

VALIANT DUST

by Percival Christopher Wren

...the Post One of the Foreign Legion in the Mekazen territory is being relieved. Under Major Riccoletti it will march to the Citadel of the Kaid of Mekazen ostensibly escorting Riccoletti there for a parley with the Kaid. Riccoletti, a long record of French heroism, plans to betray France to the Kaid, and having gotten his headquarters into the citadel under pretense of joining with the Kaid against France, plans further to murder the Kaid seize the citadel for himself and to become the Sultan Riccoletti. Riccoletti fears only the English in his command led by Otto Bellone, and their French pole "Tant de Solf" and Pere Pous-

Chapter 12

THE LEGION MARCHES

HAVING sounded their call in the center of the post, the buglers marched to the gate and again sounded the "assembly," outside the post. They then marched right round the walls sounding their strident urgent call to each of the other three points of the compass.

"Do put on a noo record. That one's settin' wore out," observed Sallor Harris as he stuffed a small kit into his sack.

"Wore out!" grunted William Bossum, rolling spare boots in blanket and tent-canvas that he proceeded to strap to his knapsack. "I reckon it's broke. They broke it. Yus... they broke the record," he chuckled. "Playin' it five times round five square yards to five men and a boy."

"Hi'mel A joke!" observed Sallor Harris in an annoying manner.

"You break the record for speed, my lad, or you'll be in for it," urged Joe Mummery, as he spun round and round winding twelve feet of broad woollen belt about his middle...

In the cook-house soup is being hastily prepared and loaves of bread laid out for distribution.

The tightly packed sacks, and the rifles are brought out and, by each man, laid in the place where he will fall in.

Once again the bugles sound, and almost immediately everybody is in his place, and the roll is called. Cartridges are distributed, the quartermaster and his orderlies issue reserve rations to each man, two tins, a pound of corned beef and a pound of biscuits. Each man also receives a little bag of coffee, one of salt and one of sugar.

Major Riccoletti mounts his horse. The men stand silent and steady as a rock, buglers ten paces to the right.

The Senegalese come to attention. Their guard present arms.

Forward! March!

The buglers strike up the March of the Legion and once more the Legion marches.

Always the Legion marches...

Some feel that Major Napoleon Riccoletti is being a little excessive. They have every intention of marching when on the way to billets in a real town, and all the joys thereof.

If all his men would not follow him to the Gates of Hell and through them, as he is fond of boasting, they will certainly follow him to the Gates of Mekazen and through them.

But it is a weary march across the burning waterless desert that is one of the chief factors in the impregnability of Mekazen: most powerful of the defenses that had kept the country inviolate since the days when the great Sheressian warrior ancestor of the Kaid conquered and colonized it, centuries before his descendants conquered and colonized Spain.

A weary march, needing no human enemies (in alliance with those of heat, thirst and sandstorms) to render it almost impossible.

How long ago it seemed to the over-strained, heat-stricken men, since the detachment of Senegalese infantry arrived at the post and took over charge; how long since their own bugles blew the assembly.

As usual, it was the aged and alcoholic Tant de Solf who could find breath for song and conversation.

"Do you know what we are?" he asked, as the column halted and flung itself down for its ten minutes' rest, at the sound of Major Riccoletti's whistle.

Sallor Harris's reply is better unrecorded.

"Speak for yourself," rebuked Tant de Solf. "I will tell you what we are—as distinguished from yourself. We are sheep. Sheep, I say—and I don't like it."

"We are being absolutely shepherded along. There are at least four scouts in touch with us. I don't like it, I say. I have lived for France and desire to go on living for France. I have no wish to die for

ROOSEVELT AND CLAUDEL CONFER

NEW YORK, Feb. 22.—(AP)—President-elect Roosevelt said today he had discussed the world economic conference and inter-governmental debts with Ambassador Claudel of France.

The president-elect declined to go into details with either his talk with M. Claudel or Douglas D. Herridge, the Canadian minister, another caller.

Mr. Roosevelt issued the following statement late today: "After conferring with Secretary Stimson in Washington on Monday, the French ambassador came to see me in New York today."

"We discussed unofficially all questions relating to collaboration between France and the United States in world affairs."

Broken windows glazed by Trowbridge Cabinet Works.

"What's this about being shepherded along?" asked Joe Mummery.

"Live there, you mean."

"No, I haven't," stated Pere Pous-

sin. "No? Well, you should march with your eyes open. Instead of staggering along half-fasped, bent double and with your eyes on the ground—as though you are looking for your lost innocence."

"Oh, shut up, you old wind-bag."

"You leaky wine-skin, be quiet... All the same—I don't like it," persisted Tant de Solf.

"Go and tell the Major you don't—and let us sleep."

A sudden cry from a sentry who extends a pointing arm.

A blast from the whistle... A shouted order...

In less than a minute the straggling, sprawling, recumbent column is in position, prepared to receive cavalry or anything else.

A whirlwind, consisting of buff, white, brown and grey camels ridden by yelling, rifle-brandishing men in flowing and fluttering white clothing, sweeps down upon the bayonet-bristling double rank, on the flank of which Major Riccoletti sits, cool and steady, on his horse.

"Wait for it," he cries, as a few rifles are raised from the "ready" to the "present."

It was a wild fierce charge, and if the tribesmen come on, the men must be swept away, stamped flat.

The strain is terrible. The instinct of self-preservation strong.

A man throws his rifle up to his shoulder—and a sergeant flicks him so violently from behind that he almost falls.

"Steady—you wretched recruit," he growls. "Wait for it."

"This is madness," observes Tant de Solf as the avalanche surges down upon the thin khaki line.

But there is method in Major Riccoletti's madness.

Suddenly, a man who has throughout kept ahead of the charging horde, throws up his hand, and instantly the company divides and wheels, one half to the left, the other to the right, and instead of overwhelming the soldiers and trampling them into sand, out-flanks them on either wing, surrounds and envelops them.

The leader rides up to Major Riccoletti, laughs and salutes in semi-military fashion.

"Good morning, Major," says he, in excellent French. "You were expecting us?"

"I was, Prince Raisul," he replies. "My men were not... You have thus already seen something of their steadiness and discipline."

"Quite good, my dear Major."

"Yes, I am glad that neither you nor any man of yours was shot. One may observe that you took a risk, Prince Raisul."

"Oh, I like taking risks, don't you? I too am glad for all your—our—sakes that no one was shot..."

From that hour the "military mission" was undoubtedly shepherded as Tant de Solf had said, or escorted as Raisul said, on the remainder of its roundabout and terrible journey—roundabout because no one whatsoever was allowed to approach France-defying, Spain-defying, Europe-defying Mekazen, by the direct and secret route through oases and mountain pass; terrible because of the incredible heat, lack of water and looseness of the soft and shifting sand...

And one morning, a day or two later, the red tired eyes of the weary marchers were gladdened by the sight, upon the far horizon, of the minarets and domes of the city of Mekazen, rising from a sea of palms that appeared in the shimmering light to flow about the base of the mighty cliff of rock, on the summit of which was perched the great citadel of Mekazen, impregnable, inviolate, virgin even to that day.

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The Legion finds an amazing situation, Monday, in Mekazen.

DEBATE FRIDAY ON MANCHURIA POLICY

GENEVA, Feb. 22.—(AP)—The League of Nations report condemning Japan's Manchurian policy was presented this afternoon to the league assembly, which then adjourned without discussion until Friday, when the report will be debated.

Paul Hyama, Belgium's foreign minister and president of the assembly, told the members in presenting the report that the conciliation committee of 19 had failed to effect a peaceful adjustment.

Last week for Midget Photo Special at Peaseley's Studio.

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REPEAL CONVENTIONS WILL COST HUGE SUM

WASHINGTON, Feb. 22.—(AP)—Catholic ladies are serving delicious turkey dinner at Parish hall, Thursday from 5:30 to 7:30.

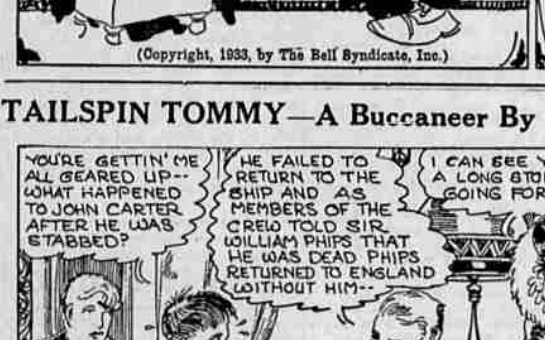
must create the constitutional conventions for action on prohibition repeal, today estimated they would cost \$7,500,000.

"This sum would finance the election and the transportation of delegates at five cents a mile," he told newspapermen.

Telephone at night

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



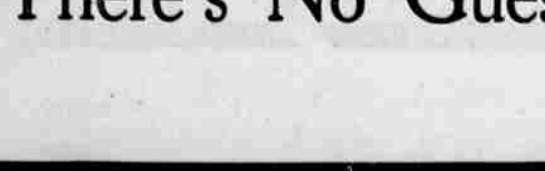
TAILSPIN TOMMY—A Buccaneer By Chance—Not By Choice

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—The Awful Charges!

By EDWIN ALGER



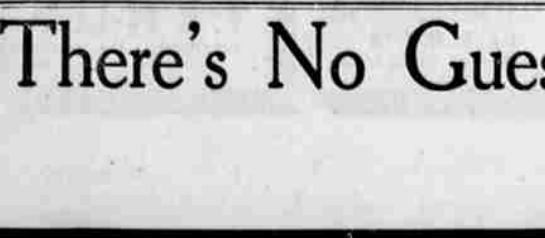
THE NEBBS—Nice Weather We're Having

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



TELEPHONE AT NIGHT

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



REPEAL CONVENTIONS WILL COST HUGE SUM

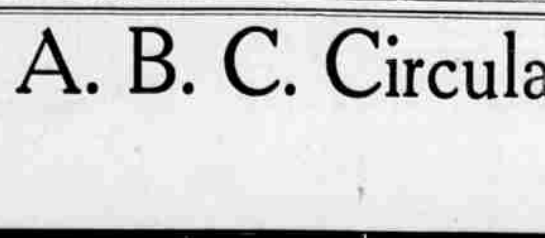
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"Buy American" Is Legislation Order

WASHINGTON, Feb. 22.—(AP)—The house today accepted the "Buy American" senate amendment to the treasury-postoffice supply bill, directing government agencies to purchase articles produced in the United States

In preference to those of foreign production.

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