



"There is the man! Sickness and leprosy, shame and beggary and violent death—may they never fail in the house of Joab"

The Story Thus Far:

IN THE hearing of King Saul, who is desperate because none of his soldiers is brave enough to fight Goliath, giant of Gath, David plays his harp and sings a song about vanquishing the giant. Saul takes him seriously and David finds himself expected to make good his song.

That night, lying beside the sleeping Joab, his nephew, though only two years his junior, David blames his harp for getting him into this fix and flings it from him. Then he regrets his hasty action and rises to retrieve it. Walking down the hill he finds Goliath lying dead by the side of Elhanan, one of Saul's soldiers, who, returning to his sentry post much the worse for wine, had accidentally tripped Goliath, whose head had crashed against a stone.

David cuts off Goliath's head and marches triumphantly to Saul, making it impossible for Elhanan ever to prove the truth.

Saul, though he had promised Merab, his elder daughter, to David as reward, arranges to marry her to another. Joab is incensed at this insult and urges David to steal Merab, thinking at the same time to take the younger daughter, Michal. To his sorrow he finds Michal in love with David and David not in love with either. However, at Joab's suggestion, David asks for Michal.

As a marriage present Saul demands a hundred dead Philistines. Joab gathers together volunteers and they kill the Philistines.

David and Michal are married and Saul begins to fear David's growing power.

Saul turns against David and David and his family flee over the Jordan to Moab and then David decides to go back and fight Saul. Joab and his brother Abishai and Abishai's wife, Tirzah, go with him. They gather together about four hundred men.

After a long, hard winter with Saul's armies under Abner closing in on them, they flee to the Philistines, their erstwhile enemies. Achish, King of Gath, takes them in as part of his army. When they are at last ready to fight Saul, David's plan is, if it proves expedient, to turn against Achish and go over to Saul, who he thinks would take him back if he helped him to win a victory. Achish, however, getting word of this, forbids David to fight. Whereupon David's army turns against him.

He wins them back, however, just before word is brought that Saul is dead.

Achish makes David king over Judah, one of the conquered provinces. Whereupon King David finds himself fighting Saul's son, Ishbaal, and Abner in order to keep his province. The lines of battle are drawn when Abner sends out a messenger with a flag of truce.

Giant Killer

By ELMER DAVIS

Illustrated by CORNELIUS HICKS

V

THEY met by the pool, the two commanders and their aides, the armies halting on the slopes behind them. Joab instinctively saluted, the captain saluting the general; hard to remember that he too was a general now. There was nothing very impressive about Abner, stout and grizzled—even his plumed helmet could not make him look tall—but there were gold bracelets on his arms such as only a king should wear. King of Israel in all but name; presently, unless they stopped him, King of Judah too—

"Joab, is there any need of this? Our people are brothers. Must we kill each other—for them?" He nodded toward the west; toward Philistia.

"Then let us alone," said Joab curtly.

Abner laughed. "Why, this is our territory. Saul took the Canaanite cities."

"Breaking his oath!" Joab sneered. He had admired Saul for that hardihood; but the reproach ripped out in sheer nervous resentment.

"Suppose he did," said Abner with a shrug. "Judah never claimed this ter-

ritory. Take your men home, and there will be no trouble."

"And leave your army concentrated three hours' march from Judah? We never interfered with you in Benjamin and Ephraim."

Abner laughed. "Do you think I haven't heard of David's scheming? He wanted the whole kingdom, the heritage of Saul. Saul's son inherits that—not his daughter's first husband."

Joab's hand went to his sword—then dropped slowly to his side. He mustn't begin it. David was right; whoever began it would stand condemned by public opinion. Abner knew that too.

"Well," he said sullenly, "go back to Gibeah, and we'll go back to Judah." Abner looked at the armies, drawn up on the hills above.

"They'll feel rather foolish," he observed with a short laugh. "A long hot march for nothing. . . . I hear you have some good swordsmen, Joab. So have we. Perhaps some fencing matches—only in sport, you understand—might amuse the troops. You and I can go back to the lines and keep them in hand. . . . Well? Shall the young men arise and play before us?"

Under his grizzled beard his lips curled in faint mockery—and Joab knew. There could be no friendly sport today between his men and Abner's; fencing matches would turn to a fight in earnest, and then neither army could be held back. Abner wanted war without the responsibility of beginning it. Well—if it must come—"Let them arise," said Joab grimly; and they went back to their men.

A dozen pairs of fencers were matched, out of hundreds of volunteers (Asahel had volunteered, but Joab rejected him gruffly); from either slope they walked down into the valley, alert; and Joab turned to Abishai.

"Off to the right wing, and be ready. See—Abner's men are forming. It's coming." He squatted on the ground, his trumpeter beside him.

THE fencers met; they saluted. Then swords, that should have touched lightly and drawn back, drove home; men were falling, right and left; from both slopes went up a sudden hoarse shouting. On Abner's side came the blast of a ram's-horn trumpet.

Joab turned to his trumpeter. "Quick! Form squares!" Two long blasts on the trumpet—and it was time.

For Abner's army hurled itself down the slopes: a long undulating wall of spears—the old furious Hebrew rush that usually carried everything before it. To right and left of the pool they poured down with a wild yell: "Forward! Yahweh and Abner!"

They swept across the valley like a tidal wave—and then on the farther slope they began to break, their first

impetus failing; they ran more slowly up the hill, breathing hard, their ranks disordered. And they crashed against close-packed, immovable squares—a triple rank of bristling spears, shields interlocked in a wall that stopped the Benjaminite javelins; and behind the wall stood the archers, shooting in volleys, rapidly, methodically, ceaselessly. . . .

Joab, in the front of the foremost square, drew a deep sigh of relief. For the attack was failing; behind heaps of the fallen, wounded writhing among the dead, Abner's men were recoiling dazed, disordered, a jostling mob. Joab's trumpeter blew three short blasts.

Now they moved forward, the ranks of spearmen, each battalion forming into a wedge; running downhill, they drove irresistibly into the mass of Benjaminites, while the archers on the hill behind them shot steadily over their heads—a barrage of arrows that broke up every rallying nucleus of Abner's men before it formed. A long blast, a short one. Joab's light infantry fell on the Israelite flank, a volley of javelins preparing the way for their swinging swords—and Abner's army broke, broke and ran in frantic terror. And with an exultant yell Joab's army, that had proved itself at last, flung itself into the pursuit.

Now Asahel was light of foot as a wild roe. As his men broke ranks to hunt down the fugitives he bounded ahead of them hot and eager. For in the route he had marked a stocky grizzled man with gold armlets, running like the rest—Abner.

Abner was short and surly and unimpressive; but those talks on Abishai's house top came back to Asahel now, and Joab's deepening frowns as he mused on Abner's patient, unwearied scheming, ever more successful—Oh, Abner was a giant! A giant whose shadow only an hour ago had lain dark across Judah, who might beat them yet. . . . But the man who killed Abner, who struck down this shabby, unimpressive terrible giant, would finish the war single-handed. . . . And Asahel rushed after Abner.

Steadily he gained on him; at last he could hear him panting, this stout aging man. Abner threw a glance back over his shoulder.

"Is it you, Asahel?"

The boy's "Yes!" was a gasp. Abner ran on, his head down, his spear trailing at arm's length, its butt forward. He glanced back again.

"Turn aside!" he panted. "Kill someone else, and take his armor."

But Asahel would not turn aside from following him. And suddenly Abner's trailing arm swung forward—and back; the spear thrust swift and straight as a striking snake. . . .

JOAB and Abishai, side by side, came up to where a gathering crowd of men stood about something on the ground.

The pursuit had stopped; far away the Benjaminites were rallying on a hill.

"Get on!" Joab barked. "On after Abner! Don't stand here!"

Mute and worried the men looked at the sons of Zeruiah. Joab flung them aside. . . . His little brother. Dead.

"He was all right," said a veteran, leaning heavily on his spear. "He was as good as they make 'em. If we'd only thought of that trick—"

"What trick?" Joab demanded. "And where were you?"

"A hundred paces behind, sir. Out of reach. It was that old trick—the back-hand swing with the reversed spear. He'd never seen it, I reckon."

"You saw it?" Joab rasped. "Then who did it? . . . Abner! As God lives! Get on!" he panted thickly. "After Abner!"

But the delay had given Abner a priceless half hour. He had rallied some

hundreds of men; as Joab and Abishai came up they found his troops in position on a hill, ready for stout defense. And of the army of Judah most still lingered, binding their wounds or plundering the corpses; with Joab and Abishai were no more men than Abner had. And the sun was going down.

"Still," said Abishai thoughtfully, "more and more men will keep drifting in. Our archers can outshoot theirs, and one rush will finish them if they don't get away in the dark. . . . Aggh!"

Abner had stepped out in front of his men.

"Joab!" he called hoarsely. "Must the sword devour forever?"

"Till it devours you!" Joab flung at him.

"Me—and these?" Abner waved at the men behind him. "Must it go on, bitterness and hatred forever between your people and mine? Brothers killing brothers?"

"He's lost one battle, and now he's trying to talk us out of it," was Joab's first furious reaction. But then, as he stared at Abner and the compact group behind him, he grew more thoughtful. Brothers killing brothers! His little brother Asahel—but he had been killed in a fair fight; the sons of Zeruiah had no fair ground to pursue a blood feud against his killer.

"Brothers killing brothers," said Joab aloud. "I wonder—"

He looked at Abishai; but Abishai in this crisis was waiting for orders. . . . If they went on now—massacred Abner and all his men—the battle would be won: but not the war. Every man they killed would be a brother or a son, or a husband to be mourned in Ephraim or Benjamin; his blood would cry out from the ground, an undying fountain of hatred against Judah and David and the dream of a reunited Israel. . . . No, they could not win that way;

for this problem the sword was no answer.

So Joab blew the trumpet and all the people stood still and pursued after Israel no more. And Abner and his men went all that night, and they passed over Jordan and came to Mahanaim. But Joab and Abishai took up Asahel and buried him in the tomb of his father at Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went back to Hebron.

Before the new moon he knew he had made a mistake. Abner had tricked him out of his vengeance—and more than vengeance.

For once begun the war went on—a fitful, futile, inconclusive war, a war of raids and forays and skirmishes, burned barns and rustled cattle.

DAVID grew stronger and stronger; the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker: never again after the battle of the pool of Gibeon did Abner dare to stand against Joab in the open field. Before a year was past Joab knew that he could drive in one quick dash to Mahanaim, storm the town, and slaughter Abner and Ishbaal in its burning ruins. . . . But with them would die the last hope of uniting Israel. For they were a cantankerous race, these Hebrews. The Northern tribes, and even Ephraim, despised Ishbaal; they sent few men to aid him. Abner's army was mainly Benjaminite, of his own tribe, with a scattering of volunteers from beyond Jordan and adventurers from the Canaanite towns. But if the North despised Ishbaal it still distrusted David; if Joab had tried to occupy the land, if he had marched into Ephraim, all the North would have risen against him and he would have had to meet a nation in arms.

He could beat them—that was the sickening part of it. His army, practiced and confident, could rout the full

force of the Northern militia. But to hold a conquered Ephraim had been too costly even for the Philistines, and David dared not even try it. He could not afford to conquer; his only hope was to win them over of their own accord. And if he beat and killed Ishbaal, that hope was gone; Ishbaal as Ishbaal the North despised, but Ishbaal as the heir of Saul represented an idea that the sword could not kill.

So the war dragged on, a war that they could win but dared not win; and as the months passed Joab was beset with a sickening sense of impotent futility. He was a man of action condemned to act in a matter which action could never settle, a soldier who must always fight, who must not lose but dared not win. Abner as a force he no longer feared; that giant had fallen by the pool of Gibeon. But Abner as a patient, cunning brain might beat them yet; all David's intrigues with the dissatisfied minority in the North were brought to nothing by his craft and cunning; he sat like a spider in Mahanaim, and all Israel was caught in his web.

And no one seemed to worry. It became a habit, this fitful war that never settled anything. After a year or two most people stopped thinking about it. David was vaguely optimistic—but David was preoccupied with his wives and the horde of children who began to toddle about his house, and with teaching Judah to pay taxes and keep up the payment to Achish. Even Abishai, when he was not actually in the field, was absorbed in his family; he only smiled absently when Joab talked of some day winning Israel, of some day rising up to shake off the Philistines.

So it seemed to Joab, sometimes, that he was the only man who still remembered their old dreams and tried to realize them. One could hardly expect that an artist-king would worry about the future when the present gave him all the wealth he needed and all the women he wanted, or that a contented husband and father would trouble himself about abstract hopes and remote fears. That was the business of a childless man, a man who had never had time to marry; who without conscious intention seemed to have stumbled into his life work, devoted himself to the single end of uniting Yahweh's chosen people and freeing them from the Philistines. . . . A man of action, playing a game that action could not win.

BUT at last Abner blundered. They heard of it first from a ransomed prisoner come back from Mahanaim; the story ran all about Hebron, one of the countless jokes on Ishbaal. There was a woman, a concubine of Saul's named Rizpah; Joab remembered her from the old days in Gibeon: a tall, gracious woman, silent and proud. She had fallen to Ishbaal with the rest of the inheritance, but Ishbaal could hardly interest a woman who had known Saul; it was no wonder that when Abner wanted her she responded eagerly.

It had taken Ishbaal some time to find out what was going on, and then he had—spoken to Abner! They roared when they heard that in Hebron. He had not even killed the woman; he had spoken to Abner—and Abner had spoken to him, and Ishbaal could not answer another word, because he feared him. . . . It was a great joke; but David, when Joab brought him the news, leaped up exultant:

"God is with me, Joab—we've won at last! This means the end of either Ishbaal or Abner—and we can beat either one without the other!"

"The matter seems to have been settled," said Joab dryly.

"No king, (Continued on page 30)

Flash Back



THERE are scores and shoals of ambitious damosels who have hit the trail to Hollywood, intending to spread their charms upon the silver sheet, but there are very few who have brought with them the fair sum of twelve thousand dollars.

Miss Willa Binney was such a one and since she was only eighteen at the time she owned the twelve thousand, you will believe that almost anything could happen. It did, and is very blithely set forth in one of the snappiest short stories that ever came out of Cinemaville-by-the-Sea.

By
FRANK CONDON

IN NEXT WEEK'S COLLIER'S

The Sovereign of the Sea

By ALBERT
RICHARD
WETJEN

Illustrated by JOHN A. HAELEN

*The sea! What is
its silent inexorable
master?*

IT OFTEN happens that the most vital thing in a man's world is something he accepts so casually, so much as matter of course, that its importance escapes him. Captain Graham had been going to sea some thirty years before the abrupt knowledge came to him that he served a master greater than his owners, greater than his ship, greater even than deep water itself. Indeed, all these others—owners, ship and deep water—in their turn served this master. Men signed away for some reason they considered good, for fame, money, love, bread, adventure. Such things were the stars that held them, to which they gave their youth, their manhood, often enough their lives. But after that one memorable voyage of the Carradine, Captain Graham knew that ships and men and the sea were bent to one purpose, to one end, to the yoke and service of one silent and inexorable master before which duty, honor, love, toil, fame, adventure, life itself were as incense offered before some ancient and indifferent shrine.

The Carradine loaded lumber at Gray's Harbor for San Francisco and points south this particular voyage. For two weeks the winches rattled along her decks. Derricks swung, guys jarred, steam hissed, men shouted. On the wharfs gangs labored like beavers, piling the lumber in slings which the winches lifted and then lowered into the gaping holds where other gangs received it. The Carradine's mates watched that the stowage was properly done, this size lumber placed so, that size placed otherwise. First into the ship must go the stuff consigned for San Diego. Above that the stuff consigned for San Pedro. And above that again the main cargo for San Francisco. This last overflowed from the holds, which already held two million feet, and another million was carefully stacked on deck and made fast with great chains.

In time the stevedores left the ship; the hatches were secured; the winches ceased their clamor; the derricks were lowered to the top of the deck load and made fast. The blue peter fluttered from the foremost halyards and the Carradine was ready for the sea. The pilot came aboard. The lines were cast from the wharf bollards. The telegraphs clanged, and the vessel moved away. The next dawn found her lifting and falling across sullen leaden swells, her rigging wet and dripping from the rain that drove out of a sickly sky and her whole lumber-gorged being shaken and creaking from the pounding of her engine. Captain Graham, who had been

up all night, took a last look around, crossed the bridge to peer into the compass and then, with a word to his mate, went below. It was about that time things began to happen.

Captain Graham was just finishing a belated breakfast in his cabin when the steward appeared.

"The second engineer, sir," said the steward, a trifle breathless. "He's broken his leg."

"Leg?" said Captain Graham, bolting a last fragment of toast and rising to his feet. The steward nodded.

"He fell over the steam-pipe casing, sir. We took him to his room."

"Well, well!" jerked Captain Graham. "I'll be right along."

*"One more lashing,"
Captain Graham
would shout, "just
one more!"*

The steward went away. Captain Graham pulled on the jacket he had only recently taken off, adjusted his peaked cap and went amidships, a sturdy, brisk little man with graying hair, keen blue eyes and a pleasant, round red face. He bustled into the second engineer's cabin with a cheery, "Well, well!"

chatted amiably of one thing and the other, told a few stories, swore a bit when a safety pin pricked his thumb. When he left, the second engineer was lying contentedly on his back, his in-

jured limb swathed in bandages, and, though his face was white and drawn, enjoying one of Captain Graham's cigars.

The captain, returning to his cabin, prepared to get some sleep. He undressed without interruption, climbed into his bunk and was just pulling the blankets up to his chin when the Car-

