

# SPEED ADVENTURE STORIES



MAY, 1944

Vol. 2, No. 4

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SPEED ADVENTURE STORIES is published bi-monthly by Arrow Publications, Inc., 29 Worthington Street, Springfield, 3, Mass. Editorial offices at 126 East Forty-sixth Street, New York, 17, N. Y. Entered as second-class matter, March 23, 1943, at the Post Office at Springfield, Mass., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Yearly, \$3.75; single copy, 15c. Canadian and foreign postage extra. Manuscripts should be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelope and are submitted at the author's risk. Copyright, 1944, by Arrow Publications, Inc.

# COCONUT CARGO

"JUMPER, she sails pretty," said Captain James M'Shane to his Kanaka boy, who was mate, steward, bo's'n, and able seaman in one. "A new ship is like a new woman's face: it takes time to get used to it. But this *Albatross* is a handy schooner, and I've got to hand it her.

"I'll miss the old girl, after three-and-twenty years in her, but I'm glad I scuttled her, when she was past repatching, rather than sell her to a marine junkyard. Now we're broke, down on our beam-ends, Jumper, but we've got a ship, and we've got a cargo that'll put us in the black, if we can deliver it."

"Me no like deliver bang-bang to Japanese feller, captain," answered Jumper.

"Me British subject like yourself."

"Don't like delivering ammunition to the Japs?" retorted M'Shane, tugging at his red beard. "Why, Jumper, you're crazy! Those Japs at Bongo Bongo are fighting Americans and Australians, not England. They're desperate for ammunition, and, unless we can run this block-

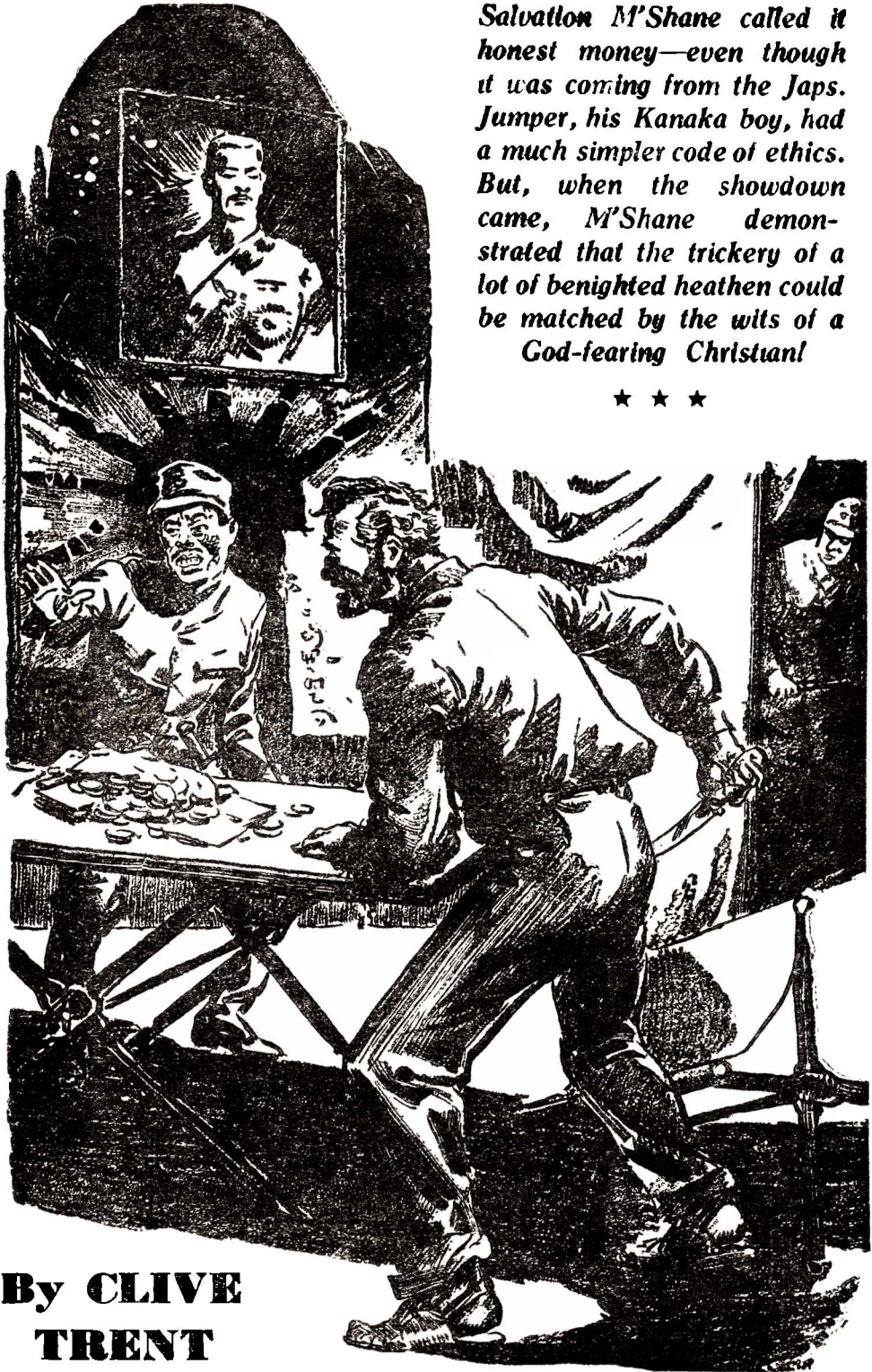


*For a moment those two were back in the black-birding days of their youth.*

★ ★ ★

*Salvation M'Shane called it honest money—even though it was coming from the Japs. Jumper, his Kanaka boy, had a much simpler code of ethics. But, when the showdown came, M'Shane demonstrated that the trickery of a lot of benighted heathen could be matched by the wits of a God-fearing Christian!*

★ ★ ★



**By CLIVE  
TRENT**

ade, they'll have to give up. I tell you there's a fortune in this, if we can get through the sea-patrols.

"You're talking nonsense, boy. Remember that Yank Marine whose face I broke my hand on, in Sydney? And remember that Aussie lieutenant who boarded me at Whatyoucallum, and sent a plane to help Lord get away, when he had him cornered? I've got no love for either of them, and, if Lord can make a fortune in this business, I reckon we're due for a few pickings, too."

"You work with Lord?" asked Jumper.

"Work with Lord? Why, Lord's waiting for us at Bongo Bongo, with the Japs there, and he's got bags full of gold to pay us with. Just because we split up years ago, when I saw the light and quit blackbirding, and just because we've crossed each other's trail a few times since, ain't any reason why we should throw honest money away."

"Let them fight their own wars. I'm fighting mine, for the right to live, Jumper. The right to earn enough to retire to a little farm in England, in sight of the sea and, grow turnips and marigolds, and watch the ships sail up and down the coast, and—and provide properly for the little woman who's waiting for me so patient, Jumper.

"But you wouldn't understand a man being true to his lawful wife. You're still a heathen, Jumper, me lad, and I've never been able to whale those heathen notions out of you."

"But, captain, you are an officer in Australia navy. You make sign papers."

"Well, what about it?" snarled M'Shane. "Ain't it been the immemorial custom of the Navy to sail under false

colors for the purpose of deceiving the enemy? You watch that wheel, while I go below and inspect the cargo."

**JUMPER** was an expert seaman. He had sailed with M'Shane for years, but always, just when he thought he understood him, some queer quirk had shown him that there were depths in the white man's mind that he would never master.

He was M'Shane's closest confidant. They had faced many perils together

since the days when his master got religion, and quit blackbirding with Lord. He loved the fiery little man with the bright red forked beard, that thrust itself out at an aggressive angle from his chin. But he had never understood him.

Jumper knew that the Japanese were savages who had come down from the north and overrun the islands and that the Australians and the Americans were fighting them.

So he couldn't understand how M'Shane could be taking ammunition to them, when he was in the service of the Australian Government.

Down in the hold were cases and cases of the tiny Japanese small-arms ammunition—enough to keep Bongo Bongo, their toehold on New Guinea, supplied for weeks.

Down in the hold of the schooner, which was packed so heavily that the *Albatross* was loaded far beyond any imaginary Plimsoll line, were all those cases, together with shells, the whole covered two feet deep with coconuts. To all appearance, the *Albatross* was an innocent coastal trading ship, engaged in the copra business.

Jumper didn't like the situation at all, but nothing M'Shane did could be wrong.

## PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

The use of paper in book and magazine publishing has been curtailed sharply by the War Production Board.

In line with the Board's rulings to conserve materials and manpower, we are cooperating by:

1. Using lighter weight paper to reduce the bulk of our magazines.
2. Printing magazines with narrower margins, permitting fewer pages in each magazine, but without curtailing the total number of words or stories.

These measures will save paper and plate metal and labor and shipping space. We are sure you will understand our desire to cooperate with the objectives of the War Production Board and our government.



"Get up on deck and don't make a false move," said the lieutenant.

And M'Shane had made a Christian out of him, and Jumper had sent away all but one of his wives—the prettiest. That had been harder than running contraband into Bongo Bongo.

M'Shane walked through the hold, inspecting his cargo. He picked up an occasional coconut, examined it, and then laid it gently down. He was thinking hard. He had to make Bongo Bongo within four days, or he'd lose more of that gold than he wanted to. There was a premium on time.

A shout from Jumper brought him back to the deck. About a mile away, between the *Albatross* and the New Guinea coast-

line, which showed like a murky thread upon the silver water, an Australian patrol-boat was scudding.

Flags were going up: "Heave to for examination!"

"Run up that damn' jib!" roared M'Shane. "Maybe we can best her, if we can make Dead Man's Reef!"

**T**HERE wasn't a chance of making Dead Man's Reef, and the blue ensign of Australia, with the Jack in the fly, and the six stars that M'Shane flew, didn't make the least difference to the pursuing cutter. An ominous boom, and a splash a hundred yards abaft, forced the

captain to let down his fore and main sails. Resignedly he ordered Jumper to drop the anchor, and the cutter came alongside.

A spruce young officer in white called through a megaphone, with a Sydney accent: "I'm coming aboard to look over your cargo. Let down a ladder!"

In a minute or two he had climbed up to the deck. "Who the devil are you?" he asked.

That was a question that cut M'Shane to the soul. M'Shane, of the red beard and proselytizing tendencies, was known from Tonga to Auckland, from Sydney to Malacca. The young man was a novice at the business, but that fact didn't ease the captain's sense of outrage.

"Captain M'Shane, sir, out of Port Moresby, with a cargo of nuts for Sydney," he answered meekly.

"I'll see your papers, and then I'll see your cargo."

"You'll have a drink, sir?"

"Do what I told you!" snapped the stripling.

It was almost more than the fiery little captain could bear, but he had to keep that red-hot temper of his under control, and he led the way to his cabin. An inspection of his papers showed that they were in perfect order, and the young officer went down the hatch into the gloom of the hold. Here nothing was visible but the piles of coconuts in their racks.

"You're riding pretty low for a cargo of coconuts," said the young officer.

"Port Moresby coconuts are well known for their specific gravity," returned M'Shane. "For heaven's sake be careful, sir! Don't throw them about like that. You'll bust them!"

But already the ammunition cases had come into plain view, and, though it was too dark to read, nobody could mistake the Japanese characters on them. M'Shane saw the muzzle of an automatic pointed at his midriff.

"Get up on deck, and don't make a false move," said the lieutenant. "We know all about you."

On deck the captain found Jumper facing the carbines of two Australian sailors.

"Shoot this man if he makes a break,"

said the young officer. He beckoned to two men in the cutter, which was riding not twenty feet away. "We're taking the *Albatross* in tow into Lowela," he called. "Make fast!"

**L**OWELA was the dirtiest and meanest post on the New Guinea shore. Five years before, it had been an unexplored jungle, inhabited by wild pigs, kangaroos, dingoes and a few natives, perched in huts on stilts that rose above the stagnant marches. Now it had a police commissioner, a dozen native soldiers, a government hut, and a jail hut, and a tiny wharf afforded a tie-up place for the cutter.

After the war was over, it would almost certainly be evacuated, but for the present it was useful as a radio station and observation post. The radio happened to be out of commission, but young Lieutenant Chambers, of the cutter, and his four seamen, were mightily alert.

At the entrance to the jail hut M'Shane said, "If you'll put me on your wireless, I think I can clear up this trouble. I tell you I've to get on my way."

"That's your way," snapped Mr. Chambers, pointing inside.

M'Shane stepped into a dirty hut, under the menace of two Papuans armed with carbines. He shrugged his shoulders. He'd been in worse jams before. It was only that, if they didn't let him out quick, something quite unexpected was booked to happen.

He meditated for about twenty minutes, and then a ferocious-looking Papuan appeared, with a towel over his shoulder, a basin of water in his hand, and something else, and Lieutenant Chambers behind him.

"Sit down, M'Shane," said Chambers, indicating the rickety army cot.

"You going to cut my throat?" gulped the captain, trying not to recognize the fatal situation in which he was engulfed.

"You're going to be shaved," said Lieutenant Chambers.

"Great guns of glory!" shouted M'Shane. "You can't do that to me!"

"The regulations state that all prison-

Humiliated, outraged, he swore revenge, but that revenge would have to wait.

He put his hand to his chin. It was as smooth as a girl's. Without his beard, he was like Samson without his hair. His personality was destroyed.

And he had just four days in which to



"Run, Jumper!" he yelled. "And don't drop that bag! I'll follow you."

ers must have shaves and haircuts," replied Chambers coldly. "I advise you to sit still, M'Shane. Sour Herring is an enthusiastic barber."

**I**T was a licked, but not entirely hopeless M'Shane who sat on his cot, with the moonlight streaming into the hut, looking at the tufts of red hair on the ground.

deliver his cargo at Bongo Bongo. If he didn't deliver it by then, all hell would break loose. There were matters at stake which he might explain to Chambers, but he was damned if he would.

Lieutenant Chambers came to the door of the hut. "Well, M'Shane, and what decision have you come to?" he asked.

"I ain't been asked for any decision,

whippersnapper," snarled the little captain.

"Vulgarity will get you nowhere, M'Shane," responded Chambers. "I've been looking through our official files. There is some reference to a M'Shane, in association with one Captain Lord, a notorious blackbirder and smuggler. I presume you are that man.

"Your papers, showing you to be a representative of the Australian Government, are a neat forgery, but not impressive. As for your beard, about which you made such an outcry, it is customary to shave all condemned prisoners. The beard is apt to interfere with the smooth running of the rope. Yes, M'Shane, your life isn't worth a single one of those coconuts that you used to cover that shipment of Jap ammunition."

M'Shane chuckled. Chambers didn't know those coconuts. He waited.

"I have reason to believe that you are the agent for an important ring of gun-runners. If you choose to make a complete confession, naming your associates, I'll submit a recommendation for mercy when I send you to headquarters."

M'Shane arose. He drew himself up to his full height of five feet six. "You can go to hell, melad," he said, with icy dignity. "I and my friends, Hirohito and Tojo, are going to settle your hash when the illustrious Sons of Heaven really get going. There's going to be some first-class belly-cutting, Chambers, and you'll have first-hand information."

"Impenitent," sneered Chambers. "The yelp of a trapped fox, M'Shane. I've got your measure now. I hope we'll give you a good, tight neck-fit, M'Shane. Our ropes don't shrink in the laundry."

He stalked out, leaving M'Shane to his own meditations.

**F**OUR days—three days now, in which to deliver that cargo. M'Shane groaned in his agony of spirit. He wondered what had happened to Jumper. The boy had helped him out of many difficult situations in the past, but what could he do now, with two armed native Papuan soldiers parading in front of the jail-hut, and looking in now and again, to make

sure that he hadn't taken wings and flown through the roof?

The night was wearing away. Outside M'Shane could hear the noises of the night, the yelp of a dingo, the rustling of the palms. In the morning he knew he would be taken to headquarters, wherever that was, for summary trial. M'Shane couldn't afford to face a trial. He had to get free.

In the end, he must have fallen into a doze, for he was awakened by hearing his name whispered. He started up. In the moonlight he saw Jumper standing before him, and he started to his feet in amazement.

"You come along me, captain. All soldiers gone," whispered the Kanaka.

Unable to believe it, M'Shane followed Jumper from the hut. It was true. The hut was unguarded. In a moment they were moving through the jungle in the direction of the tiny wharf.

Moored to the wharf on either side were the Government cutter and the *Albatross*. There was no sign of a watchman.

"Me kill Govment engine," explained Jumper. "Me bust him carburettor. He no can go catch us now."

"Jumper, melad, you're a jewel," said M'Shane. "But how did you get rid of the guards? You know. Soldier mans who make watch me and *Albatross*."

Jumper grinned. "*Lubras* see you beard, captain," he answered. "All *lubras* in Lowela want to say how-do to you. They love you beard, Captain. Me tell them to take guarda talkee-talkee in bush, and then maybe I show them you beard."

"You dissolute heathen, you mean you got the girls to lure the guards away with the promise that they'd get the chance to make up to me?" demanded M'Shane. "Those poor black wenches who know nothing of the Word? Jumper, I'll whale the Truth into you if it's the last act of my life."

"It get light soon," said Jumper. "We push off now, captain, before they see us and start fire bang-bang."

**B**Y dawn, Lowela was a mere speck on the horizon. Under a freshening wind, the *Albatross* careened through the



waves, with her cargo of ammunition. It was only three days to Bongo Bongo, and now there was no likelihood of interception. Lord would be waiting at Bongo Bongo, with his gold. M'Shane rubbed his stubbly chin with satisfaction. Of course, Lord might double-cross him about the money. But M'Shane didn't really care about the money.

He was getting to be an old fellow now. He was forty, and he had been twenty years in Pacific waters. It was twenty years since he had seen his wife, though he had sent her money scrupulously, and had heard from her a few times. There had been ten years of blackbirding and outlawry, with Lord, before he had seen the light. There had been two years as an official of the Australian Government. Now, with the prospect of five thousand pounds in English gold, and retirement, he knew he didn't want to see Jessie again.

She was something out of his past, something he hated to go back to. Her letters were bitter, always demanding money, and more money. He hated women anyway, cluttering up a man's life. He liked his ship, and Jumper, and the free adventure of the South Seas. He half hoped Lord would double-cross him, so that he wouldn't have to retire.

He brooded during the two days that followed. On the second evening Jumper, who was an expert seaman, came to him as he stood his trick at the wheel.

"Tomorrow we come to Bongo Bongo," he said.

"Well, what about it?"

"Me no like work with Lord. Me no like sell bang-bang to Japanese feller. We turn back, captain, yes?"

"I've told you no!" roared M'Shane. "What's the matter with you, Jumper?"

"Me British subject. Me no like sell to Jap feller."

"Jumper, I've tried to overcome your scruples the best I know how. I told you we're getting at those damned Yanks and Aussies. I've told you there'll be more money than you've ever seen in your life."

"But you Christian feller, captain. Me no understand," wailed Jumper.

"Melad, is this mutiny?"

"No mutiny, captain. Only me no understand," Jumper lamented.

"Maybe you'll understand when you see that gold," snarled M'Shane. "Get over to this wheel, and stop muddling up your black head with things that's too deep for you."

**T**HERE was plenty of evidence of the presence of the Japanese at Bongo Bongo. M'Shane could hear the roar of artillery fire before he came in sight of the little bay. Then he saw a line of smoke along the ridge of the hills behind the little settlement, where the Australian shells were bursting.

The Japs were answering. They still had ammunition enough for that. But they were waiting anxiously for M'Shane. That was shown by the joyous wavings from the deck of the destroyer that escorted the *Albatross* into the harbor, and stood by while she was made fast to the little dock by half-a-score of Jap soldiers.

Jap troops swarmed in the settlement. A company was marching up the heights along a dirt road. Everywhere was bustle and activity. The rim of sunken barges along the shore, and the burned out storehouses along the sea-front paid tribute to visits of the Australian air force, and showed that M'Shane had arrived at a crucial moment.

A Japanese officer was waiting, with his staff, and with him was Lord, his black beard tinged with gray now, his eyes as shifty and his face as villainous as ever.

"Howdy, M'Shane. I reckoned you'd get through. Meet Captain Minami."

The little Jap officer hissed through his teeth, and gave M'Shane his hand. "I am glad you have come," he said. "We are in need of your cargo. You had no trouble?"

"Held up at Lowela," M'Shane grunted. "Little fool of an Aussie officer. Never mind that. Here I am. Where's my money?"

"You shall have him," answered Minami. "I give you much thanks in the name of my Emperor. I shall look at the cargo."

"Go ahead," answered M'Shane. "I'll show you my bill of lading. Had a devil of a time. I'm shipping coconuts."

(Continued on page 66)

# Coconut Cargo

(Continued from page 11)

"Coconuts?" asked Minami.

"Yeah, two feet of them above the ammunition. That little ass at Lowela got wise, but I gave him the slip. I'll help with the unloading. You've got to be careful with them coconuts. They're ripe, and there's good copra in them. Maybe I'll pick up a market for them before I get back to Sydney."

**T**HE little Japs uttered cries of delight at the discovery of the ammunition under the nuts. M'Shane was here, there and everywhere, superintending. He seemed to value his coconuts, though there would be only a very minor load of them, after the ammunition cases and shells had been removed.

"Our ammunition is almost gone," said Minami gratefully. "You have saved the day for us. You must have dinner with me."

"I'll see the stuff off first," answered M'Shane. "Where's your dump?"

Minami pointed up the hill. "Below the top," he said. "We have only one day's supplies left. Again, I do not know how to thank you enough."

"Gimme a gang," said M'Shane.

He toiled like any laborer until toward sundown, by which time the bulk of the ammunition had been transferred. The shells had been distributed among the guns. Some of the cases of smallarms ammunition had been broken up for the troops, and the rest piled high on the dump. Here and there the husk of a coconut protruded out of the masses of cartridges. By sundown there was a heap fifty yards in length, and of considerable height and thickness, under the shelter of an outcrop of rock, where no Aussie shell could reach it, save by a miracle.

Now and again an enemy shell would explode on the crest, but the soldiers, working under cover, sustained no injuries.

M'Shane stopped at last, and wiped

the sweat from his forehead. "Well, that's that," he said. "And now I could eat an ox."

Lord came up, leering. "Minami has dinner ready for us, M'Shane," he said.

That dinner was good. The steak was probably water-buffalo, but it was as good as any M'Shane had ever tasted. It was dark when M'Shane laid down his knife and fork and pushed back his chair.

"Good grub," he said. "And now I guess I'll take advantage of the night and get out of the harbor. I'm ready to settle up with you, Captain Minami."

"Oh yes," grinned the Jap officer. "What is it your book says? 'The laborer is worthy of his hire.'"

He rose and unlocked a large safe in the tent. From it he extracted a canvas bag. He laid it on the table, and sat down again. He produced a document in Japanese and a fountain-pen. "Sign here, Captain M'Shane," he said.

"I'll see the money first," answered M'Shane.

**T**HE little officer opened the bag and poured the contents upon the table. These consisted of shining English gold pounds. M'Shane divided them into little heaps of tens. He saw at once that there was nothing like five thousand pounds there.

"Five hundred pounds," he said, when he had finished.

"That was the agreement, was it not?" inquired Minami. "Five hundred pounds upon delivery of the cargo at Bongo Bongo."

"I'm damned if it was," roared the irascible little captain. "The agreement was for five thousand, and I'm calling you to witness, Lord."

"No, no," said Lord, shaking his finger at M'Shane, as if he were a naughty child. "I told you five hundred, M'Shane. And good money today, with all this paper stuff floating around. Don't let your

imagination run away with you, M'Shane."

"You dirty crook!" roared M'Shane. "For two pins, I'd twist that grinning head of yours around, so that your beard ran down your back."

"Violence will do no good, M'Shane," leered Lord, whipping a long and large knife out of a sheath. "I'd advise you to sign and take the money, M'Shane."

"I'm damned if I will!" shouted M'Shane. "You don't double-cross me, Lord. You've tried it plenty times before, and found it doesn't pay—hey, Lord?"

"But what is the trouble?" inquired the Japanese. "Five hundred pounds, according to the agreement."

"And you're lucky to get it," grinned Lord.

"And how much are you paying this crook?" asked M'Shane of Minami. "I'll have that five thousand, as agreed, or I'll take that blooming cargo back again!"

Lord thrust his bearded face into M'Shane's. "Looky," he said, "you bargained for five hundred, and, as I said before, you're lucky to get it. You'd sell your soul for five hundred pounds, Salvation, you canting old humbug, and well you know it! If you'd stood in with me, you'd have found it paid you better, old Bible-thump! Now, if you're looking for trouble, you'll get plenty."

The snarl that came from M'Shane's lips was like that of a cornered cat. Instantly he had his knife in his hand, and he and Lord went into crouches, waiting for the chance to strike. They were back again in the days of their youth, those days of blackbirding in the South Pacific, when men knifed upon a word.

But little Minami came between them, and pointed upward. "No fighting in the presence of His Majesty," he said, indicating Hirohito's portrait overhead.

"Okay," said M'Shane. "That goes with me. I'm taking that cargo back again. Jumper!" he yelled.

The faithful Jumper, who was never far away, appeared promptly at the entrance of the tent, between two staring Japanese sentries.

"We're reshipping that cargo," said M'Shane. "We're transferring that dump

back into the hold of the *Albatross*, if it takes us all night and all day and another night to do it. Just you and me. You get me, Jumper?"

"Me get you," answered Jumper.

"But that you cannot do," protested Minami. "That ammunition is now the property of his sacred Majesty. And I have no more gold, and no authority to pay more. You should be reasonable, Captain M'Shane. It is possible that I might obtain for you a very high decoration—"

"To hell with your decorations!" roared the fiery little captain, sticking out his stubby chin. "You've had my ultimatum, Minami. Five thousand pounds, or I take back that load, except for the shells, which you can keep, with my blessing."

HE drew a gold watch out of his hip pocket. This was one of Captain M'Shane's most treasured possessions. Circular, and of considerable thickness, it resembled not so much a turnip as a well-rounded beet or onion.

"Five minutes past nine," he said. "I'm giving you till exactly eleven o'clock, P. M., to make up your mind. If you don't change it by then and produce that four thousand five hundred you're trying to gyp me out of, I'll take that dump away!"

"It does not occur to you," said Minami suavely, "that you are in my power and that you have no status, except that of a man vairy much wanted by your own Government."

"Bah!" snorted M'Shane, replacing the onion in his pocket. He leaned across the table and began scooping up the gold, and replacing it in the bag. He retied the string about the neck, and heaved the bag to Jumper.

"Hold on to that, melad," he said. "I'm taking this on account of payment, Minami. And it'll be four thousand five hundred more by the stroke of eleven tonight, or good-bye to that dump of yours. You'd best set your watch by mine. Show it me!"

The little officer, dumbfounded, held out his wrist. The illuminated dial showed that his watch was four minutes behind M'Shane's.

"Thirteen minutes past nine to the

dot," said the little captain. "Correct that timepiece of yours, Minami. I'm used to precision."

And he stalked out of the tent, leaving Minami gaping after him in astonished confusion.

**L**ORD'S chuckle, which reached his ears, as he plunged into the night, evoked only a grin upon M'Shane's stubble-coated face. He turned to Jumper, plodding at his side with the bag of gold.

"You hold onto that, melad," he said, "and don't let nobody take it away from you. It's all we're going to get, but there'll be a—what's that Yankee word? A payoff. Yep, there's going to be a payoff at exactly twenty seconds after eleven o'clock. And when I yell, you make for the *Albatross*, melad, running like hell, and get the jib up in record time, and then the mains'l. And don't stop to ask no questions."

"Me get you, captain," answered Jumper.

"You've asked me questions which was too deep for you, you being a besotted heathen. You'll find the answer later. Just remember, when you hear me screech, you make for the *Albatross* with that gold I gave you."

"We go holiday?" asked Jumper. "Plenty drink, plenty *lubra*?"

"You heathen, how many times have I got to tell you I'm a family man, and I won't have truck with *lubras*? You get that into your thick skull, Jumper. And that'll be all except you stay by me, and look out for that bag of gold."

"Me get you, Captain," answered Jumper.

The night was very dark. Strolling up the hill, in the direction of the dump, M'Shane knew perfectly well that scores of eyes were watching him. He knew Minami's threat was quite substantial: he was in the power of the little Japanese. If Minami was holding off arresting him, it was because he wanted to know what M'Shane was going to do.

Manifestly, it was impossible for M'Shane and Jumper to remove the dump wholesale, and transfer it to the hold of the *Albatross*. Little Minami suspected

that M'Shane had an ace up his sleeve, perhaps that he was a spy for the Aussies, and was maneuvering to spring some trap upon Bongo Bongo.

And this was exactly what M'Shane wanted Minami to believe. M'Shane figured that, out of sheer curiosity, and Japanese stupidity, Minami would give him grace till the hour of eleven that night. And that was all that the little captain wanted.

Strolling up the hill with Jumper, M'Shane was increasingly aware of watchers in the darkness. Presently he became conscious of forms slinking along on either side of him. And now he was aware of the ammunition dump in front of him.

**I**T was beneath a jutting crag, about two hundred feet under the brow of the hill. That crag was an outcrop which shielded it from the possibility of a shell hit. And above it moved the figures of the Jap outposts. Now and again a rifle cracked somewhere along the ridge, but apart from that there was utter silence, and utter watchfulness.

But now, reaching the dump, M'Shane perceived the sentries marching to and fro in front of it. And behind him a troop of Jap soldiers came into view. They took up their positions in a line in front of the dump. It was as if they anticipated some attempt on the part of M'Shane to remove the dump bodily.

With the fear of the occidental common to the Japanese, for all their imitation of him, they were watching every movement of the little captain, as he promenaded to and fro before the great pile of ammunition cases. M'Shane, apparently oblivious of the escort on his heels, examined the dump with careful scrutiny.

Here was a broken case, topping upon another, and he raised it and set it squarely on the top of a sound one. Here was a coconut in the midst of a pile of ammunition—and M'Shane picked it up gravely, and deposited it in position under the spreading pile. And behind him trooped the soldiers, their eyes bulging with wonder.

They had their orders, that at precisely eleven o'clock, the pink-skinned madman and his Kanaka were to be placed under arrest. But they didn't know what it was all about, nor why M'Shane was making this solemn peregrination to and fro along those fifty yards.

M'Shane looked at his onion in the light of the moon. It was half-past ten. He was then on the upper side of the dump, immediately beneath the jutting crag, which formed a sort of cave.

"Half an hour, Jumper," he said. "We'll have a prayer-meeting for the benefit of these heathen." M'Shane's voice was stentorian as he called:

"I'm giving you the Word! You've got a half-hour to approach the Mercy-Seat. Line up, you slant-eyed sons of sin!"

From the other hip-pocket than the one that held his watch, M'Shane produced a bottle.

"Line up!" he shouted, drawing back under cover of the crag. "I'm leading you to salvation, as many as get the grace. We shall read Psalm Number One Hundred Forty."

AND now from all sides the Jap soldiers were collecting, attracted by the sight of the pink-skinned madman, standing under the crag.

"Back, ye Mongolian monkey-faces! Get back! Get on that dump!" shouted M'Shane, waving his arms.

The Japs, realizing that something in the line of entertainment was being offered, scrambled up on top of the dump, until it was topped with a crowd of eager auditors. M'Shane drew back a little further under the shelter of the crag.

Lord's voice rang out: "M'Shane, you old hypocrite, this won't bring you what you're looking for. M'Shane, you and me were messmates once. You quit this fooling and take your five hundred, and be damned glad of it. M'Shane, you was a good fellow once, before you split up with me. Maybe we might get together again, if you'd quit this foolishness."

"Lord, I've had hopes of your soul, even when I've seen you at your worst. Lord, I'd hate to have you pass unrepentant

into the presence of the Mercy-Seat—"

"You slimy son of a sea-slug!" roared Lord. "You've overplayed your hand, you prickly-pear-faced nine-day wonder! You Bible-spouting bile-bladder of bluff and barratry, I'm giving you your last chance—"

"Lord," said M'Shane, with simple dignity, "I'm warning you, because, as you said, we once was shipmates. I want to save your soul alive, to bring it to the Mercy-Seat. Lord, something's going to break. Lord, if you know James M'Shane, you'll make tracks quick, before the vengeance of the Lord overtakes these heathen."

M'Shane pulled out his onion, and held it up to the light of the moon. "Twelve minutes, Jumper," he said, "and remember what I told you, when you hear me screech."

He looked at where Lord had been sitting on the dump. But Lord was gone. After all, Lord and M'Shane knew each other pretty well from of old.

"We shall now," said M'Shane again, "read Psalm One Hundred Forty."

The Japanese soldiers watched, thrilled by the antics of the pink-cheeked fanatic. There was not a man there who understood a word of English, but all of them knew that something was going to break at eleven o'clock, and almost all of them had wrist-watches.

"Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man," said M'Shane. "Preserve me from the violent man.

"They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah.

"The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they spread a net by the way-side; they have set gins for me. Selah."

The Japs were staring, goggle-eyed, at M'Shane, as he shouted the words. The dump was packed from end to end with soldiers. M'Shane paused, and consulted his watch in the light of the moon again.

"Two minutes, Jumper," he said. "And there's only three-tenths of a second leeway. Prepare, Jumper. Get ready when I screech."

"Me understand," said Jumper.

"As for the head of them that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. Let burning coals fall upon them; let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again—"

M'Shane paused. He looked expectantly at the Japs. He waited.

And a deep sound, a mumble that became a stuttering response answered him. Then suddenly a roar. And then all hell loosed, as the dump exploded with a hundred thousand detonations. Into the moonlight flew five hundred thousand cartridges, and the bodies of five hundred Japs caught in the demolition.

M'Shane pulled Jumper back under the shelter of the crag, while the air was filled with flying débris. Then a wild whoop burst from his lips.

"Run like hell, Jumper," he shouted. "And hold that bag. Get up the jib and mains'l. I'll be with you!"

As the flying débris subsided, M'Shane made his way down the hill toward the dock.

"YOU see, Jumper," explained M'Shane, as the *Albatross* threaded her way out to sea, "it was something you, being a benighted heathen, couldn't understand. But judging from those sounds, that's the end of those Japs on Bongo Bongo."

And, though the settlement was only a blob on the night, they could hear the crackle of small-arms, and the roar of artillery, and knew that the Aussies were making a clean-up.

"There was time-bombs in those coconuts, Jumper," said M'Shane. "And only three-tenths of a second leeway. They had to go off at eleven sharp. We done the trick, Jumper, and the Australian Government will be well pleased, I reckon. Now we'll have a lay-off, and take it easy."

"Plenty drink? Plenty *lubra*?" asked Jumper hopefully.

M'Shane sighed hopelessly. "I'll have to knock morality into that thick, black head of yours, Jumper," he answered. "I don't seem able to get it through that I'm a family man."

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