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ONE WEAK SPOT

by
Edgar Young



Author of "The Man-Maker," "Converging Trails," etc.

IVE tramped with a good many men and I've studied men on the trail, weighed them, measured them with the yardstick to see how they checked up as pals. Perhaps this is a hobby of mine to keep the brain occupied on hard, cruel jaunts when men are too tired to speak and must conserve each tiny speck of energy for the work in hand; perhaps it's a sort of fear that I, myself, have—a fear that I may not be all that I would like to be.

At any rate, I've learned a rough way of sizing men up and I've seen them teeter in the balance and I've seen them go bad and fail. And I, myself, have tottered. A pal has lashed me with an oath or a kind word and I've gritted my teeth and hit trail when every stride was a wrench of torment.

I was burned to a crisp after I left the mouth of the Banana River, by walking two days in a suit of B. V. D.'s on the beach trail from Limon to Bocas. Infection set in and the veins bulged through, swollen hard as wires. If I

paused for so much as a second, the blood stagnated in my legs and threw me as if I had been hit on the head with a club.

Ross, the barber in Colon, knows what I looked like when I staggered into Baldy's saloon on Front Street. He knows, because he quit shaving a man to take me up to his room and the Zone doctor he ran after knows that I was packing a fever of over a hundred and four. But I made that trail.

It seemed a thousand miles long. It was over two hundred of beach, jungle and swamp. And two live men came into Colon when two dead men might have rotted on the Costa Rican beach if I had failed to do my bit. Part of the time I walked automatically. I swam the Sexola on the boundary between Costa Rica and Panama in a dream. My shins are jagged with saw-grass cuts—the scars of those made as I stumbled through oceans of it on the Panama side of this river. Don't tell me there is no saw-grass there. I know better.

My trousers were worn off at the knees.

The blades of grass were three feet long and their edges were sharp as hack-saw blades. Ask Ross how I rolled and tore at his mattress with my teeth when the doctor slashed into the proud flesh that had formed and poured blue-stone water in to kill the tropical sores that had eaten to the bone. I made it. I'm proud to have made it. My pride happens to run in that direction, for in that direction lies my fear.

And Eugene Rodin made that trail with me. If I am proud of myself what shall I say about Eugene Rodin? A little wisp of a man, burned to a cinder from the sun, barefooted from the loss of his shoes in the Rio Estrella, whose feet printed their soles with blood on the trail, bare-headed and with his ears swelled to black lumps on his head, slashed to ribbons with saw-grass and briars, rocking like a drunken man with delirium as he clasped my hand so we would not stray apart in the reeling jungle, shouting in a frenzy of torture, and hitting trail from morning to night. Not only did I fail to out-nerve him but I was hard put to keep him from out-nerving me.

"Come on, — you! You call yourself a man. Hit trail! It's Canal Zone or bust! How far is it? Maybe four hundred, maybe a thousand. I'll walk you to death. Two hundred and twenty you weigh. You'll tip the scales at less than that when we hit Culebra town. My hundred and twenty-five won't balance the scales."

This is how he shouted at me when he knew he was shouting. Other times he screamed things that merged with the troop of fantasmagorical monsters that marched beside us and reached for us with claws that barely missed. The real and the unreal were merged into one and it was only by heavy concentration that I was able to separate them.



HE, TOO, had studied me and he knew the raw spot where the spur would make me flinch. And we made Colon. A man picked him up in his arms and carried him across the line into Cristobal just as I staggered into Baldy's place. And we lived through it and dug our bit of the big canal.

We got prosperous and dolled up out of Uncle Sam's big stores. And I guess I swagged a bit more than I should have done and bragged of how we had made the beach-trail. And other men who had hit trail in Brazil and down across the Andes sought us out and came and chatted with us on the cool veranda of House No. 7 in Gatun by the Lake.

They had bucked big on big trails with men of many climes and they shook us by the hand and talked of hopes and prides that were in their heart of hearts.

There was Flood from Mazatlan, Kid Matthis from San Antone, two buddies, Hart and James—Hart with a scar on breast and back

where a Mexican had plunged a candle-stick through him, Brewer with a brow like a sheet of writing-paper and the wisdom of a Greek god, old Mike Sullivan from the Rand, Walt Johnson from a thousand trails, Lanky Moore who blew into Sao Paulo, Brazil, with a bag of diamonds and a suit of parrot feathers; and a dozen others.

Big talk and vain words were spoken with these men, but they knew and understood of what we spoke and why we did so. Also they, too, dropped sneery hints as to home-guards, contract-stiffs and white-collared dudes. And often when Rodin had stepped away I told them behind my hand what a true-blue guy he really was, for I felt ashamed to let him see just how much I appreciated him.

He was a little shy on talk in a crowd and I guess I had a little more than my share of the gift of gab. This is the truth, take it or leave it, doubt it or believe it. Ask Ross. And I guess Jim Adams might be able to bear it out. I know. My shins know. And when I take a bath I see a few grim reminders in the way of glistening scars that say "beach-trail" so that I won't forget.

Other men may, and have, walked the low beach and swamp-trail from Limon to the Zone without a scratch. But it sure gave us a mauling. I, for one, don't want to double that stretch of country again. Men died on other trails that we trotted over without half-trying. Tom Rourke is buried with a machete between Morales, Guatemala, and Puerto Caballo. That trip was his Waterloo. Costa Rica beach came near being ours.

Could you blame me for being strong for a guy that came clean that way after me having been double-crossed by a dozen others? John Roach quit me in Edmonton, Canada, one dreary Fall night after we blew in from Red Deer on a rattler. He got afraid a yard-bull would pinch us in the yard. He was afraid of the hoosgow.

I sneaked after him when he slipped from the box car where we had crawled in to sleep and crept up through the yard to the ticket office. I peered through the window and saw him cash a fifty-dollar bill and buy a ticket to the States.

He'd been under cover with that cash all the time. He had shown good nerve but was afraid of a night in jail. That's why he didn't stick. Hal Devers quit me in Eagle Pass, Texas, when we came up out of Mexico on the I. M. Ry. and got a job in a shoe store. He told me he was of a good family and was afraid he would be a tramp if he did not quit the road. That was his weak spot. I'm thinking he would have made a better tramp than he did a shoe salesman. It depends on what a man wants to be. Look at old man Dowie! He made a million trying to be the Second Messiah.

Red Hicks sent me out to batter the main

stem in East St. Louis while he ate a big steak with some money that had been sent him from home, in the dining-room in the passenger depot. I quit him and I'll bet it cost him part of that cash to get a new set of teeth after I got through with him.

"Lefty" Ward held out the last cigaret. I was dying for a draw. I knew he wouldn't do at all, so I quit him quick. Barnsy met up with a girl he liked and while he was struggling with the question whether he would or would not quit me and me thinking he wouldn't, I drifted off by myself. I guess they have quite a chunk of a boy named after me now. I sure would appreciate it if they had, for that Barnsy was a blown-in-the-bottle pal.

Rodin was the survival of the fit from many buddies and pals. He had been with me longer than any and showed no signs of quitting. His ideals were about like mine, to follow the rainbow to the end and while en route to look for beauty in all things.

Crazy ideals? —, men have had worse! Look at Will Hohenzollern, for instance. At any rate Rodin suited me. I was betting the works on him at every turn of the cards. That's how I felt about it. I was ready to go to the mat for him any time. I guess that's what made me begin feeling so bad a short time afterward.

Now if the truth be told there were some pretty hard birds in the towns along the canal. It's that way in all big construction jobs and Panama was no exception, maybe it was a little worse for it was a very large job. Good guys there were in plenty but there was a large sprinkling of ex-bad men, coyotes and crooks.

The colonel even chased away secret service men who had trailed bad actors down there, telling them he didn't give a whoopee what they had done just so they dug dirt. He was side-tracking passenger trains on the Panama Railroad to get dump trains over. He was making the dirt fly—beating the world's record in price and quantity.

He even told a bunch of officers' wives that they could go back on the first boat when they kicked about the rough-necks sitting out on the porches in their pajamas; said he could dig the canal without women but needed the men and wanted them to rest when their work was done.

He even let a dirt-train conductor change back to his right name when he wanted to get married. The conductor came out one day signing orders under one name and next day signed another. He was a good conductor and the colonel didn't have time to care what he had done that he flew a bum flag.



THE best were rough men and the worst were darned rough. Gum-shoe men stood in the saloons in Colon and kept tab and men poured fiery rum down them like water, but not a word was said if they

were on the job and digging dirt next day. Men were going to pieces from the "hot sun and tin roofs"—according to a zone expression—and the colonel's assistant was shattered by the strain of the slides in the cut.

Still the old man sat in the saddle and yelled for the dirt to come out of the canal. And it came. Bucyrus shovels roared, Star drills and channelers snorted, dirt trains came up out of the cut at Dump Six Cabin in a steady stream.

And the men who stood this strain were no weaklings. A man, to stand his ground, in the quarters, at the post-office, in the eating-houses, and even on his job had to rear up and roar to keep from getting run over. Men fought fist fights down in Gatun Locks, on the Spillway, and down on the Rock Storage Dump below New Gatun.

Sometimes they used such playful weapons as sledge-hammers and crowbars and then there was a hospital call and a trip to Culebra penitentiary. Sometimes a man smiled at another man's wife in one of the commissaries, for white women were awful scarce, and then a man was packed away on a stretcher with a bullet-hole drilled through his chest.

Actual violations of the law were taken care of by the Zone police and the courts, it was the past that did not matter. Every man had his chance to make good on the canal; all that had happened previously was forgotten.



I AM a little oversize and men do not pick on me when they want to fight as a general rule. Also I've had my part of training with the gloves and don't mind getting beat up a trifle in a fisticuff. When it comes to throwing rocks and making a rough-house with clubs, I'm a little shy on that but I will take a chance.

I guess I'll have to admit that I made a pretty fast run from a knife once in Mazatlan until I got a piece of two-by-four to come back with. I'm not very strong on that knife stuff. Taken all in all, without blowing my own horn, I guess I'll pass if I have to fight.

I don't like to but I'd rather fight a man than have him think I'm afraid of him. The worst thing I can conceive of is to be called a coward and I'd rather get beat up than have any doubt on the subject.

I took it as a matter of course that Rodin felt the same way about it I did. That's how I didn't come to take note at first. Not only had he shown nerve on the beach-trail but before that he had showed pure grit at every thing we had tackled.

I'd seen him laugh when we got caught in a squall off the breakwater in a dugout at Salina Cruz when we were tossing like a feather on the high waves and being swept out to sea. Our chances were about a thousand to one of ever

making the Mexican coast but he hadn't turned a hair.

He swam a muddy bayou in Honduras teeming with sharks and alligators to fetch a dugout from the other side while I was trying to figure out a sane way. I'd seen him under fire when we fought with old man Lee Christmas in Guatemala and he seemed to enjoy it. He made a balloon ascension in Salvador with the aeronaut and came down in the parachute just for the fun of it.

He was afraid of no horse that ever bucked under a saddle. He was not shy around women—a common fault of brave men—but was very partial to them. I was just about to decide that he was the exception to the rule that every man harbors a fear of some sort when this thing began to crop up in Gatun.

The first time I noticed it particularly was in House No. 7 one night just before supper. The quarters were noisy with hungry men washing. Rodin had been craning a shovel and he was black with the grease and dust.

I had had my locomotive crane in the shop and had sneaked up before quitting time to wash up and take a short rest. The machinists were doing the work on the crane and it was merely a rule that I had to stick around the shop. I suppose the Government made this rule so that we would not strip a cog just for the sake of a lay-over day.

I was waiting for Rodin to wash up for we usually ate at the same table and had some extras cached with the waiter. He started for a vacant sink and was almost to it when a big dinky skinner from the Spillway marched up ahead of him, elbowed him aside and began to wash.

I expected to see Rodin reach up and get him by the collar and yank him back out of it. I'd have done just that and as I brought his head back past me I would have hit him a crack on the burr of the ear that would have taken both the idea of washing and eating out of his head.

Flood was washing at the next sink and I saw him pause and look back out of the corner of his eye. He finished hastily and told Rodin to go ahead and wash if he was in a hurry and stood behind him when he started. He remarked to me in a loud aside that "the red-muzzled guy there at the second sink appeared to be a durned hog, and would get clawed some of these days."

The name seemed to fit. Several rough-necks laughed. He was known after that all along the canal as the Red-Muzzled Guy. He appeared not to notice Flood's words but finished washing with an extra spluttering of water, dried his face hastily and hurried by.

I was itching for him even to look at me as he passed. I'd have knocked him for a goal if he had. I was boiling for he had hurt me worse than he had appeared to hurt Rodin. I wouldn't have felt half so bad if Flood had not

been present. Flood had a way of kidding a man as he mauled him to a jelly.

He spoke almost as if in benediction when he was at his worst. I had heard him speak in soft, pleading tones to "Big Jumbo," the blacksmith, the Sunday afternoon they fought under the eating-house.

"Brother, you should not have done thataway," and "Sir, I'll beat you up as if the hogs have had you," or "Friend, you hit below the belt that time, take that."

That was usually a haymaker that almost sunk the tattooed ship on Jumbo's chest. But Jumbo was a man. He got up with his face beat to a pulp, spat out a mouthful of teeth, grinned and shook hands.

The Zone policeman had stood beside his horse on the edge of the crowd just out from underneath the eating-house gazing down across Gatun Lake. He himself had once walked five miles to the Zone borders to fight a man who accused him of using his job to run over him.

They came back laughing and talking and no man ever did hear how it came out. Those who noted closely said the policeman showed the fewer marks but they both had many.

And it wasn't the case of fighting and getting licked. A man can only do his best. No one can lick everybody unless he is a champ and makes that his business. No blame can rest on a man who has fought all he can fight and then goes down and out. Men had a way of saying that they whipped such a man, but they got fought with.

Many times the victor would not have relished another fight with a man who had almost put the Kobie on him. I wouldn't have said a word to have seen Rodin beat up by the Red-Muzzled Guy if it had been open and above-board, if he had dug in when his rights were imposed upon. But he didn't try. That is what hurt and it hurt deep. He was much more than a brother. He was my partner of a thousand hardships who had always rung true.

He did not mention the incident on our way over to the eating-house and I kept my head half-turned away so he could not see my face. To tell the truth I was so badly cut up about it I had a lump in my throat and felt like I wanted to cry. He talked very low and seemed very much subdued.

As we passed a bunch of steam-shovel runners I gave old Tom Logan a whack on the back in fun that made him turn and glare at me. Tom was poison and had his bluff in on a dozen down in the cut. He stuck out his tongue, made a playful swipe at me with his huge fist and laughed deep in his throat.

I did that just to show Rodin that there wasn't any subdued feeling in me at the time. He grinned his characteristic twisted smile and together we entered the eating-house.

It just happened that the Red-Muzzled Guy

had picked our table and sat at Rodin's regular place. No man had a lease on any of the places at the tables but as a rule we had our own place and patronized the same Jamaican waiter. Why this was so was because every man tipped the waiter by the month and a man could get better food from his own waiter than from a strange one.

Uncle Sam played no favorites in his eating-houses but those black boys sure knew a tipper and lugged out the grub. The Red-Muzzled Guy really belonged at another negro's station just back of us for I had seen him eating back there many times. His table was full and he had a right to grab the first vacant place.

I saw him in Rodin's place just as the door-boy tore off our coupons and I saw Rodin look and give a quick start. Then without pretending to have noticed he wandered off to the other side of the room. The Jamaican recognized us as another waiter's regulars and he proceeded accordingly, bringing out the poorest grub he could find.



IT WOULD not have bothered me if he had brought none. I had no appetite. My throat felt swollen when I tried to swallow my food. I talked abstractedly to Rodin without knowing half of what I said. I felt sore at Rodin and I felt sorry for him all at the same time.

A man with his nerve to let a red-muzzled dinky skinner get away with a bluff! And then I began to think along the lines of my old theory that a fear of something lurks in every man. This must be the answer. Yet I glanced across the table at his half-turned head.

He had the head of a fighter. Not only were the bumps of combativeness normally developed, they were abnormal. His head was heavy behind the ears and I had never seen a man with that kind of a head who would not fight. Yet he had not fought and the cause had been just. Truly this seemed an exception to the rule. Phrenology was a pseudoscience at the best, I decided.

And then I began to think of this red-mustached bully. A fire burned deep within me. It seemed that in the past I could remember subconsciously having seen him look sneeringly from where he sat over at our table at us. Looking back at the incident in the wash-room it appeared he had done it with some intention or other. In the future I would keep an eye on him. Maybe he had run a bluff on Rodin before. Perhaps he would try that game on me. I hoped so. I didn't want people to think he could get away with stuff like that on me. I would rather have him put me in Ancon than have that happen.

When I saw him get up from the table I got up and hastened toward the door. As we passed out I jostled him heavily against the

jamb. He stepped back and allowed me to go ahead without a word. He stopped in the door and Rodin had to wedge by him. His red mustache lifted in a snarl and he muttered something which I did not hear.

Rodin's face grew white but he did not answer. He vouchsafed no explanation and I asked for none as we walked over to House No. 7. The trail-hitters were gathered at the end of the porch and they greeted us with extra effusion.

Flood had told them of the incident and they were pretending not to know. Any one of them would have dug up his last cent for the others, even though he knew he would never get it back. One man of that party did afterward pay eight thousand dollars to get another out of serious trouble caused by an accident, and the man he helped died within a month.

I knew that the Red-Muzzled Guy was in bad with that crowd. I knew that each one would watch for a real or fancied grievance to pick trouble with him, just as I intended to do. The conversation naturally drifted to fighting.

Flood was the windiest man in the town, but he was that rare exception, a windy fighter. He would talk beforehand just "how, when and where," as he phrased it, he would put the Kobie on some man he did not like and he never failed to do it.

In a hotel in Colon which had very thin partitions he had heard one man telling another that he, Flood, was a crook and a dead-beat. Flood was neither a crook nor a dead-beat. On the contrary he was so open-handed he gave away all he made. He figured out that a fight in Colon would cost him fifty dollars and a night in the spiggoty jail. In the Zone he could do it for twenty-five and a reprimand from the colonel.

He had come back to Gatun, told every man in town what he was going to do, saw the man who had made the remarks coming up the street past House 65, went out and took him by the collar, told him just how he was going to thrash him, and then, in this particular case, did not strike a blow when the man refused to defend himself. This was the only time and men gave him credit for his generosity.

He easily knew more of rough fighting than any man I ever saw. Without looking at Rodin he began talking of defensive fighting. He showed by exactly thirteen demonstrations how to fight to keep from getting licked if unable to thrash the other man. He fell on his back, made imaginary swipes, grunted, roared and strained until the men were convulsed with laughter. And if they wanted to fight dirty just watch him!

He went through a demonstration of biting, choking and mayhem that made the tears roll down our faces. Rodin sat very quiet and had little to say. The truth is that Flood was a big

brute of a man who needed little of the science he had; and such science as it was, it was of his own manufacture and gained in many battles. Rodin moseyed off to bed early. Flood looked at me closely.

"I sure would have hated to see that Red-Muzzled Guy's face if Rodin had put for him," I told him in an undertone. "He's one of these quiet kind that hates to start."

Flood nodded gravely but I could see he doubted my words. We all fell to talking of other things and the incident was laid aside. Finally we lumbered off to bed for tomorrow a hard day's work awaited all of us. Men worry in the tropics more than in temperate climes.

Ultra-violet rays of the sun is the explanation that science gives us for this. Yet on this night my worry was deeper than the slight neurotic tendency of the torrid zone. I had had a pal go bad. He had showed fear, the worst failure a pal can show. I rolled and twisted far into the morning trying to solve it. It was beyond me how it could be so. Even the fear of death can be conquered in one quick instant. How could a nerry man like Eugene Rodin fear the mauling of another man's fists?

And in the days that followed I tried to shield him from further showings of this streak. It was something that must not be made known but concealed. I overstepped other men's rights and was fast approaching a time when some fighting canal-digger would hammer the daylight out of me.

I had grown into a sort of bully from a good-natured lumbering ox. Men glanced at me from under tense eyelids that advertised hate. A bully is a man to be despised and I hated the rôle I was playing. But I had to do it to try to lift the stigma that might rest upon us both. Men would know that at least part of the combination contained fighting blood.

Rodin grew more mild-tempered and many times I caught him studying me. I was afraid to be known as a coward. My bullying was a direct result of my fear. This I knew in my heart of hearts. Rodin's failure I had charged to his fear of physical combat. The thing was becoming unbearable. I began talking Rio and B. A. and the West Coast. I wanted to get Rodin back on the trail where he would loom up big again.

He was cutting a sorry figure in my eyes and I had lost a great deal of my respect for him. And I noticed when the bunch of rainbow chasers talked to us they always directed their remarks to me. This hurt too, for I knew he had lost caste with them. Finally he got so he did not join the circle when they gathered but sat far at the other end of the long porch reading a book or staring off across the lake.



HE WAS sitting thus one evening just at sundown when the Red-Muzzled Guy entered the screen-door in the middle of the porch, between where we sat and where Rodin sat, glanced quickly at us and walked over to Rodin. We ceased talking and Flood half-rose from his chair muttering something about "a red-muzzled funeral at Monkey Hill."

I laid my hand on his arm and pushed him down in his chair. I had decided then and there that the red-muzzled man was my meat if he did anything to Rodin he should not do. I measured the bulging shoulders of the dinky skinner as he stopped in front of Rodin. His bullet head was thrust forward and he was speaking in a low snarl.

Rodin's finger marked the place in the book where he had left off reading. We could not hear what the Red-Muzzled Guy said to him but we could catch every word that Rodin said in return, for his face was toward us and his voice though low was cold and tense as steel. We craned our necks and listened so closely that we scarcely breathed.

"You killed him. I sat right there in the Cotton Belt depot waiting-room with the lights out and saw you do it. I heard the two of you quarreling and I saw you begin to fight. I saw every lick that was struck. As you locked with him I saw you had a barlow knife open in your hand.

"You stabbed him with it just at the base of the brain and as he fell the knife clattered to the ground. You saw me run out and I ran after you beyond the light cast by the electric arc-light and I lost track of you in the yard. It was my report that put them to searching for you. They tracked you to Navasota and down to Eagle Pass and couldn't find where you went in Mexico."

Rodin spoke as if in an ordinary conversation but his throat tightened and the words began to click from his smiling lips like the purr of a rattler. His face grew white as cotton and the veins on his forehead showed like blue-pencil marks. His eyes, steady as knife points, glowed like those of a tiger.

He rose to his feet and laid the open book on the porch railing against the screen. The Red-Muzzled Guy took a couple of steps forward, walking on the balls of his feet and snarling deep in his throat.

Rodin's voice quivered to an angry pitch.

"You killed him, you murdering cur—killed him like a dog with a thrust in the back. You've tried to bully me to keep me quiet for you saw my face as I ran out of the depot and you knew what I knew. There's a ranger heading this way for you now. I cabled for one the day I saw you—"

The Red-Muzzled Guy made a quick snatch at his bosom and fired pointblank into Rodin's

face. Rodin's move was quicker than the eye as he ducked the flash of the gun and struck the revolver to the floor. Then there was a sharp crack as he smashed the big man in the face and straightened him up. Flood sprang three feet in the air and let out a roar like a wild bull.

"Go to him, you rainbow-chasing trail-hitter! Claw him and skin him from his forehead to his waistband. Chaw him up and spit him out! Tear him up like the hogs have had him! Put a head on him he can eat green briars with! Stand back, fellers, and let 'em fight! I'm betting the works on that little guy. Thirteen ways of whipping him and try 'em all Whoopee!"

Flood was leaping into the air and performing peculiar gyrations as we gathered around the two men. Rodin was about half the size of the other man but he had a huge fist and his wiry frame was hard as nails.

He was ducking and dodging blows that would have killed him had they landed square and glancing licks had started the blood flowing from his nose and face. But he landed full and square on the other man's face quick and regular as the stroke of a pile-driver. Hell's tide had surged into his face. I noticed that the whites of his eyes were blood-red like those of an angry ape and a low growl came through his snarling lips.

Men had run from the bathrooms and living-rooms and gathered from the street until the porch was packed with people. The thick heavy lips of the Red-Muzzled Guy were beaten to purple bladders that oozed blood. His cruel little eyes were snapping in rage.

He struck a terrific crash at Rodin's face, missed and turned half-way around. Then his hand shot into his pocket and he drew forth an open barlow knife. As he raised it Flood started to spring for him but Rodin was quicker. He jumped through the air like a cat and wrapped himself around the Red-Muzzled Guy's neck. The knife fell to the floor and the big man began to scream as Rodin started tearing at his throat with his teeth. They went down together on the floor. The Red-Muzzled Guy was roaring and crying for mercy. Rodin gnashed his teeth as he tore the life from the big man's frame.

Flood, who could judge another man's resistance to an ounce, looked seriously at me. I stepped in and laid my hand on Rodin's shoulder. He snapped at my hand and his teeth clicked as they missed. He grasped the Red-Muzzled Guy's head in his hands and rising to his knees began twisting it around so as to break the neck.

He was fighting to kill. I snatched him by the wrists and strove to break his hold. He sank his teeth into my neck and put me to shouting for help to tear him loose. Flood, Hart, and James sailed in and between all of us

we managed to drag him off and pry him loose from the Red-Muzzled Guy and from me.

He was blind-mad, a fighting demon. Some deep barbaric strain had been touched, a strange atavism of man's prehistoric ancestry had risen within him. At last, puffing and blowing we subdued him and sat upon him.



THE Red-Muzzled Guy lay quiet. Then his eyes began to blink and he began to gasp. He rolled over and sat up. A quiet little gray-haired man with steady gray eyes who stood in the group walked up to him and knelt beside him. There was a sharp snap as he adjusted a pair of handcuffs to the Red-Muzzled Guy's wrists. The gray-haired man grinned into the surprised faces of the bystanders.

"I've been waiting two weeks for this bird to get out of the zone and into Panama or Colon so I could pinch him. I took the Ranger's oath that I would bring him back when we heard he was down here. Now he's going back with me, colonel or no colonel. It isn't the first time a Ranger has kidnaped a man and I guess it won't be the last."

Flood walked out behind the two of them and as they passed beyond earshot I heard him telling the Ranger of a negro in New Gatun who owned a cart in which they could ride the six miles to Colon. The Zone mounted policeman, riding toward House No. 7, nodded to the Ranger as they met and the Ranger called him by his first name.

If he noticed that the Ranger had his arm locked into that of a handcuffed man he appeared not to do so. Perhaps he was an ex-Ranger himself. He blustered up into the porch, told all of us we must not disturb the peace, walked down the steps chuckling to himself, mounted his pony and rode away about his business.

Rodin finally quieted down and we let him up. His face was very sad and he hung his head as if with shame. I led him toward the wash-room to help him wash the blood of battle from him. When he had finished he laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Sandy, if ever you are around when I get into a fight, watch me. When I get started I don't know when to stop. I've come near killing a few men. Everything gets red and I only have one thought—to kill and kill quickly. I've seen all along you were afraid I would murder that Red-Muzzled Guy and I sure have been patient with him but he did crowd me; you'll have to admit that yourself."

That was the one weak spot in Eugene Rodin—afraid he would kill an adversary in a fight—and a better weakness no man could have. Many is the time after that I got him away from some one I feared he would tie into in a fight.