

IN THE MATTER OF A BALE OF BLANKETS

By James B. Connolly

ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. C. YOHN



HEY were holding what was almost a public reception in the ward-room of the *Missalanna*. The Honorable J. J. Flavin, having appeased his hunger and slaked his thirst, signalled the Filipino mess-boy for a smoke; and having decided as to what was the most expensive cigar on the tray, he took two, and moved on to where, through a shining air-port, a fresh sea-breeze might find its cooling way to his beaded brow, for it was a warm summer's day and at trencher-play the Honorable Flavin had been no laggard.

As the Honorable J. J. smoked, so did he take the time to observe; and, observing, he vouchsafed the opinion to a thin-faced, high-shouldered young fellow who happened to halt near him: "These navy fellows must have a fat time of it, huh, Carlin?"

Carlin flashed a glance of something like resentment on Flavin. "How do you figure that?"

"Why, look at the swell feed—and the champagne here to-day. And look!" He slid off for inspection the band of the cigar he was smoking. "I paid three for a dollar for that same cigar the other day at a big hotel in Washin'ton. They must have money to throw overboard to be givin' that kind away."

Carlin knew the brand. He also knew that only two, or it might be three, officers of that ward-room mess could afford to smoke that make of cigar regularly; but he did not tell Flavin that. "They get those cigars for twelve cents apiece—buying 'em by the hundred—in Cuba, J. J.," he suggested mildly.

"And the dealers stick us thirty-five cents for 'em up here! Anyway, a fat time they have swelling 'round in uniforms given 'em by the gover'ment for the ladies to admire 'em."

Two years of political reporting in his

home city and two more as Washington correspondent for the paper of most vital circulation in that same home city had not made of Carlin a politician, and it is to be doubted if ten times four years in a political atmosphere would have so made him; possibly because he wished no ambition to be so distinguished, but more likely because ancestrally implanted in Carlin's breast was an inextinguishable desire to speak what he thought, and usually as soon as he thought it.

He said now—sharply: "What do you know about naval officers or navy life, J. J.?"

The Honorable J. J. Flavin had never, not even when he was only ward-leader, and therefore much more disposed to humility than now, been able to reconcile Carlin's unworshipful tongue with his own sense of what was due a man of importance in the political world. And Judas priest, he had a tongue of his own if it came to that! "Of course, you know all about it!" he retorted.

"No, I don't," replied Carlin promptly and placidly. "But I probably know more than do you or almost anybody else who has never had the chance to live aboard ship and see some of it. This afternoon the officers of this ship are spreading themselves according to service traditions to give you and me and all aboard here a good time. To-morrow they'll be to sea and on the job, a simple-living, busy crowd—working hard, taking chances, and making no talk about it."

Flavin whoofed a funnel of doubting cigar-smoke into the teeth of the air-port breeze. "Taking chances! How? And where?"

"Everywhere. Day and night—battle-ships, destroyers, in submarines, and aeroplanes. Thirty men and officers killed in one turret explosion only last month."

"Taking chances—huh! Foolish chances!"

"Anybody who isn't living to see how long he can live takes a foolish chance once in a while. That turret crew were on the battle-range trying to make big-gun records."

"And did they make 'em?"

"They did. And their seven-inch batteries made 'em too. Single guns and broadsides at ten thousand five hundred yards."

"I didn't hear about that," growled Flavin.

"No? That's a shame, J. J. The department ought to 've wired you about it."

Flavin eyed Carlin sidewise. No use—he would never change. Would he never get on to himself? Flavin wondered. He ought to have been one of the best-advertised men in his line in the country, as everybody around Washington said, but a fellow liable to hop out any time and bat somebody that could be of use to him over the eye, how could anybody go boosting him?

"They must 'a' treated you pretty well, Carlin?" he hazarded silyly.

"They treated me well—yes," snapped Carlin. "And they're treating you pretty decently now, aren't they?"

"I'd like to see 'em treat me, or any member o' Congress, any other way!"

"A member of Congress—that's right. And as a member of Congress you're drawing down how much, J. J.?"

"Seventy-five hundred a year—and allowances," replied Flavin, looking around the ward-room and not caring particularly who might hear the figures.

"And before you were sent to Washington you never made more than fifteen dollars a week in your life," thought Carlin. Aloud he said, in as gentle a tone as he could on short order muster, "And did you ever stop to think, J. J., that while you're being paid that seventy-five hundred a year—and allowances—the captain of this ship, with nine hundred and forty lives and a nine-million-dollar war-machine to look out for, gets less than five thousand a year—and that only after thirty-odd years of professional study and practice? And that almost all of these other officers you see standing around here will regularly have to go up on the bridge and take full charge of this ship and all on her, and let 'em, some night or day, make

a mistake, lose their nerve, or close their eyes for an instant and—bing! All off with the nine hundred and forty lives, not to mention the nine-million-dollar plant! And these officers under the captain have had all the way from seven or eight to thirty years of continuous professional study and practice, and yet some of them are getting less than one-third of the money you get."

To which the Honorable J. J. responded blandly: "Well, what of it? Their pay and my pay is fixed by the same government. If they don't pay more, it's because the people who regulate their pay and my pay think they ain't worth any more."

"Fine!" said Carlin—"seeing that Congress regulates them both!"

"Huh!" Flavin hadn't foreseen that. "Here, you!" he roared to the mess-boy with the tray of cigars; and the little brown boy, with no inclining admiration for stout-waisted, loud-voiced men in splendid new gray trousers and frock coats, but always well drilled, floated himself and his tray respectfully, if not over-hurriedly, across the ward-room deck to Flavin.

"If you worked for me I'd soon learn you to move faster," growled Flavin. He began to paw through the tray. "Where's that cigar I had before? This it?" He read the name on the band. "Yes, that's it. Twelve cents apiece in Cuba, did y'say, Carlin? I wonder couldn't I get somebody to get me some of 'em? Here, ain't you having one?"

"No, I've smoked enough."

"Enough?—and swell smokes like this kind being passed round!" He took two.

Suddenly, smoking anew, Flavin cast a suspicious glance at the newspaper man. "What you getting at, Carlin—trying to drive into me all this talk about the navy? Is it because I'm a member o' Congress?"

"I don't know that I've been trying to drive anything into you," retorted Carlin. "But you made a crack about the navy, and after you've been in Washington awhile longer somebody will be sure to tell you that my favorite monologue is the navy. They'll probably tell you, too, that if I couldn't get anything more intelligent to listen I'd hold up a row of trolley-poles and pump it into 'em. And

so long as we are at it—take the officers' case again. As a member of Congress, J. J., you ought to know these things. When from out of his pay an officer deducts the cost of his grub and uniforms, not to speak of other items——”

“Huh!” Flavin had before this decided on the framework of a new speech. Its theme was to be the soft times of certain pampered government servants, this for the undistinguished but unterrified voter of his district; but this item of grub and clothes was disturbing. “The gover'nment don't furnish 'em grub and clothes?”

“It doesn't. And the special full-dress coat of that officer standing there, or any of those younger officers, happens to cost nearly one-half of one month's pay—just the coat. And being naval officers they have to live up to a certain standard aboard ship, as do their families, if they have any, ashore. And a lot of other items. Take this reception this afternoon—they have to pay for it out of their own pocket.”

Flavin whoofed two, three funnels of smoke thoughtfully toward the air-port. That speech would sure have to be given up, or vamped up in some new way, or saved for prudent delivery before closed secret organizations—that was sure. An impressive speech, too, he could have made of it. Confound Carlin butting in with his inside information! And Carlin not being a politician either, what could a fellow do with him?

Carlin waited for the words of wisdom to flow. They flowed. “Y'know, Carlin, there's nothing to be gained in my district by voting for any naval bill.”

“Is there anything to be lost?”

“Suppose I could swap a vote with somebody for a federal building or something in my district, for something in his district?”

“Go ahead and swap it!” barked Carlin. “And keep on swapping till your district wakes up to you and swaps you for somebody else!”

Flavin shook his head in triumphant prophecy. “They won't—not in my district, Carlin. It's too solid. A nomination is an election in my district, and the machine says who'll be nominated. But I tell you what, Carlin—a man like you in Washin'ton could help me out a lot through your paper up home.” He eyed

Carlin narrowly to see how he took that. Carlin said nothing. Flavin continued: “You weren't born in the bushes yesterday, Carlin, for all you're no pol. You know enough about the game to know there's nobody giving somethin' for nothing in politics. And——”

Carlin raised a warning palm. “Pull up, pull up! You don't have to do any trading in this thing. You want to remember, J. J., that I'm a newspaper man even before I'm a navy man, and whatever you do you'll get what's coming to you from me.”

The Honorable Flavin, not without doubt in his eyes, stared out of the air-port. Presently he said: “I'll take a look over the ship, I guess. See you later.” He threw his cigar-stub through the air-port and moved away.

The eyes of Carlin, searching the ward-room for such officers of the ship as he had not yet greeted, encountered the quiz-zical and questioning glance of “Sharkey,” otherwise Lieutenant, Trainor, United States Navy. “Who is your large and sonorous friend?” queried Trainor. Being a host he did not put it in words, but being human he could not help looking it.

The spoken answer to the unspoken question would probably have horrified the Honorable Flavin. “He's a man from up my way who made himself useful to the machine, and so they sent him to Washington. He's pretty raw, Sharkey, but I suppose he could be worse. At least we know where he will always be found.”

“And where, Carl, will he always be found?”

Carlin smiled with Trainor. “Where the votes are. That's his idea of supreme political genius—playing for the votes of the moment. I was talking up the navy to him, with an increased navy-pay bill in mind for this session. But I don't suppose that interests you, Sharkey.”

“Thanks to the thrift and thoughtfulness of an acquisitive ancestry,” smiled Trainor, “I suppose I could worry along if there was never a pay-day in the service. But most of the rest of the fellows would surely be interested. There's Pay Totten now. He'd——”

“Where is Pay? I haven't seen him since I came aboard.”



"These navy fellows must have a fat time of it, huh, Carlin?"—Page 744.

"Nor you won't for a long time again, unless you carry a longer than regulation glass, for Pay's by this time on the high seas and southward bound. That's why I spoke of him. But come into my room."

From a pigeonhole in his desk in his room Trainor pulled out several typewritten pages. "Ever hear, Carl, of Pay's bale of blankets?"

"Nope."

"Ah-h—yours shall be the joy of hearing the tale from the lips of the poet-author himself. You may elevate your high literary eyebrows at the construction, but recalling that you, or some other competent critic, told me once that construction was after all subordinate—that is, physical, not psychological, construction—I venture to tell this story in my own way. Hark, now!" Trainor smoothed out his sheets of paper and read:

"She was the war-ship *Missalam*, which lay out in the stream

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Of a port in Chinese waters which translated means Cold Cream.

A wireless comes from the admiral—he flew two stars on blue—

And the message read: 'At once cast free and join me in Chee Foo.

But bring along all packages, all bundles, and all mail—

Our need is great, the fleet does wait, come forced draft, do not fail.'

"And the *Missalam*'s commander says, 'Whatever shall I do?

'Tis a two days' Chinese holiday, don't they know that in Chee Foo?

And a thousand tons of coal we'll need, and merchandise in dock

Fills half the tin-clad warehouse, and immovable as a rock

Are sampan men and coolies when they've knocked off for the day—

And now 'tis snow and hail and sleet and a two days' holiday!"

"But he wakes up good old Totten
Sleeping soundly in his bed,
And showing the admiral's wireless,
Mutters, 'This is what he said.'"

Trainor looked over the top of his first page. "How's it so far, Carl?"

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"They've put men in the brig for less.
But go ahead."

"Thanks. I proceed:

"I was dreaming," says good old Totten, 'I was
writing to my wife
Of Chinese native customs and the joys of navy
life.

But two hundred coolie men we'll need and a
score of sampans wide

To get that coal aboard the ship and sail by morn-
ing tide.

No night for honest men to roam, but be sure
ashore I'll go—

Mayhap in a shack on the water-side I'll find my
friend Jim Joe.'

"Pay found his old-time Chinese friend and tells
him what's to do.

'A thousand tons of coal I want and I'm putting
it up to you.'

But Joe he looks at his Melican flend and he says,
'Me no can do—

To-night good Chinese mens they go and burn
the joss-sticks—so—

And bad Chinese mens, my flend,' says Joe, with
a wink or two,

'They play fan-a-tan, low-lee and mot.' Says
Joe, 'Me no can do.'

"And saying the last part over again—

With another wink or two,

'They play fan-a-tan, low-lee and mot.'

Says Joe, 'Me no can do.'

"Then Pay, with a grip of Joe's pigtail, 'You
mind the time—you do?—

When I pulled you out from a gunboat's snout?
—and you now say, "No can do"?

Two hundred coolie boys I want and twenty sam-
pans wide,

And twice five hundred tons aboard, so we sail by
morning tide.

When I left the ship the skipper says, "Now, Pay,
it's up to you!"

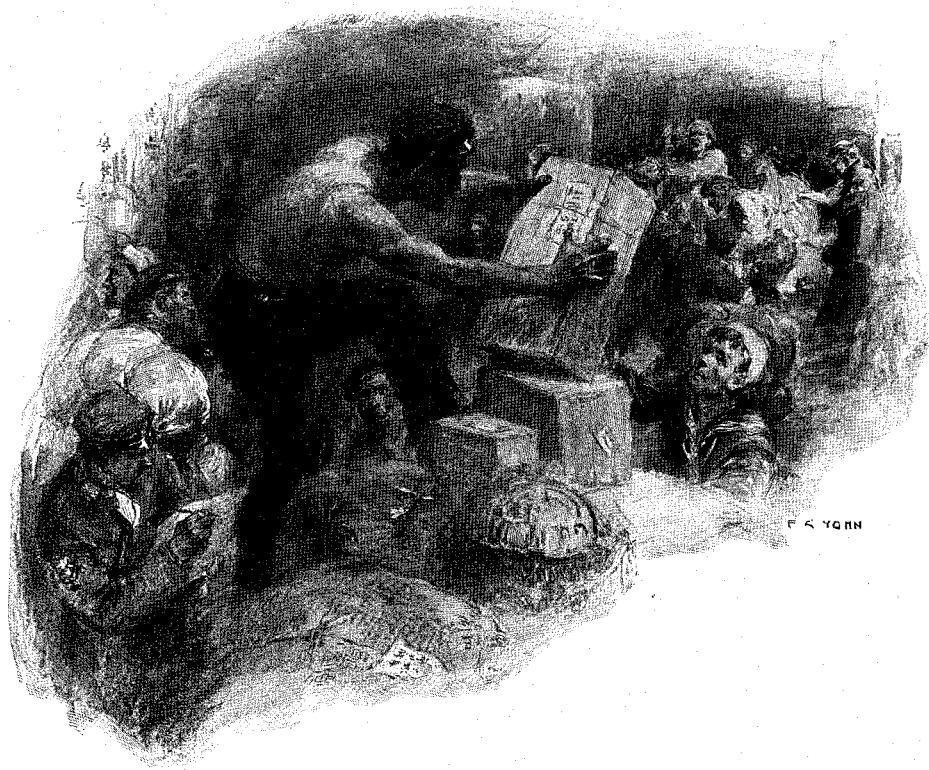
Pay gives Joe's tail a gentle twitch—"Now, Joe,
you must can do!"

"And Joe, with queue curled all anew, in the sleet
and hail he goes

And two-score crews of coolie boys he drags out
by their toes.



"Two hundred coolie boys we want and twenty sampans wide."—Page 749



Imagine him on a slushy, snowy night . . . tearing out those packages.—Page 750.

'Two hundred coolie boys we want and twenty
sompans wide,
And tice fi' huddled tlons on ship so she sail by
morning tide.'
And some he tore from their honest beds and
some from loud wassail,
But all came out, for Joe was stout, into the sleet
and hail.

"And two hundred lusty coolie boys
With twenty sompans wide,
Laid twice five hundred tons to where
The ship in stream did ride."

Trainer laid down the sheets.

"That's not the end, Sharkey?"

"No, no. But that's the end of the Jim
Joe part, which was hailed as so masterly
a performance on Pay's part—getting those
sampan men and coolies out of their beds
on a night like that and to work at coaling
ship for us—that I, the uncrowned poet
laureate of the Asiatic squadron, was com-
missioned to do it in verse, which I pro-
ceeded to do one night; and got that far,
swinging along fine and dandy, when the
messenger called me for the mid-watch."

"And you never finished it?"

"I couldn't," wailed Sharkey—"not in
rhyme. After that four hours' night-
watch the rhymes were all gone from me.
It was a rough night. A monsoon made
out of the southeast—"

"Omit the professional jargon, Sharkey,
and your professional troubles, and re-
member the first law of story-telling is to
tell the story."

"Wizz!" murmured Sharkey, softly.
"Thus encouraged, I proceed. Well, get-
ting Jim Joe started with his twenty
sompans and his two hundred coolies was
only part of Pay's job that night. The
big warehouse, where goods for our fleet
and other craft were stored, was in charge
of a Chinaman we called Hoo Ling, and
he knew less English than Joe, and appre-
ciated even less than Joe the need of quick
action. The admiral's wireless message
looked just like any other wireless mes-
sage to this big chink, Hoo Ling. But it's
a great thing to be a student of the Chi-



There were a dozen ship's boats and two hundred ship's men coming and going.—Page 751.

nese and of Chinese customs and of Chinese mental processes. Pay wheedled Ling a little, bluffed him a little, touched on past friendships a little, on possible future business a lot, painted a picture of our warlike forces over to Chee Foo, touched—not too casually—on the so much greater love which the officers and men of the United States Navy bore for China than for Japan, and such other little subtleties as he could invoke or invent. At last the old fellow was moved to open up and let Pay pick out what packages were for the fleet.

“And so, with four yeomen of the ship roused from restful hammocks to make memoranda of the addresses as fast as he pried them loose from the main pile and called them out, and with twelve able seamen of the watch to hustle the packages along as fast as the yeomen recorded them, and with forty other bustling blue-jackets to load them into the boats, Pay tore into that pile of freight, which was about as high and twice as long and wide as a three-apartment house. There were probably four or five thousand packages of various kinds to be overhauled, and they were addressed in four languages—English, German, French, and Chinese.

If Pay was the only white man in that part of China who could have charmed that impassive old storekeeper out of his bamboo bed that time of night, he was probably likewise the only white man in port that night who could read those Chinese shopkeepers' addresses.

“Dry goods, wet goods, hardware, grocery stuff, butcher's stuff, jeweller's stuff, ship's stores, bales of cotton, bales of silk, curios, souvenirs, bicycles, sewing-machines, sacks of rice, sacks of coffee, sacks of potatoes, barrels of flour and of gasoline, auto tires, boxes of tea, quarters of beef and of mutton, cases of breakfast-food and of oil, packages all the way from the size of a finger-ring to packages the size of an auto-truck. You know what a big, husky chap Pay Totten is? Imagine him on a slushy, snowy night, stripped to the waist, wading into that pile—feet, shoulders, knees, hands, elbows, with his teeth almost—tearing out those packages, and from addresses in English, French, German, and especially Chinese, picking out flying such as were for our ships.”

Trainor paused. A reminiscent smile was parting his lips.

“Hurry up. Did you sail on time next morning?” demanded Carlin.

"We did. With our coal aboard and the packages for the fleet, we made a record run and arrived in Chee Foo hours before the admiral was looking for us. And it was the day before Christmas and our coming made the whole fleet happy for Christmas week, and our skipper got 'Well done!' from the flag-bridge, but—" Trainor looked at Carlin and smiled ruefully. "There's so often a but, isn't there, to the otherwise happy tale? Among the seven hundred and odd pack-

ages receipted for by Paymaster Totten it seems there was missing one bale of blankets. What happened to the bale of blankets? they queried Paymaster Totten, and 'Lord!' says poor Pay, 'how do I know? It might 've been stolen on the wharf, or dropped overboard between the wharf and one of the ship's boats, or lost in rowing out to the ship or hoisting it over the ship's side. There were a dozen ship's boats and two hundred ship's men coming and going, and half a mile between



It was drive, drive, drive, from midnight to daylight.—Page 752.

the ship and shore; and it was a black, blustering night of sleet and hail, and there were also hundreds of coolies and dozens of sampans on the coal. It was drive, drive, drive, from midnight to daylight—how do I know what happened to one lone bale of blankets?

"However, Pay nor anybody else worried much about the blankets at the time. Our skipper recommended, in view of Paymaster Totten's extraordinary exertions on that night, that the bale of blankets be not charged against his accounts. And the admiral, when he heard all the story, approved and passed it along to Washington. But it came back. And by and by it was sent on to Washington again. And by and by it came back.

"And forth from us it went in due time, and for the last time, we thought, on leaving for home by way of Suez and Guantanamo. In the Mediterranean we picked up the European squadron and with them enjoyed several gala occasions, notably at Alexandria, Naples, Villefranche, and Gibraltar, at each of which ports we deemed it incumbent upon the service to spread itself a little. And during these festivities Pay was there with the rest of us, but between the gala days going without his bottle of beer with lunch, his cigar after dinner, in order that on the great days he might be able to contribute his share toward these receptions and yet not impair that sum—three-quarters of his pay it was—which he sent home monthly, in order that Mrs. Pay and the five little Pays might have food, lodging, clothes, and otherwise maintain the little social standard of living imposed upon a naval officer's family.

"'Thank God,' says Pay on our last day in the Mediterranean, 'we are leaving here to-morrow!' and he hauls out his aged special full-dress suit, and looks it over, and says with a sigh, 'I'm afraid I'll have to lay you away, old friend; but a few thrifty months in West India winter quarters and I may be able to replace you with a grand new shining fellow, and so come up the home coast the gayly apparelled, dashing naval officer of tradition.'

"And we went on to the West Indies and put in the rest of the winter there, with Pay forgetting all about the bale of blankets, until the night before we were to

go north. On that night a steamer from New York puts into where the fleet is, and in her mail for us is our old friend the letter of the indorsements as to the loss of the blankets, and now with one more indorsement since we'd last seen it, to wit: the department saw no reason to change its original ruling as to the responsibility for the loss of the bale of blankets, and Paymaster Totten's accounts would be charged with the loss thereof."

Trainor paused to allow a swift hot blast from Carlin to sweep through the room. "The archaic bureaucrats!" concluded Carlin fervently.

"Yes," agreed Trainor, "and yet, Carl, from their point of view——"

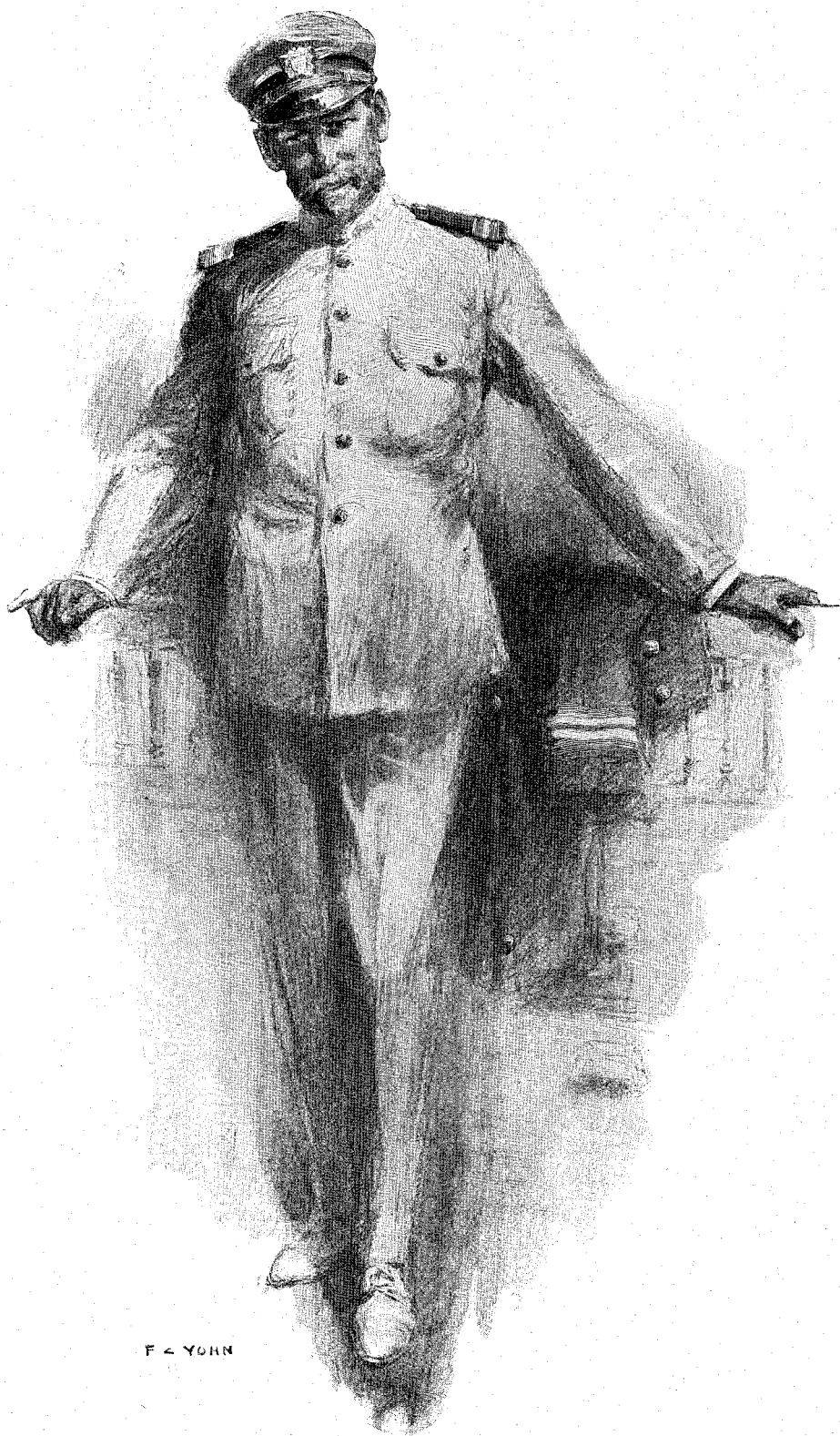
"A point of view which impairs high service is criminal."

Trainor knitted his brows. "Maybe you're right, Carl, but—recalling your advice about story-telling—Pay Totten, foreseeing a battle-ship cruise along the North Atlantic coast this summer, with certain pleasant but expensive ports in sight, could see where it might well behoove him to ask for a change of venue—that is, if he ever hoped to settle for that bale of blankets. It was costing him thirty dollars on the ship for his grub, which, as you know, didn't include any smokes or an occasional bottle of beer, nor the laundry for fifteen white suits—a fresh one every day in the tropics—and a few other sundry items, not to mention other minor but inescapable items.

"So Pay thought it all over, and on his way north he put in his request, and two days ago he got his orders; and yesterday he left us. And this morning—look!"—from the pile of letters atop of his desk Trainor selected one. "This came. Listen." Trainor read:

"DEAR SHARKEY:

"We're sailing to-day for the West African coast to look into Liberian matters. And in that country, where you're likely any time to fall in with a member of the cabinet sitting barefooted in the middle of the road peeling potatoes, the wear and tear on uniforms won't probably be over-heavy. And if there should happen to be any *recherche* affairs when we move onto the Congo coast, I am only hoping that the natives won't inspect too closely any



Paymaster Totten.

special full-dress paymaster's coat which should be blue but, as it happens, is green in the region of the seams. And after the West African sojourn we are bound for a little jaunt of a thousand miles or so up the Amazon, where I learn—and I've taken some trouble to learn—we won't have to wear full dress at all, not even when calling upon the tribal high chiefs. I'll come home yet with that old full-dress standby—if it isn't blown off my back during some tropical typhoon.

"It's a great thing, Sharkey, the being allowed two months' advance pay on leaving for foreign service. For me it means that Mrs. Totten and the children can have their little place and their one little maid at the little beach which did them all so much good last summer, and, if they're economical, maybe an occasional trip to the movies.

"And so I am leaving almost happy. Of course, the good-by and that two years made me feel a bit lumpy and lonesome leaving them, but the race would be too easy if we didn't carry some little extra weight, wouldn't it? As to the bale——"

Trainor stopped reading. "There's something else, personal stuff, which doesn't concern the story." He laid down the letter and looked up. "I couldn't help hearing a word or two of what your friend the congressman was saying to-day—half the ward-room also heard it, I guess. There's a case for him, Carl, if he's the right kind—a special bill to reimburse Totten."

Carlin jumped to his feet. "You're right, Sharkey. And he isn't the worst in the world. I'll put it up to him right now, if he's still aboard."

Congressman Flavin was still aboard, but also was bursting with something to tell. "What d'y'know, Carlin—nine hundred and odd sailors aboard this ship and not one of 'em could vote in my State, not even if they all lived there and wanted to! How's that!"

"Why, of course. It's in our State law—service in the army or navy or marine corps——"

"And you ask me to vote for navy bills and not one of 'em got a vote! I wouldn't 'a' known only they told me themselves. I

was speaking to a couple of 'em happened to live in my district, and they told me."

"That's all right, J. J., but forget that voting stuff for a minute and listen to me." And briefly, rapidly, and not without art, Carlin retold the story—retold it in prose entirely—of Paymaster Totten and the bale of blankets. When he had done he added, "Now, J. J., what do you think of a man doing a good job like that and losing out by it?"

"Always the way, Carlin—always," replied the Honorable Flavin briskly. "What most of these fellows on these ships need is a little course in practical politics. Why didn't that paymaster sit tight in his bunk, the time his captain came to him with that hurry-up message, and tell him he couldn't get any coolies or sampans? If he'd just rolled over in his bunk and said, 'Captain, it can't be done,' or if he'd gone ashore and made a bluff it couldn't be done, he wouldn't 'a' had any bale of blankets to pay for—see? This doing things you don't have to do, and nothing in it for yourself when you do do 'em—that's kid's work."

"All fine, J. J., but how about Christmas for the fleet?"

"Christmas? Let 'em look out for their own Christmas! He'd be getting his pay envelope every week just the same, wouldn't he?"

"Fine again—and as beautifully practical as you always are, J. J. But how about doing what Totten thought was his duty?"

"Duty? That ain't duty—that's foolishness. Duty's doing what you *got* to do, not doing something just to make a good fellow of yourself."

Slowly Carlin began to count: "One, two, three——"

"What's the matter?" demanded Flavin.

"A dream I had taking the count—eight, nine, ten, out! Say, Flavin, did it ever occur to you that your duty included knowing something about your business—who can vote, for instance, among a thousand other things, and who can't?"

"The mistake you make and all you wise high-brows make, Carlin"—and the Honorable Flavin fixed him with a knowing eye—"is in thinking I don't know my job. My job ain't in being in Congress. A hell of a lot they'll know at

home what I'm doing in Washin'ton after I get there. My job is being *elected* to Congress. And getting elected means to be able to get votes, and getting votes means being with the people who'll give you the votes. And your paymaster friend"—the Honorable Flavin favored Carlin with a wink and another knowing smile—"and his push, they don't swing any votes. But o' course that's for them. With you it's different. Now, you being in Washin'ton with a string o' newspapers—huh?"

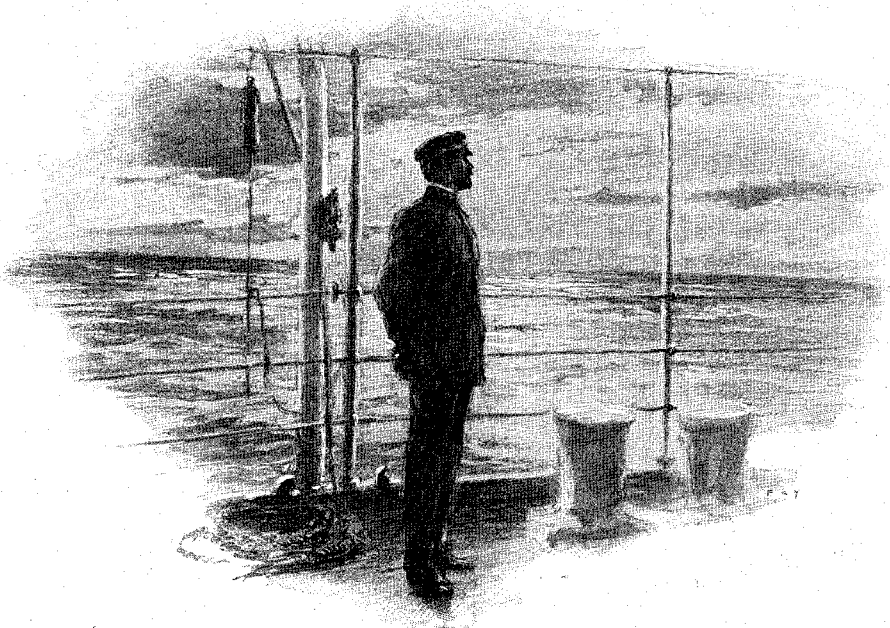
Carlin had walked off.

"There he goes," muttered Flavin, "pluggin' the game of a lot of people can never do a thing for him."

Trainor was shaking his head, half sadly and half seriously, at Carlin. He replaced Totten's letter on the pile on his desk. "One of the jokes of the mess is to accuse me of having so much money that I could publish my own books of foolish rhymes if I felt like it, but I haven't enough to pay for that bale of blankets for Pay Totten. Aboard ship Pay has just as much money as I have. But no matter—I'm one of those who believe that nobody beats the game in the long run. The eternal laws are against it. The people

get everybody pretty near right in time. And fellows like Pay will get what's due them some time. And your congressional friend, too, I hope. But"—Trainor stood up—"what d'y'say, Carl, if we get out into the ward-room country again? It's been a long watch since you and I clinked glasses together."

And outside in the mess-room, standing almost under the air-port which opened out to sea, Trainor held his glass up to Carlin's, saying: "There was a bosun's mate I knew one time, named Cahalan. I used to absorb most of my philosophy from him. I was on the bridge one night, and in one of the wings was Cahalan and another lad of the watch. They were evidently having an argument about something, and Cahalan was trying to convince him. I couldn't hear what his watch-mate said, but from out of the dark all at once I heard Cahalan. Said Cahalan: 'When a man does a good job and gets rated up for it, he's a lucky geezer; when he does a good job and don't get rated up for it, he mayn't be a lucky geezer, but what th' hell, he's done a good job just the same, ain't he?' So, Carl, what d'y'say? —to Pay Totten, sailing lonesome through the Trades—a poor politician, but a damn good officer!"



THE DEVIL-HEN

By Katherine Mayo

ILLUSTRATIONS BY WALTER L. GREENE



Big Mary, a strapping Barbadian negress, had strayed across the Caribbean to the Dutch colony of Surinam more vaguely than a bird strays in the air. So, also, came Moses, a black bulk from Demerara. And the two, being met, mated enduringly, yet by bonds far slighter than those that bind the feathered folk in springtime.

Big Mary attached to Maclise and his mining work in the gold bush; and here, indeed, grew no slight bond, but the single-souled devotion, the hot, inalienable loyalty of the old-time negro to the master. In many a pinch had she proved it—in one above all so stiff and wicked that the grateful Maclise had rewarded her gorgeously, even with the right to ride in his private launch whenever he himself should traverse the river between Paramaribo, the port town, and his placer in the jungle.

As this distinction pertained to Mary alone, of all the colored multitude of the colony, she wore it with sacerdotal majesty. And though it entailed her constant attendance afloat, Maclise found little objection, for the giant Barbadian was as silent as the rough-hewn wooden idol she resembled, while the sight of her burly form, squatting alert and motionless on the forward deck, imparted a sense of reserve force not always unwelcome.

Moses, her man, like the stolid ox he was, she kept to his work at the placer. To the mind of his mate Paramaribo was no place for Moses. In his first five minutes on Waterkant, she explained to him, some rapsallion would strip him of every cent he possessed, returning no benefit. Whereas, if she went down singly, drew his earnings, and spent them as her spirit moved, they served at least an agreeable purpose. So Moses continued to chop cord-wood and lay up treasure in the town office, while Mary, flitting at will and alone, disbursed that treasure to her own satisfaction.

To the other laborers Big Mary seemed a thing apart. The only woman allowed on

the placer, her severity, her strength and courage, and her fierce faith to the master made her a sexless engine of wrath. They respected and feared her with a truth that afforded Maclise unending delight, and he never tired of observing that comic relationship.

Now it happened, on a season, that Maclise was called from the placer to town; and, the contracts of a gang of laborers expiring at the time, he determined, for convenience' sake, to take the gang with him. To them, at the last moment, accrued one alleged invalid. This fellow, a mulatto pump-hand named Banknote, lay under strong suspicion of malingering; but his pretence, if such it was, cleverly defied proof and enforced his plea for sick-leave.

"Banknote," said Maclise, as he stepped into the big fish-boat that should convey them all down creek to the launch's river anchorage, "Banknote, take an oar. It is good medicine. But, Mary, you sit opposite and watch he doesn't overwork himself. Banknote is sick, you know." He regarded the Amazon gravely.

"Yes, mahster," said Mary with a face of stone.

The men had stowed their luggage as best its motley form allowed. Canisters, boxes, sacks, and tools were packed compactly, while on top of all perched the inevitable chicken-crate crowded with melancholy fowls—property of the stroke-oar, Fitzjim.

Heavily stumbling, bitterly mumbling, Banknote slouched to place. Big Mary fronted him solemnly. Maclise, lighting a pipe, settled back in his deck-chair prepared for enjoyment. With a cloven howl Fitzjim hove his great voice into the swing of the old-time negro chanty:

"Wakti pikiensio, joe sa si"—

The crew bent to their oars.

"Wait a little, you shall see
The Englishmen returning."

To the slow lunge of the song the blades swung and caught and the big boat slid