

Picked out of the Air

By Jack Binns

IN THE Eighteenth Century the leading powers of the world warred with one another to acquire colonies. In the Nineteenth Century international trade rivalry led to greater conflicts that culminated in the World War. Now it begins to look as though radio wave lengths might be the future cause of battle.

Communication is the most vital of all needs in modern civilization. The control of world-wide communication by the Allied Powers during the World War was just as important as the physical control of the high seas by their fleets. With this control of communication, they were able to coordinate their combined resources and direct them to the points where they would be most effective.

World-wide radio communication is now a possibility for every nation, through the medium of ultra-short wave channels that are being opened by engineering development. Unfortunately there are only a limited number of such channels available. They were divided up for specific services by the last International Radio Convention held in Washington last year.

Since that convention adjourned, rapid strides have been made in the development of apparatus. With each increase in the sensitivity of radio receivers, there comes a corresponding decrease in the number of wave channels actually available at any one time. In other words, the transmitters in different countries begin to interfere with one another just as a great many of our broadcasting stations located in different states interfere with one another despite the prohibitions of the Federal Radio Commission. Scientific progress is always one or two steps ahead of regulatory efforts.

Take short-wave rebroadcasting channels, for instance. There are thirty-five of them available for the entire world. The Federal Radio Commission in this country has already allotted twenty to local station operators. How many have been assigned by other nations to their own citizens I cannot say, but there is no doubt these channels are already saturated.

Every nation has a legal right to use

all the channels for transmission within its own borders. Unfortunately radio waves do not respect man-made geographical boundaries.

We are on the threshold of international broadcasting. It is quite conceivable there will be interference unless some international agreement is reached. It would seem to be the policy of wisdom for our Federal Radio Commission to begin cooperating with the International Radio Union of Berne before any serious cause of international misunderstanding arises.

Or Unduly Extended

A headline on one of the items sent me by the public relations department of the chains, reads: "Radio Conductors Devise Elastic Music."

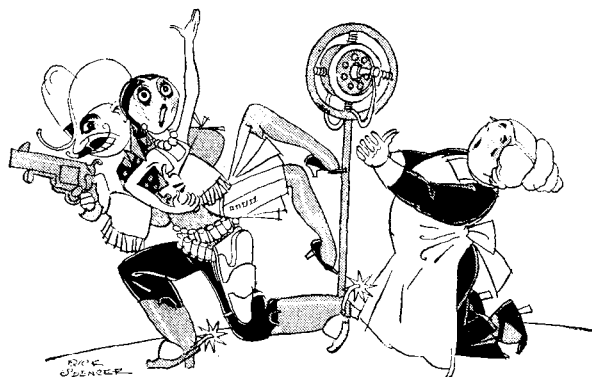
Yes, indeed, some of it does sound rather badly stretched.

Curses! Jack Dalton

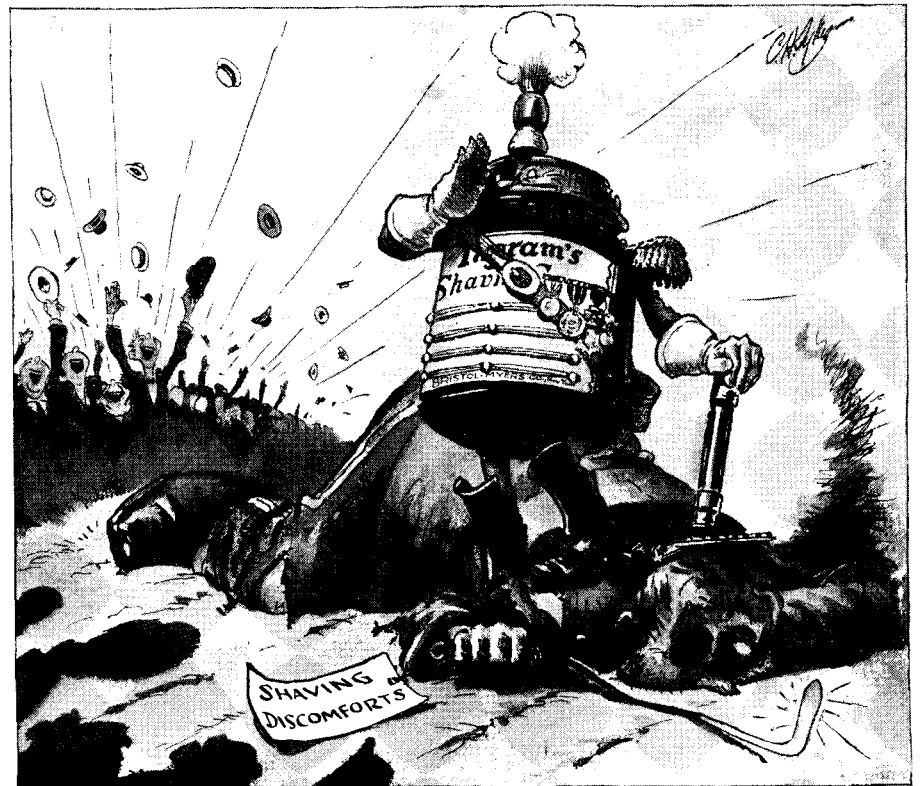
One of the strange things to the visitor in a broadcast studio is to see the actors and actresses who are taking part in a radio drama gesticulate quite as freely as though they were on a theater stage. It appears even more peculiar because of the lack of make-up or costuming to fit the part that is being portrayed. The gestures, however, are no mere heritage of former stage experience. They are vitally important to a proper vocal effort. Let Charles Webster, who has devoted the last three years to radio drama over the NBC microphones, tell you why.

"The radio actor," declares Charles, "knows that the only thing he does before the microphone that reaches his audience is what he says. But to achieve the best voice, to convey the most passion, pity or anger through the voice, the actor must make about the same gestures he would on the stage."

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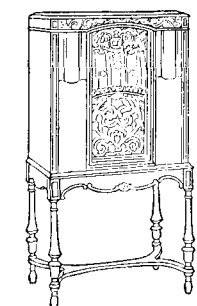
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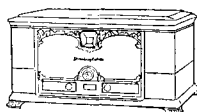
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Nothing but a Ghost

Continued from page 32

few cans tonight at the store," grunted the captain. "It gets that way sometimes."

A few moments later Mr. Smith passed his hands over his eyes and yawned.

"I shouldn't be sleepy," he confessed. "How long will it be before we anchor, Captain? I think I'll take a last nap."

"Plenty of time," the captain assured him heartily. "You turn in. I'll see you're called afore we drop th' hook."

Mr. Smith rose. He seemed to weave somewhat as he entered his cabin and they heard him mutter, perplexed, "Queer! I shouldn't feel so tired."

THE captain waited until he heard the boards of the bunk creak under his passenger's weight and then with a nod to his companion, he got up and went on deck, the mate following soon after. Anselm met them at the taffrail.

"Well?" he said.

"He's going under," grunted the captain. Anselm nodded and turned to watch the dark shadow that was Waratah Island, looming closer and closer. The schooner slid between long rolls of foam, and came to rest on the placid water inside a sheltering reef. Anselm, the captain and the mate went below.

"He ought to be out by now," commented the captain.

"We'll pitch him ashore when we're through," said Anselm, curtly.

The captain unlocked a long drawer. He took out three cartridge belts with holstered revolvers, and each of the men buckled one on.

"What beats me," said the fat mate, cinching himself up, "is why you didn't come here afore. Looks like you've wasted a pile o' time knowing them pearls was here."

"Lucky for you," was Anselm's comment. "You get your share now. But the fact is I only got to look at the old man's papers about a year back. I knew about the stones all right but hadn't an idea where they were till I got a slant at the plan of the house. Took me a year then to get to Singapore and find the right men to chip in with."

"And then you found us busted flat," grunted the captain. "But Mister Smith came along just in time."

The three men left the main cabin and a few minutes later were pulled across the inky waters to the beach.

They stumbled on to a narrow path, and following it for some hundred yards, eventually reached a large clearing in the center of which stood a roomy bungalow made of white coral blocks half smothered in vines. They ascended the veranda steps, moved cautiously toward the front door that opened into the bungalow living-room, and then Anselm, with an abrupt gesture, flung it open and stood blinking in the light that flooded from the opening.

There was a startled gasp from a woman who was sitting by a long and narrow table, her hands busy with some sewing as she rocked back and forth in a cane chair. Across the table from her sat a man about thirty-five years of age, sprawled in another cane chair and with his stockinged feet resting on a stool. Seeing a stranger, he rose.

"My name's Cartright," he said. "Won't you come in, Captain . . . er . . ."

"The name doesn't matter," drawled Anselm. He stepped into the room, the mate and the captain crowding close at his heels, their hands resting on their gun butts.

"Keep still," he snapped grimly. "And tell your woman to behave. You won't get hurt."

"Better make him fast," grunted the captain. "No sense leavin' him loose."

The fat mate passed a length of fishing line round both of the trader's elbows which he made fast behind his back with a strong seizing, rendering him helpless.

"We'll do the same for you, ma'am," said Anselm. The trader uttered a stifled protest.

"You lay hands on her and I'll . . ." he choked.

"Aw, quit," grunted the captain with some disgust. "We ain't after wimmin."

The trader's wife, trembling a little, rose from her chair and submitted to having her elbows lashed behind her. That accomplished she was bundled into a corner with her husband and the three intruders set to work.

Anselm produced a scrap of paper which he scanned with care, occasionally lifting his eyes to orientate himself in the room.

"Direct line from idol about ten feet to center of room," he muttered. Then gazing about, "There's no damned idol here!"

He thrust the paper into his pocket.

"Where's the idol that used to be here?" he demanded harshly, staring at the bound trader. The man looked puzzled.

"He means that old wooden image we used to have," cried the woman hurriedly. "It was here when we came. We sold it to a collector who was here last year," she added, looking at Anselm. He wiped his brow as if relieved.

"Where did it stand?" he demanded.

The woman nodded to one wall.

"About there, I think. Below that picture. Did you come for that?"

Anselm ignored her. He strode to the spot indicated, placed himself beneath the picture and measured ten feet outward to the center of the room. Then taking a hammer from his pocket, he tapped on the floor, listening after each blow.

THE bungalow was of a construction rather unusual in those parts. Beneath the hardwood of the floor there was apparently solid stone and Anselm's hammer knocked futilely for some time.

"Got a chisel or crowbar anywhere around here?" he snapped.

The trader shook his head.

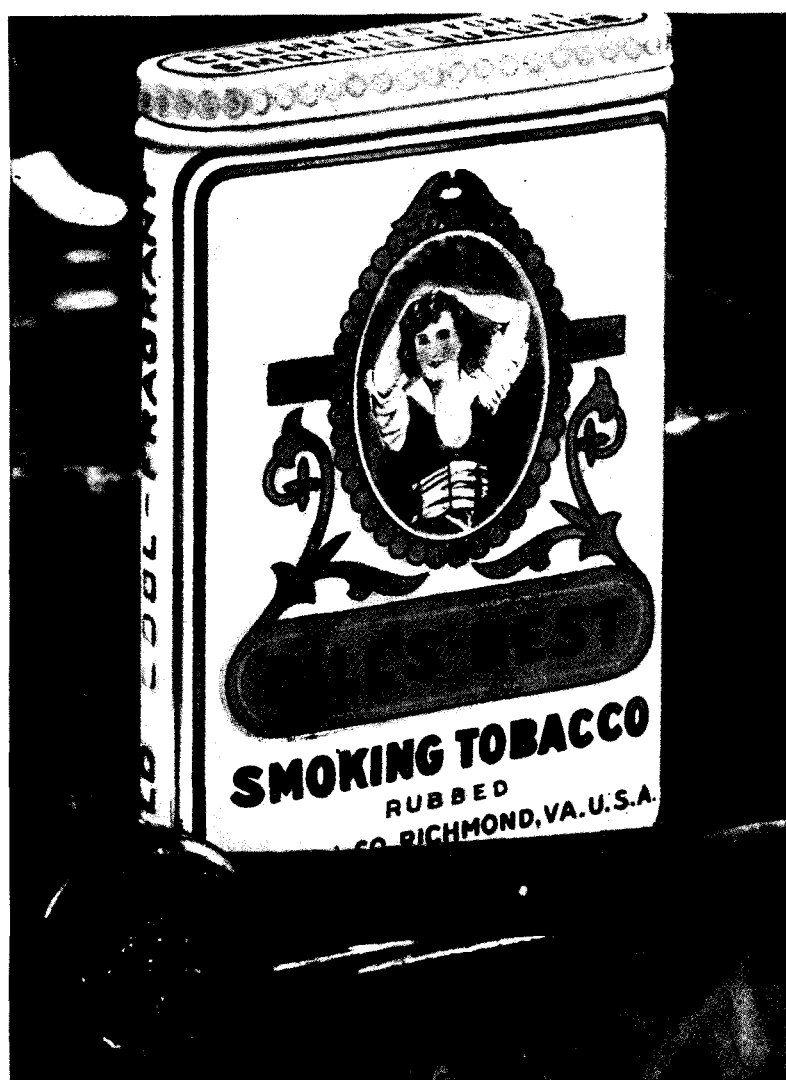
"You might find a screw driver in the cupboard over there," he suggested, and Anselm crossed to the indicated place and wrenched open the door. A few moments of feverish groping and he found a screw driver with which he proceeded to pry up one of the floor boards, the captain and mate watching him intently.

The board had been well laid and it was nearly half an hour before, with an exclamation of triumph, Anselm tore it free and tossed it aside. From the captain and the mate there came a simultaneous quick breath. In a small cavity which the board had covered there lay a rusted but still sound japanned tin box. Anselm lifted it out and carried it to the table, the others crowding at his heels; then he pried off the lock and jerked back the lid. Then he drew out first a small bundle of papers, tied with string, a worn leather bag-purse which clinked, and finally an old-fashioned, single-action .45 revolver. This last he tossed impatiently aside, as he did the papers, after a hasty glance through them. The bag he emptied with care to disclose a small packet of tightly folded Bank of England notes, a few gold sovereigns and some silver. That was all. (Continued on page 51)

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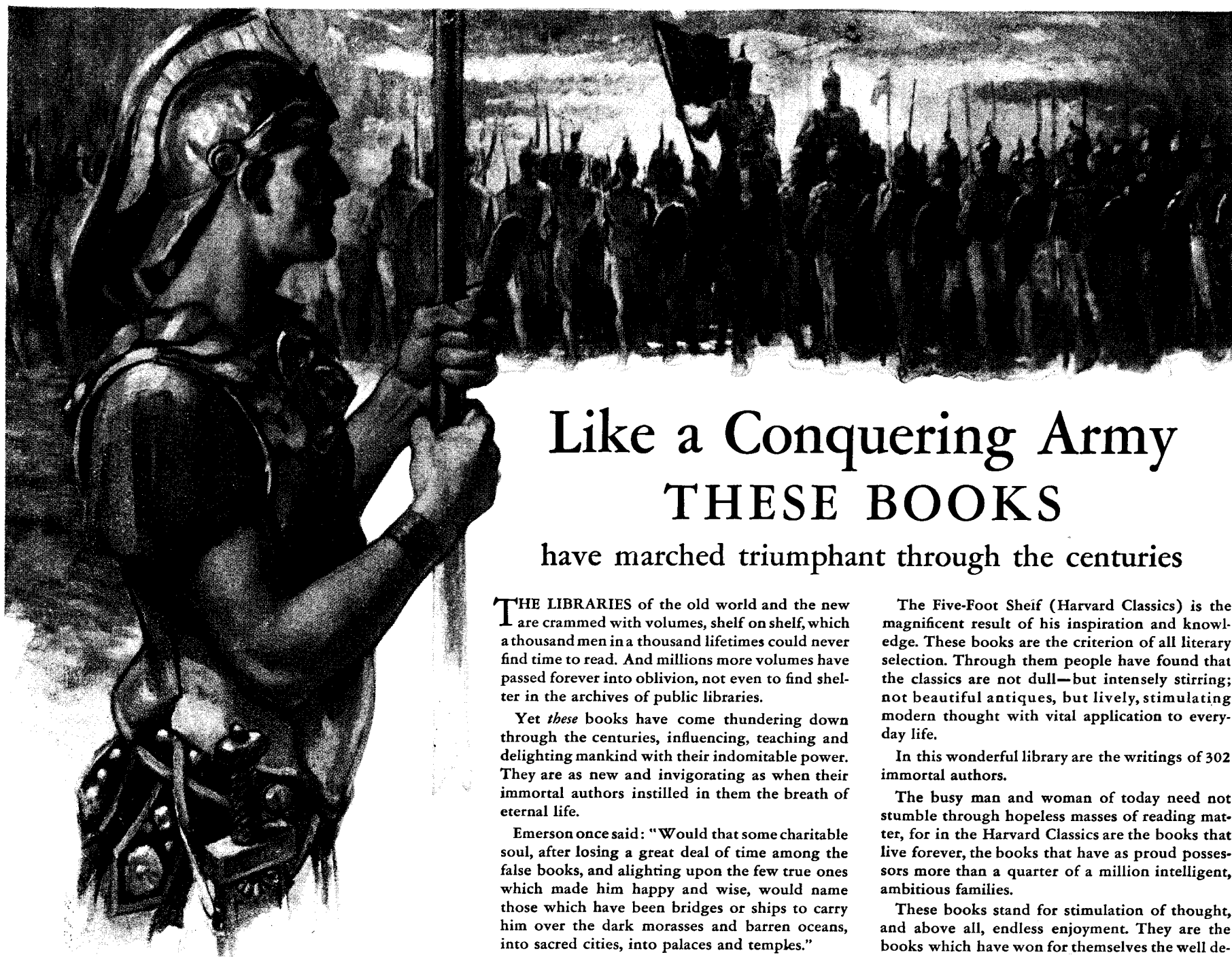
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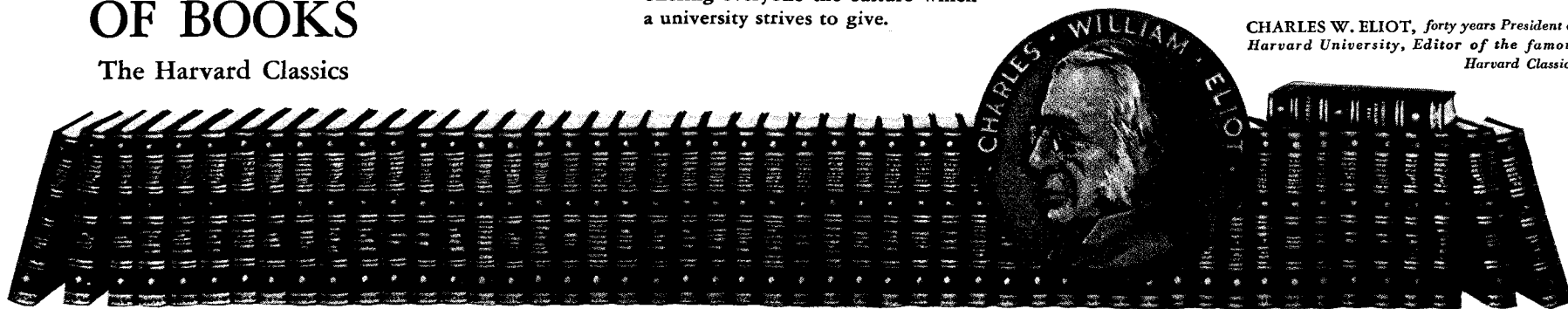
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Nothing but a Ghost

Continued from page 48

"Ain't no pearls there," grunted the captain surlily.

"By God! They *were* here!" shouted Anselm. "They must be here! Only two men knew about them and one died in Queensland and the other in a Shanghai dive!"

The captain licked his lips.

"Maybe this wasn't the hiding place," he suggested. "Maybe there's other places!"

"By God! That's right!" Anselm blurted. He picked up his hammer again and, dropping to his knees, went carefully over the floor.

At last he paused and dropped into a chair, baffled.

"Looks as if you got us on a wild-goose chase," the captain rasped.

"Wait a bit and let me think," Anselm snarled. "They're here somewhere I tell you—find a drink!"

THE fat mate had already discovered a half-filled bottle of gin in a cupboard and this he brought forward with some cups. The captain dropped to a chair, frowning heavily, and the mate, setting the bottle on the floor, poured three generous drinks and passed them round. Several minutes passed in comparative silence, and then the captain rose and moved slowly over to confront the trader and his wife huddled still in their corner.

"We ain't meaning no harm t' you," he began smoothly. "It's a private sort of affair we're on, y' see, looking fer some loot we buried here some time back. Guess you never run across it, did you?"

"Do you think I'd be trading for copra still?" suggested the trader, with a touch of irony. "I never even knew of that hiding place under the floor."

The captain grunted.

"We got a friend of yours on th' ship," he began again. "Old gent we picked up at Singapore. Said he was your uncle, ma'am."

"Uncle?" cried the woman. She choked back her resentment and tears. "Did you bring him? I knew he was coming but we thought it would be on the next schooner from Batavia. Is he well? You didn't hurt him?"

"Not yet," observed the captain significantly. "I suppose he ain't ever been here any time?"

"Oh, yes," said the woman. "He was a trader here a long time ago."

"He didn't write an' tell you about any pearls, heh?" the captain suggested.

"No," answered the woman. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Mebbe if we tried a little hot iron on yer man's feet you might think of somethin'," drawled the captain. The woman's eyes widened and her lips moved soundlessly. The trader uttered a short oath.

"Sure," grunted the captain. "A touch of hot iron might help."

He bent and caught the trader by the arm, dragging him to the center of the room. The woman screamed, a high-pitched throbbing sound that made the men curse her savagely. The trader kicked and wriggled but his legs were finally lashed fast and Anselm began to heat the bent and twisted screw driver over the flame of the oil lamp on the shelf.

"I tell you there are no pearls here!" panted the trader, his face ashen. "You swine! I'd tell you if I knew."

Anselm crossed the room, the metal of the screw driver smoking a little but not quite red-hot. The fat mate bent and ripped one of the socks from the trader's

foot and Anselm dropped to his knees. The woman moaned, a long, low sound filled with anguish. Her eyes closed, to jerk open again as a choking cry of pain split the room. There was a faint odor of singed flesh.

"Let him go!" whispered the woman. "There's money in the safe in the bedroom. Take it and let him go. There are no pearls that we know of."

"Might as well give him another touch," the captain suggested, and Anselm grunted. The choking cry, bitten off short, rose again. The woman lay limp in the corner, unconsciousness flooding her. Anselm straightened with a curse and flung the screw driver aside.

"Looks as if they're tellin' the truth," he said savagely.

The fat mate slopped another drink into a cup and lifted it to his lips. It never reached there. He remained transfixed, his eyes wide, his body tense. Anselm uttered a stifled and wondering oath. The captain stopped chewing at his quid and dropped a hand involuntarily to his gun. In the doorway stood Mr. Smith!

He did not look at all insignificant now. The weary shoulders seemed to have straightened and grown wider. The age wrinkles about his mouth seemed to have been magically wiped away. The eyes were no longer a lifeless gray left chill and hard and wide. There was something menacing about him in spite of his white hair, something deadly and coldly magnetic.

He was bareheaded, dressed only in a shirt and duck pants, both of which dripped with water. The front of his ducks was also stained a faint brown, from the waist almost to the knees, and it came to Anselm with a start that such a stain might have been caused by deliberately spilled tea. More menacing than all, and more suggestive, were two cartridge belts crossed about Mr. Smith's waist, and though he stood with a hand idly resting against each lintel of the door, he looked quite ready to use the guns which sagged in their holsters down each thigh.

"I WAS delayed a little," he said, and his voice was crisp and clear. "I had to swim. I came principally to correct your version of an old history, Anselm. Bradley did not want to hog all those pearls, as you suggested. His partner got that idea and shot Bradley in the back. He was afraid to try any other way. Bradley was the fastest gunman in the South in those days. His natives attacked the partner—you were right there—and he got out. He was a yellow sort of dog, for the first thing he did was to tell the authorities where they could find Bradley, and they got him and put him in jail. Bradley heard later that his partner had been killed and it never occurred to him there would be any clue left as to where the pearls were hidden, so he didn't bother to get them. He figured they'd be all right for a rainy day. When he got out of jail he went into northern Queensland and there he died. I knew him very well, you see?"

The three men, standing erect in the room were as if in a trance. The sudden appearance of a man they thought drugged for the night stunned them. There was a long, tense silence after Mr. Smith had finished speaking. Anselm was the first to break it.

"You know so damned much," he sneered, "I guess you can tell us where the pearls are then. They're mine by rights. My father..."

(Continued on page 52)

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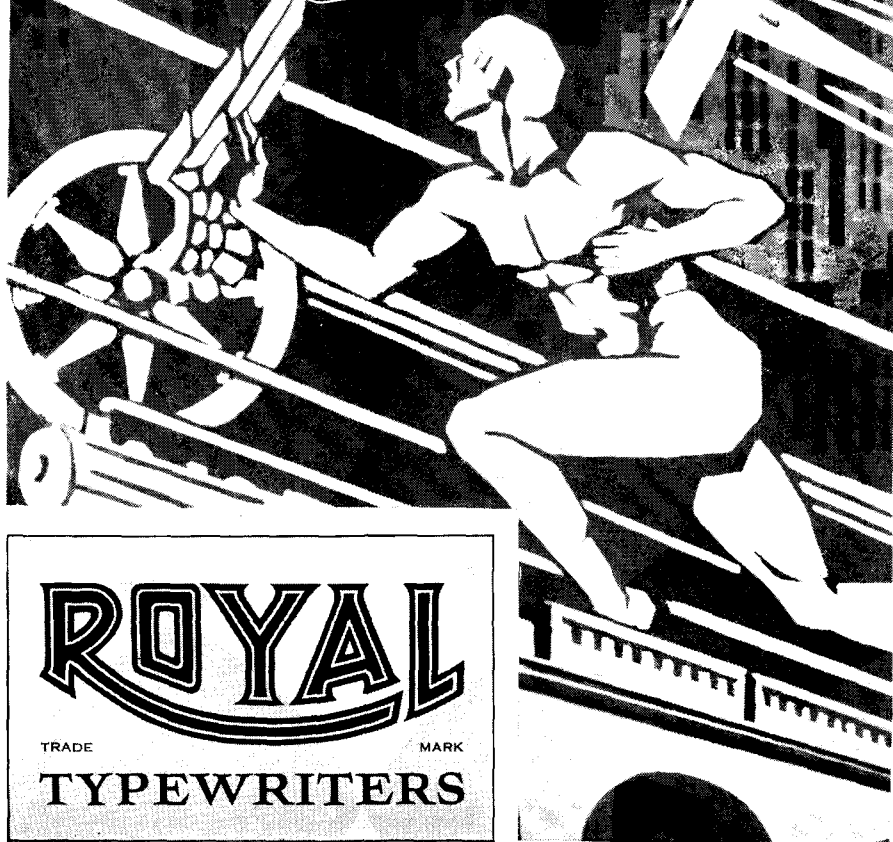
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(Continued from page 51)

"Was Bradley's partner," said the old man quietly. "And a yellow dog!"

"There's no use blabbing away like this," jerked the captain suddenly. "You know too damned much, *Mister Smith*. Guess you were wise to the doping, eh? Well, we c'n use you right now. What happened to the pearls?"

"They're here," said Mr. Smith, a faint smile curving his lips. He glanced at the gap in the flooring and then at the seared feet of the helpless trader. Finally he glanced at the woman huddled in the corner and his face hardened.

"I'll take the three of you to Billiton and the magistrate," he stated crisply. "You'll get five years at the least!"

Anselm's breath went out with a hissing noise. The captain's eyes became mere slits. The fat mate took half a step back and dropped a hand to his gun. The three of them drew almost together, and the captain and Anselm at least were fast for men who were not professionals with weapons. But neither of them saw Mr. Smith's hands move. One moment he was idly and even indolently leaning in the doorway, and the next, he was erect and orange flames were stabbing from each of his hips.

The fat mate's bullet buried itself in the floor as he pitched forward like a log, a neat hole above his heart. The captain staggered and went on one knee without having fired at all, his gun dropping with a thud as he twisted sideways and crashed limp. Anselm's bullet splintered the stone of the wall a clear two feet to one side of the doorway, and then a red stain crept slowly across the bosom of his shirt. He sagged at the knees, and then collapsed like an empty sack.

Mr. Smith stood motionless for a moment, blue smoke curling up before his face. Then, holstering his guns, he moved into the room, secured a knife and cut both the trader and his wife free.

He lifted the woman to a chair, and forced some gin between her lips. The trader hauled himself to a seat and swallowed a stiff three fingers before he could speak.

"You came . . . just in time," he

whispered hoarsely. "The devils!" He stared at the limp bodies and shuddered. The woman opened her eyes and gazed stupidly around before remembrance came and she moaned. Mr. Smith picked up from the debris of the ruined table the old single-action revolver Anselm had lifted from the tin box, and began to fumble absently with the butt. It came away in his hand after awhile to drop into his palm a small wash-leather bag which he opened and emptied, disclosing nearly twenty fine pearls of considerable size and value. He stared at them for a while, smiling faintly, and then slipped them into his pocket. The woman stared at him, awed.

"Who are you?" she whispered. "I don't know you . . . unless . . ."

"I'm your uncle," he said gently, and blinked. "There's nothing to worry about now." He left her for a moment and went outside into the darkness. His face was queerly soft and gentle as he gazed up at the stars and the night wind played in his hair.

"There was a man who died in Queensland," he whispered. "In the old days, the brave old days. We must remember that. It was only a ghost that walked tonight."

HE REMAINED motionless for a long time. Then his hands moved to his cartridge belts. Twice and three times he touched them and twice and three times his fingers fell away. He seemed irresolute, as if there was some madness in the wind, and the night that stirred him set desires racing in his blood which he fought against. But at last he straightened his shoulders and set his lips. Steadily he unbuckled the belts, and flung them away with their holstered guns.

"Yes," he said, very wearily, "it was nothing but a ghost. The old days are gone."

Then Typhoon Bradley turned and went back into the bungalow and strangely the age-lag was in his step and the shoulders that had once been massive were caved over the ruin of a chest again. But he was smiling to himself and felt at peace.

Bad News for Pitchers

(Continued from page 19)

subject in which I am vitally interested, as one of my kiddies got kicked in the head by a zebra the other day, and will have to give up reading for the law and be a football coach, a baseball umpire and a cartoonist. The madam thinks a cartoonist's work is too confining; if the boy got good at it and his cartoons were widely syndicated, he wouldn't dare go any farther than Siberia for his outings and not even there more than four or five times a year.

A football coach is usually home in the summer, when you've already got mosquitoes. So we kind of hope the boy will choose umpiring, and have engaged a private tutor to instruct him in pointing as well as imitating the cries of animals.

The Place for an Expert

I don't believe I had better waste my time and yours with suggestions on how to umpire. Billy Evans, apparently normal when a child, went into the profession and wrote a surprisingly clear booklet about it which you can buy for twenty-five cents.

There is just one thing I would advise and that is to sit in the stands or the bleachers instead of trying to

run the game from the field. I know that the place to judge balls and strikes is in the back row of the right field seats, because I have sat there and heard my neighbors correct an umpire when he charged one of the home batsmen with a strike that was below his knees and too close to him. The correction went unheeded, of course, because umpires are infallible.

The only time I ever saw an umpire in doubt of this infallibility was five or six hours after a certain world's series game in New York. Two of them, following a consultation, had called the game on account of darkness. It was noon and Old Sol beat down out of a cloudless sky. I reached Park Row forty minutes later and nearly had sunstroke walking from the subway to the office. The stenographers, returning from lunch, carried parasols.

My work done, I went to the Waldorf where Mr. McGraw was not letting you pay for anything. I saw one of the umpires in the lobby with Nick Altrock, and horned in.

"I'd like to have you boys' honest opinion," said the umps. "Didn't you think it was getting pretty dim out there?"

"It would have been only for the fireflies," said Mr. Altrock.



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YOU, as a conscientious mother, buy the best food for your children, prepare it with scrupulous care and cook it correctly. Yet, in spite of all, you may be giving your children food which is not wholesome—possibly dangerous!

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The General Electric is ideal for the home. Its simple mechanism which you never need to oil, is mounted on top of



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the cabinet and hermetically sealed in a steel casing. It has a simple accessible temperature control, makes a generous supply of ice cubes, creates no radio interference. It has the only all-steel, warp-proof cabinet—easily-cleaned, sanitary.

Your dealer will be glad to explain the spaced payment plan, which makes it so easy to own this faithful watchman of the family health. If there is not a dealer near you, write Electric Refrigeration Dept., General Electric Co., Hanna Building, Cleveland, Ohio, for booklet C-9.

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There are now more than 300,000 homes enjoying the comfort and protection of General Electric Refrigerators—and not one of the owners has ever had to pay a single dollar for repairs or service.

GENERAL ELECTRIC

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"Then ye who'd bid adieu
to care,
Come here and smoke it
into air."

—Anon.



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Wellman's Method, used exclusively on Granger Rough Cut, is what makes it so fragrant and mellow, so sweet and cool.

Big, shaggy flakes—not like finely cut hot-burning tobaccos, but "Rough Cut" to burn slowly down to a clean, dry ash.

All in a common-sense soft package, foil wrapped to give the best protection, at 10 cents. A whole bookful of reasons why it's "in more pipes every day!"

LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.

GRANGER ROUGH CUT



...in more pipes every day!

I'm not scared of the General

Continued from page 17

"That reminds me." On his way to the door George Malt turned. "She gave me a message. Something—was it?—about a dog—"

"A dog?"

"As I recall it," stated George Malt, "it was some bilge about if she had a dog who wanted a walk she would not be troubling you."

"Oh." Aubrey had paled, but he set his teeth. "She said that?"

"If you see him," she said, "tell him this from me." George laughed. "But don't you worry! Leave it all to me!"

IT WAS not until the following afternoon that Aubrey had a chance to show initiative. Strolling down by the lake, he heard the boom of the General's voice. It seemed he was addressing a gardener. Throwing up his chin, Aubrey made for the source of the disturbance, thoughts of Lindbergh banking up solid behind his resolution.

"Good afternoon, sir," opened Aubrey, as he came on the General surveying a ladder with disapproval.

The old soldier turned on him abruptly.

"D'yeh see what that fool brought me for a ladder to reach up to the gallery windows?" he shouted. "Ten-foot short! What does the blinkin' fool think I am—Blondin?"

"Is there any little thing I can do, sir?" asked Aubrey.

The General surveyed him thoughtfully. He had not forgotten billiards or the fly book, but he hated delay and he wanted to get a burglar trap he had devised fixed at the windows of the gallery.

"I think," he declared, "I could manage to reach the ledge up there if you could steady the ladder. Think yeh could manage it? Then while I make fast to the ledge, yeh could shift the ladder round the corner and I could climb on again and reach the sills. What?"

"Certainly!" agreed Aubrey, showing enterprise.

Collecting a coil of wire the General mounted the rungs.

To Aubrey at the foot of the ladder the climb seemed a long one. Some thirty feet up the General was snorting dizzily among drain pipes and gutters, trailing yards of wire as it unwound on his outstretched arm.

When he had reached the ledge the General looked down. "Right?" he inquired.

Tightening his hold on the ladder, Aubrey jerked his head. Gingerly the man at the top transferred his weight to a foot groping for a toehold on the coping, then, clinging to the ledge with his hands, he parted company deliberately with the ladder. Watching the feat brought perspiration to Aubrey's brow, safe as he was on the ground. It seemed as though the General could only hold on for a matter of seconds. He heaved at the ladder to shift it, as ordered, round the corner.

His first heave moved the top some three feet against the brick work, but not by a millimeter did it shift the bottom cupped in the turf. Desperately he heaved again and this time the top, yielding gracefully to gravity, began to slide over the wall. Leaping round the base, Aubrey set his shoulder against the progress, and it was not until a yell from above reached his ear that he knew he had been successful. The top of the ladder he now found had ridden the crest and stopped itself by cannonading into the seat of the General's trousers, on the other side. A man

made of lesser stuff than the General would have been dislodged.

"What the boundin', blastin' hell," he inquired, choked with the effort, "do yeh think you're doing, yeh pop-eyed young fool?"

But Aubrey, shaken to the core, did not hear him. He was sure the General could not cling on more than a minute or so longer—and so was the General. Twice more in less than half a minute he drove a battering ram into the seat of the old soldier's pants, then, taking advantage of his flagging strength, the ladder skidded off due west, and crashing over the roof of the library windows, split itself neatly in half.

The General, like a parboiled eagle from the crags, watched it go—watched the man to whom he had trusted his life, snatch up the longer portion and offer it to him as the best he could do—watched Elaine arrive, attracted by the noise. Then he applied himself inarticulately to the job of holding on to his two inches of coping.

"Oh, oh!" cried Elaine. "Why won't you do something? He'll be killed. . . ." It seemed likely to Aubrey. "But what can I do?" Lindbergh, he was certain, would have done something.

"A ladder—a rope! Anything!"

It was at this moment that the gardener appeared with the long ladder. The whole household seemed to have collected as they set it rapidly against the wall for the General to embark. "Poor, poor fish!" her eyes seemed to say to him, but the arm of George Malt drew him aside.

"Shift-ho, I think," he counseled.

"Me?" Aubrey demanded with heat. "I'm not afraid to—" he broke off, catching sight of the General's face as he paused before making his descent. It was as if his roving eye were seeking out someone in the crowd below. "Where to?" he amended hurriedly.

"Immaterial," stated George Malt. "It is speed that counts."

THAT evening he chanced upon Elaine in the picture gallery upstairs.

"Still here?" she greeted, a trifle coldly Aubrey thought.

"Here?" He moved over to her side among the crates in the softly-lit gallery.

"There is," she explained, "a good service of trains back to town."

In the faint glow from the shaded lamps she made a picture which went straight to Aubrey's heart. Swiftly now he knew that he hated this man Lindbergh. He gulped. "I'm not going," he stated in a voice he did not recognize.

"Oh?"

"I'm not going to leave this house, Elaine, until I've shown you that I am not the—the worm you think I am."

"You know I consider you a worm?" She was examining the tips of her fingers.

"Yes." He moved closer to her as she slanted against a crate. "George Malt told me."

A hand hanging at her side touched his. Like a man in a dream he bent his fingers over it. "He's your father, Elaine—and after all I'm stopping in his house."

She shook her head, and Aubrey noticed that her lip was trembling. "What difference does that make? Oh! As long as I can remember I seem to have heard him cursing and spluttering at people! At first I thought you were—different. But I know now that it's just because you haven't the spirit. Oh, oh! Either a man has nice manners

and no spirit, or . . . or . . . Why, if I only knew it, I expect Lindbergh raves at you if you forget to put s-sugar in his t-tea. "

A remarkable thing happened to Aubrey Effingham. He discovered himself in the act of kissing someone. It was Elaine.

"Ye Gods!" cried Aubrey, when at length he came up for air. "Ye Gods and by Jove!" He prepared to submerge afresh, but Elaine was gone.

From the door at the far end came the sound of retreating footsteps. Aubrey leaped round.

"Oh, oh!" sounded a queer little voice. "I hate you! I hate you! But . . . you're rather a dear. . . ."

IT WAS the proximity of the cases, taken in partnership with the new yeasty feeling which now surged in him, which gave him the idea. It seemed to show initiative. It seemed to show enterprise.

Through the billiard-room he made his way round to the kennels at the back of the house, taking care to leave the French windows open behind him as he took to the lawns. It was close on midnight and there was no one about. He wanted to keep his idea to himself.

One of the first things he had been shown by the General on his arrival was the lion dogs brought back by the General from Kenya some six months ago. "The only things, my boy," that old soldier had confided to him in those days when all was peace, "the only things on four legs that will stand up to a lion." And certainly they had looked fierce enough. Outside the pen now, Aubrey ran an eye over the brutes in the moonlight. He was not afraid of dogs—even half-broken lion dogs as big as small mules. But he wanted to make sure.

"Good fellows then," opened Aubrey. "Good boys!"

One of the dogs nosed to the bars. Hoping he did not look like a lion in the moonlight, Aubrey scratched his head. In less than a minute, that dog was outside the pen and, with his collar held firmly in Aubrey's hand, was being led quietly back to the house.

"And now," said Aubrey to himself as he shut the door of the gallery on the lion's foe, "that plate which has been worrying the General is safe for one night at any rate. If I couldn't help the old boy rig up his trap at the window, he'll have to admit I did the trick for him in another way."

He turned to open the door for a last look round on this show of enterprise, but a bloodcurdling growl, followed by a sinister rush, caused him hastily to change his mind. "I should not," he reflected with satisfaction, "care to be the burglar who tries to break in there!" Smiling to himself he went happily to bed.

Next morning Aubrey awoke to a rose-tinted world. He greeted the company at breakfast with a quiet confidence. The General, stretched in a chair at the French windows, had a touch of gout.

"Well, well," Aubrey chirped as he shook out his napkin. "Everything all right with the plate?" It was a rhetorical question.

"What do you mean?" demanded George Malt.

"Mean?" Aubrey turned to him from beaming on Elaine. "I mean that I'll bet no one got in to steal it!"

THROWING aside his napkin, the friend of Aubrey's school days rose urgently to his feet. The look of consternation on his face piqued Aubrey.

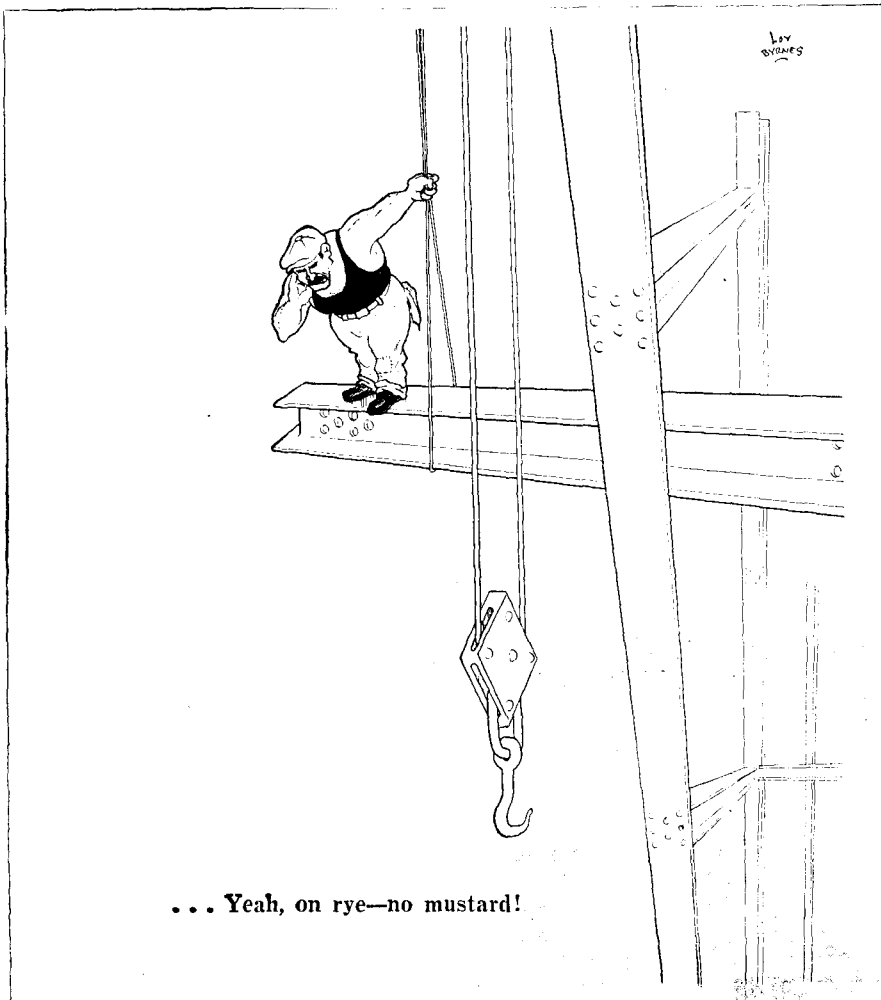
"Do you," he inquired distantly, "find anything wrong with the idea?"

George Malt waved an urgent hand, pointing to the General and pressing a finger to his lips.

Aubrey was puzzled. Smiling he shook his head. "I was only asking you if you found anything wrong with my scheme of shutting the dog up in—"

A smothered howl burst forth from the direction of the General's chair. His neck was swelling as he struggled to get on his bandaged legs. "So you were the idiotic fool who shut that damned dog in the picture gallery! Lemme get hold of yeh! Gimme that crutch somebody, I'll—"

(Continued on page 56)



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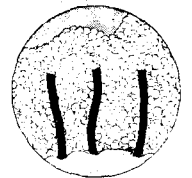
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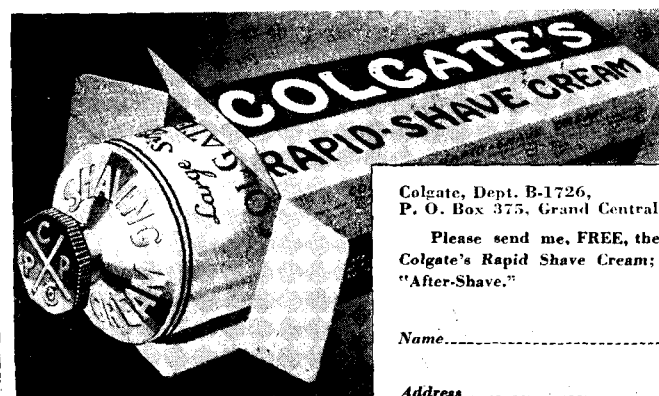
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WINCHESTER

TRADE MARK

(Continued from page 55)

Aubrey was getting used to leaving his host in mid-sentence, but this time as he legged it for the broad horizons, he was puzzled.

"Gout!" echoed George Malt, when he had piloted his friend out of reach of the storm. "What made you think the old boy had gout? Those bandages were how the doctor fixed him up after the dog had finished with him. When he got home last night he popped up to the gallery for a last look round. I beg your pardon?"

"If you will pack my bag and bring it out to me," Aubrey said, "I am catching the next train back to town."

But George Malt was not listening. He waved his friend absently to silence. "I'm thinking. I always work best when hard-pressed for ideas. . . ."

THROUGH the screen of trees and shrubs intervening, Aubrey glimpsed a slender figure patting pillows about the General as he allowed himself to be settled once more in his chair. A sensation of vast loneliness swept over him.

"Good!" decided George Malt. "It will work. What is needed is something desperate—something that will knock them cold. I knew I would be able to help you!"

"I am going back to London," said Aubrey.

"You are not. Not when I have had the idea of a lifetime."

"I am going back to London."

The man with ideas patted him tolerantly on the shoulder. "Listen to me, laddie! Either you want this girl or you don't. Am I right?"

Aubrey eyed him doubtfully. "Well?"

"This is the scheme. Either you jump into it with both hands and the engagement is announced, or you confess you're sick of this woman and I get your bag."

"Elaine—"

"Good! You are with me! Wise—very wise. You know Melchington?—about seven miles from here, the place where they hold the Assizes. Well, there's a fellow there I defended once—he should have gone for a stretch of anything up to five years, but I pointed out that he was an ex-soldier, father of five, with a wife expecting, and," added George Malt, "that he was in Glasgow at the time. He got off with a medal and ten pounds from the missionary box. I must tell you about him some day."

"Do," invited Aubrey. "But in the meantime I am going back to town."

"One minute! This fellow will do anything I ask. This morning I am running over in the car for a chat with him. Now listen very carefully to this. With this plate lying about it's a gift! At two-thirty tomorrow morning—no, make it three. Three, then? Good. At three, this fellow is found by you in the picture gallery. You slosh him—he's about six-foot-four—did I mention he got pinched the time I appeared with him for putting three constables into a hospital for seven weeks? You are seen by the household putting in the good work, then, just as everyone rushes to your assistance, he breaks loose and gets away—"

"And—you mean Elaine. . . ."

"My hero!" she breathes, and drops into your arms. 'Put it there,' says the General. 'My boy, I'm proud of you! Proud to have my daughter marry a man like you. If—'"

Aubrey stopped it with a gesture. He wanted time to think. The idea had possibilities. "You don't think he might lose his temper and—"

George Malt laughed. "Give me a tenner," he said, "and leave it to me. Remember—three o'clock in the morning!"

That night Aubrey took an alarm

clock to bed with him. He passed into the land of dreams full of quiet confidence.

It was not the alarm clock that woke him in the early hours. The sound of a shot echoed into his sleep, and as he leaped out of his bed he became aware of sounds of confusion rising up the broad well of the stairs from the hall below. Seizing the clock he scrutinized the face closely in the darkness. Three twenty-seven was the time, for Aubrey was a sound sleeper. The clock had done its best. With a groan he jumped into a dressing-gown and dashed for the stairs to take up his belated cue.

But on the broad gallery running round three sides of the hall, he pulled up short. And not without cause. His meteoric entrance on the scene was greeted by three shots fired rapidly from an automatic held by George Malt's obliging acquaintance who, it seemed, was cornered in the hall below.

"Overdoing it," Aubrey decided. Woodwork had splintered all round his head. He hesitated. In various strategical positions the whole household appeared to have collected on that gallery and behind pillars and convenient objects of heavy furniture in the hall.

"Get down, yeh fool!" breathed a familiar voice at Aubrey's feet. "The man's a thug—cornered—and he's out to kill. . . ."

On his stomach the General was snaking his way towards the banisters, a double-barrelled elephant gun in his hand. Someone, before the fun had begun, had switched on the lights, and in the glare of them Aubrey now made out the figure of Elaine, hands clasped before her, among an assortment of maids on the far side of the gallery. He drew a deep, happy breath, holding his ground.

Over the balustrade, on the blind side, he passed on to the friend of George Malt a wink full of significance, then stooping over the General concentrating in his Indian Brave act, he tapped him on the shoulder.

"No, no!" he smiled. "This is not the way." From that dumb-struck tracker's fist he removed the gun, shaking his head critically. "Cocked, too! Let me—"

The gun in Aubrey's hand leaped like a live thing, and a shattering roar took the air. A large fragment of the General's coat sailed into the air, and closely following it came the old soldier himself, fists clenched over his head.

"Yeh blitherin' fool—" he began, but a salvo from the man with the automatic sent him back to earth with a bound.

SHAKEN, Aubrey laid aside the gun. The time for action had come. With a shrug he walked deliberately to the top of the main staircase.

"Stand back—or I'll plug yer!"

Aubrey smiled—and strolled on down the stairs. This fellow was doing it rather well. A warm feeling of gratitude moved him for that man of affairs, George Malt.

"Get back!" the man in the hall snarled. Into his voice he had managed to put a certain amount of realism. Aubrey admired his work. "What's yer game?"

Aubrey passed a confident beam round the breathless company. It lighted on the face of George Malt.

A late-comer on the scene like Aubrey, George Malt had cast one glance on the burglar below, then clung to the pillar he was hiding behind for support. He had never seen this burglar before.

His face, as Aubrey now surveyed it, looked odd. There was a tense expectant twist about it that puzzled him. He smiled reassuringly to let his promoter know that, although he had arrived late, he was not going to let him down.

But from the cover of his pillar, George Malt shook his head, waving his hands idiotically in front of his face.

With his head poised to one side, Aubrey watched it critically, his eyebrows puckered politely.

"Get back!" this man croaked hoarsely. "Get back!"

It seemed like a chorus to Aubrey. The sound of it had begun to bore him. "That's all right," he said. "Leave this fellow to me. Don't worry!" He laughed carelessly. Lindbergh, he was sure, could have done no better.

A bottled moan escaped from the lips of George Malt as he watched Aubrey continue down the stairs. Vaguely he considered making a dash to drag this poor nut back to safety, but he decided that one funeral was sufficient.

TO THE man with the automatic, Aubrey was a new experience. Up to the point where this young man had burst in on the scene, the recovery from a bad start to his night's work had been progressing as well as could be expected. In another brace of shakes he would have worked his way to the switches and made a safe get-away in the darkness.

His first thought on encountering the strange phenomenon of one advancing with a smile on to the spout of a formidable automatic was concealed machine guns. But as Aubrey stopped in front of him, hands on hips, he abandoned the theory. He now favored the thesis that he had bumped into a colleague engaged on an inside job.

"What's the game?" he repeated in a dry whisper.

Aubrey held a finger discreetly to his lips, lowering the left eyelid commandingly. "That," he said in a voice that carried well, "will be enough of this." Then he made a grab for the gun.

Up the stairs George Malt shut his eyes and waited for the report that was to be Requiem.

There was no report. For one thing, the gun was empty—the last shot had gone to discipline the General before Aubrey began his descent; for another, this thug was interested in Aubrey. That wink had strengthened the theory of an inside job.

"Oh?" Aubrey drew back a space to turn up the sleeves of his dressing gown. "Very well. I shall have to use violence."

Carefully clenching his fist he brought it sharply down on the gunman's wrist. Behind his pillar George Malt's knees gave. The automatic spun from the thug's hand, and, with a bellow of wrath, he jumped at Aubrey. But before his fingers could meet round the young man's throat, he stopped short. A second wink had reached him. It was full of dark significance. This sort of thing was outside a hard-working burglar's experience. He paused to consider it, and in that pause Aubrey landed his second blow—half an inch, perhaps, too low under the right eye.

As the bewildered gunman recoiled, he became aware that this little man was wagging an urgent finger at him. He only wagged it long enough to attract attention, then put all his weight behind a drive that took the intruder's wind somewhere a long way off where it did not belong.

In the next few seconds the dazed thug seemed to see nothing but urgent winks, commanding gestures that plumbed depths of understanding beyond his knowledge, and the beginning end of rocket-like swipes that landed on him regularly in the brief intervals. It did not look like a square deal to him. He pulled himself together. Whatever this was, he was going to put an end to it.

An avalanche landed on him—it was Aubrey leaping round his neck. He seized it, and tearing it away from him,

held it purposefully at arm's length. He drew back his fist.

Aubrey was puzzled. Three winks he got over *accelerando*, then came realization that this roughneck must have let his artistic spirit run away with him. But instinct came to his aid. As that swing whistled through the air, he ducked and dived for the stairs and safety.

When he came to work it out afterwards he decided that he tripped on the rug as he dived. All he remembered at the time was hitting the parquet, and, as he sprawled, heavy boots taking him in the ribs. One flash he registered of the thug, stern elevated, striving for a decision against gravity, then astronomy seemed to be indicated.

It was the General who dragged him to his feet. "By Gad!" he was snorting, as he indicated the limp pile, all that remained of the thug. "That last was a neat bit of work!"

"Bit of work?"

"Throwing him over your shoulder! Cumberland style! Stunned him, by gad!"

"Cumberland style?" He wanted to get this business clear. "Is—is he dead?"

The General laid a restraining hand on his arm. "Best leave him as he is," he hastened persuasively. "If yeh go any further we may have trouble with the police." He turned away to take charge of the internment squad. "My lad, I'm proud of yeh! And to think when yeh took my gun I—" shaking his head he applied himself to the victim.

The General was proud of him. The words had a familiar ring. But according to George Malt, there should have been a second stanza. If—

"Oh, Aubrey! How . . . wonderful . . ."

Wide-eyed this girl was hanging on to his gaze, her knuckles tucked up under her chin. Aubrey had seen things like this on the screen. Clearness of vision came to him.

"Wonderful? You mean that fellow?"

Drawing a deep breath she said nothing.

"Oh, that!" He laughed lightly. "It was nothing! Just Cumberland style." Lindbergh wouldn't have thought of that.

She shook her head. "Aubrey," she breathed, "I'm sorry I said that about the dog. I should have known that—that in the big test you—"

"BY THE way—" The figure of George Malt, drifting by, fastened itself on to Aubrey. "I meant to tell you, but it slipped my memory. That fellow I was talking to you about yesterday in the gardens bought a pub in Blackpool last November. I recalled it just after I left you."

Aubrey allowed it to soak in. "Then—" perspiration broke out on his brow, "you mean . . ." His eye lingered on the procession led by the General. It was bearing the thug away like a sack of grain. "They've got that fellow quite—safe?"

George Malt shrugged. "I must hop along to lend a hand. Odd coincidence, was it not?" He hurried off at the tail of the procession, leaving them alone together in the hall.



Aubrey recalled his thoughts from the toils of the last half hour. A slim hand had found its way into his fingers. Eyes of cornflower blue were holding him expectantly. As one who samples the upper air at the top of the shaft three days after the mine explosion which entombed him, Aubrey Effingham filled his lungs.

"You were saying," he reminded, as he adjusted the cord of his dressing-gown and straightened the cuffs, "something about taking a dog for a walk?"

"My Lindbergh!" breathed Elaine.

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April Escapade

Continued from page 28

and helpless, somehow, curled in her lap.

"Why couldn't you tell Rountree that you couldn't do it?" Martin asked, in what was almost his usual gentle tone with her.

"I thought—" she said huskily, in a lowered tone, "that you could use the money, Mart. I thought you could go to Germany."

"The money!" he echoed, with a scowl.

"Yes. That was what started it."

"He paid you?"

"But why should I have done it, otherwise?"

"You mean you thought I'd take his dirty money!"

"Mart, don't talk that way."

"I might have murdered the fellow, and you take his money!" Mart said bitterly.

"But I couldn't know that," Mary Kate reminded him, openly wiping her eyes, looking at him through sopping lashes. "I am as sorry as I can be," she said. "But—but you have no right to be so hard on me, Mart."

JUST then there was an authoritative knock on the kitchen door. And instantly she knew it would be Christopher who stood in the opening, when Cass had opened it—as indeed it was Christopher.

He sent a quick glance about the orderly, homely room, and came in. Hardly a word was exchanged as he took off his hat and overcoat, and hung them on a peg by the hall door. Martin nodded toward a chair, and Chris sat down in it. Mary Kate was rooted to her own seat; she could not move. Her lashes were wet and dark with tears, her shining hair had slipped back into a careless cap of waves and loose tendrils, her face was pale and stained with tears. She continued to rest her head on her hand; she did not look up as Chris came in.

"Am I late?" Chris asked. His voice went through her like an actual pain; her senses whirled about in a sort of vertigo.

"No, it's not nine," Martin answered coldly.

"What's the matter, Mary?" Chris asked, in an undertone, leaning from his chair to bring his face within a few feet of her own. She twisted about, doubled both arms on the red oilcloth, and burst into silent, tearless sobbing that was all the more violent because of her effort to restrain it. "What's the matter?" the man asked. "Have they been riding you?"

"I wanted to ask you a few questions, but my sister has answered some of them already," Martin began, in a measured tone. His uneasy eyes moved continually to Mary Kate, who had controlled herself and sat frozen with fear. He faced Chris. "You and she were alone in the house on Friday night, weren't you? Your house, I mean, in Burlingame?"

"My servants were in a garage room that is attached to the house—yes," Chris answered, somewhat surprised.

"And she had been introduced that evening as Mrs. Steynes, hadn't she?" Martin pursued, after a moment of electric silence.

"Didn't she tell you that? That was the plan," Christopher countered, in annoyance and surprise.

Mary Kate had stopped breathing. All was lost now. She raised her head, and looked defiantly, steadily, at her brother. Martin's face was ghastly.

"You said that there were others in

the house, Sis?" he asked, almost in a whisper. The eyes of sister and brother met, and they might have been alone in the world.

"There weren't," Mary Kate answered, hardly audible.

"And he did call you 'Mrs. Steynes,' didn't he?"

"Yes, Mart."

Mart's tone was suddenly gentle, all brotherly.

"How much money did you take from him, dear?"

"None—" she had been planning to say, while he spoke. But the little tender word disarmed her, and she faltered out an indistinct monosyllable, and was silent, hanging her head.

"Tell me the truth, won't you, Molly?"

You know no one in the world loves you as much as I do," Mart pleaded.

Her armor was pierced. Through eyes suddenly drenched again she tried to smile at him.

"Honestly, Mart, I didn't do anything wrong! Honestly, Marty."

"I know you didn't mean to," Mart said. "But you let him buy you clothes, you took his name, you went to his house and spent the night. Ah, don't now, Molly—" he protested. For the tall girl had left her chair, and taken three steps toward him, and was on her knees, with her face against his knee. "And you took his money," he finished the arraignment. "Why, you know what all that looks like!"

"But, Mart, if it isn't what it looks like, and if I didn't take his money!" Mary Kate sobbed.

"Don't cry, Molly—" he said, crying himself. His well hand was on her abased coppery head. He looked across at Christopher, and spoke with a simple and broken dignity.

"I sent for you today, Mr. Steynes," Martin began, "because I thought there was only one thing to be done. And I still think so."

Cass Keating laughed, as an older man laughs at a boy's dramatics; Mary Kate brought her head up suddenly, and stared amazedly into her brother's face. Christopher pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"You have your sister's word for it, and you have mine, Mr. O'Hara," Chris presently said, in his poised, leisurely way, "that nothing wrong took place."

"I know that," Martin assented.

"But that isn't enough for you?"

"It isn't that," Martin said. "But she's not quite twenty, and you are several years older. She's very poor, she hasn't a penny or an influential friend—you're a very rich man, and accustomed to buying what you want. Yachts, houses, horses for your polo, jewels, and I suppose women, too."

"YOU can suppose what you like, naturally," Christopher said, in a steely tone. He lighted a cigarette with a shaking hand.

"She went to your house, when there was no other woman," Mart pursued; "you called her your wife before your friends, she wore clothing you had bought, and spent the night alone with you. That there was a police investigation wasn't your fault, but—"

"I'll tell the world it was not!" Chris agreed scornfully, as Martin paused.

"Now you say, and she says, that it was all a practical joke, and I believe you," Martin resumed, reddening a little, but in no other way taking any notice of Chris' manner. "But you must see that you have done her a terrible

(Continued on page 59)

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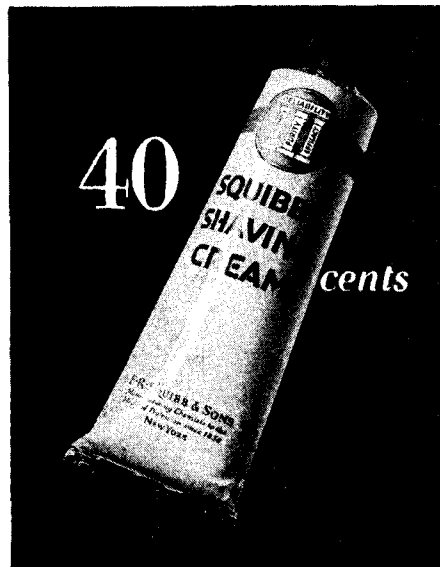
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(Continued from page 58)
injustice. She had been engaged to Mr. Keating here—"

"My dear Mr. O'Hara," Chris said airily, all the man of the world, "you are taking all this far too seriously. Of course we took a chance, your sister and I. But just because appearances were against us doesn't mean that you have to treat the girl as if she'd outraged all the laws of God and man!"

"No, honestly, Martin, he's right," Cass added. "You mustn't make too much of it."

He came to Martin's side, and held out his hand to Mary Kate, and she got to her feet, and went over to take the chair he had vacated. Cass sat on the arm of it, with his arm about her.

"She told me about it," he said. "It was all a mistake."

Mary Kate leaned her head against his arm, and closed her eyes. He was being so generous, so kind. And it mattered so little!

"When she says that everything was straight and aboveboard, why, that means everything was straight and aboveboard!" Cass said cheerfully.

MARTIN looked from one man to the other, gloomily.

"He's not afraid of what people think of her reputation, Cass," Martin presently said, with a glance at Chris. "It doesn't cost him anything to hush it up, buy me off, pay my hospital bills—that's nothing to him."

"But if I'd gotten him that night—as I wish to God I had," the boy went on, leveling a sudden look of hate at the last comer, "if I'd gotten him that night, then he would have paid. Then he would have paid!"

"And you would have paid, too, and Mary would have paid," Chris reminded him, unperturbedly.

There was a moment of silence, when she could feel, like tangible currents through the air, the hostility of the glances the men exchanged. Then there was a stir, and she opened her eyes and started to her feet as her mother's voice struck suddenly across the other voices.

"Well, what is all this? What's going on here?"

Mrs. O'Hara, rosy and breathless from walking, her widow's veil dangling from her dingy bonnet, her cotton gloves in her hand, was standing, amazed, in the hall doorway. She had come in from the front of the house; Tom was peering sleepily, curiously, over her shoulder.

Christopher rose politely to his feet, extinguishing his cigarette with a quick motion of long brown fingers against the little ash tray on the sink. Martin, trapped, looked desperately about him, brought his eyes back to his mother's face. Mary Kate, her face tear-stained, her hair disheveled, her breath coming shallow and quick, went to her mother. She took off the widow's veil with her own loving experienced hands, and carried it, as she had carried it many times before, into her mother's room. She came back to smile gallantly at the older woman.

"Nothing's the matter, Mother!" she said.

"Don't tell me that!" Mrs. O'Hara rebuked her sharply. She crossed to the chair Mary Kate had just vacated, and sat down, staring bewilderedly from face to face. "Whatever's happened, Mart?" she asked.

For a full minute there was the silence of utter confusion. Christopher and Cass sat down again, and Mary Kate took the chair she had first occupied, at the table, and rested her chin in her hand again.

"You've met Mr. Steynes, Mrs. O'Hara?" Cass remembered to say, then, rather flatly.

The older woman acknowledged the

introduction only with a shrewd appraising glance, and a brief nod.

"What's come to all of you?" she demanded.

"Mother, we've been in—sort of—trouble, the last few days," Martin then began, haltingly. "And perhaps we ought to tell you about it—"

"I couldn't go out," he added, as in sheer stupefaction Mrs. O'Hara was still, and none of the others spoke. "So I had to ask Mr. Christopher Steynes—" (the syllables were so many threats) "I had to ask Mr. Christopher Steynes to come here," Martin repeated, with a glance at him. "I thought you'd be at Uncle Robert's until at least eleven."

"Your Uncle Robert is very bad, and I promised I'd get into a wash dress and go back and set with him," Mrs. O'Hara said automatically, her mind not upon her words, her anxious eyes upon her children. "I don't know why you had to keep anything from me, Mart," she added, her look moving from one member of the silent, self-conscious circle to another.

"In this case, Mrs. O'Hara," Cass said, "there was no reason why you should ever have been bothered by it!"

Mary Kate's mother gave him a glance of superb scorn, a look expressing all the resentment of the reticent, proud woman whose private affairs are indecently and unfairly made public. Then she turned her expectant eyes toward Martin again.

"Tell me what on earth is goin' on, Mart."

"Mother—!" Mary Kate began impulsively. But her mother stopped her.

"Leave your brother talk!" she commanded. Mary Kate subsided into silence, her whole slender figure drooping, as she sat at the kitchen table, her softly tumbled coppery head resting on her hand.

"Ma," Martin began, "this Mr. Steynes here is a friend of Mr. Rountree's, and they asked our Mary Kate, last week, if she would pretend for two days to be married to Mr. Steynes."

A sharply horrified look at her daughter was Mrs. O'Hara's reception of this. Chris essayed to speak.

"The reason being—" he was beginning, when Mrs. O'Hara silenced him as she had her daughter.

"Just a moment, please!"

"THE reason was," Martin resumed, "accepting Chris' opening, 'that some woman was pursuing him and hoped he'd ask her to marry him. She had followed him out from New York.'"

"You didn't get yourself mixed up in that sort of thing?" the mother asked, with a stern and incredulous look at Mary Kate.

"There was to be money in it," Martin pursued relentlessly.

"Between us and all harm!" Mrs. O'Hara whispered.

"Look here, Mr. O'Hara, you're giving your mother an entirely false idea of the whole thing," Chris interrupted impulsively.

"I'll take it the way my son gives it, if you please," Mrs. O'Hara told him. And again Christopher fell silent.

"Mary Kate wanted the money for my German trip," Mart conceded, before continuing.

"Mart," his mother pleaded, "don't tell me she knew no better than that!"

"Well, anyway," Martin went on, "she and Mr. Steynes bought clothes, and she went down there to Burlingame—she didn't go to Sacramento at all—" "Molly—?" her mother questioned, heartbreak in her voice. Mary Kate made no answer; she did not raise her head.

"She told us she was going to Sacramento," Martin pursued, "but she went to Burlingame, and when she went

(Continued on page 60)



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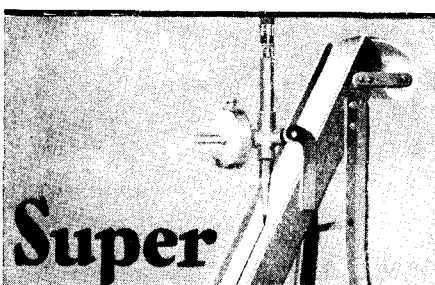
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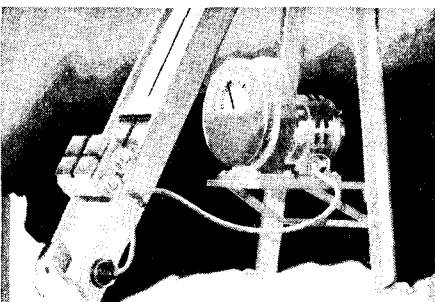
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EAGLE PENCIL CO.
NEW YORK CITY

(Continued from page 59)
to dinner at Mr. Rountree's, she went with Mr. Steynes, here, and was introduced as his wife."

"Don't say such things, Mart!" Mrs. O'Hara rebuked him.

"It's true. I drove the doctor home that night," the boy said, "and I saw her. His place is just opposite the Rountree place, and I was starting for home when I saw her come out on a sort of terrace there, all dressed up—oh, my God!"

He put his hand over his eyes. There was absolute silence in the kitchen, except that Mrs. O'Hara drew her breath with a sort of whimpering sound.

"I went kind of crazy, I guess," Martin said. "I started to come back to the city, like I always do, leaving the doctor's car down there, and all of a sudden something seemed to burst inside my head—"

"Oh, blessed and merciful Lord—" Mrs. O'Hara whispered. Her eyes were shut.

"I CAME in here 'round midnight, or later," Martin said. "You called out to me, remember? Anyway, I stayed in my room upstairs until I thought you were asleep, and then I changed my clothes, and emptied my pockets, and drove myself back. I went to Rountree's, there were still lights there, and a maid answered the door. I said that I had come to get the young lady—the red-haired young lady—that I was to call for her—and she said, 'Oh, that was Mrs. Steynes. She and Mr. Steynes went home long ago!' I went back to Burlingame, and into the telephone office, and asked the girls there where Mr. Steynes lived, and they told me. I suppose they thought I was his chauffeur, or had to call for someone at his house, I don't know.

"For about an hour I walked around the place, listening and watching. And after that I began to go crazy again, thinking of our Mary Kate in there—and you and my father, and all of us loving her so! And him with his money—"

"You know I wasn't going to kill him. But I wasn't going to let him get away with that, either—not with our Molly. And that's what got my arm, Ma. I never went to Portland, any more than she went to Sacramento. Mr. Steynes here got me before I got him."

Mrs. O'Hara looked at her son for an endless moment.

"And Mary Kate wasn't there at all!" she whispered.

"Oh, yes, she was. She was upstairs, in his room."

"You liar!" Mary Kate said simply, with a look.

"My God, have mercy; my God, have mercy," Mrs. O'Hara whispered.

"Allow me to say that you have gotten an entirely false idea of the whole thing," Chris interpolated authoritatively and impatiently. "This is all nonsense! Your daughter took part in a little masquerade, and except for her brother following her, and causing a lot of police interference, nothing would have come of it at all."

"Police interference?" echoed the mother's voice.

"After the shooting. Yes. But the whole thing," Chris explained, briskly, "has been closed up. It's done. There's no follow-up whatever. It was all extremely foolish, and we got a bad break, but it's over. Your son's wound is practically healed; I believe he takes off the bandages in a few days. And as for your daughter here, Mary, she played her part with a beautiful dignity, and lived up to her agreement absolutely. As for anything else, I never put my hand on her. She'll tell you so. I never kissed her!"

"And furthermore," Cass added, un-

expectedly, "Mary Kate and I are going to be married, and the sooner the better. When she tells me that everything was all on the level, I believe her. The whole thing was a mistake, but we all make them, and as far as I'm concerned—I'm never going to allude to it again!"

"I told you that because it's true!" Mary Kate said, explosively.

"And now that everything is settled so beautifully, what do we do with Mr. Christopher Steynes' money, that can buy him anything?" Mart asked, in an ugly tone.

"We do nothing with it, we don't want it," Cass said.

"Mother," the girl asked, turning her tear-soaked eyes and stained, pale face toward the older woman, "do you believe me?"

Mrs. O'Hara looked at her. Then her own eyes filled, and she smiled, and opened her arms. And with a burst of bitter tears Mary Kate went into them, sitting on her mother's lap, straining her slender figure against her mother, locking her arms about the older woman's neck, and hiding her shamed face on the breast that had been her refuge from the first hour of her life.

"Why, darling girl," Mrs. O'Hara said tenderly, "have they all been har'd on you? Has Mart been har'd on you? You'd only have to tell me that you'd done nothing wrong, and however foolish you might have been, I'd never hold it against you! It was only when I thought his money had bewildered you a little, dear—"

"But, Mother, I'm no fool!" the girl said emphatically, gulping, and drying her eyes on her soaked little handkerchief. "I'm not one of these poor little ignorant fools that they send out to Saint Catherine's! I knew what I was doing, and I thought it would be—just fun, and that Mart could go to Germany with Doctor van Antwerp, even if I got married. I wasn't—led astray," Mary Kate assured her brother fiercely. "I've been working in a downtown office two years. I finished high school. I know about life!"

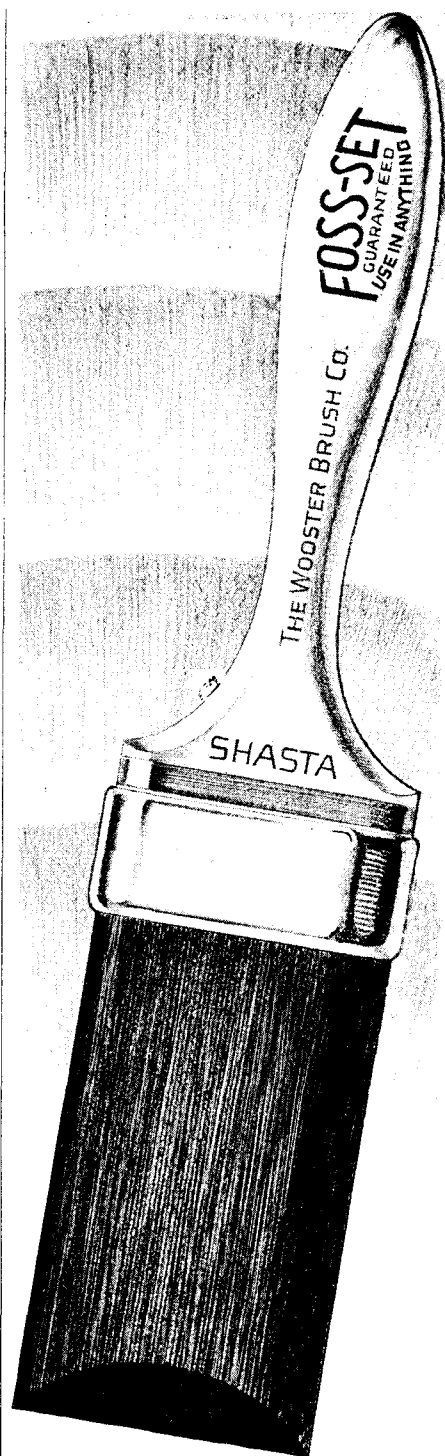
"It seems to me that this whole thing has arisen from the fact that Mr. O'Hara here put the worst possible construction upon what his sister did," Chris said, coolly.

MARTIN shot him a contemptuous look, but before her son could speak, Mrs. O'Hara answered him.

"It was very easy to put that same construction upon what she did, sir," she reminded him, with simple dignity. "Mart only thought what the world would think, and we have to remember the world—we live in the world. Mary Kate did very wrong—but who'd know the true good heart of her," her mother said tenderly, with a downward glance at the bright head on her breast, "if her own mother didn't? She's never refused one of us any kindness she could ever do us, be it what it might! She'd see only the money her brother needed, when she'd step into trouble like this, and put her hand in the fire for any one of us, if it was only little Pat himself that ast her to!"

Mary Kate at this cried more bitterly than ever, and increased her hold upon her mother almost to the strangling point.

Mrs. O'Hara's fine, simple, tired face was deeply worried; her faded gray eyes were filled with anxiety still. But, as she had gotten their tangled affairs in hand a thousand times before, in the last hard years, so she was beginning to catch at the threads of tonight's fresh predicament. Indeed, there was to her a certain exhilaration, a certain actual stimulation in this evidence that "the creatures" so palpably needed their



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Mother's guidance still. They were not so big, so tall, so smart, so free but what they could get themselves into trouble, God love them, and turn to her, and to nobody else, in the last pinch, to get them out.

Here was the dapper and modern and successful Cass Keating devotedly championing Mary Kate, and here was haggard, wounded, angry, passionate Mart ready to kill anyone and everybody who dared impugn the honor of the O'Haras, and here was her slender, tall, brilliant miracle of a girl, crying her loving, impulsive, misguided little heart out, in her mother's arms. And with all these she knew how to deal.

THERE was only one troublesome foreign element in the kitchen tonight, and Mrs. O'Hara proposed to get rid of it as rapidly as she could. This well-dressed, self-possessed young man, Mr. Steynes, who had all that assurance and confidence that is the heritage of the rich man's son, was throwing the whole situation out of key.

"Maybe," Mrs. O'Hara began, as a first step toward dismissing him, "maybe we've been making much ado about nothing, Mart. Anyway, all's well that ends well."

Unaware of the classic source of her simple phrases, she managed to give them a force of her own. Mart was still scowling.

"It isn't 'nothing' that Mary Kate had to be questioned by the police!"

"That could have happened to any witness—you fool!"

Chris did not say the last words aloud, but they were there, none the less. Mary Kate, now secure in her one sure fortress, looked resentfully over her shoulder at her brother with tear-wet eyes.

"I wouldn't care if I was in jail!" she exclaimed, "as long as I hadn't done anything wrong."

She buried her head against her mother's neck again, sure of the maternal approval, which was indeed bestowed by a pat.

"I only want to say," Christopher began, with an air of closing the discussion, "that, since Mr. O'Hara here wants to go to Germany with Doctor van Antwerp, it would give me tremendous pleasure to feel that I had—I had, indirectly, helped him to do it."

"It's a pleasure you never will have!" Martin assured him, rudely.

"I don't know that I could spare him, with Mary Kate married," Mrs. O'Hara said mildly. "But if other matters could be adjusted, indeed I'd see no reason that Mart shouldn't have his chance. Mary Kate did nothing wrong, and it would be a pity that all her loving effort to help her brother should be thrown away."

This statement, somewhat hesitatingly made, as the speaker felt her way, and sought out her words, produced a profound impression upon them all. Chris was the first to speak, and there was genuine feeling, there was even a trace of huskiness in his voice.

"I'm glad you feel that way, Mrs. O'Hara," he said, simply.

Perhaps Martin, who was but twenty-two, after all, and whose own hopes and dreams were close to his heart, had had, while they spoke, time for a swift vision of a great ship, a foreign city, the piers and the gray stone buildings of Hamburg, the thought of himself, in close attendance upon the famous old surgeon who was his friend, the mirage of strange surgeries, a strange language, a young Irish-American listening, looking, learning all the thousand things that O'Farrell Street never could give Martin O'Hara.

At all events, his expression, his tone, had changed, when he said, with a little difficult, boyish dignity:

"To borrow money from—anyone that would lend it, would be one thing. But I'd never want her to feel that she took the chance she took to help me!"

"If we believe that everything was all right, then we have to act as if everything was all right, Mart," his mother observed, with that quiet and dispassionate glance from her faded gray eyes that was more forceful than the snap of a whip, to her children.

"I don't think he should have done it," Mart muttered, stubbornly.

"I know that!" Chris himself answered sharply. "You don't think I'm proud of myself, do you?"

Mary Kate's tears had by this time dried, and she was now twisted about in her mother's lap, listening. Her cheeks were still flushed, and the silky mop of her copper-wire hair enchantingly disordered; her blue eyes were dark and shining, under their wet lashes. Except for these long lashes stuck into little points by tears, all the traces of the late storm had vanished. As quickly as a baby she had recovered.

"Ma, I'd—I'd take care of you, if Mart and Mary Kate were gone!" Tom offered now, hoarsely and awkwardly. "I'd get a job, maybe down at Mills Field—"

They all laughed, and he subsided into silence again, his cheeks blazing. That is, they all laughed except Mrs. O'Hara, who gave this dearest problem of them all a glance that said his mother perfectly appreciated the value of his suggestion, and would trust herself to his protection with absolute confidence.

"Will you keep that check until your mother and brother have had time to think it over, Mary?" Chris asked, humbly.

For answer the girl looked at her mother, whose eyes were only a few inches from her own.

"Suppose we leave it like that," said Mrs. O'Hara.

"Then there's just one more thing," Chris recommenced, with a brief nod. He turned toward Martin. "You telephoned me today, and asked me to come out here tonight, didn't you?" he asked.

Martin nodded in his turn, his eyes a little puzzled and still faintly hostile.

"What did you want of me?" Chris continued.

The other hesitated, and then said, uncertainly:

"I wanted to—talk to you."
"You wanted to talk to me when you came to my house on Friday night, didn't you?" Christopher asked mildly.

MARTIN was silent, his eyes held by Chris' eyes.

"You wanted to make me do something, didn't you?" Chris pursued.

"I thought you had—harmed Molly," Martin admitted slowly.

"You don't think so now, do you?"

The boy's eyes moved slowly to his sister's face. He cleared his throat.

"No, I don't think so now."

"You were going to make me ask her to marry me, weren't you?" Chris said. Mary Kate's color rushed up like a blown flag; Cass, lighting a fourth cigarette, halted halfway.

"I suppose so," Martin admitted sternly.

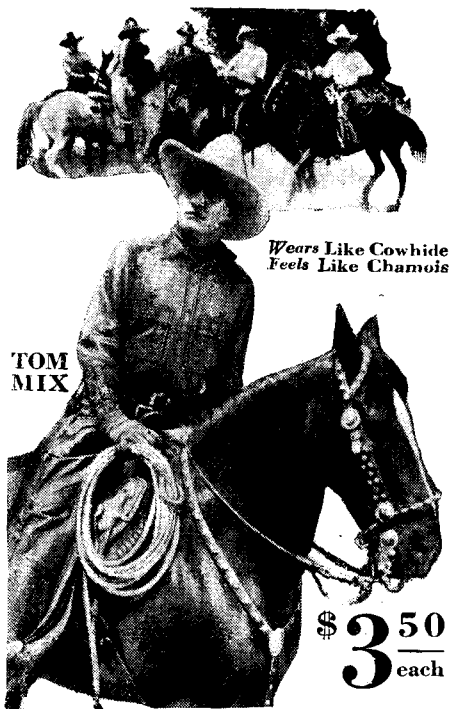
"Why, you know so! You all but said so, today," Chris reminded him.

"Well—" Martin said.

Chris looked suddenly young, and tired, and boyishly stubborn, in the melow lamplight. There were circles about his eyes; he shook his heavy mop of fair hair backward patiently.

"I do ask you to marry me, Mary," he said, steadily. "I realize that—that I had no right to—"

"Anyway, I wish you would."
(Continued on page 62)



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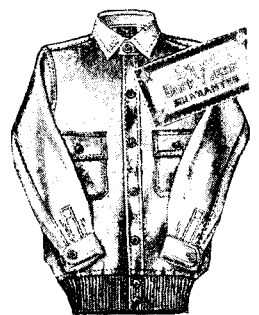
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(Continued from page 61)

A dead silence. Then Chris repeated, rather flatly:

"I wish you would."

The color had drained from Mary Kate's face, and she looked young, too, with her pale cheeks and dilated dark blue eyes, and her soft tumble of hair, as she sat on her mother's lap, one slender arm still lying about her mother's neck.

"Oh, thank you, Chris," she said, very faintly. "But—but—" she stopped short. "But thank you very much!"

And she looked at her mother in perplexity, like a child who is about to cry.

"Since I came here tonight," Chris said, "I've come to realize what—what your family means to you, and what you mean to them—"

"I don't believe I have much to offer you. Money, of course—"

Another silence.

"Money," Mrs. O'Hara pronounced, superbly, ending it, "buys very little."

And suddenly they were all in a gale of laughter. Martin laughed, Cass laughed and Mary Kate laughed almost hysterically. Even Chris laughed, caught by the contagion of their mirth.

"Ma, you are priceless!" said Mary Kate.

The atmosphere cleared. She and Cass and Chris were all on their feet. Mary Kate looked at herself in a little mirror by the sink, and made a few quick adjustments of collar and hair, and Cass held Chris' coat for him. Martin, his wounded arm strapped over his breast, watched them from his chair, and Mrs. O'Hara, fallen into deep thought with the amazing easiness of her mystical race, continued to occupy the shabby old piece of furniture known for many years as "Ma's rocker," her eyes narrowed thoughtfully, her full, disciplined, patient mouth slightly pursed.

Chris, overcoated, hat and big creamy gloves in hand, went over to Mart.

"Good-by, and good luck!" he said. "I hope—I hope you'll decide for Germany."

"Thank you," Mart said, gruffly, but in a friendly manner, too. "I'm sorry if I—blew up," Mart continued, awkwardly. "We have no father, you know, Molly and I, and maybe—maybe I forgot that she's perfectly able to run her own affairs."

"Oh, that's all right!" Chris said. He turned to Tom.

"I know Throckmorton," he said.

"What?" Tom shouted.

"If you really want to go in for aviation," Chris continued, "I'd be glad to give you a letter—"

"Let me know, will you?"

"Oh, Ma!" Tom said, almost crying.

CHRIS shook hands with Cass.

"I don't have to tell you that I congratulate you," he said. "You have my best wishes. You're—" he paused. "You're very fortunate," he said simply.

"Thanks," Cass responded.

"Good-by, Mrs. O'Hara." Chris was bending over her, he had her hand. "I—I certainly admire your family," he said, with a brief laugh. They all laughed. "I think they're all—stars. They have the—the vitality of—of—"

"Anyway, they're all stars."

"You've seen us at our worst tonight," Mrs. O'Hara assured him. "Maybe you'd come out and have dinner with us some night, and we'd treat you a little better?"

"I'm sailing on Sunday."

"Well, good-by and God bless you then," Mary Kate's mother said, with a sudden penetrating glance that saw through all the layers of veneer to the lonely, little-boy heart of the child inside him. Her changed, lowered tone spoke only to that.

"Thank you," Chris said, stirred,

clearing his throat. He blinked his eyes as he smiled at her, and bent his head suddenly over the fine work-worn, capable hand.

Then it was Mary Kate's turn. She stood by the door, and Chris took both her hands, and looked down at her, as he said, unexpectedly, incoherently:

"And you won't marry me?"

The girl looked very tall and very pale, and was oddly unsmiling as she answered, conventionally:

"No. But thank you for asking."

"Thank you." His face reddened and his voice thickened, and for a moment their hands held them united, and their bewildered eyes were fixed upon each other.

And it was as if both were asking the same question.

"What are we saying? What does all this mean? Is this good-by?"

SUDDENLY Chris, laying aside hat and gloves with a quick gesture, gathered both her hands against his heart, and bent over her, so that his browned, almost stern face was close to her own.

"There's one thing I left out, Mary," he said. "They may as well hear this, too."

"It's this," he went on, in a dead silence. "I didn't count on this. But I love you very much. Did I say that?"

The ground began to sway gently beneath Mary Kate's feet. Waves—waves lifted her from the floor, and the drumming and rushing of many waters was in her ears.

"No," she whispered. "You didn't say that!"

She turned to face the others in the kitchen, her shoulder almost touching Chris as she leaned back against him, his hand, that had been holding hers, still gripping her fingers, and his arm

half about her. And it was as if, standing there, she measured two worlds—the one against the other.

On one side was only this protecting arm and this gripping hand. She knew little more of him. And on the other, were all the associations that she knew, were all her happy, adored, protected years. The kitchen with its worn linoleum and familiar frying-pans and chairs and oilcloth-covered table. Mart, handsome and resolute and fiercely protecting; Tom, who was developing so rapidly now, who had come, just of late, so much more close to his older sister, who had seemed, just of late, to need her. Cass, clever and successful and devoted, planning a happy normal life with her—a forty-dollar flat, curtains, dishes, a white wedding in the new Dominican church in a few weeks' time, years of love and labor shared, children, some day a country home.

And last, and first, and all the time, Mother. Mother, with whom she hurried, sleepy and chilly, to early church, and with whom she walked home, at peace, for hot coffee and special Sunday rolls. Mother, who had taught her, talked to her, scolded her, praised her, all her life long, even while she fumbled in her flat purse for movie money for "Mart and Mary Kate," or patiently thumped the heavy iron that meant exquisitely fresh frills and blouses for the beloved eldest daughter.

To choose Chris meant no more kitchen, no more Cass, no more Tom—and in the dear home sense, at least, no more eager, ambitious, headstrong Marty.

It meant that she chose exile, alienation, distance. It meant no more Mother.

(To be concluded next week)

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