into the room, and he knew he could see, through the little panes of glass, the huge bedstead and the body on it. And he felt a desire to throw himself between Kennedy and it, as he might jump between a child and something that would hurt it.

He turned away his head, instinctively—why, he could not understand, but he felt that he should not look at Kennedy's face.

Over in the barn voices rose suddenly. They were disputing over the cards. There was someone complaining feverishly and someone arguing truculently, and another voice striving to make peace. They died away in a dull hum, and Michael James heard the boy sobbing.

"You mustn't do that," he said. "You mustn't do that." And he patted him on the shoulders. He felt as if something unspeakably tense had relaxed, and as if life were swinging back into balance. His voice shook and he continued patting. "You'll come in now, and I'll leave you alone there." He took him under the arm.

He felt the pity he had for the body on the bed envelop Kennedy, too, and a sense of peace come over him. It was as though a son of his had been hurt and had come to him for comfort, and that he was going to comfort him. In some vague way he thought of Easter-time.

He stopped at the door for a moment.

"It's all right, laddie," he said. "It's all right," and he lifted the latch.

As they went in he felt somehow as if high walls had crumbled and the three of them had stepped into the light of day.

X

OUT OF EGYPT

THERE was something incongruous about the old rabbi, Lahada puzzled. His grey donkey fitted in with the Syrian night, and his aquiline nose, piercing eyes, and white, patriarchal beard seemed to embody the spirit of the East; but there was some note jarring. And in a flash he discovered it. It was the coat and trousers of clerical black. Put him in a burnous, he thought, and the picture was perfect.

The caravan of Hebrew colonists had left Beirut ten days before on its way to the Mesopotamian settlements. For two miles behind him and one in front Lahada could see the long line of camels, pack dromedaries, donkeys, and mule-drawn wagons wind through the desert like a river. All around him, like the playing of a muted orchestra, he could hear the tinkle of innumerable camel bells, the soft crunch of dromedaries' pads in the sand, and the rumble and whine of cart wheels. Away in the distance there was the vibrant growl of a lioness, which began in a deep bass and ended in a shrill treble. The moon hung westward in a flaming white disk.

Lahada knew the trail well. Seven years before, when he was still a student in Barcelona, he had

gone to Damascus and Baalbek as secretary to the Spanish archæologist Carada. In that brief six months the barren desert country had stolen into his blood like a fever. And in the night time, when he sat around the red camp fires of the Bedouins, he had dreamed of grey tents and of grazing herds and of land under pasture, as there had been three thousand years ago, when his own people had journeyed out of Egypt into the wilderness, and from the wilderness to the Jordan.

Then he would wake up from his dreaming with a shamefaced laugh. It was too impossible! he said to himself. And here he was to-night, leading three thousand of them back, as thirty centuries ago the host had been led by Moses!

When the call of the Zionist leaders had swept from temple to temple, urging the people to put from them their rows of figures and dingy shops and flashing needles and pedlars' packs, and to return whence they came, he felt his spirit stir within him as he had never felt it before. When his application to lead one of the caravans to the Euphrates country had been accepted, he had gone around dazedly, hardly daring to believe it was true. To the central committee he was merely a young, enthusiastic Jewish student, who knew the trail and spoke Arabic. But in himself he felt that his expedition with Carada and his dreams by the black Bedouin tents were a fore-ordained preparation for the work.

The caravan had gathered in Beirut, and he felt for the first time that the dream of a new Zion was perhaps a futility. There were men from New York there, shrewd, crafty-looking fellows with mean eyes; men from Russia, with a hopeless, apathetic expression on their sluggish faces; pasty, white-cheeked tradespeople from England; stolid and corpulent Germans; sharp, alert men from Paris, who looked as if they would be quite at home on the Boulevard des Italiens and not at all on the Damascus trail. The Spanish Jews, tall, swarthy, and hook-nosed, seemed as if they were living a poem, and in himself he fought the fear that they would be disillusioned. But in the eyes of the women, he noticed, the sight of the swelling Lebanon hills seemed to renew the promise of Daniel.

Surely, he said to himself, these were no desert men, this was no people to refound a nation and to rebuild ancient cities, and to battle with wind and weather for their bread. It would have been better, he felt, to have left them to their streets, and to their buying and selling, and to their moving picture houses and dance halls. The burden of the Ghetto had lain too heavily on them.

They had started from Beirut with their platoon of red-fezzed, beetle-browed, contemptuous Turkish cavalry on each side of them, and, Lahada noticed, a look of shamefaced apprehension. The snarling protest of the camels, the flashing colours of the Syrian town, and the grim, grey outline of the desert they were to cross seemed to scare them. Their

faces blanched when they spoke of the roaming Kurds and Arabs, against whom the black-uniformed Bashi-Bazouk guard with their short, workmanlike rifles were to protect them.

But out in the desert they plucked up courage, where Lahada had feared they would break up and plead to be sent back to Essen and Warsaw and New York and Marseilles. They examined the desert silently, as prospectors might do, and looked at the stretch of grey sand and greenish grey rocks and stumps of brush with wide, inquisitive eyes. At first they whispered to one another, like intruders, and stepped back fearfully when a chameleon scuttled up a rock or a lizard flashed beneath their feet in a streak of silver. They watched Lahada on his big bay mare as school children watch the leader of their outing, and Lahada watched them more closely still, and little by little he saw their strides grow longer, and heard their voices rise from whispers to a drone of conversation, and then to cheery, encouraging shouts to one another, and he noticed their eyes fixed confidently on the horizon, where one morning the terraced Mesopotamian valleys would rise green and lush before them.

He rode up the line on the first morning's march, and stopped in front of little Miriam Schultz, who had left an East Side sweatshop for the promise of the rolling green fields.

"What do you think of it?" he asked, and pointed to the circle of desert that was turning white under the morning sun.

"I don't know," she answered, "I don't know." She looked at him suddenly with full, black eyes. "You'll laugh at me," she faltered, "but it doesn't seem so strange. I feel as if I had seen it all before. I wonder if I could have dreamt it?"

"Perhaps you did," he answered lightly; but he felt his heart bound within him, for his vision was coming true.

How utterly simple it was, after all! Here was this tract of fertile land wanting colonists, and here were the people who owned and tilled it when the world was young returning to own and till it again. Why couldn't they have done so before now? Why should they have slaved and suffered and been outcasts and pariahs for centuries when they had only to come back? Why should they have been scarred and hacked in the advance westward when they could have been secure and prosperous in retreat? Why should old Borsky have gone through the horrors of Kishenév, and Carcassonne been spat on by his fellow conscripts in Algiers, and Oppenheim taken the insults of coarse German students? They were forced to: they had to live. But why not have come back before now? And suddenly he remembered the long years of bondage in Egypt while the Promised Land lay across the waters before them, and they had been delayed in going forth. He questioned himself no further.

Well, they were on their way at last, thank God! This was the vanguard of them. It might take years and tens of years and perhaps centuries before they

could all foregather; but it had begun. That was the main thing. Already the shrewd, trafficking look in their eyes had turned into the keen, observant gaze of scouts. Pasty faces were becoming a healthy olive. Bowed backs were straightening by inches. Lahada noticed with surprise how like the Arabs and the Bedouins of the desert the colonists looked —the same hooked nose, the same swarthy colouring, the same deep-set, keen black eye! Surely they were on their own ground at last!

But what of the Kurds and Arabs and the nomad tribes? What if they should attack them? That was the question that had been eating into his mind like a maggot since they left Beirut. The contemptuous, inimical Bashi-Bazouks might turn treacherous, and leave them to the mercy of the tribesmen. What would they do then?

He had talked about it to Adams, the thin, angular New England consul at Beirut. The consul had looked grave.

"Yes," he had said, "the Porte wants your people back; but the Turkish soldier and the Arab do not. In short, they have always hated you, and always will. And they will do everything they can to prevent your settling in the country." He began drumming on his desk. His mouth puckered into a puzzled, thin line. "I shouldn't be surprised," he continued, "if a party of Arabs ambushed the caravan. I'll be frank with you—you may as well face it. I'll be surprised if they don't. And, as you say, the patrol may withdraw out of range."

"Then what are we going to do?"

"You have all got rifles?" Adams asked.

"Yes; but——"

"But nothing!" The consul swung round, and his eyes snapped. "You've got to fight—that or go back! Take your choice!"

That or go back! If it were only himself, Lahada laughed grimly, there would be no question of going back. But would his people fight? For centuries they had been the under dog, oppressed and trodden on; they had been traders, living by their wits and brains rather than by their hands. And the few who had worked by their hands had been cooped in sweatshops until the nerve and the spirit and the heart's blood had been ground out of them. Was the race that had been imprisoned in the foul-smelling Ghettos of Europe and America, waging its wars across counters and in board rooms and law offices, fit to cope with these wild men of the desert, who cut their teeth on rifle barrels?

In two days they should reach the edge of the desert and strike into the fertile lands. Would they get through unchallenged, he wondered? And if they were attacked, what would happen? Would the Bashi-Bazouks protect them, or would they retreat and the caravan become a shrieking, panic-stricken shambles, with the young men shot down before his eyes, and the old men clubbed brutally to death at the least resistance, and the women screaming as they were dragged into the desert? Or would—and here he gave up puzzling in sheer

weariness. He had been fearing and hoping and wondering for ten days, and had got no answer.

Day was coming up. The moon had turned from silver to yellow against the western horizon. The sharp, black silhouette of the caravan took on vague, unreal lines. The sand that had glistened white under the moon became a sea of dark grey mist, broken at intervals by the crests of great rocks that looked like crests of great waves, and by little islands of green brush and scrub. Desert life was waking. Not a hundred yards away a gazelle raced past in a streak of brown, its head stretched forward and its legs curving upward like a galloping horse. Farther on a desert dog squatted on his haunches and barked viciously at the caravan. Somewhere a pair of rock pigeons twittered and cooed.

Ahead of them Lahada could see a black splotch against the grey. That, he knew, was Kefir-Ghosn, the first stop on the day's march. It was a patch of grey rock, as far as he could remember it, with a mosque and a green oasis and a marabout's tomb. There should be a travellers' khan there too, and a fetid Mohammedan bazaar. They would stop there for two hours and then push on, until the heat of the day forced them to camp.

They were making good headway. By to-morrow night they would be on the edge of the desert, and the valley of the Euphrates would lie before them. After Kefir-Ghosn there was only Shashak, and after Shashak they were safe.

Then a sort of panic seemed to grip him in the

breast. The caravan had wavered and halted. Along the line he could hear the voices of men calling on mules and camels to stop. Somehow he felt he should get at once to the head of the column, where the truculent Anatolian major was. He clapped his heels to his horse and raced forward.

The major was talking to his adjutant in low-pitched, guttural Kurd. A captain and two sergeants stood by. They stopped talking when Lahada came up, and turned suspiciously to him. None of them spoke.

"Is anything wrong?" he asked quietly.

"No. What would be wrong?" the major answered.

Lahada felt suddenly suspicious of him. He could see a corner of the khan glimmer faintly a quarter of a mile away. Between the head of the caravan and the village the road dropped suddenly and ran through a defile of high rock, which turned sharply at an obtuse angle and hid the mosque and the oasis and the marabout's tomb. In the half-light of the dawn it suggested the blackness of a tunnel. Lahada thought for a moment that he could catch a glimpse of white against the rocks.

"Well, why don't you go on?" he asked.

The major didn't answer. Lahada suddenly felt that there was something here he should be careful of. He looked back. Along the sides of the caravan the cavalrymen seemed to have thinned. The captain and the sergeants turned their horses quietly

and trotted down the line. An idea came into Lahada's head. He turned to the major.

"Send a scouting party down that road," he commanded.

"Why should I?" he heard the major reply.

"If there are Arabs on the trail, the scouts would warn us."

"If there are Arabs on the trail," the soldier replied coolly, "the scouting party will never return. If you are afraid, why don't you turn your caravan back?"

Lahada could hear the rattle of hoofs in the distance. They grew fainter and fainter. He could see no cavalrymen now. On the crest of rocks he again thought he saw a flash of white. He caught at the major's bridle.

"Are there tribesmen on those rocks?" his voice rose involuntarily. "Tell me at once!"

"How should I know, Effendi?"

Good God! the man was maddening. "If there are, will you stand by us?" he demanded fiercely. He felt he wanted to take the major by the throat and strangle him.

"I have only a platoon, Effendi. If there are many Arabs, I can do nothing. I can't be expected to fight five or six hundred of them. I can only order you to retire. If you don't, I must bring my own men out of action. I can't sacrifice them."

Lahada felt sure now they were to be ambushed. The Bashi-Bazouk wheeled his horse and waited. There was no fear on his face, Lahada could see

that; his big white teeth showed in a saturnine smile. Under the red fez his black eyes twinkled in amused contempt. His adjutant, a stocky Albanian, with the face of a Cossack, glowered at Lahada viciously.

A group of men had gathered round. Lahada noticed Sassoo from Barcelona at his elbow, and Carcassonne and Lajeunesse. They could be depended on to fight: they had served in the African provinces. Others who had been conscripts were there too, he saw—Oppenheim, who had been in the Uhlans, and Philipsthal, who had been a non-commissioned officer in the Bavarian Rifles. And there were Nachiminoff and Czernauer, who had served in the artillery at Libau—they would stand by him.

But these, he felt, were only a few. And if there were five or six hundred Arabs, as the escort commander had mentioned, what chance of success was there? How many of the others could be depended on? He looked down the line. The caravan had broken its trail formation and was gathering in little groups. He could hear the flutter of conversation. They were already becoming alarmed. Would they stand by? he wondered. He would take the chance. He beckoned to Lajeunesse.

"Have the rifles and clips handed out," he ordered. "Keep the women back there, and bring up the men and camels. Hurry! There's no time to lose."

Lajeunesse slipped off quietly. Lahada saw Carcassonne and Sassoo follow him.

The major was getting impatient. "Well, I suppose you're for going back. Don't you think you'd better hurry and get moving?"

Somebody brushed in front of Lahada's mare and stood in front of him. "You dog!" he heard. "You dog!"

He looked down. The old Rabbi Ben Israel from Saragossa, whose clothes of western black struck Lahada as so incongruous, was facing the Bashi-Bazouk. In the dim, thin light of the dawn, his height appeared enormous. His long, white beard quivered. His lean hand was stretched out towards the Turkish soldier.

The group around Lahada had dismounted. Their faces were becoming more distinct. Towards the east the sickly yellow of the sky was turning to bright mauves and purples. Lahada felt there was no time to lose. So long as the major and his adjutant were with them they were safe, he felt. Once they had gone out of range, the attack would begin. He dismounted.

"Stretch out your camels in a row," he said to the group. "Face them towards the village and make them kneel down."

The men began leading the beasts away, Lahada could see. There had been no questions or objections—thank Heaven for that! He listened for a moment to the quivering tinkle of the animals' bells as they were led forward, and to the fierce-breathed oaths of the men as they forced them forward or to their knees, and to the sharp, staccato crack of the

whips on their leathern flanks. Above it all the voice of the old rabbi rang out like a gong.

"Go back, you traitor and son of traitors! Go back, you cowards, if you want to! We are going forward. And what stands in our way shall go out of it. Even you and your men, if they attempt to withstand us!"

Carcassonne and Lajeunesse were handing out the rifles now. The men were taking them mechanically. Back on the trail he could hear the steady rumble of carts retreating. He pushed forward to where the major was, with the old rabbi confronting him like an accusing prophet. The smile and the sneer had gone from the soldier's eyes. His voice snapped as he turned to Lahada.

"I order you to go back!" he barked.

The old rabbi turned to Lahada. "We are going to fight, my son," he said calmly, and Lahada wondered at the quiet confidence in his voice.

The Bashi-Bazouk gathered up his reins. "I disclaim all responsibility," he shouted. "I've warned you. If you insist on staying, it's not my fault."

He dug his spurs into his horse and clattered down the line. The adjutant followed at a canter. Lahada looked around him. The camels had been forced down in a semicircle, and Sassoo and Carcassonne were urging the men to lie down behind them. In the grey of the dawn the line of crouching camels suggested somehow great dun birds that had flown to the earth to rest. The rocks in front

towered up black and forbidding, like a gully in a sea cliff. The caravan rumbled and crashed as it galloped into safety. Between the camels and the village every inch of the way seemed silent and tense. From the retreating caravan black figures were stealing up towards the circle. Some of them, Lahada could see, were running, and others were crouching steadily, and still others were lagging and had to be urged along.

Lajeunesse pushed a rifle and cartridge belt into his hands, and he walked forward mechanically and dropped behind one of the massive pack dromedaries. Before him the gorge rose up black and forbidding. What if there were no one there after all? he thought. What if all this panic and preparation had been for nothing?

He could hear the distant rattle of the officers' horses down the trail. And as he listened something whined above his head. One of the black figures behind him lurched and staggered. There was a sound like the crack of a whip. A camel nearby rose on its haunches.

"Kill the camels!" he heard Carcassonne shouting. "Shoot them through the head!"

Lahada put his rifle to the head of the dromedary and pulled the trigger. The rifle leaped in his hand. The report seemed to strike him at the back of the neck.

All about him there was a sharp crackling like burning wood, and then it doubled and redoubled. The rocks ahead of him flashed out in pin-points

of flame. Lahada felt dazed and sick. He didn't know what to do. He pointed his rifle vaguely towards the rocks and began pulling the trigger. The firing became like the tearing of innumerable pieces of paper. The yellow pin-points in front of him flickered and disappeared like the flashing of electric torches. There was a smell of powder in the air.

He felt disgusted with himself. Here was he, leader of the caravan, and didn't know what to do! A great surge of impatience shook him from head to foot. He was afraid suddenly that he was afraid.

And if he was afraid, he asked, what of the others, who had not the intensity of the vision he had to steel their souls—would they stand firm? God help him! would he stand firm himself?

The firing stopped for a few moments. He looked ahead. It was becoming lighter now. There were still the dark shadows and the black gulf of the gorge. The edge of the khan in the distance took on a dim, ghostly appearance. In front of him, on the horizon, where the sun would come up, there were massed clouds in gigantic pearl-coloured layers and puffs. A ray of sunlight shot upward between them like a shaft of yellow flame. It looked, Lahada thought, like a pillar of fire connecting earth and heaven, and as he looked a shiver went through him, and he felt he should lower his head.

He heard someone grunt beside him. Sabin, who had been in the marines on the *Minnesota*, was lying

on his stomach, squinting carefully down the barrel of his rifle.

"Three hundred yards—no, three hundred and twenty-five—three hundred and fifty," Lahada heard him murmur.

He changed the sights of his rifle and brought it to his shoulder again. On the crest of the rocks a white figure had half risen. Lahada could see the torso of a burnoused Arab. There was a dull crash from Sabin's rifle. The Arab clutched the edge of the rock, fell forward on it, slid over it, and plunged into the gorge like a diver into a pool.

Then above the crackling of the rifle fire a fierce shouting struck on Lahada's ears. A white figure flashed out of the gorge, and then three others, and then a group of them, and then a score. He looked at them dully. They rushed forward, waving long, glistening barrels. They seemed to scream like women.

The figure that ran in front hypnotised him. He wanted to see what it was going to do, whether it was going to stop or whether it would go on. He forgot the rifle in his hands and kept looking at the figure. He heard the click of a tongue against palate beside him. Sabin was cuddling his rifle to his cheek. There was a little yellow spat from the muzzle, and the racing figure stopped short, spun like a teetotum, and pitched forward on its hands and knees.

He heard Carcassonne's voice volley as from a megaphone. "Give it to them!" he shouted. "Give it to them now!"

A panic seized him. He must do something with his rifle. On each side the crack of guns rang out like the chatter of a giant drill. He levelled and fired insanely, and levelled and fired again, and pushed clips into his magazine with trembling fingers.

The group of rushing ghosts wavered and stood still for a moment. They dropped prone to the ground. Lahada could see behind them here and there a figure curled up or sprawling. The group began firing carefully. A bullet struck the dromedary with a plump, and then another and another.

He looked around him. Day was long coming up, he thought. The shadows were still there, long and gaunt, and short and squat. The black mouth of the gorge was as black as before. He looked towards the rising sun.

The beam of light was still there. It had changed from golden to flaming scarlet, and thickened until it stood like an immense bar against the clouds. He felt a shiver run along his neck, and the blood pounding in his veins like hammers.

"Ready again!" Carcassonne called.

A wedge of white flashed from the gorge to reinforce the group on the sand. The group staggered up, and began rushing again.

Lahada looked up towards the bar of flame. It was still lighting angrily. He felt himself go taut. There was no indecision now. A sort of cold fury gripped him.

He raised his rifle and began firing. The sharp crashes seemed to stimulate him. He liked the feeling of the hot barrel along his palm. Unconquerable strength surged through his limbs.

He remembered speaking to Forrest, the fruit shipper, before leaving Beirut. Forrest had listened to his enthusiasm with a cold, fishy eye.

"What'll you do if the Arabs ambush you?" he had asked.

"We'll fight," Lahada had answered, with his gorge rising against the flabby merchant.

"Ah, Jews can't fight!" Forrest had said, and moved off, laughing contemptuously.

Jews couldn't fight! Jews couldn't fight! By Heaven! he'd show them!

The Arabs in front were advancing by short rushes. Then they would drop to their knees and fire, rush and fire again, and drop to their knees again. They were thinning out.

They scrambled up and ran forward. Lahada noticed a huge figure taking the lead. It wore the green turban of the hadji and was bellowing frenziedly. Lahada fired.

The bellow died, cut in mid-course. Lahada felt a fierce joy run through him. The line of Arabs broke and ran.

Jews couldn't fight, couldn't they? That was what the Bashi-Bazouk had thought, that was what the Arabs had. They were learning now!

There was a minute's respite. Lahada looked towards the east. The streak of flame was still there,

flashing angry and red like a comet. Men were stealing up towards the circle from the caravan, cuddling their rifles to their shoulders. Lahada wondered if they too had seen the pillar of fire.

Carcassonne was shouting wildly. "Stand firm now!" he yelled. "Stand firm!"

Lahada heard feet pattering like drum-sticks. There were about a hundred of them this time. There was no yelling now. They drove towards the circle like a flock of birds. Lahada heard a struggle beside him. A man had jumped up and thrown his rifle down and prepared to run. Sabin had sprung to his throat and pulled him down.

"Shoot or I'll kill you!" he was hissing.

They were in for it now, Lahada felt. He heaved his rifle up and volleyed into them. The driving white figures scattered, but never stopped. In a few seconds they would be on the circle.

Lahada looked towards the east again. The flame had changed from red to startling crimson, and seemed to rush upward as from the crater of a volcano. It played in a burning glow on the massed clouds.

Lahada's magazine was empty. There was no time to reload. He could see the brown, hawk-like features of the Arabs not forty yards away. He wanted to spring from behind his hiding place and rush to meet them.

Behind him he heard a voice ring out, sonorous and full. He glanced over his shoulder. The old rabbi was standing like a monument, his arms

stretched upward at full length, his head thrown backward. He was chanting the *Schma-Ÿ-Israel.*

"Help, O God of Israel!" Lahada heard, and then the Arabs were upon him. He brought his rifle butt from his knee up to one brown jaw, and downward on another head. Then it was wrenched from him, and he was fighting with his bare hands.

Lahada felt a slap on his shoulder. He looked up at Carcassonne.

"Let him go," Carcassonne was saying. "I want you."

Lahada looked down. He was clutching the throat of a limp, burnoused figure, a figure that did not move when he let go. He felt suddenly weak, and staggered as Carcassonne helped him back from the line. Lajeunesse was there, and Oppenheim and Czernauer and others.

They plunged onward down the trail. Lahada wondered if they were running away. He stopped suddenly. Carcassonne caught him by the shoulder.

"Hurry, man, run!" he shouted. "We've got to get back at once."

Lahada looked back towards the circle. In the distance he could see the white forms of Arabs flying towards the gorge, and growing fainter and fainter every moment. What did Carcassonne want? he wondered as he raced along beside him.

They reached a knot of deserted wagons. Two of them had been overturned, and all the mules cut free of their traces. Carcassonne sniffed and whined like a bloodhound. He dived into one of them.

"Got it first time!" he shouted. "Give me a hand."

Lahada wanted to get back. Frenzy gripped him like a fever. He wanted to get back and feel his fingers on another brown throat.

"Here, take hold!" Carcassonne was saying.

He felt something cold and heavy pushed into his hand. Carcassonne and another held on, too. Lahada saw something that gleamed and tapered and rested on a tripod. Three others carried a similar one. Behind them a half-dozen men staggered under heavy cases.

"Machine guns," Carcassonne panted, "belong to the Bashi-Bazouks."

As they stumbled back he began hissing "The Marseillaise" between his teeth. Lahada could hear the ping-pong of firing from the circle, and occasionally a bullet tore past them with a zip.

They staggered up to the circle, and Carcassonne and Oppenheim set up the legs of the tripod. The gun thrust its nose over a camel's back. Carcassonne straddled the seat behind it, and Oppenheim, kneeling, took hold of the cartridge tape. Lahada saw Lajeunesse and Czernauer setting the other gun fifty yards farther down.

"Here they are!" said Carcassonne.

Good God! The other rush had been nothing to this. There must be three hundred of them this time, Lahada thought. They came forward in a flying square, their rifles gripped steadily in both hands, their heads thrust forward. They

were going to finish the colonists this time if they could.

He looked down at Carcassonne. He was glancing along the sights of the machine gun and stroking the barrel with his hand. Then he leaned back and began leisurely tapping the ground with his foot. He swung the barrel from right to left on its axis.

The Arab column came on like a flight of sparrows. Lahada felt that there should be a special noise to its advance, like the whistle and shriek of a whirlwind, or the sound of a great wheel turning.

Why didn't Carcassonne begin firing? Was there anything wrong with the gun? But Carcassonne was still idly turning the barrel on its axis and still leaning back in the saddle.

He looked again towards the east. The great streak of red flame was still there, but growing thinner and less angry, and he noticed that the day had nearly come. The sight of the flame in the sky still roused the battle fever in him. He wanted to rush out and defeat single-handed the charging Arabs who were trying to keep him and his people from their land. He discovered suddenly that he was crouching and snarling like a dog, and that his fingers were dug deep into the dead camel's back. He could already hear the fierce panting of the advancing line.

"Now!" said Carcassonne.

The gun began to sputter and hiss and crackle.

It swung from one side to the other. Yellow flame stabbed from its muzzle. Up the line Lahada

heard the other gun like the patter of rain on a roof. The one beside him sounded like a gigantic blast pipe at work on a flame.

The flying white wedge before them tumbled and swirled and eddied and fought. He heard hoarse shouting and loud, piercing shrieks. They stumbled backward in a scattered, struggling mass, and as they went they left a white, moaning heap behind them. The guns stabbed and chattered mercilessly. Lahada saw men drop from the flanks of the rout like petals from a blown flower. A score of them reached the gorge. The chatter of the guns ceased.

"After them!" Carcassonne shouted. "Finish them!"

Lahada staggered across the camel and towards the gorge. Before his eyes the thin red flame in the sky seemed to rise and give him strength. He picked up a gun as he ran. Others were before him. He passed them, panting fiercely, his head and body bent forward like a hunting dog. His feet struck the hard stones of the gorge. He overtook one flying figure and brought his rifle down, and then another and brought the butt down again, and leaped full in the chest of a third.

And then suddenly it was broad daylight, and he was standing at the head of the gorge. In front of him the mosque and the oasis and the marabout's tomb slumbered peacefully. Down the gorge there was a trail of white figures, stained with red in spots and stars and blotches, and farther on the line of camels with black figures huddled about

them, lying sprawled or curled up or tense. They were dead, Lahada knew.

Carcassonne was coming towards him, his face blurred and blackened with the smoke and grime of the gun. Beside him Czernauer walked with his right arm hanging loose and helpless. Oppenheim staggered along with his head wet and stained and the blood running into his eyes. Carcassonne stopped before him.

"Well," he said, and he was smiling, "we won."

Lahada felt his weariness drop from him like a cloak. They had won! How much that meant! There would be no more of the tauntings and insults like those of the Beirut merchant! There would be no more sneering like that of the Turkish soldiers!

Lahada could imagine how the news of this would tauten the nerves and the spirits of the people. What news this would be for the Ghettos of Moscow and Kief, and for the sweatshops of Manhattan and Chicago, and for the petty Press of Paris and Berlin!

The Jews had gone forth to their country, and had fought their way to it, and had won! What news this was for the Black Hundred, and the thugs who prey on the little merchants of New York, and for the drill masters and sergeant-majors of Europe! They had fought and overcome the Philistines and the Amalekites and the Hittites and the mountain people and the people of the plain! He could imagine the news sweeping from city to city and from temple to temple. The Jews had again a country which they had fought for and died for and

won. How long would it be now until they came back in their thousands, and in their tens and hundreds of thousands? Now might they cease their weeping at the Temple walls, and their sobbing, and their beating of heads. Zion had risen! Zion was triumphant again!

Someone touched him on the arm. It was the old rabbi. His hand went out to the east.

The glow of the rising sun was turning the horizon to purple and violet. The beam of crimson fire had gone, Lahada saw; but as he looked a cloud rose in the pillar of black vapour and stood out strong and defiant against the sky-line. It seemed to point the way and to command them to follow.

". . . a pillar of cloud by day," the rabbi murmured, and dropped to his knees.

And as Lahada looked he seemed to hear in the air above him the pealing trumpets of Jericho and the crash of high walls falling.

XI

BLACK MEDICINE

FOR THE first year of his residence in Wadaranga Cosgrave was decidedly not a success.

When the bulky, shrewd-eyed ex-lieutenant of Tammany Hall stepped gingerly down the gang-plank of the tramp steamer into which he had changed at Freetown, he was received with open arms by the assembled European colony. For there is always the charm of novelty about the clean home-smell of a white man after you have lived for a few years amidst the acrid odours of black Gallas and Kroos.

But the welcoming joy died away little by little. For to the deep disgust of the German governor, Graf Hellmuth von Barheim, and of the Oxford-trained English consul, Cosgrave had never heard of the Statesman's Year Book, imagined polo to be the latest twist in Castilian dances, and stated openly and offensively to its most ardent devotees that diplomacy was as addition and subtraction compared to the logarithmic intricacy of New York politics.

Some months before, on the occasion of the regrettably violent demise of a well-known member of the New York gambling fraternity, over a score

of gentlemen engaged in civic affairs decided that other and perhaps foreign parts would be more soothing to their nervous condition than the hustling Empire State. Among them was Patrick Cosgrave, the iron-jawed leader of the thirteenth ward.

Something struck into his head like the beam of a searchlight and would not go out again. It was the something that had sent the elder Cosgrave from the hell of the Connaught bogs to the hell of the East Side.

He approached Hennessy with his plan—Hennessy, the captain of: he captains, whose moon face masked an infernal machine. Hennessy wasn't pleased to see the young leader, whom the thirteenth ward answered as the tides answer the moon, go and bury himself in the wilds of the world.

"Don't be a fool," he snapped; "stay where you are."

"I'm not a fool," Cosgrave answered, "and I'm going away."

Hennessy thought it over for a few moments.

"All right," he announced, and he lifted the telephone receiver.

And thus Patrick Cosgrave found himself accredited as United States consul to that blending of red-hot desert and miasmic jungle which is German West Africa. Obviously the intention of Hennessy had been to kill Cosgrave, as a warning to the other Tammany men whose feet needed warming up. For in the particular spot in which he was to represent his country, the cemeteries were the only

thriving white communities. Or perhaps he expected Cosgrave back within six months playing on the thirteenth ward as a musician plays on an instrument.

But Cosgrave successfully withstood the combined attacks of sleeping sickness, black-water fever, yellow jack, many and various snakes, and poisoned assegais, and showed no intention of ever revisiting Fourteenth Street. His face had fallen in here and there, and his pink and white complexion—the only thing the elder Cosgrave had to leave him, had turned into a delicate shade of yellow bronze. There was a merry twinkle in his eye that was entirely lacking when he bartered for men in Manhattan. And he strolled down the one street of Wadaranga more jauntily than he had ever walked Broadway.

The town of Wadaranga, from which Cosgrave wrote his consular reports, was the usual West Coast atrocity, consisting of a missionary church, a district prison, the governor's palatial corrugated-iron residence, a combination of hotel and café kept by a villainous Portuguese named Pedrocillo, a small mountain of broken beer-bottles and burst provision tins, and three dozen crawling and flying horrors.

Nevertheless, to the utter astonishment of the Europeans in the town. Cosgrave seemed to be quite happy, and to hanker not at all for the flashing, swaying cabarets of Times Square. And after a decent period had elapsed, in which the *faux pas* in regard to the Statesman's Year Book and the noble game of polo had been forgotten and forgiven, the

European colony came to like him thoroughly. He had an uncanny knack of handling the blacks of the colony, who seemed to recognise in him a man watched over by a special and very powerful ju-ju.

In a land like Africa, which is and always will be a Black Man's land; in a land, moreover, which still dreams sinister legends of dark-skinned conquerors, Chakas and Cetewayos and the like, there are often moments of dramatic tension when kraal speaks to kraal across jungle and desert with dull, rhythmic thumpings on wooden drums, when assegais are sharpened, stolen telegraph wire hammered into ammunition for elephant guns, and the tips of countless arrows moistened with slow-working poison.

It was at moments such as these, moments of which neither the Associated Press nor Reuter's Agency ever hears the faintest mutterings, that Cosgrave showed the temper of the steely thing which God had given him for a soul. Through uncanny instinct and an almost feminine power of intuition he achieved the very results which neither the German's bullying, the Briton's humanitarianism, nor the French consul's ruthless Latin logic seemed able to accomplish.

There were times when his insight into the working of the native character was a source of annoyance to the German governor. It is not good that the consul of a foreign power should receive underground communications from the hinterland and should consort with ash-smeared and villainous

medicine-men from across the border. But when the baron tried to expostulate with Cosgrave in a half jocular and half bullying manner, the American would answer in a gentle voice that he was gathering material for a work on West African voodooism and ju-ju.

But he never took the trouble to mention that the raw material for his book was regularly sent off to Washington, where, in a tiny office connected with the bureau of the Secretary of State, it was carefully studied and filed away under an index marked "Liberia."

One of the sights of Wadaranga was to see Cosgrave, seated at a table outside Pedrocillo's, or on the verandah of the little iron consulate, talking in coast pidgin to N'Ga, the medicine-man from the Liberian hinterland, a tall, sinister Kroo, with the high-pitched voice and low forehead of his kind. Unknown to speak to a white man before, and mistrusted by all the Europeans, and feared by all the blacks of the hinterland, his friendship with Cosgrave was little short of a miracle.

If a European passed them Cosgrave would hail him with a bellow.

"Come over and meet the boss of the Wadaranga ward," he would shout.

The European would give N'Ga a look in which fear mingled with disgust and suspicion. Cosgrave would roar with laughter, and the huge black would rise to the dignity of his full height and move off with the sensitive footing of the jungle man who

reckons with inequalities of ground and the sting of poisoned beetles.

Cosgrave had hardly been in Wadaranga a year when Hester Jackson came there to be governess to Hedwig and Helene, the two little orphan daughters of the German governor, whom he would not send home in spite of the ravings of the whole consular body. Hester Jackson endeared herself immediately to Cosgrave by saying that she preferred the heat and odours of the West Coast to the electric fans of the woman's magazine office in New York where formerly she read copy from nine to five every day, and complained bitterly that all the experiences and adventure worth having were pre-empted by men.

When she read in an international literary weekly that the governor of German West Africa wanted a governess for his children, she decided to bid good-bye to the copy desk and the electric fan. The magic name of Africa spun a spell around her; the feudal sound of "Graf Hellmuth von Barheim" attracted her, and her idea of the Oriental magnificence of a colonial potentate captured her imagination entirely.

"Girls," she said to her fluttering friends, "girls, I'm going to get that job." And she got it.

Her reception in Wadaranga was overpowering. Red hair, a tilted nose, a clear-cut profile and a boyish figure will work wonders anywhere, but in Wadaranga they achieved miracles. The French consul, crossed in love ten years before and cynical

ever since, listened with well simulated conviction to her arguments on feminism. The British consul, forgetting for the moment the sorely tried nation he represented, wholly agreed with her on the subject of woman suffrage. The Baron made several efforts to change from a colonial administrator to a human being, and though he failed, he failed nobly. Only Cosgrave appeared regularly with a hard, disapproving look on his face, her passage money to New York in his hand, and advice to return to the magazine office, the fashion copy, and the electric fan.

"I don't care what you say," he would argue, "this is no place for you. They had no right to bring you, and you had no right to come."

"And I don't care what you say," she would answer, "I'm going to remain. I don't see how you can dictate to me."

"There's just this," he would counter, "I've been here over a year with a pair of open eyes particularly wide open. No white man, woman, or child should stay on this continent one second longer than they can help it. Don't monkey with Africa. It will get you."

But in the end he would go off cursing viciously, and wishing she were a man, so that he could make her see reason through the medium of a right hook to the jaw.

Days drifted by lazily. There was an occasional mail. Once in a while a freighter or a dirty tramp boat called for cargo, which was always cause for

pleasurable excitement. Otherwise there were only the blazing sunlight, the blue heat hazes, the malarial nights when all the insects in Africa seemed to drone and hum and buzz outside her mosquito net. There were the impressionable young English and French consuls who squired her daily. There was the frail, faded wife of the American missionary who offered her admiration and tea. There was Cosgrave going and coming about the town, his powerful figure suggested by loose-fitting khaki. There was the baron who listened to her Vassar culture with the tolerant smile of an old man who has seen much of the world.

But there came the day when the crucifixion of two peace-loving German subjects by a hinterland tribe had worked on the baron's temper. Hester knew nothing of it. After dinner she talked away gaily. She criticised the German government of the Cameroons. She pointed to what the United States were doing in Cuba and the Philippines.

"Now take the United States——" she continued.

The baron could stand it no longer.

"Oh damn the United States!" he exploded.

Die Woche fell from her knees with a tragic flop.

"I'll not stay in this place a minute longer," she announced calmly, "unless you apologise immediately."

The baron was in no humour for apologies. So he said nothing.

She moved to the door. "All right, I'm off," she said. She opened the door. "And I'm off for

good," she continued. "Minna can take care of Hedwig and Helene until you find someone else—to insult."

All right the baron thought, she'll be back in the morning. By then he'd have a pretty apology ready. In the meanwhile, was shooting five negroes with self-respecting Mauser rifles any sort of fitting punishment for crucifixion? And if not, as he was convinced, what else was there that a European governor could do?

The next morning he saw her ensconced opposite Cosgrave in the office of the little iron consulate. She had told him her story, told him she was not going back, and told him she wanted another job and that she depended on him to get it. He had striven to send her back to the baron. She would not go.

"Can you give me one good reason for staying here, just one sensible reason?" he demanded.

"Well, I like the place," she said. "There's a sort of charm in the yellow beach, and the coconut trees, and the green jungle behind it."

"Don't pull that magic of Africa stuff on me. It doesn't go. You don't want to go back and have the women in your office snigger and think you fell down on your job. Oh, don't say that's not it. I know. If you were a man, I'd shanghai you. Well, if there's anything going, I'll let you know."

A few days later Cosgrave fulfilled his promise. For a moving picture company came to Wadaranga

from far-away Chicago, bringing the usual letters from senators and congressmen, asking the American consul to do something in return for the princely wages he received, and to feed, clothe, lodge, and help in every possible and impossible way the star-spangled citizen mentioned in the introduction.

Walters, the manager of the company, told Cosgrave it was his intention to go Paul Rainey one better, to steer clear of such minor game as lion and rhinoceros and dik-dik and warthog, and to give to the tired business man at home a thrilling series of pictures of the real savage animal, the real big game of the Dark Continent, namely, of the negroes themselves. Cosgrave listened good-humouredly; but when the Chicagoan proclaimed his intention of going into the interior and of photographing choice bits of black ju-ju worship and of simon-pure African voodooism, including human sacrifice, ghost dances and similar atrocities, he lost his temper and flared out.

"Look here," he said, "the first moment I find you and your company meddling with this ju-ju business, I'll have every man-jack of you arrested and deported on the first steamer." And then he proceeded to tell him why.

When Walters left, Cosgrave thought he had cured him of any desire to meddle with the Black Man's mysteries, and that the company would confine itself to turning the town topsy-turvy and to trampling the yellow beach. And so, when the camera operator fell sick with coast fever, he remem-

bered that Hester Jackson was an excellent photographer, far above the rank of amateurs, and he sent for her.

When she received Cosgrave's message, she walked into the office as jauntily as ever. The missionaries had consented to keep her as long as she wanted to stay, on the understanding that she would help with the mission work, and she was proud to be able to show the consul that she could shift for herself.

She found Cosgrave seated at his desk in his shirt sleeves. There were also present Walters, a dark, corpulent, shrewd man, with an eternally suspicious look in his eyes; his leading man, a tall, regular-featured blond; and his leading lady, a dark-haired, little woman, who would have been more at home shelling peas on a back porch in Yonkers than acting melodrama in an African jungle.

Cosgrave turned around to her as she came in.

"Miss Jackson," he announced, "this is Mr. Walters."

He then dilated on her accomplishments as a photographer, her nerve, her knowledge of the district and the natives; decided on her salary, her hours of working, and other details; pushed the whole party out of the office and sat down to his consular report.

Hester was dazed with the rapidity with which he settled the matter. She did not know whether or not she wanted the position. Then the glamour of it took her, as a year ago the glamour of Africa

had called to her at her polished oaken desk in Manhattan.

"We'll go down and talk this over at the hotel," said Walters.

The hotel was the ramshackle white building kept by the villainous Pedrocillo, who was suspected of acting as fence for all the thieves of the hinterland.

They sat down in the dining-room about a chipped, glass-marked table. Walters screwed up his eyes and looked at her.

"I'm not so keen on the machine end of it," he began; "we can teach you that in a few hours, and you know enough about light and developing, I guess. What I want to hear about is that nerve of yours our consul up there was talking about."

She didn't know what to say.

"Pedrocillo tells me there's going to be a regular ju-ju show to-night and that he can find a guide for us. Now I want a reel of that."

He lit a cigarette carefully and went on.

"Cosgrave up there is a decent fellow. He's helped us out a lot, but I don't believe a word of it when he says it can't be done. He's been sitting at that desk of his in this God-forsaken hole until he's forgotten how to tackle live things. I'm going there to-night with a magnesium candle, a half-dozen white men, and a dozen automatics. Are you going to work that camera?"

She thought of Cosgrave, cool, calm, and cautious. She remembered the serious tone of his voice when he spoke of voodoo mysteries, and his story of men

who had gone into the jungle against his advice and who had never come back. Then she noticed a smile on the face of the moving picture director. The smile broke into a contemptuous snort and he stood up.

"I guess I'll work that machine myself," he said.

"No, you won't," she snapped out, "I'm coming."

And so the matter was settled.

She knew she had done wrong, and she thought for a moment with a shiver of apprehension of what Cosgrave would say if he knew of it. But the words had been out of her mouth before she could stop herself, and she could not bear the sneer on the face of the movie-man from Chicago.

They took her out to the yard and showed her how to operate the shining, black mechanism on its tripod, and in childish excitement at the turning of the little crank that rotated the film she forgot the anxious face of the hard-jawed, fighting consul, who feared neither man nor beast, but who lay awake on the nights the black lodge celebrated its mysteries behind the banks of blue mist that hedged the forest.

Towards nightfall she slipped back to the mission house and changed into a riding coat and short skirt of khaki, and into stout puttees. She did not tell the missionary or his white-faced, fussy, little wife of the adventure before her, but said something about a melodramatic moving picture film to be staged on the verge of the forest. But she felt as if something were trying to hold her back

from going down to the hotel, where the enterprising director and his attendants were getting ready to take pictures for hundreds of thousands of theatre-goers of what few white men had seen and come back alive.

They were standing in front of the hotel in a little khaki-clad group when she joined them. The director was going about giving instructions. The leading man, a blond college boy, whose regular features and athletic build had endeared him to a million female movie fans, was walking around excitedly, eager to be off on a real adventure. A little apart from them was the tall, sinister black figure that was to lead them through the jungle.

"We're waiting for you," Walters hailed; "feeling all right?"

"All right," she answered. At any rate, she was going ahead with it, and would put on a bold front.

"Everybody ready?" Walters asked. "Go ahead," he shouted to the waiting Kroo.

They passed up the street of the town and out into the forest. The black in front seemed to glide. Hester walked beside Walters, who was humming a vaudeville favourite beneath his breath and calculating the profits on the first run of the film.

The twilight blotted out with the suddenness of African nights. In front of them, half over the tops of the trees, the moon hung in a bloated, yellow blotch. As they broke into the depths of the jungle, the light seemed to filter through the trees in a pale, unhealthy green. Here and there was

an open space into which a shaft of light struck down, and then would come a dark space in which they staggered on uneven ground, and stumbled over the trunks of fallen trees. Occasionally there was a rustle in the grass, and now and again in the distance something broke through the undergrowth with a crash. A bird flopped by overhead on heavy, lazy wings.

The group behind had been talking animatedly when they left the town. They had been laughing and joking at the prospect of what the night held for them. Then the conversation had dropped into the nervous, laconic remarks of over-wrought men. There was just the sound of heavy panting, and an occasional curse as a man stumbled in his stride.

The black in front kept up his silent, rapid trot. Now and again the moonlight caught his skin and played on it for a moment with an iridescent glitter. Beneath the interlaced branches of the enormous trees he looked like the native spirit of the jungle.

The man with the camera stopped.

"I've had enough of this," he said. "I'm going back."

Walters wheeled around like a flash.

"You're going back, are you?" he snarled. "What do you think you are out on? A picnic? You put that camera back on your shoulder and come right along. I'm out for business and I'm going to get it. Do you get me?"

The man shouldered his machine and the party went forward again.

No one spoke any more. They trudged forward sullenly. As they walked they moved in more closely together, until they were in a dense, grey group.

Hester's feet were hurting her. Her coat and skirt seemed to cling to her in sodden folds. Step by step a nameless terror was coming over her. She felt as if on both sides of the trail hidden, unclean things were waiting for the moment to spring out. Once something dropped on her from overhead, and she had to bite her lips to keep from screaming. When she remembered she had known the men she was with only a few hours, she felt utterly alone and helpless.

Then, while still walking, she seemed to lose consciousness. She knew that at times they rested and then trudged on again. The figure of the giant Kroo slipping through the shadows seemed to hypnotise her.

Suddenly she knew they were standing still.

In the distance there was a medley of strange sounds. There was a high-pitched shouting, and a hooting as of innumerable owls, and a dull thumping that suggested drums.

Walters turned on his men, mopping his forehead:

"What the devil are you standing there for, like a lot of fools? Can't you come on?" There was a quaver in his voice.

Again they trudged onward sullenly. The sounds grew more distinct. On all sides of them things seemed to move with a rustle. They ducked as a bat flew blindly by.

They plunged through a dark growth of thorny brush, and then through the trees, a hundred yards ahead of them, they saw the red flare of torches.

Walters turned around.

"No noise, now! Do you hear? No noise," he whispered hoarsely.

"Are you all right?" he asked Hester. "Feeling game?"

She nodded. He took the camera from the bearer.

They crept forward stealthily. Their guide had disappeared. They could see that the torches were in a glade. All about them were gigantic trees, choked by huge, writhing creepers. There were enormous fallen trunks, covered with thick moss and bloated, multi-coloured toad-stools. Around them innumerable insects droned.

They slipped forward on their hands and knees, Walters carrying the camera on his shoulder. The men behind ranged themselves in a close line. The scene in front grew clearer.

There seemed to be over a hundred of them, all Kroos, thin-lipped and heavy-shouldered. They squatted on their haunches in a wide circle of which the centre was a hut that looked like an enormous beehive. Here and there men held torches that struck gleams from oily skins and the

leaf-shaped blades of assegais, and from the barrels of a few flintlocks and elephant guns. The drummers in the circle beat their instruments with dull, rhythmic thumps. Over all there hung the massive shadow of the giant trees.

Walters drew closer and closer. It seemed as if he were about to step into the circle. He stopped beside one of the enormous palms and set up the camera on its tripod. He nodded to the girl. All nervousness seemed to have gone from him. He was once more the hunter on the track of his quarry.

"All right?" he whispered.

Her tongue was cleaving to the roof of her mouth. She felt a horrible weakness in her knees, and nausea was sweeping over her. She thought of the iron consulate and the iron consul of Wadaranga, and felt as if they were her only refuge on earth, and as if she were a thousand miles away from them.

"Keep cool," Walters was whispering. She could hardly hear him for the hoarse throbbing of the drums. "Wait till I flash the candle, and then begin cranking her up. Take it easily. We're going to get one bully film."

From the hut there came the loud, shrill hoot of a screech-owl. The circle of Kroos seemed to shiver. The torches wavered in the hands of their bearers. The thumping of the wooden war-drums ceased. A heavy, terrible silence fell upon the glade.

Through the door of the hut N'Ga, the medicine-man, was coming. He crawled through with

the slow writhing of a snake. Hester felt she wanted to catch Walters and hold on to him tightly.

N'Ga stood up. He was naked but for the copper wires studded with human teeth that encircled his ankles, and the huge, green devil mask on his face. He sidled forward and addressed the negroes in high-pitched, clicking Kroo.

"Men of the tribe which is of the Owl, the great red ju-ju has passed into the body of N'Ga, and to-night he speaks through the mouth of N'Ga." Here he stepped nearer the clan, and a shiver and moan passed through the serried ranks. His voice rose. "The great ju-ju is angry with the tribe of the Owl. Thus are your fields burnt, your cattle is dying of the plague which comes from the south, and your fruit trees die. And the ju-ju who speaks through the lips of N'Ga says there is one among you who has done the grey deed which is forbidden by the rule of the secret lodge. The ju-ju says that he will seek out the man who is guilty" . . . the line of negroes wavered and trembled . . . "that he may be sacrificed on an altar of much pain. And then again the tribe which is the Owl shall have peace and plenty. The fields shall bear rich green crops; the trees shall bend their heads under heavy loads of golden fruit, the women shall bear healthy men-children, and the cattle shall have many calves. Also shall rain come and much edible game be sent."

He motioned to the drum-beaters. There was a soft rumbling, and he began to move in the mazes

of the ghost dance. He made the round of the circle with slow, mincing steps, clapping his hands softly to the rhythm of the drums. Then he moved faster, his body swaying up and down. Someone behind choked down a sob, and Walters turned around with a snarl.

Hester felt a sort of numbness creeping over her. She wondered if she were going to slip to her knees.

She suddenly noticed two giant Kroos, armed with long, heavy knives, standing inside the circle and a little to one side. N'Ga was racing around the circle. The drums were beating in a wild frenzy. He sniffed and whined like a bloodhound. The negroes were ashen beneath their black.

The medicine-man stopped suddenly and touched a Kroo on the shoulder. The men with the knives sprang forward and dragged him into the circle.

"Let her go," Walters yelled. He lit the flash. "Crank her up, you, girl," he shouted.

The light flashed out in a blinding white flare. Hester began turning the crank mechanically. The circle of negroes stood paralysed. In the dead silence, the clicking of the camera rang out with the distinctness of a machine gun.

She kept turning the handle of the roller. Then she heard a savage shouting, and the negroes surged forward in a black wave. There was a sharp cracking of automatics, and she felt herself seized by Walters and the blond leading man and pulled backwards.

There was the sharp swish of an assegai, and the leading man crumpled up with a choking sob.

"Come over here, one of you," she could hear Walters shouting. "Give me a hand with the girl."

Behind her she could distinguish the mad yelling of the blacks, held in check momentarily by the automatics. But above it there came the shrill, squeaking voice of N'Ga addressing the negroes in Kroo:

"Hold back, hold back," he was screaming.

The line wavered and stood still.

"Let them go! The ju-ju will punish!"

The yelling died in a dull hum.

Then it seemed to her that she was dying. She felt herself being dragged along through the bush, and she fell asleep. At times she would wake for a moment and understand in a dazed way that two persons were carrying her, and then again it was one person, and again she was being pulled by the shoulders.

When she awoke again she was lying in forest grass. About her was the greenish-yellow light of tropical morning dawn. There was the twittering of innumerable birds. A quarter of a mile away Wadaranga lay like a blot on a picture. Walters and the camera bearer were standing above her. There was a dull red stain on Walters' chest.

Walters was looking at her in a curious, scared way. She felt terribly weak and tired. There was a twitching in her right shoulder.

"Help me up," she asked.

She tried to put her hands to her head. She touched her temple with her left. The right would not move. Walters turned away.

She looked at it in a puzzled sort of way. Then she laughed. It was going around with a circular movement as if turning a crank.

"Why, what's the matter with it?" she asked.

The movie man kept his back turned.

She felt the twitching in her right shoulder grow sharper. It was as if the muscles were being torn out. The hand moved around with a steady turning motion. She tried to control it.

"My God!" she screamed. "What's wrong with my hand?"

Walters turned around. "Just listen, girl," he began.

"My hand! My God! My hand!"

She broke away and staggered towards the town. She stumbled and fell, and stumbled and fell again.

The only thought in her mind was to get to the little house at the end of the street, where the consul lived. She had a vague idea that if she showed her hand to him, he could cure it. She tried not to scream when going down the street, but she couldn't keep her eyes from it, and terror would burst from her lips in wild shrieks.

She rushed up the verandah steps with the horrible, cutting cry of an animal in pain. Cosgrave, who was sleeping the light sleep of the tropics, thought at first it was a cry of which he had dreamt, and so

he turned over. Then he heard it again. He tumbled out of bed and ran to the verandah.

And there, its face and hands scratched and cut and bleeding, its clothes stained and torn into shreds, he found a wailing, half-crazy Thing which a few hours before had been a grey-eyed, red-haired, healthy girl.

It must be put on record that Cosgrave swore horribly and very profanely as he picked up the miserable heap and carried it to his string bed. And then he saw the right hand moving, moving, with a horrible, rhythmic, mechanical motion, and his eyes blazed and his lips narrowed into a thin line.

It was hours before she could stammer forth her tale. And then Cosgrave swore again and clapped his hands. His head-boy came. The consul spoke to him through clenched teeth:

"Go, Kili, and bring me the medicine-man N'Ga."

The boy stood on the threshold of the room, undecided, frightened, nervous.

"There is great medicine to-night in the tribe of the Owl. N'Ga is making magic. . . . I cannot. . . ."

Cosgrave turned and raised his heavy fist in a threatening gesture:

"Go," he repeated, "find N'Ga. Tell him Cosgrave wants him. Just that and nothing more. Do you understand? Cosgrave wants him."

Cosgrave will never forget the next hour . . .

the moaning bundle in the corner and the little hand turning the invisible crank.

He heard the shuffle of footsteps and a pit-a-pat on the verandah. He put his hand under the bed pillow and took out a short, squat revolver, N'Ga pushed open the door.

The girl burst into a frenzy of shrieking.

"It's all right." Cosgrave patted her on the shoulder. "We'll fix you up in a minute."

"Come over here," he said quietly to N'Ga. "This is some of your work."

N'Ga grinned sardonically. The squat grey gun moved slowly, until it was in a line with the medicine-man's head.

"You've got exactly ten seconds to . . ." his voice broke . . . "to stop that . . ." and he pointed to the girl.

The medicine-man opened his hands.

"Why choose me, Inkoos? You are joking. This is black medicine, black medicine sent by the ju-ju. I know nothing about it. I can do nothing."

"Wait a moment, N'Ga. Black medicine, is it?" He took up the slack of the trigger. "I've got some grey medicine in my hand that will beat that black dope every time."

N'Ga thought quickly.

"Leave us, Inkoos," he clicked.

Cosgrave walked over to the girl.

"Listen now, I'm going out of the room for a moment." She clung to him in a wild frenzy. "Listen. I'm going out. I'll be right near you,

just outside the door. When I come back, you'll be all right. Don't be afraid. I've fixed it."

He walked through the door and closed it softly.

"Damned little fool of a bully little kid," he said over and over to himself in the corridor.

N'Ga opened the door and grunted. The consul came in.

He walked over to the girl in the corner. She was sitting up quietly with her hands in her lap. He turned around to N'Ga, but the medicine-man was gone. He heard the stealthy shuffle of his bare feet up the street.

He laid his hand on the girl's shoulder tenderly. There was just the ghost of a smile on his face.

"Well, young 'un," he said, "Africa nearly got you." He paused. "Don't you think you'd better take my advice and go back?"

She waited a moment before answering.

"Are you going back?" she asked.

He rose and went to the window. The sun was coming up, and just in front of it, he noticed, was a little black cloud like a football, that seemed as if embedded in its surface. He wondered if the sun could cast it off. And then, as he looked at it, the cloud took on the shape of a house with squat pillars, the grim, sinister House in Fourteenth Street. He threw back his shoulders.

"I'm going back," he answered slowly, "when I've finished a fight I have on with myself—you don't know anything about it. It started years ago in New York. I was losing there, losing every

minute. Here I'm winning. It may take years to finish it. But when I've won I'll go back."

The cloud was losing its hold. It seemed to waver and slip aside. He put his hands in his pockets and held them there tightly clenched.

"And when I go back," he continued, "I'm going to marry you—if you'll let me."

It seemed to him that every nerve and muscle of him were listening and had been listening for hours.

"Oh, I'll let you," she whispered. He sensed rather than heard her speak.

And as he turned to go to her, he noticed that the cloud had slipped off into space and that the sun was gilding the forest with an iridescent shimmer.

XII

PANIC

When, for the second time within the week, Squint Lacy's bullet head, cauliflower ear, and high-shaven neck stood, as he went out, in the door of the grocery as in a picture-frame, and then disappeared, Giuseppe Pagino had all he could do to keep from breaking into hard, dry sobs. His face was blanched, the corners of his mouth were slack, and he looked after the vanishing gunman with tragic, accusing eyes.

A week ago they had put him in charge of the little grocery-store at Eleventh Street and Third Avenue—a weird cubby-hole, filled with gigantic, pale cheeses in muslin swathing, figs on a string like a rosary, long, corpulent lengths of polenta, and tins and jars and bottles of olive oil, green like Tokay. On one wall they had hung a glaring lithograph of Victor Emmanuel; on the other a no less glaring one of George Washington. They had put his name —Giuseppe Pagino—in gold letters on the window; hung cardboard and tin and paper calendars and advertisements on the walls; filled the till with twenty dollars' worth of change, and told him that the collector would call regularly every Wednesday and Saturday evening.

Then they left him gruffly.

His hair was fair and his face was chubby, and his eyes were blue like shallow water. There are many of his type in Venice and many in Lombardy, but there are none anywhere else in Italy. There was always a smile on his face, a very childish smile that compelled you to smile also. His apron was very large and very white, and he was obviously pleased and obviously anxious to please.

You would have liked Giuseppe Pagino. He was on Third Avenue for only three months, and that is two years ago, but they remember him still. And on Third Avenue, where life moves with the rapidity of a motion picture, that is the highest compliment that can be paid.

"Pagino?" they say when you ask them. "The little guinea with a grin? Sure, we remember him."

In Milan he had owned a little grocery; nothing so ornate as the one on Third Avenue, but sufficient to keep body and soul together. Every year, when the first breath of spring was wafted in from the fat Lombard plains, he had felt a vast and compelling desire to go roving, and every year he had beaten it back as a man beats back an enemy. Then, one fine May morning, he succumbed to the desire that had sent Cæsar into Gaul, and Caligula among the Teutons. He came westward to conquer.

"Why? Why do you ask me—why?" he said to his friends. He looked as profound as his mild and childlike features would permit him. "One

must not live like a rabbit in a burrow," he concluded grandiloquently.

So the rabbit ventured from the security of the green pastures and the yellow furze to the edge of the jungle.

The banker, whose agent in Milan had sold Pagino his passage and who was not above accepting commissions for placing labour, had him examined by the agent of the ring that operates stores through the whole of Little Italy. The agent was pleased with his find and impressed with Giuseppe's record and appearance. So within the week Giuseppe found himself in his little shop with his name upon the door, having agreed that everything he took in should be given over to a collector on Wednesday and Saturday evenings. On Saturday evening the collector would hand him back twelve dollars.

"America," he wrote to his mother in Milan—a thin, spectacled, brown woman, with the shrivelled-up appearance of a mummy and a passion for saying prayers—"America is a great country, greater than Italy, greater than Europe, greatest in the world. I am making money—I, your son Giuseppe—much money, just like Carnegie, just like Rothschild."

He was very happy there, was Giuseppe Pagino, and his features showed it. The lines about his mouth curled upward to his eyes, and his eyes sparkled with a blue flash like electricity. It was not alone the money he was making—though twelve dollars in New York was riches compared with what

he made in Milan—but the eternal panorama of life that passed his door that rendered him happy. He had the ecstatic and fearful delight of a child at the circus. Everything was new to him, mysterious, compelling. Overhead the Elevated crashed in mid-air, a hurtling thing of steel. Along the surface of the street trim trolleys glided like gondolas; and motors shifted, feinted, and dodged. Occasionally a fire engine tore along like a hurricane, the horses' legs curving, the driver's arms distended, the whole machine like some infernal chariot on which Pluto might have ridden. Great, lumbering juggernauts of delivery wagons would be charging heavily past, and frequently an ambulance would clang out its brazen call.

But it was not alone these inanimate things that interested the Italian grocer. The ever-current stream of race and nationality and calling held him as if in hypnosis. Sleek, swarthy men of his own race passed by, with ear-rings of gold and kerchiefs of red and saffron; huge, lumbering negroes, whose appearance recalled to his mind the genii of the *Thousand and One Nights*; and slim, agile Greeks with incredibly handsome faces and incredibly small feet. Occasionally a Turk slid by with the glamour of the East in his bronzed face and silk moustache, and now and then a Chinaman might shuffle along with his black, soft hat and his black-quilted coat and his black felt slippers, and all the impassivity and resignation of the Yellow Lands cut in his changeless features as if by a die.

And then another tribe went by, distinct from all these, recruited of all races. This tribe was well dressed, affecting clothes cut loosely to the body, caps, four-in-hand ties, silk socks, tan shoes. They moved noiselessly, gracefully, with their eyes shifting in every direction. They sometimes vanished seemingly into thin air.

There was something hard about their faces and something wise about their eyes that frightened Giuseppe. They had that fearless, suspicious and inimical glance that a wolf has, and their coats bulged a little over their hip pockets, or under the left armpit or at the right side.

Giuseppe once pointed out a member of the tribe to Michele, who owned the "Coal, Ice, Wood" cavern beneath the store.

"What is he?" Giuseppe asked.

"That's a gunman, a gangster, a tough guy," Michele translated with difficulty.

And Michele, with the gusto of a priest initiating a neophyte, explained to the grocer that these gunmen preyed on the city as wolves prey on a sheepfold. He drew lurid and dramatic accounts of the death of a notorious gambler, and of the more recent end of a Long Island marketman. He told him how Frank Murphy and Dutch Louie and the Chinese Kid held the city as in a strangle hold—how they ruled with the rod of Cæsar and exacted tribute like border barons.

He told of the blackmail exacted from the ice-cream vendor, from the fruit-stand man, from the

newspaper seller, from the dance-hall owner, from the saloon-keeper and the boot-black.

"But this is impossible," Giuseppe gasped, his face blanched, his hands outspread in a wide, vague gesture of incredulity.

Michele—he also called himself "Mike" on the coal and wood sign—sent his arms up like semaphores. The horrible, malignant smile of the Calabrian overspread his features.

"Wait and see," he advised grimly.

Whereupon Giuseppe, on whose mind it had early been impressed that a soft word turneth away wrath, smiled genially that warm and glorious Lombard smile of his when one of those blood brothers of fate swung past.

Some of them smiled back in return, glad to find anyone outside their profession honestly pleased at the sight of them. Some of them scowled; deep, malignant scowls. Some of them merely turned the blank, silent eyes of the opium smoker on him with a sort of weary wonder.

And then Squint Lacy had come along, Squint Lacy with the truculent bullet head, the shallow, blue cross-eyes, and the gap-toothed grin that suggested a cynical bulldog. In his day Squint had been a prominent middle-weight fighter, and his split and swollen ears were souvenirs of the time when Frawley had not been heard of and the fight game knew no law. He depended now for offence and defence on the trustworthy quality of a .44 automatic that hung by a shoulder strap under his

left arm. Squint was dressed badly. He wore invariably a suit of blue serge and a broken blue serge cap, and his clothes had never been seen when new. But then Squint could afford to dress badly, as a great nobleman or a man of high achievement can. Squint's reputation was too well known to require any advertisement of success.

Squint had surveyed the grocer's beaming smile with an air of agreeable surprise. Finally, his wide mouth had opened in a grin that disclosed his yellow and brown fangs.

"'Lo, kid," he had greeted and walked on.

The smile of Giuseppe Pagino, which had been somewhat dulled by the tales of Mike, the coal-and-wood man, appeared again in all its effulgent glory. For by the smile and gracious greeting of Squint Lacy he felt he had become friends with these notorious banditti to whom the Black Hand was children's play and the Mafia a boisterous game.

He had heard enough of Squint to know him for a master gunman. He had been told of how the gangster, riding at full speed on the running board of an automobile, had shot and killed "Oyster Mike" Daly in broad midday in Second Avenue. He had been told of how Squint had rescued a prisoner from the sheriff's guard on their way to Sing Sing. And Giuseppe's soul grew calm within him, for he thought he had a friend.

Which was all very well and very comforting to the Lombard, until the day when Squint, passing

by, stopped, pondered, shrugged his shoulders and lunged into the shop.

He leaned over the newly varnished counter and surveyed Giuseppe with his horrible smile.

"Kid," he announced, "I want ten."

"Ten?" queried Giuseppe, with a little tightening of the throat as if dust had got into it and irritated it.

"Yeh," Squint continued, "ten bones, ten iron men. Up against it; got to have them."

Giuseppe looked at him with a ghastly little smile.

"Ten bones," the gunman continued. "*Dieci dollari*—get me? Come on, kid; kick in."

As he leaned forward, the gunman's coat opened accidentally. Underneath his left arm Giuseppe could catch the blue, metallic sheen of an automatic and see its massive butt.

"Sure," he agreed; "sure." He went to the till and counted it over.

The little blackish-green roll disappeared into Squint's trousers-pocket. His right eye played over the grocer with something akin to benevolence.

"You're all right," he growled, and he vanished.

And with him vanished the peace of Giuseppe Pagino. With him went the little Lombard's happiness and dreams and ambitions. Third Avenue was no longer a vast bazaar in a city as Oriental as Samarkand or Ispahan. It became a wolf-trail and a desert. Suspicion and gloom fell upon him like a disease and tinctured the food he ate and jaundiced the light of day. He felt like a prisoner who had been arrested but not yet sentenced; who does not

know what is in store for him—whether discharge, or the cold walls of a prison, or the horrible steel and leather of the electric chair.

To Mike, "Coal, Wood, and Ice," he confided the incident. He waited for the Calabrian's decision with the air of a patient consulting a specialist.

"What did I tell you?" Mike intoned with a note of pride.

"Perhaps," Giuseppe hazarded, "in cases of this kind one should inform an agent of police."

Mike regarded him with a horrible, evil smile—the smile of a Calabrian.

"Tell the police!" he exclaimed, "and get shot in the head. Don't pay; get shot in the head, too. Do what you like." He shrugged his shoulders and prepared to retire to his cavern.

"But I haven't ten dollars to pay," Giuseppe protested. "*Dio mio,* I haven't any money."

"Well, I should worry," Mike concluded finally. He slid into his cave as a mole disappears into his burrow.

And even less comfort did the collector afford on Wednesday night, when he called for his semi-weekly takings. To the collector Giuseppe explained the occurrence with a look of sincerity and a logic of detail that would have convinced a supreme court judge.

The collector, however—a hard-bitten, swarthy, undersized Neapolitan, with disillusioned eyes, listened to the story with an expression of cynicism.

"There's art to it," he admitted—"there's art to it and it sounds well, but it don't get over. Come across, kid, come across. If you want to pinch a ten-spot, frame up something better. You're green to the game, but you'll get wise all right."

"But it did happen," Giuseppe protested with outstretched hands.

"Well, then," he grinned, "you're out ten bones; we're not. Get that?" He waited while Giuseppe handed out the ten dollars he had saved from his three week's work. "I'll bet a she-bill," he added with an acid smile, "that it don't happen again."

As he went up to his room above the store that night Giuseppe felt the grip of fear about him. Wild, melodramatic dreams came to trouble him. He could see himself scuttle from the outstretched gun of Squint like a frightened rabbit. He looked for protection to the collector. The collector threw him off laughing. He appealed for help to a colossal policeman standing dignifiedly on peg post. Squint's bullet caught him before he reached the friendly blue figure.

And all the time Mike, the coal-and-wood man, looked on with his horrible, malignant smile—the smile of a Calabrian.

Morning dawned. The Elevated overhead crashed and thundered; automobiles grumbled, purred, and coughed past his store. All the motley population of Third Avenue went by: Irishman, Italian, negro, Chinaman, and Slav. He felt no more interest in these things; he felt only fear. He imagined

the city as a gigantic mortar in which crystals like himself were ground to powder. Already he could feel himself disintegrating under the thump of the pestle.

He saw Mike through the window as he rose out of his black lair, a dusty, grimy, Caliban-like vision in baggy trousers and flannel shirt. He went out to talk on his all-absorbing topic.

"Do you think he'll come back?" Giuseppe asked timidly.

"Oh, sure—every week," the coal man answered.

"Do you think he'll want ten dollars every time?"

"Oh, sure—sometimes fifteen."

A sort of frenzy gripped the Lombard grocer. His voice vibrated, his hands went out in intensity.

"I ask you," he pleaded, "I ask you in the name of God, where can I get it, what can I do?"

"*Ebben*', how do I know?" Mike smiled as he answered, a wanton, inconceivable smile—the smile of a Calabrian. "You better get it somewhere."

The little grocer sat down to reason it out behind the brand-new coffee mill that reared itself from the counter like a Chinese pagoda. From every side strange, aromatic spices came to him like incense in a temple. As he sat there in his ample white apron, his hands folded in his lap, his eyes downcast, he suggested a priest of some strange rite in contemplation.

Squint wanted money, and he had to give it to him. That was incontestable. If he didn't give it he would be shot. That was a logical deduction.

The money would have to come from the till. The company would not stand for the shortage, and they did not even believe him. So he would have to make it up himself. If he told the police, he would get shot, too. It was plainly incumbent on him to find the money. If out of his own twelve dollars he had to pay ten, how could he live? Even a Milanese cannot live a whole week on two dollars. If Squint wanted fifteen—here he threw up his hands in a gesture of impotence.

"*Ma che!*" he babbled. "*Dio mio! ma che!*"

There still remained a faint hope, a hope so faintly vague that he was foolish to think of it. Squint might not demand ten dollars a week. He might be content with five.

Giuseppe could live comfortably on seven, but to pay ten was out of the question. If he could only speak English, he said. If he could only make Squint understand. Surely the man would not demand impossibilities.

And so for three days the little grocer hugged to himself the faint, dim hope, as the blackened sinner hugs the hope of salvation. He prepared long, incoherent speeches in English, to be spoken to Squint. He made little auguries for himself, to decide whether or not Squint would accept a smaller blackmail—tossing coins in the air and turning up the red and black of cards. For long barren hours at night he lay awake, imagining interviews with the gunman in which, by virtue of eloquence and by explaining that he did not owr

the shop, but was merely an employé, he overcame the gangster's greed and escaped from tribute.

On Monday the gunman entered the shop with his peculiar, waddling gait. His agate eyes were bloodshot and his bulldog's mouth was twisted into its evilly benignant smile. He leaned across the counter.

"You got to kick in again, kid," he announced easily. "You got to come across with another ten."

Giuseppe felt his heart stick in his throat like a lump of unmasticated food. There was no tension to the muscles of his knees, and it seemed to him that at any moment he might fall on them. He gripped the counter to steady himself. Again he caught the blue sheen of the automatic and the blue sheen of the gunman's eye.

"Come on, kid, be a sport," he could hear Squint say. "Shoot over the cash. Get a move on!"

With shaking fingers he extracted two five-dollar bills from the till. His carefully prepared speech he had forgotten. He wished wildly that he might have the courage to strike Squint with the huge carving knife on the counter, but he gave up the thought with a sort of sardonic mental laugh. What could he, a rabbit, do against this tiger of the East Side? He pushed the bills across. The gunman pocketed them.

"Much obliged," Squint acknowledged. "You're certainly one good little sport." He turned to go. Something occurred to him.

"You ain't looking well, Tony," he advised. "You ought to see a doc."

He walked to the door and wheeled round for an instant.

"I'll be in on Wednesday—see?" He tapped his pocket. "Wednesday—*Mercoledi;* get me?"

Shadows crept along the avenue. Lamps stood out murkily yellow in the twilight, and later, white and iridescent in the dark. Trains hurtled by threateningly overhead. People whisked to and fro along the sidewalk like flights of sparrows. Giuseppe Pagino took no notice of these things. He stood still and numb beside his counter, cowering when any person came into the store. Panic overwhelmed him like a sheet of icy water.

An old Neapolitan woman came in for a pint of oil. His hand shook as he measured it.

"What is the matter with you? What is wrong?" she asked.

"A touch of headache," he answered.

She went out. On the sidewalk she stopped.

"It is the mind-ache and the heart-ache and the ache of the soul," she muttered. "*Ecco.* I, who am old, know."

He looked at the fittings and contents of the little shop pathetically, at the shining canisters and the gleaming glass and the great butter vats in the back, and the queer, glaring lithographs on the walls. He gazed for a moment at the shimmering cash register with Giuseppe Pagino cut deeply in black letters on it. A mist came into his eyes.

"Ah, *il brevo tempo*," he said, "the short, short time!"

He went to the door of the shop and gazed with haggard eyes at the blue-coated vision of the policeman on peg post standing like a colossus at Astor Place. If he only dared to tell him, he thought. But the memory of the gangster's shining weapon gripped him about the heart with icy fingers, and he shivered. If he was to die, he would attend to it himself. There was a dock at the East River——

A great homesickness suddenly came on him. He remembered the dingy little shop in Milan where he had been happy, as a ship in a hurricane remembers the snug harbour she lay in before taking proudly to the seven seas. There was light there and song and company, and strong, brown, little children playing on the kerb. Men were friends to you, and women liked you, and children pleaded for sweets and got them. But here was nothing but terror and tragedy and the hatred of rivals and the crushing of the weak. He remembered how proudly he had bade farewell to Milan.

"Why do I go?" he had said. "One does not live always like a rabbit in a burrow."

It was better, he knew now, to live like a rabbit in a burrow than to live like a rabbit in the jungle, the prey of wolf and tiger and mongoose, a panicky, white, furry, little thing, with its pink heart in its mouth.

From around the corner Mike hove in sight, his powerful, malignant face radiating content and confidence.

"*Colombina, il tenero*——" he carolled as he walked.

The sound of his warbling voice struck Giuseppe Pagino with a great sense of discord. It seemed hard that anyone should sing when tragedy and death and fear were walking abroad and turning the happy daylight into a thing as gloomy as the tomb. A little moisture came into his eyes, and his under-lip quivered. Mike sauntered up and regarded him with insolent, critical eyes.

"Well, what's wrong with you now?" he demanded.

"Oh, nothing," said Giuseppe Pagino—"a cold in the head."

"A cold in the head!" the coal-and-wood man laughed. "A cold in the feet, that's what you got. That big stiff been around again?"

The grocer looked at him with the corners of his mouth shaking. He nodded silently.

"*Corpo di Dio*——" the Calabrian swore viciously. "Why don't you go up and paste him in the face? Why don't you give him all that's coming to him?"

The little grocer said nothing. His eyes sought the paved sidewalk. He felt ashamed suddenly before the truculent Calabrian. Mike continued his tirade.

"You're a fine Italian man to let a big bully like that come and take the money away from you. Do you know what I'd do if I were in your store?"

Giuseppe Pagino shook his head in ignorance.

"I'd take that carving-knife on the counter and I'd cut him up like ham. I'd teach him to come around panhandling money. Ten dollars! Ten holes in the ribs! That's what he'd get from me. Is he coming back?"

"He's coming back on Wednesday," Giuseppe answered.

"Look here," Mike directed; "when he comes back on Wednesday and he asks for money you look at him between the eyes, see? You take hold of the knife, see? And you say, 'You big pig!' you say, 'I give you money? I give you this in the ribs——'"

Giuseppe shook his head sadly. A great sigh of weariness volleyed up through his throat. The coal-and-wood man looked at him with an expression of utter contempt.

A look of intense resolution swept over his face. He struck a dramatic attitude. With a quick flick of finger he knocked the ash from his cigarette. He blew smoke from his mouth like a volcanic eruption.

"On Wednesday," he observed calmly, "I meet this swine myself!"

"You meet——" The face of the little grocer looked at him blankly. A sort of wonder crept into his eyes. The coal-and-wood man's voice rose.

"On Wednesday," he roared, "this descendant of many degenerate parents meets Michele Todisco,

corporal, of the Bersaglieri. *Per Dio*, we shall see if he gets ten dollars! We shall see."

His arms went out in a widespread gesture. His eyes sparkled. His right leg advanced.

"They think they can rob, steal, bully Italian men. They think they got nothing to do but come in and say, 'Give ten dollars,' and they get it. Hey, tell me—*Figli di cani.* Just because Italian men can't speak English, they say, 'You got no right here, wop; pay ten dollars!'"

A little knot of passers-by stopped, attracted by Mike's volleying sentences. He looked around with the expression Cicero might have worn when addressing the senate.

"Who discovered America? Tell me—who? Cristofer Colombo! He was Italian. And they ask us what right we have here."

The knot of hearers increased. The little grocer's face lit up as the face of a shipwrecked mariner's lights up at the sight of a rescue vessel. He looked at the coal-and-wood man with awe-stricken eyes.

"*Ecco!*" he murmured in approbation.

"Who," continued the coal-and-wood man, "conquered Gaul? Tell me. Who? Giulio Cesare. Italian man. Who put the Turks out of Italy? Who? Tell me. Italian men. Who will chase this son of a pig, this robber of women, of blind men, and little children? Who will put the fear of God and the saints in his utterly loathsome and incredibly degenerate vitals? Tell me. Who?"

He swept the circle with an eagle eye. His voice rang out like a bugle.

"Who but Michele Todisco, corporal, of the Bersaglieri?"

His tones dropped an octave.

"An Italian man," he added as Cicero might have said, "*Civis Romanus sum.*" He turned and patted Giuseppe on the shoulder.

"And so, my friend, you may rest in peace. I shall take your place on Wednesday when this desecrator of churches comes."

Peace, like a winged dove, settled once more on the shop of Giuseppe Pagino. The sunshine crept into it. And men and women found there the same cheery word, the same glorious Lombard smile that had warmed their hearts for a week. Giuseppe sang. He laughed. He watched Mike, the coal-and-wood man, come and go with a look of near adoration on his chubby face.

"What a jewel," he reflected in his queer thinking Lombard way, "is lost to Italy. With what weight would his words be received in the senate! How armies would follow him!"

Wednesday afternoon came and found the Calabrian behind the counter. His grey flannel shirt and corduroy trousers were concealed behind Giuseppe's snowy apron. There was also concealed behind it a wicked-looking gun of a .38 calibre, to the purchase of which Giuseppe had consented without demur. Near to his hand, on the counter, was the serviceable knife.

At three o'clock Squint Lacy slipped in with the ease and grace of a cat. He took a quick glance over his shoulder through the open door.

"Bring out the other guinea," he demanded quickly.

"Pagino's day off," growled the coal-and-wood man truculently. "What do you want?"

The gunman glanced out of the door quickly at a passer-by. "Wonder if that guy's a plain-clothes man," he muttered. "When will your sidekick be back?"

"I don't know," Mike snapped. "What do you want?"

The gunman dragged him back into the shadow of the butter-vats.

"Look here," he muttered, "I've just croaked a guy in Harlem, and I've got to make my get-away. I wonder if that is a cop!"

The coal-and-wood man felt the comforting haft of the gun in his trousers-pocket.

"I borrowed twenty bones from that little wop, and I want to slip it back to him before I go." He dug down into his trousers-pocket. "One square little guy that guinea; forked it over like a regular sport. You tell him from me when he comes in that he's all right."

Mike looked down in astonishment. He took the saffron bill tendered him in a sort of dumb wonder.

"Give him that from me," the gunman directed, "and tell him he's all right."

He slipped out of the store with the rapidity of a stage magician.

"It's all right," Mike informed the grocer a half-hour afterwards. "This particular species of accursed animal will never trouble you again. I looked at him between the eyes. I slapped him across the face.

" 'Bah!' I said. 'Sort of swine.' He fell back. He made to leave the store. I followed, knife in one hand, revolver in the other. 'If ever you come to this store again,' I said, 'and annoy my good friend, Giuseppe Pagino, on the word of Michele Todisco, I shall cut both your ears off and leave your features an unpleasant sight!' He shall never again trouble you, my good Giuseppe, never again."

He waved the little grocer's fervid thanks aside with a grandiose gesture.

"Do not speak of it," he said.

He descended into his cavern with the air of a leading man making his exit from the stage. In the rear of the store he stopped, put his hand into his pocket, produced a saffron bill, and regarded it lovingly.

A smile overspread his face—a cunning, contemptuous smile—the smile of a Calabrian.

XIII

THE STORY OF SULEYMAN BEY

THE TRIG little Turkish major turned to us briskly. "You boys are in luck," he said. "You want to know something of Trebizond. Here's the man for you."

A tall figure in a burnous floated past the court-yard fountain and towards us. In the distance we could see a stocky, truculent carbine under his arm, and the green turban of the *hadji*.

"His name is Suleyman Bey," went on the major. "He arrived in Damascus only last night, on his way home from Mecca. If he will talk to you, he will tell you more about Trebizond in five minutes than the governor-general can in five hours."

He rose. I noticed the major's heels go together with a click, and his hand flash up to his fez in salute. Evidently Suleyman Bey was a sheik of importance.

The major and Ginger broke into a torrent of Arabic salutations. I don't meddle much with the language, so I said little, contented myself with examining the sheik. Six feet one, I judged—rather tall for an Arab; closely cropped, white hair and beard; huge thighs and shoulders; broad, loose

build; face clear-cut as by a chisel; great brown hands and slim feet; and—good heavens!—blue eyes—an Arab with blue eyes! Trebizond! Probably a descendant of some renegade Crusader, I hazarded. The white Arab kilt and the tunic hung about him like a toga. The burnous fell from his shoulders in long, sweeping folds. I noticed appreciatively the ten-shot .45 in its holster, the workmanlike hunting-knife at his belt, and the Lee-Enfield carbine, with its fine sights and its bulging box-magazine, across his knees. Good taste, I thought, the best possible taste in weapons.

The major bowed to us impressively. "Suleyman Bey"—he spoke the name as he would have that of Omar the Caliph—"Suleyman Bey will be glad to tell you anything you want to know about Trebizond."

We bowed ourselves away, Ginger pouring out a stream of newly acquired Arabic—"Peace be unto you," "May your business prosper," and other equally warm and utterly empty wishes.

We passed out into the flashing, swaying streets. The hum of Damascus struck us like the hum of a thousand spinning-wheels. Tall desert Arabs floated by in burnous and snow-white tunic. Wily, shrewd-eyed Greeks and oily Syrians passed along on nervous, silent feet. A water-seller jostled against us, his huge skin-bag gurgling and moaning. From the bazaars came the now plaintive, now seductive, now hysterical, chanting of the merchants. A half-clad desert dervish reeled by, muttering to himself like a drunken man.

The figure of the tall sheik floated along like a statue in a pageant. I felt somehow as if I were a schoolboy accompanying his teacher on a walk, and the dignity of it was painful to me. We flitted through the Bazaar of the Carpenters, and looked down into the tunnelled Derb el-Mustakim. Ginger hitched his holster back. He reached up and removed his sun helmet, to the delight of a tubby Armenian brat, whom his flaming red locks sent into a torrent of obscene merriment.

"The Street which is called Straight," he quoted sententiously. "Well, do you know, now, I've seen straighter?"

I was becoming a little tired of Ginger's criticisms. "If every street you see," I countered, "isn't modelled after the exact pattern of O'Connell Street, Dublin, it doesn't suit you. Isn't that so?"

"O'Connell Street, Dublin," he replied, "is the finest street in the finest country in the world. I never saw an Irishman yet that didn't think so, except yourself."

I thought a little apology was due to Suleyman Bey. I turned around to him. "*Effendina*——" I began, and I stopped short there. The sheik was looking at us with widely distended eyes. His lips were sagging apart. His hand fumbled feebly at the folds of his burnous, at the blouse of his tunic, at the hunting-knife in his belt.

"My name," he began in English, enunciating his words with the precision of a child—"my name is Patrick Sullivan, I come from the county Sligo."

We looked at each other stupidly, Ginger and I. It was as if the angel Gabriel had told us he wanted Home Rule. Then Ginger asked him the question I knew he would.

"Your name is Patrick Sullivan, and you come from the county Sligo. What the devil are you doing here?"

"My name is Patrick Sullivan," the sheik was repeating, "and I haven't spoken to an Irishman in forty-three years."

There was an Arab café opposite. Through the open door we could see a garden with orange and jasmine trees and little, fragile chairs and tables. Back of it a brook flashed like silver.

"Come." I touched the sheik on the arm. "Come over there and tell us about it."

We crossed the pulsing, seething street together. A camel with a reptilian head lunged past us. A black Congoese cleared the way with loud, insistent cries for a native official on horseback. Waves of brown, ochre, and black Orientals surged here and there in eddies. We broke through them like footballers through a scrum. Inside the garden a knot of a half-dozen hard-bitten Arabs sat around a professional story-teller with the eyes of a saint and hands like a hawk's talons.

"There once lived in Damascus, O dearest hearts," he chanted, "a merchant of merchants, a prince of commerce, an adornment of trade. He had one son, more beautiful than the moon at its fullest and sweeter of voice than clashing cymbals, whose name

was Ganem Bin Ayyub, the Distraught One, the Slave of Love."

We sat down at one of the tables. An Arab boy brought us coffee, and vanished as if swallowed by the earth. A little breeze came up and set the orange and jasmine trees rustling like silk. In the background the brook bubbled like a fountain. Occasionally there would come a word from the sheik, and then an exclamation, and then a sentence, and then two or three sentences. Ginger and I sat back and tried hard not to look at him. His left hand lay on the table before him, a live, powerful thing of sinew and hair and brown skin. His voice boomed out like a stroke on a drum.

"I am Patrick Sullivan," we heard him say, "from Ballinasloe, in the county of Sligo; a Trinity man. I came here in '71—that's forty-three years ago."

Ginger and I sat silent. It seemed as if he were getting under way. His enunciation became more distant. Words came more easily to him.

"I came with Charteris—you've heard of Charteris, who came over here to excavate at Bagdad. There were only the two of us and a dragoman. We landed at Yoppa—Jaffa, you know—and came on the overland trail to Damascus. Somewhere near Nablus a dozen Badawin stopped us and demanded tribute. So we fought. I remember only firing round after round at them from behind my horse, and Charteris doing the same, and that the jump of the chassepot hammered my shoulder into pulp, so

when I got tired and weak the butt struck me on the jaw.

"You know how you feel after you wake up after a thing like that. You wonder why you aren't at home in bed. I couldn't understand very well why Charteris was huddled up in a limp heap, like a man who has fallen from a height and broken his back, and the dragoman lying taut like a piece of rope, and the horses stiff and cold in front of us. There was a full moon above, white, like an electric light. The sand stretched grey and black in patches for miles around us. There was a killing frost out that struck at you in a thousand places. And somewhere a pair of hyenas snarled and barked and growled at each other like quarrelling dogs.

"And then a little flock of Arabs rode up—there must have been a score of them, all mounted on restive little stallions, carrying long muzzle-loaders and curved knives. They felt us and looked us over, and gathered me up and carried me away. They left Charteris and the dragoman behind, because Charteris and the dragoman were dead.

"They took me to their encampment, a mile and a half away—a little clump of black sheepskin tents with a tetherage for horses and a big, flickering, red camp fire, with tribesmen pacing or huddling about it like shadows. They were the Beni Omar, they said, and they cared for me as if I were a sick tribesman. They were on their way north to Aleppo, and from there home to Trebizond, on the Black Sea. I went with them

and let them take care of me. I hadn't any plans without Charteris, and I felt dazed and numb. I just went along with them the way, if you've had an accident, you'll go home with the first man you meet.

"There were about twenty of them, all on horseback, with three camels for the tents and supplies. The sheik Mehmet Ali, a short, wiry, black man, with a short beard and eyes that blazed at you, rode in front. He was very kind to me, was Mehmet Ali—peace be on him!—though his manner was brusque and he didn't like unbelievers. And beside him rode his daughter—Scheherazade was her name. She was about seventeen, I thought, and she could ride as well as any of the tribesmen. I didn't know then what she was like, because of the face-veil and the hair-veil. But I could see she was lithe and active, and walked with a great, free swing. I came along behind on a well-broken mare, with a couple of tribesmen on either side. They were wonderfully decent—they tried to do everything they could for me. I felt terribly out of it, you'll understand, with poor Charteris lying dead behind. I thought of him all the time, and of the girl in Dublin he was to have married when he got back, and of what I should say to her. And all the time in the back of my mind I was thinking of the girl on horseback in front of me, and wondering what her face was like behind the veil. I wanted to kick myself often. I felt it was callous towards poor Charteris.

"We passed through Aleppo and struck the caravan trail to Trebizond. I had no desire to get away, and they seemed glad to have me, so I stayed on. The grey of the desert gave way to long and wide stretches of green grass and budding corn. There were great fields of poppies on either side of the way, red like banners, and little clumps of fir-trees and cedars, and all along the roadside there were white flowers with long stalks, and flashing lizards scurrying through the grass. All through the day the sun came down like rain, and there was the moon in the night-time. We met caravans going down to Persia, long strings of dromedaries and camels with tinkling bells, and slim, swarthy merchants in long, black coats and high, lambskin hats. And a breeze came down from Russia and set the grass stirring.

"I was getting stronger all the time. The fight in the desert, and the death of poor Charteris, seemed like things I had read in a book. I felt I was going through the East I had read of in the *Thousand and One Nights*. There was something delightfully fearful about the lean Arabs on each side, and the broad, swarthy sheik in front, and the slim, supple figure of his daughter on her little Algerian stallion.

"We camped one night near Behesni, on the brink of a little river called the Kajna, which runs into the Euphrates farther down. I remember getting up the next morning at daybreak and walking over to the river to see what it was like. It came

down like water through a funnel, very fast, very noisy. There was a great rock in the middle of it, I remember, where the water swirled like a mill-race. There were little cliffs of black rock on each side, and a band of green grass and rushes between the rocks and the river. It was very cool below, very shady. So I slipped down.

"I walked along a hundred yards, and then something white fluttered up before me. It was Scheherazade, the sheik's daughter. She had been bathing her face in the river, and her veil was pulled aside, and for the first time I saw her. We looked at each other for a minute, and then she ran off like some animal that has been frightened. The sight of her seemed to stop my breathing, as if I had climbed up the bleak side of a mountain and from the top had unexpectedly seen a great stretch of green, fertile plain. Her hair was down, and it was black and long and dim, the sort of hair that reminds you of twilight. Her face was cut very strongly and very lightly, in long, soft lines. There was a full, sweeping curve to her eyebrows, and she had black eyes that sent out light like lamps. There was a warm brown glow to her skin, like the glow on a fine bronze statue. Her mouth was—her mouth —her cheek—her ears——"

The boom went out of his voice, and a whisper took its place. Then he became silent. I knew his head was on his chest, though I didn't look up. I kept my eyes fixed on my puttees and spurs, and trimmed the ash on my cigarette. Somewhere in

the garden a bird broke into a passion of quivering song. The brook behind us plashed with a faint, swishing sound, like the noise a wind makes among reeds. We could hear the voice of the story-teller chattering to his audience like a magpie:

"Her eyebrows, O most illustrious ones, were curved like an archer's bow. Her face was like the sheen of the full moon; her mouth like a choice cornelian. White-skinned and of winsomest mien was she, spear-straight and five feet tall. Her form was more graceful than a little branch on the top of a great tree, and her voice more soothing than the summer winds of Ispahan. None could ever tire of gazing on her, and so lovely was she that the most ascetic dervish on seeing her would forget Allah and the holy prophet (on whom peace!) and become her slave. Even as the poet Farid Ullah el-Arabi has most excellently said: 'Strange is the charm——'"

The sheik seemed to have forgotten us. His head had fallen forward on his chest. His great bronze hand lay on the table. I leaned forward and touched him on the arm. "*Effendi*," I prompted.

"Ah, yes," he said. "I saw her again that evening, and again next morning, and I could see her eyes smile through the veil. And then once or twice, riding past me, she caught my hand for an instant, and it was as if my hand had touched warm velvet, or as if a rose had been pressed in the palm. When I saw her coming towards me on her little stallion, my heart would begin beating hard, until when she

was near me it would be rattling like a drummer's tattoo. And when she came up to me, it was as if a wind from a green garden was blowing across my face.

"When you are young and you love a woman, your fancy works like a weaver's loom. You think her breath pulsing through her lips is like the soft playing of an orchestra, and that every movement of her is as graceful as a white cloud on a blue sky. Sometimes I thought of Scheherazade as a May wind among the branches, and sometimes as the first spray on a hawthorn tree, and again as a single pearl on a thread of silver. And she was growing fond of me, I knew, and it seemed to me as if all the instruments in the world were playing in harmony.

"I was young then, passing twenty-four. I was strong. I was good-looking in my way, I suppose. They say the Sullivans of Ballinasloe always are. I don't know if you know them——"

"My mother was a Sullivan of Ballinasloe," Ginger broke in, and there was a ring of pride in his voice.

The old sheik looked at him keenly.

"God bless you, boy," he said, and he went on:

"We spoke very little, Scheherazade and I. When we did meet we were satisfied with looking at each other and smiling, and at the occasional touch of hands. The caravan journeyed on. Towering black mountains loomed ahead of us, like gigantic curtains of velvet. The air had the faint salt tang of the sea. The trees were greener on each side of

the trail, and great cypress trees jumped up from the earth like monstrous mushrooms. It seemed all like mist and dreams to me. My eyes were fixed all the time on the supple, white figure on the pawing stallion ahead of us.

"We cleared the tops of the mountains and began the descent. Below us lay Trebizond, a faint blur of grey granite and white marble. There was the green of budding rye and corn around it, and the red of poppy-fields. There were great clumps of trees, like islands in a green lake, and enormous stains of black rock. At the foot of the city the Black Sea laps like faint music. And away in the background the Caucasus looms up like a huge white curtain.

"You don't know Trebizond? No. Few do. It lies scattered like a sleeping giant on the border of the sea. There are great palaces in it, and the spires of churches and droning bazaars. There are broad streets where no one walks from day to day. It seems to laze and dream of the time when it was an empire, when Manuel, the Great Captain, ruled, and the Crusaders of the North clashed through it in armour. The basil plant grows on its bridges, and grey pigeons coo from morning till night. Great ships from Russia come there, and neat, cutting sloops race in from Constantinople.

"So we went into Trebizond, going down the mountains as down a stairs. At night, when the camp-fire was lighted, Scheherazade would meet me in the shadows and flutter into my arms like a bird

to its nest. And then the peace of it left me, and I wanted to take her with me, to marry her, to have her for myself. We didn't say much, we could understand without speaking. She came into my arms, and at times she felt like a bundle of red roses there, and at other times like a sheaf of white lilies. But as we went on, the sight of her no longer filled me with peace. It spurred me into thinking how to ride off with her—how? how?

"And so we came to Trebizond, to the house of Mehmet Ali, the sheik. And there in the garden, where the big fountains plashed, and nightingales cooed from the orange-trees, and the moon beat down in rays of dazzling silver, and the dogs bayed in the streets of Trebizond, we met while others slept, and Scheherazade said she would go with me.

"I don't know how I felt. It seemed such a terrifically big thing to bring the White Flower of Trebizond home to the green fields of Sligo. At times it seemed the most natural thing in the world, and at other times I would stop and say to myself, 'Why, people don't do things like that,' and be afraid. I arranged feverishly for flight. There was a vessel going to Odessa, a huge grain boat, and I bribed the captain to take us with him. And from Odessa we would go to Petrograd, and from there home.

"I felt terror in those days, I may tell you, terror for us both, if we were discovered. There is short shift for the unbeliever who lifts his eyes

in love to the daughter of the Prophet's sons, and shorter still for the Moslem woman who has looked on the unbeliever. A little boat shoves off from the quay in the night-time, and there is a splash and a circle of widening eddies in the water. So I felt all those days as if someone were behind me with a dagger in his hand, and that I dared not turn around. And then I would stand palsied with fear at the thought of the danger of Scheherazade.

"Night comes fast in the East. There is a red flare in the west, and the drone of homing bees. Birds twitter. There is a splashing of oars in the harbour, and the turn of a Levantine boat-song. And then the night falls like rain—soft warmth and the pungent smell of orange-trees. At eight o'clock Scheherazade was to slip out to me, and we would go down through the shadows to the vessel. At six I was waiting for her, while the muezzins chanted from the minarets. I stood waiting, outwardly patient, but a current was running through me like a live flame. People passed by, looking at me askance; dark, kilted Greeks and suave Armenians; Arabs from the desert; fierce, swarthy Kurds, and Jews in gabardines. Eight o'clock came and Scheherazade did not. Something had happened to delay her, I thought, but time was passing quickly, and soon the master of the vessel would weigh anchor, and we should be left behind. A panic seized me. I felt I wanted to go to the house and drag her out. I dared not.

Nine o'clock came. There was not more than an hour left. I walked up and down in a frenzy. It was half-past nine. I broke into a run to the house. I hammered at the barred door with both fists. The door opened, and I staggered into the court.

"I could see the sheik coming towards me, his powerful frame hunched up like a coiled spring, his feet moving softly over the marble tiles like those of a great cat. His hand went to his girdle to where his dagger was.

"I tried to calm myself. I couldn't. I began babbling:

"'Where is Scheherazade?'

"His eyes struck at me like hammers. 'Thou son of a thousand dogs!' he spat. 'Thou scum of Eblis!'

"'Where is Scheherazade?' I shouted. 'I must see her! I must see her! Do you hear?'

"I clutched at his arm. Beneath the sleeve I could feel it set like a piece of steel mechanism. I pawed at him like a drunken man.

"'I must see her! I must! I must!'

"He caught me by the shoulder and half pushed, half dragged, me down the court. I reeled. The white marble floor swayed and rocked beneath me like the deck of a heaving ship. We left the court and went down a passage. The sheik stopped in front of a door and tore the curtain aside.

"'You must see her, must you?' he snarled at me. 'Well, you shall. There she is.' He slung me into the room.

"There was a couch there with candles burning. There was something white on the couch. I felt suddenly terrified.

"'You wanted to see her,' I could hear the sheik bellow. 'She is there. Look well at her.'

"I staggered forward a few steps. She was there, I could see, in her white, flowing robe, and her red slippers turned piteously upward. Somehow, she suggested a great lily that had been bent in two. The place seemed to go black, and the white figure on the couch became a white stain against a background of ink. The world seemed to empty suddenly, so that there were none in it but myself and the sheik and the figure on the couch. There was a dull hum in my ears, like the distant marching of a great army. Through it I could hear the voice of the sheik volley out like crashing of thunder.

"'I heard of your plans, you dog, and son of dogs! I myself barred the doors to keep her from you. That didn't suffice. She scaled the wall to escape, and she fell. And there she is now. Her neck is broken. May the blight——'

"The noise in my ears became unbearable. It sounded like the beating of a thousand hammers. I felt myself slipping into space. I remember trying to keep up, but I couldn't, and I remember the jar as I fell.

"And when I woke again I was mad. In place of crying at the foot of the couch, I sat and babbled and sang children's songs. In place of shrinking

in terror before the sheik, I smiled at him and called him 'father.' The half-drawn dagger went back into its sheath with a click. For Allah—the Most High, the Compassionate, the Merciful—had decreed to his Prophet that the afflicted in mind should be treated as the little children on the floor. And for even the unbeliever, and the thief of the tribe's daughter, there was compassion and mercy and care.

"I remained there in the house of the sheik, with the tribe of the Beni Omar. When they went out to hunt, or forth on a raid, or their caravans travelled down to Persia, I went with them, as a dog trots behind its master. Little by little understanding and mind came back to me. Still, I couldn't leave them. They seemed to understand and would not send me away. And after a time I became as one of them, using their dress, speaking their language, and professing the True God, the One, the Only, and his blessed Prophet—on whom peace!

"Your fathers remember Endhem Bey, and the dash into Thessaly, and the raids of the Mad Sheik of Trebizond, and they remember when the wandering dervishes preached the Holy War, and the Moslem rode like a flame through the Euxine country and through Bulgaria. The Mad Sheik was there. The Beni Omar came back, a handful of men where before there had been a thousand, and the Mad Captain, who had been the unbeliever, was at their head, and he is at their head now.

"Time slips by in Trebizond. It flows like a river, thinking neither of hours nor days, nor of the rising of moons, nor of suns' setting. Forty-three years have gone by since Charteris died in the Armenian desert, and it hasn't seemed to me more than one long day. And yet now I am an old man, who will soon enter the Garden of the Eight Gates, and taste of the fruit of the Tree which is Life Eternal, and see the petals of the White Flower of Trebizond unfold in the sun of Heaven.

"Her grave is outside Trebizond, a square of marble with a high pillar, and a great cypress tree waving over it. There are roses there, white roses, and grey doves flutter in and out of the branches of the tree, and little green and silver lizards play about the grass. I go there every evening, and I can see her rise up to meet me——"

"My God!" Ginger blurted out. "What—what—what do you mean?"

I didn't blame him. The hair on my head seemed to lift and a cold wind blow all over me.

"Sometimes it is a sheen in the air, like light filtering through water, or the play of the sun on silk. Sometimes it is a thin white mist like fine muslin. Sometimes it is a whispering in the leaves of the cypress-tree, and sometimes it is a rustle in the grass. But every time it is Scheherazade, the sheik's daughter, who waits for me and meets me there. And that is why I have stayed."

The sheik stopped. The hum and drone of Damascus broke into the garden like a swarm of people. There were the shrill grunting of dromedaries, the shouts of camel-drivers, the snarling of dogs, the loud, insistent cries of the merchants. Somewhere outside a dervish chanted in loud, resonant tones. In his corner of the garden the story-teller dropped luscious phrases to his Arab audience. The sheik began again:

"Who knows? Allah, the Most High, the Holy One, who sees the bee light on the pomegranate, and watches the stork fly over oceans of great breadth, may have ordained it all in infinite wisdom. Would the flower have bloomed in the fields of Sligo? Might it not have wilted and died, pining for the gardens of Asia, and the chanting muezzins, and the white horsemen of the desert? *Inshallah!* Let the will of the Most High be done!

"Forty-three years! And no man has heard my story until to-day. I have been happy. I am content with the tribe of Omar, and with the tomb and the cypress tree in Trebizond. Sometimes a great want comes over me to see the fields of Sligo, and the mists coming in from the sea, and to see the road hard and black with the night-frost, and the rime on the grass. And to-day, when you talked of O'Connell Street, I could see the carts rattling up to Trinity, and hear the shouts of the drivers, and see the Liffey with its barges slipping down to the Bay. And a great longing came over me to tell the story to someone. I've told it to

you now, and I'll go. The caravan waits for me at the Saint Thomas Gate, and the road to Trebizond stretches before me as it did forty-three long years before."

He rose. Even near three score and ten, his face was as cleanly cut as a cameo, his eyes clear as water, his powerful frame like a statue. It was not hard to understand how Scheherazade of the Beni Omar was prepared to forsake faith and people and country and go with him. His eyes looked clear through us. Ginger, I knew, was crying. I was trying hard not to do it myself. He reached out his lean, brown hand. We took it. We wanted to explain something to him, but we didn't know what it was, and we couldn't.

"Good-bye, sir," we said.

"The blessing of God go with you!" His voice rang out clear as a bell. He turned and swung down the garden.

We watched him go off. We were dull and dazed. It was as if a life-long friend of ours was leaving us for ever. We went out slowly.

I felt somehow as if the East, which we had been cursing for the most overrated, tuppeny side-show on earth, had reached out and struck us a terrific blow between the eyes. As we passed into the street, we could hear the voice of the story-teller drone like a faint echo:

"Thus, most eminent ones, finisheth the delectable history of Ganem, the Slave of Love. What is more choice than rubies, asketh Mustafa el-Wujud,

what more sweet than true love? Passion knocketh and it passeth on, but true love abideth till the call of Gabriel. In the Seventh of the Seven Heavens Ganem and the Damsel of Delight walk together on floors of porphyry beneath roofs of live emerald. For there lovers meet whom the world—a troublous place, dearest hearts!—hath parted. What saith Ja'ar el-Din, the Barmecide, that excellent poet, in this regard? 'Stormy the wind; the waves——' "

THE END