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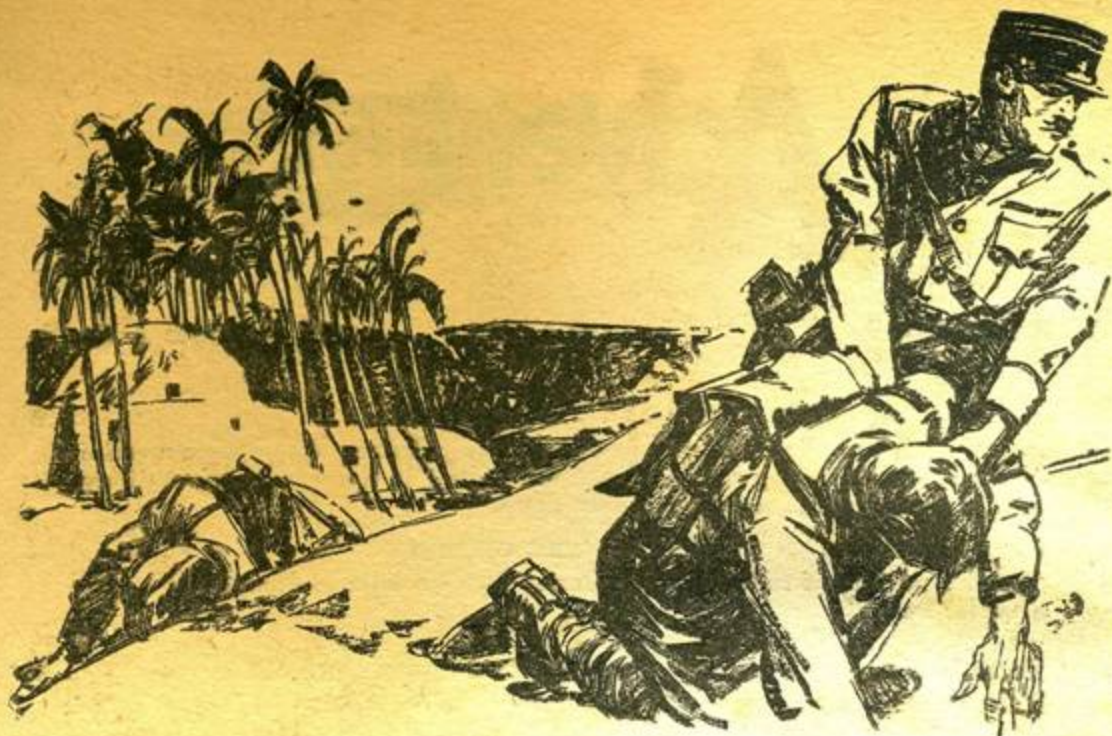
JANUARY 1ST

Adventure

**J.D. NEWSOM'S
ALL YOU
DO IS
FIGHT!**

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ALL YOU DO IS FIGHT!

BARNEY WALSH had reached the rue de Clichy and was standing close to the curb, waiting for a break in the traffic so that he might cross the street, when two men, who had been staring at a display of canned goods in a grocery window, turned and closed in upon him.

Their movements were so deliberate, they looked so commonplace in their baggy, ready-made clothes and derby hats that no one on that crowded thoroughfare gave them a second glance. Barney did not become aware of their presence until they stood close beside him, one at each elbow.

It was his first contact with French detectives, but he knew them at once for what they were. Their calling was stamped on their morose, heavily jowled faces as clearly as though the words "Sureté Générale" had been embossed

in letters of gold on their sweat-streaked hat ribbons.

Walsh's lean countenance turned to flint. He stood stock still until the detective on his right said through his bushy black mustache:

"Bernard Walsh, we have orders to place you under arrest."

He spoke in an off-hand manner as though he were discussing some trivial matter, the weather for instance. His English was very bad, but Barney understood every word of it.

His eyebrows went up and a faint smile twisted the corners of his mouth.

"Place me under arrest!" he stalled. "What's the big idea?"

The plain-clothes man did not attempt to conceal his satisfaction.

"We do not waste much time, eh? *Ah, làlà!* You foreigners. You think you are so smart! You think here in Paris



A novelette by J. D. NEWSOM

nobody can find you. But it is easy. Yesterday, the inspector said to us, 'Find this Walsh. He entered the country with a forged passport made out to the name of Fenwick. The American government wants us to hold him until he can be extradited. He is a most dangerous criminal.' And you see, in less than twenty-four hours, we have you, Mr. Walsh-Fenwick, the notorious public enemy. It was not very difficult to pick up your trail."

Barney's smile became more pronounced.

"Well," he admitted. "I guess you win."

"Always," nodded the detective, laying a heavy hand on his prisoner's shoulder. "You come quietly, yes?"

"Might as well," nodded Barney, sliding a sidelong glance at the heavy traffic rolling down the street.

The detective gave a chuckle which

seemed to come from the pit of his stomach.

"You are sensible. That is wise because the inspector said, 'Watch him. Run no risks. The Americans warn us he is a killer. We do not want such vermin loose over here. Shoot him if he makes a single move to resist, and make sure you shoot first'."

"I'll take your word for it," agreed Walsh. "What happens now? Do we stand here and watch the cars go by or what have you?"

The plain-clothes man tightened his grip on Barney's shoulder, shaking him playfully till his teeth almost rattled.

"They are not so terrible, these famous American gangsters! I have had more trouble arresting many a pick-pocket. We shall make the trip to headquarters in a taxi, yes? Armand, my good one," he spoke over Barney's head to his team-mate, "stop the first *voiture*

that comes this way. We did not have one in readiness," he told the prisoner with jovial brutality, "because we did not know whether to call a taxi or a hearse."

"You got a one-track mind," Walsh declared. "I wouldn't know what to do with a gun if you gave me one."

As he spoke, however, his right hand traveled slowly upward toward the holster strapped beneath his armpit. But the detectives were too observant and too quick for him. Before his fingers touched the butt end of the automatic, his captors grabbed his wrists and twisted his arms up behind his back with so much vigor that he was thrown forward and fell to his knees.

The plain-clothes men did not loosen their grip. They were taking no chances with this desperado for whose arrest the Federal authorities had offered a fat reward. They held on like grim death, almost wrenching his arms out of their sockets, holding him so close to the curb that the mudguard of a passing truck nearly scalped him.

And to their determination to run no risks Barney owed his life.

As they laid hands on him a closed car swerved in toward the sidewalk. A man sitting in the back seat thrust the muzzle of a sawed-off shot-gun through the open window. He let drive just as Barney stumbled and went down on his knees.

The sound of the shot was covered by the noise of hundreds of diminutive French automobiles grinding up the rue de Clichy in second gear. But the next instant all hell broke loose in that busy, over-crowded thoroughfare.

One of the detectives, drilled through the heart, fell forward, striking his head against the fender of a taxicab. The other one, clapped both hands to his eyes, and yelled:

"I can not see! *Mon Dieu*, I am blind!

Women screamed, and a plate glass window rained jagged fragments upon

the sidewalk. A portly gentleman clutched frantically at the seat of his pants as he ran around in circles, shouting:

"Assassins! Help! Police!"

A great mob, torn between fear and morbid curiosity, milled around the victims. More people leaned out of apartment and office windows, gesticulating frantically, pointing in the general direction of a dark blue sedan, which had raced away before the traffic tied itself up in hysterical knots. Infuriated bystanders, who had come up too late to witness the actual shooting, were trying to drag the taxicab driver, who had struck the detective, off his seat.

So great was the excitement that no one paid the slightest attention to Barney Walsh. He picked up his hat, crossed the street without undue haste, paused to light a cigarette, and walked away without once glancing over his shoulder.



MARIE-LOUISE threw the door wide open, rushed out onto the landing and clasped Barney's hands in both of her own.

"Barnee!" she cooed. "My darr-ling! I am so 'appy to see you. I listen—I 'ear the footstep on the stairs—and my 'eart palpitates so fast, yes, when I say to myself, 'That is 'im!' You are just in time for lunch. It is *midi*—what you call midday."

She held him at arm's length, gazing into his steady, unsmiling gray eyes, then, unable to resist the impulse, she kissed him chastely on both cheeks.

She was taking no chances with Barney Walsh. No tenth rate musical-hall *artiste* of her acquaintance had ever hooked and gaffed a more promising sucker. She had met him one evening while she was having a bite to eat at a night club with Gaston Michaud, who had spent several years in America and had come home without a sou. Michaud

was not a good prospect for Marie-Louise. His methods of acquiring wealth were too dubious and much too uncertain to make him at all desirable, but he knew lots of people in the theatrical underworld, and as such he had his uses.

But as soon as she met Barney Marie-Louise had decided to let her career flop for a while. Barney spent money like water. According to Michaud he was worth a great wad of dough, and Marie-Louise, who did not let the grass grow beneath her feet, had sworn a great oath that she would marry this young American businessman, and devote the rest of her days to promoting her own shows with her alimony.

Having embraced him, she gave him a playful shake.

"But you are so cold, my darr-ling, so distant! *Le vilain!* My beeg American iceberg. Come in quickly. We must have a little aperitif before we eat."

She hurried him across a small vestibule into a bright, cheerful dining room with a table set for two, standing by the open window giving on a very narrow balcony where begonias grew in red pots. From the kitchen came a pleasant smell of cooking and the muttered imprecations of an elderly female dressed for the occasion in a black dress and a skimpy white apron.

It was only when they stood by the window, with the clear May sunlight streaming into the room, that it dawned upon Marie-Louise that there was something strangely wrong with this clam-like Yankee. He seemed tense and pre-occupied and—dangerous. Never before had she seen that lean, hard look on his face. He reminded her of a bird of prey. For no good reason she liked him better that way, even though a chill of fear rippled down her back as she exclaimed:

"Barnee! Is something wrong? You 'ave been in an accident perhaps?"

Without a change of expression he held out his gray felt hat.

"Notice anything peculiar about that lid?" he inquired, speaking in a slow drawl out of the corner of his mouth.

For one brief moment she thought he was about to show her some imbecile conjuring trick (Americans were such overgrown children!), but her relief was short-lived. In the crown of the hat there were two round holes, and one side of the brim looked as though it had been gnawed by mice.

"Bullet holes," he explained in the same slow drawl. "Couple of inches lower and I was all washed up."

Marie-Louise gave a horrified gasp which, for once, was quite genuine.

"You 'ave been shot at! But it is monstrous, my Barnee! It was an accident, surely. You must tell me."

"Yeah," nodded Barney. "It was no accident, sister. They were out gunning for me."

It occurred to Marie-Louise that she knew next door to nothing about this thin-lipped, hard-eyed young man. Any one more unlike the proverbial sucker would have been hard to find. She had classed him as a typical American, and Americans, she had been led to believe, were as soft as mush, although they pretended to be very stiff and unsentimental. But there was nothing superficial about Barney's toughness, and she wondered how she had been stupid enough to make such a mistake and waste her talents on such a cold-blooded devil.

"But why? But how?" she stammered.

"I'm coming to that," said Barney. "I got a hunch you're on the level. You better had be, sister. I'm telling you. Now listen: how well do you know this bird Michaud? Don't make a speech. This is business. I got to work fast."

"Michaud," she repeated. "We 'ave been friends a long time. But I do not know 'im so veree well," she added hastily. "It is not 'im tried to kill you, surely?"

"That can wait. What did he tell you about me?"

She shrugged her shoulders. Michaud had assured her that Barney was a sap. No brains, lots of money. An easy mark for a clever girl like her. But she could not afford to repeat that conversation.

"I do not remember," she said lamely. "Not very well. I t'ink he told me you 'ad a beeg business in Detroit where 'e met you, is it not?"

"Is that all? Did he mention my line of business? Come on, snap out of it!"

"That is of no interest to me," she declared, trying to steer him toward pleasanter channels. "What is monee to me?"

"Cut out the baloney," Barney retorted. "I'm going to give you the straight dope. I'm no businessman, sister. I'm what they call a public enemy. Gangster to you. D'you know what that means?"

Marie-Louise tittered nervously. She did not have to be told the meaning of that word. The Paris papers, which dearly love to explain America's defects to their readers, have been full of sensational gangster stories for many years.

"It is a joke you make wiz me," she protested.

"Don't kid yourself. Ever heard of Nick Tulesco's mob in Detroit? I guess not. I played ball with him because I was after easy money. I wanted a couple of hundred thousand just to be on the safe side, then I said I'd quit."

He lit a cigarette and pitched it away after a couple of puffs. The squawk of motor horns drifted into the room. Pans rattled in the kitchen. Marie-Louise said nothing. She was less interested in Barney's past career than she was in her own plight. She had been sold a pup. She had wasted over three months trying to entice this American to the altar—and he turned out to be a gangster! It was a nasty situation which might have disastrous consequences for a conscientious gold-digger

striving after respectability and an assured income.

"I quit all right," Barney went on jerkily. "I wanted to buy a farm and breed cattle. Can you tie that? Nick swore I'd double-crossed him. The crazy mutt thought I'd salted away a couple of million. That started it. I been on the run ever since, and it's cost me plenty. You can't hold on to that kind of dough. It slips through your fingers. Nothing's safe. Hell, I was better off when I was driving a truck! When Nick found I'd hopped to this side of the water he got busy with some of his crooked politicians. They smeared me all over the front page of every newspaper in town. Income tax evasion, murder, extortion, kidnaping. I'm no angel, but I ain't that bad. There's a warrant out for my arrest. Federal warrant. If they land me it'll be just too bad."

"The soup's ready," announced the maid of all work, favoring the turtle-doves with a toothless leer. "Does *madame* want me to serve—"

Marie-Louise cut her short.

"No—yes—no! Get out, I am not hungry." As an afterthought she turned to Barney. "Lunch?" she inquired. "You want something to eat?"

"Not today. Got to be moving."

"But you must eat," she decided illogically, keeping up the pretence of intense devotion although all need for it had gone. "All right, Albertine, bring the soup."

It was a peculiar meal. Walsh ate standing up, a cigarette in one hand, a spoon in the other. Between mouthfuls he talked.

"This morning they tried to arrest me. French cops. They had me cold. I got away because of your friend Michaud."

"Ah!" breathed Marie-Louise, hoping for the best. "E is a true friend."

"Like hell he is. He's a rat. He told you to make a play for me, didn't he? Sure he did. I was wise to you, sister,

right from the start, but it was sort of fun. I thought I was sitting pretty here in Paris, and that gave Michaud plenty of time to get in touch with Nick Tulesco."

"No!"

"What do you mean—no? I'm telling you. A car breezed up just as the cops jumped me. Michaud was at the wheel. I saw him as I see you now. Not three feet away. Tony Varella was in the back seat with a shot gun. He blew the heads off the two cops, and wounded God knows how many. I beat it before the smoke cleared."



MARIE-LOUISE choked over a mouthful of *potage vermicelle*. She could not quite follow Walsh's account of the affair, but she understood enough to realize that detectives had been killed, and that she was harboring a dangerous criminal. Self-pity swept over her in waves. She might be implicated, sent to prison, her reputation torn to tatters for the French people, though they like to read about foreign gangsters, are filled with righteous wrath at the mere thought that such creatures may seek shelter in their midst.

"*Mon Dieu*," wailed Marie-Louise, "it is dreadful what you tell me. Michaud would not do such a thing!"

"For five thousand bucks he'd sell his own mother," retorted Barney. "That's what Nick offered for my hide. There ain't another man in Paris who could have spotted me. Not one."

Marie-Louise was compelled to admit that the case against Michaud was conclusive.

"But you must do something," she protested, eager to be rid of her guest. "You must go away. You must 'ide!"

"Go where? I'm ditched. I don't know the ropes over here, and anyway you can't move without a whole bunch of identity papers and passports and God knows what. If the cops don't get me

Michaud will. It's a fifty-fifty proposition."

"There's breaded veal cutlets and new potatoes, if you want any," said Marie-Louise biting a bright red thumb nail. "Have you no idea what you will do?"

"Sure I have. Michaud ought to be along any time now and—"

"No, no, no!" she cried, wringing her hands. "That is horrible. You must t'ink of me. They will put you in prison—"

"Not a chance. I've had a skinful of being hunted and double-crossed, and wondering what's going to happen when I reach the next corner. It ain't no way to live. I'm getting the jitters. And what am I going to eat when my money's gone? I'm through, but I'm going to fix Michaud's feet if it's the last thing I do."

Marie-Louise suddenly felt very sorry for him, but her sorrow was mitigated by her anxiety to get him out of the apartment, as far from her as possible.

"There is a way out," she assured him. "One way—if it is not too late. 'Ave you 'eard of the Foreign Legion?"

"That outfit in Africa? Is that what you mean? I read about it somewheres. Nothing doing, sister."

She was on her feet, facing him, pleading with him passionately.

"You must. There was an Austrian I met. He served in the Legion. It is only for five years. All you do is fight. They ask no questions of you. Nothing. And then you are safe. No more running away, Barnee. Safe! The police can not arrest you. Your Nick Tulesco can not follow you. You give whatever name you wish, and when you leave they give you papers with that name on them, and you make a new start."

"Says you! But all that cockeyed stuff about discipline and hard-boiled top-sergeants gives me a pain."

"You will have a worsen pain, Barnee, if they send you to prison. It is better than a bullet in the back, better than

your electric chair. And if you are killed you die as a soldier, not as a criminal."

"That sure helps a lot," Barney said sourly.

"What else is there?" she insisted.

He went to the balcony and looked down at the busy street. Everything seemed normal. No one loitered on the sidewalk outside the building. He turned back toward Marie-Louise and picked up his battered hat.

"There ain't another doggone thing, sister," he admitted. "Where's the recruiting office? Write it on a piece of paper so I can show it to the cab driver. My French ain't so hot."

She scribbled the words, "Bureau Militaire, rue des Dominicains," on the back of a butcher's bill and thrust it into his hand.

"I am very glad, Barnee," she said with a catch in her voice. "What you 'ave done you can not change. So you must begin a new life and the old one will be forgotten. If they ask me about you I shall say you 'ave gone to Belgium."

She did not attempt to kiss him. They shook hands, and she stood on the threshold, listening to the sound of his quick footsteps until he reached the ground floor. Then she slammed the door, went back to the dining-room and burst into tears.

"*Comment!*" exclaimed the maid, lumbering in after her. "He is gone, and the breaded veal cutlets not even touched! After all the work I've done! Isn't he coming back?"

"Never," sobbed Marie-Louise. "He had to leave on a business-trip. He won't be back—today."

"Such an agreeable *monsieur*," sighed the maid. "Always so quiet and so—"

"Imbecile!" screamed Marie-Louise. "I am glad he is gone. I am overjoyed. I hated him. Get out of here and leave me alone."

But whether her tears were due to

relief, or regret, or disappointment she herself did not begin to know.

The maid shuffled back to her kitchen and started scraping the veal cutlets into the garbage pail.



AT ELEVEN o'clock that morning Walsh knew little and cared less about the French Foreign Legion. Soldiers filled him with derision. He had nothing but contempt for poor boobs who had themselves shot down to make dividends safe for armament manufacturers.

By one o'clock, however, he was so anxious to get into the Legion that he almost had heart failure when a bored and disgruntled sergeant, seated behind a rickety desk in a dingy office, informed him that, effectively, the Foreign Legion was open to all comers.

"*Alors*," said Barney in his abominable French. "I desire to engage myself."

The sergeant looked him over without enthusiasm. Most would-be recruits belonged to a definite social group. Poverty was their outstanding characteristic. Hungry men, misfits, petty crooks, booze hounds, crack-brained adventurers weary of family ties and many mouths to feed, these were the stuff the Legion was made of. Later on they might turn into dependable soldiers, but when they appeared before the recruiting sergeant they were full of deference and submission.

Barney was not so easy to classify. His double-breasted blue serge suit had evidently been made to order by a high-priced tailor. His collar was spotless, his necktie was new, the heels of his well polished shoes were not run down. Nor did he show any signs of cringing in the presence of authority. His hard, sharp-featured countenance was closed and expressionless, although the sergeant thought he detected a faint glint of mockery in Barney's coldly appraising gray eyes.

"You are sure you want to enlist?" he inquired. "If I were you I would think it over. You can't change your mind after you have signed your papers."

"I am here," Walsh labored to explain, "because I desire to join the Foreign Legion. *Voilà!*"

"Ah!" remarked the sergeant, annoyed by that meaningless "*voilà!*" You seem to know what you want, but I think you had better consult the captain. He speaks English and can understand what you say, which is more than I can do."

So Barney, whose knees displayed a remarkable tendency to knock together, was escorted into an even smaller, dingier room, smelling of stale tobacco smoke, old papers and ink, where he was interviewed by a middle-aged officer with a capacious stomach and an exasperating habit of leaving most of his sentences unfinished while he stared at the fly specks on the shade of his desk lamp.

"You see," he told Barney, "the Legion is—"

"You bet," Barney agreed after an interminable pause. "Me—join—Legion. Yes."

The strain became so great that he found himself talking pidgen English but even that didn't arouse the captain, who went on dreamily:

"You must not make a mistake. The Legion needs—requires—demands the utmost of those who serve. They must be prepared to endure—"

"That's swell," declared Barney, watching the door, wondering whether he was being detained while the sergeant called the cops. But at last the captain spoke again to say that Barney looked like a *monsieur* of refinement and culture, accustomed to life's amenities, and as such he might not be able to endure the Spartan simplicity of the Legion.

Barney was not able to repress a lopsided grin at the idea that he was a

gentleman of refinement and culture, but he let that pass.

"I'll risk it," he assured the officer. "I can get used to most anything, I guess."

The captain stood up and escorted him to the sergeant's office.

"There is room in the Legion for men of your type," he declared, shaking Walsh's hand. "Men with high ideals. Men who will—"

He nodded sagely and departed, closing the door in Barney's face.

But Barney was not yet in the Legion. There were papers to be made out, and another five minutes, that seemed like five centuries, elapsed while the sergeant noted down the fact that the recruit's name was William Barney, twenty-five years of age, and an American.

"The doctor will examine you," said the non-com, pushing open another door. "Undress in here and sit on the bench until he arrives."

Walsh found himself in a bare, low-ceiled room, damp as a tomb, with a red-tiled floor and a strong aroma of creosote. Beneath the heavily barred window stood a sink with a brass tap, beside the sink there was a table and a chair. Against the opposite wall stood a wooden bench, dark and polished by generations of potential Legionnaires. And on this museum piece a large, muscular man, very pink and naked, sat with his arms tightly wrapped across his hairy, barrel-like chest. Bull-necked, heavy-jawed, with bulging eyes set flush with his broad cheek-bones, the best thing that can be said about him is that he looked rugged and virile. A three-day growth of brick-colored whiskers did not improve his appearance.

He sat bolt upright when Barney entered the room, examining him carefully from head to foot. And all at once he clapped a huge paw over his mouth and roared with laughter. Fresh spasms shook him when Barney loosened his tie. He smacked his thighs, clutched

his aching sides, and gurgled mightily as though he were about to die for want of breath.

"You're having a good time," nodded Walsh, who was endeavoring to take off his coat and hang it up without disclosing the presence of the holster sewed into the lining.

The man went off into renewed convulsions.

"An Englishman, *Gottverdom!*" he wheezed painfully. "What are you doing here?"

"You're all wet," Walsh retorted. "I'm American, and it's none of your damn business what I'm doing here."

His neighbor, apparently, thought Americans were even funnier than the English.

"And you are enlisting!" he exclaimed. "Such a nice young chap. Does mama know you are out?"

Even then Barney did not lose his temper. Now that he was almost in the Legion, almost free from the nightmare existence he had led for so many months, he did not give a curse what this hairy ape thought of him.

"I'll write and tell her all about it," he declared, pulling a long, sober face. "She'll be surprised."

But the joke fell flat. The man spat contemptuously within an inch of Barney's feet.

"That's right," he observed, laying on the sarcasm with a trowel. "You must not forget the old mama. You must be a good boy and write once a week."



HE LEANED forward while Walsh was stooping to unlace his shoes, and dealt him a tremendous smack between the shoulder blades.

"What's that?" he demanded, running his fingers over the bulky wallet in Walsh's hip pocket.

There was plenty of weight behind that smack, but Walsh made no complaint.

"That's a wallet," he explained placidly.

"Money?" the man edged over closer, his broad nostrils quivering.

"A little."

His neighbor caught him by the elbow and dragged him down onto the bench.

"How much?" he demanded sharply.

"A couple of hundred or so. Nothing much."

The man threw a heavy arm across Barney's shoulders and breathed stale beer fumes in his face. He had, he declared, taken a great liking to Barney. Yes, sir, he had! He had been to New York once and was a great admirer of America. His name was Groote, Otto Groote. His home town was Antwerp, but he was one of nature's rolling stones and had worked at many strange jobs in far away places—foreman of a sheep ranch in Patagonia, deck-hand on a schooner in the New Hebrides, owner of a gambling joint on the island of Macao.

Of late he had been resting in Paris (he smacked his lips and winked to show Barney what he meant by a "rest"), but he could not stand life in a big city and was joining the Legion because, he said, it was a good way of seeing Africa. The Legion was an open book to him. He talked about it as though he had spent a life-time in its ranks.

"But you," he said earnestly, "you have no experience of such things. It is all new to you. Some Legionnaires are rough customers. You must be careful. If they find you with two hundred or three hundred francs—or more perhaps, eh?—they would stick a knife into you."

"Boy howdy!" commented Walsh. "Is it that bad?"

"*Gottverdom!* It is always bad for men like you. But you can trust me. I take good care of you. Nobody can fool Groote. You give me the money and I keep it for you. Then if some *cochon* comes to you and asks for

money you send him to me, haha! I show him something. I show him this!"

"This" was an outsize in fists which he held so close to Barney's nose that the latter had to squint to examine it.

"I'll think it over," Barney promised.

Groote, however, was a fast worker. His hand slid off Barney's shoulder and his thick fingers groped clumsily for the button closing the hip pocket.

"You trust me," he advised, grinning as he flourished his fist close to Barney's face. "I have knocked about the world. We are comrades now, in the Legion, and—"

There were limits to Barney's patience. Those limits had been reached. He did not mind being laughed at, he rather enjoyed Groote's reckless lying, but he drew the line at being held up and robbed. His wallet held not a few hundred but several thousand francs, all that remained of his original stake, and he had every intention of hanging onto those notes, if possible, in case of future emergency.

Groote wasn't an emergency. He was merely a nuisance.

"Listen, mug," Barney warned him, "and get this straight. I'll take care of my own dough and I don't need help. Why, you poor mutt, you're too dumb to hold up a ten-year-old kid and get away with it!"

But Groote was much too sure of his strength, and too greedy, to attach the slightest importance to anything Barney might have to say.

He stood up too, squaring his great shoulders, swelling his chest to its full extent.

"That is no way to talk when I try to help you," he growled, scowling ominously. "You give me that money to keep or else—"

As he spoke he reached toward Walsh, but before his fingers could find a purchase on his victim's neck, something happened, something incredible. Walsh's fist shot out and crashed against the

side of his jaw. The blow had not traveled two feet, but it landed on Groote's chin with sledge-hammer force.

His legs went out from under him. He skidded across the floor and came to rest against the bench. Two threads of blood trickled out of his nostrils into his open mouth.

Too stunned to heave himself to his feet, he clung to the edge of the bench, gaping at Walsh, who had turned away and was unbuttoning his shirt as calmly as though nothing extraordinary had taken place.

"*Gottverdeck!*" muttered the astounded Fleming. "To me—you did such a thing!"

"You bet," assented Walsh. "And if that don't hold you I'll sock you again."

"I could break you in two," swore Groote. "I could tear off your damned head."

He got no farther just then, for the door opened and the medical officer bustled into the room. Bald and bearded, he was rather skinny and undersized, but his lack of inches was amply compensated by his truculent manner.

"Now then! Now then!" he exclaimed on catching sight of Groote's blood smeared head sticking above the end of the bench. "What's all this about? What are you doing on the floor?"

Groote struggled into an upright position. He stared hard at Walsh before he said:

"Begging your pardon, but I fell down and bumped myself. It is nothing."

The doctor took in the situation at the first sniff.

"You have been drinking. You are drunk. And that is spittle on the floor. I suppose you slipped on your own spittle. Serve you right. Filthy habit. You ought to be severely punished. Go get a mop and clean it up. No!" he cried as Groote fished a grimy handkerchief from his trousers pocket. "Not with that, cretin that you are. Get a floor cloth,

a mop, a bucket of disinfectant! And don't bleed all over the place."

He did not stop talking until Groote had put on his clothes and had been led away by the sergeant in search of cleaning materials.

"Now," added the doctor, pouncing upon Walsh. "You."

The examination was brief, perfunctory and explosive. Barney was in good shape, hard as nails, without an ounce of fat on his long, smooth muscles. He hopped, walked, bent over, and every time he misunderstood an order the doctor clutched at his beard and tried to tear it out by the roots. At last it was over.

"Not a thing wrong with you," the doctor summed up. "All right. Fit for active service. Dress and report to the sergeant."

Barney was wriggling into his coat when Groote reappeared armed with a bucket, a rag and a broom. When he beheld Barney a dark flush suffused his face and the veins stood out in knots on his temples.

"You'll pay for this," he promised in a throaty whisper. "I'll teach you a lesson, you treacherous swine."

"That'll be just fine," agreed Barney. "Just take your time and make a nice, clean job of that floor. I'll be seeing you."

"This way," barked the sergeant, hovering in the doorway. "What do you think this is—a debating society?"

In the outer office he thrust a pen in Barney's hand and jabbed a forefinger at a dotted line at the foot of a printed form.

"Sign here."

"Am I in?" inquired Walsh as he put down the pen.

"You are," the sergeant said heartily, "and let me warn you, my lad, from this moment onward you are subject to military law." His grumpy manner suddenly deserted him as he added with a subdued chuckle. "Next time you want

to hit anybody pick on a fellow your own size, otherwise you'll get into plenty of trouble."

"How—"

"He told me. Wanted to have you arrested. Said you hit him while he had his back turned. But I asked him where he got that lump on his jaw and he shut up. Watch out for him. He's a bad actor."

He handed Barney five francs and a railroad warrant to Marseilles. "You are to take the eighteen minutes past twenty o'clock train at the P. L. M. station. If you miss it you'll be courtmartialled."

"What do I do in the meantime?" inquired Barney, confronted by the unpleasant prospect of having to hang around Paris for several hours.

"Do!" cried the sergeant. "It is nothing to me what you do. You have your marching orders. Clear out!"

"Don't I get an escort or something?" protested Barney.

"An escort, *mon Dieu!*" bellowed the sergeant. "These Americans. I suppose you want a couple of regiments and a brass band to parade with you to the station. But you can't deceive me, you scoundrel. You're hanging around, waiting for that fellow Groote to come out. If you want to fight, fight in the street. But I advise you to be careful. You knocked him down once. That is very good. Next time he may hit first and if he does there won't be much left of you. Now get out of here!"



WALSH thrust five hundred franc notes into the taxi driver's hand and hurried away. The amount of the fare was ninety odd francs.

"Hey!" cried the driver. "*Monsieur—* your change."

But Walsh was in no mood to worry about a few hundred francs more or less.

"Keep it," he called over his shoulder. The driver pocketed the money and

shrugged his shoulders up to his ears to express his disgust.

"These Americans," he said to a nearby porter. "*Quel peuple!* They throw their money away."

"Some do," admitted the porter, "and some don't. The more they have the less they give."

"Anyhow they're all crazy," said the driver. "Look at that one." He jerked his thumb at Walsh's receding figure. "He's been riding around in this cab of mine since a quarter past two. Out to Versailles, and Garches, and Asnières. Wouldn't stop for a bite to eat or a drink, and as soon as we get here, off he dashes as though the devil himself were on his trail."

Walsh, indeed, felt as though ten thousand devils were after him as he crossed the main hall and threaded his way through the scattered groups of travelers toward the platform gates. At any second he expected a gun muzzle to jolt against his ribs and to hear a voice say, "Stick 'em up!" But nothing happened. He reached the gates. The ticket inspector examined his warrant, raised one eyebrow, and said:

"Another Legionnaire, huh? You better hurry. Train leaves in one minute. There is a third-class compartment up ahead for you."

Sweat poured down Barney's cheeks as he went up the platform. It was as though every link blinding him to his past had snapped as he filed through the gate. And all at once he felt light headed and weak to the point of nausea.

Whistles were blowing and an employee equipped with a little flag cried "*En voiture!*" Passengers leaned out of the windows exchanging the customary platitudes with their friends on the quay. The engine hooted and the wheels began to turn.

Had Barney's life depended upon it he could not have reached the compartment to which he had been assigned. He grabbed the first hand-rail he saw

and clambered up into a well lighted dining-car where the air was perfumed with the smell of roast lamb *printanière*. He was very hungry.

The head-waiter spotted him instantly. In fluent English he informed Barney that the service had not yet started, but if he chose to sit down and "refresh himself" he was more than welcome. A moment later Barney reclined in a comfortable seat watching an attendant pour whisky into a glass not much larger than a good-sized thimble.

"Is that supposed to be a drink?" inquired Barney, who was beginning to revive. "It is? O. K. I'll buy the bottle."

Never before had a shot of whisky tasted so mellow, so warm and comforting. He glowed from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. First he drank to his dead past, then he toasted his escape from Nick Tulesco and the police, then he raised his glass in honor of Marie-Louise; and after that he settled down to do a little serious drinking because the nightmare was over and he could afford to relax without fear of being shot at, blackmailed or arrested.

When the first batch of diners lurched into the car he beamed upon them. They looked like law-abiding citizens, and so was he, by heck! No longer did he have to lie and hide and scheme to avoid the forces of law and order. Instead of carrying a gat under his armpit, hereafter he was going to carry a perfectly good rifle on his shoulder. If he shot any one he would be doing his duty instead of committing murder.

The thought delighted him so much that he poured himself another drink in his water tumbler, polished it off, and was still wreathed in smiles when three well-dressed, arrogant looking young men swayed up the aisle and stopped beside his table. There were no other vacant seats, but the three gentlemen, having stared down their noses at Barney and noted the half empty whisky

bottle, seemed disinclined to sit at his table.

One of them, a long, languid person with a toothbrush mustache and a thin, high-bridged nose, appealed in a loud aside to the head waiter.

"Is this—ah—passenger nearly finished? One finds the smell of whisky most objectionable."

The head-waiter's regret was profound. The American gentleman, he explained *sotto voce*, had not begun to eat. He was still refreshing himself.

"In that case," sighed the haughty gentleman, "I suppose we shall have to make the best of it."

"Howdy, gents," grinned Barney, who had reached the convivial stage. "Greetings to you, *mongsoors!* How about a small snifter just to break the ice?"

Perish the thought! They refused to admit that this garrulous individual could possibly be speaking to them. They ignored him. If they understood English they concealed the fact behind frigid masks, and when they happened to glance in Barney's direction they looked straight through him as though he were a figment of his own imagination.

As soon as they were seated they burst into animated conversation. Their voices were the voices of the ruling caste—loud, trenchant and unhurried. Their manners, too, were typical. Having made up their minds that Barney was an obnoxious alien they cold-shouldered him to a fare-you-well. He ceased to exist. Supremely indifferent and self-assured, they reached across and around him for such things as salt and pepper, water and mustard. To one another they were exquisitely polite, but they treated Barney as though he were a speck of dirt on the table cloth.

Barney, however, refused to be swept away.

"For May," he hazarded in his terrible French, "we are having the warm weather."

That didn't work, either. So he helped himself to another drink.

"Don't tell me I'm being high-hatted," he went on, addressing the languid gentleman with the toothbrush mustache who sat opposite him. "I couldn't stand it. No, sir, I could not. France is famous for her hospitabilitik! I mean hospi-hospitality. Let's have a bottle of champagne and see if that helps any."

The gentleman put down his knife and fork, and fixed Barney with a coldly impersonal stare.

"We do not," he said in very English English, "desire to make your acquaintance, sir. Be good enough to mind your business as we are minding ours, and I am sure we shall get along very well indeed. Thank you, sir."

"Is mah face red!" ejaculated Barney. "Socko! Right on the button. 'Be good enough to mind your business as we are minding ours!' Say, that's a swell line! That's great! I got to remember that."



HE DID not mind being insulted, he did not object very much when his neighbor's elbow joggled his arm as he carried food to his mouth, but he felt that the joke was being carried a little too far when his opposite number kicked him on the shin. It was not intentional. Of course not. Oh, no! The gentleman merely crossed his legs and the toe of his shoe had come in contact, inadvertently, with Barney's shin bone.

"Suffering pups!" he protested. "That ain't no way to act."

Once again the gentleman became aware of his existence.

"Your leg, sir? Kicked by me? An absurd idea, sir. Most certainly not."

He had dined very well; so had his companions. They exchanged glances charged with discreet amusement, but their amusement changed to consternation when Barney, with a nonchalance equal to their own, crossed his legs and

caught his fellow diner such a crack on the ankle that the latter emitted a yelp of pain.

"Imbecile!"

"Your leg, suh? Kicked by me?" drawled Barney, blowing cigarette smoke out of the corner of his mouth into the gentleman's face. "An absurd idea, suh! Most certainly not!"

A long moment dragged by while the three Frenchmen, overcome by unspeakable indignation, glowered at Barney. The gentleman he had maimed suddenly found his voice and cried:

"This is an infamy! Such creatures ought to be segregated. This drunken person," he informed the head-waiter who had dashed up the aisle, "now chooses to kick me beneath the table. It is a miracle my leg is not broken."

"It may have been an accident," soothed the head-waiter, thinking of the tip he would certainly lose if he had to take action against the American.

"Nothing of the sort," the gentleman replied with crushing scorn. "It was done deliberately. I demand the removal of this inebriate. At once! I warn you, my friend, I shall lodge a complaint against you with your company. Baron de Glatigny, chairman of the board of directors, is my intimate friend." He drew a card from his pocket and thrust it before the head-waiter's eyes. "Here is my name. I am Lieutenant Edouard d'Auclaire. I am not in the habit of submitting to the assaults of drunken foreigners. I insist upon his immediate departure!"

The head-waiter had never heard of the Baron de Glatigny, and although he was a member of the radical party and an ardent anti-militarist, like all good Frenchmen he had the greatest respect for his national army. Between a lieutenant and a semi-pickled American, he could not afford to hesitate. He knew which side his bread was buttered on, particularly since the lieutenant's loud

protests had attracted the attention of every passenger in the dining-car.

He appealed to Barney. "I much regret, *monsieur*, but I shall have to ask you to move. Perhaps, you will take the little table by the service door. It is empty now. You will be more comfortable, yes?"

Barney ought to have accepted the compromise. Any man in his position with an atom of horse sense would have done so, but he was too full of food and booze to bother about consequences just then.

"No," he said amiably. "I'm fine and dandy right here, cap'n. These cooties have been asking for trouble ever since they breezed in. To hell with 'em! They don't own this joint. I'd throw 'em out if I was you, and if you need help, just say the word."

The head-waiter wiped the back of his hand across his damp forehead. The train was nearing Dijon station. Customers were clamoring for their checks. Waiters hovered uneasily in the background. Lieutenant d'Auclaire and his friends stood in the aisle, napkin in hand, waiting for him to do his duty.

He tried a different line of attack.

"A complaint has been lodged against you," he said sharply. "Either you pay your bill and vacate that seat or I shall summon the conductor."

"That'll be fine," agreed Barney, blowing cigarette smoke at the ceiling. "What a day! Gentlemen, this is the happiest day in my life. And now I am to meet a genuine French train conductor! O. K. Shoot the works. I'll tell him what I think of these lousy, cockeyed, he-chorus girls. Gertrude—" he wagged a reproachful forefinger at Lieutenant d'Auclaire—"you're the worst little spitfire I ever met."

Even then a major calamity might have been averted if Fate had not intervened at that moment in the guise of Legionnaire Groote, escorted by a dozen apoplectic, ungirt recruits. Boiled as

owls on the cheap red wine they had been guzzling ever since the train left Paris, they burst from their compartment the instant the train came to a standstill, and rolled down the platform to see what the white-collared passengers might be doing. The lights of the dining car attracted their attention. And Groote, as he lurched along, suddenly caught sight of Barney sitting there, smoking a cigarette as though he were a bourgeois capitalist instead of a recruit headed for Africa and the Legion.

Such snobbery was more than Groote could bear. He let out a yell which rang from one end of the platform to the other. Shaking his fist at Barney, he brayed:

"Look at him! Look at that little squirt. Too proud to travel with us. Too stuck up to associate with other Legionnaires. What's he doing in there? That's no place for a recruit."

Every word he said was clearly audible in the dining-car. Lieutenant d'Auclaire and his friends became very stern, very stiff. They were no longer young men about town, they were officers.

"Are you," d'Auclaire demanded, "a recruit of the Foreign Legion?"

"That's me," Barney admitted. "Long live the Legion!"

No one seemed to share his enthusiasm.

"Are you traveling on a government warrant?"

"What a mind!" cried Barney. "You ring the bell every time."

D'Auclaire spoke very slowly and distinctly to make himself heard above the clamor of the unwashed mob on the platform.

"I am an officer of the First Regiment of the Foreign Legion."

"Put it there!" exclaimed Barney, springing to his feet. "We'll let bygones be bygones. I'm glad to know you."

The lieutenant was not glad to know him. Far from it.

"Let me see your warrant," he or-

dered. "Quite so," he went on after Barney had produced the paper with a flourish. "Very well, Legionnaire Barney, you will hear about this later. You have no right to be in this dining car. Pay for your meal and leave instantly unless you want to be placed under arrest."

The word "arrest" had a sobering effect on Barney, but he objected to being ordered about by this superior young man.

"Say, wait a minute," he retorted. "How the heck do I know who you are? Let's have a look at *your* papers."

His request met with no response, for at that moment the head waiter, who had hurried away at the train stopped, reappeared followed by the conductor and two men in khaki uniforms, complete with leggings and belts of black leather. They were not policemen, they were *gendarmes*, members of a semi-military corps which performs many and varied duties. They patrol highways, enforce the law in villages, assist tax collectors, and last but not least they act as military policemen.

A staccato conversation ensued between d'Auclaire and the three newcomers. The *gendarmes* saluted, d'Auclaire stepped to one side, and the *gendarmes* confronted Barney. The leader, a brigadier, spoke briefly and to the point:

"Pay your bill and follow us."

Roars came from the recruits on the platform when Walsh drew a sheaf of notes from his pocket book; the *gendarmes* themselves blinked like owls. Barney paid and paid and paid—for his meal, for the whisky—for service, for the price of a first class ticket from Paris to Dijon, for having voyaged in a class superior to that indicated on his warrant.

"Anybody else want a handout?" he inquired, cocking a steely gray eye on d'Auclaire.

No one had ever addressed the lieu-

tenant in that insolent fashion. He turned a delicate shade of green.

"Take him away!" he told the *gendarmes*. "I'll see he is dealt with adequately at the depot. If he resists, arrest him."

"Coming?" demanded the brigadier, placing the palm of his hand on his revolver holster.

"Let's go," agreed Walsh, not knowing what lay in store for him. "This is a frame-up," he told d'Auclaire, "but maybe I'll be seeing you one of these days."

"You will," promised the lieutenant. "Get out!"



FLANKED by the two *gendarmes*, Barney marched away without protest. What happened during the next few minutes before the train pulled out is strictly off the record. There is no evidence that anything untoward occurred from the moment the *gendarmes* hustled their prisoner into the station lamp room until they hoisted him into the compartment reserved for Legionnaires.

Officially he was detained for his own good, to keep him away from the other recruits and to avoid a disturbance in a public place. Unofficially, the instant the door closed behind them the brigadier pinned Barney's arms behind his back while the other *gendarme* smacked his face.

"Manners," said the brigadier, digging one knee into Barney's spine. "That's what you need, you hyena—manners. Wait till you reach the depot. You won't insult any more officers!"

They worked with swift and dispatch. They did not injure Barney, they merely pulled his hair, trod on his toes, punched him in the stomach, and then, before he knew whether he was coming or going or merely standing on his head, they rushed him down the platform and booted him into a compartment, built to accommodate ten passengers, but actually holding fourteen rau-

cous, perspiring recruits, who howled for joy when Barney fell in on top of them.

Barney was no longer mellow. He was not only sore, he was mad clean through. He grew much sorer and even madder, when his traveling companions, in a burst of high good humor, rolled him onto the floor covered with a thick layer of greasy papers, banana skins, sausage rinds and empty sardine cans. What they did to his clean clothes was nobody's business. His coat was ripped up the back, one sleeve torn out, his collar yanked off, his tie draped over his back, his shirt pulled up out of his pants like a Russian blouse. Hobnailed boots and rope-soled sandals scraped over him, pressing his face into the filth, rubbing the skin off his nose.

Then a hand gripped him by the scruff of the neck, hoisted him into an upright position, and flung him against the door. Groote, big and broad as a barn door confronted him.

"And you thought you could get away!" jeered the Fleming, hanging onto the baggage racks on either side of the compartment. "*Gottverdom!* You ought to be thrown out the window. Look at it," he appealed to the recruits. "Look at the little swine. It's got a few pennies and it thinks it can lord it over us. But we got him! We made him climb down off his high horse."

Loud cheers rent the air. They had no real grudge against Barney, but any excuse was a good excuse to let off steam, and yell, and tell the world they were brave, brawny lads on their way to join the Legion.

So far Groote had been the life of the party. He could drink ten bottles of wine without passing out and bellow louder than any one else. Consequently they supported him vociferously. Barney, on the other hand, after the rough treatment to which he had been subjected, looked woebegone and ridiculous, so they hooted at him and cursed him in German, French, Russian and Croat.

"I could break you in two," Groote informed him, "but you are not worth spitting on. You're going to get down on your damn knees and say you're sorry you tried to punch me this morning while I was not looking. And you're going to hand over what's left of your money to buy drinks for the crowd when we reach Lyons."

Barney was beginning to recover from the effects of his reception.

"Did you say I tried to *punch* you?" he inquired. "Why, you big hunk of cheese, I knocked you cold."

There was a metallic ring to his voice which made the recruits sit up and take notice. Every line on Barney's dirt smeared face, the look in his eyes, warned them of impending danger. It was as though a stick of dynamite with a lighted fuse had been thrown in among them.

"Nobody wants to fight," protested a stout, round-faced Bavarian. "We have plenty of time later on to fight. It is stupid!"

"He's a liar," Groote broke in. "I'll make him eat his words, on his knees. He—"

The words strangled in his throat when, abruptly, he found himself looking down the wide muzzle of an automatic Barney had whipped from its holster.

At the far end of the compartment an undersized guttersnipe with a pock-marked face cried out:

"*Pas ca*, idiot! Not that! That's murder. Put it away, for God's sake!"

"Shut up!" rasped Walsh. "When I'm through with this baboon I'll attend to you. If any man reaches for the alarm cord I'll blow his head off."

Silence weighed down upon the compartment.

"Groote," Barney went on. "I'm plenty sick of you. You been shooting off that big mouth of yours ever since I first saw you. You're nothing but a blow-hard and you know it."

"A little friendly fun, that's all it was," stammered Groote, a sickly grin on his face. "Just a little joke."

"Swell! Now you tell these birds what happened this morning. Tell 'em you tried to hold me up and I bust you one on the jaw. Spit it out."

"Well, maybe you did."

"Not that way. Give 'em the straight dope in your own words. Talk French. I can understand it even if I can't speak the doggone language."

There could be no question of evading the issue—not with that gun muzzle staring him straight in the face. Groote did as he was told. He did not go into details, nor sing hymns in praise of Barney's hitting power, but the facts themselves were so startling that they required no embellishments.

The recruits' hostility toward Barney gave way to admiration. Any man who could down a burly fellow like Groote with one punch was entitled to their respect, particularly when he held a gun in his hand.

"O. K.," nodded Barney as Groote reached the end of the confession. "That's that, but I guess you ain't happy yet, so," he slid the gun back into its holster and buttoned up what remained of his coat, "I'm going to knock your teeth down your throat, big boy, just to show these birds you ain't so hot."

He didn't wait to find out how Groote felt about it. The narrow aisle between the seats was full of legs and knees and feet, but he waded in somehow and landed a well-timed wallop on the side of Groote's bruised jaw before the latter's slow brain had fully grasped the idea that he was in no danger of dying of lead poisoning.

That blow hurt. Groote swung wildly in the general direction of his assailant, but his eyes were blurred with tears, and instead of hitting Barney, his fist bounced off the ear of a bearded and gloomy Russian, who let out a tremendous yell and promptly hurled an

empty sardine can at his head, drenching him in oil and fish scales.

After that it was a circus. There was nothing Herculean about Barney, but he was well-knit and compact, and he knew how to hit. He followed up that first punch with an uppercut that rocked Groote back on his heels and exposed his broad stomach to a volley of wicked, short-arm jolts that made him double up. His knees began to sag. In that narrow space, packed to overflowing with humanity he could not fend off his smaller, lighter antagonist. At close quarters, his arms seemed to tie themselves up in knots.

The ribald laughter of the onlookers filled him with dismay and rage. And blood squirted from his nose as Barney mashed it down on his cheek. Bellowing with indignation, he tried to fall forward upon Walsh and drag him to the ground. But it did not work.

His mouth was still wide open when Barney pounded him on the jaw—once, twice, and again. Right, left, right! And as the third blow crashed home Groote went out like a light.



A HATCHET-FACED sergeant of the Legion and two *gendarmes* greeted the recruits as they tumbled out of their compartment when the train reached Marseilles.

"Warrants!" barked the sergeant. "This way. Fall in! Don't shuffle! Hurry up, confound you!"

His voice filled the train shed, causing nearby travelers to stare in alarm at the ragged crew he was endeavoring to round up. Order and discipline laid a heavy hand upon the recruits. They were in the army now; files on parade, anonymous "bayonet units" eager to do the sergeant's bidding.

In theory, at least, that is what they ought to have been, but one and all, they were suffering from such splendid

hangovers that they did not care what he said, nor how he said it.

Never had they spent such a night. At Lyons Legionnaire Barney had bought wine by the case, champagne and cognac, Scotch whisky and vodka. And great quantities of food (not stale buffet sandwiches; he abandoned those to hungry second-class passengers) but cold roast chickens, lobsters, bread by the yard, and a basket of fruit so expensive and rare that each piece was separately packed in cotton wool.

The ensuing party had been stupendous. They had sung themselves hoarse, laughed, lied, argued, fought, and smashed every pane of glass within reach. They had splintered the benches and cracked the partitions.

The sergeant who greeted them meant well, but he had rarely had to handle such a bunch of sleep-walkers. They were unbelievably foul and dirty, and their combined breaths would have asphyxiated a skunk at ten paces.

"On two ranks!" stormed the sergeant. "Get in line. Any kind of a line! Move, band of alcoholics! Wake up!"

Only one man showed some signs of intelligence, and that man was Legionnaire Groote. He stood squarely in front of the sergeant, heels together, straight-backed, stiffly erect. He had a lovely black eye and a swollen lip, but he, alone, appeared to be moderately sober.

"Amazing!" cried the sergeant. "Marvelous! Congratulations! Let me tell you I have never seen such a collection of crapulous degenerates. Come on," he bellowed. "Form up, I tell you. Stop swaying! Stand up! Look to your front!"

The *gendarmes* came to his rescue, pushing and shoving the men into some semblance of military formation.

"What has happened to them?" the sergeant protested. "They couldn't get that drunk on five francs subsistence allowance."

"No, sergeant," agreed Groote, trying to appear very solemn and righteous.

"They did not. May I have a word with you in private, sergeant? There is something I think you ought to be told."

The non-com's eyes grew round with surprise as he listened to Groote's whispered warning.

"I'm glad you told me," he declared. "You've got the right spirit, my boy. I'll mention you in my report. Now keep still while I settle this."

He held a brief consultation with the *gendarmes*. Together they bore down upon Barney who was sitting on the running board, holding his head between his fists.

They did not give him a chance to move. One *gendarme* half strangled him, the other tore open his coat and the sergeant plunged forward and wrenched Barney's automatic from its hiding place.

"Scoundrel!" thundered the sergeant. "You'll find out what it costs to carry concealed weapons before you're much older. You won't last long, I promise you—not in the Legion. Slip a pair of bracelets on his wrists," he advised the *gendarmes*. "If he wants to behave like a criminal, we'll treat him like one."

They did. Barney was marched through the sunlit streets of Marseilles in handcuffs, followed by little boys who hurled horse dirt and insults at him, much to the amusement of the *gendarmes*.

Eventually they reached Fort St. Jean, the concentration depot for all troops bound overseas. It is a grim, medieval pile, very impressive to look at, but a shade too damp and primitive for modern tastes. The cells, Barney discovered, were perfect examples of the architectural efficiency of the middle ages. They were designed neither for comfort nor sanitation, but to subject their occupants to the maximum amount of physical annoyance.

The officer commanding the depot passed sentence upon Barney almost as soon as the recruits entered the fort,

for the case was too grave to be held over.

At this officer's side, when the prisoner was marched into the orderly room, stood Lieutenant d'Auclaire, resplendent in a new khaki uniform of impeccable cut.

He gave Barney one look, wrinkled his aquiline nose, and said:

"That is the man, commandant."

The commandant scrutinized Barney from head to foot, then spoke to Groote, who stood like a ramrod facing the desk.

"Let me hear what you have to say. I want facts—pertinent facts. Be brief!"

Groote, though battered, produced an excellent impression upon both officers. He was big and dumb and tongue-tied. Begging the commandant's pardon, he said, he had endeavored to subdue the recruits who, at Barney's instigation, had been destroying the railroad company's property. Thereupon Barney had drawn this gun of his and had struck him several blows with the heavy barrel, knocking him unconscious. At Lyons, Barney had purchased several hundred francs' worth of alcohol and all the recruits had become intoxicated. Barney had compelled him to drink a bottle of wine and had threatened to shoot him if he said anything, but he felt that he was doing his duty—

"That will do," the commandant broke in. "Thank you. Silence!"

Then the sergeant and the two *gendarmes* were heard, and the officer, after a brief pause, addressed himself to the culprit.

"Have you anything to say for yourself?"

"Plenty!" swore Barney. But his French was not equal to the task. "Next time I meet Groote," he began, "I'll break his jaw. The gun—"

The commandant silenced him.

"We do not want criminals in the Legion," he said in a harsh voice. "We do not need them. We do not tolerate them. You, Barney, appear to be a

criminal. Your record for the past twenty-four hours proves this conclusively. You have insulted an officer, threatened to kill one of your comrades, and behaved so disgracefully that from Paris to Marseilles protests and complaints began pouring into this office even before you arrived. And you were found carrying a lethal weapon in a specially devised pocket. Barney," he leaned forward, threatening the prisoner with a long, bony forefinger, "you are a menace to all who come in contact with you. I wish I had the power to get rid of you at once. I have not. I must keep you, though I am morally certain you will be a failure and a nuisance. I have never heard of a criminal who was not a coward at heart. And cowards do not last long where you are going. They die. Whatever you may have been in the past, today you are a Legionnaire. Either you decide to live a clean and decent life, or else you will suffer. I am going to give you one last chance to think it over. Until the boat sails for Oran, you will be kept in solitary confinement. You will cross the sea in irons, and if any further punishment is considered necessary, it will be inflicted upon you at the Sidi-bel-Abbes depot."

"It's a frame-up," protested Barney. "Groote's a liar!"

"March him away," snapped the commandant, and for the next ten days Barney lived on a diet of bean soup, bread and water, in an underground cell, where battalions of voracious vermin attacked him in mass formation.



IT WAS a crazy idea. Neither Legionnaire Barney, nor Karkovski, nor Waldeman, had started out with the slightest intention of going to the theater.

To be precise, they were on their way from the café of the Widow Brulot, where they had imbibed great quantities

of red wine, to a grog shop at the corner of the street of the leather works, where, according to Legionnaire Waldeman, there was a troupe of Ouled-Nail dancing girls whose performance was very fine indeed.

But they never reached their destination. They were meandering past the theater when Legionnaire Karkovski fell into a trance before a billboard which announced in flamboyant language the first sensational showing of the most famous drama of all time, "The Count of Monte Cristo."

"I read it," he announced, and tears streamed down his cheeks into his great black beard. "Years ago. When I was a little boy. I had a French governess in those days—"

"I know," scoffed Barney. "The estate on the steppes, the snow, the sleighs, the baronial hall, the peasants, the war, the revolution, the red army, the white army, the flight to Constantinople, the flight to Paris, the pangs of hunger, the wish to die, the Legion. Baloney!"

Karkovski stared at him open-mouthed.

"Who told you?" he gasped.

"You did, fifty times," retorted Barney. "Come on, if we're going."

The Russian refused to budge. "I read it," he repeated sorrowfully. "It was very beautiful."

"And look," added Waldeman, "there's eight vaudeville turns straight from the leading halls of Paris, so it says. That ought to be worth seeing."

"After all—why not?" agreed Barney. "I ain't been to a movie since Detroit."

The sound of the word "Detroit" gave him a queer twinge of apprehension. All that lay behind him. It was done with, forgotten, and dead. He felt as though he had been in the Legion for years on end, and only with an effort could he realize that less than four months had gone by since he had enlisted.

Whether or not the Intelligence De-

partment of the Legion was aware of his past misdeeds is an open question. Possibly it was, for the Legion, although it takes in all-comers and asks no questions, is remarkably well informed in most cases as to the antecedents of its recruits—not because it is particularly curious or fussy, but because it must guard against agitators, spies, and other secret agents whose presence in its midst might do a great deal of harm.

Barney fitted into none of these categories, but the colonel in command of the training battalion at Sidi-bel-Abbes had decided that this particular recruit was in need of a stiff dose of discipline.

"You ought to be placed in prison," the colonel informed him. "Had you committed your crimes within my jurisdiction that is where you would be sent. You will do twenty-eight days ordinary arrest to teach you to respect the more elementary decencies we expect of all our men."

There was nothing ordinary about that period of ordinary arrest. Leather-lunged drill instructors made him sweat blood. They draped sixty pounds of kit on his back, hung a bayonet and an entrenching tool and two great cartridge pouches around his waist, shoved a Lebel rifle in his hands, and taught him the rudiments of his new trade on a parade ground where the heat—it was mid-June—was so intense that every breath he drew scorched his lungs.

At night and between drill periods he was locked in a cell. Aching from head to foot, half starved, so exhausted that he could scarcely crawl, more than once he had been on the brink of rebellion, but those drill instructors were experts. He didn't stand a chance. They knew exactly what to expect, and when to expect it, and they steam rolled him with a thoroughness that compelled his grudging admiration.

And he learned fast. At the end of his third week he drilled like a veteran, but even then the Powers That Be did

not trust him. Because of a loose button on his tunic he did another two weeks' stretch, and then eight more days because of a broken shoe lace.

After that he was turned over to a regular company. But he had learned his lesson. The Legion's iron-bound code of discipline controlled his every action; nevertheless, for the first time in many years, he felt free. He worked like a coolie, ate like a lumberjack, slept soundly, and when the occasion permitted, guzzled red wine by the gallon.

He was so completely at peace with his surroundings that even his grudge against Groote had lost all significance. The Belgian had been transferred to the base at Marakech, and Barney had far too much to do to bother about a man stationed hundreds of kilometers away. In fact, he was too pleased with life to bother about anything or anybody. Off duty, when a midnight pass could be wangled out of the platoon sergeant, he explored the byways of Sidi-bel-Abbes with his cronies, Waldeman and Karkovski, and if occasionally they painted the town a little too red and ended up in the guardroom, no one thought any the worse of them for that. Legionnaires are no different from other human beings: they have to let off steam now and then.

That night, however, when they invaded the Theatre du Globe, according to their standards, they had not even started to quench their thirst.

The *mademoiselle* at the booking office gave them a look so blighting that they ought to have shriveled up. Didn't they realize, she demanded acidly, that this was a gala night? The gallery was packed. There was not an inch of standing-room left. And anyway, the feature picture was almost over.

In common with most of the civilians of Sidi-bel-Abbes, whose livelihood depends upon the pennies of Legionnaires, she despised and distrusted them. She would not have cracked a smile on a bet,

but Barney refused to be turned down.

"Who said gallery to you, my little cabbage?" he inquired. "We are not difficult to please. What's the matter with the first balcony?"

The first balcony, his little cabbage retorted, was sold out, and, she added spitefully, it was out of bounds to the rank and file. And so were the orchestra seats.

"Would you like a box?" she inquired loftily, sitting back and patting her frizzy hair with a queenly gesture. "That is the one thing I can offer you. It is very expensive."

She was due for a shock. From his pocket Barney fished a crumpled thousand franc note which he smoothed out on the counter. It was the last of his loot, but he did not give a damn.

"A box, darling, is just what we want," he assured her. "We couldn't possibly think of associating with the common herd. It will have to be a box or nothing."

They got the box. The mademoiselle ought to have been more cautious, but she was the daughter of Monsieur the Director of the theatre, and she could not resist the temptation of overcharging these insufferably common Legionnaires. The sides of the box would shield them from direct observation. If they behaved properly, no one would notice them.

"If you are not quiet," she informed them as she counted out the change, "you will be thrown out. The place is packed with officers tonight and there are plenty of policemen on hand."

"Three little mice," promised Waldeman, placing a finger over his lips and rolling his eyes. "That's us."

"Ghosts!" added Karkovski, entering the theater on the tips of his hobnailed boots. "Watch us flit."

They flitted so cautiously that immediately upon entering the box they became snarled up in the spindle-legged chairs and almost wrecked the place.

Karkovski was writhing on the floor when the film ended, while Waldeman and Barney, solemn as a pair of judges, sat side by side on the remains of an overturned chair.

They had seen nothing but they applauded vigorously, and Karkovski, heaving himself off the floor, said in a choked voice:

"It was beautiful. It all comes back to me now—"

"Best show in town," agreed Barney. "Let's have a drink."

They did not get it. The whole audience was acutely aware of their presence. The cream of the town's shopkeeping class, gathered in the orchestra seats, glared at the noisy trio. Hoots and cat-calls came from the rabble in the gallery. And all at once a head popped around the end of the partition between the boxes. It was a very handsome head with patent leather hair and a tooth brush mustache and glittering black eyes.

"You!" ejaculated the head on catching sight of Barney.

Legionnaire Barney sprang to his feet. The chair uptilted and Waldeman slithered to the floor, dragging Karkovski down with him. More noise. Loud protests from the orchestra, great guffaws from the gallery. But Barney stood motionless in the midst of the commotion, for that head was the exclusive property of Lieutenant Edouard d'Auclaire, whom he recognized instantly although he had not seen him since the day of his arrival at Marseilles.

What that exasperated countenance clamored for was a good, swift wallop, but Barney kept his hands down where they belonged, his little fingers touching the seams of his trousers even as it is prescribed in the manual of military training. His personal opinion had ceased to count. D'Auclaire was an officer, as such he was entitled to impersonal obedience and respect.

"Sorry, *mon lieutenant*," snapped Bar-

ney. "An accident. It was dark when we entered the box and—"

"Drunk, I suppose," retorted d'Au-claire. "If I hear another sound I shall have you arrested."

As he vanished Monsieur the Director, in person, invaded the box. He, too, threatened to have the troopers arrested, but he relented when Barney paid about ten times the value of the broken chair.

"If I hear one sound from this box during the vaudeville performance," he warned them as he departed, "I will summon the police and have you thrown out."

In a chastened mood the three Legionnaires watched a troupe of acrobats stumble through their act.

"If you've had enough," said Barney, "let's go."

But the next minute he was sitting on the edge of his seat, staring at a girl in an abbreviated dress, who came dancing out of the wings with a soldier's cap over one ear and a toy rifle on her shoulder.

First she sang one of the Legion's marching songs, then a ballad of moonlight and love, and wound up with an epic poem extolling the glories of a soldier's life. Her voice was rather thin, but she was attractive and full of pep, and she brought down the house. Great roars of applause rolled from the gallery; gallant young officers clapped until they must have burst the seams of their gloves, the civilians themselves shouted "Bravo!" and "Encore!" and "Bis!"

"Wunderbach!" cried Waldeman. "She must sing again. What beautiful legs she has once!"

"Legs worthy of a Slav!" admitted Karkovski. "In Moscow I knew a girl whose voice— What!" he exclaimed, turning toward Barney. "You are not leaving now? What is it? Are you sick?"

"Me—sick?" echoed Barney. "Don't be a nut. Listen, fellows: I know that jane. You bet. Name of Marie-Louise

Cluny. I got to see her. She steered me into this outfit, see. She's O. K. I got a hunch she came here to see me." He grinned fatuously. "Ain't that something? Wait here. I'll be back. I'm going to throw a party for that kid if I have to spend every cent I got."



HE WAS on his way before they had a chance to speak. Behind the scenes every one objected violently to his presence, but one and all—ushers, call boys, stage hands, firemen and managers—they succumbed to their highly developed instinct of acquisition. Barney lavished money upon them, dealing out hundred franc notes until his wallet grew limp and flat. Before the end of the last encore, he greased the last itching palm and reached Marie-Louise's dressing-room. He had the place to himself for maids were an unheard of luxury at Sidi-bel-Abbes.

And was Marie-Louise surprised when she burst into the room, breathless with triumph, and found him lolling in the arm chair as though he owned the theatre? Surprise does not begin to do justice to the strength and depth of her emotions.

The bright and merry smile she wore as she crossed the threshold changed to a look of intense suspicion, then to astonishment and irritation.

Her first words were:

"*Mon Dieu!* It is Barnee. I did not recognize you—but not at all. So black you are! And that uniform, it is ugly!"

"What did you expect?" laughed Barney. "Gold braid and a row of medals? Gimme time. Say, kid, this is certainly swell!"

She did not seem to share his enthusiasm. Instead of taking his outstretched hands, she backed away, glancing over her shoulder at the door.

"You must not stay 'ere," she said emphatically. "I am verree soree, but

you must go. It is wrong. I am expecting somebodee. . . ."

"And that somebody is me," caroled Barney, who could not get it through his thick head that his presence in that dressing room was not at all welcome.

"It is not you," she retorted, stamping her pretty foot. "It is all finish' between us. I can not 'ave you 'ere."

"But I thought—"

"Ah, là, là!" cried Marie-Louise, planting her fists on her hips, fishwife style. "You t'ink, you t'ink! Stupid one. Me—come here to see you! You are the lunatic. Once, perhaps, I like you—but not when I find out what you are. A gangster!" She shuddered in her best theatrical manner. "I am 'orribly afraid. I am finish' with you, *hein?* What are you to me? Not'ing! So get out!"

She meant just that.

"For the love of Mike," exclaimed Barney, suddenly returning to earth with a mighty jolt. "But look here, sister. I ain't a crook now. . . ."

That was the least of Marie-Louise's worries. She had not journeyed all the way from Paris to Sidi-bel-Abbes to be pestered by a low scoundrel like Barney. He had caused her so much mental anguish that she remembered him without the slightest pleasure. For several days after he had enlisted, the papers had played up his story, printing sensational and inaccurate lists of his misdeeds. They swore he had been rescued by members of his gang, and the two detectives who had tried to arrest him became national heroes overnight: France's first line of defence against the invasion of American thugs.

It was a situation well calculated to give a hard-working *artiste* a bad attack of nerves, particularly when she heard that her friend Michaud had committed suicide, and that a foreigner by the name of Tony Varella, of Detroit, Michigan, had fallen off the Cherbourg boat train and had died of a broken neck. The newspapers established no connection be-

tween these minor affairs and the shooting of the two detectives, but to Marie-Louise, the connection was painfully clear. The Sureté Générale had avenged its colleagues in its usual businesslike fashion without going to the trouble and expense of a trial by jury.

Marie-Louise had spent many a sleepless night—ruinous to her complexion—wondering whether her turn would come next, but nothing had happened, and she had become so wrought up that one morning she had put on her new summer dress and had marched into the police commissioner's office to make a clean breast of all she knew.

The commissioner had been very sympathetic. He had patted her hand and had assured her that everything was quite all right. He seemed to know all about Barney.

"If he is in the Legion," he smiled, "we'll let him stay there. He committed no crime in this country, and of course we can not deport a French soldier. But I do not pretend to have any accurate information in accordance with the request of the American authorities. That is the official thesis. Bear it in mind and act accordingly, and I am sure you will have no cause for regret."

And that had been the end of that.

Plain common or garden curiosity and the prospect of a steady six weeks' job had impelled her to accept an engagement at the Theatre du Globe. She had intended to tell Barney what she thought of him at the first opportunity, but her success with the young officers of the garrison had been so instantaneous that she had forgotten all about him.

His unexpected presence in her dressing room filled her with dismay. If any of her aristocratic admirers found a soldier of the second class on the premises they would certainly cut her dead.

"If you do not leave at once," she cried shrilly, "I shall call for help. I 'ate you! I know what you 'ave done in America."

"I guess that lets me out," shrugged Barney. "It's O. K. by me, sister."

"You 'ad no right to come 'ere," she swore, unable to leave well enough alone. "Bandit and assassin that you are. Beast!"

She flung open the door with a sweeping gesture worthy of the great Sarah Bernhardt in her prime, and on the threshold, with his knuckles crooked, ready for a discreet knock, stood Lieutenant Edouard d'Auclaire, bearing a huge bunch of red, red roses in his arm.

Marie-Louise promptly let out a melodious wail and burst into tears, for d'Auclaire was the most eligible bachelor in town.

He was slightly stunned when he saw Barney standing in the middle of the room, but his self-control was perfect. He came in, closed the door, and placed his flowers on a chair. Without condescending to notice Barney, who was making a half-hearted attempt to stand at attention, he appealed to Marie-Louise.

"Do you not think, *mademoiselle*," he said with freezing politeness, "that I am entitled to an explanation?"

She flung herself into his arms.

"It is terrible," she sobbed. "I found him here. He will not go away. I can not rid myself of him."

D'Auclaire disengaged himself, and held her at arm's length.

"You—ah—happen to be acquainted with this—ah—soldier?" he inquired with all the formal courtesy of a judge about to pass sentence of death upon a prisoner.

On the spur of the moment, Marie-Louise followed the line of least resistance.

"I have never set eyes on him before," she declared. "I can't imagine what he wants. Do make him go away! I am very frightened!"

She tried to fly into another clinch, but d'Auclaire sidestepped gracefully, and Barney made matters worse for the un-

fortunate girl by refusing to let her get away with that story.

"Let's get this thing straight—" he began.

"Speak when you are spoken to," snapped d'Auclaire, "and do me the favor of addressing me in French, if you please."

Had he slung a handful of mud in Barney's face, he could not have made his contempt more emphatic.

"Don't listen to him," begged Marie-Louise, fearing the worst.

"Sorry," drawled the lieutenant, whose self-respect demanded that he know the worst. "This—er—man may wish to make a statement before I summon the police."

"I do, *mon lieutenant*," agreed Barney. "Mademoiselle says she has never seen me. She is mistaken. I met her in Paris—"

Marie-Louise did not give him an opportunity to finish what he had to say. Wise girl that she was, she jumped into the breach and told the truth, the whole truth, and a great deal more than the truth. Her elocutionary talent stood her in good stead. When it came to talking she could run rings around Barney.

He had tried to lure her into marriage, she cried, but she had repulsed his advances, for she had never really believed he was a wealthy businessman. And then she had discovered that he was the notorious Walsh—Barney Walsh—the American gangster! She had been so upset that she had to break her contract and go into a nursing home. He was to blame if today she wasn't playing stellar roles at the Comedie Francaise!

"Very interesting, indeed, I'm sure," commented d'Auclaire, smoothing his little mustache with his finger tips. "And you, Legionnaire—er—Barney, or whatever your name is, have you anything to add?"

Barney had no desire to get into an argument with the lieutenant. His one

ambition was to leave that room without delay and rejoin Waldeman and Karkovski.

"I guess I made a mistake, *mon lieutenant*," he confessed. "I saw *mademoiselle* on the stage and I thought I'd like to say hello. But since she doesn't want to have anything to do with me I . . ."

"I hate him!" interjected Marie-Louise.

D'Auclaire, with perfect poise, led her to a chair and begged her to be seated. Then he faced Barney and drawled:

"My good fellow, you bore me. You bore me desperately. You are an insufferable nuisance. Your presence irks me. Whichever way I turn, apparently, I must contend with you, and I have had enough of it."

Barney kept his mouth tight shut. Four months in the Legion had made a new man of him. So long as he stayed on the right side of the law and kept out of prison he did not give a damn what d'Auclaire thought or said or did.

"You are," d'Auclaire went on, "the most noisome creatures it has ever been my misfortune to meet. I have often wondered what one of these American gangsters looked like—one of those beastly murderers who—"

"With all due respect, *mon lieutenant*," Barney broke in, "may I remind you that you are speaking to No. 93,883, Legionnaire Barney, W.?"

That rebuke stung d'Auclaire. He had been guilty of a gross infringement of Legion etiquette, but it was too late to mend matters. His long, flat checks turned a dark red.

"You would not interest me in the least," he retorted, "if you had not broken into this room and terrified this lady. This becomes a personal matter. To protect *mademoiselle's* good name I can not afford to have you arrested, but it would give me great pleasure, as man to man, to thrash you with the utmost severity."

Marie-Louise's heart missed a beat.

She had won a great moral victory. For her sake d'Auclaire was ready to rend Barney limb from limb!

"*Mon lieutenant*," Barney protested, "I tell you it was a mistake. I don't want to fight you, or anybody else. Man to man—nothing! You're an officer, I'm a Legionnaire. . . ."

"You're not, you're a cheap and nasty coward," d'Auclaire informed him. "Very brave with a gun, of course; ready to victimize unarmed citizens and to break into a lady's dressing room, but cringing with fear when—"

"You can't have it both ways," snapped Barney, his patience beginning to wear thin. "If I am a Legionnaire you have no right—"

"That's just it," said d'Auclaire. "If. Didn't I say a moment ago that you were a coward? That term is never applied to Legionnaires."

"All I'm trying to do is to keep out of prison," Barney said desperately. "That's the long and short of it."

"Very well," nodded the lieutenant, casting a sidelong glance at Marie-Louise's ecstatic countenance. "If you want to keep out of prison you will stand up and take your thrashing like a man."

"Here?"

It was not without good reason that d'Auclaire had acquired the reputation of being one of the most hot-headed and tempestuous subalterns in the army.

"Here and now!" he declared, "unless *mademoiselle* objects."

She did not object. She was thrilled. Claspng his roses in her arms, she egged him on with a brave and beautiful smile.

"Splendid!" laughed d'Auclaire. "Now my good gangster friend, let us see how you fight empty handed. Are you ready?"



THE proceedings, of course, were wholly contrary to good order and military discipline, but d'Auclaire did not mind a little thing like that. Though he was an officer and a gentleman, he did not

hesitate to trade blows with Barney, not only for Marie-Louise's sake, but because it was the third time he had come in direct and unpleasant contact with this infamous upstart. Only in this fashion, he felt, could Barney be put in his place, taught to respect his superiors, and made to keep out of their way.

The one unfortunate drawback to d'Auclaire's scheme was that he had learned the noble art of self-defence in the gymnasium at the military academy, where he had learned to box so scientifically and so well that he had won the school's middleweight championship three years in succession.

Barney, on the other hand, had learned all he knew about scrapping at the school of Hard Knocks. He did not fight to score points; he fought to rock his opponents to sleep as quickly as possible. But he could not make himself believe that the lieutenant intended to hit him . . . not until d'Auclaire's left flashed out like a rapier and landed crisply on his nose.

Marie-Louise gasped. Overcome with terror and delight, she buried her face in the roses, following the contest through a small gap in the mass of fragrant red petals.

D'Auclaire pranced about, light on his toes as a toreador. Again his left shot out and connected with Barney's right eyebrow. He stepped back, shaking his head, unwilling even then to strike his superior officer. It was too damned easy. D'Auclaire's well molded chin loomed before him, large as all outdoors.

"Oh, no you don't!" exclaimed the lieutenant, who was enjoying himself to the utmost. "I am not through with you yet! You're not going to run away."

He ducked, feinted with his left, and uncorked a perfect right with plenty of steam behind it, which landed on Barney's ear and sent him sprawling.

"Say, listen!" he protested, sitting by the wall, nursing his ear. "Call it a day, will you? I'm licked. It's O. K. by me."

"Get up," ordered d'Auclaire. "You are not even hurt."

"Aw, what's the use?"

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders. A look of intense disgust swept across his handsome countenance.

"You see," he told Marie-Louise. "A whipped cur would put up a better fight. I was right when I said he was a filthy coward. He is not fit to wear the Legion's uniform. If he had one spark of manhood—"

Barney got up.

"You been asking for it," he said in a level voice. "Now you're going to get it."

He didn't feint, duck or weave. Flat footed, his arms hanging at his sides, he bore down upon d'Auclaire.

"So you have changed your mind at last!" cried the lieutenant. "So much the better!"

Out shot that flashing left of his, that famous left that had scored so many championship points, straight from the shoulder. It landed squarely on Barney's chin. And Barney kept right on coming. D'Auclaire, slightly taken aback, broke away, skipped about on his toes, and sent over a sizzling right, which crashed against the top of Barney's head. And still Barney kept on coming.

The lieutenant was not used to such tactics. They rattled him. He was acutely conscious of Marie-Louise's presence. She was watching the show with both eyes now, watching him intently, waiting for him to do something marvelous and heroic.

He did his best to please her, jabbing his left into Barney's face several times in quick succession, then, gritting his teeth, packing every last ounce of his strength into the punch, he slung a long, swinging right at his antagonist's jaw.

And the next thing he knew he lay beneath the dressing table, wondering what it was all about. His mouth was full of blood. His stomach felt as though

it had been kicked by a mule. All the wind had been driven out of his lungs and several seconds elapsed before he could do more than lie still, all curled up around his aching stomach, gasping and wheezing as he tried to catch his breath.

Marie-Louise's screams rent the air. For her sake, although his head was spinning around and around at an alarming rate, he struggled to his knees.

"It—it's nothing," he gulped. "I am quite all right, really."

He looked around and saw Barney standing with one hand on the door-knob.

"Don't you dare leave this room," he ordered. "Wait!"

"As man to man," said Barney, "let me tell you something. You couldn't fight a one-armed paralytic. You socked me and I socked you. The ball game's over. Good night."

He saluted as woodenly as though he had been on parade, and marched out of the room—straight into a large, silent gathering of officers, stage hands and chorus girls, who had been listening intently to the sounds of strife filtering through the thin partitions.

All those bystanders had been under the impression that two of Marie-Louise's suitors had come to blows, but these suitors were supposed to be of equal rank, and, to avoid a scandal which might have led the authorities to forbid young officers to go back stage, every one had agreed to a policy of non-interference.

The theater was one of the very few places in that small, gossip-ridden garrison town where subalterns could amuse themselves without running the risk of being squelched. They made a point of honor of settling their differences in private, and more duels had had their inception in that hectic environment than in any other spot in North Africa.

But Barney was a very different prop-

osition. The unwritten code of the Theatre du Globe did not apply to him. On the contrary. In the memory of living man no Legionnaire had ever been seen back-stage. Angry mutterings greeted his appearance. The mutterings grew louder and more indignant when the goggle-eyed crowd beheld d'Auclaire on his knees by the dressing table, looking dazed and disheveled, with a thread of blood trickling out of his mouth.

Marie-Louise added piquancy to the situation by having hysterics. The chorus girls in the passage, overcome with excitement and heat, followed suit, shrieking their heads off.

The uproar became deafening when Barney tried to squeeze his way through the crowd. A solid wall of humanity confronted him, and one of the scene shifters, whose palm he had crossed with silver, salved his conscience by slugging him behind the ear.

"Let him go!" croaked d'Auclaire, tottering unsteadily across the room.

He might as well have saved his breath. His shout merely added to the general confusion.

"Don't you worry," one of his colleagues assured him. "We won't let him go. He'll pay for this, the blackguard!"

Beyond a shadow of a doubt Barney paid. If left to themselves the officers would not have resorted to physical violence, but they were not alone. They were surrounded by angry civilians who asked for nothing better than an opportunity to take a crack at the alleged culprit.

Blows rained upon Barney. He was kicked, scratched, and belabored. He did not want to fight, but in self-defence he had to. And when he swung into action, flattening out an electrician who was making passes at his head with a monkey wrench, girls fled in panic, bawling for help, breaking up the show, forcing the management to ring down the curtain.

Barney did not last long. In that narrow, ill lighted corridor he was pinned against the wall and smothered beneath sheer weight of numbers. Battered to a pulp, he slipped to the floor and his assailants were using him as a spring board when the town picket, summoned by the director, arrived and restored some semblance of order at the bayonet point.

Of the ensuing scandal, of the townspeople's indignation, of the violent editorials in the local press, of the commandant's proclamations, no words filtered through to Barney for many days. For a month he lay on a cot in the prison infirmary recovering from a multiplicity of injuries ranging from a broken arm to a lacerated scalp in which the surgeon had to take twenty-two stitches.

"I asked for it," he told the ward orderly in a burst of confidence. "There I was, sitting pretty, having a swell time, and then everything went haywire. But that guy d'Auclaire—he ought to have had more brains. An officer trying to fight! Why, the poor mutt's just a big hunk of mush. He couldn't take it. None of 'em can. If I go to prison—"

"There's no 'if' about it," the orderly assured him. "After what happened at the theater? My old one, when you come out of prison d'Auclaire will be a divisional general, retired on half pay."

But he was wrong. Once again, by the skin of his teeth, Barney escaped court-martial, and the long shadow of prison gates which had hung over him so many years once more faded away, leaving him almost unscathed.

Almost, but not quite. The day of his discharge from hospital he was marched before the colonel, who did not seem at all pleased to see him.

"Legionnaire Barney," said the Colonel, "your record is an abomination. Apparently, you are incapable of behaving like a soldier, but—" here he paused and busied himself for some moments with the papers on his desk—"in this instance

I find you are not wholly to blame. Certain incidents of a private character took place between you and Sublieutenant d'Auclaire. Because these incidents occurred in private I can not take official cognizance of them, but—" again he fussed with his papers—"I want you to remember this; there can be no private relationship between you and your superior officer. It is against the letter and spirit of army discipline. Therefore—" he cleared his throat rather noisily—"if you want to bring charges against Sublieutenant d'Auclaire, you are free to do so."

"I have no charges to make against anyone, *mon colonel*," snapped Barney.

The colonel's leathery face relaxed, and a faint gleam of approval showed in his eyes.

"Is that final?" he demanded. "Because, I warn you, there are charges against you I do not intend to dismiss."

"That is final, *mon colonel*," Barney said stolidly.

"Very well." The colonel drew a deep breath. "Sublieutenant d'Auclaire has already been dealt with, and punished for his share in this disgraceful affair. You, Legionnaire, are guilty of having caused a disturbance in a public place. In view of the injuries inflicted upon you during the disturbance, you will be confined to barracks for a period of two weeks. And don't let such a thing happen again—ever!"

It was as though a crushing load had been lifted off Barney's shoulders. Instead of being treated like an incorrigible criminal, instead of being reminded of his unsavory past, he was being treated justly and mercifully.

"Thank you, *mon colonel*," he blurted out. "I—"

"*Disposez—dismiss!*" rasped the colonel. "And don't let me find your name on a crime sheet again unless you want to spend the rest of your days cracking stones!"



IN A smother of dust the column skirted the town of Ain Fezzoul, and climbed at a snail's pace up the slope toward the loopholed walls of the fort sharply outlined against the morning sky.

It had been a hard grind. In four days the convoy had crossed a hundred and fifty kilometers of arid, sundrenched desert, but that last mile up the hill was the hardest of all. The transport mules, straining at their breaststraps, lurched and stumbled, unable to make any headway against the deadweight of the heavily laden wagons. Legionnaires, their lips cracked and swollen for want of water, strained at the wheel spokes, hoisting the wagons over boulders and rock ledges, forcing them forward foot by foot.

By the side of the trail, impassive and enigmatic, Arab goatherds leaned on their staffs and watched the white soldiers toil.

Waldeman mopped the sweat out of his eyes and cursed angrily.

"What do they think we are—coolies? Why don't they put those black fellows to work? I'm sick of it!"

"Do your stuff and quit bellyaching," retorted Barney, straining at a wheel spoke. "The sooner we reach the fort the sooner we drink."

Grunting beneath the weight of his pack, hampered by his rifle, Waldeman shoved half-heartedly at the tail end of a cart.

"I was a fool to enlist," he declared. "Legionnaires are cheap. Look at what we have been through. No chance to eat or sleep, and not enough water."

"We'll get you a Pullman next time," promised Barney. "Nobody asked you to join this outfit. There's worse places, I'm telling you."

Karkovski, limping along on bleeding feet, spat out a mouthful of dust.

"It's the way they treat you," he complained. He jerked his bearded chin in

the direction of Lieutenant d'Auclaire, who was trotting up to the gateway to the fort. "Look at him up there. Too conceited even to notice us. I'll bet he's never had a blistered heel. No, and I'll be he's never gone thirsty, either. In the old Russian army—"

"Yeah, the old Russian army," nodded Barney. "And look what happened to it! What do you expect an officer to do? Kiss you good night and tuck you in bed?"

"I suppose you like to be treated like a dog," complained Karkovski. "The way you talk, you might think you hadn't spent a month in hospital because of that tailor's dummy. You have a short memory."

"Like hell I have," snorted Barney. "But that cootie ain't the whole Legion, not by a long shot. I ain't worrying about him. He got it in the neck same as I did. They sent him out here instead of letting him play polo, or what have you, at Rabat. That ought to hold him for a while."

"It is a punishment for him," Waldeman said gloomily, "but for us it is all in the day's work."

That four-day hike had left its mark upon the twenty recruits sent to replace casualties at Ain Fezzoul. Their first contact with the real desert had had a demoralizing effect upon them. Brought up in congested cities, they were unprepared for such an experience. At railhead, where they had joined the supply column, they had left behind all familiar landmarks and had trudged out across the limitless plain, where nothing grew except tufts of blue-green *alfa* grass; a wilderness of stone and rock and drifting sand.

The barrenness of their surroundings had dismayed the recruits, and as the miles slipped away beneath their hobnailed boots an enormous silence closed in upon them. It made them aware of their complete isolation from the world they knew, of their helplessness. If they

lost contact with the column, if they strayed from the trail, their fate was sealed. Death marched close beside them, ready to strike at the first sign of weakness.

They had kept their thoughts to themselves while they were on the trail, but from the moment they had sighted the red walls of Ain Fezzoul they had been so relieved and delighted that their pent up uneasiness had come boiling over, and they had cursed themselves, the Legion, and the country at large with blistering oaths.

Barney, however, had nothing to regret. Detroit and Nick Tulesco, Federal agents and French detectives—all these had been left far behind. It was as though a door had been shut and bolted upon his past.

"Sure, it's all in the day's work," he told Waldeman. "This dump don't look so bad. If it's got a canteen and a shower bath, that's all I want."

There was a canteen at the fort, the showers were in good working order, but Barney soon discovered to his bitter disgust that Ain Fezzoul was no haven of rest for the weary Legionnaire.

As the troopers straggled into the fort they were greeted by an adjutant who brayed orders at them in a furiously angry voice. Spindle shanked, raw boned, gawky, with a small, mean head perched on a skinny neck, he was the prototype of all the dumbest, most narrow-minded virtues a non-commissioned officer can possess. And if Ain Fezzoul was reputed one of the most dismal hell-holes in South Morocco it was largely due to the influence of this paragon among adjutants, Emile Casto.

It didn't take him long to show the incoming Legionnaires what kind of treatment they might expect from him. They were dog-tired, they were thirsty, their backs ached, but Casto did not believe in molycoddling his men.

"Look alive!" he bellowed. "Fall in on two ranks. Move, you hunks of liv-

ing putrescence. On the double!"

They didn't move fast enough to suit him. Punishments rained upon them. Five days' detention, two days ordinary arrest, a week's defaulters' drill. That was his idea of discipline, that was his way of showing them that they were dealing with a real adjutant now, not with the weak-kneed drill instructors of the depot.

In five minutes he had the Legionnaires so bewildered that they could not make head or tail of his orders.

"As fine a bunch of gallows fodder as I ever laid eyes on," he proclaimed as they formed up outside the one-storied office building. "You, *salopard* that thou art!" he suddenly pounced upon Karkovski, who had shifted his weight from one foot to the other. "Don't you know better than to move on parade? Seven days' extra drill for you. Stand steady!"

"My boots—" began Karkovski.

"Silence!" roared Casto. "Ten days instead of seven. Shut your lousy trap and stand steady!"

He kept them standing at attention in the full glare of the sun for a quarter of an hour, until the District Commander, Captain Riverain, condescended to step out of the office and review the incoming draft.

That part of the program was soon over.

"All present or accounted for, *mon capitaine!*" boomed the adjutant, bringing his heels together with a tremendous smack and carrying his hand to the vizor of his cap. "Recruits all of them, I regret to say. They won't be much use to us until we can lick them into shape."

Riverain stood for a moment with his hands clasped behind his back, gnawing at his ragged gray mustache while he stared at the troopers, then with a slight shrug and a nod he turned and went back into the office.

"Platoon leaders!" shouted Casto. "This way. Double march!"



FOUR sergeants, who had been standing to one side, dashed forward and came to a halt, heads up, chests expanded, staring into space with the fixidity of cigar store Indians. Four sergeants after Casto's own heart.

"No. 1 Platoon take the first five men!" ordered Casto.

The sergeant on the right of the line came to life.

"First five," he roared with martial vigor, as though the men were a couple of miles away. "Slope arms. . . Right face. . . Quick march! Sheep!" he yelled at them. "Pick up those feet. Step out! Faster! I'll teach you to shamble! Double march!"

Barney's turn came with the third group. A familiar figure loomed up in front of him, a familiar voice bellowed in his ear . . . and all at once he found himself looking straight into the eyes of Otto Groote; Groote with a sergeant's silver stripe on his sleeve; Groote, bigger, more corpulent than ever, literally bursting with pride and self importance.

Recognition was mutual and instantaneous. For one split second Groote's eyes seemed about to pop from his head and a sly grin distended his broad, full lipped mouth. Then the grin vanished; glaring at his five troopers he hurled orders at them as Casto had taught him to do—as though he were daring them to disobey under penalty of death.

They were so weary of being shouted at that they moved woodenly without making the slightest effort to put any snap into their movements.

The adjutant barked at them:

"That won't do! How did these dopes get into the Legion? Get 'em, Groote. Make 'em sit up!"

Groote got them. He had earned his stripes in a remarkably short space of time by patterning his behavior upon the adjutant's, who couldn't give a single order without cursing and ranting until he was on the verge of apoplexy.

A dozen times Groote had made his squad slope arms, ground arms, and slope arms again until their knees began to give way and their eyes were glassy with exhaustion.

"You're rotten," he informed them. "What you need is a couple of weeks of pack drill, and I am the man, my boys, to see you do it. Forward!"

Outside the hutments he brought them to a halt. There, as last, he condescended to notice Barney.

"So you've turned up," he commented, hooking his thumbs in his belt and sauntering up so close that he seemed to tread on Barney's feet. "You're a bad actor, Legionnaire Barney. A gangster with blood on your hands. You're a criminal. But I won't miss you if you try any of your tricks. Let's have a look at your military booklet."

Barney handed it over without a word. Every French soldier carries this booklet wherever he goes. It contains a detailed account of his record—crimes and punishments, acts of bravery and rewards.

Groote gave a loud snort.

"You haven't changed! 'Injured while creating a disturbance in a public place.' 'One month in prison infirmary.' *Gottverdom!* we'll have to keep an eye on you. Here, take the filthy thing, it's not fit to touch."

He did not wait for Barney to take the booklet. He dropped it on the ground.

"Pick it up!" he ordered. "At once."

Barney, tight-lipped and silent, did as he was told, not promptly enough, however, to please Groote who shouted in his face:

"I'll have you up for insolent behavior if you're not careful. You're too slow for this outfit. You need limbering up. Bend over and touch your toes ten times."

Even then Barney voiced no complaint. He carried out the stupid order without the slightest hesitation, and

when he straightened up there was no trace of emotion on his sweat-streaked, dust-caked face.

"That's much better," crowed Groote, all puffed up with his own power. "It's a good thing for you, my lad, you've acquired some sense. We make short work of soreheads up here, and don't you forget it."

Then he led the way into the hut, showed the newcomers to their cots, and marched out with all the pompous dignity of a barroom bouncer.

With the exception of the room orderly, who was scrubbing the floor, the hut was empty. The rest of the platoon was on fatigue duty helping to unload the transport wagons.

"What's the matter with this outfit?" Waldeman demanded as soon as Groote was out of earshot. "Do they think they're herding wild animals in a zoo?"

The orderly sat down on the end of a cot, holding the mop between his knees, and lit the butt end of a cigarette which had been tucked behind his ear.

"You'll find out soon enough," he promised gloomily. "I was with the Disciplinary Battalion once for two years. It wasn't as bad as this. One of these days, Groote's going to wake up with a bayonet in his big gut. And he isn't the worst, by any means. There's plenty of others."

Karkovski pitched his pack upon his bed and turned to Barney.

"I thought you were going to nail that buzzard," he observed. "I wouldn't stand for that treatment from anybody, sergeant or no sergeant."

Barney was filling his tin mug at a water pail by the door.

"What's the hurry?" he inquired. "I ain't going to prison just to please Groote. I joined this outfit to keep out of prison, if anybody should ask you."

"Not I!" swore the Russian. "If he ordered me about like that I'd smash him in the face and go to prison!"

"Go to it," agreed Barney. "We ain't

built the same way, I guess. I'm giving Groote all the breaks. But if he don't know when to quit, and if I have to fix his feet he's going to stay put for a long, long time—and nobody's going to be any the wiser. Get me?"

He spoke quietly, but the threat behind every word he uttered was so plain that Karkovski's eyes flew wide open.

"You mean—"

"Are you asking me?" drawled Barney. "Now forget it. All I want is peace and quiet. I'm not hunting trouble."



BUT he found neither peace nor quiet at Ain Fezzoul. Minutes later, as he was heading for the baths, Groote sent for him.

"Better see him first and wash afterward," advised the orderly. "You don't want to keep that hyena waiting."

"Let him wait and be damned to him," Waldeman protested. "We're off duty until two o'clock. We're entitled to a few hours' rest after marching all night, I should think."

Barney shook his head. "I'll be along later. Orders is orders."

Groote was lounging on the window sill in a small, whitewashed cubicle he referred to as his "private quarters." At his feet stood an empty wine bottle. In one hand he held a glass, in the other a short-stemmed clay pipe.

He came straight to the point, brutally, without any pretense whatsoever.

"Listen, you, I want two thousand francs and I want 'em now. How about it?"

"Well," drawled Barney, "come to think of it, I could use a couple of thousand myself. How about it? Got any suggestions to make—er—sergeant?"

"I'm talking business," retorted Groote, scowling ominously. "Don't tell me you have no money. I read about you in the papers. You're Walsh. I know all about you. We have an old score to settle, you and I. It's going to

cost you exactly two thousand, and you're going to hand it over here and now if you know what's good for you."

"My pay," said Barney, "is twenty-five centimes a day. Apart from that I haven't a nickel."

He spoke the literal truth. The last of his cash had gone the night of the riot at the Theatre du Globe. His wallet had been stolen and his pockets turned inside out.

"You're lying," threatened Groote.

"And if I had any dough," Barney went on, "I wouldn't give you one red cent if my life depended upon it. Don't kid yourself."

"I'd change my mind, if I were you," Groote warned him. "If you don't, you'll be on your way to the rock pile in double-quick time. We don't need notorious criminals in this company. One word from me to the adjutant and you're through. Casto's a fast worker. But I'll let you off easy. Hand over the two thousand and I'll see you aren't bothered. If you're reasonable—I have plenty of pull—I can find a good job for you."

Barney, no longer looking or acting like a Legionnaire, cut him short.

"Why, you cheap grafter, you couldn't blackmail me on a bet. Get wise to yourself. You double-crossed me once, and you got away with it, but you won't do it again if you know what's good for you. I'm telling you. Now look: I'm broke—stony—and I don't crave publicity. I'll do my stuff, Groote, I'll play ball with you, but if you get tough, if you try any more stunts like you did this morning, I'll have you up before the commanding officer, with plenty of witnesses and you'll get all that's coming your way if I know anything about the Legion."

Groote roared with laughter.

"You have a lot to learn about the Legion," he jeered. "You'll find out all about it before you're much older. The commanding officer? You can forget

him. He's nothing but a stuffed shirt. I'm the boss of this platoon. Bear that in mind, and when you're ready to cough up that two thousand, look me up. Get out!"

He reached over and half drew his revolver from the holster hanging on the wall at the head of his bed.

"Get!" he repeated as Barney wavered, "or I'll blow your brains out."

Barney turned on his heels and left the room. At the depot everything he had seen had led him to believe that the Legion's law applied to all ranks without exception. And this system which seemed to be so free from the graft, corruption and crookedness he had known in civilian life had won his grudging respect, then his admiration.

Groote's threats did not shake his faith. He went about his business firmly convinced that so long as he stayed within the law, no harm could befall him. But he was wholly wrong. He was a marked man, powerless in the face of Groote's determination to smash him. He could not stay within the law. Without rhyme or reason, for imaginary specks of rust on his bayonet, for non-existent spots on his clothes, for offences he had not even thought of committing, he was shoved in solitary confinement, fined, starved, and drilled till he dropped—drilled in the full blast of the desert sun with a fifty pound sandbag balanced, for good measure, on the top of his knapsack.

Complaints were worse than useless. They never got beyond Adjutant Casto, who treated complaints as personal insults and doubled all sentences without even trying to find out what the troopers might have to say.

"You—of all people!" he rasped when Barney appeared before him. "A specimen of a gangster, you want to bring charges against one of my sergeants! You ought to be shot. You'll do ten days' punishment drill on half rations, you damned *salopard*. And I'll double the

sentence if ever you dare to come to me whining about bad treatment!"

His sentences were without appeal. Captain Riverain meant well, but he was absorbed by a hundred political and administrative problems. The town of Ain Fezzoul was under his direct control, and he had to keep in touch also with the nomadic tribes scattered throughout the several hundred square miles of his district. It was a full time job. In five years he had trebled the irrigated area of the oasis, organized a school of agriculture, and established a free dispensary. And while he labored to improve the natives' well being, his company of Legionnaires, entrusted to the tender mercies of Adjutant Casto, had gone to pieces. Outwardly it retained a semblance of cohesion and discipline, but the intangible force that had welded those one hundred and twenty-five hard-fisted, hard-headed troopers together; the spark that had kindled their blind faith in their regiment was dead and cold.

A sense of impending tragedy brooded over Ain Fezzoul. Casto and his non-commissioned officers could still exact obedience, but it was a sullen, grudging obedience exacted at the pistol point. They could no longer trust any of the men, not even those who fawned upon them and whispered secret information about mutinies and threatened reprisals.

No competent officer would have tolerated such a state of affairs, but Riverain had lost all contact with his men, and the sergeants, drunk with too much power, ruled by fear, growing more brutal and callous from day to day as they tried to stem the torrent of hatred they had let loose.

Barney was one of many. He had plenty of company in the guard-room and at defaulters' drill, but that did not help him to accept his fate philosophically. A more promising Legionnaire would have been hard to find than Barney the day he reached Ain Fezzoul, but in six

short weeks every last scrap of loyalty had been battered out of him.



THE climax came one morning while, by way of punishment, he was toting stones off the trail leading up to the fort. He heard the clatter of horses' hoofs and, looking up, saw Lieutenant d'Aclaire riding toward him.

Barney did not hesitate. He dropped his load and placed himself directly in the lieutenant's path.

He came up to attention, saluted, and said in a clear voice:

"*Mon lieutenant*, may I speak to you, if you please? I have a complaint to make."

Unfortunately he had no legal right to appeal to d'Aclaire without the express permission of his sergeant.

And the lieutenant, when he saw that he was being addressed by the scoundrel who had caused so much trouble that memorable night at the Theatre du Globe, was filled with righteous wrath. His transfer to Ain Fezzoul, where he was suffering from the most exquisite boredom, was directly due to his altercation with Barney, and he resented the mere thought that such a notorious criminal should have the gall to address him in this unseemly fashion. Because his own conscience was none too clear he was positive that Barney had a grudge against him and was about to resort to physical violence.

"Stand back!" he ordered.

"But, *mon lieutenant*—" began Barney.

D'Aclaire shouted at Groote who was lumbering down the trail as fast as he could run.

"Can't you control your men, sergeant? Confound it! Must I be pestered by every soldier who thinks he has a complaint to make?"

This was a slight exaggeration for he had not done a stroke of work since he had been at Ain Fezzoul.

"Very sorry, *mon lieutenant*," panted Groote. "This man is incorrigible. Worst offender I've ever had to handle. Can't do a thing with him."

"I have been trying to place a complaint before Captain Riverain for the past nine weeks," Barney persisted doggedly, "but Adjutant Casto will not allow me to do so, and—"

The mere mention of Riverain's name was enough to set d'Auclaire's teeth on edge. There was no love lost between the district commandant and his subaltern. Riverain who had the soul of a bureaucrat, could not abide d'Auclaire's lack of interest in paper work, and instead of making use of him to run the company had treated him as though he were incompetent, and useless.

The lieutenant vented his resentment upon Barney, lashing him with his tongue.

"Then your complaint must be groundless. Sergeant, see to it that this man does ten days' detention. If such a thing should happen again I shall hold you responsible."

He gathered up his reins and sent his horse forward at a fast trot without deigning to glance in Barney's direction.

"Ruin my reputation, would you?" commented Groote. "Wait until I get you in a cell. I'm going to give you something to complain about, you lousy gangster."

"He said detention—not cells," Barney pointed out quietly.

"But a cell is the place you're headed for," barked Groote. "Leave it to the adjutant."

Barney gave his shoulders a slight shrug.

"That's fine, sergeant Go right ahead, but this is the last time you frame me. I've had a skinful."

"What's that—a threat?" shouted Groote, gripping the butt end of his revolver.

Barney smiled at him.

"I'm making no threats. I'm telling you, that's all."

Groote drew his revolver and leveled it at Barney's chest.

"I'll wipe that smile off your mug before you're much older Step out if you don't want to croak. They wouldn't even hold a court of inquiry for a blackguard like you."

And Barney trudged uphill to the fort, and across the courtyard to the cell block. Once he was safely stowed away where no witnesses could observe their actions, Groote and the orderly sergeant used him as a punching bag, slugging him with their gun barrels and their fists. When he fell they rolled him over, and the orderly sergeant sat on him, while Groote ripped his clothes off.

"I thought he had a money belt," Groote commented angrily. "He was supposed to have thousands stowed away somewhere. Leave it to the newspapers to lie and invent all kinds of fool rumors."

The other non-com picked up the lantern and held it so that its light fell on Barney's swollen face.

"My old one," he said at last, "I've been in the Legion almost eight years, and I'm not what you might call soft. Some of these *salopards* need a good hiding every so often just to keep 'em toned down—but if I were you I'd be careful."

"I'm not worrying about such vermin."

"I would," the non-com went on. "You don't find many like him He didn't let out a whimper. That breed's dangerous."

Groote drove the toe of his boot against Barney's jaw.

"Just let him start something," he jeered. "Prison's the place for him, and that's where he's going if I have anything to do with it."

But he was very careful not to take his eyes off Barney as he stepped backward out of the cell.



IT WAS late afternoon; it was suffocatingly hot. A gusty wind tore at the Venetian blinds and filled the air with dust, thick as a yellow mist.

There was a film of grit underfoot, on the desk, in Captain Riverain's hair. Where his neck bulged over his collar the skin was raw and fiery red.

But he was unaware of his physical discomfort as he stamped about the office, muttering beneath his breath and scowling at the pattern on the carpet.

Each time he passed in front of Adjutant Casto, who stood awkwardly jammed up against a chair, Riverain exclaimed:

"Disgraceful! Simply disgraceful! I am astounded! I am shocked! You hear me, Casto. I am shocked and amazed!"

He had every reason to be. That day he had been brought face to face with the brutal truth that the XIVth Company was completely demoralized.

There had been a full dress parade for the benefit of a number of *kaid*s of doubtful loyalty, who were to have been over-awed by the martial valor of the local garrison. And the XIVth Company, in the presence of the *kaid*s, of the battalion commander and his staff, of the officer in charge of native affairs, and other important personages—the XIVth Company had behaved shamefully. Platoons had tied themselves up in knots; the simplest orders had thrown the ranks into confusion; no two squads could be made to observe the same spacing and alignment. As a *grande finale*, during the march past the reviewing stand, one man had gone mad, and had only been subdued after a ghastly scuffle which had brought smiles to the lips of the *kaid*s.

Sick with apprehension Riverain had watched his guests pile into their staff cars and roar away toward the base. The battalion commander before his departure had had a private interview with Riverain, and the latter had emerged from that meeting white and shaken as

only a man can be who has suddenly been confronted by the dreadful certainty of his own downfall. He might be able to build up the morale of his men, he might be allowed to hold on to his present job, but his prospects of promotion and better billets had been shattered.

"Have you no explanation to offer?" he flung at Casto. "Sacred name of a thousand thunders, do you have to stand there gaping like a carp? Didn't you know what was going on?"

"I have had trouble ever since the reinforcement draft arrived," Casto admitted, "but I never imagined—"

"You never imagined!" Riverain said scathingly. "You aren't paid to have imagination. You're supposed to be responsible for the discipline and morale of the men, and that is all."

Casto had done his best, according to his standards, to maintain discipline. But he had been given too much power, and power had gone to his head. Even then it did not occur to him that the Legionnaires might be in open rebellion against his brutal tyranny. His conscience was clear.

"I am very sorry, *mon capitaine*," he retorted, "but everything was all right until that last batch of recruits joined us. Some of them are dangerous criminals. I can't do a thing with them. They have poisoned other men's minds. They're clever I can't pin a thing on them. They're not soldiers; they're agitators."

"But this is terrible!" cried Riverain. "It's a conspiracy. Why didn't you warn me. D'you know who the ring-leaders are?"

Casto had their names on the tip of his tongue: Waldeman and Karkovski and, worst of all, an American, a notorious gangster called Barney; but that wasn't his real name. It was Walsh.

"Walsh!" repeated the captain. "I read about him in the papers some months ago. Good God!"

"That's the man. He is an evil influence, if I may say so."

"What has he done since he has been here?"

"Er—well—that's just it. He's too crafty to let me catch him, but he has been stirring up discontent. . . ."

Riverain ran his fingers through his thinning hair.

"All right," he snapped. "Tomorrow I'll hold a court of inquiry. And the culprits, Casto, whoever they may be are going to prison. Meanwhile, I am going home. I am worn out and I have a headache of the most abominable!"

But he was due for an even worse headache before he reached the residency. As he was about to leave the office an orderly brought him a note from the medical officer in charge of the infirmary.

Can you come over at once? A native, Mulay abd el Barka, has just been brought in. Says he must see you. He has not long to live. Gunshot wounds in abdomen and groin. Right hip smashed. Hurry if you want to talk with him.

Riverain hurried, galloping at top speed through the dust, for Mulay abd el Barka was one of the very few secret agents he had ever been able to depend upon to keep him informed as to the movements of the unconquered tribes inhabiting the broken country along the northern boundaries of the district.

Under ordinary circumstances the news that Mulay lay dying would have caused Riverain a great deal of distress, but coming on top of all the other disastrous incidents of the day, it assumed in his mind's eye the proportions of a major calamity.

He found Mulay stretched out, thin and bloodless, beneath a tightly drawn sheet. His eyes lit up when Riverain entered the room, but he was too weak to move.

The captain had to bend down close to his lips to catch the whispered words.

After months of patient work Mulay had found out how the dissident tribes were supplied with arms and ammunition. Gun smugglers, coming from Rio

de Ouro, eluded the French patrols by cutting across the desert in the western corner of the Ain Fezzoul district.

"But there are no wells," protested Riverain, who had always maintained that no gun runner could set foot in his territory without being captured and shot.

"*Sidi*," whispered Mulay, "thou art wrong. The wells exist. Two of them. I went over the road with the last convoy. The old caravan trail from Marakech to Adraar—"

"Those wells were choked with sand. The survey engineers said—"

"The wells have been reopened. Ras-el-Baroud to south, Bou-Sefta to the northeast. Those I saw. There I drank clear water, *sidi*, cool water." A pink foam was gathering in the corners of his mouth, bubbling over his jet-black beard. His voice gurgled in his throat. "Another convoy goes through in a week or so. It will reach Ras-el-Baroud in five days. Post men at Bou-Sefta, *sidi*, take the *harka* by surprise, drive it back toward Ras-el-Baroud, then close in behind it, catch it between two fires. It will perish for lack of water. Five hundred rifles, *sidi*."

His eyes opened enormously wide, and his long fingers closed convulsively on Riverain's wrist.

"Five hundred rifles!" he repeated, raising his head off the pillow. "Keep away from Ras-el-Baroud. You can not get there in time—not now—they—"

He choked and through the pink foam a thread of dark blood ran down his cheek, staining the pillow. He tried to speak again, but his words were unintelligible. His breathing grew more and more labored until at last it stopped altogether, and his eyes stared unwinkingly at the ceiling.

Tears dribbled off the end of Riverain's nose onto the sheet.

"Stupid of me," he apologized, heaving himself to his feet. "I've had a hard day."

"You can't do anything about it now. Go home and rest," advised the doctor. "A cup of hot tea will do you more good than anything else. Madame Riverain will take care of that, I am sure."

Riverain, however, had not yet reached the end of his calvary. Worse, far worse, lay in store for him when he reached the residency.



ON THE settee, in the drawing room where he had been bawled out earlier in the day by his battalion commander, he was privileged to behold his wife, Madeleine, with her arms clasped around the neck of Lieutenant d'Auclaire, resting her head on his shoulder.

Riverain's blood promptly boiled as only a Frenchman's blood can boil when confronted by such a spectacle. Finding his wife draped around any man's neck would have been a terrible blow to his self-esteem and his pride of possession, but that the man should happen to be d'Auclaire destroyed Riverain's last remnant of faith in human nature. For the lieutenant was the bugbear of his existence, and a thorn in his side.

He had done his best to make use of this superior young man, but their temperaments were too greatly opposed. Between them no team work was possible, and though they were still on speaking terms, Riverain, for weeks, had been striving to create a situation which would enable him to explode. He had relieved d'Auclaire of all responsibility and treated him as though he were a visitor at the fort, and an unwelcome visitor at that. But the lieutenant refused to allow himself to be maneuvered into a false position. He never disagreed with his commanding officer, never argued, never raised a single protest.

That morning, after the disastrous dress parade, he alone had kept his head, and had contrived to talk to the battalion commander as though everything were serenely normal. The colonel had shaken

hands with him before he left, whereas he had favored Riverain with a stiff salute, more damaging than a kick in the seat of the pants. That handshake had been on Riverain's mind all day.

And now, worst and most outrageous of all insults, he had to find his wife weeping on the lieutenant's shoulder!

He did not stop to realize that d'Auclaire was perched on the edge of the settee in a stiff and awkward attitude. He let out a mighty howl and tried to leap across the room in one bounding stride. His muscles, however, were not equal to the task. Instead of landing on d'Auclaire's lap, he came to earth on a hand-woven prayer rug, skidded across the polished floor, rolled over several times and brought up with a crash against a Louis XV whatnot, which overturned and showered him with china Sevres coffee cups, and framed pictures of Mme. Riverain's two married sisters. The sharp-angled corner of one of the silver picture frames struck his head with so much force that it subdued his caveman instincts and cut a two-inch gash over his right eye.

He did not pass out, but he was so badly shaken that before he could extricate his feet from the glass door of the whatnot, his wife dropped on her knees at his side and tried to dab the blood out of his eyes with a handkerchief already damp with her tears.

D'Auclaire hovered in the background, looking like a cat who has just swallowed the pet canary.

"My poor Gustave!" cried the lady. "Now please—be calm—I am so sorry for you. You are hurt!"

Was he hurt! He was in agony!

"How dare you, *madame!*" he sputtered. "Do not speak to me. My honor—"

"Is intact, *mon capitaine,*" d'Auclaire said blandly. "I had the pleasure of taking tea with *madame* this afternoon. She was very much upset by the incidents which occurred this morning. All her thoughts were of you."

They were so high minded and so virtuous that they made Riverain feel like a cad, and left him without a leg to stand on although he remained morally convinced that he had been grievously wronged.

And while they talked queer thoughts began to gather at the back of Riverain's mind. At first he rejected them, but they came back again and again with more force, and more precision, until at last a definite plan took shape almost against his will. He could rid himself, at one stroke, of all the malignant forces that threatened to wreck his life.

"I'm afraid I was too hasty," he admitted after his wife had washed the gore off his face and applied a strip of adhesive tape over the cut. "I suggest that we forget all about it. This has been a hard day for me. I'm not at all well."

"Everything is going to come out all right," soothed his wife. "Of course you are upset, *mon cheri*. Lieutenant d'Auclaire understands so well how you feel."

It was almost dark. A solemn-faced orderly, sweating curiosity at every pore, brought in a lighted kerosene lamp, placed it on the table, and departed, carefully closing the door behind him.

"With your permission," smiled d'Auclaire, "I shall be on my way. It must be very late."

"Wait," said Riverain. "There is a matter of some importance I want to talk over with you, lieutenant. I should have had to send for you after dinner anyway, so if you'll come over to the office with me I'll go into details at once."

"Why not talk here?" said his wife, trying to be very bright and gay. "Wouldn't you like an aperitif?"

"An excellent idea," he agreed, "if d'Auclaire will join us."

"Charmed!" bowed the lieutenant.

And so, over lukewarm vermouth, while the wind tore at the palm trees

outside the house, Riverain sentenced d'Auclaire to death.

"One of our secret agents came in this afternoon with a wild story about an old well having been reopened by gun smugglers at Ras-el-Baroud. Personally I don't believe a word of it. (Have a little more vermouth, d'Auclaire?) Not a single word. But I am sending out a small patrol in the morning to investigate and report, and I think it might be a good plan if you went along. You need experience, you know."

"Quite," agreed d'Auclaire. "It ought to be very interesting."

Riverain nodded. "It will give you a taste of campaign conditions, but you won't find it very exciting. Ras-el-Baroud has been abandoned for years—long before our time. And if there are any gun smugglers anywhere in the neighborhood they'll give you a wide, wide berth. They're not going to run the risk of losing their stock in trade! I wouldn't ask you to go if Ras-el-Baroud were not so far away. I can't entrust a two hundred kilometer patrol to a sergeant."

"At your service," said d'Auclaire, and Madame Riverain, seeing them on such amicable terms, breathed a sigh of relief.

She might not have been so relieved, however, had she been present at four o'clock the following morning when d'Auclaire led his party out of the fort and headed westward across the plain.

Eighteen men marched behind him; eighteen hand-picked troopers, the ring-leaders who, according to Casto, had undermined the company's morale. Sulen and defiant, they slogged along in the lieutenant's wake, and a more unpromising, potentially dangerous crew would have been hard to find anywhere on the face of God's green earth.

Barney was there, and Karkovski, and Waldeman, and all the other stubborn, intractable Legionnaires who had refused to cringe before the adjutant. And

in rear, behind the three pack-mules, Sergeant Groote closed the line of march.



STRUNG out in single file the patrol straggled up the flank of the sand-drift. White-hot, the sunlight lay like molten metal upon the Legionnaires' head and shoulders. Bowed down beneath the weight of their packs, step by labored step they fought their way up the slope, which gave way beneath their feet and held them back so that they seemed to be marking time on a treadwheel.

Karkovski was first to reach the crest. On hands and knees, craning his neck, he stared at the country beyond, and all at once a hoarse shout burst from his lips:

"Water!"

Dead ahead, not half a mile away, in the middle of the shimmering inferno, stood a clump of trees, amazingly green and cool, and the broken, crumbling dome of a whitewashed house.

Barney crawled up beside the Russian and lay on top of the ridge, wheezing as he sucked the superheated air into his lungs.

"It's a mirage—"he began.

"It is not," protested Karkovski. "It is too close." Tears filled his red-rimmed eyes. "I can smell the water!"

"Well, what the heck, that ain't nothing to cry about," Barney retorted. "It beats me where you get enough water for all them tears."

"It is not sadness, it is joy," exclaimed Karkovski. "That is my nature. In Russia—"

Barney glanced over his shoulder. The rest of the patrol was scarcely midway up the slope. The lieutenant, on foot, pulling at his horse's bridle, was hurrying forward, slipping and sliding at every step.

"Russia!" grunted Barney. "You ain't got nothing to cheer about yet. We got a long way to go yet."

"You still think we can do it?"

Barney nodded emphatically. "Sure—why not? We're about two hundred and fifty kilometers from Rio de something or other. After that nobody can touch us. Call it another hundred and fifty to the Atlantic coast. That ain't so much."

"Four hundred kilometers of this!" muttered Karkovski, jerking his beard in the direction of the sand dunes. "It is a great craziness. We have no compass—no map. We do not know where the wells are."

"All we got to do is to keep on going due west," said Barney. "Three pack mules'll carry enough water to see us through. There's enough food and plenty of ammunition."

"It's a long way—"

"And what of it? That ain't news. We've chewed it over a hundred time. Don't you want to get out of this outfit?"

"But I do not want to commit suicide. And even if we get through—even if we reach Spanish territory—what comes afterward? We have no money."

Barney refused to bother about such minor details. He could not afford to. The future would have to take care of itself.

"If you got cold feet," he said angrily, "You can stay behind with the looie and Groote. They're going to need company in the worst way. They're due for a good long rest when we pull out."

Before Karkovski could frame a suitable retort d'Auclaire scrambled up beside them and examined the oasis through his binoculars. There was not a living soul in sight. From the spot where he stood to the clump of trees lay a stretch of stone-littered plain. A crescent-shaped sand-dune along the southern edge of the oasis had engulfed some of the trees. Several were buried so deep that only their ragged green fronds stuck out above the sand.

D'Auclaire lowered his glasses.

"All right," he announced. "Karkovski,

you are on point duty. Go ahead and keep your eyes open. Don't go too fast."

Karkovski hitched up his pack and swung down the slope, digging his heels into the soft sand at each stride. He didn't bother to acknowledge the order, nor to salute, nor did d'Auclaire attempt to rebuke him. Discipline had worn so thin since the patrol had left Ain Fez-zoul that it had almost ceased to exist.

There had been no definite break but d'Auclaire had learned to his bitter dismay that his authority over the Legionnaires was non-existent. They were not at all impressed by his immense superiority. They weren't even aware of it!

Thrown in close contact with the rank and file as never before on that long trek across the desert he had come to realize that these rough, mannerless troopers possessed unsuspected qualities of good humor, dogged courage and self-reliance. And the scales had dropped from his eyes. Leadership, he had discovered, was not a God given privilege, a matter of birth and breeding. Leadership called for a knowledge of human nature he did not possess, for understanding he had never tried to acquire, for sympathy without condescension, for unswerving loyalty not only on the part of the led but of the leader.

His own shortcomings had become so glaring that he had lost all faith in himself. He would have given all he owned to win the respect of his troopers—but he did not know how to go about it. One thing, however, he had had sense enough to do: he had kept his temper, and gone about his business as placidly as possible, ignoring all provocations, asking no support of Sergeant Groote, for the latter, from the moment he had marched out of the fort, had been suffering from nervous apprehension which unfitted him to be of any assistance whatsoever.

As soon as Karkovski had covered about fifty yards d'Auclaire turned to Barney.

"You're at cover-point," he said in an even voice. "Follow Karkovski. Stop when you reach the trees and wait for the patrol to come up."

Barney paused just long enough to show clearly what he thought of the lieutenant's orders, then he heaved himself to his feet and slid downhill in Karkovski's footsteps. He felt almost light-hearted. In a very little while he was going to tell d'Auclaire and Groote where they got off, and if they didn't like it it would be just too bad.

He was midway across the plain when, out of the tail end of his eyes, he thought he saw something flash along the rim of the sand-drift south of the oasis.

"See anything?" he called to Karkovski, and his voice sounded queerly flat in the noontide silence.


Karkovski half turned, shielding his eyes with the palm of his hand as he peered at the trees half buried in the sand.

"Thought I did," he shouted. "Nothing there now. . ."

He went on, and Barney followed him keeping a wary eye turned toward the rim of the dune. There was nothing to be seen, the day was so still that he could hear the muffled beat of his heart throbbing in his ears, but an indefinable change had occurred. His grip on his rifle grew tighter; he moved forward as gingerly as though he were treading on eggs. Glancing uneasily over his shoulder he was relieved to see that the patrol was coming down the slope in a long, straggling line.

But as he looked toward his front again, once more he spied a quick, slithering flash over yonder on the skyline. And all at once the air seemed to quiver. Little tongues of flame, colorless in the sunlight, played along the crest of the sand dune by the oasis. There was a burst of sound, a splintering crash, followed instantly by the shrill whine of bullets. They came with a swift rush, thudding into the dust at his feet, whis-

ting past his head so close that they fanned his cheeks.



ROOTED to the earth, rigid, numbed by the noise, he saw Karkovski turn and come running toward him. Karkovski's mouth was wide open. He was shouting, but his words were blown away. The shadows beneath the trees were alive now with blazing rifles. Before Barney could tear his feet off the ground, Karkovski lurched drunkenly and clapped both hands to his neck. His legs buckled beneath him. He fell to his knees. Another slug crashed into his head. His cap whirled away. He pitched forward onto his face, spilling his brains into the sand through a jagged hole at the base of his skull.

Then Barney moved. He forgot heat, thirst and exhaustion. Fleet footed as a gazelle he raced toward the shelter of the sand hill. The patrol had gone to earth. He was out in the open, alone, a target for every sniper in the oasis.

He still had twenty yards to go when he was struck a tremendous blow in the small of the back. An invisible hand seemed to pick him up and hurl him to the ground. A sleet of lead beat about him. He tried to get up, but his legs would not budge.

"That's the doctor," he thought. "Spine's bust, I guess."

He dug his elbows into the sand in a vain effort to lever himself along, but the weight of his knapsack nailed him down and he could make no headway.

Suddenly a pair of boots came within his range of vision. He looked up. Lieutenant d'Auclaire, seemingly very phlegmatic and bored, bent over him. For all his apparent boredom, however, the lieutenant wasted no time. He rolled Barney over, caught him beneath the armpits and dragged him up the slope. He made slow progress but at last he reached the crest and dumped Barney out of reach of the bullets.

"We'll try to patch you up before we move forward," he said when he recovered his breath. "Where were you hit?"

"Spine," croaked Barney. "You can't do a thing for me."

The lieutenant, he was forced to admit, was a cool customer even though he was a lousy squirt. It called for steady nerves to walk out into that burst of fire.

"I'm much obliged," he went on grudgingly, and because he thought he was dying he added, "What the hell made you do it? What's one gangster more or less to you?"

D'Auclaire, raising one eyebrow, drawled:

"I know nothing about gangsters. You happen to be one of *my* Legionnaires. That's a good and sufficient reason, isn't it? Now let me see that wound. We'll have to hurry—"

"Forget it," urged Barney. "I'm all washed up."

But a moment later he was alarmed, and infinitely relieved, to discover that he could wiggle his toes, and as two Legionnaires turned him over onto his stomach, he discovered further that he could use his legs.

D'Auclaire felt his back, tugged at his belt, and held up his entrenching tool. The shaft was split in two and the metal ring was flattened out.

"Your spine," the lieutenant announced, "appears to be all right. I think you will recover from the effects of the—er—bruise. But you'll need a new entrenching tool, I'm afraid."

A gust of laughter—the first in weeks—came from the troopers. Barney turned scarlet.

"I couldn't move—"he started to say.

D'Auclaire cut him short, dismissing the incident with a jerky nod.

"Fall in," he ordered. "On two ranks, facing me."

The uproar had died away and his clear, unemotional voice rang in the stillness. He was so unperturbed and cool

that the Legionnaires obeyed his commands as they had never done before.

"We shall have to drive those people out," he said briskly. "We must do so at once before they have a chance to foul the well. Most of us, I gather, would enjoy a drink."

Without faltering, or groping for words, he explained clearly what he intended to do. He was going to attack the enemy with twelve men. Sergeant Groote and the six other troopers were to stay where they were and pump lead into the oasis until the attacking party reached the trees. Afterward Groote was to rush his party forward and help mop up the rebels.

"Most of us," d'Auclaire concluded, "are going into action for the first time. I expect you—every one of you—to obey orders without question. Sergeant, you will have charge of the machine gun. Open fire as soon as we start. Smother 'em. Barney, look after the pack mules. You're in no fit state to move about yet."

"My legs—" began Barney.

"You have your orders," snapped d'Auclaire. "They are final." He confronted the twelve men who were to follow him. "Off packs. Fix bayonets! Forward!"

In half a minute the detachment was on its way. A gust of fire greeted the men as they crossed the sky line. Strays shrieked by overhead, others kicked up flurries of dust along the top of the dune.

Groote sang out:

"Range, three hundred meters! Target, the trees in front of the attacking party! Independent rapid fire! Fire!"

The Legionnaires let drive round after round as fast as they could load and aim. Crouching low, his shoulders hunched around his ears, Groote blazed away with the light machine-gun; one short burst, another, then the bullets came in a steamy stream.

Smack! A trooper slewed around, his

lower jaw shot away, and rolled downhill. He came to rest a foot or so from Barney.

One glimpse of that shapeless, red horror that had been a man's face was enough for him. He fastened the bridles of the pack animals and of d'Auclaire's horse together in one tight knot, made them fast to the dead Legionnaire's belt, and crawled up to the ridge.

The assaulting party had gone to earth. The men lay behind a low hummock within a stone's throw of the trees. In their wake five gray shapes sprawled motionless in the dust.

One man, close to Barney, shouted:

"It's a massacre! They'll wipe us out!"

He was half hysterical with heat and noise and fear.

"Yep," nodded Barney. "If you have anything to do with it we'll be wiped out sure enough."

His back felt so much better that he was scarcely aware of any pain as he crept along till he lay beside Groote. The sergeant, his eyes starting from his head, yelled:

"Fire! Fire, you fool! Can't you see what's happening?"

"Fire at what?" snorted Barney, ducking as a covey of bullets swept the ridge. "Them slugs ain't coming from the oasis, you mutt. Watch for the flashes. All the firing's coming from that sand heap over on the left."

But Groote was not listening. With feverish haste, his fingers shaking, he slapped a fresh cartridge drum onto the machine-gun and was about to squeeze the trigger, when Barney said:

"Here, gimme that. You ain't fit to handle a popgun, let alone that doggone typewriter. Let me have it."

Purple with rage, the tendons standing out in cords on his thick neck, Groote swung around, jamming the hot gun muzzle into Barney's stomach.

"I'll blow you to pieces!" he bellowed. "I told you to open fire. . . ."

Barney was in no mood for an argu-

ment. His left hand swept down, knocking the muzzle aside. His right crashed against Groote's jaw. The sergeant lurched unsteadily, and Barney slugged him again, flattening him out. It happened so swiftly that the other Legionnaires were not sure whether Groote had been shot or punched. But Barney held the machine-gun.

"Get that gun going," bellowed Waldeman. "For God's sake hurry!"

"I'm hurrying," assented Barney. "Now look; you fellows keep on peppering that sand heap and, for the love of Mike, aim straight. Scatter your shots; keep those birds guessing. And if Groote butts in rock him to sleep."

"How about that machine-gun?" insisted Waldeman. "What—"

"Leave it to me. If we can't get in to that damned oasis the front way we'll try the back door. I'll be seeing you."



WITH the machine-gun in his arms he raced down the slope and swung around in a wide circle, working in behind the ridge of sand south of the oasis. Sometimes he ran, sometimes he squirmed along flat on his belly, and at last he found himself staring at the reverse slope of the sand drift.

Some horses were tethered down below. A native squatted on his hams close beside them. A rifle lay across his knees. Up above, on the sky line, thirty-odd men, clad in the grey *djellabas* of the Moroccan tribes, kept up a steady fire.

A thin smile drew down the corners of Barney's mouth: It was as easy as falling off a log. Inch by inch he crept in closer, hugging the earth until he reached a position where he could enfilade the line of snipers. With infinite caution he adjusted the sights and brought the gun to bear on the man guarding the horses.

Crack! The bullets came with a rush. The native leaped to his feet, then caved in as though he had been cut in two.

Six hundred to the minute the bullets sped on their way. A horse reared up, pawed the air, and came down on top of the native. Another rolled over, and another. In utter confusion, the others wheeled and stampeded in a great whirl of dust.

Barney swung the gun toward the snipers. Bunched together, some kneeling, some standing, they were pointing at him, gesticulating wildly. A slug grazed his left wrist. Then he let them have it in one unbroken burst of fire which crept up toward their feet, climbed higher, and moved them down as though a giant scythe had swept their ranks.

A handful bolted. Methodically Barney picked them off, one here, one there, bowling them over like rabbits, until the survivors dodged behind the palm fronds and passed out of sight.

For a long while he lay still, waiting for some sign of a counter-thrust, but none came, not a shot was fired in his direction. A great deal of noise came from the oasis, and after a time he saw a large group of natives running across the plain toward the pillar of dust that hung above the bolting horses. One last burst of rifle fire sped them on their way and as it died down the faint sound of cheering reached Barney's ears.

He stood up stiffly—his back was very sore again—and limped toward the oasis. The machine-gun weighed a ton. At first he met no one, but as he approached the trees d'Auclair came toward him.

His first words were:

"I thought I told you to take charge of the pack animals?"

The question took all the wind out of Barney's sails. D'Auclair, he perceived, had a great deal more backbone than might have been expected. There was a steely glint in his eyes very different from his usual superior and sleepy stare. He looked hot and out of breath and much more purposeful that he had ever looked before.

"I forgot all about the mules," Barney confessed.

"I don't advice you to make a practice of forgetting orders," snapped d'Auclaire, "But," he added, "there are exception to most rules. You saved the detachment from annihilation, and I thank you for what you did. I am very sorry I misjudged you."

Barney closed up like a clam.

"Aw, that's all right," he muttered. "We all make mistakes, I guess—"

He did not want to rehash their misunderstandings. What he wanted just then was a drink, but he very much feared that the lieutenant might be about to become effusive and kiss him on both cheeks or do something equally absurd. He was quickly undeceived. D'Auclaire had his emotions well under control.

"You are quite right," he admitted. "But there's one mistake I wouldn't make again if I were you. When you happen to disagree with your platoon sergeant don't make a practice of knocking his teeth down his throat."

"He was bughouse," swore Barney. "He was shooting—"

"I want no details," d'Auclaire broke in. "When we get black to Ain Fezzoul we are starting out—all of us—with a clean slate. It's up to you to keep it clean if you want to."

But they were a long, long way from Ain Fezzoul, farther indeed than any of them realized at that moment.



WALDEMAN loosened the buckles holding the pack on Karkovski's back.

"He's out of the Legion," he said gloomily. "He's lucky. What are we going to do? Still think we can reach the coast?"

Barney swung the dead man's kit onto his own shoulders before he spoke.

"We're pretty well clawed to pieces. Strikes me we'll have to hang together a while longer. We couldn't leave the

looie behind to be carved up by them wild gazebos."

"We'll have to go back to the fort."

"Got any better suggestion to make?" Barney demanded angrily. "There's nine of us left, and two wounded. What are you going to do with 'em? Leave 'em here to croak?"

"You can talk some other time!" shouted Groote, lumbering toward them. "Come on, get that stiff in his grave."

It was late afternoon. D'Auclaire had given the Legionnaires a few hours' rest and had sent them out to pick up the dead and bury them in one long pit on the outskirts of the oasis.

Fifty boxes of ammunition and over four hundred rifles, wrapped in burlap, ready for loading, had been found by the well. It was a tremendous haul, but the gun runners had made no attempt to drive out the Legionnaires and regain possession of their booty.

Groote had been placed in charge of the burial party, and Groote now that the immediate danger was past was in an evil mood. He had tried to lodge a formal complaint against Barney, but the lieutenant had not given him a chance to state his case. Without cracking a smile d'Auclaire had congratulated the sergeant and assured him that he had displayed remarkable initiative and forethought.

"A splendid move," he had declared. "If you hadn't sent Legionnaire Barney around the flank we should have been cut to pieces."

And Groote had been compelled to swallow his rage while the Legionnaires grinned sardonically.

His temper had not improved when d'Auclaire had sent him out to supervise the stretcher bearers. Beneath the trees he felt moderately safe, whereas out in the open, on the white-hot plain, a thousand eyes seemed to be peering at him. His one ambition was to finish the job and get back to the well in double-quick time.

"You can loaf later on," he bawled. "Pick him up instead of making a funeral oration. That *salopard* got what was coming to him."

Barney and Waldeman had already carried the bodies of four of their comrades to the communal grave. They were not overburdened with sentiment, either of them, but the task of burying men they had known so well, men with whom they had cursed and laughed, suffered and got magnificently pickled, was making them sick at their stomachs: the soft-nosed bullets manufactured by some up-and-coming armament firms for their expert trade make shocking wounds.

"Karkovski's dead," retorted Waldeman, his round face twitching with fury. "You needn't insult him now. He was worth ten of you."

"That'll do," shouted Groote. "You can't talk to me like that. The lieutenant may be afraid of you—I'm not! I said he was a blackguard and that's just what I mean. I got no more respect for that damn Russian than I have for a hyena. Do you think I don't know what's going on? He was going to desert. Yes, and so were you. But you won't! Not now, by God, and when I get back to Ain Fezzoul. . . ."

"So you're going back, are you?" said Barney, twisting his mouth sideways as he spoke. "That's fine!"

"I'll be there," rasped Groote, "and I can promise you right now you'll go to prison, you rat-faced criminal—where you ought to have been sent long ago. Come on, I tell you, pick up that baboon's carcass."

They were at his mercy. Their rifles were slung across their backs. He held his against his hip, ready to shoot, aching to shoot.

Waldeman said slowly: "It's easy to insult the dead, sergeant. But one of these days you may be dead too."

Groote had reached the end of his tether. His fingers closed convulsively on the trigger. Flame spurted from the

gun muzzle full in Waldeman's face. Shot between the eyes he crumpled up on top of Karkovski.

It happened so swiftly that Barney had no opportunity to intervene. His hand closed on the hilt of his bayonet as he stumbled toward Groote who, now that his access of rage had spent itself, was staring in horrified amazement at his victim.

Before Barney could whip the bayonet from its scabbard, before he had taken two steps another shot rang out. A bullet whisked past him, and Groote, drilled through the heart went down all of one piece with that frightened, whimpering look fixed on his face for all eternity.

Barney spun around. A whisp of smoke hung above a boulder not a hundred yards away. As he watched it dissolve, a native rose up, head and shoulders above the rock, and took careful aim at him. He waited for no more. Dodging like a hare with a greyhound on its trail he sprinted toward the trees as fast as he could travel.

The gun runners had come back. Recovering from their blind panic when they had found that the surprise attack on their flank did not herald the approach of overwhelming forces, they had closed in upon the oasis where a handful of soldiers had taken possession of a store of rifles and ammunition worth a king's ransom.

They were not free agents, those simple Moroccan tribesmen. They were middlemen and traders, carrying munitions to Tafilalet rebels as they would have carried sugar or kerosene had the profits been as great. They could not afford to retreat while they stood a chance to recover their consignment.

But they were in no hurry. They had water in the goatskin bags lashed to their camels' flanks, they had food, and above all else they valued their hides far too much to rush recklessly across the open as hillbred warriors would have done.

They could afford to wait—to lie under cover and pick off the soldiers, and harrass them by day and by night until their endurance gave out, and they could be polished off without undue bloodshed among their assailants.



SPRAWLING behind a fallen tree-trunk Barney watched them close in. The light of the moon brushed their bare, brown bodies as they crawled through the dust. They made no sound. In the distance, against the black sky, the sand drifts were as bright as silver.

With stiff, slow movements Barney brought the muzzle of the machine-gun to bear upon the natives. He was so weary he could scarcely keep his eyes open. For the past forty-eight hours he had known neither sleep nor rest while the detachment dwindled to the size of a corporal's squad as man after man was snuffed out by the snipers' bullets. Now there was neither squad nor detachment. Barney lived, and d'Auclaire, and a blue-eyed Scandinavian giant by the name of Norberg, who could still crawl about and make use of a rifle though he had two bullets in his stomach and a third in his left thigh.

"Better hurry," Barney called out. "They're coming!"

Time and again the natives, eager to be done with this handful of *roumis*, had tried to rush the oasis; each time they had been driven off after hand to hand scuffles which had made a charnel house of Ras el Baroud. But three exhausted men could not protect themselves front, flank and rear. It was only a question of hours or minutes before a surprise attack swept them into oblivion.

Behind him, Barney could hear d'Auclaire and Norberg heaping the captured rifles and boxes of cartridges on a great bed of dry palm fronds and tree trunks. The lieutenant had delayed setting the pyre alight until the last second, hoping against hope that their

assailants might be compelled to raise the siege for want of water. But the natives had not withdrawn; the end was in sight.

"Many coming?" shouted d'Auclaire.

"Plenty. More than I can hold."

After a brief pause d'Auclaire said:

"Very well—"

A match sputtered and as the dry leaves caught fire a great lick of flame shot skyward.

And then pandemonium broke loose. The natives, pouring volley after volley in among the trees, closed in with a rush, yelling as they came. Barney let them have it. His hands were numb and the gun jerked unsteadily, but after the first few rounds, he brought it to bear upon the close-packed mob. It wavered as the stream of lead struck home and opened out fanwise. He blew the center to pieces, dropping a dozen men. The others swerved away and scattered, but for once they did not retreat. Taking cover behind the dead, they returned Barney's fire, using the flash of his gun as a target.

Slugs beat about him, drumming into the trees, plowing up the earth. A sharp stab of pain shot through his left shoulder, and as he rolled over another bullet cut a groove across his cheek-bone, covering his face with blood. But he dragged himself back to the overturned gun and set it straight again.

The glare of the fire suffused the oasis, casting monstrous black shadows across the moonlit plain. The noise became deafening as the boxes of cartridges exploded, hurling red-hot rifle barrels high in the air, spreading the fire in an ever widening circle. Palm trees blazed like torches, the heat scorched Barney's back.

A dark figure crept up beside him.

"They got Norberg," said d'Auclaire's voice. "*Nous touchons à la fin!* We are nearing the end."

He lay on one side in a stiff, awkward pose.

"You been hit?" inquired Barney.

"Both legs," nodded d'Auclaire.

"Tough luck." He meant it. Not a bad kid, the looie. Level-headed.

A crate of hand-grenades in the heart of the fire blew up like a volcano. Tree trunks, jagged fragments of steel, mangled bodies spouted upward in one mighty swirl of smoke and flame.

"There goes the well," said d'Auclaire as the uproar subsided. "I fixed that."

Barney made no comment. Fatigue had blunted his senses. He was growing dizzy and found it increasingly difficult to keep his one sound eye trained along the gun sights.

Ras-el-Baroud was a seething, smoking cauldron, and the plain, where the dead were scattered, was all silver and scarlet, intolerably bright yet veiled in a haze of drifting dust which made observation almost impossible. The snipers, silenced by the blast of the exploding grenades, were beginning to fire again. And Barney knew that they were edging in closer although their movements were so stealthy that he could not follow them.

"There is another party closing in south of us," said d'Auclaire, and his speech had grown thick and difficult. "They can't be far off now."

"Maybe not," admitted Barney. "God knows we can't stop 'em."

Directly in front of him several natives had raised themselves to their knees. The glare of the leaping flames stained their bare torsos the color of burnished bronze. He braced the gun-butt against his shoulder.

"We're going for a buggy ride," he observed, "but we ain't going alone."

D'Auclaire tried to prop himself up on one elbow, but he was too weak to do so. He fell back, racked with pain, gritting his teeth to keep from crying aloud.

"Wait," he choked as the pain subsided. "I can't reach my revolver. Take it out for me . . . now . . . before it is too late. I don't want to be taken alive . . . nor do you . . . not by those people."

Barney drew the revolver from the

lieutenant's holster and laid it between them.

"I shall have to ask you to assist me when the time comes," d'Auclaire apologized with a flash of his old manner. "I am terribly sorry but my arms are quite useless. You will be doing me a great favor."

A grin straggled across Barney's face. "O.K." he promised. "When the time comes. . ."

"Thank you very much. I could not ask," the lieutenant's voice was very faint, "ask you for a more dependable Legionnaire . . . a better soldier."

His voice trailed off into silence. He sighed deeply and settled down, his cheek resting on the earth, as though he had fallen into a deep sleep. But his eyes remained wide open.

The natives were on their feet now, crouching low, moving step by step toward the blazing trees. Meeting with no opposition, a number of them broke into a slow, shuffling run.

"Yeah!" snarled Barney. "Come on! I'll fix your feet."

The gun rattled into action, but he could no longer hold it steady. The recoil jarred his whole body and the blood spurted from the wound in his left shoulder. Here and there a man dropped, but most of the bullets flew wide, and his assailants ran at him like wolves. The plain seemed to be alive with them.

He pitched the hot gun aside, snatched up d'Auclaire's revolver and pried himself off the ground. Braced against a tree he faced the oncoming mob.



AND ALL at once a new sound beat against his ears. Acrid and high pitched it cut clear above the clamor. It rang in the moonlight till it seemed to fill the whole vast bowl of the sky.

Bugles—bugles in the moonlight, singing to high heaven:

"Y a la goutte à boire là-haut.
Y a la goutte à boire!"

"There's a drop to drink up there!
There's a drop to drink."

There was a quick stirring along the crest of the sand dunes, a glistening flash of steel, and behind the steel came half a battalion of the Legion, deployed in company formation. It poured down into the plain. A volley crashed into the mob which had faced about and was milling in wild disorder. The mob broke, and as it did so a squadron of Spahis, their khaki bournous streaming in the wind, rose up in their stirrups and gave tongue as they rode like a whirlwind in among the screaming tribesmen.

Barney, leaning against the tree trunk, watched the fight roll away across the plain in a towering pillar of dust. He was too weak to move, too dazed to understand what was taking place before his eyes. It seemed to him that he must be dreaming; that the bugles and the Spahis and the lines of troops moving with such orderly precision across the plain must be part of a mirage or vision, some fantastic trick of his swimming brain. In a second or so, he told himself, all this would vanish, and a swarm of skinny, half-naked savages would lay hands on him and hack him to pieces.

A group of men were moving toward him. They looked astonishingly like Legionnaires, but he knew that this could not be. He did not try to pick up the revolver for he felt sure that if he moved away from the tree he would collapse.

"Come on, you baboons," he muttered. "I can take it."

But the hallucination persisted and he was mildly astonished to see quite a number of men who could easily have been mistaken for officers ride up ahead of the soldiers, dismount, and come toward him.

"For God's sake," he said aloud. "I've gone nuts."

One of the officers bore a startling resemblance to Aromanche, the battalion

commander he had seen the day of the dress parade at Ain Fezzoul. Same gray whiskers, same bushy eyebrows, same rat-trap of a mouth. It did not begin to make sense.

"I can take it," repeated Barney. "Do your stuff. What the hell are you waiting for?"

His astonishment turned to utter bewilderment when the apparition halted six paces away, drew himself up and, of all impossible things, instead of becoming a blood-thirsty Moroccan, carried his hand to the peak of his cap. And the officers lined up behind him were saluting too!

"Am I cockeyed?" wondered Barney. "Or am I cockeyed?"

He heard the apparition say, "Legionnaire—" and he realized that this was no ghost, but the big shot himself, in flesh and blood.

"Legionnaire!" the one word rolled inside his head, ringing like the tolling of a bell. "Legionnaire!"

With a mighty effort, summoning all his strength, he levered himself away from the tree. Well worn words came unbidden to his lips:

"Detachment all present or accounted for, *mon colonel*."

And the colonel, who was troubled by a queer catch in his throat, said:

"Where is the rest of the detachment?"

The question seemed irrelevant. Through the red glare and the smoke Barney saw them line up, all the hard-boiled eggs: Waldeman and Karkovski, Norberg and Lintz and Bruno and a dozen others, and d'Auclair was there too, as spick and span and phlegmatic as though he had just stepped out of a bandbox.

He knew they were not there. They were dead. All of them, dead and black and stinking. He had seen them rot before his eyes, but he had to justify himself, he had to answer the colonel's question.

"The detachment is on parade," he

announced. "All present or accounted for."

Then the earth rocked crazily beneath his feet and the stars overhead wheeled together in an apocalyptic dance. His legs sagged and the colonel caught him as he fell.

"Where's that confounded doctor!" shouted the colonel, holding the blood-smear, powder-blackened scarecrow against his clean white tunic. "Damn it, gentlemen, where the devil is he?"



THE medical orderly lit a cigarette and placed it between Barney's lips.

"Just take it easy and relax," he said with professional assurance. "Ride with it. You'll get used to it in a little while."

Barney grunted dismally. Ether fumes welled up in his throat. He ached all over. The stretcher on which he lay was strapped to the sweating and odorous flank of a pack mule. Each step the mule took jarred every bone in his body. A canvas hood protected his bandaged head from the direct rays of the sun.

"And they call this an ambulance!" he complained.

"Of course," retorted the orderly, "heroic Legionnaires like you deserve six-wheeled motor ambulances, but a *cacolet* is the best we can do for you right now. It's not so bad after the first fifty kilometers or so. Why, I've transported some fellows who actually liked the sensation. There's no telling, by the time we reach Ain Fezzoul you may be crazy about it yourself. We'll be there in another couple of days."

Barney puffed on his cigarette, dropping ashes on his bandages. He was silent so long that the orderly bent down to look at him.

"Feeling all right? Want a drink or something?"

"Not now."

"Don't be bashful about it," the orderly insisted sarcastically. "I got my

orders. You can have anything you want within reason, lemonade or water with a little wine. The old man doesn't want a dead hero on his hands. He's going to pin that medal on your chest, my lad, right out there before the whole bunch."

Barney squirmed uncomfortably. Ever since he had come out of the ether and found himself strapped on the jolting *cacolet*, the doctor and the orderlies had talked of nothing but this medal he was supposed to get. He didn't give a damn about medals.

"What's eating you?" the orderly inquired. "You don't look happy. Wait till you see the write-up the old man gave you in brigade orders! You can't live this down, my old one. When you step out there on the parade ground at Ain Fezzoul and the drums begin to roll—"

"That's it," said Barney. "Ain Fezzoul."

The orderly gave him a startled look. "What's the matter with Ain Fezzoul?" He checked himself abruptly, sucking air through his teeth. "That's true too," he exclaimed. "You don't know what happened. Hasn't anybody told you?"

"Told me what?"

"About the district commandant. Listen, it's supposed to be confidential, but a man like me, in the hospital, I hear a lot of things. There's been hell to pay at Ain Fezzoul. It seems the old man went down there for a review and got the idea that that outfit of yours was in a lousy mess. He breezed down a couple of days later, nobody expected him, see?—and the lid blew off.

"Riverain said he'd sent your detachment to Bou Sefta, but one of the clerks butted right in with a copy of d'Auclaire's marching orders, and Riverain cracked up. He confessed he'd sent you to Ras el Baroud. Some grudge he had against d'Auclaire. That made a sweet stink: Riverain having hysterics and Aromanche bellowing so you could hear him for miles! He put Riverain under

close arrest. Riverain goes to his room and blows out his brains.

"After that things began to happen. The old man works fast. While the wireless was spitting orders at headquarters, getting the column under way, he went over that company of yours with a fine tooth comb, and did he dig up some dirt! Every sergeant in the XIVth has been demoted, back to the ranks, and Adjutant Casto is going to be courtmartialed. Neglect of duty, abusive treatment, illegal detention! He'll get ten years. Discipline means something in the Legion. You can't monkey with it. You ought to know that."

Barney lay back on his pillow and expelled a lungful of smoke. A tremendous weight had been lifted off his shoulders. The jolting of the *cacolet* no longer bothered him.

The past had been swept away, every last vestige of it. With the passing of Riverain and Casto even the memory of Walsh, the Detroit gangster, had been blotted out. Only Legionnaire Barney remained. And the Legion, as the orderly had said, could not be tampered with. It was hard as steel, incorruptible as gold. And though its purpose was war, with it Barney had at last found peace.

"What the hell's the matter with you?" inquired the orderly. "Have you gone to sleep again?"

"Not yet," grinned Barney. "I was just thinking—"

"About medals and such tripe, I suppose," jeered the orderly. "Step along, Marguerite! We don't need no hardware, the two of us. We wouldn't wear 'em on a bet."