

FREE GIFT INSIDE—"AIR PILOT'S CAP"

THE SKIPPER

№ 489 - JAN. 13TH 1940

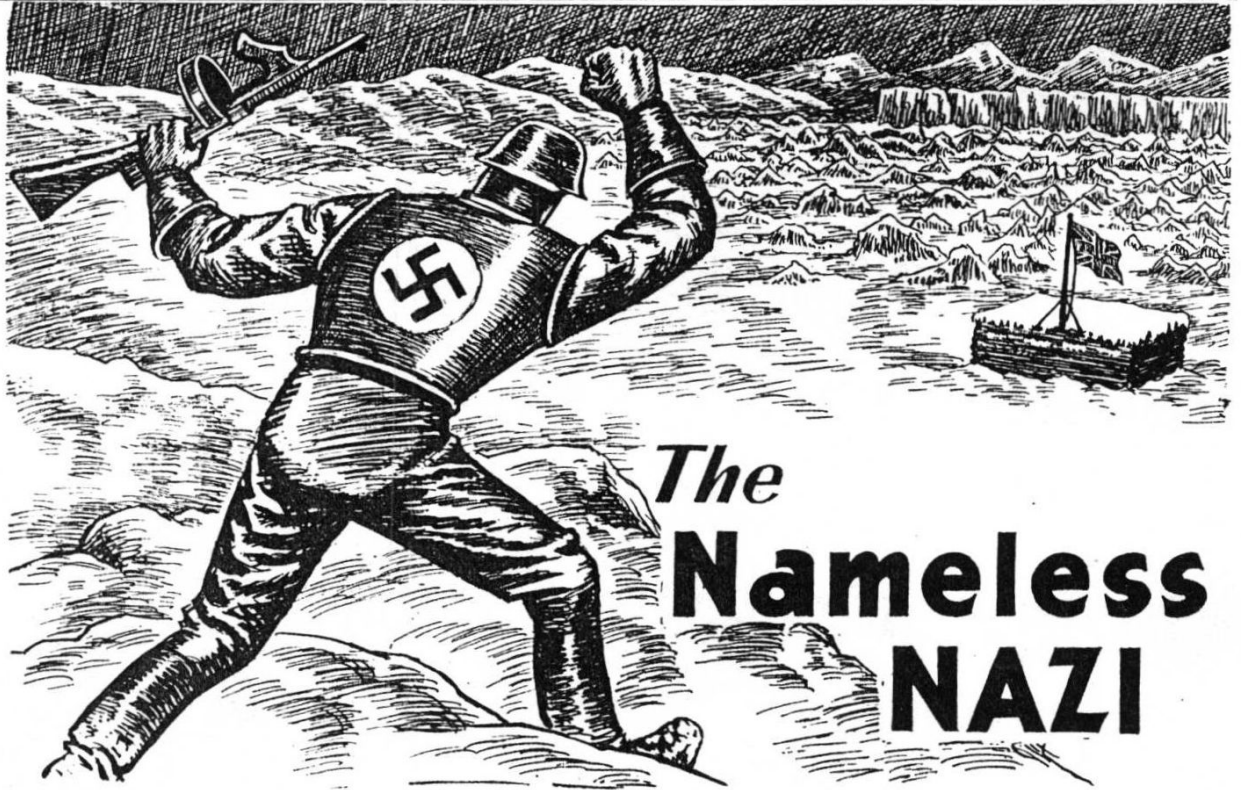
- PRICE 2^D



The Nameless NAZI Sensational New Story.

STARTS TO-DAY—

HE COMES FROM GERMANY WITH AN ARMY—TO HUNT DOWN BRITISHERS IN CANADA.



The Nameless NAZI

Zeppelins Over Canada

BENT almost double, Corporal Hayes, of the Canadian Mounted Police, forged ahead on his snowshoes.

He had held this trail for more than a hundred miles, right up into the Boothia Peninsula, in Northern Canada, and he was ready to carry on for double that distance if necessary.

Somewhere on in front, in that white waste of ice and snow, was the man he wanted, the man he had been tracking for so many days.

More than once he had felt amazed that Miles Cooper had kept on so long. He had never believed the man possessed enough vitality and determination. Down in the Murchison River district, where the trail had started, Cooper had been considered nothing more than a remittance man, a ne'er-do-well from England, who had been paid a small monthly sum by his family to keep out of their way.

As long as Cooper had contented himself with idling away his time, gambling, and mixing with the Eskimos, nobody could complain, but one day the remittance man had discovered there was an easy way of making extra money, by buying and selling liquor to the half-breed Eskimos.

That was strictly forbidden. The law was severe about such things. So Cooper had cleared out when he got a tip that Corporal Hayes was coming for him.

The remittance man had set a pace which even the Mountie had found hot. Cooper seemed determined to lose himself in the Arctic wilds. If they went much further they would come to Franklin Strait. To cross that at this time of the year was impossible. It began to look as though the trail was nearing its end.

"About time, too!" thought the Mountie grimly. "There's a war on in Europe, and I'd like the chance to transfer to one of the Imperial Forces. If Cooper had had any

pluck he'd have headed south an' enlisted, instead of bolting up here."

It had been nearly three weeks since Corporal Hayes had heard any news of the war. He wondered how things were going in the great struggle which Britain and France were making against the Nazis.

His legs moved mechanically beneath him. He had long since lost feeling in them.

But when he topped the frozen ridge, and saw a figure ahead, his thoughts came back to the present with a jerk.

There was his man! There was Miles Cooper, not more than fifty yards in front!

The fugitive was standing on another ridge, not a high one, but one tall enough to block the view ahead. His back was turned to Hayes, and he was staring straight in front of him, careless of what might be happening

THE GIANT NAZI
WITH THE
BOOMING VOICE
AND THE
STRANGLING HANDS.

to the rear. He was perfectly motionless, as though frozen in his present pose. Something had riveted his attention. He could see something through the drifting snow that the Mountie was not yet in a position to see.

Corporal Hayes hitched his pack higher on his broad shoulders, and his grey eyes narrowed. Swiftly and silently he went down the slope. The trail was going to end quicker than he had expected. If Cooper did not turn for twenty seconds he would feel a revolver in the middle of his back, and would find himself a prisoner.

Down into the snow-filled hollow glided the Mountie, then went swiftly up the other side.

Nearer he went. Now a dozen paces only separated them, then ten, eight, six! He

was almost within leaping distance, and the stoop-shouldered, sandy-haired man in front did not stir.

Corporal Hayes' lips were parted for the warning shout which would tell Cooper the chase had ended, when suddenly his mouth gaped in wonder. His grey eyes widened, and became fixed on the object that the other man was staring at.

Instinctively he came to a halt. He was utterly unable to believe his own senses. He shook his head as though trying to rid himself of a vision, but when he looked again it was still there.

It was a Zeppelin, a monster airship nearly a thousand feet long, fastened down to numerous stakes driven into the frozen ground. There must have been fifty cables holding the airship in check, and several hundred Eskimos and half-breed Indians standing around the stakes. It looked as though they had recently hauled the aerial monster from the skies.

A German Zeppelin! There was not the slightest doubt about it. Hayes could clearly see the Nazi Swastikas painted on its side, and see the number on its stern. Three glistening gondolas hung underneath, and down a rope ladder men in uniform were swarming.

No wonder the fugitive had become rigid with astonishment. What was a German Zeppelin doing in war time on the Boothia Peninsula, far north of Hudson Bay?

Corporal Hayes asked himself that question as he lowered his revolver. The need for catching Miles Cooper had gone from his mind. That Zeppelin filled his consciousness just as it seemed to fill the landscape ahead.

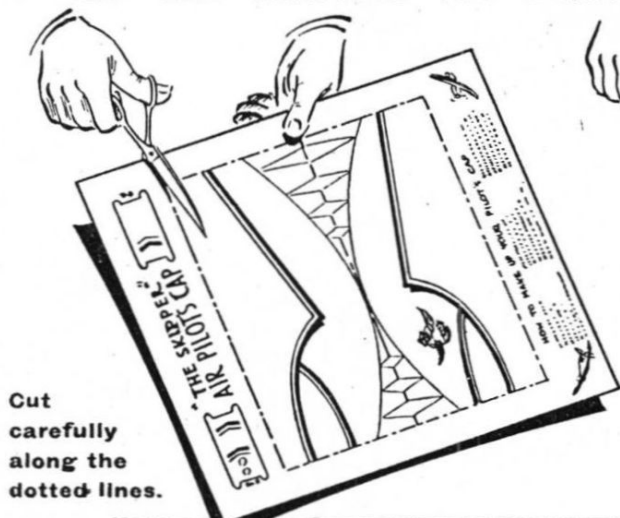
Suddenly there was a curt order snapped in the Eskimo tongue, and the Mountie awakened to the fact that he and Cooper were surrounded by muffled figures.

They were Eskimos, but they were led by men in brown uniforms with black leggings. Even though Corporal Hayes had only seen such men on pictures, he knew what they were. They were German Storm Troopers—here, in Canada!

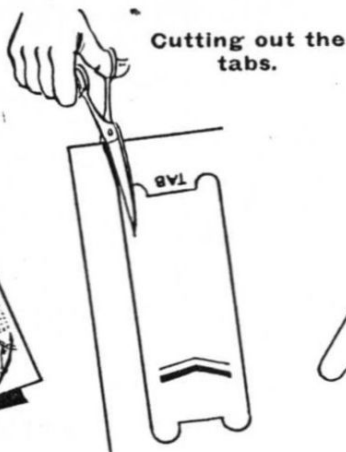
He saw some of the Eskimos leap on

HOW TO MAKE UP YOUR AIR PILOT'S CAP

READ CAREFULLY THE INSTRUCTIONS PRINTED WITH THE CAP AND EXAMINE THE DRAWINGS PRINTED ON THIS PAGE.



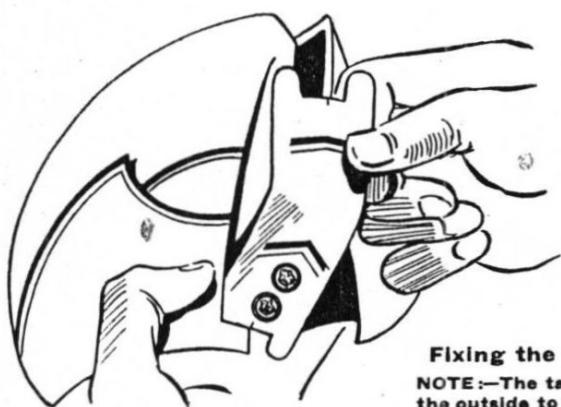
Cut carefully along the dotted lines.



Cutting out the tabs.

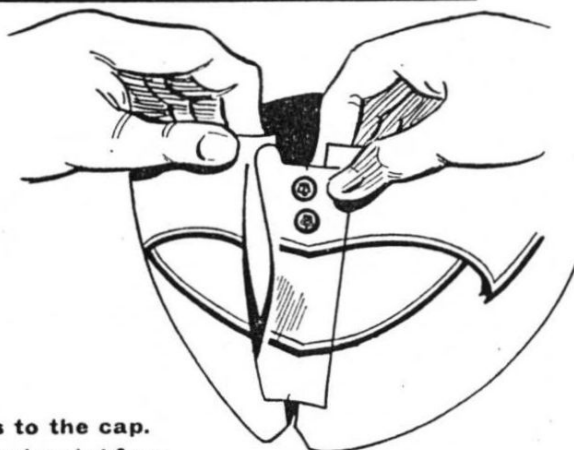


How the tabs should be folded.

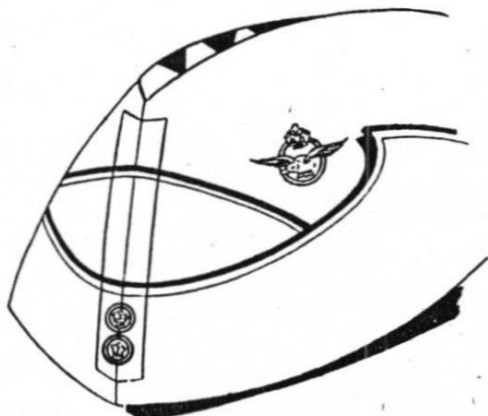


Fixing the tabs to the cap.

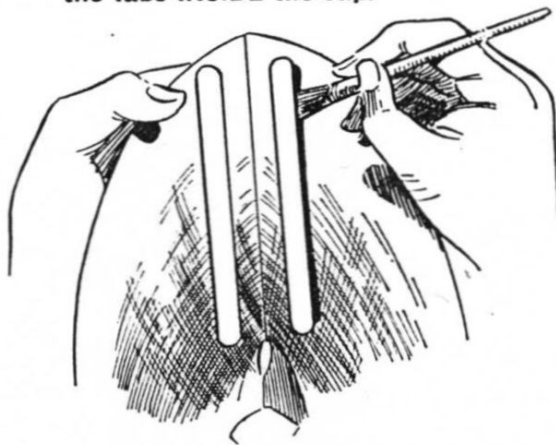
NOTE:—The tabs are inserted from the outside to the inside of the cap.



If you like you can paste down the tabs INSIDE the cap.



This is how the end of the cap should look when the tab is fixed.



them. He looked somewhat startled when he saw the dishevelled, bloodstained figure.

One of the two who had guided the Mountie explained—

"We found this man lost in the maze. Through the observation posts we had seen him chased by the Nazis. He was unlucky enough to run into a grizzly bear. I shot it. I don't know if he's hurt. There's a good deal of blood on him."

"It's the bear's," growled Corporal Hayes, steadying himself against the table. "I'm from the Canadian Mounted Police, Hayes by name. I was heading northwards after a man who has broken the law, and then we ran into those Germans. There's quite an army of them on the other side of that ridge. They've got a cordon right across the peninsula, and we saw a Zeppelin. Can you explain? I'm beginning to wonder whether I'm going crazy to see such things."

The tall, lean man with the glasses smiled as he passed the Mountie a steaming hot cup of coffee.

"No, Corporal, you're not crazy. In a few minutes I'll tell you all about it, but may I say how glad I am my friends managed to rescue you in time. You're the first Canadian to reach Magnetic Camp. We're all British."

"Magnetic Camp!" murmured the Mountie. "I've never heard of such a place. It's not on any of the maps."

"Because it has only existed a few months. Almost under your feet is the Magnetic Pole, the magnetic centre of the world, the spot to which all compasses point. At the moment it is in British hands, and you will have observed we are well fortified, but those Germans wish to take possession."

"I still don't understand," murmured the corporal. "What use is the magnetic pole to anyone? I always thought it was just a theoretical spot."

"So it is, but use can be made of the strange forces that come from it. That is why we are here. My name's John Lancaster, of the Aeronautical Research Department, and these are Dave Godden and Leslie Ormes, my assistants. Ormes is a reserve officer. We have half a dozen loyal Eskimos with us as well, but that is all."

The Mountie's eyes opened.

"And you few have managed to hold back that Nazi horde, with all their Eskimo allies? For how long?"

"For over a month. But I will begin at the beginning. Soon after the war began, and when German air raids threatened to wreck the country, I made a suggestion to the British Government. Briefly, it was to use the force from the Magnetic Pole to act as a field through which no modern aircraft engine could fly and still function. It is not exactly

a ray I am working on, the idea being to harness the forces of magnetism to protect Britain against air raids. That is all I need say."

"Looking round at the scientific instruments, and at the keen faces of the three Britons, the Mountie marvelled.

"For the purposes of my experiments I had to come here to the Magnetic Pole and establish a camp. Secretly the R.A.F. transported us here with our equipment and a number of men. The camp was set up, but there came disaster. Our mechanics and helpers were caught in a blizzard one day on the pack ice. They had two sledges with them laden with equipment, including the portable wireless set. They never returned. All were lost, including the equipment. Since then we have been going on with our experiments, and have practically finished them, but we have been unable to communicate with England or the South. None of us would have any chance of finding our way through to Canada, so here we've been marooned for nearly three months."

"And the Germans, the Nazis?"

"They came a month ago. I fear there must have been a leakage of our intentions from England before we left. Perhaps a German spy got hold of an outline of the idea. Maybe they have picked up waves of magnetism sent out from here, and have traced the source to this spot. At any rate, a month ago the Zeppelin arrived with fifty Nazis aboard, and with the giant whom the Eskimos call the Nameless One. We call him the Nameless Nazi. He is their leader, and he has cleverly made himself a god to the local Eskimos."

"They've been attacking you ever since?"

"Yes. They want to capture my secret, or to smash our chances of using the magnetic field in defence of Britain. We had taken the precaution of fortifying ourselves, and anyone who comes here must first pass through the ice maze. No man has ever done it yet without a guide. Each of their attacks has failed, but they have persuaded the Eskimos to help them, and now have a cordon across the entire peninsula, preventing us sending a message south even if we could."

His matter-of-fact voice told the story quite casually, but the corporal was thrilled. He had come north on a routine task, to chase a seller of liquor, and he had found himself in the midst of the war against Hitlerism.

He had stumbled in upon an outpost of the empire where brilliant men were risking their lives in order to improve the defences of Britain. He had stumbled upon a battle front which no newspapers, no officials in Britain, even knew about.

But the Nazis had found out, and by

means of the Zeppelin they had beaten the British blockade and arrived on the Boothia Peninsula.

Ruthless, sticking at nothing, they had not scorned to fool the Eskimos with the Nameless Nazi in order to secure their support. The handful of Britishers were now completely isolated.

Corporal Hayes rose to his feet. He felt better after the coffee, and the story he had heard made him forget his fatigue.

"I'm glad you saved me from the bear, for now I'll be able to help," he said simply. "I can shoot, use a machine-gun, and know conditions up here well. There's another Englishman out there, the man I was chasing, but I don't think he'll be of much use to us. The Nazis have got him, and he's lost his nerve."

Shouting from outside the hut took the three scientists to the door. A moon-faced Eskimo had come running from the outer defences of the camp. He spluttered in his own language—

"The Nameless One—he come!"

"Come?" snapped John Lancaster. "What do you mean he comes? He could never get through the Ice Maze."

"Yes, master, he come. Plenty German men come through the maze. They nearly here. They almost out of the maze now. I see um."

The Eskimo was plainly telling the truth. The three Britishers snatched up their rifles, and one handed a revolver to Hayes, with a belt of cartridges. He was going to be given a chance to show his skill as a fighter earlier than expected.

Back the way he had come they led him, and he had a chance to see the cunning way they had planted their defences. They had made it possible for a handful of men to hold back an army. Every natural feature of the country had been utilised.

They reached the top of the ice cliff overlooking the great ravine, which all intruders had to pass. From up there they could look right down upon the Ice Maze. The roof of the maze was hidden by ice hummocks, but here and there were patches of clear ice, making it possible to see the men who were now picking their way through it.

The Nameless Nazi was in the lead, his head bent because the roof was too low for him to stand erect, a machine-gun nurse in his arms.

Behind him came a file of Nazis, and in the distance followed Eskimos.

They were coming through the maze swiftly, making no mistakes at the numerous corners. It was almost uncanny to watch them, until the Mountie noticed that the Nameless Nazi from time to time bent to look at the ground.

"We forgot the blood!" he cried.

"Blood?" echoed Dave Godden, hauling the rope-ladder out of the depths. "What blood?"

"The blood of the grizzly bear. I was covered in it. As I followed you it must have dripped at every stride. They see the red specks in the snow, and are following those. That's how they are able to get through the Ice Maze for the first time. I'm afraid I've brought you trouble!"

They nodded grimly, but there was no word of blame for the tight-lipped Mountie, who had taken his place at their side. They were glad to have him with them in the forthcoming tussle.

Three rifles and a revolver were aimed at the exit from the maze. When the Nameless Nazi and his Storm Troopers emerged they would receive a warm welcome. They had passed the outer defences of Magnetic Camp, but that did not mean they had captured it!

The Nameless Nazi is a terrible menace to the British stronghold now he's mastered the secret of the maze. Hold on to your chairs next week when you read of the terrific fight to beat back the Nazi invaders.



Another Big Reason to

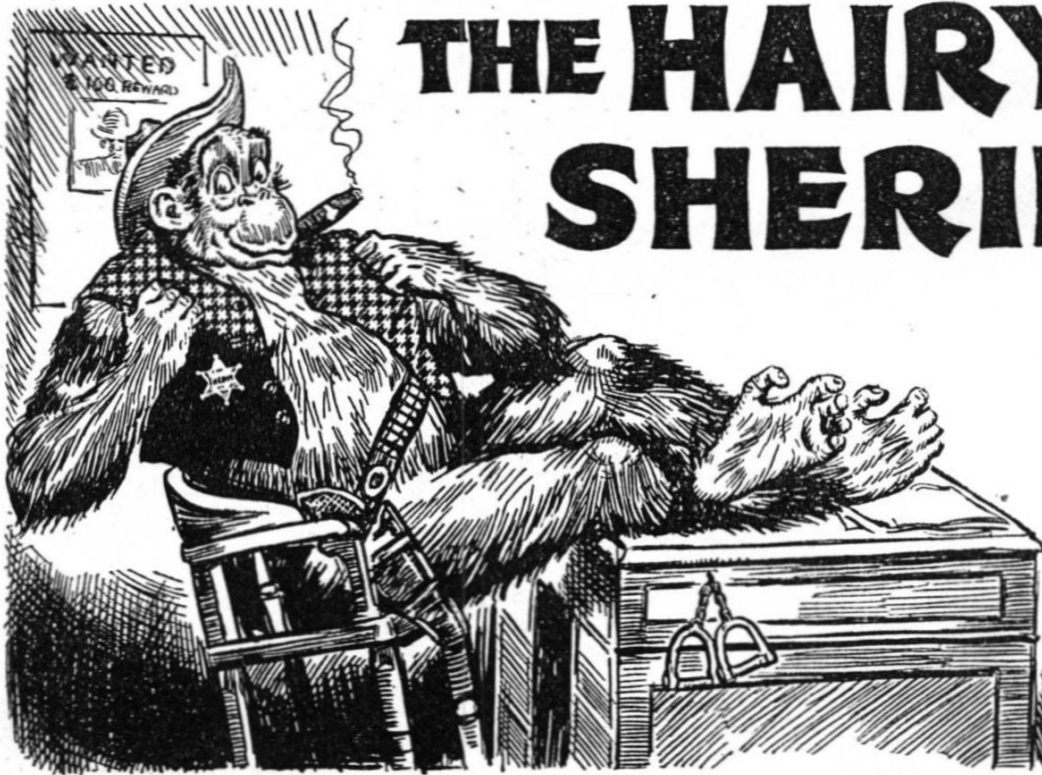
ORDER YOUR COPY NOW!

Why? Because Buckshot Brand is coming back to "The Skipper." Thousands of boys have been asking for more thrilling exploits of the man who brings LAW to the West with his guns.

His smashing new adventures begin next week. If your copy is ordered at the newsagent's you're a wise lad. The title is

"BUCKSHOT DRIVES THE DEATH COACH"

THE HAIRY SHERIFF



The Circus is Mortgaged

RUMBLING down the main street of Sandstone City, which, in spite of its name, was just a small, straggling Western township, came a queer procession.

It was led by an elderly-looking elephant, on the back of which sat a little man in a battered silk topper. Following came a couple of trucks bearing assorted equipment, and then half a dozen tired and hungry ponies.

The rest of the procession consisted of a few covered cages on wheels and a man with a tattered banner. On the banner were the words:—

COLONEL SAM BARKER'S GRAND CIRCUS.

The Greatest Show on Earth!

Opening To-morrow in Sandstone City. The few inhabitants of Sandstone City who happened to be in the street eyed the procession without interest. It didn't look the greatest show on earth to them. Some of the trucks looked as though they might fall to bits any minute.

"Here we are at last, gents!" the little man in the battered topper bawled through a megaphone. "Colonel Sam Barker with the greatest road show touring America!" He drew a deep breath and halted the elephant.

"To-morrow is your lucky day, folks! We bring you the sensation of the world! Riley, the most amazing ape in the whole world! Is he human? Is he the Missing Link or the Wild Man from Borneo? Even scientists are baffled. Come and see Riley for yourselves when we open to-morrow, folks!"

The people didn't seem to be very interested, so the procession moved on again. It rumbled wearily down the street to an open space at the end of the town. The elephant looked fed up. The truck drivers looked fed up. Even "Colonel" Sam Barker himself looked a bit fed up.

As a matter of fact, Sam Barker was fed up. Fed up to the teeth! He was broke

to the wide, and from what he had seen of the town it didn't look as if he was going to take much money in Sandstone City.

He slid off the elephant's back and gave the necessary directions to his staff about fixing up the tents and sideshows. Then he lit a cigar and strolled across to one of the cages and removed the cover from it. On the cage was the notice:—

Riley's House.

Sitting in a chair in the centre of the cage, his feet on a table, studying the pictures in a comic paper, was the ape. At least, Riley looked like an ape, yet he was different from all other apes.

The tiny eyes that gleamed from his hairy face had a look in them that was intelligent and human. When he saw Sam he thrust a hairy arm through the bars of the cage and unbolted the door.

"Thanks, pal," said Sam, stepping into

**A SHERIFF THREW RILEY
OUT OF HIS CAGE—SO
RILEY THREW THE SHERIFF
OUT OF HIS JOB!**

the cage and taking his last cigar from his pocket and tossing it to the ape. "Well, we're here in Sandstone, but, gee, what a dump!"

"Uh-huh!" grunted Riley, sticking the cigar in his mouth and blowing out a cloud of smoke when Sam gave him a light.

Riley looked so human as he sat there, puffing at the cigar, that it was hard to believe he was an ape. He could do almost anything except talk properly.

Sam and Riley had been together for years. Sam didn't know where Riley had come from. He had taken him over from another circus. But Sam had got to know the human ape so well that he looked on him as a good pal rather than part of his show.

Sam could even understand most of the peculiar grunts that served Riley as a

language. He sat in the cage beside Riley and brooded gloomily.

"Do I get tough breaks!" sighed Sam. "Do you remember that time in Kansas, Riley? It rained solid for six weeks. We didn't take a dime. And when we moved on to Texas what happened? Mash me for a potato, if there wasn't an epidemic of influenza."

"Uh-uh!" grunted the ape, and a sad look seemed to appear on his hairy face.

"And then there was that cyclone which blew the tent to ribbons," mourned Sam. "I reckon I'm the world's unluckiest guy."

He gave the big ape an uneasy glance.

"There's something," added Sam, "I ain't told you yet, Riley."

The ape pricked up his ears as if he was listening intently.

"Now, don't get mad at me, pard," said Sam hastily. "It was for your sake I did it. You and the rest of the company. It was that time in Kansas. We had to eat, didn't we?"

"Uh!" growled Riley, blinking suspiciously.

"Well, there you are," said Sam. "I had to raise the dough somehow. There was the only way. I mortgaged the circus."

"Uh?" Riley raised his shaggy eyebrows.

"Mortgaged, pard, mortgaged," said Sam patiently. "One day I'll have to get me a dictionary and sit down and teach you all these big words. It means I borrowed the dough, giving the circus as a security. If I don't pay the dough back, the other guy can claim the circus."

"Uh-uh!" said Riley.

"Well, here's the nasty part," continued Sam uncomfortably. "I should have paid the dough back last week, but I ain't got it. The guy who lent it me was a shyster named Pawkins and I happen to know he's been trailing us from town to town for weeks. If he catches up on me before I can raise the dough, I'm sunk."

Riley scratched his head. He seemed to understand the situation perfectly. After thinking about it for a bit he raised a hairy hand and passed it across his throat in a meaning way.

"Now, no rough stuff, pard," said Sam.

he and his gang raided my till. Cleaned it out. But I nearly got him as he was leaving. Look." He brought an old stetson with a bullet hole in it from under the counter. "That's his hat. I made this hole in it."

Sam beamed at the sight of the hat. "Just what I needed. Mind if I borrow this for a day, mister? We'll bring it back with Brannigan under it."

He walked out with the hat, leaving the man gaping. Riley followed, chewing his banana with great enjoyment. Sam gave him the hat to sniff.

"Only the day before yesterday, so the trail's still fresh," muttered Sam. "How's the old sniffer, pard?"

"Oke," grunted Riley. Ten minutes later Sam and the ape had left Sandstone City. Sam was riding on a borrowed horse, but Riley was getting along quite well on his own legs. The ape could follow a trail like a bloodhound. Ambling along with a queer, crouching gait, he led the way and Sam followed.

In the meantime, the bartender and his battered pals were trying to put the wrecked saloon straight.

"Must be a shack there," said Sam nervously. "Now look here, Riley, this is where you do your stuff. These bandits are tough and I reckon they'd shoot a guy as soon as look at him. You know me, pard. I never could stand shooting."

"Uh-uh!" said Riley. "Well, you just go and get that Brannigan guy while I wait here. You saw his picture on that 'Wanted' notice, so you know what he looks like. What's more important, you know what he smells like. Make a quick job of it, pal, and you can have bananas for breakfast for the rest of your life."

"Uh-uh!" said Riley, and he ambled away towards the trees.

The big ape swung himself up into the branches and vanished. Riley was quite at home in the tree-tops and he swung himself from branch to branch with the greatest of ease.

He soon reached a clearing and saw before him an open space in which horses were grazing. Beyond them stood a shack. Lounging outside was a man with a couple of guns in his belt, evidently one of the bandits on guard.

and looked up into the trees. He nearly fainted. The guard was up there, hanging from a strong branch by his belt, struggling furiously.

"What's the idea?" yelled Bull. "What are you doing up there?" "I dunno!" gurgled the guard. "Something came out of the tree and lifted me. Help!"

"This needs looking into," snarled Bull. "I'll get the boys—"

A couple of hairy hands suddenly came out of the tree and gripped Bull by the neck. Riley was hanging by his feet from an upper branch. He pulled the struggling bandit up beside him.

"It's an ape!" shrieked Bull, pop-eyed. "Uh-uh!" said Riley cheerfully.

Gripping the bandit with one powerful, hairy arm, he pulled off Bull's gun-belt and dropped it to the ground. Then, holding Bull under one arm, he began to swing himself through the trees back to the spot where he had left Sam.

The little ex-circus proprietor let out a yelp of delight when he saw his shaggy pal return with the raving bandit.



"We'll never get that guy now," said one of them. "He's left town and taken the ape with him. I guess he's nuts. He said he's going to bring in Bull Brannigan. We'll never see him again."

"Sure we'll see him again. Bull always brings the bodies back so that we can give them a decent funeral."

"What's the use of bodies to me?" snarled the barman. "I want my compensation. If I don't get it I'm going to the sheriff."

Riley Cleans Up

SAM and Riley followed the trail into the hills until it was nearly dusk. Then they came up against a huge wall of rock. Sam dismounted and surveyed the cliff with gloomy eyes.

But Riley went straight on. And to his surprise, Sam saw that what he had imagined to be a mere crack in the cliff face was actually an opening wide enough for a man to walk through.

They went through the opening and found that it widened into a large canyon. Ahead was a thick belt of trees. Beyond the trees a wisp of smoke drifted into the sky.

The Sheriff gave Riley his orders to quit, but by a smart piece of work by the almost-human ape, the tables were turned and Riley gave the Sheriff the sack.

Riley's tiny eyes glimmered thoughtfully. Then he grasped one of the smaller branches of the tree and snapped it off. Steadying himself, he hurled it at the unsuspecting guard.

Bonk! It hit the bandit full in the face. He staggered, snatched one of his guns, and stared about him in amazement. There was not a sign of a movement anywhere.

After looking round for a bit, the guard went inside the shack and came out with another man. Riley at once recognised Bull Brannigan.

"Listen, boss, there's something funny going on around here," said the guard. "A chunk of wood suddenly came from nowhere and hit me on the jaw. It seemed to come from those trees, but I can't see a thing."

"I guess we'd better take a look." They moved over to the trees, guns ready.

"There's nothing here," snapped Bull. "I reckon you— Suffering Peter!"

He blinked in amazement. The guard had vanished! Then Bull heard a rustle

"Good work, Riley! Now we'd better get out of here before the rest of the gang starts wondering where their chief is."

"Get me away from this ape!" screamed Bull. "He's dangerous! He'll murder me!"

Riley grinned cheerfully. The little procession made its way back to Sandstone, and Bull Brannigan perspired with terror all the way there.

The New Sheriff

THE Mayor of Sandstone was a pompous but decent little man named Hiram Button. He was sound asleep when, in the early hours of the following morning, there came a thunderous knocking on his front door.

Mr Button leapt out of bed, threw up his window and put his head out. He saw three dusty, travel-stained figures in the dim light below.

"Show a leg, Mayor!" bawled Sam's voice. "We got a little surprise for you. There's a guy named Bull Brannigan to see you."



RED GAUNTLET

THE KING'S CHAMPION

The Stranger Knight

BONTRAN is coming! The King of Burgundy's Champion is coming!

The cry rang out down the narrow winding streets of Alencon, in the land of Normandy. It rang through the court-yard of the Golden Cockerel Inn, and brought the ostlers running from the stables.

The guests emerged from their rooms, and crowded the galleries that surrounded the yard. Everyone waited breathlessly to catch a glimpse of the greatest warrior in the whole of France.

A flourish of trumpets greeted Bontran's arrival at the entrance to the courtyard, and in he rode, followed by half a dozen attendants. A great cheer greeted his appearance. "Vive Bontran!" the crowd roared. "Long live the King of Burgundy's Champion!"

"Who is this Bontran and why is everyone making such a fuss?" a peasant asked, turning to a neighbour.

The man looked at him as if he belonged to another world.

"Why, where have you been brought up, brotherling?" he demanded. "The whole of France has heard of the great Bontran. He is the King of Burgundy's Champion, and accepts all challenges for the King. Every great ruler has his Champion who fights anyone who has challenged his ruler's honour. In a hundred tourneys Bontran has proved himself the master. With a lance or with sword, on horse or on foot, there is none to face him. With quarter-stave or with bare fists, in wrestling bout or mortal combat, he has carried all before him!"

"Indeed, he looks every inch a champion!" said the peasant, and, carried away by the general enthusiasm, he began to yell at the pitch of his voice. "Vive Bontran! Long live the King of Burgundy's Champion."

Bontran did look every inch a champion. A great swaggering bull of a man he was, with a red face, black gleaming eyes, and a

pair of curling moustachios which gave him a fierce appearance.

He was not in armour at this moment, but was dressed in the height of fashion, in green velvet doublet, and breeches of silk. On his head was a velvet bonnet, with an eagle's plume held in place by a silver clasp.

"Come, comrades," Bontran cried to his followers, "we will drink to our success in to-morrow's tourney. Ha! There will be something worth our steel there to-morrow, for all the bravest knights in Europe have gathered for the sport."

"You need fear nothing, Bontran! No one can ever beat you," cried his toadies.

HE'S A CHAMPION
WITH LANCE, SWORD,
BATTLE-AXE, OR
MACE.

"By the land! I don't believe there is a man in Christendom can match me," cried Bontran, and led the way into the tavern.

The place immediately filled up, amidst a great uproar, to the obvious annoyance of the one man in the whole place who didn't seem excited about the arrival of the Champion. During all the excitement he had been sitting at a table in a corner of the big room, gazing before him, as if lost in thought.

Now he looked up with a frown, and cast a sharp glance at the Champion who was causing all the disturbance, then he sank back once more into his thoughts, oblivious to his surroundings.

"Ho, scullions!" the Champion roared. "Wine—wine. Every man here shall drink with me to-day. Wine, you rogues."

His orders were swiftly obeyed. He might almost have been a King himself judging by the deference with which he was treated. The potboys scurried to do his bidding.

Great bumpers of wine were placed in the hands of everyone. A beaker was even placed before the silent stranger in the corner. He waved it away impatiently.

"To Bontran!" cried one of the guests, raising his beaker aloft. "To Bontran, Champion of Burgundy, the pride and glory of Burgundy and of France."

"Vive Bontran! Long live the King of Burgundy's Champion!"

Bontran loved flattery. He began to boast of his exploits.

"It was thus I broke the neck of Alonzo of Spain," he cried, showing a death-lock on one of his attendants. "I snapped it like a rotten stick."

"You could hear the crack of it all over the place," said his toady.

"Ah, but the best fight I ever had was the time I challenged the King of England's Champion, because of an insult he had offered Burgundy," Bontran boasted. "But before I tell you that story, another beaker. Then I will tell you!"

He suddenly broke off, with an astonished growl, seeing for the first time the silent stranger in the corner of the room. The first thing he had noted was the full tankard of wine on the stranger's table. It had not been tasted.

The eyes of Bontran narrowed, and his moustachios began to bristle.

"Hola there!" he suddenly thundered. "You, there, in the corner. Do you refuse to drink with me?"

The inn became silent. Bontran was notorious for his swift fits of uncontrolled passion. If he were insulted, or even fancied himself insulted, he would fly into a terrible fit of rage. He had broken many a man for nothing more than an imaginary insult.

The sudden silence made the stranger look up.

"Were you speaking to me, Sir Knight?" he demanded, in French, but with an unmistakable English accent.

"I was speaking to you. I asked you a question. Do you refuse to drink with me?"

The stranger's answer was plain and simple.

"Yes," he replied.

"You have your reasons, no doubt?" he demanded in a choking voice.

"The best of all reasons. I am not thirsty, and do not wish to drink."

A noise like the growl of an enraged mastiff issued from Bontran's throat.

"Do you hear that, comrades? The English pig refuses to drink with us. Name of a name! Name of a thousand names!"

Shouldering his way down the room, Bontran approached the English knight's table. He picked up the tankard and offered it.

"Drink," he commanded.

"I do not wish to drink," came the reply.

"But I—I, Bontran, wish you to drink! Name of a dog! Must I force it down your throat?"

He suddenly reached round, grabbed the stranger by the scruff of the neck, and tried to thrust his face into the tankard.

What happened after that no one could exactly say. All the spectators saw was that Bontran suddenly somersaulted through the air, then down he came with a crash on one of the tables. The table collapsed with the force of the impact and Bontran went to the floor amidst the wreckage.

Up he came in a moment, bellowing like a bull. The stranger had also risen to his feet, and the spectators were now able to get a clearer view of him. As he faced Bontran, everyone saw that he was as big, if not bigger than the Champion, but so perfectly proportioned that he did not look it. His face was bronzed, as if by tropical suns. His eyes were a vivid blue, which changed now to a steely grey in a startling manner. Flaxen hair curled about his brow.

"He is a foreigner. He doesn't know whom he has offended," the spectators whispered to each other. "Bontran will kill him."

Bontran advanced a step, breathing hard, the veins standing out on his forehead. His moustachios were bristling like the bristles on a sow's back. His whole body was trembling with concentrated rage.

"Clear away the tables," he commanded in a strangled voice. "This insult can only be avenged in blood."

The Duel

BONTRAN whirled his sword from its sheath, and, answering gesture for gesture, the stranger also drew.

Bontran's way of fighting was always the same. Shock tactics. A whirlwind attack to fling his opponent off his balance, a quick thrust and—phui!—that was the end of the matter.

In he rushed, crouching low, his blade pointed upwards, thinking to carry the Englishman backwards to the wall. But the Englishman braced himself. To Bontran's amazement his sword was met with the clash of steel, held in a hand so strong that he was brought to a dead halt. He almost recoiled from the shock of that first meeting.

And then the spectators saw a sword-fight such as few of them had ever seen before, even in a day when tournaments were the order of the day and sword-fighting was an art which everyone practised. Backwards and forwards the fighters swayed. They circled around. The ring of their steel was like the continuous ringing of a bell.

They parried and thrust and cut and feinted. Their swords gleamed like streaks of fire in the sunshine that was pouring in through the windows. Breathlessly quick it was, every movement dangerous.

But all at once the end came—and it came in a way that no one expected. As the fighters locked blades again, the sword of Bontran suddenly snapped in his hand. The blade broke fairly through the middle, leaving him with the useless hilt in his hand.

"A Champion," the Englishman scoffed,

as Bontran flung away the useless weapon and cursed loudly. "A Champion—and yet he uses a sword like that!"

As he spoke, he flung his own sword into a corner, and advanced on Bontran with bare hands. Bontran could scarcely believe his luck. He gave another of his bull-like roars. Lowering his head he charged, his great arms flailing like a windmill.

But again, as in the sword-play, he received a rude shock. He was received with a blow that could only have come out of England, a straight left to the right ear that jarred him to his very toes. Before he could recover a right caught him on the nose, and another left banged up one of his eyes.

The next few minutes were an object lesson, showing what boxing can do against mere brutal strength. The Englishman ripped the Champion to pieces.

But even the finest boxer cannot keep out a determined fighter. Bontran kept boring in, trying to get a wrestling hold. Finally, trying to escape him, the Englishman slipped and fell. As the stranger rose to his feet Bontran saw his chance. Like a panther he leaped, clean on to his enemy's back. His arms wound around the Englishman's neck. He jammed a knee in the small of his back, and, as he had done to many an opponent before, tried to break his neck.

But here Bontran was up against something he had never met before. That powerful back of the Englishman's resisted the pressure. He bent forward, until he managed to put both his hands back through his own legs. Those hands got a firm hold on one of the Champion's ankles. Then the Englishman flung himself back, his feet clear of the ground, hanging on to the Champion's leg at the same time.

Straining backwards as he was, Bontran went backwards with a vengeance. Down he went on the flat of his back, with all the weight of the Englishman thudding on top of him. There was a gasp from the spectators as the stranger rolled clear.

Bontran's strength and stamina enabled him to get on his feet again. Like a flash the stranger, now a human tiger, was on him. What kind of hold he got no one could see. But there was a sudden scream from Bontran, the dull snapping of a bone, then through the air he was flying to land with a sickening crash on the floor. There was another sound of snapping bone as he fell, and there lay the great Champion of Burgundy, scarcely looking like a human being, with his right wrist and his left arm broken, and feeling more dead than alive.

In the manner of crowds, the Champion was immediately deserted, and the winner was surrounded by a cheering throng. Everyone began to demand his name, and all about him.

But he refused to give any answer to their questions. Swiftly he strode to the stairs which led to the upper floor.

The crowd plied the landlord of the Golden Cockerel with questions.

"He is an English knight. He has been in the Holy Land, that's certain," the landlord informed the curious. "He travels alone. He had no attendants. His war-horse is in the stable. His pack-horse carries armour on which the only device is a red gauntlet. It is the only device on his shield and his breastplate!"

In a flash the crowd fastened on the one fact.

"Red Gauntlet!" they began to cry. "Red Gauntlet, the Englishman, has defeated the King of Burgundy's Champion!"

"Red Gauntlet! Red Gauntlet!"

The King's Wager

IN the great Chateau of Alencon, it had been a day of days. There had franced nearly all the Kings and Princes of France and Germany to settle their quarrels, and to put an end to the perpetual wars which were

ravaging their countries. For in these times Europe was divided into many small states, each ruled by a King or overlord.

In open conference they had discussed their grievances, settled their boundaries and made a solemn compact to abide by the decisions.

Now, the serious business of the Conference over, they were feasting in the great hall of the Chateau, with the most prominent of their nobles and retainers.

"By the great wind!" cried the King of Burgundy, rising to his feet with a flagon of wine in his hand. "It has been a day of days. Never before was there such an event as this, and never before has there been such a gathering of the chivalry of Europe. To-morrow's tourney will be sung and told in story till the end of time. I ask you to drink with me to all true knights who to-morrow will battle for honour and immortal fame."

"To all true knights," cried the company, raising their flagons.

The Duke of Lorraine stole a glance at Burgundy. Between the two of them there had been a long and incessant feud.

Never were two men more unlike. The King of Burgundy was a well-built figure of a man, full-lipped and a black beard round the angle of his jaw, with a great laugh and a temper that flashed out like a burst of summer lightning, and as quickly vanished.

The Duke of Lorraine, on the other hand, was long and lean, with little blinking eyes that never looked anyone straight in the face.

As he sat there amidst the babel of talk, an attendant came up to him and whispered something in his ear, something that made him blink more quickly than ever, and brought a flicker of a smile to the corners of his thin lips. The words the attendant whispered, were these:

"The King of Burgundy's Champion has been broken in a tavern brawl. He is well-nigh dead. His arm and his wrist have been broken, and they say he will not leave his bed for a full six months."

That thin smile continued to flicker about the corners of the Duke's lips as he listened to the toasts that were being made. At last he himself rose to his feet.

"Each one of us has a Champion," he said. "Each Champion is a good man and true. We each of us believe in our Champions."

"There is none in all the world like my own Champion, Bontran," cried Burgundy bringing his fist down with a crash on the table. "My honour is safe in his hands."

"My own Champion is a good and true knight," said Lorraine slyly. "He is a German Knight, who has won a great reputation in the Holy Land. Sir Amyas is his name. But enough of boasting. What I was going to suggest is that as each of us has faith in his own Champion, it would be not amiss if we decided to back our faith by more than words."

"Words—words—!" cried the King of Burgundy. "I back my faith in Bontran with more than words. I have such prodigious faith in Bontran that I will stake the whole Kingdom of Burgundy on my Champion's prowess."

"We would scarcely accept such a wager," said Lorraine, looking more like a reptile than ever. "But I have long claimed the Castles of Langres, Neufchateau Jussey and Luxeuil, and all the lands and rights that go with them. You, on the other hand, have claimed my castle of Toul. Are you prepared to wager your castles against mine on the prowess of your Champion?"

"Aye—and a hundred more," cried the rash King. "And I call every knight here to witness. You have lost your castle of Toul, Lorraine. Name of a Name."

"Time will show," said Lorraine, and smiled another of his thin smiles.

That thin smile worried the King, and when at last the feasting came to an end and he had retired to his apartment, he summoned an attendant.

"Bring my Champion, Bontran, to

In a temple in Syria there is a stone 67 feet long by 14 feet high by 9 feet thick.

me," he ordered. "I must speak with him before I settle to my rest or I shall not be able to sleep a wink. If he fails me on the morrow, my plight will be a sorry one, for the possession of those castles I have wagered will give that fox, Lorraine, a strangle-hold on Burgundy. I will become no more than a petty vassal. Bring Bontran to me at once."

"My—my lord," the attendant stammered, scarcely daring to break the news.

"At once," thundered the King.

"Y-yes, my lord," said the attendant hurriedly, and vanished as quickly as he could.

The Duke stamped backwards and forwards in his chamber, biting his lips, and grinding his teeth.

"I have been a fool," he reproached himself. "I should not have risked so much. But all will be well. Bontran cannot fail. I do not like him. He is a bully and a braggart. Yet he is a great fighter."

The moments passed. Still no sign of the Champion on whom he relied, and on whom he had staked the strongest of his castles.

"By my sword! What keeps them?"

Footsteps were heard on the stairs. Slow and stumbling footsteps, and the sound of whispering voices.

"Careful now—round the corner," said a voice.

The King strode to the door, flung it open, and into the room staggered a sorrowful procession.

"Bontran has come, sire," said the attendant.

Bontran had indeed come! Borne on a litter by four retainers, he was carried into the King's chamber, and laid gently on the floor. The King stared at the sight with incredulous eyes.

It was indeed Bontran, but not the Bontran the King knew. His face was swathed in bandages. His arm was in splints. His other wrist was in bandages. The famous champion was a mere wreck. He couldn't even speak, as his jawbone had been fractured by one of Red Gauntlet's terrific blows.

"Who has done this thing?" cried the King angrily, when he had recovered from his stupefaction. "What band of ruffians has set on Bontran?"

"No band of ruffians, sire, but an English knight. A wandering English knight whom they call Red Gauntlet. 'Twas all done in fair fight! 'Twas Bontran himself provoked the fight because Red Gauntlet would not drink with him."

"It is impossible. No man alive could have broken Bontran in such a manner in fair fight."

"'Twas so, sire," the attendant replied. "I had the tale from one of Bontran's squires, who saw the whole event. Bontran was beaten first in sword play, and afterwards in fair wrestling. Never was such a combat seen. The English knight had the strength of ten men."

"By the Seven Wonders of the earth!" the King raved. "I thought there was no man in all the world who could do that. This Red Gauntlet must be found at once. At once, d'ye hear. Find the dog at once and bring him to me. Go quickly, fools. Bring Red Gauntlet to me ere another day has dawned, or your bones will ache for it."

The Chase

KNOCK! Knock! Knock!
Red Gauntlet stirred uneasily in his sleep, then all at once he was wide awake. On his door, a heavy fist was pounding. Excited voices sounded on the stairway. A voice was crying, "Open up, in the name of the King of Burgundy! Open up there."

Red Gauntlet leaped from his bed and flung open the door.

"What means this din?" he cried angrily to the men who crowded the stairs.

The noise they had made had by this time awakened everybody and in a moment or two the whole inn was in a pandemonium.

"The King of Burgundy has given orders to arrest the English knight," cried a voice.

"Surrender in the name of the King of Burgundy!" said the leader of the King's party.

"Foul fiend fly away with the King of Burgundy," cried Red Gauntlet. "Why should a free-born Englishman surrender to him?"

"His majesty brooks no disobedience to his orders," came the reply. "If you do not surrender, we must take you by force."

This was the kind of language Red Gauntlet understood.

"Back dog!" he cried in a voice of thunder.

As the King's man tried to force his way into the chamber, Red Gauntlet sprang. Before the surprised fellow realised what was happening, he was in the grip of a pair of iron hands. Effortlessly, as if he were a half-empty sack, Red Gauntlet raised the man above his head and hurled him into the arms of his followers, who were crowding the stairway.

A cry of horror arose.

"Red Gauntlet has defied the King's authority. He is mad."

"Back dogs!" cried Red Gauntlet, in a voice like a trumpet, as there came another rush up the stairs.

He had run back into his room, and got his sword. Now at the top of the gallery stairs he made the blade whistle. It flashed like a streak of lightning in the moonlight, and caused even the bravest of his enemies to pause.

But the gallery, in the manner of old inns, ran right round the courtyard. There were two stairways, leading up to the guest-rooms. The king's men immediately took advantage of that. They split into two parties, one party going up the stairway on the opposite side of the courtyard to take Red Gauntlet in the rear.

He had no chance against such odds, attacked front and rear as he was.

His swift glance took in the situation. Down below in the courtyard a groom was holding a fine bay stallion, belonging to one of the King's men. Red Gauntlet made his blade sing within an inch of the nose of his nearest attacker. Then he leaped clean over the gallery rail.

Down from the gallery he shot, straight on to the back of the bay stallion. He landed with both feet on its back, as lightly as a circus acrobat and slid down into the saddle. One swish of his sword sent the groom scurrying out of the way. He seized the bridle and whirled the stallion round.

"Make way! Make way!" he roared, and sent the stallion plunging forward.

The crowd scattered in haste. The stallion's hooves struck fire from the cobbles. It reared and plunged, but it quickly knew its master. The hand on the bridle was a hand of steel. A dig of Red Gauntlet's heels sent it bounding forward.

Away through the cobbled streets the stallion dashed, awakening the whole town with the thunder of its hooves. Away through the town and out into the wooded country beyond they swept, well ahead of all pursuit.

But the King's men had their orders, and when the King of Burgundy gave an order it had to be obeyed. Red Gauntlet heard the thunder of the pursuit.

For perhaps three miles Red Gauntlet spurred along the forest path, hoping to throw off the pursuit. But still it came on, and at last he pulled the stallion to a halt.

"A murrain on it!" he growled. "Am I to be hunted like a fox, and driven away from the tourney, just because a fool of a Champion couldn't mind his own business!"

Leaping down from the stallion's back, he waited. While he waited he slashed off the leafy branch of a tree with his sword. He tied it to the stallion's tail.

Nearer and nearer drew the chase, and the first of the pursuers appeared in the moonlight. No sooner had he appeared than Red Gauntlet gave the stallion a thwack on the rump with the flat of his sword, and away the animal bounded.

The tree branch began to flap about its legs. The strange experience struck panic into the beast's heart, and away it fled as if pursued by a thousand fiends.

Red Gauntlet dived into the undergrowth by the side of the path, and past him swept the chase in full cry. On they tore, spurring hard and yelling at their mounts.

"It'll be a long while before you catch up with that stallion," he chuckled. "The branch I tied to his tail will keep him going. Good hunting to ye, gentlemen!"

Red Gauntlet Returns

A LONG the forest path a sturdy black-cowled friar came stamping. By his side hung his begging bowl, and in his hand he had a great ash stave. Although posing as a man of religion, he was no more than a sturdy beggar, belonging to one of the great begging fraternities of the period.

Along the path he came striding, in the early dawn.

Suddenly out from the undergrowth stepped Red Gauntlet, with a grim smile on his lips. Hand on sword, he blocked this path.

"Pax vobiscum," said the friar, mechanically. "Peace be with you, my son!"

"Pax vobiscum," Red Gauntlet returned with a smile, but he did not move out of the path.

The friar raised his stave in a menacing manner.

"Retro Sathanus," he thundered. "Get thee behind me, Evil One! What—would ye dare to block the path of a friar! Out of the way, ruffian!"

"I merely wish to borrow your cloak," Red Gauntlet replied. "And, mark me, friar, I mean to have it. So if you wish no violence—"

"Have at ye for a rogue," roared the friar, and raised his stave high over his head. Down it came with a swish, and a force that would have cracked the knight's head like an eggshell if it had landed.

But it didn't land. Up shot Red Gauntlet's right hand. It met the descending stave in mid-air. There was a loud thwack as it struck his open palm. Then the hand closed on it, and held it there. Held it there as if it had been frozen in mid-air!

"Fool of a beggar—would you match your strength against mine," said Red Gauntlet. "Into the wood with you, you rogue."

Poking the ruffian in the ribs with the stave, the knight forced him off the path and into the shelter of the trees. There, in a little clearing, the friar was ordered to strip. The man tried to protest, but it was to no purpose. When at last he had cast off his clothes, and stood in no more than his shirt, the knight donned the gown and cowl and sandals, and took the ash-stave and begging-bowl.

"I regret to leave you in no more than your shirt," he said mockingly. "But I must be on my way!"

The Tournament

ON the ground which had been specially prepared for the tournament the crowds had already begun to gather. In the air was a fever of excitement. Never had such a tournament been held. All the pride of Europe was there, and every knight with a reputation to make or lose.

Everyone was gay and happy, and eagerly excited at the prospect of such a day's sport as had never been seen before. The nobles and barons and princes had laid aside their quarrels for the time being.

But there was one man who had a sullen

and anxious brow. That man was the King of Burgundy. He kept away from all the company. He strode backwards and forwards alone, eaten up with worry.

"That fox of Lorraine!" he kept snarling to himself. "He knew all the time that my Champion had been crippled. But I have staked my faith as a true knight to hand him over my castles if my Champion does not win."

As he strode there alone, one of his retainers came running breathlessly. "My sire," he stammered. "Our men have returned. The English knight tricked them, and left them to chase a riderless stallion. On their way back, they fell in with a friar. It seems that the Englishman stripped him of his clothes, and is now here in the guise of a friar."

New hope sprang up in the King's heart. He bellowed out orders.

"Let every friar in the assembly be arrested and brought before me," he thundered. "If the Englishman is among them, I will smell him out, never fear."

When he saw that his orders had been obeyed, the King strode towards his pavilion, and entered his tent. No sooner had he entered than an iron hand reached out at him and seized him. The point of a dagger pricked at his throat.

"Listen to me, proud King," spat a cold voice. "You have been hunting me like a dog, and like a dog I'll be hunted no longer. I have come from afar to this tourney to avenge an insult. Call off your hounds, and give me a fair field, or I swear that you will never leave this tent alive."

Recovering his senses, the King gazed into the steel-cold eyes that were staring into his. He saw the lean, sunburnt face under the black friar's cowl—and suddenly the King collapsed.

A great gust of laughter shook him. He roared with laughter until, in sheer surprise, Red Gauntlet let go his hold.

"The jest may seem good to you—" Red Gauntlet began.

"Jest!" The King gradually recovered. "Faith, Sir Knight, it is no jest, but grim and deadly earnest. The fair lands of Burgundy are at stake. What think ye I wanted you for?"

"Why, to throw me into one of your dungeons for ruining your Champion, of course."

"No, no, no!" cried the King. "I want you to be my Champion in the place of Bontran, the boasting fool. Quick, Sir Knight. There is no time to lose. Any reward shall be yours. If you can beat Sir Amyas—"

"Sir Amyas," growled Red Gauntlet—and the growl in his throat was like the growl of an angry mastiff. "That caitiff! I have followed him all the way from the Holy Land. He foully betrayed me, and left me to suffer shame and disgrace. I have followed him here and have sworn that he shall die."

"Then you are my champion," cried the King. "Sir Amyas fights for Lorraine."

The trumpets were blowing in the lists.

"Sir Amyas of Lorraine doth here and now assert the right of his master, the Duke of Lorraine, to certain castles and properties at present held in the possession of the King of Burgundy. If any other but the Duke of Lorraine assert any title to these castles and properties, then Sir Amyas saith that he lieth and is a false traitor, being ready in person to combat with him: and in this quarrel will adventure his life against him, on this the day appointed for a settlement."

For a long time after the challenge had been issued, Sir Amyas the German sat motionless on his war-horse at the end of the lists, his lance at rest.

Again the herald made the proclamation, and still there was no reply. For the third time he made the proclamation and the decision was about to be given for the Duke of Lorraine when there came a startling blare of trumpets from the other end of the lists. Out into the lists rode a knight in black armour. Completely black he was from head

to foot, save for the red gauntlet emblazoned on his breastplate and shield.

"Red Gauntlet! Red Gauntlet! The Unknown Knight!" roared the mob.

In a voice that rang through the lists like a trumpet, Red Gauntlet made his challenge.

There were no further preliminaries. The champions retired to their respective ends of the lists, and awaited the signal for the encounter. No sooner did the trumpets sound than both riders dashed their spurs into their steeds, and they bounded from the mark like arrows from the bow.

A breathless hush descended on the crowd. Nothing could be heard but the thunder of the horses' hooves as they raced at each other. Down on each other they charged as if no force on earth could withstand their fury.

There was a resounding crash as their spears met each other fairly and squarely.



Red Gauntlet had knocked his opponent off his horse and had dismounted to fight him on foot. But Sir Amyas mounted his horse again and tried to ride down the English knight. It was bare hands against a lance.

That of Sir Amyas met Red Gauntlet full on the breastplate. That of Red Gauntlet, aimed higher, caught Sir Amyas clean between the visor bars, and swept him from his horse.

Red Gauntlet made a flying dismount and faced about to give battle on foot; but Sir Amyas came charging through the dust clouds, mounted once more. The German had been unhurt by his fall and had seized a fresh lance and remounted. The shrieks of the crowd died to silence. The German's act was against all the rules of chivalry. Red Gauntlet had no chance against a horseman.

But just as the lance was at his throat, the black knight acted. He let the lance pass under his arm, then he leaned back and yanked upwards on the lance. Sir Amyas left his saddle like a rocket and crashed into the dust for the second time.

"We meet at last, false German," snarled Red Gauntlet through his visor. "For the

last time. This time you shall not escape, traitor."

"You—you here!" cried Sir Amyas, recoiling a pace.

"Aye, I have followed you all the way from the Holy Land. You cannot escape me," Red Gauntlet cried. "Come, fight for your life, or die like the dog that you are."

The two knights went at each other like madmen. Their swords struck fire from their armour. The sparks flew in showers.

But gradually the German began to give ground. Gradually he began to weaken and retreat. The retreat became a rout. Once, amidst the jeers of the crowd, he turned his back, and ran a few paces. Relentlessly Red Gauntlet pursued him. He drove Sir Amyas into a corner, and then dashing in under his uplifted sword, he drove the point of his sword through a chink of his armour straight to the German's throat.

"It is the end of an old quarrel," said Red Gauntlet as the marshals of the lists came hurrying up. "If ever knight deserved death that one did."

"My Champion! My Champion!" cried the King of Burgundy, coming rushing up and clasping Red Gauntlet in his arms. "Just look at that sour dog of Lorraine! Look at his face. It is green with rage and jealousy. He now loses his castle of Toul! Ha, ha, ha! He thought that I could not find a champion, but now I have gotten a champion greater than ever I had before! You are my Champion, are you not?"

"I have sworn it. I will fight for you whenever and wherever you will," Red Gauntlet replied.

"Red Gauntlet! Red Gauntlet!" roared the crowd.

How do you like this deadly fighter? There's a top-notch yarn for you next week. Red Gauntlet battles an army single-handed.

THE GHOST DRUMMER OF THE BLUE BRIGADE



Three Against an Army

BULLETS whistled round the heads of General Eugene Fleckmann, commander of the Robber Army, and his troopers and an escort of cavalry as they pulled round their horses and galloped madly for safety.

The firing came from earthworks that had been thrown up months previously, when the great Battle of Satowa was fought between the North and South in the American Civil War.

Rage and bewilderment were mingled on Fleckmann's hard face. He could not understand what had happened. The redoubt appeared to be occupied by a substantial force. Bayonets glittered above the parapet. Rifles protruded from all the loopholes. Here and there a shako could be seen.

From the distance came the frantic puffing of locomotives at Satowa Junction. It was to investigate the noise of the engines that Fleckmann had ridden forward. Something must have gone wrong with his plans.

While his main force was to pick up ammunition from the battlefield to replenish lost supplies, two hundred troopers under his second-in-command, Major Titus Burger, had been detached to work round and capture the station, which was congested with passenger and freight trains. Now that the Civil War had ended, commerce was trying to make up for lost time. There were goods worth a huge fortune waiting to be plundered on the Junction tracks.

It was clear to Fleckmann that somehow Burger had failed, and that the locomotives were working desperately to clear the sidings and get the vehicles away. But the way to the Junction from the battlefield was blocked by the redoubt.

The duelling scars showed up vividly on Fleckmann's cheeks as he at last reined up. The capture and looting of the Junction was to have been a climax of his raid through Tennessee into Arkansas.

Fleckmann, a soldier of fortune, had fought for the North for his own ends during the Civil War. When peace was declared he

put a sinister project into execution. He had released a thousand jailbirds from a military prison, equipped them, and set out on a vast marauding expedition, safe in the knowledge that months must elapse before a force large enough to tackle him could be assembled from the demobilised battalions.

Uncertainty had him in its grip as he stared back towards the redoubt. Had a force at last been mustered to oppose him? Judging by the briskness of the rifle fire, the earthworks were strongly held. And from beyond the stronghold came the incessant puffing of the engines.

Fleckmann gave a sharp order for the Robber Army to reassemble.

But before Fleckmann could give a further command, there was a feeble shout.

A man in a once-smart uniform was

RAMROD PLAYS BASE-BALL — WITH A RIFLE AND A HAND-GRENADE FOR A BALL.

staggering out of the spruce woods on the far side of the battlefield. He had lost his helmet. His tunic was torn.

"By thunder!" Fleckmann uttered a startled exclamation. "It's Titus!" He dug his spurs into his horse and galloped to meet his second-in-command. "What's happened to you?" he shouted. "Where are your two hundred men?"

Burger, over whose left eye a repellent white film had grown, gave a groan. "Most of them are dead," he said.

"Ambushed?" cried Fleckmann.

"No," answered Burger. "We seized a train in which to travel to the Junction. The locomotive was captured by that infernal Drummer and his two rogues. They let it run amok with the train. It crashed over a trestle and caught fire."

"With all our men aboard?" demanded

Fleckmann, and saw Burger nod. "By my sabre," his wrath was intense, "that reduces our army to eight hundred! So it was the Drummer! Queer! There was a roll from his drum just before the firing from the redoubt! Can he have assembled a force to fight us?"

But the garrison of the redoubt consisted of just three men.

While the Drummer, an uncanny figure in his flesh-coloured mask with his battered Injun drum slung over his shoulder and a crutch under his right arm, kept watch from the rampart, his two comrades hastened to re-load the row of rifles sticking out through the loopholes.

"Worked first time," chuckled Lieutenant Reed Cannady, who was only nineteen, but who had had two years of warfare. "Wonder how long we can hold out?"

"Long eno' for the Junction to be cleared, I hopes," grunted Ramrod M'Cannon, former bosun in a British brig, and gunner in the Union Army.

A huge man was Ramrod, with a piratical, whiskered face. He had joined the Robber Army by mistake, and had rescued Reed. Then the latter was taken prisoner by Fleckmann. In the woods they had encountered the mysterious Drummer, and eventually accepted him as their leader to fight against the Robber Army.

The Drummer never gave a clue as to his identity, but in his old hat was a faded tuft of blue-black feathers, the symbol of the Kentucky Blue Jays. The North had possessed no more formidable regiment than these irregulars, who had been raised and commanded by Colonel Richard Saginaw, pioneer, blazer of trails, and Indian fighter.

Such savage blows had the Blue Jays struck at the South that the harassed Confederates had offered ten thousand dollars for their betrayal into an ambush. It was Fleckmann's shameful secret that he had taken this bribe and lured the Blue Jays into a trap, in which they had been annihilated.

The Drummer looked over his shoulder.

"Judgin' by th' row th' locomotives are makin', Superintendent M'Coll hasn't got much stuff away yet," he remarked. "But,

considerin' what a jam th' Junction was in, I'm not surprised."

M'Coll, the railroad superintendent, was struggling to clear the Junction, sending the trains off anywhere rather than let them fall into the hands of the Robber Army. It was typical of the audacity of the Drummer and his comrades that they should take on the desperate task of trying to hold up Fleckmann until the trains had gone.

Reed closed the breach of a rifle. "We're ready again, Drummer," he called out. "We've got thirty rifles loaded."

Ramrod replaced a bayonet that had slipped down from the parapet. The weapons and kit they were using for their immense bluff they had gathered from the battlefield. The shakos that Fleckmann had seen and which he believed men were wearing were merely stuck up on rifles.

There was a sharp, warning shout from the Drummer.

"Get ready," he exclaimed. "He's sending up a strong force of infantry to attack us!"

The Defence of the Redoubt

REED took a hasty glimpse through a loophole. A hundred infantry, with fixed bayonets, had started to advance. Crouching low, they ran forward swiftly. They kept in open formation, thus making a difficult target.

"Now," said the Drummer. "Fire!" Bang, bang, bang! Reed and Ramrod ran as fast as they could go along the trench, snapping off the rifles. They did not pause to take aim, and so quickly did they pull trigger after trigger that it sounded as if thirty men were firing a ragged volley.

Several of the attackers were hit, and fell sprawling. The others flung themselves to the ground and began firing. Bullets thudded viciously into the sandbags. A shako was whisked high into the air.

Reed and Ramrod had each re-loaded half a dozen rifles by the time the infantry began to make another rush. Bang, bang! With more deliberate aim they picked off a man with each shot, not wasting a bullet.

The rush ceased as abruptly as it began. The troopers were out for loot—not to be killed. Lying flat, they continued to blaze away recklessly at the redoubt.

"Drummer," grunted Ramrod, "can I have a wallop at 'em now?"

"Aye," said the Drummer.

Ramrod's eyes gleamed. His horny hand stroked the rusty barrel of a squat trench-mortar. The muzzle of the short cannon was fully a foot in diameter. Gunpowder was the charge, and Ramrod had filled the muzzle to the brim with jagged bits of metal, small cannon-balls, and grape-shot.

"Hold yer ears," he exclaimed as a sulphur match fizzed in his fingers.

Reed got his hands to his ears in the nick of time.

"Take a swallow at this, you skugs," roared Ramrod, and put the match to the touch-hole.

Boom! Flame belched from the muzzle. There was a terrific detonation as the mortar discharged its contents and recoiled a couple of yards.

Screeches burst from the infantry as the shower of hot metal scattered over them. At least a dozen figures lay motionless on the ground as the result of Ramrod's shot.

But as Reed removed his hands from his ears he caught the mutter of voices.

They came from a flanking trench that linked up with the redoubt at a right angle.

While the infantry had been attacking, a dozen troopers, commanded by a sergeant, had crept up from the side and managed to reach the flanking trench without being seen.

As Reed whirled round, not having time to shout a warning, a smoking grenade was

hurled over the sandbags, and fell just behind the Drummer.

The grenade burned the skin from Reed's fingers as he snatched it up. With all the force in his arm he hurled it back into the side trench. Bang! Its instantaneous explosion was followed by yells and groans.

"By jeebers, we've got to clear 'em out," snapped the Drummer.

"Need grenades to toss over the top of your parapet," muttered Reed.

"Trouble is we ain't got any grenades," Ramrod growled.

"I'll tell you what to do," exclaimed the Drummer, and swiftly made his suggestion.

Ramrod nodded, and grabbed a rifle to which a bayonet was fixed. He held the barrel as if it were a spear, and then hurled it into the air. Down into the flanking trench plunged rifle and bayonet with a wicked whistle. There was a thud, followed by a bubbling scream. The needle-point of the bayonet had found a mark. Reed had a second rifle whizzing over the top before the scream had ceased, and there was another stricken cry as it dropped.

But more men could be heard scrambling along the adjoining trench.

"It looks like they'll soon shift us if they keep tossing over grenades like this. We'll have to do something about it," said Reed.

As he spoke, they heard the scraping of a match on the other side of the sandbags. Immediately, Ramrod started to climb the wall of sandbags separating the trenches.

"What are you doing? Come down. You'll be shot," shouted Reed.

Ramrod just grinned and went on. He reached the top and stood up. Immediately bullets began to fly around him from the main force of the Robber Army, but he paid no heed. His eyes were fixed on the adjoining trench. There, one of the soldiers was just about to hurl the grenade that he had lighted with the match which Ramrod had heard striking. Seeing Ramrod up there, he hurled the grenade straight at him.

Ramrod lifted his rifle over his shoulder and waited for it. Swish! He lashed down at the grenade, struck it with the butt, and literally batted it back in among the soldiers, where it exploded instantaneously. Ramrod now turned and sprang back into the trench beside Reed and the Drummer.

"Prepare to attack 'em now, men," shouted the Drummer, as though he had a numerous force at his command.

The survivors did not wait to be attacked. They could be heard running wildly away along the trench, and the Drummer saw them scramble out at the end and go scampering back towards the main force.

Reed and Ramrod cheered lustily, and were starting to load the rifles when the Drummer came sliding down from the ramparts.

"Down!" he exclaimed. "Fleckmann's bringin' up his guns!"

The Robber Army possessed a battery of the latest steel-rifled guns, and now he planned to shell the redoubt.

"We'll have to clear out," shouted the Drummer as a shell exploded with a shattering roar. "Those guns are well out o' range o' th' trench-mortar! We'll fire a final volley an' then beat it!"

Out of the rear of the redoubt they crawled, and ran down the slope from the plateau towards the Junction.

The sky behind them was splashed with fire and fountains of earth as the shelling of the redoubt continued.

Ramrod gave a deep-chested laugh.

"Hark at him wastin' his ammunition," he chortled.

"Th' longer he goes on shellin', th' better for us," declared the Drummer.

Reed, whose long legs had carried him a little way ahead, was the first to emerge from a grove of trees.

"Look," he shouted triumphantly, gazing towards the Junction. "M'Coll's done wonders."

The station and sidings, which had been choked with rolling-stock, were now nearly empty.

At a run the three comrades reached the station.

Only a single car remained. It had solid sides, and was inscribed—"Wells Fargo!" It belonged to the famous transportation company.

This car stood at the end of a siding, and a locomotive was in the act of backing down towards it. A brakeman was waiting to couple the engine on to the vehicle. M'Coll himself was doing the signalling to the whiskered engineer.

The superintendent hailed the Drummer. "Thank the stars you're all right!" he called out. "Heard the guns going off! You can see we've been working!"

"Even faster than you yourself thought possible," praised the Drummer. "What's in this car?"

"The bullion I told you about," said M'Coll, keeping an eye on the approaching engine. "Gold and silver bars worth a hundred thousand dollars. Couldn't get at it before. Siding was blocked by a string of lumber trucks that couldn't be moved till the main tracks were cleared."

"The shelling's stopped," Reed broke in, a trace of anxiety in his voice. "Fleckmann won't lose much time in pushin' out his cavalry."

"We shall be all right," M'Coll replied. "We'll have this car coupled up and be away in less than a minute."

The locomotive was coming slowly along, tender first. It was the usual type of wood-burner, with an immense balloon smoke-stack. The engineer was watching M'Coll as the superintendent waved him on.

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LISBURN & TOWNSEND, Ltd. (8K.), Liverpool, 3.

An American, Mr William Hope Harvey, built a modern pyramid 120 feet high.

M'Coll's eyes measured the narrowing gap between engine and vehicle. He suddenly gave a shrill whistle and flung his arms out horizontally for the locomotive to stop.

The driver instantly shut off steam and clamped on the brakes.

The brakes bit all right, but the locked wheels skidded instead of stopping.

Thud! The tender struck the car with a heavy impact. The vehicle began to roll backwards along the siding. M'Coll made a despairing leap for the rod of the hand-brake, but reached it just too late. A splintering crash resounded as the car smashed into the wooden buffer-stops at the end of the siding, and came to rest with the leading pair of wheels on the ground.

The Gold Is Hidden

IT was a piece of appalling bad luck. Neither M'Coll nor the driver were to blame. Some tallow from a lamp had dripped on the rails at some time or other, leaving them greasy. Under other circumstances it would have been but a minor mishap. Now it was a disaster.

The superintendent looked in dismay at the Drummer.

"It will take at least ten minutes to get the car back on to the rails," he said. "Have we got that long?"

"No!" The Drummer shook his head. "But Fleckmann isn't stealin' that bullion! Open th' car doors!"

"No key," replied M'Coll tersely. "When

bullion's being transported, the Wells-Fargo agents open and shut the doors."

The Drummer gestured to Ramrod.

"Bust it open!" he snapped.

Ramrod's hand flew to his belt, and he pulled out the iron spike that he called his chiseller. Up the steps he climbed and wedged the chiseller into the hasp of the massive lock. The muscles bulged in his vast arms, a vein throbbled in the middle of his forehead as he strained to burst the fastening.

"You're hoping to rush the gold and silver away on the engine, of course?" said M'Coll.

"No," answered the Drummer. "It's goin' to be touch and go whether we git th' loco clear. Don't forget that Fleckmann's got artillery——"

The answer startled M'Coll.

"Man alive!" he gasped. "Where are you going to hide the gold?"

The Drummer pointed to the big water-tank from which the locomotives drew their supplies. Water dripping from the dangling hose-pipe dribbled away down a drain.

"Fetch the grating off that drain, Reed," the Drummer ordered. "Th' bullion'll be safe enough down there."

"By Pete, you're right," M'Coll declared. "It'll be easy enough to empty the drainage pit later on."

The clank as Reed lifted the grating off the drain was followed by a sharp crack and a grunt of triumph from Ramrod. By sheer strength he had broken the hasp. With a heave he slid the double doors open.

A pile of perhaps a hundred brick-size wooden boxes, each containing a bar of gold or silver, stood in the centre of the vehicle.

"Sling them out, Ramrod," commanded the Drummer. "We'll form a chain."

M'Coll, driver, fireman, and brakeman stood in a line. The superintendent caught the weighty boxes as Ramrod tossed them out of the car. Along the line they were thrown from man to man till they reached Reed. There was a rapid succession of splashes as he dropped them down the drain.

The Drummer kept sentry. His keen gaze searched the trees for the first sign of the enemy.

"Hurry!" he shouted, seeing a number of birds wheel up skywards from the trees. "They're comin'!"

"That's the lot, Drummer," Ramrod roared.

Clank! Reed dropped back the grating over the drain. As an after-thought he opened the valve a notch so that water splashed down from the hose in a continuous stream.

"On to the loco, all o' you!" exclaimed the Drummer.

The driver had the engine moving while Ramrod and Reed, the last aboard, were climbing up the steps.

Almost at the same moment steel glittered among the trees, and a squadron of cavalry thundered through the grove and galloped across the level ground towards the station.

The troopers raised their carbines and fired from the saddle. Bullets splattered the locomotive as it clanked along the siding.

The troop-leader, a bearded sergeant, shouted a command, and the horsemen suddenly changed direction.

They were aiming to cut off the engine before it could pass over the points.

THE HAIRY SHERIFF

Continued from Page 33.

"What?" yelled the Mayor, ducking for cover.

"It's all right, he's a prisoner," said Sam.

"Really?" exclaimed the Mayor, amazed and delighted. "I can hardly believe it. After all these years! Brannigan captured at last."

"I wouldn't have been," snarled Bull, "if they hadn't set a darned ape on me. Why, it—ain't the right way to treat a guy."

The Mayor hastily dressed and went down to let the visitors in.

"Splendid work, splendid work!" said the Mayor, pumping Sam's hand. "The whole town shall have a holiday to celebrate this day. I'll see that you get the reward as soon as I have been to the sheriff."

"Talking of sheriffs," said Sam, nodding towards Riley, "meet the new one, Mayor."

"Eh?" gasped the Mayor.

"This is Riley," said Sam. "He's the one who captured Brannigan. He's taking the sheriff's job at a hundred bucks a week. You surely haven't forgotten the old bye-law, Mayor?"

"N-no," stammered the Mayor, gaping at Riley. "B-but this is an ape. We couldn't have an ape for a sheriff. The—the dignity of the town——"

"Uh?" growled Riley.

"N-not that I have anything against you, Mr Riley," stammered Hiram, backing nervously round a table. "But this is a matter that—er—needs careful thought. I—I shall have to call a meeting of the leading citizens of the town to—er—consider the position."

After breakfast the Mayor called his meeting. A whole crowd of citizens turned up, but the Mayor took care not to let the matter come to the ears of Clem Skinner, so the sheriff was not there.

"Gents," said Mr Button, "I have good news for you. Bull Brannigan has been captured at last."

"Good!" yelled one of the citizens. "Now we can get rid of Skinner and get a new sheriff. That bye-law we passed years ago is still law."

"Yes—er—unfortunately," said Mr Button. "Ahem! Bull was captured by an ape. I fear we did not take that possibility into consideration."

"An ape! Great horned toads!"

"Well, I rather have an ape for a sheriff than Skinner," argued the first citizen.

"Any excuse to get rid of that guy."

"It's not a bad idea at that," said another citizen. "I heard about that ape. He made a pretty good job of cleaning up Spike's saloon. That was one of the worst spots in the town, always full of toughs and crooks, and the ape cleaned it out single-handed. That's the kind of sheriff we need."

"As long as we get rid of Skinner I don't care if we have a kangaroo for a sheriff."

"Quite, quite," muttered the Mayor doubtfully. "But what about Mr Skinner? He won't like giving up his job. Who's going to fire him?"

The citizens lapsed into thoughtful silence. Nobody relished that job. After some argument, however, they came to a decision and sent for Sam and Riley.

"Mr Parker," said the Mayor, "we have agreed to your claim that your—er—friend should be appointed, sheriff, but only on condition that he first fires the present sheriff."

"Good," said Sam. He beamed at Riley. "You heard what the gent said, pard. What do you think?"

"Oke," grunted the ape.

"He says he takes the job, gents," explained Sam. "Come on, Riley. To work."

They departed. The Mayor gazed after them with an unhappy look in his eyes.

"I hope I have done the right thing," he muttered. "But—an ape! Dear me, I do hope I have done the right thing."

Sam and Riley made their way straight to the sheriff's office. Clem Skinner was sitting at his desk. Hanging on a hook behind the door were his stetson and his waistcoat.

Sam took the waistcoat down and put it on Riley. Then he put the stetson on the ape's head. Skinner gaped at them with growing rage.

"Say, what's the idea?" he yelled, leaping to his feet. "Get out of here! Get——"

He broke off in amazement as Sam calmly removed the sheriff's star from his coat and pinned it on Riley's waistcoat. The ape began to grunt.

"He says you're fired," explained Sam to the startled Skinner. "He says he's the new sheriff. He's giving you ten seconds to get out of his office."

Skinner turned purple.

"What!" he yelled, grabbing his gun. "Get out of here, you half-witted circus clown, and take your performing monkey with you! Get out——"

He ended with a yelp of distress as a hairy paw gripped his arm, sending the gun flying across the room. Sam hurried to the door and opened it. Riley pitched the raving ex-sheriff into the street.

"Well, that's settled, pard," beamed Sam, closing the door. "Now I'll appoint myself your deputy and we'll get down to business."

Business started early for the sheriff that day. Within a few minutes the door bounced open and in marched the black-eyed bar-keeper and his six battered pals.

"Listen, sheriff," he snarled, "I've waited long enough for that circus guy to come across with the compensation for wrecking my saloon. Now I want him arrested——"

He stopped and his jaw dropped. He suddenly realised that he was not talking to Skinner. In the sheriff's chair, his feet on the desk, a stetson on the back of his head and a cigar in his mouth, was a hairy ape. Riley grinned cheerfully.

"Uh?" he remarked, removing the cigar.

"Morning, gents," said Sam. "The sheriff wants to know if you've got any complaints."

The bar-keeper and his pals goggled. "Sheriff!" stuttered the bar-keeper. He backed hastily to the door. "N-nunno! No complaints."

They departed. When Sam went to close the door he couldn't see them for dust!

Next week Riley starts his amazing career as a sheriff. His first arrest's a whopper.

The sergeant drew his sabre and pointed it at the lever that worked the points.

"Pull that lever over," he shouted. "We're finished if they turn the points," M'Coll broke out. "We'll run bang into the wall of the store-shed."

Flogging at their horses, the cavalry were drawing level. Those in the rear, under orders from the crafty sergeant, maintained a hot fusilade at the engine.

It was a terrific race, and it looked as if the troopers would win. The clanking of the side-rods, the thud of hoofs, the crack of the carbines mingled in a tumult of sound.

Ramrod suddenly seized the shovel. "Open the firebox," he bawled at the fireman.

A wave of scorching heat blew across the cab from the roaring flames as the iron door opened.

Ramrod bent forward and drove the shovel deep into the firebox, pulling it out piled high with sizzling, white-hot cinders.

Risking the bullets he swung right up and, with a sweep of his arm, hurled the contents of the shovel out of the cab.

The burning mass spread out in the air. Down on the men and horses showered the flaming splinters.

Neighing with terror, the sergeant's horse swerved and collided with the roan ridden by the corporal at his elbow.

Both animals toppled over. Down in front of the squadron they crashed on their riders. Over them fell the horses of the troopers immediately in their rear. Men rolled across the ground amid the lashing hoofs. Other horses, stung by the cinders, threw their riders and galloped madly away in all directions. It was a scene of incredible confusion.

"Smart wheeze, Ramrod," exclaimed Reed.

The driver immediately yanked open the throttle.

"Right away for Carson City," he shouted as the engine leapt ahead.

A hundred yards in front the line plunged into a narrow, tree-lined cutting.

Reed, looking back, saw a vivid flash spurt out behind the station.

A gun boomed. Craaack! A shell burst just over the speeding locomotive.

A terrific, blinding cloud of steam hissed out from a severed pipe, covering the engine in a scalding mist.

Speed fell away. The crippled loco wheezed to a stop.

"The engine's done for!" The driver's voice rang out harshly above the hiss of steam. "We'll have to abandon the ole gal."

Craaack! Another shell burst close by.

"Run for it," shouted the Drummer "Make for the trees up th' cutting!"

But one of the occupants of the cab did not move. Reed lay sprawling on the front of the tender, a great dent in his shako. A fragment from the second shell had caught his head a glancing blow and stunned him.

The steam hid him from the view of his comrades as they groped their way out of the cab and ran up the cutting.

From the station galloped a troop of lancers sent out as soon as it was seen that the shell had disabled the locomotive.

Death Sentence

MEANTIME Fleckmann and Burger were examining the Wells-Fargo car. It was a way-bill, picked up by Fleckmann from the floor, that informed them that the contents had consisted of gold and silver bars.

Fleckmann nearly choked. He tore at the collar of his tunic in a fury. His anger had been mounting ever since he had discovered how he had been tricked at the redoubt, and then had come the staggering blow of finding the junction cleared of the rolling stock he meant to loot. The knowledge that bullion worth a hundred thousand

dollars had slipped through his fingers was the last straw.

Then he received a piece of information that banished some of his rage. It was given him by one of the troopers who had chased the engine along the siding.

"I reckon the bullion was transferred from this car to the loco," the man said. "The engine was standing jest here when we rode into sight. It could ha' got away a lot sooner if they hadn't bin waitin' for something."

"By m'sabre, that's likely," Burger declared. "Somehow or other this Wells-Fargo car came off the rails. They wouldn't have time to get it away. By thunder, it's commonsense that the gold must have been shifted to the engine."

"We'll follow up the lancers," exclaimed Fleckmann.

The two officers turned their backs on the

"You used to be an engineer," snapped the Major. "Is the locomotive badly damaged?"

"No," was the answer. "Jest a hole in a pipe."

"Can you plug it?" demanded Burger.

"Yes, it'll be easy!" replied the man.

"Then go on with it," Burger ordered. "We may find the engine useful."

Fleckmann's scowl returned as no shout announced the discovery of the bullion. Soon came the crestfallen report that the gold and silver bars were nowhere on the locomotive. Enraged, Fleckmann pulled round his horse to face Reed.

"Where's the gold, you puppy?" he demanded harshly.

Reed made no answer.

Swish! Fleckmann slashed his riding whip down on Reed's neck and shoulders.



The soldiers had meant that grenade to finish off Ramrod and his pals, but they got a shock when they saw Ramrod preparing to "bat" it back amongst them.

car and ran to their horses, which they had hitched to one of the pillars of the water tank.

A muttered oath broke from Fleckmann as he caught his heel in the drain and stumbled. Without even looking down, he recovered his balance and swung himself up into the saddle. With Burger at his side he galloped along the track till he reached the engine.

The first thing he saw was Reed, his head hanging limply, in the grip of two of the lancers. The steam had subsided, and they had seen him on the locomotive and taken him prisoner just as his senses were returning.

A savage smile flicked across Fleckmann's face as he saw Reed, but his first thoughts concerned the bullion.

"Search the engine!" he ordered the lancers. "Look everywhere! Probe under the logs in the tender! Don't forget the water tank."

One of the lancers was beckoned to by Burger.

"Speak!" he raved. "Tell me where the bullion's hidden, or—"

Reed still stood mute.

"There's an easy way to make him talk," Burger shouted. "Tie him to the coupling rod of the engine. It'll be repaired in a few minutes. If he don't open his mouth we'll give him a ride that will shake him to pieces."

Fleckmann nodded instantly. The lancers dragged Reed to the side of the engine and lashed him along the massive side rod that coupled the pair of driving wheels together. The wheels were outside the frame, and he would not be carried as high as the splashers, so that there was no protuberance against which his head would strike. But if the threat were put into action, as Fleckmann plainly intended, he would be whirled round and round until death ended indescribable torture.

Read next week how Reed refuses to tell, and Fleckmann carries out his terrible threat.

WHO BOUNCED A BRICK OFF THE MAN-HANDLER'S DOME?



The Leg-of-Mutton Message

PEAKED cap on the back of his head, truncheon swinging by a cord from his wrist, a brawny cop sauntered down one of the main streets of Faro City, Oklahoma.

The Man-Handler, rough-house champion of the Bowery, was well aware of the curious looks of the passers-by. He was also aware that two men had shadowed him ever since he left the police building in the city square to go on patrol.

A cop was a novelty in Faro City. Though the town had a population of a hundred thousand inhabitants, the police force consisted of three men only—Big Bad Wolff, that born adventurer who was the terror of thugs and twisters, Blackjack Stevens, the slugging expert, and the Man-Handler.

An amazing situation had arisen in Faro City since the four big gangs, once rivals, had been linked up into a single organization by a mystery master crook known as the Slink.

The Slink had got rid of the police force in a very ingenious manner. The police chief, a man named Delaney, had been in his pay. Over a period of months Delaney had discharged the old, reliable officers and replaced them with his own nominees. Then, on a given day, Delaney and the entire force had resigned—being richly rewarded for doing so. By the employment of terrorist tactics the Slink had stopped the citizens from enlisting a fresh force. No Federal laws had been broken, so that the G-men couldn't interfere.

With no police protection, Faro had become an "open city," like towns in the old Wild West. Every kind of racket flourished.

Then Big Bad Wolff had stepped in. Some time previously he had solved a kidnapping mystery in Faro, and, as a mark of appreciation, had been made an Honorary Police Captain. He had decided to make use of that rank, and had calmly taken over

the policing of the city with just his two tough chums to help him. Already they had dealt some smashing blows at the Slink.

The Man-Handler did not bother about his "shadows," taking it for granted that all his actions would be watched. What he didn't know was that his approach had been noticed by a burly tough who was standing on a corner chewing gum.

"By jings," muttered the tough, Harry Kick-the-Door-In. "If I could bust up this bull it'd do me a bit o' good wid th' Slink!"

Harry Kick-the-Door-In lost no time in acting on his idea. A bit further along the street was a scaffold on which a bricklayer was busy on a repair job. The tough made for the ladder and climbed up.

THE MAN-HANDLER
BUYS A BUTCHER'S
SHOP. HE USES THUGS
TO MAKE MINCEMEAT.

"Hi," protested the bricklayer. "You ain't allowed up here—"

"Shurrup," growled Harry. "Shurrup or I'll bust yer face!"

Helping himself to a brick, he waited. The Man-Handler came sauntering on.

The tough raised the brick and took aim.

Swish! With the full force of his arm he flung down the heavy missile.

Thud! The brick struck the Man-Handler on top of the head.

The Man-Handler blinked a couple of times. He also shook his head.

Then, grabbing up the brick, he hurled it back.

The smack as that piece of baked clay hit the tough in the face was heard a block away.

His features looking rather like a squashed beetroot, Harry Kick-the-Door-In fell off the scaffold. That hurt him some more. The Man-Handler didn't arrest him. He merely grunted and passed on.

But, strangely enough, the Man-Handler nearly came a cropper a minute later.

Failing to notice a tradesman's box cycle outside the new, freshly-painted shop of Fred K. Butt, butcher, he walked right into it.

The two slouch-hatted, tight-lipped men who had followed the Man-Handler from the police-building chuckled maliciously.

"Wot the—" roared the Man-Handler. "Wot the blazes 'd'you mean by leavin' yer bike on the side-walk for folk to dive over?"

The butcher hurried from the back of the shop. He was a big, brawny man with a craggy sort of face and hands as large as hams. A blue apron was tied round his waist. A steel dangled from his belt.

"Aw, I'm sorry," he said. "I guess the errand boy forgot to put the bike away."

"I'se a derned good mind to summon you for obstructin' the side-walk," bellowed the Man-Handler, and then, abruptly, dropped his voice. "How'se tricks, ole pal?"

Sockeye Mason—alias Fred K. Butt—gave a wink that only the Man-Handler saw.

"No news for you yet, chum," he answered in a hoarse whisper.

Sockeye Mason, whose artistry with fists and feet was second only to the Man-Handler's, had come all the way from New York to start this meat chopping business in Faro City. And it was Wolff who had paid his fare and provided the money to open the shop.

The Man-Handler stooped and rubbed his chin.

"Tell that kid o' yours to be careful where he parks the bike in future," he snorted loudly. "An' don't forgit that we'se ordered a nice big leg o' mutton for the week-end."

"I'll see that you git a nice juicy leg," promised Mr Butt.

The Man-Handler gave a testy sort of nod and walked away. The two slouch-hatted men strolled after him.

Blackjack Stevens, a little chap with twinkling eyes, opened the door for the Man-Handler at police headquarters.

"Waal, m' old airedale," he said. "Did you contact Sockeye?"

The Man-Handler turned out of the corridor into the police-chief's office.

"Aye," he replied. "I gotta word wid the old beef-basher."

morning's fiasco. How many men can you let him have, Richetti?"

"He can have the whole bunch—thirty."

"Good enough," nodded the Slink.

Wolf's One-Man Show

A FLICKERING street lamp threw a dim light on the big doors of the old warehouse in River Street—a gaunt brick building with boarded-up windows. It stood amid factories and sheds in Faro City's industrial area. In the daytime the street was one of the town's busiest. Now, at night, the alley cats had it to themselves.

On the opposite side of the street to the warehouse was a vacant lot that, in the course of time, had become a rubbish dump.

The vacant lot was ideal for hiding the gang, and Legenza had his men there as soon as it got dark.

Harry Kick-the-Door-In crouched behind a pile of refuse by the side of Legenza and maintained a running commentary on what he meant to do to the Man-Handler. He had equipped himself with an iron-bar, as long as his arm and nearly as thick.

A warning hiss from Legenza put the crowd of gangsters on the alert.

"Not a sound," he whispered. "Cops are comin'!"

Footsteps became louder. Three figures,

on the other side of the street, emerged from the gloom and turned towards the warehouse. The Chief's shield on Wolff's jacket showed up vaguely in the half-light as he stooped to unlock the wicket door. Followed by the Man-Handler and Blackjack, in their police uniforms, he stepped into the building.

"Got 'em cold," said Legenza gloatingly. "There ain't any other exit!"

"Time some of dem shopkeepers was showin' up," muttered Harry, a moment or two later.

"Can hear somebody comin' along now," Legenza exclaimed. A man with a stoop appeared. He was wearing a bowler hat and a thick overcoat. His moustache was thick and bushy. With nervous haste he made for the warehouse door. As he knocked he kept shooting apprehensive glances around. When the wicket opened, he fairly jumped inside.

There was an interval of two or three minutes before a second visitor—a man with a neatly-rolled umbrella and a light raincoat—came along the street and was admitted to the warehouse. The third arrival was obviously a personage of some importance, for there was a top-hat on his head which went well with his frock-coat. The fourth was a very fat individual whose gasps and grunts could be heard half a block away.

By the end of the hour, twenty shopkeepers had gone into the warehouse.

"How 'bout gettin' busy?" grunted Harry Kick-the-Door-In.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Legenza. "Here's another."

Down the street limped a hunchback. His head seemed to have sunk into his shoulders. There was a big hump under his coat. On his head was a woollen cap with ear-flaps. As the door closed on the hunchback, Legenza scrambled to his feet.

"Right, lads," he exclaimed viciously. Hitching out their guns, the thirty gangsters padded across the street. Legenza glanced at Harry Kick-the-Door-In.

"Do yer stuff!" he snapped. Harry kicked the door in. With a terrific lunge of his heavy boot he smashed the wicket and dived through into the warehouse. A cry of surprise burst from him.

"Where are they?" he exclaimed. Click! A switch was flicked over. The lights blazed on.

Rat-a-tat! Rat-a-tat! Bullets hissed over the gangsters and tumbled into the grimy plaster.

"Grab for your ears!" roared the voice of Big Bad Wolff.

"By jings," croaked Legenza. "It's a trap!"

Near the door of the warehouse crouched Wolff. Huddled to his hip was a tommy-gun, a deadly sub-machine-gun that could riddle the lot of them in a matter of seconds.

Legenza stared goggle-eyed at Wolff. "Wot the—" he gasped.

On Wolff's head was a woollen cap with ear-flaps. Under his coat was a hump. Just then he gave himself a shake. The hump slid downwards and a cushion fell out.

On the floor was a pile of clothes—clothes that the gangsters had noted the shopkeepers were wearing.

Sockeye Mason uttered a chuckle. He was wearing Wolff's police jacket and sweater.

"Lummy, boss," cackled Blackjack. "Yer quick-change act has got 'em guessin'! Ha, ha, ha! They never tumbled to the fact that you was every one o' them shopkeepers!"

"Wot!" howled Legenza. "But we should ha' seen him come out! There ain't another exit!"

"Aw, we knocked a hole in the wall at the back an' made one," said Blackjack. "As fast as the boss came in, he crawled out agin an' returned as another guy! Gummy, ain't this rich?"

Wolff felt very pleased with the way his trick had worked. The manager of a chain store had had the sense to ring up Wolff during the afternoon and inform him that the letter he had received had disappeared. Wolff, suspecting that the letter might get to the Slink, had promptly cancelled the meeting—and proceeded to put on his one-man show as a lure for the gangsters whom, he felt sure, would make a raid.

"Collect their guns, lads," he said. "Then we'll fetch the Black Maria an' take 'em along to jail. Thirty crooks is a nice cop an' will jest about convince the shopkeepers that they needn't pay any more protection money."

As the Man-Handler strode forward, Harry Kick-the-Door-In suddenly snatched up his iron bar.

"I'll settle you, anyhow," he bellowed in a rage.

Thud! The bar smashed down on the Man-Handler's head.

Harry Kick-the-Door-In, watching for the result, saw the Man-Handler blink once or twice and shake his head.


Then, taking off his cap, the cop pulled out the specially-made guard of steel and rubber that he had fixed into the crown.

"See, brainless?" he shouted as he hit Harry on the ear and put him down for the full count.

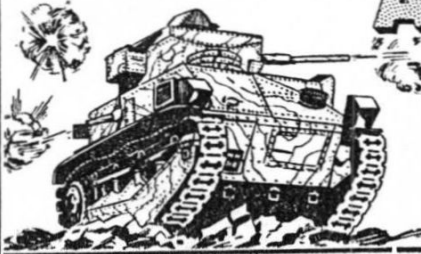
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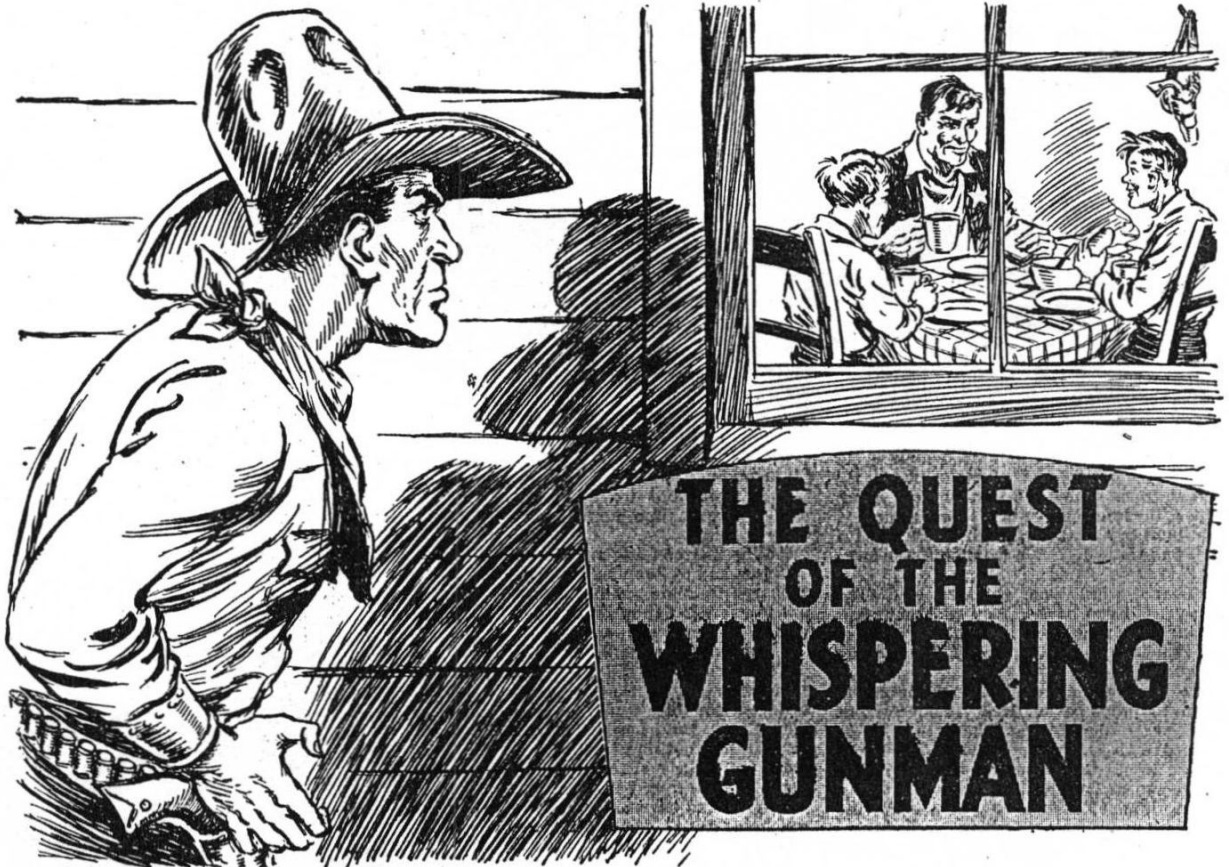
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**THE QUEST
OF THE
WHISPERING
GUNMAN**

The Lynchers Are Out

WHILE Shard was urging the crowd to find and lynch the Whispering Gunman, and the sheriff was tackling the dangerous situation, the Whispering Gunman himself was searching for Bill. He meant, if he could, to find out the truth about the notes. Not for one moment did he believe his son had stolen them, but he hoped Bill might know something which would give a lead to who had planted them among the boy's clothing.

On the quiet, Brad Lewis, the Whispering Gunman, had watched his son so many times, though without Bill knowing, that he knew the boy's favourite haunts. From one to the other he went, but without success, and, as they were mostly outside the town, Brad still had no idea of what was happening in the street.

He was able to hear the muffled sounds of uproar in Deadpan, but that it was due to a crowd looking for him to lynch him was about the last thought that would have entered his head at the present time.

By now the commanding presence of the sheriff was beginning to have an effect on the crowd. Many men were prepared to accept the sheriff's promise that he would see justice was done and that the killer of Lafe Knight should pay for his crime.

Inwardly raging because his plan was being foiled, Shard had the sense not to pursue it openly. In fact, thinking he was cunning, he appeared to be supporting the sheriff now.

"If Tex says he'll get the killer, boys, we got to leave it to him," he announced.

Men were drifting back into the saloons now, and for the time being peace was restored. But Tex had had such a long experience of this sort of thing that he guessed the trouble was likely to break out

again. He strode away in the dusk, hoping he would find Brad quickly.

To his relief, he caught sight of Bill's father coming towards the town, and he went swiftly to meet him, steering him into the shelter of a shack.

"What's bitin' you, Tex?" asked Brad.

"Plenty!" replied the sheriff. "You got to stay quiet unless you want to be the chief act in a neck-tie party!"

The Whispering Gunman's lips tightened, and his hand dropped to his gun.

"Who aims to do the tyn'?" he demanded.

"Before I answer that question, I'll ask you one," said Tex. "Did you bump Lafe Knight?"

"Not yet!" replied Brad, meeting the

**SHARD FINDS IT'S NO
USE BEING FAST AT
DOUBLE-CROSSING IF
YOU'RE SLOW ON
THE DRAW**

sheriff's tense stare frankly. "Maybe I will, though."

"And maybe you won't! Some other guy has done it already!"

The look of utter surprise on the Whispering Gunman's face drove away any lingering doubt that the sheriff might have had, and he took the arm of Bill's father.

"I want to keep you out of the way for a bit, to save trouble, Brad," he said, and then quietly told him what had happened in the street. "It's my hunch," he added "that Shard has been stirrin' the crowd against you."

"Then I got to know!" said Brad grimly, preparing to make his way to the Nugget

Saloon and march inside, regardless of the danger.

Tex held his arm tightly, begging him to agree to stay in jail for the time being.

"It's a frame-up, Brad," he said, "and you've got to give me time to prove it. It's going to be a lot easier if I know you're out of the way."

A faint grin came to the Whispering Gunman's face, but there was no mirth in it.

"So I got to go back to prison?" he said.

"I swore I'd sooner die first. Let me go and shoot it out with Shard."

"And get a bullet in your back, like Knight did," said the sheriff.

Presently Brad yielded to Tex's pleading, and in the gathering darkness the two men reached the building in which the sheriff's office and the cells were situated, and Brad was locked up.

"Just one thing, Tex," said Brad, as the key was turned, "when Bill comes back, tip him off that this is only a stunt. Not that it matters a lot, since he don't know I'm his dad, but I'd feel kinda happier."

"I'll see to it," responded the sheriff, with a warm smile. "I know just how you feel, Brad, and—I'm with you."

Tex went back to his office, a worried frown on his face.

"Goshdarn it!" he muttered. "What's the way out of this darn tangle? There's Brad just eatin' his heart out for Bill, but he won't have Bill told."

The arrival of Tex and Brad Lewis at the office had been seen by a man in the street, but he had kept out of sight. Now he hurried with his news to the Nugget Saloon, where Shard was seeing that liquor was flowing freely.

"I seen the sheriff takin' the Whispering Gunman into his office!" shouted the newcomer.

"He's got him, fellers!" exclaimed Shard "He's got the dirty killer! We got to see that guy Lewis pays!"

Once more Shard whipped up the passions

of the crowd, and men streamed along the street, and the grim cry of "Lynch him!" rang out again.

Tex heard it, and was standing in the doorway when the crowd surged towards the building, a gun in his hands. It was not a revolver but what is known as a scatter-gun, a nasty weapon at short range, and one likely to damage a number of men, since it fired hundreds of heavy shot at one discharge—shot that sprayed out fan-wise.

"Better stay back, boys!" said the sheriff, his finger across the two triggers of the double-barrelled gun. "She's charged with heavy slugs."

"We want the Whispering Gunman!" bawled Shard, from the back of the crowd, managing to disguise his voice.

"Yeah, and so do I, and I got him first!" shouted Tex. "You charged him with murder, so I run him in, and I'm goin' to do my job and see justice is done."

In his cell, Brad Lewis was able to hear the raised voices, and he cursed himself for having agreed to the sheriff's plan. He wanted to be outside, a gun in each hand, to meet the lying charge in his own fashion.

"Stand out of the way, Sheriff!" called a man in the crowd. "We're lynchin' the dirty dog!"

"That's what you think!" said Tex calmly. "Keep back! Any guy that steps off on the wrong foot is goin' to cause a powerful lot of damage. Do I have to use this gun?"

The men in the front rank of the crowd began to press back. Every man present knew that the fearless sheriff could be dropped with one shot, but they also knew that he would press the two triggers of the scatter-gun as he felt the thud of the bullet striking him. That heavy gun was moving to and fro in a sideways fashion, so that there was no telling who would be hit if it exploded, but each man in the crowd had the uneasy feeling that he might be the victim.

"Let it ride, boys!" shouted a man in the crowd. "The Whispering Gunman's locked up, and he'll get his!"

Shard began to try to inflame the crowd again, but more voices supported the man who had just spoken.

"Gee!" muttered the sheriff, stepping back into his office, and partly closing the door as the crowd faded away for a second time. "That was too darn near trouble for my peace of mind."

He locked and bolted the office door, and presently made his way through to his house, which was attached to the prison building. Big Aggie, Tom, and Clem Stone were in the living-room, and the little house-keeper was holding a pail of boiling water.

"They lit out just in time," she said. "I was going to pitch this over them."

Before anything more could be said, they heard Bill's voice at the back. Quickly Tom unlocked the door and let him in.

"Where have you been all this time?" asked Tom.

"Oh, places!" replied Bill, his face very set. "What was all the row about?" he went on.

"A gang trying to lynch the Whispering Gunman," said Clem Stone.

Bill's face grew deathly white, and the look in his eyes startled the sheriff.

"They didn't get him, son," said Tex quickly. "I got him locked up."

"Why?"

"To keep him clear of the neck-tie gents, son, that's why. They got a hunch he plugged Lafe Knight in the back."

"What?" shouted Bill, his eyes blazing.

"That's a dirty lie! He wouldn't do it!"

"Getting all het up about a gunman, aren't you?" sneered Clem Stone. "It's just the sort of thing he would do."

Bill whirled on him with clenched fists. "Take that back!" he said. "Take it back, or I'll make you!"

Though he was a young man, a good deal bigger and older than Bill, Clem Stone

backed away before the boy's hot anger. Bill followed, eager to fight, but the sheriff, a puzzled look in his eyes, stepped in front of him.

"Take it easy, Bill," he said. "I'd like to have a word with you," he went on, taking the boy's arm. "Don't worry about Clem shooting his mouth off—it don't matter a button."

He led the boy into the adjoining room and gazed keenly at him.

"Lafe Knight said you stole money from him," he said quickly. "We found a wad of notes among your clothes upstairs."

The anger fled from Bill, though only for a moment, and he looked completely blank. Then his eyes began to blaze again.

"And you believed him?" he demanded.

"No, son!" replied Tex quietly.

The Sheriff Straightens Things Out

THAT one word drove the anger from Bill a second time, and he stared thoughtfully at Tex.

"Why did you ask me?" he said. "Just had to," replied the sheriff. "When a charge is made against anybody, it's my job to ask what they've got to say. I knew what you would say, anyway."

"Tell me some more," said Bill.

The sheriff began the story of Lafe Knight's accusation, saying that the gambler said he believed the thief would prove to be either Clem Stone, Brad Lewis, Tom, or Bill. Then he told how nothing incriminating had been found at Jake's shack, and how they returned and searched the bedroom upstairs.

"We found the wad of notes, like I said," concluded Tex. "It was among your clothes in a drawer, and the numbers of the notes were the same as those which Knight said he'd had stolen from him."

"And the Whispering Gunman was here all the time?" asked Bill.

"Yes, son," answered the sheriff, that puzzled look in his eyes.

"What did he think? Did he think I stole the money?"

"He was the first to say he reckoned it was a frame-up," replied Tex. "He put it down to Lafe Knight, and he said he'd get Knight if—"

"But he didn't get Knight!" broke in Bill.

"That crook was shot in the back!"

"Which, like you were sayin' just now, is certain proof Brad didn't bump him?"

"Of course it is!"

That puzzled look was stronger in the sheriff's eyes, and he scratched his chip thoughtfully.

"Well, that kinda clears things up," he said presently.

"Not altogether," said Bill quickly. "You've got to find out who did kill Knight, and then you've got to let—to let the Whispering Gunman go free."

"Sure, son!" responded the sheriff drily. "I was kinda thinkin' along those lines myself. Anyway, we've had our talk, so let's go."

He led the way back to the living-room, but Bill did not follow. He turned up the staircase. He did not go far, however. When the sheriff went into the living-room and shut the door, Bill ran noiselessly down the stairs and made his way towards the cells.

A light was shining there and it revealed the Whispering Gunman looking out through the barred gate. When he saw his son he caught his breath, watching him intently but not speaking. He was almost afraid to speak in case he could not choke back the words that he longed to utter.

Then he frowned, for Bill was taking down the keys which hung on a hook on the wall. Still without speaking, the boy went to the cell, put the key in the lock, and opened the gate. Then at last he spoke.

"Come on, dad!" he said.

The Whispering Gunman was dumb at first, but his face was transfigured. The lines brought there by the hard life he had lived seemed to vanish, his eyes filled with a tender glow, yet there was something like fear in them.

"You—you know?" he whispered at length.

"Yes, dad!"

Only Brad knew what it meant to hear that old familiar word—one which he had never expected to hear from his son again.

"I didn't guess," he said huskily. "I never meant you to know, son. I wanted to get you back more than anythin' I've ever wanted, Bill, but—it wasn't fair on you."

"Why not, dad?"

"Because—because I'm what I am!"

"You're my dad!" said Bill.

"A gunman and ex-convict!" Brad said bitterly, fighting the longing to put his arms round his son. "It won't do, Bill, you've got to forget; you've got to keep folk from knowin'. How did you find out?"

Bill told him about the note he had received.

"Shard wouldn't have sent it," said Brad, speaking without thinking. "He was keepin' me in the gang that way, sayin' he—"

Brad paused, meaning to leave that news unfinished, but Bill was quick at the uptake and he understood.

"So that's why you stayed on with that crowd?" he said. "Dad—I mean, the sheriff?" he went on hastily, his face red. "didn't understand. You told him you were going straight, yet you kept in with Shard and his bunch. Shard said if you didn't he'd tell me you were my dad. That's it, isn't it?"

Brad nodded his head.

"And you were in the hold-up gang?"

"Yes, Bill."

"But you were against them, really," said the boy quickly. "It was you who brought the stolen gold back, and you helped me and Tom away when Shard kidnapped us, and it was you got us and my cousin out of the saloon the other night when the shooting started?"

"You don't have to answer, dad," Bill said, when Brad was silent. "I know. And—and you did all that because you thought I'd be ashamed to have you for a dad?"

Still the Whispering Gunman did not speak. "Why—why, any chap would be proud to have a dad who could do all that and keep quiet about it, and—and—"

Bill's voice broke, and that snapped the iron restraint in Brad. Unable to help himself, he put his arms round his boy and hugged him.

"I never thought I'd be doin' this, Bill," muttered the Whispering Gunman. "I took some notes in the saloon that night meaning to hand them back to Stone. But these were not the notes that Knight said he'd lost. They were planted all right. That washes up that frame-up," he went on.

"We've got to know what we're going to do. It must have been Lafe Knight who wrote that note to you. I can see his game. He reckoned you'd come runnin' to me, and then I'd get mad and go after Shard, reckonin' he done it, and I guess Knight was plannin' to plug me when I wasn't watchin', sayin' he did it to help Shard. But Knight got plugged instead, and why?"

Brad paused, his face wrinkled with thought.

"Shard must have found out Knight told you," he went on. "Once you knew the truth, Shard knew I would be through with him, and maybe he guessed I would go gunnin' for him. That's why I got the blame for bumpin' Knight, I reckon. Shard started the neck-tie party to get rid of me."

"Yeah, I reckon you got it all doped out, Brad, and I reckon it's all you been sayin'."



WISHBONE WUZZY

JOINS THE ARMY!



"Here's the uniform, m'lud." Says the guy who's khaki-clad.



Wuzzy thinks he'll have a jest, Magic Bone will do the rest.



Don't the soldier look a treat? Wuzzy's wish is now complete.



Tommy doesn't think it fun. Wuz had better start to run.



Wishbone Wuz goes up in smoke, To surprise of soldier bloke.



Here's our Wuzzy now in France. Soon he'll make old Hitler prance.

"Maybe, but all this stuff has happened through me, or a lot of it. I never thought about that when the sheriff told us to beat it. But I've thought now, and I'm not leavin' him to handle it alone."

Again there was silence, while the horses galloped swiftly, reeling off the miles. The moon had risen and was lighting up the country, and a way in the distance a few pin-points of light showed where Deadpan stood.

"Rein in!" said Brad suddenly, pulling his horse on to its haunches. "Hoofbeats!" he went on. "Thought I heard 'em. Somebody ridin' hard, too."

"Maybe it's somebody after us," Bill said. "Oh, I don't mean with a gun," he added. "I thought perhaps somebody might have been sent after us with a message."

"And I've thought, too!" muttered Brad. "That's why we're backin' behind this bush. Gents ridin' hard this time of night might be lookin' for trouble, not for us."

The two riders waited behind some bushes, Brad peering over the top. The sound of the scampering hoofs drew nearer and nearer. "Couple of 'em!" said Brad.

Bill was peering over the top of the bush, too, and he recognised one of the riders before Brad did.

"It's Tom! I was right!" he said, and

then his voice rang through the night. "Tom!"

A startled yell broke from Shard's lips, and he forgot everything except the fear of death. He dropped the rope he was holding and swung his horse away to one side, spurring it savagely. He did not know who was on ahead, but the shout of recognition had been enough.

The Whispering Gunman saw one of the riders swing away, and caught a side view of his face, silhouetted against the moonlight.

"Shard!" he whispered, and then galloped headlong, riding across so as to cut the fugitive off.

"I'm coming, Shard!" he shouted.

"The Whispering Gunman!" groaned the ruffian—the one man he had done so much to escape from, but by his own villainy they were coming together.

Beads of cold perspiration gathered on his forehead, and he snatched out his gun and began to shoot at the grim figure riding towards him. He heard the Whispering Gunman laugh, but he heard no answering shot, and his terror grew more intense.

That a man could laugh while riding into flying bullets seemed almost incredible to Shard. He swayed in the saddle, his gun hand shook.

"You couldn't get me, Shard, not if you

had twenty guns!" came Brad's grim voice. "But I'm gettin' you!"

A bullet hummed past his ear and another whined over his head, but they were almost spent. Brad could tell that from the sound; he knew the range was too long for accurate shooting; that was why he had not fired.

"Ready to take it, Shard?" he called. A scream of terror broke from the ruffian's lips, and then there was a spurt of red flame from Brad's gun, and Shard screamed again and slid sideways from his horse.

He lived long enough to be taken into Deadpan, where he confessed to the murder of Lufe Knight, and to other crimes.

After all, the Whispering Gunman and his boy did not leave Deadpan. They started a small ranch not far from the town, and Tom and Bill are just like brothers still. Tex Marshall cleaned up the rest of the Shard gang, and he is looking forward to retiring from the sheriff's job, and going into partnership on a bigger ranch with the Whispering Gunman.

Next week the hero of every boy is back to "The Skipper." It's Buckshot Brand, the roving marshal, and you'll find him in the epic pioneer story entitled "BUCKSHOT DRIVES THE DEATH COACH." Remember, first instalment next Saturday! Order your copy now!



- FOR ONLY 1^d that's MilkyWay

