

# All Noisy on the Spanish Front

By THEODORE ROSCOE

I

**W**HAT really did happen there in Andorra? Who was Judson Stairway? And why? Reports were so garbled at the time, and much that was written so utterly fabulous. Now that the affair has had nine months to cool; now that the whole episode has been buried under the sub-

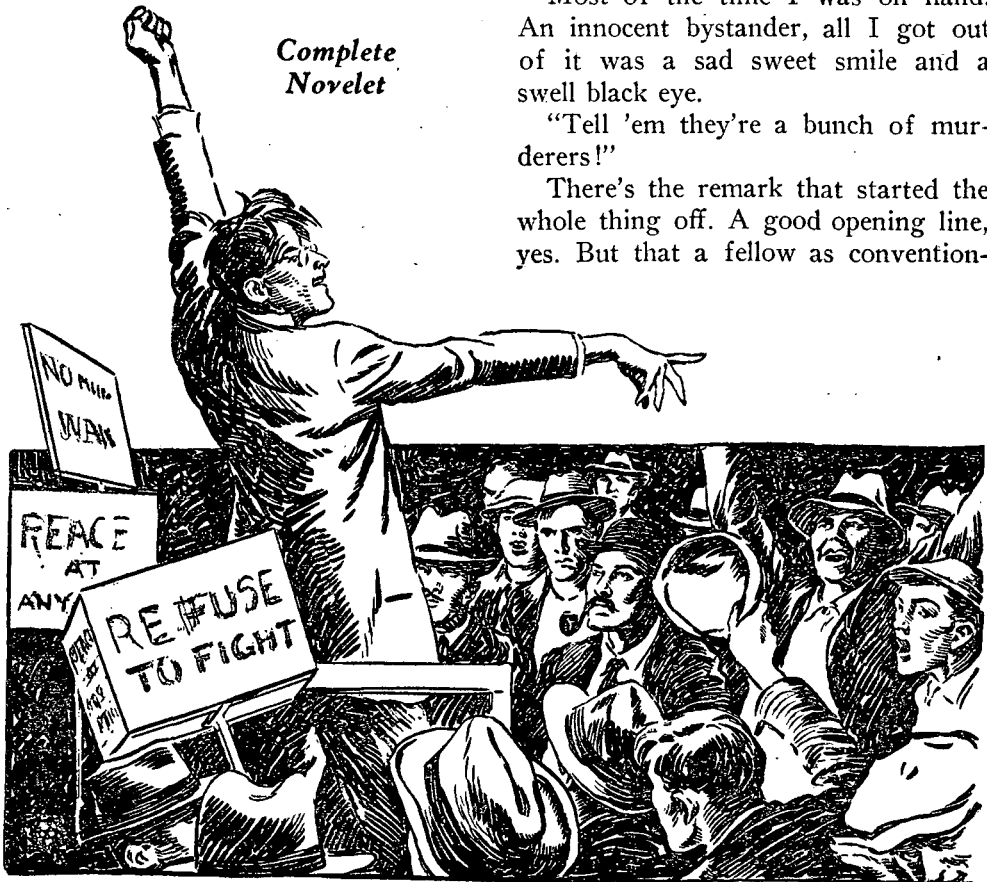
sequent Spanish earthquake; now that the generals fight for front page space with love-nest cuties, and the bubble has blown away, and I've had time to think up fictitious names for the parties involved, perhaps it would be interesting to have the truth. I think it's a great story. The greatest story to come out of the Spanish Civil War. That it did not happen in Spain doesn't matter.

Most of the time I was on hand. An innocent bystander, all I got out of it was a sad sweet smile and a swell black eye.

"Tell 'em they're a bunch of murderers!"

There's the remark that started the whole thing off. A good opening line, yes. But that a fellow as convention-

*Complete  
Novelet*



ally patterned as Judson Stairway should have taken it seriously, should have let it take him to that remote fly-speck country in the Pyrenees between France and Spain, never seemed written in the stars. At least, not in the forty-eight five-pointed stars spangling the banner we were sailing under that trip, or the sky that showed through the smoking room ports that night of the remark. That Year of Our Lord, 1935. Our ship, the S.S. *George Washington*, one day away from France. Andorra was as far away as Arcturus. And Judson Stairway, in his dinner jacket, nearsighted glasses, in a corner of the smoking room with a weak Tom Collins, had never even guessed there was such a country.

Even on shipboard he reminded me of lawn mowers, steam radiators and graham bread. The sort whose face sold for a dollar a dozen on every Main Street. Mild lips. Docile ears. Ordinary nose. Brown waves of hair ebbing a little from the shiny beach of his forehead. You could see he was out of his element this far from Akron, would rather be back in his office studying reports that said the insurance business was on the upturn. And he already had charts to prove it.

There were also charts which could prove that this vacation to Europe with Eunice and Eunice's aunt and a marriage—with Eunice—when they got back home would be Judson Stairway's last adventure, and a pretty dull one at that. Eunice was a sensible girl—as her aunt would fulsomely describe her, a "wholesome" girl—brownish-haired, speckle-blue eyed, freckled in season. Wore pink knitted sweaters and played the piano as if it were out of tune; never missed Easter at Brick Church and had once been fifth in a daisy chain. Her ideas of geography stopped with a real estate subdivision on the edge of an Ohio town; this trip to Paris was like a jaunt to the moon. Andorra? Well, a lot of people have never heard of the smallest country in the world.

For my own part, I was astounded to meet Judson and Eunice on a boat bound for France. For Eunice, you see, is a relative of mine.

"And you're going there, too, Cousin John?" Eunice trilled to me. "Isn't it a small world, meeting on this ship? Now you can show us Paris. Judson was going to Paris on business, you know, and Auntie and I decided to come along, and when Jud-



son's old regiment found out they decided to have him represent them at the Society of French War Veterans dinner. It's on Bastille Day. The dinner. You know Judson's regiment was attached to the French during the War. He was a lieutenant. Well, and it seems the French are going to give him a medal. Isn't it thrilling?

And Judson Stairway was telling me about it again that last night out, when everybody was packed to go ashore in the morning, the voyage almost over, and we got together for a last drink at sea. "Yeah," he said, "I don't know what it's all about, but they're going to give me a medal of some kind for war service. I don't want it, but the boys back home said I had to go. It's a banquet this Society of French War Veterans is giving on Bastille Day. Day after tomorrow, that is." He flushed in proud embarrassment. "I got to make a speech."

Now it is just this sort of homely curtain-raiser line that is sure to produce a Cranshaw Drew on the stage. Drew was on shipboard, bound for London on some kind of literary deal. A book publisher. I'd known him in newspaper days before he acquired the Oxford accent and his hawk nose was photographed in all the smart magazines. Through a series of shrewd publishings he'd made enough money so he could afford to insult his friends and live in Europe. He came lounging into the smoking room that night, white tie and tails, whisky and soda in bored hand, in his elbow his latest success—an album of sensational World War photographs. His eyebrows gave a sniff at Judson Stairway as he paused beside our table.

"Did I hear you say you were making a speech to the Society of French

War Veterans? They're giving you a medal?"

You can see him draw up a chair. Judson beaming at this familiarity from a celebrity. Eunice putting on the dog.

"My fiancé is going to make a speech in Paris." She patted her dry hair. "We thought Cousin John might give him some ideas for it, you see."

Judson was modest. "Well, Mr. Drew, I didn't want to do it, but these Frenchmen asked me. Gee, I can't make a speech to this Society of French War Veterans. I—I don't know what to say."

Drew nodded gravely. "Well, then, why don't you tell them they're a bunch of murderers!"

I STOPPED my rye highball on its way to my mouth, and glared at Cranshaw Drew. It was so annoyingly like the man, that remark. He had spoken it seriously across the lips of his whisky glass, but he couldn't help quirkling an eyebrow at Judson Stairway. Judson's lips were open a little. He peered at Drew nearsightedly, decided it was all in fun, chuckled heavily.

"Tell 'em they're murderers?" He was eager to see the joke. "Those men at the Society of French War Veterans banquet?"

"Why not?" Drew's face was almost sincere. "You want to make a good speech, don't you? Then tell those ex-soldiers the truth. Something they'll remember. Tell 'em they are, to the last man, so many murderers."

Eunice, already hostile toward the Drew elegance, gave Judson's arm a little pat of ownership and maternal protection. She smiled stiffly. "Would you call Mr. Stairway a murderer, Mr. Drew?"

Drew waved a slim hand. "Your fiancé was in the artillery, wasn't he? He fired a gun. He killed men."

"Yes, of course. But a murderer. Like these gangsters and—"

Drew's smile was indulgent. "Gangsters? Eh, but at most a criminal gunman might slay half a dozen men before he was sent to the chair. These guns in your battery, Mr. Stairway,"—he pointed his cigarette—"let us presume you fired a sixteen-inch howitzer—a French seventy-five?—quite. Well, what is a gangster's sawed-off shotgun in comparison? The gangster, in all his career, kills only six men. Your seventy-five would slay that many with a single shell. In three hours' firing it might easily kill sixty men. In three days' firing it might have—possibly *did*—kill six hundred. And so? You are going to get a medal."

Judson Stairway smiled and peered. "Yeah. Sure, I suppose. But of course, that was war."

"War!" Drew peaked his eyebrows in pain. "Come now, Stairway. What is war but a lot of killing? And killers are murderers. The Bible says, 'Thou shalt not kill'—period; it doesn't say, 'Thou shalt not kill unless the colonel orders it,' nor 'Thou shalt not kill unless there's a war.' Soldiers are killers, therefore they are murderers. Yes, like gangsters. Only worse."

"Worse, Mr. Drew?"

"Absolutely." Drew tapped the table with a polished finger. "Not only because their weapons are more devastating—they're lower spiritually. Our gangster admits he's a criminal, makes no false pretenses to his soul about it, killing his enemies. The soldier? Struts off waving a flag, fights for some vague doctrine he hasn't taken the time to analyze, and claims the Almighty

has given him a special dispensation to butcher his fellow man. He prays 'Peace on Earth' as he zippers his victim's belly open with a bayonet, and afterwards says he's sorry. You chaps in the artillery didn't even *see* the victims you killed, and you're not quite sure now why you killed them. Stairway, do you know *why* you went to war?"

"Well," Judson's nearsighted glasses were puzzled—he was still trying to see the joke—"I guess it was the sinking of the *Lusitania* that—"

"Ha!" Drew glared as if he saw the *Lusitania* in miniature sinking in the perspiration coming on Judson's forehead. "Let's see. There were one thousand, one hundred fifty lives lost on the *Lusitania*—right?"

"I—"

"But there were more than thirteen million casualties afterwards, in the war. So! You could sink the *Lusitania* once a day and every day for thirty years and you wouldn't equal the casualties lost in reprisal. Besides, the lads you killed afterwards didn't sink the *Lusitania*. Ever think of that, Stairway?"

Stairway had never thought of it.

"Ever think of the number of men just one of your shells—you were in charge of a battery, weren't you?—might have killed?"

Judson hadn't thought of that, either.

DREW'S pale eyes fixed Judson with a look of serious reproach. Pulling the volume of World War photographs from his elbow, he planked it on the table under Judson's nose, casually opened to a picture of a German soldier whose jaw had been shot off. "Ever see any of these Western Front photographs? The camera

doesn't lie. Here's the real truth about war. . . ."

I'd seen Drew's album of photographs before—a grim and genuine record of the World War harvest—and I was annoyed. Nobody'd asked him the truth, and it was unnecessary for him to pop himself into the middle of our party and start harrowing my "country" cousins. Everyone realizes war is useless butchery; among his own crowd of highbrows Drew would have scorned such a discussion as stale. But here (I saw he saw) was virgin territory for his pinprick humor; he would have some fun with these small town lovebirds, this prim pink girl and complacent tourist. That was Drew. He liked to shock people.

I said, "Don't let him kid you, Judson—this is just a sales talk for his new book," and Drew gave me a reproachful look that was almost convincing. Judson didn't hear me. Snapshots of war's backwash, pictures of shattered landscapes, ruined church spires and contorted dead in ludicrous postures were swarming up at his spectacles. He turned a little greenish at a body in a trench without a head, and he made a sound in his throat at three legless corpses hanging in a mass of barbed wire. Dead horses piled in a bog. . . .

"Is that—is that the work of shell-fire?"

"No, Stairway, that's gas. The next picture is an example of shrapnel. Creeping barrage. Ever direct one?"

Those pictures would give anyone the gollywogs, and I hurried up a round of drinks, wishing Drew would go. But he was enjoying the expressions on Judson Stairway's face; he ordered a third round of scotch, and while Judson oggled through that picturebook of corpses, Drew began to talk of Euro-

pean intrigue, crooked diplomacy and the hypocrisy behind war.

"We thought we were saving the world for democracy. But weren't we, actually, saving big business investments in Europe? Did you know the steel combines let the War go on two extra years? Ever hear of the munitions scandals, the . . ."

I suppose the trouble was that Judson had never heard of such things at all. In Akron they must have libraries, but Judson read for what he called "amusement." As for the War, that had ended in 1918, a dream in an unreal past, something only recently remembered by this trip to France and an unexpected chance to make a speech. The War? His country had called; he had gone. Something about Belgium. All the other boys went, and they'd gone to kill an idea—militarism or something—not men who had arms and legs. You stood in a concrete dug-out and shouted mathematics in a telephone. There'd been pretty girls and a parade back home and he'd done his duty. . . .

"Yours not to reason why," Drew murmured.

Eunice fidgeted and wanted to go out on deck. What had started all this, anyway? Who wanted to look at those dreadful photographs the last night at sea and Paris ahead? "Come, Judson, let's go and dance in the—"

"I—I'll just finish looking at this book, Eunice. It's—"

Drew cheerfully ordered more drinks and kept on talking. At one o'clock Eunice went to bed mad. Judson didn't notice the gun-like slam of the starboard door as she went out; I know now the report was lost in the louder gunfire of his own exploding thoughts.

"Those burning houses! Set fire by our shells—"



"Yes."

"The dead under that tree! Why, they're just boys and—"

"That's war for you, Stairway."

THERE must have been a thousand photographs in that book. The smoking room was badly ventilated; the hour was late; Drew kept talking and ordering drinks. Judson's forehead I saw was moist and green. At the time I thought it was alcohol. How was I to know, he'd never seen a real dead man in his life—never even been to a funeral?

I've only given the highlights of what was said that evening, but as the whisky wore on Drew spread it thicker, and I dozed in an illustrated lecture on Armageddon, cheating diplomats, lying propaganda, the war that wasted millions of dollars and murdered millions of men. Drew could talk, too. Like an actor. Torturing the emotions of his audience and finally working his own emotions to fever pitch.

At four A.M. I woke up to see the smoking room otherwise deserted, Judson Stairway swallowing his last drink and staggering up out of his chair. "I see, Mr. Drew," he was saying. "I never thought of it before. There's no such thing as a righteous war, is there? Every side thinks it's defending itself. All that death and horror and destruction for—for nothing. But what—what can one do about it, then?"

"Do about it?" Drew burred. "Nobody'll do anything about it. But we ought to refuse to fight, that's the answer. Refuse under any circumstances to kill. Look—" he pushed up from his chair and put out pleading hands to the empty room. "Suppose the first *poilu* had stood like this, open-handed, before the first Uhlan, crying, 'Kill me, friend!' Suppose you stood thus de-

fenseless before your sword-waving enemy. The chances are he'd be ashamed to kill you, and if he did, what a cause you'd die for! Peace! Real peace! You wouldn't be a murderer just because he is. No, you'd be a martyr, a sacrifice to humanity. You wouldn't have on your conscience all those lives your cannon must have taken, the dead wantonly killed, the—"

"May I borrow this book of war photographs, Mr. Drew?"

"Keep it. Keep it, Stairway. And remember! The only answer is complete disarmament, absolute refusal to fight under any provocation, turn the other cheek, honest calling of a spade a spade. All soldiers are murderers—there is the honest truth." He sank back in his chair wearily, with a sad little shrug. "Good night, Stairway. Hope I haven't bored you. Good luck. I wish I could make that speech to those veterans for you . . ."

"Cranshaw Drew," I accused when Judson Stairway had gone, "you're a heartless Choctaw. Get your hooks in that poor devil, feed him full of liquor and bewilder him with ideas just to hear yourself talk. He drank in those photographs like whisky straights and crept out of here—did you see his face?—looking as if he were to blame for half the fatalities of the war."

Drew said, "If he was a good artilleryman, he is," and smiled as if he'd just eaten a canary. He lifted his eyebrows artfully. "Anyway, I wanted to see if that war book would make an impression. Y'know, John, I think that picture volume will sell . . ."

I went to bed worried about the look on Judson's face, but the farthest flight of imagination never brought to my mind Andorra. You know. That tiny country in the Pyrenees between France and Spain . . .

In the morning, I saw Judson looking thin and yellowish; heard him tell Eunice he hadn't slept well. After we'd disembarked and were on the accommodation rattler to Paris, he sat staring out at the French countryside while Eunice's chatter bounced off him like the rain that bounced off the windows. France can be dingy as an old attic when it rains, and when we pulled into the Gare St. Lazare, Paris looked like Moscow. Funny how things go. If the sun had been shining on the boulevards—if we could have gone out for air, taken in the sights, seen a risqué review at the Moulin Rouge . . .

But we couldn't.

For the next two days the Paris weather was as foul as any in Siberia, and the entire city, including Judson, stayed indoors out of the storm. Rain fell like Noah's flood from a sky that blotted out the Eiffel Tower and wept down the chimneypots. It was gloomy. The second day I was sick of my hotel room, sick of American tourists—Judson and Eunice in particular, although I hadn't seen them—sick of France. I forgot it was Bastille Day. I forgot about Judson's speech to the Society of French War Veterans. I forgot the shipboard episode with Drew, and, I repeat, the country of Andorra was never in my thoughts. I spent that day in the hotel bar.

The following morning a lot of things were to come back into my aching head. I woke up with the door-knocker going like bedlam. I opened the door and Eunice rushed into my room as if the Old Harry were on her heels. Outside the Paris taxis were tooting joyously in fresh sunshine; the bad weather had passed. But I saw from one look at Eunice's face it was just beginning. She was wringing the morning paper in her hands.

"John! It's Judson! He's gone completely and totally mad—"

## II

SHE had known ever since we landed in France, she told me, that something more than a headache was the matter with Judson. Rain or not, it was no reason for him to lock himself in his hotel room and refuse to see her or Auntie for the past two days. "I'm sick—I don't want anything!" that's all he would say. Then yesterday afternoon, yesterday when it had simply poured bucketsful, Judson had sneaked out of the hotel. Gone out walking by himself. Without his hat! As if it wasn't dangerous enough for an American to go poking alone around this foreign city—Eunice still thought of Paris as sewers full of Apaches—he might've caught his death of cold.

Finally, way after teatime (she'd tried to phone me all day) Judson had come back. Straggled into the hotel lobby, red of nose, soaked to the skin, circles under his eyes. No explanation. Told Eunice not to bother him, he had to get dressed for the veteran's banquet. No, he wasn't catching cold. He'd been walking, he said, and thinking.

And doubtless drinking, Eunice had told him. That glassy look in his eyes . . . But no, Judson had denied, talking and staring in the oddest way, he'd just been thinking. And now if Eunice would excuse him, he had to get dressed and go to that dinner . . .

When she came to the part about "that dinner" Eunice permitted tears to bud and travel down her freckled cheeks. She hadn't been able to see Judson or talk with him on this, the morning after; but here it was, all of it, in the morning paper. I, Cousin John, could see what Judson Stairway

(and it was doubtless partly my fault!) had done. Two columns of news. There it was!

Well, Judson Stairway had made his speech to the Society of French War Veterans, no doubt about that! And he had called them murderers! Not only that, he had confessed himself a murderer, called every veteran at the banquet an assassin—"Of a far lower character, gentlemen, than the gunmen who admit themselves to be criminals"—and what was more, he had pronounced a French general, the toastmaster who'd introduced him as an ambassador of good will—he had called General Pierre Césaire Fulgence Montfaucon a murderer!

Briefly, loudly and with simplicity, that was what Judson Stairway had done. Rising at the head of the table, forehead burnished, cowlick silhouetted against draped battle flags, he had started off with such a broadside as he'd never fired in all the War. I could just imagine the sound of his first words exploding in that historic banquet hall. He spoke French unusually well considering he hadn't used it since 1918; afterwards I found out that one of the things he'd been doing while locked in his hotel room those two days was brushing up his French.

"*Messieurs*, I am only going to say a few words. We—we are all ex-soldiers here—" picking at the studs in his shirtfront, eyeballs bulging with the effort, getting it out of his mouth like a hot potato—"and we are nothing but a lot of murderers!"

There! Murder was out! I would have given a winning sweepstakes ticket to have witnessed the scene. To have seen Judson Stairway delivering that unexpected address. Those French warriors, years out of the trenches, pleasantly pink from wining and din-

ing, resigned in their chairs for oratory, suddenly aware that this American had said something. General Pierre Césaire Fulgence Montfaucon, all medals and braid, his mouth open behind a lifted cigar. But then, ha ha. Those French faces relaxing, shrugs and chuckles, all smiling and putting elbows on table, all waiting—as Judson had once waited—to get the joke.

But Name of a Sacred Name—

"I was in the artillery, *messieurs*. I fired a big gun. A gangster with his pistol might slay half a dozen. I have killed that many men with a single shell. You will say that was war. *Messieurs*, I ask you! The Bible says 'Thou shalt not kill'—*period*! It does not say, 'Thou shalt not kill unless the colonel orders it!' or 'Thou shalt not kill unless there is a war!'"

*Mon dieu!* and what the devil! What is it that this wild-eyed American is saying? Somebody swears. All eyes are on Stairway.

But the ice had broken now, and the shock of first plunge was over. Frozen to his immortal skeleton (I could imagine) Judson could only go on swimming in that glacial speech. I could even picture him breasting the icy tide with some of Cranshaw Drew's gestures and scornful eyebrow lifts.

"Consider the *Lusitania*! *Messieurs*, we could sink a *Lusitania* every day for thirty years and not equal the deaths of those who were killed to avenge its sinking."

And—"Did we go to war to save Belgium, or to save the investments of big business?"

And—"Did you know certain steel combines tried to make the war last two years longer so that they could sell their munitions?"

And—"It was a lot of lying propaganda, crooked diplomacy, useless



slaughter that accomplished nothing, nothing, nothing—”

**S**WEET Land of Liberty! If Judson Stairway didn't swim through the whole thing from beginning to end, through the munitions scandals and patriotic hypocrisy, the millions of wasted dollars and millions of dead, man's inhumanity to man, Drew's whole harangue word for word. And going hoarser by the word, but swimming through it all. Those French war veterans there to give him a medal must have listened with their jaws hanging like broken gates.

And finally, “I say there is no such thing as righteous or defensive war. But suppose the first *poilu* had stood defenseless before the first Uhlan, extending empty hands, saying, ‘Kill me, friend!’ He might have died, *messieurs*, but what a truly great cause to die for. Peace! Honest peace! I say the only answer is complete disarmament, absolute refusal to kill under any circumstances . . .”

Lord! But he ended up by declining any medal, yanking the book Drew had given him out from under his chair, slamming it down on the table where all could see. “Those dead men! Those shattered bodies! *Our* guns did that, too. Look at those photographs! The camera does not lie! There is the truth about war. All soldiers are murderers! Good night, *messieurs*!”

Judson Stairway had rushed from the hall with a sob, and General Pierre Césaire Fulgence Montfaucon had rushed after him to stop him at the door. The word “madman” had drifted back into the thousand-ton silence at the flabbergasted banquet table; then was heard Judson's final salvo: “Report me to the government if you wish, *monsieur* general, but I will not re-

tract a single word. What is more, I include you in the condemnation. You were a soldier like the rest of us. You are a murderer, too!”

Eunice wept down at the newspaper telling this amazing story.

“Good Lord!” I thought. But then I comforted her. “It's way back on the seventh page,” I said. “In a week it'll be forgotten.”

If I'd known—

**Y**ET it would have been forgotten if a certain fox-nosed Independent Press reporter hadn't happened to drop in on that banquet. Independent always goes for the sensational, and the smart correspondent saw a story right up the editors' alley.

**AMERICAN DENOUNCES ALL SOLDIERS AS ASSASSINS. EX-SERVICE MAN WOULD REFUSE TO FIGHT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. CALLS GENERAL MONTEFAUCON OF FRENCH ARMY A MURDERER.**

It sizzled the wires of the Atlantic cable and made headlines in numerous American afternoon journals. More than headlines in Judson's home town. Somewhere the local boys acquired a photograph of Judson, one of those fat-cheeked halftones in the O.D. uniform of World War days, and the front page blurbed him in his soldier suit. The lads of his old regiment sent him a cablegram asking what the hell, and in two hours the story was copied by every paper in America.

**AMERICAN REFUSES FRENCH DECORATION. CALLS GENERAL MURDERER.**

You can see how the Paris press which had buried the story had to copy it back from the American releases; how the story would move up from seventh to third page in the French

newspapers; how the French War Department would make a howl that had the newsboys yelling it next morning on the boulevards.

**AMERICAN SOLDIER CALLS GENERAL MONTFAUCON ASSASSIN!**

I spent a lively twenty-four hours trying to stave off reporters, calling up editors, running from Eunice's room—she and Auntie down with hysteria—to Judson's quarters where he sat wrapped in a blanket with his feet in a dishpan of hot water, shouting at one phone call after another, "No, I won't take back a word of it. Soldiers are murderers, murderers—"

I didn't waste any time having Judson's phone put out of order and telling him I'd be a murderer, myself, if he didn't put an end to this nonsense. But by that time, though I didn't know it then, it was far too late and we were, in a manner of speaking, on our way to Andorra. If you know anything about French politics you'll know they're just about as hysterical as a box of firecrackers on a hot stove, and back there in 1935 the situation in Europe was jumpy to say the least. France was balanced on a delicate poise between going Fascist or Communist, and this General Pierre Césaire Fulgence Montfaucon—a leader of the Right and an advocate for heavy rearmaments—was right in the middle of the balance.

By the following morning it was clear that Judson's little after dinner speech to the Society of French War Veterans had become an address that was making headlines all over France. A Fascist deputy from Marseille said Judson was a rabble-rouser sneaked into the banquet by the Communists, and the Communists were crying out that he was a Fascist trying to pull the

wool over the eyes of the people by making them think soldiers today were really pacifistic. Rastinax, the French radio commentator everybody was listening to in those days, quoted the speech in his daily broadcast from Paris. Rastinax finished with:

"Undoubtedly a great many Frenchmen were not happily surprised by the American's words. Did General Montfaucon have the face red?"

"On the radio!" Eunice screamed at me. "Judson's name was mentioned. Do you see the crowds in the street looking up at his window? There's a newsreel man out there. The hotel proprietor says we have to leave. Judson won't even answer his door this morning. Somebody's got to do something . . ."

**Y**OU know the excitable French? Then you know the affair was quite out of hand by that time, quite out of Eunice's and certainly out of Judson's. General Montfaucon's face had been red, all right . . .

I took the elevator to Judson's room, forced the door when he didn't answer my knock. Nobody there . . . It gave me a fright because I was beginning to see Eunice's fiancé wasn't the sort to be on the loose. Without telling Eunice, I called the police to find out where Judson had skipped to.

Can you guess where the Paris *gendarmes* found him?

Late the night before, General Pierre Césaire Fulgence Montfaucon had sent his seconds with the challenge, and our Judson had gone at five A.M. to a secluded spot in the Bois de Boulogne to see about the general's outraged honor. Pistols at dawn! Dueling is against the law in France, but they bootleg such meetings on occasion, and General Montfaucon of the French Army (my honor, *monsieur!*) was not

to be called murderer with impunity. We found Judson, of course, in the hospital . . .

I'd have sold my soul to have seen that duel. The mist of early morning. The seconds pacing the dewy grass; the doctor with his sinister case of instruments; that purple-whiskered general scowling like a furnace. And Judson Stairway—I can imagine the first rays of sunlight touching his owlish glasses as he stumbled nearsightedly forward to choose his weapon from the pistol case—

Death? What was death to a man who had seen the handiwork of his own cannon; the thousands of mangled dead for whom his own hand might have been responsible? A man who'd seen the mathematical symbols of artillery lessons turn into smashed arms and legs? Who'd swallowed at one sudden gulp the awful casualty lists of the whole World War?

"You will take twenty paces, *mes-sieurs*, turn and fire once."

And Judson threw down the weapon and stood there with empty hands. The general was too shaken with rage for the usual French marksmanship. The bullet went through Judson's upper arm clean as a piccolo hole, missing bones and arteries.

By lunchtime Judson was back in the hotel, pretty white around the gills, but apparently suffering nothing worse than a bad cold.

By two o'clock the American Diplomatic Corps had the French Diplomatic Corps on the telephone. By two-fifteen the War Department on the Seine was telling General Pierre Césaire Fulgence Montfaucon to take a vacation and take it quick. By midafternoon the duel was on every lip in Paris, a radio station wanted to put Judson Stairway on the air, there was a fight among

Leftists and Rightists in the Chamber of Deputies, the Republican Guard charged a mass meeting in Montparnasse, the garment workers went on a sympathy strike, some Royalists built a barricade somewhere, a crowd of intoxicated Blue Devils flung eight bricks through the windows of our hotel, a sailor was stabbed in an argument in Bordeaux, and the name of Judson Stairway was ringing across the *bistro* tables from Verdun to Avignon.

At dinner time Judson was in bed, unconscious from sleeping tablets taken to ease the pain in his arm. Eunice and Auntie were weeping tantrums in their rooms. I opened a cablegram from Judson's insurance company saying, "Fired." I saw an evening paper that said:

**ALL FRANCE STIRRED BY AMERICAN'S SPEECH. PACIFIST REFUSES TO FIGHT AND INVOKES BIBLE COMMANDMENT. CALLS MONTEFAUCON A MURDERER AND ALLOWS GENERAL TO SHOOT HIM THROUGH ARM. ARMY MEN ENRAGED. POLITICS INVOLVED. WOMEN STORM HOTEL TO SEE MARTYR.**

I received a quiet phone call from the American Embassy. The speaker said: "We believe that, due to the delicate political situation, it would be advisable for Judson Stairway to leave France. Belgium, perhaps . . ."

I went up to Judson's room to tell him about it. His bed was empty and his suitcase gone. That night the police couldn't find a trace of him.

### III

**A**NDORRA? Patience. It is not easy to reach that tiny independent republic (pop. 5,000) which is perched like an eagle's nest in the mountains between France and Spain.

The road there is circumforaneous and roundabout, as high of endeavor and as difficult in attainment as the Road to Heaven, and as beset along the way. According to my memory book the route went through half the capitals of Europe and took a year. London, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Berlin, Helsingfors, Moscow, Budapest, Vienna, Bern—a trail through back halls and alleys, an itinerary through a maze of trapdoors and railroad stations and police stations such as would have driven a Cook's Tour Agent—and almost drove me—to suicide.

"When Judson ran away . . ." That is how Eunice still describes it, which shows that no matter how far some women travel, their comprehension never gets much beyond the outline of their feminine heads. Judson ran away? Well, then, so did Saint George run away when he set out single handed to conquer the dragon. So did Buddha run away when he left his wife and kingdom and started across Asia to teach humanity the Light. So did the Prophets, the Apostles, the Crusaders run away . . .

**AMERICAN DUEL-MARTYR FOUND IN LONDON. TELLS CROWDS NO EXCUSE FOR ANY WAR. PREACHES LOVE YOUR ENEMIES TO THRONG IN HYDE PARK.**

The English know how to deal with things like that. Hyde Park. Go there and set up your soapbox and talk your head off about anything you want, and the police won't bother you except by yawning. A safety valve where all the cranks and anti-whatnots and spellbinders can let off steam.

When Eunice and I got there, following the trail by the newspaper, Judson was on his soapbox, eyes shining, cheeks feverish. Can you see him there

in the torchlight—Drew's book uplifted in one ministerial hand, posed like Moses confronting the mob with the Tables of Stone? "Here's the truth about war! See these corpses? It's murder, wholesale murder!"

"Yah," a heckler in the audience was calling. "But wot if y're attacked by some blighter? Wot if some bleedin' enemy jumps onto you?"

"Will you be a murderer because the other man is? No, no! Refuse to fight! Turn the other cheek! If the Bible means anything to you—"

"But suppose 'ee attacks yer wife an' kids—"

"He will not attack unless he thinks you were going to attack *his* wife and children first. All men are good at heart. If we put down our guns—"

What attacked Judson right then was Eunice's voice shrilling for him to "come right down off that box, we're taking the next boat home."

I won't forget the scene that night in that dumpy London hotel. Eunice pleading, weeping, stamping, letting down her hair. Me bellowing: "Damn it, man, you can't start out trying to save the world!" Judson, sitting like a rock, staring at nothingness, murmuring, "Somebody must do something. Somebody must tell the truth. All those dead men. I, too, was responsible. Somebody must make them *see*, before it happens all over again."

"But you can't go on like this. Your arm . . . And what about our home, our marriage, what about *me*!" Eunice would bring it down to that.

Poor Eunice! When you think of all the Crusaders who buckled on their armor and left home without bothering to say goodbye. No wonder Judson couldn't argue; couldn't explain. He crept out that night and took a plane for Holland.

After all, you can't lock a man in his room. Not when he's free, white and under forty, and out to save the world.

**CROWDS RIOT IN AMSTERDAM HALL WHEN AMERICAN CRIES FOR PEACE. BEGS SOLDIERS TO LAY DOWN ALL GUNS. DUTCH AIR OFFICE PROTESTS SPEECH.**

That was in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, but he left Holland without giving them a forwarding address, and we had to wait for him to turn up in the *Copenhagen Aften-bladet*.

**FANATIC CALLS ON KING TO DISBAND ARMY. CAUSES ROW IN DENMARK.**

**W**E got to Copenhagen about the time he reached Helsingfors, and we reached Helsingfors about the time he arrived in Berlin. Why did I chase him? You don't know my Cousin Eunice. You never listened, late at night in some sidetracked railway depot, to her screaming, "We've got to stop him! He's mad! We can't let him go on like this! It's all your fault for introducing him to that terrible man on board that ship!" You don't know any woman who feels she's been jilted and sets out to recapture the man who jilted her.

I had two Crusaders on my hands that dreary winter. Judson Stairway out to save the world, and Eunice out to save Judson Stairway. As a kid did you ever play "slopes," chase a trail of torn-up paper around the woods? It was like that. We chased headlines. Only never play it with a girl who has hysterics every mile and who knows how to faint every time you want to quit. I don't wonder Judson took to ducking down the alleyways and dodging from the back doors. If he'd

seen the expression on Eunice's freckled face coming after him—

She wasn't the only one after him by that time, either. You can't go around a powder mill like Europe throwing the cold water of truth like that. In Europe, these days, truth is against the law. Besides, there's a point where reason becomes dangerous. If soldiers threw down their guns a lot of gunsmiths would go out of business, United Tombstones would drop below par, and 872 diplomats would be looking for work. *Heil, Hitler!*

In Berlin the police jailed Judson on some claptrap Communist charge, and the American consul sweat gin in the effort to save Judson's head. We weren't allowed to see him in the prison, and a month in solitary confinement was all he needed to cement his resolve and turn him into a nonstop Messiah. Persecution—the final forge to the reformer's sword. Figure the power that was in the man when I tell you he pried the bars of that Berlin hoosegow and escaped from Hitler's *Gestapo*. Onward to Sweden!

Some cadets gave him a shower of beer bottles in Stockholm; a tramp freighter got him to Esthonia. Esthonia bounced him to Russia where he talked for almost three minutes on a Moscow street corner before Stalin saw he was a spy of Trotzky's and kicked him over the border to Poland. It was February by then; Eunice and I, following the trail through a maze of Muscovite red tape and blinding Slavic blizzards used to wonder how Judson kept alive. His money must have long since petered out, and his shoes. He was walking from village to village in that frozen waste, stopping only long enough in each place to cry, "Throw down your guns!" and be shoved on by the police. He was limping, now, and ragged, and



he wore a scarecrow's beard. Eunice worried about his underwear. But I could understand what the frontier guard meant when he told us: "It was a night below zero when he came in here with snow in his pockets and toes poking from his boots, but you saw he could not freeze to death because his eyes were keeping him warm . . ."

*Brrrrrrr*—you are thinking Andorra with its olive trees and liquid guitars must be a long long way from that icy sentry box on the Russo-Polish frontier. But it won't be long now. Judson Stairway, somewhere in Poland, was joined by the first little band of converts to his Never-Carry-A-Gun Society.

That same month, somewhere in France, a bandit named El Lobo—The Wolf—broke jail and decided to return to his native lair in the Pyrenees.

Somewhere in Spain a general named Franco, a Jesuit named Gil Robles, and agents from those gay blades, Hitler and Mussolini, were plotting to overthrow the republic's government in Madrid.

I got a wire from London:

MY SPEECH SEEMS STILL GOING  
OVER BIG STOP BOOK SELLING  
NICELY CRANSHAW DREW

On a main street in Warsaw, Eunice was hit by a motorcycle.

And in a back room, not two blocks away, Judson was meeting Al Ritter.

AS I put it on paper it occurs to me that Ritter might easily have been an agent of Drew's; I wouldn't put his sense of humor past any duplicity.

Ritter (Al to you, Pal) was the high-pressure publicity boy to a caricature—too utterly the part to be believed. His hair was orange. He wore brown derbies and suits striped like

watermelons. He was as blatant as a carnival midway and as full of ideas as a monkey cage. He didn't give a damn about peace, in fact spent his waking hours in such a hotcha of mental hurricanes as would have ruptured the brain of any ordinary lunatic; but he knew a Barnum project when he spotted one, and I could picture him grabbing hold of Judson and Judson's exiled followers, and saying, "Boys, for a hunderd a week I'll really put this no-gun racket across.

"First we gotta get contributions. Stairway, you gotta shear off the whiskers—no, leave on the beard, but trim it. Then we get a name. Slogans. Blurbs. Line up a lecture tour—none of this pitchstand stuff—halls! After the money starts comin' in we'll plaster Europe with posters, distribute literchoor—that's what we'll do—*literchoor!*"

"Why, yes. Uh—yes. I need help like yours, Mr. Ritter . . ."

I'll say this for Ritter. Agent or not of Drew's, at least he was honest. The contributions didn't go for Irish whisky. It was Ritter who organized the "society" into a "movement," who thought up the White Shirts. Who made the "band" into "The Unarmed Pilgrims." Who titled Judson "The Ambassador of Peace." It was Ritter who brought Judson's odyssey out of the underground rabbit-holes where poverty and the police had driven it by now, and brightened it with headlines again.

Born then were those posters to be emblazoned across Europe from Belgium to the Balkans—*War Is Hell!* That was the season when some queer little man with an umbrella was liable to sneak up behind you and slap a sticker on your back—*Don't Fight!* If you were on the Continent that spring

of 1936 you undoubtedly saw that billboard of Judson Stairway, empty hands outstretched, white shirt open at the throat, face lifted to the dawn, standing so before a Death's-Head Hussar who aimed an ashamed pistol at the passionless forehead of his unarmed friend. It was captioned—*Put Down That Gun!*

In Prague, Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia—Ritter hired the halls and led the singing—they packed them in. Ritter booked the Opera House in Vienna, hired the National Theatre in Bern. The slogan: *Books Instead of Bullets* was Ritter's.

But only Judson Stairway could have conceived of that *Peace Pilgrimage to Spain!*

Spain . . . Well, it's an established fact that when you raise an army you can't let it stand idle. What an army needs is action, something to give it confidence, something to test its mettle, a victory or two to prove its purpose. To keep from going stale an army, you might say, must be used—whether it's an army of Peace Pilgrims or an army of Spanish rebels.

July was on us. *Arriba España!* Down with Madrid! Up Franco!

**REBELS ATTACK CAPITOL! LOYALISTS FIGHT TO SAVE REPUBLIC! ALCAZAR BESIEGED! THOUSANDS SLAIN AS CIVIL WAR FLAMES ACROSS SPAIN!**

Minor headlines:

**Ambassador Of Peace To Lead Goodwill Caravan To War-Torn Peninsula. Anti-War Books to Be Distributed. One Hundred Thousand Volumes of World War Photographs and Fifty Thousand Hymn Books to Be Passed among Spanish Combatants. Says Judson Stairway: "The Time Has Come for Action. I, Myself, Will Lead the Vanguard; Unarmed We Will Go to the Battlefield of This Unfortunate Land Where Misguided Men Water the Soil with Their Blood. Twenty Truckloads of Books Will Be Distributed among These Battling Brothers. Let Every Warrior Discard His**

**Rifle and Read the Truth. Forward, Peace Pilgrims!"**

Sub-headline:

**Twenty Truckloads of Books to Leave Switzerland Passing Through France into Spain by Way of Andorra.**

I was on my way to take Eunice home from the Warsaw Good Sisters Hospital when I read those items in English newspapers that were two weeks old. Three months in Poland playing nursemaid to the accident victim girl friend of a wandering world-saver (Auntie had long since gone home) had just about done me up; and I thanked God I had the tickets to America in my pocket.

Ha ha. One glance at her face when I met Eunice in the hospital lobby told me I could tear up the tickets. I'd like to have got my hands on the interne who gave her that English newspaper.

"John, we've got to stop him! This time we've *got* to stop him!"

You'd have thought that bump with a speeding motorcycle would have knocked Judson Stairway out of her. Not a bit of it. Three months in a lonely foreign hospital had hardened her determination as confinement under Hitler had hardened Judson's. Her jaw had healed into a rock. Her lips were thin.

"And he needs me now! He's in danger—real danger! If I can't stop him, any way—I'll go with him! Whether you come or not, I'm going!"

**WE** went. By plane to Paris, and then in a hired Renault-16, Eunice driving. Whew!

The car radio picked up a news-item broadcast from Avignon. Judson's caravan had just gone through.

"It was an odd sight, listeners-in!" the broadcast said. "Those twenty trucks lined up with their white flags flying—*Don't Fight* and *Books Instead Of Bullets* painted on the hoods—twenty White Shirted volunteer truck drivers anxious to push on. Off to the war, folks, and their leader boasting there isn't a single gun or weapon of any kind among them; the first truck carrying a box of doves. Yes, the Peace Pilgrims ought to reach Andorra by tomorrow night, and then—"

Eunice held the gas to the floor. Lordy! The Pilgrims were only five hours ahead of us when we raced through Toulouse, and we could see the tire-tracks of those trucks when we hit the highway into the Pyrenees. Spain just beyond . . . Clinging to the door of our swaying sedan, I wanted to wring the sarcastic necks of the French officials who'd given Judson passports to go through.

French statesmen, of course, being French statesmen . . . Naturally there was someone in the State Department who remembered the Bastille Day incident and figured it might be a good thing for this fellow to reach Spain. And what would you, when one could not have stopped him anyway? The American, not so? was mad.

Which was also the comment of Captain Alejandro Escobedo, head of the Guardia Civil on the frontier of mountainous Andorra. He gazed at our special passports—bribed from the harried French authorities by Eunice at the price of more hysterics—and glared at our travel-stained car in astonishment.

"*Madre de Dios!* Two more Americans who wish to go into the danger zone! Bones of five thousand saints! has the Independent Republic of An-

dorra become a highway for all the maniacs in creation? The *señorita* wishes to catch up with the American who is taking twenty trucks of books God knows where? But he is mad, that one—*loco*—a lunatic! Listen . . ."

Captain Alejandro Escobedo puffed his cheeks and waved his arms in the mountain twilight. "This morning comes this fleet of trucks heading for Spain. I say, is a war going on in Spain or a circus? I stop these drivers, *Alto!* Who goes there, please, and why? Stands to the fore this individual, this American with a beard like a Bible and great owlsh spectacles on his nose. Passports he produces of which I can make neither head nor tail save this parade of lorries may go through Andorra for Spain. But what do you think is painted on those trucks? In Spanish the words, *Do Not Fight*. Only that is not all—"

Captain Escobedo combed his bald head with wild fingers. "I tell this American, 'It is dangerous in the hills of Andorra at night. Have you means of defense?' He stares at me as if I had insulted his paternal grandmother. 'Not a gun among us or any weapon,' says he. 'But Spain is a tornado of bullets,' I tell him, 'and these Andorran mountain passes are as dangerous with *bandidos*. This war has disrupted our police. There is that villainous guerilla band led by that raider from hell, El Lobo! To go on at night in Andorra is like walking into a nest of wild tigers!'

"So I draw my pistol to illustrate the danger. *Tu Madre!* if this Yankee maniac does not shove a book in my hand. What is it? Photographs of dead soldiers! He orders me to throw down my gun. Orders *me!* But there is more. If he did not then call me, Captain Alejandro Escobedo, whose record is a

byword for honor and discipline in the Andorran Guards, whose character has never before been impeached—if he did not call me a *murderer*—”

The little Andorran's eyes bulged as he sputtered this recital, but they almost popped out when Eunice delivered her five cents' worth.

“Quick! Which way did he go! You must help us catch him—”

“*Ya lo creo!* I should leave my post and go chasing after a madman? This is the Andorran Frontier Office, *señorita!* Beyond our borders in Spain there are snipers, danger! In our own hills there are these bandits! Go at night without reinforcements? Do you think I want my throat cut by that El Lobo?”

Did that give Eunice an instant's pause? . . . She declared:

“Then we'll go alone! Come, John—”

I couldn't stop her. My own sanity was wavering; long since she had mesmerized my will power. We roared out of that fly-speck frontier station at sunset, while the barefoot Andorran guards and their popeyed captain stood like toy soldiers in the dust and bid us *adios* with their mouths open.

Nightfall pinned a blue veil of dusk across the Pyrenees. Andorra may be the smallest country in the world, but her mountains don't look it. The car climbed and wound in a majestic twilight. Judson was just ahead—Eunice dinned that in my ears as she burned up the gas. Judson was just ahead in that vista of forested peaks, and we had to reach him before he reached Spain.

El Lobo was up ahead, too. El Lobo—The Wolf . . . His personal introduction to this story I can only construct now from imagination and subsequent happenings . . .

#### IV

EL LOBO had his namesake's hungry underlip and a similar ferocity in his soul. Also he had a hump on his spine, a beard as foul as a restaurant mop, a milky cataract over his left eye. His was as dirty, depraved and dangerous a gang of guerillas as ever huddled together under a mountain moon, and most dangerous of the brood was El Lobo himself.

But what good is a wolf without fangs? Here was a wolf to conjure with, leader of the finest pack of wolves in creation, possessed of a perfect hideout (what policeman in Andorra would dare approach this ruined castle on a mountain-top known to be haunted?)—a perfect set-up, and no teeth!

For bandits can't live off knives—not in a land where every mountaineer now carries a gun. Not on the borders of a country where there are a million guns. With that Civil War in Spain, guns everywhere were at a premium. Bullets cost like diamonds. *Alma de Dios!* El Lobo's trusty pistol had been wrenched from him by those rascally French police in the north. His men, while he was in jail, had long since run out of bullets. His sole remaining weapon, purchased at the cost of a Jewish pawnbroker's life, was a rusty old Nagant carbine with only two bullets for the barrel—a museum piece of a musket that looked as if it hadn't been fired since the Napoleonic Wars. The only gun in the pack, and El Lobo must preserve it for discipline. A gaunt, lean season it had been for El Lobo and his wolves.

But tonight—heaven be praised! A windfall such as no bandit would dare have dreamed!

Crouching atop a tower of his ruined

castle, El Lobo scratched a carbuncular ankle with his musket-barrel while his good eye blazed star-like off through the mountain vastness—focused like a telescope on a lazy column of dust that was crawling in the twilight up a mountain road.

"And is it true, Pedro my good one, that these truck drivers have not among them a single firearm?"

Pedro, who was nobody's good one, could only pant and wave his hands, for he had ridden all afternoon by roundabout road, and ridden hard.

"But it is true!" Pedro blared. "I was in the Customs House this morning when they came over the frontier from France."

"These are not volunteers for the Spanish, then?"

"*Por Dios!* Rather some new religious party that preaches against killing and cries 'Never Fight!' and goes to war without weapons."

"Not one gun or pistol? No machine guns, bombs or swords?"

"Only much rich baggage concealed under canvas coverings. Much provision, by the looks. Very valuable."

"Santa Maria be praised!" sang El Lobo in his rich contralto. "Go quickly to the patio, Pedro! Bid each man sharpen his knife and coil his rope. Round up the horses in the corral. At midnight we go to greet this *Americano* who poaches thus boldly on my territory. Together we go to greet him, Pedro—you and The Wolf—"

**I** WISH I could describe the daze in Judson Stairway's glasses when they first focused on that pair. They'd been dazed enough, two minutes before that, when they caught sight of Eunice and me. We'd come up on the trucks, parked for the night at the roadside, and found Judson standing in the

doorway of his tent, staring off at the moonlit mountains beyond as a Crusader might have stared at the foothills owned by the Turks.

I wonder if Judson, now the test was at hand, Spain closing in, the safe outposts of France shut behind him like a door—I wonder if Judson, that night in the Pyrenees wilds, wasn't having his first qualms? Street corner preaching, pitting his bright faith against the rotten eggs of scoffers and stupidity of police, had been one thing. Heading an expedition, leading an organized movement was another. The petty dissensions of the march. The warnings and rolling eyeballs of the authorities. Uneasy glances of the volunteer truck drivers as they chugged deeper and deeper into this mountainous limberlost. Nerves developing. Someone suggesting they post a guard. Anxious questions to be answered, loosening faiths to be bolstered; everybody hugging the campfire. It had all seemed so simple, so pure and simple at first.

Certainly the Spanish War, as seen from the heights of Andorra, was a disillusionment. No thundering panorama of battlefields smothered in shellfire, no charging squadrons of tanks, no shattered labyrinths of barbed wire, trenches, ruined towns. This northwest corner of Spain seemed the only peaceful prospect his eyes had encountered since his leaving Ohio. Instead of a landscape ravaged by flames, here were crags of natural rock, deep valleys soaked in moonlight, cliffs overgrown with forest, a road that climbed off through emptiness, a mountain silence lonely and depressing as an owl-hoot. The only ruin in sight was a medieval castle on a cliff-top off to the left. Somewhere a wolf howled.

I wonder if Judson, sharing his tent with Mr. Al Ritter's twitchings, gab-



bings and cigarette butts, hadn't been thinking of home and Eunice. If, instead of listening to Mr. Ritter's dynamic chatter he hadn't been gazing a bit wistfully across that lonesome summer night moonscape where the only evidence of war was in the eternal erosion of time, and, judging from the silence to the south, the Spanish upheaval was only a rumor . . .

Eunice skidded our car to a halt, jumped out, ran forward with hair in her eyes. "Oh, Judson . . . Judson . . . Thank God, we've got here in time!"

He wore fawn-colored riding breeches and white silk shirt open at the throat, and I recognized him from the posters I'd seen—save the Vandyke wasn't quite so lush and there were tired cones under his cheekbones. He'd lost a lot of flesh in a year at world saving. He stared at Eunice as if he didn't recognize her.

I shuffled toward him, saying, "Be human, Judd. She's just out of the hospital."

Judson came out of the trance and gulped, "Eunice!" glassily, and then went back into the trance, staring goggle-eyed at the moonlight behind me. There was a spatter of hoofbeats on the road as I turned, and somewhere a man gave a yell, and the next thing I knew there were horsemen all around us in the night and two leering ragamuffins were coming out of some ilex bushes near the tent.

One was skinny as a skeleton in a wrapping of crumbling mummy rags.

But if this one seemed no bargain for looks, no dashing *caballero*, he was as nothing beside the other.

The other was bloaty and hump-backed, a sort of human toadstool under a battered sombrero, wearing a beard like a restaurant mop and with a milky cataracted eye.

"UP with the hands, *señores*. *Con cuidado!* No tricks! This cavalcade is surrounded by my followers who are legion. Have you not heard of El Lobo, master of this mountain pass, leader of brave *bandidos*? Have you not been told of The Wolf, whose slightest whim is a command, whose very name sends all of Andorra into hiding? Gold we demand, *señores*. Much gold for the safe conduct of this cavalcade which has trespassed on the territory of The Wolf!"

Judson gasped, "Wolf—" looking unhappy with his beard.

Eunice threw frightened arms about Judson's neck.

"Make no move," came the command. "We know you are unarmed."

I saw the one-eyed toadstool was pointing a sort of rifle, an antiquated fowling-piece that looked as crippled and moth-eaten as One-Eye himself. I put up my hands. Ritter popped out of the tent in lilac pajamas and yelled, "Whaa—"

"Stand where you are, *señor*. El Lobo demands your gold!"

You can imagine the moony roundness of Judson's glasses glaring across Eunice's hair at those two pariahs.

There was a muffled sound of yelling and scuffling down the line of parked trucks. Judson blurted: "Gold? We haven't any gold! And you know we don't carry arms. Put down that gun! If I could just speak with this El Lobo—tell him we didn't mean to trespass—talk to him about our—"

"El Lobo," said the one-eyed hump-back proudly, "stands before you. It will be useless for you to fight, *americano*. You observe my gun!"

"But you can't mean—I tell you, we bring peace! Peace!"

Pedro, chuckling, smiling shyly as he fingered a knife, had to put in the

one English word he knew: "Surrender!"

"But you can't do this!" Judson shouted. "We are the Pilgrims of Peace, come open-handed with a message of fellowship—brotherly love..."

"Love," nodded El Lobo cheerfully, blinking at Eunice. "But the gold in those trucks when you hand it over will assure your safe conduct. I mean, for the *señorita* too."

I got the meaning of that, all right, and I saw the sweat of understanding come to Judson Stairway's forehead, and I heard a gulp from Ritter. I made an involuntary step toward the toadstool-man, and there was that gun pointing at me, and Pedro smiling shyly with his knife. Meanwhile there were a lot of highjinks going on down the line of trucks; bandits seemed to be everywhere, and I could hear someone knocking things around in Judson's tent.

I was trying to think up something to say when a big pirate with a face like an overripe fruit came charging out of the shadows, his arms filled with books. He was followed by a ragged little squirt with a crate of doves on his shoulder—who was followed by another pirate with an armload of books. Books, books, books! I wish Drew could have been there to hear the literary criticism on that album of war photographs, then!

A torrent of words broke loose around El Lobo. Cries of disappointment. Jabbers. Oaths of dismay. A light cream came to the mouth of El Lobo. The Wolf gave a howl of rage.

"So!" he screamed at the moon. "Books, is it, *amigos*? Nothing in all these motor trucks but books! Books and a crate of pigeons! Did you think to fill the coffers of El Lobo with that? *Diez diablos*! No!" he squalled at Jud-

son. "El Lobo will see about getting from you some honest *americano* gold—"

He gave a shriek at his men. They were on top of us before we could budge. Pinning our arms, trussing us with stinging rope. Those Andorran brigands knew their technique.

Before you could say Jack Sprat, even as the volunteer truck drivers had been tied to the tail-lights, we were bound and hogtied and standing as helpless as tenpins, in the door of that ruined tent. Judson, Ritter and me—Pedro bound us hand and foot to the tent-pole, and the ropes were like steel bands holding me.

Eunice . . . ?

There was a rush of little brown horses in the moonlight. Eunice was lifted bodily, flung across a saddle. El Lobo mounted like a cat. Curvetting, he leaned down, put his eye close to Judson's paralyzed face.

"Gold I want, *americano*! Fifty thousand dollars in gold to be delivered in one week to such a rendezvous as my messenger shall assign. Tomorrow a letter will be sent to the headquarters of the Andorran Guardia giving you further directions. Fifty thousand dollars of gold in one week, *señor*, or you will never see the *señorita* again!"

He chucked Judson under the chin with the rusty musket muzzle for emphasis, and he signed his ultimatum with an old Andorran custom. *Pfit!* Squarely and truly he launched a glistening streak of tobacco juice that made a round brown *smack!* on Judson's unprotected breast.

The horses bunched and went. Fading down the road . . .

Eunice's cries came wailing back in dusty moonlight. "Help me, Judson . . . Oooh, help meeeee—"

## V

IT seemed a year before any of us moved. Even if we could have moved we wouldn't have been able to. From the corner of my eye I could see Judson Stairway's face. Can you imagine a statue sweating? Staring at the road where the horsemen had been, then staring down at a rank brown streak on his chest, then staring back at the road again. Sweating. Then a slow red flame beginning to crawl up the plaster of his cheeks . . .

Well, I suppose at worst Judson Stairway had expected a Spaniard of the Hollywood kidney, a dashing Valentino on a stallion with tossing cloak and bright *bandolera*, all swords and suavity with a rose behind his ear. I suppose his imagination had wanted the military Japanese, or some cunning War Lord in the trappings of Unter den Linden. It was one thing to martyr yourself before a Prussian Hussar or an Italian *Generalissimo* who might have a brain for repentance. But this demented ruffian—this flea-bitten monstrosity—this leperish small-time brigand with an out-dated popgun—this bleary and spitting shadow that had fallen across the clear white light of world peace . . .

The red reached Judson's eyeballs, and his whole face took fire. His glasses were the doors to a furnace. His mouth breathed brimstone heat. His jaws clenched like tongs; bars of steel ribbed his throat. His shirtsleeves all but split up the sides; his shoulders swelled.

I can hear him panting yet—"Uh-huh—Uh-huh-Uh—!"—and I can almost feel the agony of muscles straining ropes, the agony that must have been like the searing convulsion in his soul. Ropes? What were

ropes to a man who had broken from one of Hitler's jails? To a man who had walked across the Continent of Europe after an idea? Literally, he broke those knots. . . .

Three things he said before we got under way.

As he tore his wrists from their lashings and set to tearing the ropes from Ritter and me: "You say she was just out of the hospital, John—just out of the hospital?"

As he kicked the red-headed Ritter into action: "Untie the first truckman and tell him to drive like hell back to that French frontier station and bring back Captain Escobedo!"

As we darted down the line of trucks, releasing one after another those overwhelmed White Shirt volunteers: "Into those trucks and follow me! We're going after them!"

One scene I will remember the rest of my life is that line of trucks waking up like a picket line of wild elephants, motors roaring, drivers shouting; great mechanical pachyderms with their canvas-covered backs, their fluttering circus flags (*Don't Fight, and Books Instead of Bullets*), their wheeling yellow eyes, their rumbling bulk—snorting and turning and lining up in blue clouds of gasoline fumes on the road.

Another scene is of Judson, Ritter and me crammed into that jolting driver's seat, Judson at the wheel, Ritter hanging to the dash, me hanging for dear life to Ritter, the landscape going by in the moonshine like green soup. Downhill . . . uphill . . . banking around curves . . . slewing on sharp turns . . . following the road where those horsemen had gone.

"Judd," I screamed. "Slow down! Wow!"

He didn't hear me. His face, in the

gaseous gloom of our narrow cab, was like something in rock and his glasses were headlights brighter than those of the truck, sweeping the shadows from the moon-surfaced road. For five miles that mountain road was like a roller-coaster track, dropping steeply into black chasm on one side, walled by sheer cliff on the other. There were no side roads, no clefts in the precipice, no turnings where those horsemen could have ducked. Figuring the time it had taken us to get loose and break camp, those riders must have had a half hour's start. At the speed we were going, if Judson didn't jump the cliff, we ought to overtake them any minute now. . . .

Then Judson slammed the brakes. There was a screaming of hot brake-bands down the line behind us. Ritter and I pulled bleeding noses off the windshield. Judson, leaning out like a locomotive engineer, was pointing.

"A side road! Hoofprints! They turned in here!"

A rutted wagon-track of grass and gravel, bending off through a gully to the right. You could see the prints of many horses. The trail bent off through underbrush, lost itself in moonlit forest on the mountainside. Horses could make time on such a road. No truck could get in there.

JUDSON wrenched the wheel and turned us onto the wagon path. The heavy wheels churned and dug. Gravel showered. He threw the clutch into second, looked back to signal the others to follow. We lumbered uphill.

The road steepened, twisted. Up-grade, five miles an hour. And ahead, hoofprints leading on and up and around. Forest jamming the path on either side. A mountain looming up ahead like a barrier of night. Silhou-

ette of a ruined castle on the mountain-top, like a stencil of black paper pasted against the moon.

Judson snapped, "There's been a light in a window of that tower for the last half hour!"

We got there.

The road bulged up along the mountain-top at one point, and that medieval manse lay a little below. Crumbling battlements of stone, black parapets and bartizans frowning up out of the pines. One broken-down tower and one solid tower. There was a drift of cinnamon light in the courtyard at the front, and the courtyard was enclosed by a high crenellated wall that looked solid enough, and a massive wooden gate. The planks in the gate looked new.

From where our trucks had halted, the road ran downhill a hundred yards or so, and our headlights made a torch-spot on that massive gate. The gate was closed.

Judson cut off the engine; signaled the drivers behind to silence theirs. We sat in the cab, listening.

Wind in the pines. An owl. Perhaps an hour ago a lot of horses had galloped down that grade and gone through that gate. The wind veered, and I thought I could smell wood smoke and hear echoes of wild singing. I suppose El Lobo and his boys had gotten themselves gloriously drunk, and that was why they hadn't heard our engines. Or maybe the echoes in that moony altitude weren't right. When the wind shifted again you couldn't hear anything.

I was wondering what Judson was going to say to open that gate. "Open Sesame?"

He did not say that.

He stared down the hoof-tracked path to that castle gate, his face put

on that swelling act again; and all he said was, "*Charge!*"

WE must have been going sixty miles an hour when we hit that gate. Can you think of an elephant going through the window of a saloon? A few thousand copies of a heavy photograph album run into tons of momentum. That truck didn't even stop! And the gate exploded like a dynamited cheese.

Ritter and I had only time to yell—and put our heads under our arms. But Judson had his hands steering that wheel, and his face was like rock behind the windshield. Crashed timbers splintered and flew like shell fragments. The windshield blew backwards in one burst. Judson's goggles probably saved his eyes, but you couldn't have bought his face for a dollar a dozen in Akron after that!

El Lobo's wolves surely had something of a shock when that truck arrived in their midst, but the scarlet death's-head framed in the cab's broken window must have actually frozen their tails between their legs. I got my turtled head out of my shoulders in time to see a courtyard going every which way, men bouncing around like acrobats, sombreros flying, figures like jumping-jacks. One hobo-jungle group was posed like dummies around a campfire—they'd been roasting Judson's white pigeons!

Judson couldn't stop—or wouldn't. The other trucks were roaring through the breach, and I don't think our brakes would hold. There was a great stone archway in the castle's face and a wide door open to a vast, gloomy hall.

Bam! I lost my bridgework going over that doorstep, and the truck slammed into that hall like a British tank. It didn't stop going until its

bumper smacked the farthest wall. A lot of masonry and ceiling plaster tumbled down, and we were engulfed in a vast cobwebby cavern filled with shadows and slants of moonlight, and the bat smell and the shrieks of a witch tower.

I remember a flight of steps leading up to a stone balcony, and a lot of wild men coming down the steps, squalling bloody murder and waving bright knives. Judson grabbed the first thing to hand, and jumped out. And the first thing to hand was something that had been on the seat beside him—something he had kept there through all his long pilgrimage.

He threw like fury, and that heavy volume of World War photographs—the original, given him on ship-board by Drew—that first edition whined through the gloaming like something fired from a French seventy-five, and took the first bandit on the stairs a knockout crack in the face.

Red-haired Mr. Ritter was never slow at catching an idea. I saw him go up the side of the truck like a monkey on a stick. The bandits had already loosened the tarpaulin. Judson was screaming, "Throw at them! Throw at them!"

If I lived to a quintillion, I could never forget that battle. The first shower of books from our truck. The trucks outside getting the idea. Those White Shirted drivers leaping to the safety of their cab roofs, kicking and punching to stave off assault, grabbing and throwing, the whistle of those incredible missiles, the *smack* and *thock*, the tearing paper, the yowls of the wounded, oaths, bellows . . . There were all the tongues of the Foreign Legion among those volunteer pilgrims, and as many among El Lobo's mob . . . And above all, Judson run-



ning up and down the line like a maniac directing a snowball fight, shouting, "Give them hell! Give them hell!"

I stood on top of our truck with Ritter, pelting books at a merry-go-round of squalling brown faces. You cocked your arm just right and they made good scaling. A spinner on the temple hurt. The hymn books toward the bottom of the load were even heavier. The great ruined hall was strewn with literature. Volumes sailed and curved. I remember one cover broke off as I threw, and I cracked some ape in the eye with *I Want to Be An Angel*. For five minutes or so it was like a hurricane in a library.

But it was all Judson's fight. He organized the battle, rallied the men, directed the fire. He led the storming party up to that dark balcony. Bounding back into the castle hall from the courtyard, he tackled a gang of greasers, bare-fisted, at the foot of the stairs. Then a faint, stifled scream trickled down through the din, coming from some dark upper cranny of the tower.

"Eunice!" Judson shouted. "She's up there! Come on!"

HEAD lowered, fists slugging, he started up that wolf-jammed flight of steps. Somehow Ritter and I were after him, pegging books, mopping up the human debris. But he didn't leave much for us to do. His fists were pumping like pistons; hitting like steam-hammers. Step by step, he slugged, ripped and tore his way upward. Bandits churned and threshed around him, screeching like wildcats. Those spigs weren't throwing snowballs, or books either, but contesting the assault with knives. In the dust, gloom and plaster blizzard, you could see the flash of those blades. Stiletos,

daggers, hunting-blades, jabbed at Judson on every side.

He plowed through that butchering riot like some indomitable mass of metal smashing its way through the piston-knives of a whirling meat-cutting machine. He ducked a stab and knocked a greaser senseless against the sidewall. He caught two dagger-waving bandits and smashed their heads together. He threw them over his shoulder for Ritter and me to catch, rolled them down the steps under his feet, kicked them flying, flung them like sacks of dog food over the stone balustrade.

"I'm coming, Eunice! I'm coming—!"

The stone bannister broke and crashed to the floor below. Bats flew squeaking. Granite blocks fell from the mouldy architecture overhead. When he finally reached that upper mezzanine, the whole old ruin seemed ready to collapse from the jarring. The dust was thick as the powder fog in a cement factory, and the *bandidos* caught on the landing were jumping down from the balcony and piling up in the hall below like rats jumping from a fire escape. Judson wiped blood from his glasses, put them back on, swerved and dashed for another flight of stairs.

Steps winding up into the tower, dark as the ascent to a belfry. We couldn't keep up with Judson. He took them four at a time.

The tower room was square, I remember, a lofty monk's cell with narrow slitted windows and a big jagged hole in the ceiling covered over with a piece of starry sky. El Lobo was there, humpbacked and mop-bearded with his evil eggshell eye and the musket that looked as if it fired mothballs.

Shy Pedro, with his knife. Eunice, huddled on a mat of moonlight in a corner.

Naturally, thinking the uproar below meant victory for their side, Pedro and El Lobo were surprised to see Judson. He didn't look like Judson any more; but they knew at least that he carried no weapon in his hands.

Pedro tiptoed forward with the knife, smiling coyly.

El Lobo merely raised the gun.

Eunice screamed: "Look out for the gun!" and Judson was on-top of them like a tempest unchained. He picked up Pedro as if he were made of bamboo, and splintered him down on El Lobo's head. El Lobo was squeezing the musket, but the ancient trigger was sticky. El Lobo went down like a squashed toadstool under Pedro, and Judson went down with both in a clawing tangle of rags, teeth and beards that spun across the floor like some outlandish whirling bundle of soiled laundry. The bundle separated—Pedro pulling his fractured bones together in a corner; Judson somersaulting to a stand; El Lobo spinning like a top in mid floor. It separated for an instant, then came together again so fast that Ritter and I didn't have a chance to get into it.

Fists flying. Boots flailing. The whipping light of Pedro's blade. El Lobo's milky eye. Judson's glasses blazing, his shirt coming off in fragments, his breath blowing in long whistling gasps, his knuckles pounding like sledge hammers, *crack, crack, crack!* They went down together, and they got up together. They went down individually, and got up individually. Under the rain of knife-cuts from Pedro, Judson was turning red from head to foot. Under the storm of blows from Judson's red fists, Pedro was

breaking up into kindling, and the howling Wolf was becoming jelly.

Ritter could only stand there yelling, "Wow! Wow!"

I tried to join in, and I got in the way of one of those red fists of Judson's, and that is how I got my black eye.

**I** COULDN'T quite see how it ended. Judson was beating that pair of kidnapers into a Spanish omelette, and Eunice was moaning, and the tower room, like the music, went round and round. As the radio gabs would say, it was a great fight, folks!

But Judson couldn't last forever. Pedro still clutched his knife, and El Lobo still clung to his gun. So Judson, pulling a last desperate haymaker up from his shoe tops, caught Pedro a final blast on the chin. Pedro spun and recovered and smiled shyly and sprang; and El Lobo got in the way by mistake, and Pedro blindly drove his knife to the hilt in El Lobo's back.

The Wolf died then and there with an appalling howl, and his death grip pulled the sticky trigger of the ancient rifle twice. *Wha-wham!*

Bullet Number One caught the stumbling Pedro squarely in the back of the head.

Bullet Number Two went through Judson Stairway's left arm, clean as a piccolo hole, perfectly and exactly through the passage charted twelve months ago by a bullet from General Pierre Césaire Fulgence Montfaucon, missing bones and arteries.

**J**UDSON turned then, and picked up Eunice with his right arm; and we trooped down the tower steps. In the wreckage of the hall at the bottom Judson had to stop a minute for breath. The ruin of the castle was

hushed. Quiet had pooled in the courtyard outside, but far down the mountain fleeing men were wailing. Some wraiths in white shirts sat about, holding their heads.

Judson stared about him dumbly, a ragged red wreck of a man, hair disheveled, beard half gone, something more than tobacco juice spotting his bosom now. His elbows and knees were dripping, his shirt in slashed ribbons, his glasses cracked. I saw his eyes go across a pile of torn books to the truck that stood ghostly at the end of the hall. The headlamps were still burning, and there was a sickly backwash of light. Enough light to see, if you stared, the signs painted on the sides:

**Books Instead of Bullets!**  
**Don't Fight!**

I stared at the Ambassador of Peace. Judson was staring at the signs.

He stared so long there was a noise in the doorway. The truck driver we had sent for help, and a batch of Andorran soldiers in uniform, and Captain Alejandro Escobedo of the Andorran Guardia rushed in.

"Congratulations, *señor!*" the captain yelled. "You have done it, *señor!* Scattered the bandits, and captured The Wolf, their leader! *Señor* is a great fighter, a great hero, a general! Andorra shall award you a medal re-

served only for soldiers, a medal only given to great warriors, the biggest and greatest medal you have ever seen!"

Judson pulled himself to attention, hand at salute.

Eunice flung her arms around that battered neck. "Oh, thank God!" she was moaning. "Thank God! Judson is himself again. . . ."

Judson, with Eunice at his side, marched out of the door.

For a wedding present, Cranshaw Drew sent Judson a copy of his latest book: *The Coming Armageddon: Why the Countries of the World Must Rearm.*

\* \* \*

What really did happen there in Andorra? Well, I've told you.

Who was Judson Stairway? He was you, my friend, and me—and all of us who bump our rosy high ideals against the cold hard rafters of reality; who learn the stars are made of tinsel-covered cardboard on the Christmas Tree; who try in our groping way to climb, and bark our shins at the top against an actuality of night, proving ourselves only human after all.

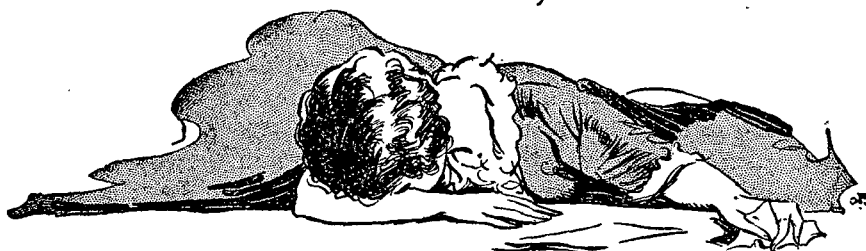
And why? Boys, you've got me there. But the thing is, that men do keep trying. And someday, perhaps! But until then—

Onward Christian Soldiers.



# In the Bag

By HUGH B. CAVE



HE watched the girl for at least thirty seconds before deciding to put his foot down on the brake-pedal. Hitch-hikers on Florida's Dixie Highway were as plentiful as coconuts on the palm trees and as much of a nuisance, sometimes, as trucks and trailers. But she was young to be thumbing rides at four-thirty in the morning. So he stopped.

"Been on the road all night, sweetheart?"

She shook her head. She was all of five feet three, weighed easily a hundred pounds, and was scared. Cute, he decided, despite the lines of fatigue that marred her pale face.

"I left Miami at three o'clock," she said, and timidly added, "My room rent wasn't paid, so I had to get up before the landlady did."

He leaned over and took the suitcase from her hand. Its weight surprised him. Gently, so that its battered cardboard cover would not burst open, he swung it onto the rear seat. The girl got in beside him and pulled the door shut.

"Half frozen, aren't you?" he observed.

"Uh-huh." Florida mornings could be cold, and the ragged red sweater she wore could not be very warming.

She was going home, she said. She

had gone to Miami to meet someone, but had failed to make connections. She had tried to find work—but Miami was full of girls looking for work. Her name, she said, was Matalée.

"Mine," he said, grinning, "is Jim Smith. I'm a salesman."

None of this was strictly true.

He was a United States Customs Special Agent. He was in Florida investigating an influx of heroin, marijuana and poppy poison from Cuba. His name was not Jim Smith, but Art Mace. And the suitcase, the hour and the girl—especially the suitcase—had aroused his suspicions.

Dope could be carried that way. Dope, in suitcases toted by pseudo down-and-out hitch-hikers, had already, according to authentic reports, found its way safely out of Miami and into circulation elsewhere.

Thinking about it, he drove along at a steady forty mile an hour clip, casually studying his passenger. Presently he said, "That's a heavy bag you've got, isn't it?"

She had picked up a magazine and was scowling.

"Do you read this?" she asked.

He chuckled. The magazine had been sent to him, for no known reason, months ago. Its title was *Lonely? Why?* Many a dreary evening had been