

● SERIAL STORY

MEXICAN MASQUERADE

BY CECIL CARNES

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EXPLORATION

"Ah, now you misjudge me," protested Escobar quickly, and if his tone was equable, there was still a trace of red to color the clear olive skin of his cheeks. "As the officer responsible for this district, I have lately found it advisable to keep an eye on telegrams. A mild censorship, you see, quite unofficial and very extra-legal. The wire to you came through the San Saba office while I was there, and it was placed before me as a matter of routine—police routine, senior."

"I beg your pardon," said Allan, rising and holding out his hand to make it more convincing. "I should have remembered your official position and not spoken out of turn. With the whole world going to hell in a hack you are certainly justified in doing everything you can to keep this little corner of it peaceful."

"My sentiments exactly," nodded the Mexican, and gave a friendly pressure of his strong fingers to Allan's hand. "And now—you will excuse me, yes? Perhaps we shall have the pleasure of your company at dinner this evening."

His smiling, debonaire self again, he sauntered back to where his charming companion awaited him. Allan made a grimace at the treacherous telegram and stuck the thing in his pocket.

He gave some thought to the incident that afternoon when he wasn't wondering if the axles would snap or the radiator blow up. Whatever else Escobar might be, he was still the Government with a capital G in this neck of the woods and it made Allan a bit uncomfortable to think he might have become an object of suspicion to the police. It would be ruinous to his mission if he were slapped into the local hoosegow on charge of being a spy or fifth-columnist or something.

But the colonel had seemed quite good-humored about it, he tried to reassure himself, and if he really had serious doubts of Allan's bona fides he would hardly have tipped off his hand so openly about the "extra-legal" censorship. Moreover, his suggestion of dinner together had sounded cordial, and he had drifted away smiling.

Not that the smile meant much, mused Allan, dissuading the sedan from plunging into a clump of cholla cactus. Mexicans have a reputation for taking life easily, but they stand for no foolishness. "Damn efficient, these rurales!" muttered Allan. "The way he spotted that San Diego date-line—! Dammit, he's good!"

WHEN his speedometer had jolted off nearly ten miles of highway hell, Allan slowed up and began to look about him for Sun Su's landmark. He discovered it presently, well off to the left of the road he was on and evidently quite near the shore of the Gulf. It was a steep little hill, perhaps thirty feet high, and the top was crowned by a grove of knotty, gnarled old pines. If he could gain their shelter unseen, he could be comfortably sure of remaining so.

There was a jungle of cactus to the right. He located a break in the gray-green wall, turned into it daintily, and parked the long-suffering sedan where it would not be noticed from the road.

Not a soul was in sight. He might have thought he had Lower California to himself but for faint sounds of human activity which came from the direction of the gulf. Distant voices, and mixed with them the rattle of chains and the clank of machinery.

"The cannery, I expect. The cannery—and what else?" His right hand went back to touch his hip-pocket, though the weight of his automatic was proof enough of his presence. Just for luck, and thinking of poor Harry Bishop, he took it out and made sure it was in readiness for use in case anybody came after him with a hypodermic needle. "Well, here goes!"

Stooping a little, his alert eyes watchful, he left the dusty road and headed cross-country for the pine-topped hill. He had on canvas leggings which protected him from cactus spines—and other more deadly perils. Several big scorpions scuttled away at his swift approach, and at least one side-winder rattled an angry warning at him to watch his step.

shore; on the farthest, a long pier jutted out into the water. The other occupied island was a good deal smaller than the first. Allan noted a reeomy, white stone bungalow in the center, and a small structure, apparently a boat-house, on its nearest shore. He saw the figures of a man and a woman pacing to and fro on a tiled path, and he focused his glasses on them curiously. Neither was Japanese. The woman was young, blonde, and rather pretty in a pliant way, he decided. The man was blond, too, tall and broad-shouldered; he might have been an American but for the way he gesticulated with his hands as he talked.

Still and all, the chief feature of the scene to hold Allan's bemused attention was on the Peninsula itself. A little way off, a crew of Japanese workmen were digging into the side of a small mountain with picks and shovels. They seemed to be excavating a dark, clay-like substance which was put on hand barrows and carried to a big scow by the water's edge. When it was loaded, the scow was towed by a launch to the cannery island and another scow came up to be filled.

"Something wrong about this," muttered Allan, wrinkling his brow in perplexity. "You don't use clay in canning fish, do you? I wonder why the San Hill Sun Su didn't mention this digging? It could have started, I suppose, after he received his last report from his pals. He shook his head regretfully. "Wish I knew more about soils—"

In the middle of that wish, a rattlesnake whirled some yards behind him. He had done nothing himself to startle the most nervous of side-winders; he turned his head quickly to see what had.

He found himself looking

straight into the muzzle of a rifle. It was held by the squat Eurasian, and behind him were six short but strongly built Japanese. The squat man growled a guttural order.

"Hands up, Senior Steele! Pronto!"

(To Be Continued)

Pvt. Ernest B. MacArthur reads of his grand uncle's exploits as a couple of buddies look on at Jefferson Barracks, Mo.

THE FAMOUS DUAL-TEMP
Stewart Warner
REFRIGERATOR
with the
Freezing Locker
Still at LAST
Year's Prices!
UHLIG'S
1026 Main

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson

IN BRAZIL,
PEOPLE ARE
KILLED EVERY
YEAR BY
FALLING
BRAZIL NUTS!
THE HARD
ROUND SHELLS,
EACH CONTAINING
SOME TWENTY
NUTS, DROP FROM
200-FOOT TREES
WITH TERRIFIC
SPEED, AND
BOMBS-LIKE
EFFECT!

QUOTING ODDS
COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.
T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

A MILLION-YEAR-OLD V FOR VICTORY!
A PERFECT LETTER
FORMED OF A HARDER
MINERAL IMBEDDED IN
A STONE CONTAINING
FOSSIL SEA SHELLS.
FOUND BY
MRS. ELMER
FISCHER,
WILMINGTON,
DELAWARE.

**"IF YOUR NAME IS LONG,
IT'S SHORT,"** Says
TOM CURRAN,
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

HEAD OF U. S. CIVILIAN DEFENSE

HORIZONTAL
1 Pictured U. S. official.
10 Undefined.
11 Long fish.
12 Verbal.
13 Low chirping note.
14 Ardor.
15 Tear.
16 Pair (abbr.).
17 Greek letter.
18 Theater sign (abbr.).
19 Symbol for erbium.
20 Print measure.
21 Sour.
22 Enemy.
23 Gorch.
24 Otherwise.
25 Obtains.
26 Born.
27 Like.
28 Tiredness.
29 British (abbr.).

Answer to Previous Puzzle

R	E	S	C	U	E	S	Q	U	A	D	S
S	T	R	A	I	N	E	S	U	P	S	E
T	E	N	A	R	D	S	L	A	P	E	S
R	E	E	R	E	P	L	A	C	E	R	I
A	M	B	O	R	A	O	K	R	A	O	M
V	I	T	O	S	S	A	L	T	A		
C	R	A	I	D	R	E	S	C	U	E	S
C	O	L	D	R	E	S	C	U	E	S	
A	R	A	D	S	I	S	R	N	O		
M	I	N	I	E	P	A	T	E	M	P	O
S	I	N	N	E	R						
T	E	N	N	E	M	E	N				

VERTICAL
1 Leap.
2 Exist.
3 Myself.
4 Fasten by stitches.
5 Sheltered place.
6 Beverage.
7 Accomplish.
8 Anger.
9 Act of selling.
10 Suffering.
11 Tardy.
12 Snare.
13 Stepped on.
14 Appellation.
15 Composer.

ALLEY OOP
THE PREHISTORIC MAN WHOSE BLUNDERING COURSE THROUGH THE PAGES OF HISTORY HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE BY A MODERN SCIENTIST'S TIME-MACHINE.

NOW SMACKS INTO 1942
AND THE GREATEST HISTORICAL EPISODE OF ALL TIME!

ALTHOUGH FANTASTIC IN THEIR IMAGINATION, THE ADVENTURES OF OUR HERO ARE BASED ON LOGIC AND THE TECHNICAL DETAILS ARE DERIVED FROM AUTHORITY.

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO THE BRAVE MEN OF OUR ARMED FORCES AND THE MILITONS WHO STAND SOLIDLY BEHIND THEM.

THE AUTHOR

OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams

THERE'S TWO PIPES IN THIS COAT-- MAYBE THAT'S WHY YOU SMELL ON YOUR COATS-- BUT THIS OTHER COAT IS TH' ONE PA USES TO GROOM TH' HORSE AN' CLEAN TH' BARN! MAYBE

IT'S BOTH! TH' COAT WITH THE PIPES WAS HANGING OVER MY COAT AND THE STABLE COAT OVER MARS-- WE EACH SMELL DIFFERENT!

AND NOW HE'S GOT THEM BOTH! TAKE THAT OUT OF YOUR MOUTH AND HANG THOSE ON THE BACK PORCH WHERE I'VE TOLD YOUR FATHER TO KEEP THEM!

BORN THIRTY YEARS TOO SOON

RED RYDER

OFFERING TO MATCH EVERY DOLLAR RED RYDER COLLECTS FOR THE NEW SCHOOL. EH? ARE YOU CRAZY, BOSS?

YEAH... LIKE A FOX! HA-HA!

THAT JUST MAKES RYDER WORK HARDER. THEY'VE FINISHED BUILDING THE SCHOOL AND THE RODEO BENEFIT STARTS TOMORROW!

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

DOC BLUNT--CHUCK--KATIE--LORETTA--ANNE AND SANDY-- QUITE A HOUSEHOLD FOR A BACHELOR WHO RATHER FANCED HIMSELF AS A RECLUSE UP TO A FEW MONTHS AGO-- AH-H-- THE HOUSEHOLD CASH DRAWER--

HM-M--ELEVEN DOLLARS AND EIGHTY CENTS-- I THOUGHT THERE'D BE MORE-- BUT WHAT'S THIS? DEFENSE STAMPS-- A WHOLE BALE OF THEM--

OH, DOCTOR-- ANNE THOUGHT OF IT-- YOU SEE SOME PEOPLE BUY EXTRA THINGS NOW, TO PUT AWAY--

HOARDING, YOU MEAN? SUCH THINGS AS SUGAR, PERHAPS?

YES--ANNIE SAID, LET'S HOARD, TOO. ONLY LET US SPEND EVERY CENT WE CAN SAVE ON THE HOUSE MONEY FOR DEFENSE STAMPS, AND HOARD THEM-- I-- I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND--

MIND! HERE! HERE'S AN EXTRA HUNDRED DOLLARS! ADD 'BOND TO THAT 'HOARD!

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

SAY BOOTS-- REMEMBER THAT DATE YGAVE ME FOR THIS P.M.?

SURE

WELL, G-GOSH-- LOOK! WOULD Y'MIND GIVIN' IT T'ANOTHER GUY?

WHY, FERD-- WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WASH TUBS

AS EASY AS REACHES THE PHILIP-PINE SHORE:

POW! POW!

WUP! SMALL CALIBER RIFLE... POSSIBLY A JAPANESE SENTRY

FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

FROSTY SLIPPED THAT CHECK IN THERE JUST SO I'D BE OUT OF BALANCE!

WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT NOW, FRECKLES?

I CAN TAKE YOU TO THAT DANCE AND POP HIM RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS SCHNOZZ!

ARE YOU TAKING ME JUST TO SPITE JUNE?

NOT A CHANCE, JUD! I'M TAKING YOU BECAUSE YOU'RE CUTE!

THAT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO SAY, FRECKLES-- BUT I'D HAVE GONE ANYWAY!

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THE AUTHOR

OUR BOARDING HOUSE, with Major Hoople

NAWP! MISTAH MAJOR AIN'T HOME TODAY. HE FLEW OFF SUDDEN LAGS' NIGHT TO TEND A REUNION OB DE HOOPLE FAMILY AT DE SOUF POLE! ON DE WAY BACK HE AIM TO STOP AN' SPEND TH' SUMMER IN SIBERIA OR MEXICO AN' GOME OB DEM PLACES.

EVERYTHING WRONG HE DOES WELL--

WELL, THAT'S TOO BAD! JUST TELL HIM WHEN HE COMES HOME HIS ABSENCE COST HIM \$25-- WE WANTED HIM TO JUDGE A THOROUGHBORED PIG CONTEST!

By Fred Harman

GOOD! WE WILL HOPE FOR GOOD WEATHER. A GOOD CROWD AND A BIG PURSE!

HA-HA!

YOU SOUND PLUMB DAFKY, BUT I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOIN', BILLY!

MY MAN, GAZE UPON THIS ESTABLISHMENT! COULD A MAN WHO DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HE WAS DOING OWN THE MOST SUCCESSFUL ENTERPRISE IN VALLEY CENTER, AHEH!

By Harold Gray

BY JEEPY, THIS WAR IS GETTIN' SERIOUS!

By Martin

AW--I MET A YOUNG FLYER TODAY! HE DOESN'T KNOW ANYONE HERE-- AN' HE'S HOMESICK-- AN' WELL-- IT'D BE SWEET IF YOU SORTA CHEER 'IM UP-- JUS-- SORTA--

--YOU MEAN YOU-- ARE WILLING TO GIVE UP YOUR DATE-- YOU'RE ASKING ME TO GO OUT WITH ANOTHER BOY--

By Cran

OH, WELL, HE'S SOMEWHERE ACROSS THE BAY... BUT WHERE THE BLAZES ARE THE SCOUTS WHO WERE TO MEET ME? AH, HERE'S THE TRAIL-- I'LL FOLLOW IT TO A SAFER HIDING PLACE AND WAIT

STOP! PLEASE RAISE HANDS

By Blosser

THAT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO SAY, FRECKLES-- BUT I'D HAVE GONE ANYWAY!

By V. T. Hamlin

FRESH FROM AN ADVENTURE IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND, ALLEY OOP POP-EYED WITH WONDER, STARES AT A FIRE-BREATHING MONSTER OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

WHAT IN THE JUMPIN' BLUE BLazes IS THAT CONTRAPTION?

WHO SAID HE WAS AN INDIAN? HE SURE DOESN'T TALK LIKE ONE!

MEBBE HE'S A COLLEGE GRADUATE