



# Adventure

Registered in U. S.  
Patent Office

First October  
1920 Issue  
Vol. XXVII ~ No. 1

## Published Twice a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President

C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougall Streets - - - New York City  
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the  
Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, \$4.00 in advance

Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents

Foreign postage, \$2.00 additional. Canadian Postage, 40 cents.

Trade-Mark Registered; Copyright, 1920, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain.

The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

## Contents for First October, 1920, Issue

<b>Trail of the Chosen Four</b> . . . . .	<i>A Complete Novelette</i> . . . . .	Barry Scobee	3
Four men on foot wander through the wilderness of the new world.			
<b>Number One Macey</b> . . . . .		Norman Springer and Jim Desmond	37
An idyll of a king of the forecattle.			
<b>Convoys Courageous</b> . . . . .		Samuel Alexander White	47
A fight for fur.			
<b>The Eighty-One*</b> . . . . .		Hugh S. Fullerton	55
<i>Bancroft</i> answers an advertisement for suicides. *See next page.			
<b>One Weak Spot</b> . . . . .		Edgar Young	61
It's fight or back-down in the Canal Zone.			
<b>Tell It to the Marines</b> . . . . .		Roy P. Churchill	68
Marines stage a jail-delivery at Guadalupe City.			
<b>Toyama</b> <i>A Five-Part Story Part II</i> . . . . .		Patrick Casey	77
Japanese mysticism and gold in Lower California.			
<b>Substitutes</b> . . . . .		Robert J. Pearshall	100
A game of crook against crook, played in the dark.			
<b>The Tapir</b> . . . . .		Arthur O. Frial	108
Why a man in Brazil quit living in a tree.			

(Continued on next page)

# Adventure

First  
October  
1920  
Issue  
Vol. XXVII  
No. 1



## TRAIL of the CHOSEN FOUR

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE  
by Barry Scobee

*Author of "Heart of the Yankee," "Road-Signs and a Nose-Ring," etc.*

### CHAPTER I

#### A BIT O' BLUFFING

**B**ALES and boxes of trade goods were piled high on the low deck of the Barcelona-built hull, and the stowaway Irishman hidden among them, cramped from sitting for hours in one position, longed to shove the packages aside and walk out among men as a man should. But he dared not be so reckless; the vessel might still be near enough to land for them to put back with him.

He actually ached for knowledge of their whereabouts. But all he knew pertinent to the subject was that at noon of this tenth of July in the year 1527, a fleet of five wooden ships had sailed from San Lucar de Barrameda, Spain, for the mystery world of gold and adventure that Columbus had discovered not many years before—America, called New Spain.

About the time he began to feel that he would rather fight the whole crew than to endure the muscle aches any longer, he realized that dusk was coming on. A great babel of talk rose aft,

but the creak of the rigging and the *ssough* of the sea kept him from distinguishing words. Then the talk fell off; it stopped as if every man had shut his mouth at a given signal. What was up? He popped to his feet. How good that first straightening of his knee hinges felt! He stepped to the bale on which he had been sitting, and was able to see out over the ship.

In the stern, against the rail, was what seemed to be the whole ship's company—the brilliantly garbed court gentlemen, the boat's officers and low-born crew, all forgetful of rank and rubbing elbows as they peered through the gathering night for a last look at their homeland. Beyond them, stretching out toward the dim shore, were the four other vessels, all in a row like so many ducks. In a moment a gaunt figure detached itself from the cluster and, making a pose with his gauntleted right hand held high, declaimed oratorically:

"Farewell, my Spain! Farewell till I come back to you, my ships weighted down with yellow gold!"

"Farewell! Farewell!" rumbled a hundred voices.

The stowaway's throat pinched, not for love

of the land he was leaving, but with the thrill men feel who venture from the known into the unknown. The commander, Panfilo de Narvaez, dropped his pose and turned to his captain.

"Pantoja, have lights brought. Instantly, sir!" He always spoke with offensive arrogance. "And assemble the company. I wish to announce the king's final orders."

Pantoja transmitted the order and presently sailors were hanging baskets of pitch on the after cabin. The company crowded around eagerly to hear this important communication. The stowaway climbed down and joined them, unobserved in the darkness, though he stood elbow to elbow with sailors who smelled of garlic.

"Gentlemen and men," began Narvaez, his one good eye running over them sharply, "by the orders of his Majesty, our King Charles the Fifth of Spain, I make final announcements. I am your commander, and I am to be your governor in the settling, exploring and conquering of the firm land of New Spain that lies between Florida and the River of the Palms.

"I am instructed, because of the prying pirate ships of the Normans and British, to avoid touching at the Canaries and Madeira. We shall take our course southwest to the trades, thence to Santo Domingo and onward to the firm land."

The commander paused to open a parchment that he held. The stowaway thought he knew what this was—a roster of the company, and he expected to hear a roll called and see noses counted, with his own nose being an extra one. At the thought his hand sought the hilt of his long straight sword, for he knew that the king had given orders that not one foreigner be permitted with the fleet.

Narvaez said nothing of a roll call, however, but began to read:

"FROM KING CHARLES THE FIFTH

To my trusted officers and friends of the fleet,  
Greetings.

Also to the near six hundred men of the fleet, who by my orders, for political reasons and reasons of state, are of Spanish birth—"

So it came that way! The Irishman was keyed to a high pitch with his hiding and waiting. Impulsively he decided that now was as good a time as any to dive in and have it over with. He elbowed his way through the line of men and at each step he became cooler. When he entered the light and stopped before Narvaez he was smiling jauntily—a lithe, blue-eyed figure of a man, booted, sword at side, and crowned by a bristle of sandy hair.

"Image of Satan!" the governor stormed out. "Who are you?"

"Andy Doran, Irish gentleman, and at your service, sir." And the stowaway swept his plumed hat through an exaggerated bow that was a scornful dare to the Spaniard.

"Foreigner! Spy!" came the hisses.

"By my soul!" exclaimed an easy-going voice among the gentlemen—Cabeza de Vaca, "'tis Andres Dorantes, the Irish swordsman."

Every eye turned, almost clicked to the stranger, for this Irishman had some fame in Spain as a duelist. Doran's ruddy face was alight with amusement at the circle of amazement and chagrin.

"How came you aboard this ship?" Narvaez demanded.

"By a bit o' luck, Excellency."

"Why?"

"To go venturing into this new world with so renowned a navigator as yourself, sir."

"Keep your northern blarney to yourself. I dislike it. Besides you lie."

"The word, an it were turned to a Spaniard, would be a compliment!" Andy flamed.

"You are a spy of the Normans, or the insolent British."

"Would I were!"

"What do you mean? Answer me!" The commander's anger was gathering like a storm on the horizon.

"I mean that I would take pride in an alliance with either of those clean nations," Doran replied with deliberate insult, stung by the Spaniard's manner and words. "The morals of you Spanish *conquistadores* have come to smell since Columbus gave you a world to loot."

"By the saints! I'll have you drowned. Pantoja, have men fling this foreigner over the side."

"Nay, Excellency," interposed de Vaca, who was treasurer and second in command. "This man was born in Spain, in Bejar, and though of Irish parentage his nativity will fulfill the King's requirements. It is ill-advised to baptize our expedition with blood. Remember what the soothsayers told—"

"Enough! Fling him over the side!"

"An you do, Excellency," Doran said easily, striding close to the governor, his arms folded over the breast of his slashed doublet, "my ghost shall sit on your cabin and kick its heel against the port o' nights from here to Florida."

Narvaez, who was notoriously superstitious, gave back a startled step.

"You threaten me?" he cried.

"Not at all, but my father used to say, 'If ye start, keep going.' An' I mean to reach this new world, an' it's as how you wish my company—a wet and dripping ghost or a warm and welcome guest."

"You northern dog!" Narvaez, his one eye flaming, was beside himself with anger. He whipped out his sword. "You pig, I'll run you through."

The governor had not drawn his sword half out before Doran had sprung back and rasped out his own. The two poised for an instant, measuring each other for attack and defense,

and fortunately for the Irishman that this pause came, for it gave two men an opportunity to rush between them.

"Nay, nay," urged Cabeza de Vaca quietly, "do not set the fates against us by ill-judged slaughter."

"Stand aside," Narvaez ordered.

"No," spoke the firm, yet pleading voice of Fray Saurez. "Do not baptize our departure with blood, Excellency." He put a detaining hand on the governor's arm. "It is useless to slay this foreigner. He can be held at Santo Domingo and returned to Spain."

"I'm going as far as this expedition goes!" Doran, in a tempest now, flung out.

Narvaez put up his sword—no doubt glad of the friar's intervention, for that gave him an excuse to desist in an act that he must have felt would bring evil upon them.

"Very good," he said to Saurez. "Go forward, Irishman, while I continue the reading of orders. At Santo Domingo you shall be returned with the first ship sailing to Spain."

"Santo Domingo is another day," Andy retorted. "Before you and I say good-by, Excellency, I shall be a captain in your horse."

## CHAPTER II

### A GOOD NOSE PAYS

HOWEVER—a handy word—this was the fortieth night in Santo Domingo and Andrew Doran was no nearer to being a captain in Narvaez's horse than he was the day they docked.

However, this was the fortieth night here also for the governor and the fleet, and there was like to be an eightieth night and a hundredth night and possibly an abandonment of the expedition and a return to Spain. For bad luck had come upon the fleet. All the mechanics had deserted, and not one horse could be obtained. And horses were necessary. However. . . .

Santo Domingo, beyond the strictures of the old world, was a wild and reckless town. From dark to daylight barefooted, bare-armed sailors caroused about the wine shops and streets singing and drinking and getting into a thousand kinds of mischief. The shop called the Pirate's Hive was forever filled to its thatched roof with the ribald uproar of men who drank, and with the music of guitars in the hands of sailors.

This was a fine large night at the place. Andy Doran sat by a table, his chair tilted against the wall, and bantered back and forth with every Tomas, Ricardo and Pedro that came along. He knew them all and every one was his friend. As he sat there and held his own against the rude throng a slim, dandified officer of the fleet entered. He was Captain Alonso del Castillo, of horse, and following him as his shadow was his man Estevanico, an Arab Moor.

"Buena noche, Andee," he called out gaily. "What bottle shall I order for you?"

"None at all, an you will excuse me, Alonso. As you know, I have no palate for more than two bottles in a night."

"You're not consistent in your philosophy," Castillo charged. "What maxim would your father have? If you drink, drink hard!"

A laugh went up around the room, for "Andee's" quotations from his, apparently, gifted father had become famous.

"The Señor Andee is in a corner, no?" laughed Sergeant Bastos, whose lasting friendship Andy had won by finding a house for the man and his wife. "If you drink, drink hard!"

The soldier laughed in huge good fellowship, and the house joined in again.

"But my father had a different verse for that," Andy demurred, and the shop became quiet to hear his words. "If ye drink—your wife will soon be wearing the breeches."

Ha-ha-ha-ho-ho-ho! Men laughed in those days, pirate laughter that could be heard a mile.

Now that Castillo, an officer, was present with their adored Andee, the red kerchiefed throng departed, every one lifting his hat and bowing deeply before passing through the door. Castillo sipped and gossiped.

"Anything about the fleet sailing?" Doran asked.

Castillo shook his head.

"Great fishes!" Andy yawned. "I wish it would sail."

"What!" Castillo pretended surprize. "Why, everybody in the port knows that you will not go. It is an open secret that the Alcalde Diaz will hold you here on Narvaez's instructions."

"Wait and see! I suppose the governor is still whinneying like a horse with the hope he can attract a few score steeds to his ships."

"Ay, or braying like a donkey of Seville. He's got on our nerves up there at headquarters with his ragged temper."

"Why doesn't he try for horses in Cuba?"

"He fears he would not get any there and would be compelled then to go on without any. He's in an unenviable quandary." The captain rose and the Moor fell in behind him. "Well, Andee, I'll get back to the *casa grande*. His Excellency may want to swear at me, and not be able to find me. Wish you would go along."

"And I would, right gladly, had not Narvaez, as you know, forbade me to enter the staff's building. My compliments to him, though, and tell him to save a good cabin for me."

With Castillo gone, Andy was alone save for the man behind the counter, a husky, bare-armed half-breed called the Pirate. The man was habitually as silent as a post and Andy, always wanting company in his misery of uncertainty about continuing the voyage, sauntered out to see—what he could see.

Instead of going toward the beach he went up

the gentle sandy slope in the direction of the town and government buildings. No one was abroad here, it seemed, for the citizens kept to their beds at night when a fleet was in and the water-front was maggoty with brawlers. Besides, there were frequent showers—little splashes of rain that passed over the sand and roofs like pattering feet. Yet the seeming that no one was abroad was a seeming, for Andy had not progressed far when he saw two men coming toward him. As they drew near he saw that one was Alcalde Diaz himself; the big man of the town. They came on and drew abreast and passed; then Andy stopped as abruptly as if he had been a soldier commanded to halt. He whiffed, he faced about and lifted his nose toward the retreating figures and whiffed some more.

"I'll be banished," he said half aloud, "if I didn't get the smell of horses from them—and there isn't a horse on the island, so says Diaz. Andy, here is where you make Narvaez your friend and get the captaincy, or—don't find any horses."

He followed the mismatched pair—mismatched because the man with the mayor was a half-nude laborer—and they led him straight back to the Pirate's Hive. He was close enough on their heels to see Diaz nod significantly to the Pirate and, with his man, pass behind a curtain at a door that Andrew knew was the entrance to a series of rooms. Their step-sounds told him that they had gone to the rear, out of hearing. He lounged up to the counter, assuming a lazy and indifferent air.

"Queer birds get together," he commented, nodding idly in the direction the mayor had taken.

The Pirate's hard black eyes turned on him keenly, but the grim lips did not part in speech. Andy knew by Diaz's familiarity with the place and with the barkeep that he had been here before and he decided the Pirate knew what was afoot. Also he proposed to fish a little with his wits for a hook and line.

"The man should get the smell of horses off him before he comes into the settlement," he commented.

"Why?" the Pirate snapped him up.

"Any of Narvaez's men can smell him, and they might learn something the governor is anxious to find out." Andy chuckled knowingly.

"How did you learn?"

The barkeep was divided between curiosity, suspicion and belligerency.

"For one thing, Pirate mine; me father came from the island of saints and scholars." He was encouraged by the barkeep's look of mystification. "And for another, when a subject is talked of indiscreetly about the government buildings, leave it to a Celt o' Erin to learn. I wonder, now, what this bumpkins

could be wantin' to whisper to Diaz? The horses are not dying, do you think?"

"They need new pasture. This old 'One-Eye' Narvaez keeps staying and staying and the horses eating and eating. Porfirio, who it is that talks jowl to jowl with the *alcalde*, asks for aid to drive the beasts to another valley. 'Tis curious that ye know all this."

"Wouldn't the governor prance if he knew how the mayor is deceiving him! No horses my foot! A hundred at least."

"Nay, not so many. Half that, *posiblemente*. It is strange, *señor*, how you came by this knowledge." The Pirate was troubled. "When Alcalde Diaz sent the horses inland he gave out that they had been shipped to Cuba and lost at sea. Only Porfirio knew the truth at first, then I. And now—open talk at the government building."

"Oh, not open talk."

"Thou wilt have care, *señor*, with thy words lest it appear that Porfirio or I have talked in forbidden cars?"

"Should I be asked, Pirate, whence came the first whiff o' these horses to me I should say in the street, and say true." Andy was elated and he wanted to go out on the beach and yell, but there was still more information to gain, so he affected a huge yawn. "Wh-wh-ho hum hi—why did Diaz attempt such a fool's trick anyway? Doesn't he know the tale will tickle the King's ear sooner or later?"

"Disappointment sharpens knives and dull wits," the Pirate opined. "Diaz had his mind pegged to be governor on these new firm lands and old One-Eye got the place. When your fleet cut the horizon Diaz knew who came, and that night he sent the fit horses up the coast, knowing well it would be a burr in Narvaez's crop."

"Have you not thought of selling this information to Narvaez for a few handfuls of gold?" Andy asked curiously.

"Aye, I had thought of it but—I heard the wife of Sergeant Bastos talking the other night."

"What of that?"

The Pirate shook his head positively and shuddered as if in fear.

"The devil would wait for me at the door of hell with a bucket of hot pitch," he said and thrust out his hands, as if to push Andy and his suggestion away.

Andy sauntered around the room, yawned again, complained about the dullness, and with a "good night" passed out of the door. But outside his demeanor underwent a magical change. A happy grin lighted his face.



NARVAEZ and most of his staff gloomed about the big room of the many-roomed bamboo house on the beach that the expeditionary officers had appropriated. Outside, every few minutes, a

light shower of heavy drops pattered over the thatch and the sand like running feet. Inside, the rush lights wavered in the draft stirred up by the governor's pacing back and forth over the creaking slat floor.

"Satan's plague!" he blazed out suddenly. "Can not you men at the dice game there be quieter. You make more noise than a troop of horse on the Toledo bridge."

"Horses are on your mind, Excellency," Cabeza de Vaca remarked lazily.

A rattling scabbard interrupted the commander's retort, and he stared at the door in amazement, for Andy Doran stood there, smiling. He removed his plumed hat, bowed, and strode forward—a little short of six feet in height, but muscular and light-treading and as self-confident as—an Irish swordsman!

"Why come you hither?" Narvaez demanded sharply.

"For a captaincy in your horse, Excellency."

He chuckled happily.

"You impudent—"

"I can put a bug in your ear, sir, that will repair your garment."

"I will not hear you. Out with you."

"Nay, nay," de Vaca interposed. "A son of Erin is a luck piece. Perhaps 'twould be profitable to listen."

"An it would—"

There was something in Andy's tone that made the governor pause and knead his sharp chin with his long fingers.

"I will listen," he granted. "Speak out."

"Horses, that is my talk, an it were induced by a commission in your army."

"Horses and men?" The governor and the whole company pricked up their ears. "Know you something new?"

"I do that."

"Out with it then."

"I can be persuaded by a commission, sir, sworn to before the friar, and saying that I am to accompany you on all expeditions and remain in your service until I wish to quit or the expedition is ended."

"Commission! Fool! Thinkest I can risk the wrath of my King by making you, a foreigner, an officer of my horse?"

"Remember thou hast no horse yet," Andy retorted significantly.

"You—you—" Narvaez fairly panted with wrath. "I've a mind to choke you. Speak out. The commission is yours."

"'Twere of more substantiality written on good parchment and, in my hands."

"You doubt my word."

His hand went to his sword.

"Yes," Andy replied calmly.

Narvaez was beside himself. He jerked out his sword.

"Tell me what you know of horses and men or I'll run you through!"

"You do that and you'll never hear a horse snort in Santo Domingo."

Narvaez ran at Andy, point to the fore. Doran retreated a step or two, drawing his own blade. He had felt in his serious moments that a contest of this sort was inevitable between himself and the governor and he had made up his mind what to do, let the consequences be what they would. As the swords clashed and flamed he retreated step by step, backward and sidewise, keeping his opponent's steel away from his body and waiting his chance. It came quickly, and, taking advantage of it, he cried out—

"I hate to fight a blind man!"

At the same instant the governor's sword seemed to be wrapped about with Andy's. It was jerked from his hand, and in the same motion Doran sent it flashing across the room.

The enormity of his offense was impressed upon him by the dead silence of the onlookers. They regarded him as if he were already flayed to death. For a second he was at a loss what to do, but he had the faculty of knowing when retreat was victory, so now he picked up his hat from the floor, every man, including the governor, still staring at him, bowed low and said—

"I bid you a pleasant good evening."

He expected to be arrested before he reached his lodging, and he expected it all the next day. The tale soon was on everybody's lips, and a group of horse and sailors offered to mutiny in support of him, but Andy went about as gaily as ever, and bided time. Then on the third day the governor sent a summons. He was in the Pirate's place at the time, and that individual, having heard the story, was much alarmed.

"Thou hast put thy neck in a noose," he whispered as Andy started off. "Be careful that thou dost not get mine in also. Thou wilt say nothing of our talk, *señor*?"

"Not even if I have a chance to," replied Andy, not knowing whether he was to be hanged or appointed.

He found the commander in his private room of the *casa grande*.

"Irishman," Narvaez began without preliminary, "I prefer to hang you, and some day I may, but necessity devours wrath. Here is your commission." He passed over a paper which Andy saw was a proper commission in all respects. "Speak of what you know, and remember, if your words are not true, I shall put you in jail—and worse."



IN THE afternoon of the forty-fifth day at Santo Domingo, near fifty horses, obtained from the *alcalde's* hidden pasture, were in the low waists of the vessels, a sixth ship had been added by purchase, and a troop of ten men had been assigned to Captain Doran's command. And in the evening the fleet sailed away in all its pride and

glory for the unknown shores of the American mainland.

In the stern of the vessel that Cabeza de Vaca commanded, Andy leaned over the rail and pondered his change in fortune and the future. He was interrupted in this pleasant pastime by a soft-footed Spanish woman stopping at his side.

"Señor," she said in a low earnest voice. "Dost thou value thy life?"

"Well," Andy answered whimsically, "it isn't worth much but—about all I have."

"Then—this fleet will stop at Cuban ports. Lose thyself in one of them."

"Why all this?" Doran asked. "What do you know?"

"Señor, thou didst do the sergeant and myself a favor in Santo Domingo. I do thee a favor in return. I warn you. Remain in Cuba, for they who go with the expedition on the firm land are lost."

Andy laughed aloud at her woful seriousness. "Tut-tut, woman. My star is a lucky one, and my feet are itchin' to be scratched by the golden pebbles of yon far beaches. Nay, I shall go as far as our commander, and may be it, a bit of distance farther, weather and health permitting."

### CHAPTER III

#### THE DEAD MAN'S GOLD

MANY a month passed before Captain Doran felt the tickle of the sands of North American beaches. For this was an ill-fated expedition from the first, delayed and harassed and—cursed.

It was late in October when the fleet left Santo Domingo. In Cuba Narvaez bought two more ships and additional horses. In November two ships were lost, with sixty men and nearly twoscore horses, in a tropical hurricane; and after this, one tempest had hardly subsided before another was bobbing them about like corks in a boiling kettle.

The culminating piece of misfortune, though it was not known at the time, was Narvaez's selection of a pilot for the uncharted waters of New Spain, one Miruelo, who boasted that he knew the north coasts from the greatest harbors to the oyster beds.

The second day that the pilot was at the wheel of the flagship, he grounded the entire fleet on a low island, and it held there for fifteen days, until another storm blew up water and floated them clear. Eventually, in early April, this man by the sheerest luck doubled the west end of Cuba and trimmed the sails for Havana with five vessels—one brigantine and four three-masters. One ship had been left back to come on later with fresh supplies.

It was the commander's intention to repair

his ships at Havana and rest the company, but bad luck, like a gray bird perching on the mizzen, snatched this last cup from their lips. When twelve leagues off the settlement another tropical hurricane broke and blew them northward like a shower of leaves in Autumn. When the storm subsided they were west of Florida, half lost. But the pilot assured the commander pompously that he would guide them to a safe harbor, one not far from the River of Palms—the harbor of Panuco.

Panuco! The Spaniard's ignorance of the north gulf coast was colossal. Panuco was what a long time afterward became Tampico, Mexico. It had been located by Spanish ships coasting north from the Carribean sea—Cordova in 1517, perhaps. The navigators went as far north as the Rio Grande—River of Palms—and believed they had traversed the coast clear to Florida. Yet they did not know that Galveston Island and the Mississippi River existed. Thus it was that Miruelo thought to pilot the fleet northward from Havana, and soon find Panuco in Florida.

Even persistent bad luck relents now and then—long enough to fool its victims! And one morning when the red sun was edging up from behind the cloud of land like a copper coin from a magician's fingers they descried a bay—probably Tampa Bay—reaching inland. Miruelo admitted that it was not Panuco, that he did not know what place it was. But the commander was anxious to land, get rid of their sea cramps, and explore the country, so he had the fleet hauled up on the north lip of the bay.

Immediately there was a great to-do in preparation for landing next day and taking formal possession. Trade goods were winched up, armor scoured for the ceremony. Everybody speculated as to who would be permitted in the first landing party.

"There will be few enough," drawled Cabeza de Vaca. "The governor is jealous of his prerogative to be first, and he wishes to have only a select company with him."

"I lay a good wager that I am one of them," Castillo said. "I am always lucky."

"I'm not lucky," Andy denied, "but I am going to be in the first shore party if Narvaez will listen to reason. I feel like a bug shut up in a book. I'm going in and chat with him about it."

"Better not," de Vaca advised. "If he thinks a man wants a favor—he will give it and pay the interest before it is due."

"He'd leave me aboard sure if I didn't see him, so I might as well go and see if I can pick some good out of a bad nut."

A moment later when he knocked at the governor's door, high on the poop deck, he received a short "Enter!"

"Ah," Narvaez said suavely when he saw who stood before him. "Think of a friend and the

friend thinks of you! I've had you in mind for a half hour, Captain Dorantes. Sit down. I have a special honor to confer upon you."

"Yes?"

Andy was plainly skeptical.

"But state your business first, my good Captain."

Narvaez fairly beamed.

"Oh, a mere nothing, sir," Doran was very polite. "I would go ashore on the morrow, and you are willing."

"A coincidence! Just what I had in mind. I mean to honor you by permitting you to lead the horsemen, breaking the way for us mere followers as we explore inland tomorrow. There may be savages and danger."

"No doubt."

"You are not afraid?"

"Nay, Excellency," Andy smiled. "Neither am I puzzled why the honor is mine. 'Tis a good honest way of ridding yourself of one Captain Doran. Indian attacks, you know, and—"

"You have a quick wit," Narvaez complimented, his one good eye twinkling like a kindly father's. "Such a quick wit that I shall go farther and extend the honor." He leaned forward and tapped off his words with his long white fingers. "Every journey, every trip inland henceforth, thou shalt be the leader to break the way. Thou shalt soon be slain by the savages, certainly, but what an honor to die for Spain! Get out, and be ready in the morning with thy ten horsemen."



THE ceremony of taking formal possession of the mainland was gone through with the next forenoon. It was typical. Narvaez walked up the beach in advance of the others, knelt and kissed the ground, then planted two iron-shod staffs, bearing the colors of King Charles and of Spain. He was gorgeous in his slashed doublet, his cape, the plumed hat and polished boots. After he had proclaimed himself governor and conferred their titles on the staff members, he directed the company, consisting of about fifty men, to go inland to see what manner of land they had arrived at.

Doran and Sergeant Bastos led the way, the others of the troop being stretched out in a sort of skirmish line. Every man was interested. They at once began to examine the pebbles and sand for gold, paying little heed to the strange jungle, to the land and water birds that flew up with raucous cries, or to the gorgeous blossoms and the rich odors.

Because their responsibility was greatest, Doran and his sergeant kept alert, but in the end their caution went for nothing, for without warning four naked Indians, armed with heavy bows, suddenly confronted them. All the other explorers had fallen far behind.

"'Tis time to be polite," Andy called back to Bastos whimsically.

He dismounted and put out a hand, but the Indians, not knowing the custom of shaking hands, gave back a step. However when they saw that he was friendly, they invited him and the sergeant to follow, using expressive gestures.

In an hour they arrived at a village of a half dozen grass huts with a patch of corn close by. The populace, men, women and children, mostly naked, came pouring out with incredible amazement in their faces and a curiosity that made them finger the cloth of garments, the armor and the cross-bows. They were led straight to a hut larger than the others. Inside an old man, no more than a bag of bones, sat on a skin. The instant he saw the two strangers he sprang to his feet, and Doran thought the old eyes would pop from their sockets. But the tribal father controlled himself at once and led the way hurriedly, all the tribes people following excitedly, to a patch of low brush not far away.

Here, it was Andy's and the soldier's time to be amazed, for in a half-circle were a dozen boxes such as were used by the Spaniards to ship merchandise in to the new world. They bore in Spanish lettering, "Trade Goods." Over the tops lay painted skins. Andy lifted one of these to see what was within, and started back in horror. Then one by one, Bastos looking over his shoulder, he lifted the covers of the other boxes.

In each one was the dried-up body of a man, Spaniards as evidenced by their clothing.

"Where have these come from?" Bastos asked stupidly.

"I know not, sergeant."

"An omen, these corpses!" the soldier whispered hoarsely.

"Pooh! Forget those superstitions and what your wife is always saying. These no doubt are the men of de Ayllon who, you remember having heard in Cuba, sailed for this north coast last Summer."

"'Twas a dismal end," Bastos shuddered.

"Let us see if we can find a clue to their identity," Andy suggested.

They began to peer into the boxes again, going from one to another, the Indians meantime watching with curiosity.

"These savages," Andy surmised, "found the men dead and they are curious about our being alive."

"What is that?" Bastos cried, pointing inside of a box. "The mummy holds something in its hand."

"A kerchief! Gripped tight, too, as if he had tried to take his mummy to heaven with him. Let's see." He seized the bag that the kerchief formed and it tore away rottenly from the dried hand. Into his own hand he poured four



gleaming pebbles. "Look, Bastos. What is this?"

They peered at the pebbles for a moment. Andy hefted them, bit at one. Bastos cut at one with his knife. Then they looked at each other.

"Gold!" croaked the Spaniard.

"Gold!" Andy triumphed.

The Indians were pleased at their interest and the two soldiers asked, by signs, where the nuggets could be found. For a little while the Indians were puzzled or were reluctant to tell; then the chief, with an air of concluding that he might as well do it as not, lifted his arm to the north and began to wiggle his fingers.

"That would mean north, and no doubt several days, I take it," Andy said. "Watch him."


The chief slowly swung his extended arm to the northwest, still wiggling his fingers.

"Then that would mean northwest many days, after going north, eh, *mi capitán*?"

The Indians pointed then to the feet of the women, and the two saw that every female from twelve years on wore heavy beaten gold anklets.

"Great stars!" Andy gasped. "There's sufficient gold—why, a bigamist among these people could start a mint!"

The savages now led their guests back to the village and gave them food—gourds of boiled fish, a crushed maize concoction and "cabbage" of the palmetto. While they were eating, the main body of Spaniards came into sight around a point of the jungle. So many strangers paralyzed the Indians with fear for a moment; then they fled, down to the last screaming child, to their canoes that lay bottom up on the beach.

 ANDY led Narvaez and the others to the mysterious boxes and an excited discussion arose as to the identity of the corpses. But the commander was not so moved as not to see the patch of maize, and when he found that the grain was ripe he sent his men into the field to gather the corn. Fray Saurez, the friar, however, was greatly perturbed over the bodies. In the end he surmised that the Indians were keeping them for some idolatrous purpose and ordered them piled and burned. When the flames rose, the Indians at the beach hurriedly launched their canoes and paddled affrightedly away into the bay. Seeing this, Andy nodded Bastos aside.

"With the savages gone," he whispered, "these others can learn nothing of the gold. Keep a dumb tongue, sergeant. If the people knew of these nuggets and the direction the chief told us of, they would abandon the ships and their reason and go north, mad for gold. Understand?"

"Yes, *capitán*. I shall say nothing."

"Keep quiet until the time arrives to talk. We would not be the cause of disaster."

But the story of the nuggets did not remain a secret. By noon the next day the whole fleet's company—numbering now four hundred, some having deserted in Cuba—were talking about them. Bastos told his wife, and she told a friend, who told a friend . . . I When Andy returned from a scouting venture of exploration, Narvaez charged him with holding back information for selfish ends, or for the Normans, or Britains. Andy then told the whole story. After a few days Narvaez assembled the company and informed them that as the land was empty—there being no food, no Indians for slaves, and no gold—he had decided on another step. He ordered the pilot Miruelo to coast southward toward Florida—already they were lost without knowing it, for they were in Florida—to seek Panuco. Lieutenant Caravallo was placed in charge of the other ships and ordered to coast northward, also seeking Panuco or some other safe harbor. At the same time a land party was to go northward searching for gold and a harbor. Whichever northward party found a safe anchorage first should wait for the other, and Miruelo could join them or send word of his whereabouts.

A great discussion ensued. Cabeza de Vaca argued that a safe harbor for a base should be found first, then inland expeditions made. Fray Saurez on the other hand held that it would be tempting providence to go on the ships again, seeing that God had saved them from the storms so many times. Narvaez settled the matter by announcing arrogantly that his plan would be followed.

Then one morning, the first day of May in the year 1528, the expeditions were ready. Formed in a column, the land party waited for the order to move. Everything was in readiness. Farewells had been said—the ten women of the fleet wailing sadly. Narvaez was on the point of giving orders to move when a woman, the wife of Sergeant Bastos, ran forward from the group that was to return to the ships.

"Sire, sire," she pleaded, dropping to her knees before him, "abandon this journey. Change thy decision. Go not inland."

The gold-mad Spaniards broke in with cat-calls and ribald derision, except Bastos, who sat his horse with white face and trembling lips.

"Cease thy foolishness, woman," Narvaez ordered. "Unless," he added, "there is something new to tell us."

These women had done a great deal of prophesying, and though the governor was as superstitious as the meanest of his men he had given orders against open talk concerning the dire fate that was said to await them.

"I have something new," the woman said.

"We ten women have relinquished all hope of seeing our husbands again and will each take a

new husband when the land expedition passes out of sight in the jungle."

There was a shocked outcry at this. Every husband was in the land expedition. Some of them turned pale, some wrathful. A half-dozen dropped their packs and, mumbling threats, started toward the group at the water's edge, where the women stood looking on in agitation. Narvaez, brandishing his sword, sprang before them.

"Back to the ranks!" he bawled.

"But Excellency," protested a big sailor, "I would speak with my wife."

"I would give mine a taste of my fists to make her remember to be true," another blurted angrily.

A third, sickly-pale under his dusky skin, simply wrung his hands and looked at the governor pleadingly. Others looked first at Narvaez and then their women, irresolutely.

"Back!" the commander ordered sternly. "Tis a trick to break up the expedition."

"No, no, sir," wailed the woman. "It is not a trick. Thou goest to thy death. Those who go inland will never be seen again. It is so written. They will vanish from the earth like smoke."

The Spaniards were thoroughly frightened. Bastos, the worthy old soldier, sat his black mount sobbing in terror and grief. For a moment Doran felt the panic, especially as he remembered that the same woman had warned him to stay in Cuba. But Narvaez, the most gold hungry of them all, was not to be cheated. He too was pale, but he steadfastly bellowed an order for the column to move forward. It did not move. Instead, the bolder of the husbands again started toward the group by the water, where the nine remaining wives were now wailing and sobbing. Narvaez began to whip the rebellious ones with the flat of his sword, two or three of the horsemen assisting him. They speedily found their places in line, though they kept muttering curses on the expedition, the governor, and their women.

"Pay heed," Narvaez shouted so that all could hear. "An one of you tries again to leave the column I shall run him through. We go inland. Have no fear of the idle superstitions of these cats. You husbands will see your women again within a fortnight." He paused while the assurance could have its effect, then suddenly he held up the four nuggets before them, just a moment so that all could see. The trick was magic. "Gold!" he shouted in a sort of ecstasy. "Forward, march!"

Some of the noblemen and some of the sailors raised their voices in a marching chant. The column moved like a company of soldiers.

The wife of Sergeant Bastos, standing there alone on the sand, screamed once, then wailed her warning again.

"You will vanish from the earth like smoke."

Bastos rode away sobbing. The column kept on, Narvaez ready with his sword to make good his threat to run through any man who turned back. At the edge of the jungle they half paused to wave a farewell to the silent knot on the beach and to those on the ships, then entered the forest.

Not one of them ever saw the fleet again.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FOREST PROCESSION

THIS journey of the Spaniards northward into a strange and savage land is one of the most remarkable pictures in the world of human avarice. Those who marched in the company numbered three hundred. They had forty horses. There were no women.

For food they had only one-half pound of bacon and two pounds of ship's biscuit to each man. Their weapons were lances and crossbows. The soldiery and many others wore heavy armor. There were no hunters, no artisans, no guides.

Fifteen days they traveled northward without seeing a soul except themselves. The only extra food they found was the spadex of the palmetto. Day in and day out Narvaez ordered Doran in the lead—at the very point of the column, and had it not been for his Irish sense of humor he could not have stood up under the labor.

"Bastos," he said one day, "did you ever sympathize with a needle that a woman uses?"

"What mean you, sir?" countered the puzzled soldier.

"Nothing, except that I am the point of the needle. A few days more of this and my front shall be worn off to my back-bone."

"It is true thou hast lost much weight."

"Oh well, this is adventure, and I stole aboard the flagship to find adventure. I daren't lose courage in two weeks."

At the end of the first fortnight they were a ragged and desperate procession. Their shoes were worn off, their feet bare and bleeding. Heavy armor gouged into the flesh so that some groaned from raw pain. Many would have deserted and sought the sea, but they did not know where it was, nor how far off. On the fifteenth day they reached a river and when the sick and sore refused to cross, Narvaez and his noblemen went among them with whips, lashing and driving.

No sooner were they across, however, than they came upon a large party of Indians. The Spaniards siezed four for hostages and compelled them to lead the company to their village, which proved to be a small collection of grass huts with a patch of corn. The hungry horde went through the field like a devouring swarm of locusts.

The people set up a cry to be led to the sea and the fleet. De Vaca, Andy and others urged Narvaez to heed them, and events might have turned out differently had he done so, but in going among the Indians exhibiting the four nuggets he found an old man who recognized the stuff. Pointing toward the northwest the patriarch spoke a single word many times—  
"Apalachen, Apalachen."

The Spaniards forgot their misery, the fear that they were lost. In their new excitement they threw away parts of armor, tossed bundles of trade goods into the brush, lightened themselves for the race to the city of gold. Again Doran, who had learned caution from his father, protested to Narvaez, only to be rebuffed.

"Attend to thy own affairs as trail-breaker," the leader snarled. "I do not need advice from a northern pig."

Andy, sitting his wiry black pony, spat savagely in disgust and rode away.

The Spaniards plunged into the journey. Within a day or two they were in a thick dark forest of great trees where they must clamber over windfalls and go around frequent lagoons. Fortunately they found plenty of young water-fowl for food. They talked of nothing but gold, thought of nothing—except Doran, Enriquez, the clerk, and Estevanico, the Moor. They gave attention to learning the Indian language.

One night Narvaez and Andy, officer of the day, walked together among the groups about the cooking fires on inspection. They came upon men tearing up shirts and blankets and sewing them into bags for the gold that was to be found, and they saw others gambling for this same gold, using knives and trinkets for pawns and gambling by weight. Narvaez laughed.

"Twill be a laugh on the other side, an no gold is found," said Andy.

"Gold will be found, never fear. It must be found. I've got to find it. For years in Cuba, in Trinidad, have I searched for it and never found, but now it must be at Apalachen or—I shall never return to Spain. By the saints, it will be there."

It was as if he were trying to make the gold be there by his will power.

On they went, singing, cursing, half-starving—until the four Indian hostages said they no longer recognized the country and the company failed to find Apalachen; then a change came over them. At first a numbing fear took hold and their pace slowed down. The deep dark forest oppressed them. They began to question one another with hollow, anxious eyes. They forgot about gold and sank into lassitude, moving forward only because instinct forbade them to stop. They slept on and on like silent and weary ghosts, scarcely speaking above a whisper in this twilight gloom.

Two men kept their brains keen—Doran and

Narvaez. The governor knew but two words, "northwest" and "Apalachen." To make speed he quit lashing the sick and the weaklings of mornings, preferring to let them remain behind. But Doran had the sort of courage that never bent from humanity; he took it upon himself to lash the laggards into column rather than to let them die alone.

On the thirtieth of June the company reached a river, and again the people refused to cross. Again, in the extremity, Indians appeared. They said that Apalachen was but nine days distant. The Spaniards forgot their lassitude, straightened up like hungry men at sight of a laden table; they felt the gold on their palms once again. In their pell-mell rush to get across the stream the first loss of life occurred—a dragoon and his horse were drowned. The Spaniards ate the horse for supper.

Their spirits revived. They began to throw away of what they had left—mainly tools, such as a hand-forged, sledge, saws. The day came when men sobbed over this. It was a race between mad beings. Gold! Gold! Apalachen but nine days off.

The Spaniards made it in eight days, less time than the Indians required.

On the eighth of July, two days short of one year from the time they sailed from Spain, they came suddenly upon their dreamed-of city of gold. Doran and Estevanico went ahead, while the company waited, not knowing it was the place. The two, advancing while Indian women, old men and children gave back in fear at the strange men astride stranger animals, counted no fewer than forty grass houses, some large enough to house a score of men.

"Dost thou observe there are no men?" asked the Moor.

"Warriors? They are away, but one of these old men will answer our purpose."

The women and children were able to get out of the way but one old man was unable to run. Doran overtook him and addressed him.

"O great chief," he said in the simple tongue he had acquired, "we would be told the name of your village."

"Apalachen," the old man replied.

Estevanico instantly spurred his horse toward the waiting Spaniards and began to shout at the top of his voice:

"Apalachen! Apalachen!"

The company abandoned reason along with packs, arms, surplus clothing, and rushed into the houses, through the streets, plunged into lagoons and swept up handfuls of sand, dodged hither and thither.

Andy felt the madness seize him but he held himself in check by remembering that he would be accorded his share even if he did not pick up a single palmful of the glittering metal. He held staunchly on to the old man so that they would have at least one hostage in case

of attack. Cabeza de Vaca joined him after a while.

"Didst thou ever see such madness, Andee?" he asked. "See them pawing in the sand!"

"Has a speckle of gold been found?"

"Figuroa but told me that were he to make a bag out of the eyelid of a duck it would yet be too large for all the gold in Apalachen. Lad, the devil is to pay."

"And no gold to pay with."



THE Indian warriors returned and attacked within an hour. Andy put his armored men to the fore and drove them back, not because the Spanish soldiers knew how to fight, but because their armor could not be pierced by the arrows and the savages were afraid of men who kept on advancing after being hit.

They attacked again the next day and burned the village, and they kept up their attacks day after day, but Narvaez, the implacable, held on and sent out party after party to search for gold, because the old *cacique*, whom Doran had held, said that Apalachen was a province as well as a town and extended northward even to great mountains.

Time and again the explorers returned with the same report, "No gold." On the evening of the twenty-fourth day in Apalachen the party which had gone farthest and made the most detailed search returned to say that they had not found a fleck of gold. Narvaez assembled the company. He looked them over in silence for a moment, then—

"No gold," he said, and by the very saying of it he seemed to become an old and broken man. "Captain Dorantes," he went on without spirit, "repeat again what the *cacique* told thee."

"About Apalachen?"

"Nay. About the sea."

"Little enough, Excellency." Doran was one of the few who still honored the leader with this form of address. "He tells me that south of here, or a little west, nine days distant is a village named Aute and beyond that, he knows not how far, the sea."

"Captain Dorantes," the governor continued in a subdued and pleading voice, "you led us hither under compulsion, and were a good leader. Will you lead us to the fleet by favor?"

Doran was swept off his feet for a second by this surprising request but he responded at once positively, for his mind had journeyed to the sea many times and his opinions were ready.

"I will, an we can start at once, and I may have full authority."

"Does any man object?" asked Narvaez.

"No! No!" the people cried. "Dorantes, Captain Andee."

So it came about that the next morning Andee

drew Doran found himself at the head of a moving column, responsible for reaching salt water.

The horses were given to the sick. Indians attacked every day. Andy put his few armored men on the fringe of the column and again the armor saved them, for arrows that would penetrate through trees a hand's span in thickness would no more than dent the armor. The Indians feared to pass this fringe of steel men.

On and on they went, gold forgotten, their minds busy with ships and a phrase—"vanish from the earth like smoke." If their journey northward was one of lassitude and hopelessness at times, every day southward was a journey of fear and despair and death—for graves were left at every camping-place.

By day snakes pended from the hairy moss of dripping trees, their forked tongues flashing poisonously. The sun never penetrated to the forest rot under their naked feet. Slime lay on the water they drank. At night wild animals prowled and screamed, the feverish cried out in delirium. And some asserted that the ghosts of the dead walked with them through the twilight shade, refusing to be left alone in the hellish land.

At last, somehow, they arrived at Aute—to find it in ashes, burned by the Indians to foil the strangers. There was plenty of squash and maize, but the next day the Indians drove them on. They straggled throughout the day, in a final spurt, and reached a river. This had inlets and sluggish water, indicating that the sea was not far beyond.

The company was at the end of its tether. Every man was wounded or sick. On the shore, by an oyster-bed, the Spaniards gave up; they could go no farther. They simply lay down and quit. Three men died almost at once; life was at the lowest ebb. Even Andy, who had not relaxed a moment heretofore, slept with the rest of them throughout the night, not even putting out a guard.

When day came again it was plain to be seen that they could go no farther. Not half of them could have walked a league. Andy mauled his brain to find some way out. When he began to see a glimmer of light, de Vaca addressed the supine crowd, recommending that they resign themselves to death.

"No!" cried Andy. "Are you weaklings, cowards!" He literally was the only man among them on his feet—a gaunt reminder of himself, sandy hair and beard long, barefooted, in rags. "We are near the sea. We must go on. We will go on!"

"How?" asked de Vaca contemptuously.

"Build a fleet of barges!"

"How?"

"How? An you Spaniards had had my father to tell you, as he told me, of a belly pinched by hunger, of makeshifts and ingenuity

in turning a sow's ear to silk, you would not lie on your backs and ask how."

"We have no tools, no forge."

The end of everything seemed to be at hand. The indifference, the helplessness, overwhelmed Andy. His eye chanced to fall upon the man who had thrown away their hand-forged and his temper flamed.

"Murderer!" he shouted, pointing an accusing finger.

The man turned over on his face weakly and began to sob.

"You blatherskite of a bloated nobleman," Andy flung at de Vaca, "is there not a man among you?"

The sobbing man sat up suddenly, a queer expression on his face.

"I can burn charcoal," he said.

Andy was contrite on the instant. He patted the man's shoulder.

"You can redeem yourself," said he. "Now for the forge." He looked around.

"I am a ship's carpenter, as you know," said another man, sitting up and speaking doubtfully. "I might make a bellows of reeds and sticks and skins."

"The fleet is built!" Andy declared.



HE IMMEDIATELY assigned men to various tasks, though most of the company had never turned a hand at useful employment and did not know how to work. He ordered the noblemen, otherwise useless, to care for the sick, threatening to kill with his bare hands any man who refused. None refused. The horsemen he appointed food-getters, directing them to raid Aute for maize and squashes, and some footmen he set to gathering oysters. But as to artisans, not more than twenty men were found who showed the slightest ability to wield a hammer or a draw-knife.

When the forge—a hairy thing what with the untanned hides—was finished, Andy made the first tool, a hammer. He pounded red-hot stirrup irons around the end of a stick with a stone until there was a knob of iron on a handle. With this he shaped a hammer, and with the hammer he made other basic tools, so that soon several were working on hand-axes, draw-knives, crude saws, all made from scraps of armor, metal from the cross-bows, their spurs. Every sliver of metal was saved for nails.

With these crude tools small trees were flattened on two sides and made to fit together for the bottoms and sides of the barges.

It was a struggle for existence with ingenuity as the key. Each day some man went to Andy with an idea. A Greek named Teodoro, who had stolen aboard as had the Irishman, suggested palmetto fiber and pitch from the resinous trees for oakum caulking. Another spoke

of using the horse legs—Andy was having a horse killed every three days for food—for water-bags. Doran thereafter had the legs skinned, leaving on the hoof, and flayed the hides. Andy himself thought of having the noblemen braid the manes and tails into rope for rigging.

All did not go well. Men died constantly, and once ten were killed by Indians at the oyster-bed with the others looking on helplessly because they no longer had weapons, the cross-bows having been robbed of the metal. Always they were hungry. The score who worked on the barges kept at it from daylight to dark, then by the light of fires until they fell asleep at their tasks and others dragged them aside out of the way. Everything was makeshift; everything was used. The pouches made to carry gold in from Apalachen Andy had filled with corn, ravaged from the fields of Aute. Oars were made of juniper saplings and sails of their shirts.

Finally on the third of October five barges, each twenty-two elbow-lengths long, were launched. Most of the company felt themselves already saved so great was the feeling of victory in having made a fleet from nothing. But this optimism was dampened when Narvaez assembled them for orders. He was scarcely able to stand, even with one hand on a tree trunk, and he aroused pity in their hearts by his aged feebleness.

"My people," he began in a quavering voice, "we owe Captain Dorantes our thanks—more than that, and I salute him—I have here information which I shall give you so that should any of us survive it can be carried to the ear of the king." He referred to a scrap of white bark covered with charcoal marks. "The pilots swear that since leaving the fleet in Florida we have traveled two hundred eighty leagues, more or less. That is a far way to come not to arrive at a profitable destination. Of the three hundred who started on land, two hundred fifty-one are yet living. The others have perished. I shall now appoint commanders for the barges and assign the companies."

To himself he gave forty-nine men, and the same number to Fray Saurez and Alonso Enriques, to Captains Tellez and Penaloza, forty-seven men; to de Vaca and Alonso de Soles, an inspector, forty-nine men; and to Doran and Castillo, forty-eight.

The following morning they went aboard. When the bags of corn, the two hundred forty horse legs filled with fresh water, and their clothing had been placed among the companies the sides of the barges were but one hand's span above the water.

"The ships! The ships!" the people shouted when the boats were pushed off. "We have won."

## CHAPTER V

## VANISHING LIKE SMOKE

FOR seven days the barges were sailed and poled in waist-deep water, then they reached the open sea. Here they made a fatal mistake by turning westward instead of to the east—westward, because in that direction they believed Panuco to be, and the fleet there waiting for them.

For thirty days and more they held their way westward, hugging the coast, not daring to venture into deep water because of their frail craft. Always their eyes were strained to see the tops of masts sticking above the trees in some inlet, which would be their fleet awaiting them. Storms were frequent. At first the Indians they found were low-lived, dim-minded creatures flitting under damp live-oaks, so poor and ignorant that they had no supplies of food even for themselves. Then the horse legs rotted and spilled the fresh water. But by the time this happened the character of the Indians had changed, had become fierce, so that when they attempted to go ashore for fresh water they were driven off. Storms also prevented them landing.

On one occasion they went six days without water and five men died from drinking out of the sea. Cold rains began to drift across the land and water, from low gray clouds, and all the food they had to warm their blood was unparched corn. To live was worse than to die.

When the rains stopped cold northers began to blow. In the midst of these, their tongues black from three days' thirst, they sailed into a current of fresh muddy water that flowed into the sea from the north. (This was the Mississippi at the mouth, seen for the first time by Europeans, for de Soto of course had not yet discovered it. Thus the Narvaez expedition really discovered this river, though de Soto, coming later, has the credit.)

They plunged into it with the barges, in the continuance of their journey west, but soon found that it was a mighty stream, seeming to move like a never-ending tide from out of a continent. They surmised that the country from which it came must be as large, or larger, than the whole of Spain!

Within an hour after entering the stream it became apparent that they could not cross it without danger and trouble, for the barges were being carried out to sea. Doran, always more alive to the situation than the chilled and hopeless Spaniards, rose in his vessel and called to the others—

"We had best turn back, else we will be separated."

"Nay," spoke Narvaez feebly from nearby. "We must keep on toward Panuco. We must cross or we are lost."

"Panuco! Go on! Cross! Panuco!" called many voices.

"But we are being carried away from land," Andy countered. "The barges with the weaker oarsmen are unable to combat the current. We will be washed apart."

But the crews were for beating ahead, and Andy, realizing that after all they might as well be separated as to remain where they were, broke off his protest. He hoped it would at least serve as a warning for the barges to do their uttermost to cling together in a fairly compact group.

Throughout the day they kept pulling to the west to get across the stream, but steadily the mighty volume of water dragged them and manhandled them and worked them out from land toward the open water. By night no barge was within two hundred yards of another.

On the second day they became more widely separated. Once in curiosity, Andy paid the lead-line over the side to test the depth of the current. He paid out thirty fathoms and failed to touch bottom. The men were amazed and even frightened, as men are when they realize that bottomless water is beneath them. Then Andy discovered that the lead was being carried down-stream by the current, and they knew they could not tell how deep the water was. But without doubt it was swift.

By the evening of the third day of this killing contest to break through the clutching barrier it was evident that the barges would be entirely separated. They called out from one to another as best they could to go it on their own and get across somehow then continue westward, working gradually back to the coast—for now they were miles from land.

In the watery sunset of that evening the farthest barge was but a dim gray speck on the high waves, from Doran's craft. It seemed, indeed, that they were vanishing like smoke. By daylight of the fourth day, Andy found himself on the western edge of the current—across at last, but not one of the other barges was in sight anywhere. An off-shore wind had set in over night. Andy believed there was one barge, that of de Vaca, between him and the shore, but he could not see it.

"They are all lost," Castillo declared mournfully. "A watery grave."

"Why think you that?" Andy demanded. "Because we can't see them? Neither can they, see us, but we are not lost. An we push or west we all shall meet again, if not at Panuco, at least somewhere on the coast."

Castillo shook his head so dolefully that Figueroa, the big sailor, laughed outright. They, with sail and oars, worked westward, trying at the same time to make it back toward the land, now far to the north. On this fourth day gray clouds came on again, the seascape

turned gray and wickedly wild, and cold rain set in afresh.

Through two days of this they fought their way, never sighting another barge. Then on the thirty-seventh day after turning westward from the inlet where the craft had been built, now toward the last of November, they came to the point where only three men were able to help navigate. These three were Doran, Castillo and Figueroa. And they were on their last legs. In desperation they set the rag of a sail, turned the barge's nose into the oncoming breakers and let the northeast wind drift them to the west and southwest.

"If we let her go we'll get somewhere," Andy decided. "In this way one of us can steer while the other two get some rest."

"I hope 'somewhere' is the bottom," Castillo shivered. "This cold! It makes my blood as cold as the fishes. Why man will try to go on living is a mystery to me."

"It's the man in you," Andy retorted. "Die fighting, Alonso. That is the glorious end! Hand me a handful of corn, an thou wilt, so I may feast and lie down under the blanket of the thick rain and sleep. Let us be cheerful."

Andy chuckled at the absurdity.

"Thou imbecile!" exploded Castillo. "How can you laugh?"

Figueroa, the strong, laughed in ribald amusement at his captain.

For days they were blown westward, with rain eternally drenching them, with the north wind whipping their rags and cutting to their entrails. Sometimes they were near the dark and inhospitable shore, sometimes far off. Twice they sighted a barge, or two different barges, they could not be certain, on the gray-green horizon to the south. They forgot to count time, forgot even to lift overboard a dead man who lay on his back in the bottom of the barge, his mouth open to the rain, pools of water in his sunken eyes.

Andy worked alone one night, shifting the sail, trying to steer with an oar, and tried to figure out how long they had been coming west since leaving the river. He estimated that it was ten days, but could not be certain. In the midst of the vexation of trying to recall he was startled by a new sound. Hastily he awakened Castillo and Figueroa to ask if what he heard sounded to them like surf. They said it did, and when daylight arrived they saw the shore very close. Moreover, just back of the line of white foam, continually in a turmoil from the great waves, stood a horde of Indians, watching and waiting.

The three able ones tried hard to keep the craft offshore and were having success when fate in the form of a great comber picked them up and wiped them forward. They were helpless. In a moment the barge was slammed down on the sand, high and dry, with a loud crash:

The Indians stood petrified for one instant, then galloped forward, yelling.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ISLAND OF ILL-FATE

THE giant roller that cast Doran upon the sand also beached de Vaca, but two leagues or so farther back on the coast to the northeast. The leader immediately sent his strongest man to climb a tree for a glimpse of the country. When Oviedo returned he reported that he saw Indians approaching. The Spaniards were too cold and weary to care. Oviedo explained that they were on an island—probably Galveston Island—a few leagues long and one wide, and that a narrow ribbon of water separated them from the main land.

The savages appeared presently. There were only a few and they were alarmed, but when they saw that the voyagers were emaciated and sick they came forward—a stupid and brutal set, so low in the scale of humanity that they had no weapons nor clothes. But they offered to bring food, and set out at once, promising to return before nightfall.

Somewhat cheered, the Spaniards decided to launch the barge and be ready to continue as soon as food was brought. De Vaca ordered every man to strip, put his clothing aboard, and lend a shoulder to get the craft off the sand.

"But Excellency," protested Oviedo, who, though the strongest, was the greatest grumbler among them, "this wind will nip at our skins like the teeth of a squirrel."

"But our garments have dried in this wind, and when the barge is afloat we can put them on again. Off with them, men! Let us have the task finished."

Every man naked, they worked at the heavy craft for an hour, and at last had the satisfaction of seeing it float. A few scrambled aboard with the clothing while others waded and pushed. Then in the midst of this success a big wave upset them and the barge went down with two men and all the clothing.

The scrubby mesquite brush offered no shelter. No one knew how to build a fire. The keen norther chilled them so that their back and stomach muscles jerked spasmodically. For the sake of some protection, it occurred to Estevanico, who was the most ingenious of them all, to dig individual pits in the sand to lie in. And here they laid and shivered until almost night, until the Indians approached with gourds in their hands.

The savages looked all about and could see no one, but they kept coming, their faces expressing surprise at the disappearance of the voyagers. At this point one of the Spaniards called out that the Indians were back and the thirty-five bearded, naked and wild-looking

men rose to their feet as one. The apparition was too much for the natives, who dropped the gourds and fled.

The Spaniards lost no time in falling upon the gourds, which contained the meat of ruffs cooked with roots, and the Indians, seeing they were only hungry humans, returned. Estevanico explained to them the best he could—he was ever glib—about the loss of the barge, the clothing and the two men, whereupon the savages all sat down upon the ground and began to weep and wail. For a half-hour they kept this up, then broke off abruptly at a signal from their chief. Having thus paid their proper respects, the chief stood two of his men beside each voyager, and those Indians who were left over ran back into the brush. When they were out of sight, the remaining hosts seized the Spaniards by the arms and began running, every two Indians supporting a man between them. A little way into the brush and they saw a big fire ahead.

"They mean to roast and eat us," Oviedo cried out affrightedly.

"We shall at least get warm then," shouted de Vaca as he was swept along over the ground in eight-foot strides.

And the Spaniards, thus heartened, made an effort to increase their pace!

Arrived at the blaze, the Indians sat their guests down around it in a circle and explained to Estevanico that the fire had been built to keep the naked ones from freezing on the way to the village. The Spaniards literally wept in relief. When they had warmed, the Indians helped them on the way, and they stopped at four more big fires before reaching a village, where they were put in a big grass hut and given food and fuel.

For several days they remained here without heart to examine their surroundings, or strength to make any sort of effort, but on a day that de Vaca calculated must be near the last of November the leader observed a savage with a sheath knife, and learning upon inquiry that none of his party had presented it, the whole of them took a new interest in life, believing that other Spaniards were near. They flocked around the Indian and he told them that men like themselves were then approaching. De Vaca and all his group set forth at once and had not gone far when they met Doran and Castillo with forty-three men, so that altogether they numbered eighty.


Those who had clothing divided with the naked ones. Each group learned that the other knew nothing of the remaining barges. Doran explained that when they were beached the Indians saw how near death they were and helped the Spaniards to their village and fed them. The day before Doran's party had learned that other white men were near-by and had set out to find them. In the end the

two parties decided to return to the place where Andy's barge lay, launch it, and send the ablest men on to Panuco for help. They still contended that Panuco was along that coast and believed, since they had come so far, it could not be much farther. The entire day was spent in going to the place, the stronger carrying the sick on their backs through the deep sand and thorny mesquite scrub, and when they arrived it was to find the barge split from stem to stern and beyond repair. Thus balked and there being nothing else to do, they all returned to the village where de Vaca and his party had been.

The talk now turned to sending a small party south but no one was willing to go except Andy and Figueroa.

They thriftily traded beads, a few trinkets, and some even let their knives go for food, but what they received—and the Indians had no other—was nothing but roots and bony fish so that day by day the sick died from starvation and exhaustion. At the end of two weeks they counted themselves and found that forty, just half, had died. The same day the Indians said that they had no more food to give them, which was too obviously true. The Indians were dying also. These two facts drove them to action. Three men volunteered to go with Figueroa to find Panuco, and Doran remained to care for the sick.

However, after the four had departed, the remaining thirty-six concluded that they could not stay together for the stronger to care for the weak because they could not get food. The Indians advised them to distribute themselves among the family groups on the mainland, where roots were more plentiful. This advice they followed, bidding one another farewell—after agreeing to meet on this island of Ill-Fate, as they named it, in the Spring—and set out by ones and twos.

 OF THEM all, Doran went the farthest south on the mainland, and joined a family group consisting of a dozen men, their wives, and a score of children. They had heard of the many strangers, but when they learned, through inter-family gossiping, that many had died and the others were scattered, their first kindness changed to cruelty and they drove Andrew to actual slavery. His work was to dig roots from the salt water in the low places, and to catch small fish in the reedy channels. His hands and feet soon became lacerated by the sharp grasses so that they grew swollen and seeped blood from one day's end to the other. Andy attempted rebellion to avoid such agony, but the only result was that Glott, the family head, and his brutal warriors drove him to the work with sticks.

The roots gave out in February and a period of starvation set in. Necessities of life would



not be easily obtained until birds' nests, then berries, came in April. Andy, expecting that help might arrive any time from Panuco and fearing he would be left behind, tried to escape several times, but his every move was watched and he did not even get away from the camp in the first attempts.

The Indians were so low in the scale of humanity that they sacrificed every girl baby to keep it from falling into the hands of enemies and thus bearing more enemies. Their own wives they captured from enemy tribes. It was of an early morning in the midst of one of these sacrificial ceremonies that Andy saw an opportunity and fled.

He went straight toward the coast, and at tide-water turned northward toward the Island of Ill-Fate. The Indians evidently knew he would do this, for Andy suddenly found them confronting him, having cut across the hypotenuse of the right angle he formed in his flight. Chief Glott dragged him back to the village, sometimes actually by the hair of his head, and the whole tribe beat him with clubs.

Warm weather arrived by degrees—Spring with its carpet of scarlet and yellow and purple flowers like a gay woman appearing in a ball-room. Andy grew more uneasy each day for fear the Spaniards would gather on the island and go on without him; at nights he dreamed that a ship had come and was sailing away with him standing alone on the shore. His nerves became ragged, and he resolved on another break for freedom.

The second attempt was more discouraging than the first, for men of another tribe stopped him and sent for Glott. That chief and his men, instead of prodding him back to the village, walked beside him and made merry in their watery gutturals. Their geniality was a threat, Andy felt; he smelled a brew of unusual cruelty.

Back at the encampment, Glott, with much ado, graciously brought him a gourd of water to drink, as if he were an honored guest. Andy thought of poison as the vessel was extended to him, and in the same instant he saw, from the tail of his eye, a man squat behind him. As Glott put the gourd into his hands he shoved backward quickly and with force. Andy was tripped over the squatting man and landed flat on his back. The Indians roared; it was their idea of a joke. But there was more to it than that. In a second a half dozen were on top of him. They spread-eagled him, sitting on his legs and arms, and Glott sat on his chest.

The chief plucked Doran's beard, hair by hair, from the entire right side of his face.

When the torture was completed they let him up. His face was swollen and bleeding, but his blue eyes glinted as of old. He deliberately spat in the chief's face and kicked him in the stomach, all at once.

They held him down again and plucked the left side of his face, hair by hair. He did not rise this time, but lay on the ground in such exhaustion that he seemed to be dead.

When the men left, an old woman, for whom Andy had carried water often, came and bathed his bloody face and massaged it with salve.

The Indians may have thought they could break a white man's spirit; they did not know the race that seemed born to venture over the world. Andy meant to escape, was more determined now than ever, and he bided his time.

Preceding the season of blackberries, came the time of living on eggs from birds' nests and tender shrubs boiled in water. Andy ate of this rich food and conserved his strength. The hard work had given him endurance. He was not so heavy as Glott, but he was wiry and strong.

One day, a short time before the berries should be ripe, the tribe was making a systematic search of a grassy slough near the seashore for birds' nests. Andy kept working his way farther and farther to one side and rear of the others in the tall grass, watching for a chance to go. Presently he began to nourish a real hope of making a run for it and getting away to the north and the island where the others might still be. Then, when he would have been gone in a moment more, Glott raised up out of the grass at his very side and grinned.

"Come with me, slave," he said mockingly. "There is something to fill the eyes of a slave who would escape from his masters."



ANDY followed, resolved to kill the man if an opportunity offered. The Indian led toward the shore, leaving the others at the tasking of getting their dinner. Within a mile or so the two passed through a fringe of reeds and mesquite brush and abruptly came out to the sandy shore.

There before them lay the wreck of a barge. Andy ran to it. The craft was more completely wrecked than his had been; some of the timbers were missing. But sufficient was left for him to know, by the wood and workmanship, that it was the barge of Tellez and Penalosa. Ready at hand when the inspection was finished, Glott touched Andy's arm and pointed back toward the fringe of brush, off to the right.

Scattered about were human bones, and just beyond them, set in a half-circle, were human skulls on short sticks driven into the ground.

"One, two, three—" Andy's shocked mind counted them. Forty-nine, the number that had been aboard that barge. Forty-nine grinning brown skulls.

"Come," said Glott. He led to the very center of the half-circle and set another short stick into the sand. "For the skull of a slave," he said, "if the slave should try to leave us

again." He tapped Andy's head with his fingers. "We will put it here for the dead to laugh at. See how they laugh with their mouths full of teeth!"

"Glott," said Andy quietly, "I am going to kill you."

The Indian stiffened, and chuckled. He was ready. Like animals ready to battle, they read death in each other's eyes, that were kin to the soulless eyes of wolves. Neither was armed. They began to circle about each other, seeking advantage.

Doran set his thoughts on one purpose. That was to get behind his enemy, lift him from the ground and throw him down. He had in mind just how he would do—seize the man's hair with his right hand, and with his left arm and left knee lift him at the crotch and get him off his feet.

The Indian forced the offensive with confidence in his greater bulk. Andy, lighter on his feet, evaded. Back and forth and around and around they darted, tearing up the sand. An impalpable dust rose to smother them; sweat ran down their naked bodies in streams. Andy centered his mind upon a preliminary task, which was to seize one of the chief's arms and jerk him off his balance so that he could leap in behind.

Twice he succeeded in getting the Indian's right wrist, but the grip slipped because of perspiration. Then an unexpected thing happened. The Indian tripped Doran, and before Andy caught his balance the savage had him in a hug. The great arms began to bend his ribs, to force his breath out, to crush him. He began to gasp, then he wilted, turned limp. Glott's strong arms relaxed, just barely relaxed. Perhaps he meant to change to the throat. On the instant Andy's sweat-slick body slid downward. He darted under Glott's right arm and was behind the Indian. The hair grip, hand and knee at crotch, a lift and shove, and the Indian was on his face. Doran landed with his knees along the savage's spine, and at the same time he transferred his left hand to the Indian's hair and his right under the chin with his elbow on the chief's right shoulder.

For a space they were like two straining sculptured figures, the lower one writhing in death agony while its head came back and back. After the neck cracked there was nothing but dead silence.

Andy left his enemy there for the skulls to grin at and started north for the island of Ill-Fate.

Arriving at the rendezvous the following day he found fourteen of his companions. These accounted by word of mouth for all the others of the thirty-six, except—

"Rodriguez and his five," Castillo reminded.

"I shrink at telling you," Cabeza de Vaca

said, and grimaced in disgust. "In the cold of last Winter Rodriguez came to me. His mind was going. He confessed that as his *companeros* died one by one they ate the bodies, and at last only he was left, and there being no one to eat him, he came to me. That night he killed himself and I gave him a decent Christian burial."

The question now arose as to what they should do. Doran held that they should start south at once by land, since if they remained here they would die as the others had done. He told of the third wrecked barge and of Tellez and Penalosa and their companions.

"Fifteen of us left from three barges," he concluded. "No doubt Narvaez and Saurez failed to reach Panuco, or a ship would have come to us."

"But we can not go southward by land," Castillo declared. "Hast thou not observed the feet of de Vaca and Oviedo, Captain Andee? Poisoned by dipping roots in the water and swollen so they can not walk a league."

"For chivalry's sake you insist on staying with us," de Vaca broke in, "but we shall die for we need medical aid and must depend on you reaching Panuco—which Figueroa must have failed also to do—to send it."

"But we can't go south," Castillo insisted. "Tis better to wait for help if we wait even another year. Every one of us has had to escape from our Indians, and they will either capture us or kill us on the road. Better for us to return to them."

"And be slaves!" Andy snorted. "Eat birds' eggs and grass the rest of our lives? Alonso, thou wert ever an easy-going youth."

Castillo was voted down at once. Thirteen agreed to go down the coast. Democratically they chose Doran as the leader, he being the strongest among them, and as a parting gift Cabeza de Vaca presented him with a heavy steel sheath knife, silver mounted. It was the only one left among the Spaniards. It was a sad farewell, for none expected to see either de Vaca or Oviedo again, and they knew that not all of the thirteen would be lucky enough to reach Panuco, for some of them were very feeble.

The next day they took their departure, going inland to avoid the Indians, known to be near the coast eating eggs and waiting for the berries to turn.

The first three days of travel they saw no Indians, but other trouble developed. Four of the feebler ones grew too weak to travel. It was obvious the others could not carry them. The four generously urged that the others go on, saying that they would search out Indian families for themselves. This was agreed to partly, Doran insisting he would first find the Indians to care for them.

The fourth morning Andy set off alone toward the coast to find a family, one small enough so as not to be a hindrance to the others in continuing the journey. But none were to be had; he did not see a soul throughout the forenoon. At noon he observed a great smoke where he had left the party and thinking it a signal for his return he hurried back.

No living men awaited him. In the smoking fire were ten bodies, indistinguishable except that they were Spaniards. He had left twelve, so two must have escaped or been taken captive. For two days he searched in hope of finding these, but failing he set his face grimly toward the south.

Day after day, under the white sun, naked, with long, braided hair and smooth, stern countenance lighted by unflinching blue eyes, he kept on, sometimes hidden in the sweltering jungle, sometimes silhouetted against the sky on a rise of land, like some solitary primordial man wandering alone after a cataclysm had destroyed his woman and their offspring.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE END OF THE WORLD.

THE barges of Narvaez and Saurez, when the little fleet was torn asunder by the great river of fresh water in November, hugged the coast and continued the journey as the others had done. But more men in these two vessels were able to handle the oars and sails, so that they made greater speed and succeeded in getting much farther south than the Island of Ill-Fate. Eventually, however, Saurez was cast upon the shore on the northern lip of a great bay. Historians believe this was San Antonio Bay, Texas.

Narvaez, not far behind, entered the bay and left his company in a big pecan grove and returned for the others. He reached the stranded ones in the evening, and that night all slept on shore except the governor and two men. The men were ill and Narvaez remained aboard to care for them. The anchor was a huge rock. In the night the line slipped off it and when morning came the company saw the barge, with the governor standing in it, far out at sea.

Throughout the forenoon they watched, helpless to give aid. Narvaez seemed helpless also, for he made no effort to get the barge back to land. Perhaps his oars were lost—or the span of life had already grown too long for him under his great disappointment. The people stood with faces turned to the sea until noon, when the barge disappeared in the haze of the horizon, Narvaez still standing and looking toward the shore. He was not seen again.

The companies, now under command of Pantoja, went into Winter camp on the bay.

No Indians were about, so that they had to depend wholly on their own efforts for food. This consisted principally of fish—at first.

Here Pantoja met a fate that he could not have thought of on that day he sailed as captain of the flagship from Spain. His rule was overbearing, and a man named Sotomayor struck him with a club and killed him.

Soon the Spaniards were dying and the living eating the dead. At last only Sotomayor and Esquivel were left. Then Sotomayor died and when Esquivel had eaten him, and there was no more food an Indian appeared, by chance, and Esquivel went away with him. In the tribe that they joined Esquivel found Figueroa, who told how, when he and his three companions set out to find Panuco, one had been killed by the Indians and the other two had died of cold and exhaustion.

This tribe, which Esquivel joined, placed heavy stress upon their dreams, believing them to be communications from the Great Spirit and interpreting them accordingly. The first night a woman dreamed that Esquivel would slay her children, and when she told this the next morning the Indians killed the Spaniard at once. This left Figueroa the only survivor in all that region.

Figueroa was big and strong and jovial and for those reasons did about as he pleased among the savages. He traveled from family to family in search of his countrymen, and not long after Doran's companions had been killed and burned the two met. Thus the story of the other two barges came to the Irishman.

"So," Andy commented at the finish, as they sat in the shade of a thin mesquite, "there are but six of us left out of the three hundred. And you know nothing of Panuco?"

Figueroa shook his head. "Why bother? Life with these Indians isn't so bad."

Andy regarded him in amazement. "Why bother! Great stars, man, doesn't your heart itch to get back to your own kind? To see how the world is pegging along?"

The sailor cocked up one eye and grinned. "The women make the living here," he smirked. "Why go back to work?"

"You — you — heathen! Well, I'll tell you this, I'm going on and I'm going to keep going till I can't go any farther. I don't mean to 'vanish like smoke.' I want to see civilized people again. Come, Fig, aren't you a white man?"

"Yes, but —"

"Let's go then. We've got a knife apiece. Are you afraid to try?"

"Afraid? Not I, but —"

"Prove it then!"

Figueroa debated this and abruptly got to his feet.

"By —, I will, Andec, an it's thou ask-ing it. I'm ready."

So they set out in a renewed search for the settlement of Panuco. Soon, however, they found that the food had given out—the berries and birds' eggs gone. They found scattering Indians working west, "following the tunas," or prickly pears. They told of how each year they went westward until about the first cold moon—September—living on this fruit, then returned to the coast for nuts. The two travelers were forced by hunger to turn westward also but ever and always they slanted to the south; under the white sun of noon, in the breeze cooled evenings and the sultry mornings they kept elbowing to the southward. By mid-Summer they reached a river that poured into another great bay—Corpus Christi Bay—and kept on beyond it. In the end there were no more Indians and little fruit and then they reached the border of a waste land.

Sand dunes confronted them, yellow heaps that were ever shifted by the winds, burying trees and moving on by grains, and leaving the trees free again months later. Sometimes the dunes were high enough to cover the trees, and one of these Andy and Figueroa climbed to survey the land. To the west was a dark green forest of mesquite; to the east, the sea, glinting under the sun far away; and to the south, yellow dunes and dancing heat waves and lonely whirlwinds that rose and twisted and died away—little symbols of life. A desolate empty land scorched by white sunshine.

As they stood there debating, not with each other but in their private hearts, about the possibility of going on, an Indian appeared from out of nowhere by their sides. He swept a naked brown arm out over the southward and shook his head solemnly.

"Where dost this way lead, O chief," Andy asked.

"To death, white-skin. This is the end of the world that thou beholdest spread before thee."

"Are people there?"

"Naught but thirsty ghosts who have not drunk for a thousand moons."

"And what lies beyond, O wise man?"

"No wanderer hast returned to tell. Did I not say that this is *nnuu*, the end of the world? Thou canst not go farther and live."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MEETING

**N**OW comes one of the most amazing phases of this amazing adventure of the first white men in the land that three hundred years later was made a part of the United States.

Doran turned back from *nnuu*, the end of

the world, and lived for five years with various tribes of Indians—savages so low in the scale of man that they had but little clothing, no permanent homes, no agriculture, no pottery, scarcely any religion, just mostly superstitions and vile and brutal practices. Indians who had no thought that around the curve of the globe were cities and civilization; who could have no idea of the tragedy of a white man's life being snuffed out by their barbarous hands.

Andrew by force of circumstances became a surgeon because he had a knife. He was called *Svss*, or the Knife.

For five years he lived from tribe to tribe, not knowing where the land went, nor scarcely where he was on the face of the earth. How would he have felt had he known that an unbroken wilderness stretched through endless leagues to Hudson Bay, to the Mackenzie River, the Yukon River, to San Francisco Bay, all yet nameless places upon the silent geography of the western world!

Lost and alone, like a Mohammedan in a Christian's hell, he all but forgot his native tongue and his adopted Spanish. He was a shuttle flung back and forth by the seasons. In the early Summer the red men moved westward to live on the prickly pears; in the Fall they returned to the coast to live on pecans, roots, fish, and on birds' eggs and berries in the Spring. Pacing the years, hopeless, like a panther in a circus cage. In all these five years he heard of but one survivor of the fleet, a man referred to as the Trader, but who he was Andy could not learn.

Then one Autumn day there came to the tribe where he was an Indian chief from the north to ask the white man's service in healing the sick. Andy sat in the shade of a *huisache* tree naked, brown, sullen, wondering if it would not be best to take a wife among these heathen.

"Oh, I'll go," he answered the chief listlessly.

"In my village, O mighty *Svss*, are two of thy kind," the chief suggested.

Andy sprang upright, his blue eyes glittering.

"Thou liest," he said wickedly. "I will bend your neck back until it cracks. Who are they? What are thy like?"

"Look upon them with thine own eyes," the Indian evaded cunningly.

He wanted the Knife to go with him very much.

By the hour the night birds ceased their weird chant and the sky crimsoned in the east the next morning, they were traveling northward over the brown and empty country swift as the shadows of flying eagles. Scarcely a word was spoken, for the chief's son was sick and the father had no breath to blow out on idle chatter. And when they stopped at springs to drink they were on the swing again before water ceased to drop from their chins.

Many times in that swift journey Andy's hand found the knife in his girdle and felt of the five little nicks in the back of the blade. His calendar for five years.

"Who are these of my kind?" he kept asking himself. "Who, oh, who?"

Before the rays of day were level across that level land they came to a clutter of grass huts. Doran's heart pounded from excitement, his eyes darted hither and thither, searching, prying, doubting, hoping. Then abruptly, startled, the expected ones rose from the shade of a hut, and two and one they stared—Castillo and Estevanico, and Doran.

Andy mumbled stupidly—

"The fire didn't get you."

"The Spaniards?" hoarsely questioned Castillo. "Panuco?"

Andy shook his head. Confusion was in his mind. Through the day he had wondered how this meeting would be, but he had not foreseen this stupidity and half-fearsomeness; had not forecast that they would not embrace in the Spanish way.

"*Los bahee?*" demanded Estevanico in Spanish and Indian, meaning "Those men?"

"*Keet,*" Doran answered, continuing in three tongues, "*todos keet.* Figueroa told me *de los-barges-brin*—and he was—kill by—by *bahee de los Indios*—over a woman at *numu.*"

"We three live," said Castillo in awe. "And—are you the Trader?"

Andy shook his head.

"Then we three and the Trader, whoever he is, are left," the Spaniard continued.

The Indian guide plucked at Doran's arm. It was the call of duty and he turned from his re-fused friends to a hut where, on the bare ground, lay the sick boy. He knelt over the swollen and blackened leg and began to blow on it, his eyes and mind meantime keen upon a diagnosis. Snake bite, he saw. He called for boiled sea-water and when it was brought he removed his knife and a little gourd vial from his girdle and knelt again.

Before the curious onlookers realized his intention he cut away the spot of gangrene flesh. The lad cried out and quivered but Andy soothed him with soft words while the wound was permitted to bleed. Presently he cleansed the place with water and applied liquid from the vial—a styptic made of herbs. The bleeding checked, Andy instructed the family to keep flies and other insects away and to pour warm salt-water upon the sore four times a day. Then he bent over the basin of water with mysterious gestures and senseless words.

"That is mummery," he said to Castillo and Estevanico as he rose, "but it impresses the *bahee* and helps me."

"And will the lad recover?" questioned Cas-

tillo, who had retained his Spanish by always having the Moor to talk with.

"More—possible," Andy answered, fishing for words again. "I have learn—*Sess*—knife healing. Salt water, dry air, after the cutting." "And that is the way you have saved your life!"

"Aye." Andy reached out with a bare foot and touched an earthenware pot, the first he had seen in all this land. "And has that been your way, Alonso? Or Estevanico's?"

"Mine," the Spaniard answered with a touch of pride. "I chanced upon it at a cooking fire to the westward of here where my *bahee* go each Summer to live on tunas. I wrapped a hare in clay to cook and when I drew it out of the coals I found I had burned a piece of pottery. After that I moulded and burned pots and the Indians let me live."

"And Estevanico, how have you managed?"

"Because my skin is dark like unto the Indians, Captain Andec, and my tongue quick to learn their words."

"He is called the 'Glib,'" vouched Castillo.

"Or sometimes the '*baheen*', man of many women."



WITH the coming of night and supper of broiled hare their tongues loosened. Doran got back his Spanish by leaps and bounds and they talked of all that had transpired in the five years; of *numu*, of Figueroa's death at the edge of the sand dunes because he had coveted a warrior's maiden; of their journeys westward in the Summers, but never their courage in simply keeping life within them.

"And have ever you tried to escape?" Doran asked.

"Once," Castillo answered. "Estevanico and I, when we were thirty or forty leagues west of here living on tunas and getting fat stomachs from them, tried to but came to a river that we could not cross."

"So large?"

"We could not swim."

"Give heed," Andy admonished, putting his hands on their knees in his enthusiasm. "Often have I tried it, alone, and failed. We can not cross the *numu*, but on our annual journeys west to live on the tunas I have learned that by going still farther west we can reach a country, where there is food and water, that extends southward in a wide belt, and by following this belt far, far south I think mayhap we might find Panuco.

"It is now the season of nuts," he went on. "After that will be the moons of roots and fish and birds' nests and berries, then the tunas. When we join the Trader and the Summer comes again we shall escape."

Castillo shook his head.

"We have decided that it is best to be resigned."

"Resigned?" Andy drew back shortly. "Quit? Men, don't you want to see your kind again? And have the adventure of finding them? This country grows stale. A white-skinned woman—doesn't a woman of your kind with soft lips and lighted eyes call to you? Come, let us start this night to find the Trader."

"Tis useless," replied Estevanico. "I learned this day that he comes this way. Before this moon wanes our Indians will go to meet his Indians at the pecan forest. We shall meet him there—and next Summer will be time to talk of escape."

"I'll tell you this," and Doran got to his feet coldly, "an this Trader will go, we shall set out to find men whether you have courage to accompany us or not."

Castillo shrugged. The Moor spread his hands. Andy spat savagely as was his way and laid down by a thorny mesquite to sleep.

Within ten days they started north along the coast to the pecan forest, and when they arrived Andrew recognized the place, because of human bones and Figueroa's description, as the bay where the companies of the two barges perished. In a few days other *bahee* appeared in sight coming from the north, and the three companions went out to meet them. As the parties drew near a figure broke from the large one and ran forward.

"Tis a Spaniard!" cried Estevanico.

The man came on, paused as if afraid, came on again.

"It is Cabeza de Vaca!" Andy whispered, tensed with excitement. He ran forward now. "Cabeza, it is I, Andy."

De Vaca, his chest heaving, hardly knew whether to flee or stand his ground. Finally he brought himself to take the proffered hand of this man, who might be a ghost for aught he knew. De Vaca was, perhaps, suspicious, for he asked—

"Where is thy beard?"

"Dost not remember? I told thee of Glott pulling it out."

Andy's face was as smooth as a boy's.

"Ah, aye."

When the flood of greetings was over, de Vaca explained that he had spent five years trading among the Indians, carrying sea-shells to the west and bartering them for hides, bows and arrows. The savages had come to respect him and wait for his appearance.

Oviedo had remained all the time on the Island of Ill-Fate among Indian women—a helpless little group living in eternal fear of stronger families. De Vaca had gone back this year to get him and they had started out to meet the Potmaker, the Glib and Svss, the Healer by the Knife, all of whom de Vaca had heard about that Summer. But Oviedo

had turned faint-hearted and gone back to the women, rather than to face the prospect of danger among new tribes, or of slavery.

Five years had taught these men patience. They resigned themselves to wait patiently until the next Summer, when the families would be west after tunas, to attempt an escape. Castillo and the Moor were persuaded to try it with the other two, and when the tuna season arrived they all started westward with their Indians traveling in one friendly group. Their spirits rose; escape seemed close.

But not yet was the cup to wet their lips. For the savages began to quarrel among themselves over the ownership of a young woman they had captured. In the end they separated in a huff, each of the four being compelled to go in a different family. So sudden was the rupture that the travelers had barely time to call out to one another to be patient and perhaps they would be more fortunate the next year.

Next year. Twelve months. Patience were indeed a virtue with them. Andy was surly the Summer through, often from the disappointment that fomented in his heart, fighting and whipping stalwart Indians to within an inch of their lives. No family dared kill Doran, for his services were valuable, and had any dared such a thing they would have been punished by other families by extermination. But through the year somehow Andy lived, and when the prickly pears turned yellow and red and purple in the next Summer the Indians resumed their former friendship and all worked westward together.

This enabled the four to find each other without much trouble by the middle of the Summer, and when September arrived they were at the extreme limit of their range. They, while not immediately together, yet were near enough to visit and arrange plans for an escape. This they agreed to launch at the full of the moon, which would be at about the end of the month, but chance threw them together in the middle of the month, and in the depths of a night they stole each one to a clump of mesquite and eluded their sleeping captors. Thus, by daybreak, a little more than seven years after the three hundred had left the fleet in Florida to go inland, they were free from the coast Indians and were going into the deeper unknown, into the forbidding wilderness of a savage continent.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE WHITE WOMAN

THE sun was beginning to make the morning comfortably warm when the four travelers paused in the chaparral to get the lay of the Indian village immediately before them. Well out of sight, they could still see everything

that was in progress among three or four hundred people.

On the north side was a hill and at its foot, cut deep into solid rock, were pools flowing over and tumbling down a terrace—a spring no doubt, for the water flowed off in a hardy little brook. Widespreading live oaks gave perpetual shade, and the Indian feet of centuries had kept undergrowth down so that except for the trees the place was open and grassy.

Some of the men lay on their backs in the sun, women were busy at fires—a peaceful village. But into this scene came a startling apparition, startling, that is, for Doran and his companions. From among the skin tepees came a girl, hopping, skipping, doing a sort of dance of a butterfly-over-the-flowers. The Indians gave her not the slightest heed, and she seemed to be unconscious of them.

As she drew nearer in her erratic and half-iddling course they saw that she wore a soft garment of well-tanned hide thrown over one shoulder and gathered, fore and hind, at the waist so as to form a skirt that fell to the knees. Otherwise she was without clothing. But it was not these things that caused their mouths to drop open in amazement. It was that she was white of skin, with golden hair and eyes of the daintiest blue.

She passed them so closely that they saw there was naught but emptiness in her face—one whose mind has gone. She disappeared into the mesquite, and the moment she was gone Doran gasped out a single phrase—

"A Basque woman!"

"Fool!" snorted Cabeza de Vaca. "How could a woman from the far mountains of Spain be here?"

"Here an—" Castillo tapped his cranium significantly.

"She's a Basque or—there are white-skinned people in this land," Andy maintained. "Come on, let's find out and get some food."

"Wait," cautioned de Vaca, who was always cautious. "These *bahes* are large and savage looking. Observe their long bows and the stone hatchets."

"It's get food here or die of famine," Doran retorted. "Death by a punctured skin or an empty belly—I make no distinction."

With that he crowded through the chaparral and the others, perforce, were compelled to follow. A boy, running after an arrow, saw them and screamed shrilly. Immediately the whole tribe was running in their direction and slapping hands on thighs in grotesque imitation of a rooster flapping its wings.

"Thy glib tongue may stand us in good stead again, Steve," Andy said to the Moor. "Wiggle it like a Winter leaf."

"But they call for you, Captain Andee."

"Svss! Svss!" the Indians were shouting.

"They have heard of your healing," de Vaca exclaimed with relief.

The Indians gathered around them jabbering excitedly. From out of a whirlpool of humanity a chief, judging by his skin robe ornamented with orange and yellow laurel beans, confronted them and spoke.

"Svss?" His face was remarkably stubborn; his words unusually harsh and guttural.

"I am the Knife," Andy admitted, stepping forward.

"The night birds murmur of thy healing among the peoples toward the rising sun, O great one," the chief went on. "Wilt thou go among my people and make them so they can skip and run and be happy?"

"Aye, an thou give us first of food and water."

The tribes people, who had been silent while the chief was talking, broke into joyful shouting and led the way toward the live oaks under which were skin tepees, that, Estevanico said, formed more of a village than Apalachen had been. Gourds of sparkling water first, then meat of the armadillo, nuts mixed with maize, and dried figs were brought; and when the four had eaten in ceremony, with the tribe looking on silently, the chief addressed the travelers, saying that all his people were ready to be healed.

"But all are not sick," Andy said contrarily, for he was weary from five days travel from the last village and had no mind to do more than was necessary.

"Thou shalt touch the well that they may not become sick."

"But I heal with the knife and not by touching."

"You heal," the chief returned flatly. "All my people await thee."

"Andee," said de Vaca, "I have an idea. Choose you those who need the service of thy knife, and these you leave I shall touch. Mayhap 'twill satisfy his choicy excellency."

"You have a head, even it is a cow's head!" Andy praised, alluding jocularly to de Vaca's name, 'Head of Cow'. "I shall be thrifty—"

He stopped. He stared. The yellow haired girl was coming toward them in her airy dance. She was close—easy whispering distance—when she saw them. She halted sharply, and for one fleeting instant, like a flash of lightning, keen intelligence came to the surface of her eyes. The four stared at her. Startlingly the chief cried out—

"Look not into her eyes!"

"Who is she? Whence came she?" Doran demanded.

"Her spirit is with the Great Spirit. We speak not of those who are protected by the Great Spirit, O Healer."

"I would talk with her," Andy persisted, watching the girl dance away.

"No! The eyes that wed hers, even for so brief a space as the raindrop remains separate from the brook it falls into, shall send the mind fluttering away on the wings of butterflies."

Andy, knowing the superstitions of the Indians, shrugged and turned to de Vaca—

"I shall choose the sick and leave the well to you, first informing the *cacique* that you possess the art of touching as well as I."

The chief swallowed the story, and helped them to get started. Many Indians had festering sores caused by cuts and poison from plants; one had web fingers, another's palms were covered with a horny scale resembling the material of a horse's hoof; rheumatism was common. For the last, Andy often pulled decayed teeth with a deer sinew and succeeded in curing!



IN THE middle of the day they rested, and ate and talked with the chief and his leading men. In the course of this Andy asked what manner of country lay to the south, for he felt they had arrived at the belt of food and water where they must turn off to go to Panuco.

"Why would you know?" the chief asked suspiciously.

"We would go in that direction, O mighty warrior."

"Nay, thou shalt stay with my people."

"But we must go on and heal those who have devils."

"Those who dwell between the suns—" he gestured to the south—"and my people are enemies. My kinsmen dwell to the north and on the morrow we shall travel in that direction to find and heal them, going many suns."

Andy turned to his companions and spoke in Spanish:

"This looks bad, just when we have come to a good season and place to turn to the southward. We must escape tonight. But first we must see the white girl. By the saints, yes; she may be a prisoner, like us, or the Spaniards may be near."

They agreed with him, and the Moor said:

"But appear to agree with his naked honor. And return to your gouging. Señor de Vaca and I will seek the woman this afternoon."

"Yes we must see her before we go, and remember that we go tonight, unless she tells something to change us."

Andy returned to his surgical work—surgical mainly, though he often used herb concoctions, and as frequently nothing but bluff or "magic." When the last of the afflicted had passed through his hands, happy, the day was old and the tribe was in the midst of preparations for a great ceremonial celebration of their healing. There was a din of pestles hammering in mortars in the rocks grinding

corn. Women were roasting armadillos in the animal's own turtle-like shells. Andy's three companions each told him, when he found them joking with some maidens, that the white woman was not to be found. He swore viciously at them for laggards, and being weary to his very marrow, he asked the chieftain to assign him a tepee that he might rest.

The head man indicated the largest tent in the village. Andy went to it alone, taking occasion to observe that it stood somewhat apart and backed against the little stream, offering some chance to escape without arousing the village. When he entered and dropped the flap he could see nothing in the dusky light but immediately another flap, high up on the rear side, was drawn, and there, in the golden light of the westering sun, like a clear-cut cameo, was the white girl.

As he stood breathless, taken aback, he saw that she was not more than seventeen years of age. Her deep eyes were like flowers from the clear blue sky, emotions skidding across them with the softness of fleecy clouds and lavender light-bars. In the first moment she seemed but a girlish child, but as her eyes held his he observed a change—she became womanly warm. His heart began to throb. Then she spoke in rippling Spanish—

"Where is your beard?"

He had expected anything but this. He laughed, a delighted boyish chuckle.

"Thou art a woman! Thou art my kind!"

She put a quick finger over her lips for silence. In two steps he was by her side. She was interested. She took the plait of his sandy hair and held it by the plait of her golden hair and smiled at him as if to say, "We are alike." Her warm fingers lightly touched his bare arms to make certain he was flesh and blood. This was too much for Andy, he seized her in his arms.

An instant she struggled, then lay quiet in his strength, studying his face. He bent and kissed her—and knew the warmth of a woman's lips. His heart threshed within him. Her arms went up and about his neck—as if she too were hungry for her kind. Then she drew away abruptly.

"This is the guest house," she said in a low voice. "I knew you would be sent here, so I have waited, hidden. Whence came you and whither do you go?"

"We came from Spain many years ago." Like her, he spoke rapidly, tensely. "Our fleet was lost at sea and we on the land. We turn southward here to search for Spaniards. Dost thou know aught of them? Whence came you? What is your name?"

"My name is Paula. Do not turn southward. Go to the setting sun."

"To find Spaniards?"

"Because I ask it."



She drew up imperiously.

"'Tis sufficient." He glowed. "I would follow you to the night bed of the sun, an you wish it."

"We shall find the Spaniards then," she granted, her woman's pride satisfied. "They are in the west."

He would have taken her in his arms again but she eluded him.

"Thou touch me, and the Indians see it, we are lost. Go now. Prepare to escape to-night with thy companions, else will the chief take, all of us far northward on the morrow." She put her hands on his shoulders and compelled him to the entrance, and as he raised the flap she whispered—"Follow me, my man—and act naturally, for the Indians must not suspect I am in here."

His thoughts were flying about like pigeons disturbed at their cotes. By sheer exertion of the will he gripped himself and tried to seem casual. He picked up an arrowhead, examined it, threw it down. He smiled at a wandering papoose. The chief strolled forward.

"Does Svss find the robes hard for his bones?" he asked.

"Nay, O chief. I find your village too interesting to sleep by day. I would sit among the warriors and hear your plans."

And hear he did in detail of the plans for the next day's march, for the language of these Indians differed but little from that of the other tribes. He gave thoughtful ear until the sun winked good night and the dancing of the ceremony began. All the tribe joined, even aged hags and warriors, who that morning had hobbled from rheumatism. They still hobbled, but such was the effect of the healer's suggestion and presence and the general gladness that they hobbled less than usual and were happy. The travelers entered the dance, but when all except the warriors dropped out the four quit also, at a signal from Andy, who was anxious to work toward the escape.

"Art thou not as strong as my warriors?" the chief asked with a touch of scorn.

"Aye," Andy boasted in the Indian manner. "I could be dancing when they drop to the ground and groan, but I prefer now to rest rather than to show my powers."

"When the moon rises we shall feast," the *cacique* remarked.

"Nay, O chief." Andy's wits raced like lightning for an excuse, for he meant to be gone before the moon came. "White men are troubled by devils in dreams when they eat after the moon arrives to grin at them. We shall not eat out here but in our teepee where the man in the moon may not bewitch us. I would have two gourds of food brought, and a gourd of hot coals buried in ashes, and a gourd of water, and put in our teepee."

"Strange ways," murmured the Indian,

striding off. "I shall have squaws bring the things."

"Why this?" grumbled Castillo. "I had anticipated a hot feast."

"We must escape at once and carry the things with us."

"At once?" echoed de Vaca. "Better wait until the savages are gorged and asleep."

"No. In the night a guard will be placed, but if we enter the guest house now and pass immediately through on the back side and follow down the brook we will be away before moon whitens the land."

"But we haven't seen the white girl yet."

"I have. We go west."

"You mean south."

"I mean west, toward the setting sun," Andy contradicted tartly.

"And miss Panuco?" de Vaca demurred.

"Why this change, Andee?"

"The white girl says there are Spaniards in the west and that she will lead us thither."

"Spaniards? How far? Who?"

The three were excited.

"I had no time for so many questions. She but said there are Spaniards in the west and I promised to go."

"Bah! You would harken to an insane wit of a girl on so important a matter?" De Vaca was not so contemptuous as he was alarmed at the change in plans. He ever feared any sort of change. "Who is she? How came she here?"

"I tell you I don't know. I talked but a minute." For an instant Andy wondered if he had been indiscreet in promising the girl; then he remembered her warm body and soft eyes, and didn't care. "She's not insane. I can tell you that for a fact, Cabeza de Vaca. And I go west whether you three slugs move a step or not. Stay here till you rot for all I care."

Doran was often abrupt and impatient. The heavy burden of the journey was on his shoulders. It was he who healed while the others loafed, he who planned, negotiated with the savages, kept alert. De Vaca was anxious enough to escape but had no initiative. The other two didn't care whether they escaped or not, particularly. He grew weary of always urging them. He repeated now, harshly—

"Till you rot, — you."

"Why not?" The Moor grinned. "The women here are slim and pretty."

"And the food plentiful." Castillo tongued his lips.

He was the bony ghost of a man with a round cushion stomach.

"Heathen!" de Vaca charged. "Andee, I shall go with thee, be it north, south or west."

"And we too," the others said together hastily.

"Step lively then. Here are the squaws

with the gourds. Take the things and get them into the teepee."

They courteously bade the chief good night, wished for a pleasant journey on the morrow, and strolled casually to the guest house. Andy entered last and left the flap back as if not caring who peeped in.

"Paula," he whispered, "it is we. Art thou ready?"

"Ssst!" came the low response. "Follow."

Noiselessly a patch of skin was removed from the back of the tent and in the dim light they stooped and passed through. Outside the girl was barely visible. They followed her example of stooping and began to wade along the brook, treading carefully.

After a while she turned off to the west, but with never a word. They followed. Once Doran caught up and put a hand on her shoulder. She pressed his fingers—and dropped away from his touch.

"Keep always to the west," she instructed in Spanish and presently was gone from their sight.

When day came she was nowhere to be seen.

## CHAPTER X

### THE GREAT TRADING SCHEME.

"NOT another step toward the sunset will I go!" avowed de Vaca, his thick lips setting in as firm a line as was physically possible.

"As you will," Doran replied good naturedly.

"Where then? To the North Sea?"

"Why not? The Indians say 'tis but fifteen leagues distant and no doubt the Spaniards have arrived on its coast in numbers in these seven years."

"Your knowledge of geography—why, great stars, man, the North Sea lay to the north of Havana and east of Florida, and from Florida we have traveled a thousand leagues to the west."

"But the Indians say—"

"The Indians' knowledge of distance, Cabeza de Vaca, is blood brother to your knowledge of women, which is less—"

"Women! Now you have undammed my disgust. For two months have we followed this mystic woman west and not once has she waited for us to address her, not one word has she spoken. Sometimes I think you dreamed—or conclude that she is a ghost."

"Have ghosts warm lips?"

"Warm lips? Hast thou kissed her?" De Vaca was positively startled.

"Lips must be warm to talk," Andy evaded, "and she said we would find Spaniards in the west."

"West! West! Always the words are on your tongue, Dorantes. I say I will not go west. I believe you would lead us to our deaths."

"I have told you a hundred times I would take the responsibility," Andy said tartly, getting to his feet. "I am not a murderer. I have no will to lead you three to your deaths, nor myself to mine own." He slapped de Vaca on the back. "Brighten up, old grumbler. I shoulder all responsibility for you."

His blue eyes sparkled.

"Foul!" De Vaca snapped his fingers. "You talk like God. Great trails cross here, cut deep into the earth. I follow the one that goes south, let it lead me where it will."

"Then I remain here," the Moor said. "The women are blithe and have soft hands."

"And food is plentiful," Castillo added. "Much good meat do the hunters bring in from beyond the great river we crossed—meat of the humped back cows (buffaloes). Besides, water flows from the ground in a mighty fountain." (The Comanche Chief Spring, Ft. Stockton, Texas.)

"Moreover," de Vaca went on, "it appears that none of us will leave. Yon Indians are again quarreling over us. I expect to be quartered and divided among them yet."

Andy laughed gaily. He laughed a great deal these days—much changed by new hope and the success of two month's travel, and also no doubt by the memory of a girl in his arms. Said he:

"Cabeza de Vaca, you are like the little animal the Indians speak of, the groundhog that is afraid of its shadow. Yon bickering Indians mean no harm to our bodies."

The "bickering Indians" that he pointed to consisted of the fierce tribe that dwelt about the springs, numbering a thousand or so, and about five hundred Indians from the east who had accompanied the four travelers. For in the later days of their marching the travelers had not gone through the wilderness alone, carrying a pot of fire to kindle their night blazes. Their healing had gained such fame that they were able to travel like kings. Indians escorted them to the westward in gathering numbers, hunting for them, setting up individual teepees at night.

They never found opportunity, however, to talk with the blue-eyed girl. She ever kept ahead, going where she chose because the Indians believed her mentally infirm and therefore refrained from touching her. When the four men reached a village they literally would see her leaving at the other side.

The journey had gone well until they reached the Auauche springs. Here the Auauche warriors had offered to conduct the travelers on west, but these who had come this far refused to let the great men out of their possession, refused to turn them over to the Auauches without some great payment. The travelers had nothing to trade for themselves, and the Auauches scornfully refused to pay the weaker numbers

for men they already had in their possession.

Andy was sincere in believing their bodies would not be harmed. It was other things that troubled him—when he would permit any worry to interfere in his enjoyment of this tremendous adventure. For one thing, he felt certain that if the five hundred Malichuches would retire and leave him and his companions with the Auauches, and the Auauches kept their promise to conduct the travelers on west, that when they reached the next tribe, the Auauches would there refuse to give up their men. Virtually the four were captives, though kings. The Indians knew a good thing when they saw it, and Doran, as well as the others, had become great healers, though this was chiefly due to Andy's surgery. However, hundreds claimed to be healed by de Vaca's touch. As these things passed through Andy's thoughts he got back to the newest problem, which was de Vaca's obstinacy.

"Cabeza," said he, "I appeal to thy reason to continue the journey westward. It —"

"No! I am determined. I will not continue to follow this girl who—why, we haven't seen her for a week."

"I have," Estevanico spoke up. He saw everything, was an inveterate gossip. "She returned to this place this morning from the west."

"There she comes now," Castillo exclaimed.

"Dancing as usual," de Vaca scoffed.

The girl was coming, and, strangely, the Indians were following her. Each group as she passed stopped its argumentative talk and fell in behind her. The travelers watched. Gracefully she skipped along. A tinkling as of a bell reached Andy's ears. He stiffened, expecting some message. She drew near.

"By my eye!" de Vaca cried. "She has a bell."

"A hawk-bell," gasped the Moor. "Observe. We have seen those things in Spain."

"I and other noblemen have hunted doves with them on the necks of our falcons," de Vaca granted snobbishly.

Paula had been coming toward the group. She turned off now in her apparently erratic way, and began to rattle the little bell in the faces of the Indians. The warriors gave back, turning their faces, for they would not look at her countenance. The girl made a little circle and again came toward the travelers. Andy ran out to meet her.

"What hast thou, Paula?" he asked, keeping his face turned aside so as not to appear overbold before the Indians.

He reached for the trinket, and obediently, like a child, she handed it to him then stopped to observe what he did with it. De Vaca and the others crowded up.

"A hawk-bell sure enough," said de Vaca, unbending.

"With the head of King Charles cast in relief on the side," Andy added. Then without seeming to do so he spoke to her—"Where did this come from, Paula?"

She snatched it from his hands and resumed her idle dancing, but now Spanish words were in her little blithesome sing-song that reached their ears.

"To the west, to the west, to the west! Follow me, follow me, on the morrow follow me."

Her words were drowned in the scuffle of moccasins of the Indians, wild to see the bell, not daring to take it from her.



THE next morning at sunrise when Andy left his tent of skins he found his companions squatting about a fire, for these early winter mornings were frosty and sharp here. He came forward laughing—still naked except for breechcloth and moccasins, his sandy hair in a queue down his back.

"To the west, to the west, to the west," he sang airily, and smacked the pouting de Vaca across a shoulder. "Cheer up, doctor!"

"The girl has left again," Estevanico said.

For an instant Andy experienced a twinge of jealousy that this black-skinned Moor should know more than himself of the woman he loved but this passed and his good cheer bubbled again.

"She leads the way for our departure today," he explained as if he had known all about it.

De Vaca eyed him sharply.

"Today?" he asked.

"Aye, today." He struck a kingly attitude in good-humored mockery. "O Moor, go thou at once to the chiefs of the Auauches and Malichuches and say that the Mighty Healer, Svss himself, desires their presence immediately. Ahm!"

De Vaca was canny in recognizing confidence.

"I will go west with you," he said hurriedly.

"Shall I tell the chiefs? Dost thou mean it?" Estevanico asked.

"Aye."

The Moor hurried off, and in a short time he was back and the chiefs coming—taking their dignified time. The four travelers squatted to form a circle and one by one the big men of the Indians took their place in it, very dignified, for a cold snap was on between the Auauches and the Malichuches. The latter had a perfect right to be at the great springs, for this was a neutral meeting-ground. Great trails crossed here—trails fifteen and twenty feet wide cut a foot or more into the ground by the ceaseless passage of moccasined feet through the ages. It was a meeting-place and a *franca lingua* prevailed. Dorán rose—after waiting a decorous period of silence—and in this general language began to address the grim-mouthed chiefs.

"O mighty leaders of the Auauches and Malichuches," he began, "evil spirits have been

whispering evil words in thy ears. I come to speak words of softness and wisdom. We know that the Malichuches have us in their hearts and that their hearts pain at thought of departing from us. But we are mighty healers and in the night the Great Spirit whispered words to me that I would reveal to you."

Doran paused dramatically.

"Good, fine!" whispered Estevanico. "Right keen for a maiden speech!"

"I'll choke you," Andy hissed in Spanish, and resumed his address.

"The Great Spirit, O chiefs, used fiery words to tell me that the time has come for our going to other tribes to give them of our good medicine." The Indians stirred uneasily. "But the Great Spirit did not speak of empty hands. He told me of certain gifts that are to be given today."

The head chief of the Auauches looked up sharply at Doran from his little watery eyes.

"The Great Spirit said that the Auauches would make gifts to the Malichuches, and that the Malichuches would depart for their homes while the Auauches would escort the healers toward the setting sun. The gifts which the Auauches will give our friends the Malichuches will be as many robes of the humped-back cows as Malichuche chiefs have fingers on their hands; one bow and six arrows to each chief; and twice the food that the Malichuches will require for their journey home."

The Malichuches exhibited huge satisfaction at this princely gift, for buffalo robes were very precious to them. But the Auauche chiefs looked rebellious.

"The Great Spirit," Andy went on, "directed me then as to the good Auauches. He said that when they, his children, had obediently taken us to their brothers in the west, those brothers would give the Auauches the same amount as the Auauches had given the Malichuches and as much again."

The Auauche head chief rose to his feet. "Will the brothers in the west understand this talk?" he asked.

"Do they have ears for the great Spirit? Thou knowest they do."

"A heavy deal for us," warned de Vaca. "You will ruin us."

"The Auauches," Doran went on, "have told me that the nations to the west are very rich. I am ready to have it proven that your tongues are not forked. Wilt thou travel there with me to receive this wealth? Will the Malichuches accept from the Auauches?"

The Malichuche head chief got up.

"I would not disobey our Great Spirit," he declared, looking at a fine Auauche buffalo robe greedily. "I will obey thy words of wisdom and accept gifts from the Auauches."

"The words of the Great Spirit are my law," the Auauche leader echoed. "As much again

as we give, did thou say? It is good trading!"

"'Tis done," Andy decreed. "Auauches, bring thy gifts to the Malichuches, and I will make count. Prepare also for the journey west. Svss, the Mighty Healer of the Knife, has spoken."

"Irish gall!" muttered the astounded de Vaca.

## CHAPTER XI

### WHITE MAN'S ENDURANCE

LONG before noon the strong men and women of the Auauches, numbering nearly six hundred, were marching away from the spring in a loose column. Doran led, and in a short time he was faced with a choice of three trails.

"The middle one," Estevanico directed as he arrived panting from where he had been dawdling with the column. "To the southwest."

"Did Paula say so?"

"She went that way."

"Did she see that you saw her do so?"

"Aye."

"Southwest it is then."

The Indians who were armed with bows set out in the afternoon to hunt deer for the party. Others whose weapons were heavy smooth sticks, two spans long, formed rings which gradually closed upon rabbits, and as the long-eared made attempts to escape between the hunters they were clubbed with the sticks. That night stacks of rabbits waist high and fat deer were piled before the tents of the four great men to be touched and blessed before going to the cooking-fires.

Six hundred Indians can not move as rapidly over the country as a small party, so that many days were spent in getting to the next plentiful water supply. Here they found a big and wealthy tribe. Without difficulty Doran obtained goods to repay and award the Auauches, just as he had promised.

The new tribe, being given the same sort of promise, gladly accompanied the travelers on the journey, and thus from one tribe to another the four made their way, with an ever-increasing number in the retinue and an ever-increasing amount of goods necessary to pay off the last tribe. De Vaca continually grumbled that the trading would be the rope to strangle themselves, and Andrew laughed at him.

The gray wilderness of mountains and rock and yellow grass of Winter was no longer lonely and empty. Now hunters shouted in the chase; women, spiritually moved by the healing and the presence of the healers, chanted as they marched. Every consideration was given the four. Food was supplied in abundance. If they chose they were carried on the shoulders of warriors. Their word was law. The journey became a pageant of happiness, marked for

many leagues by a cloud of yellow dust through the days and by a banner of starry fires at nights.

Progress was slow, but what difference so long as they were surely moving? They expected every day to find Spaniards. Of each new tribe they inquired whether any men like themselves had ever been seen before, or heard of. The answer was always negative, but the travelers were not discouraged; the hawk-bell had heartened them to a lasting faith.

Delays were frequent. Sometimes they would wait two or three days for parties on either side of the trail to join them. The "owning" tribe usually numbered six or seven hundred Indians, but the marchers sometimes formed a regiment of two thousand.

The direction of the journey was steadily southwest, through gray mountains oftentimes, and along southward reaching valleys filled with dun dust. Sometimes their fuel was cedar, sometimes thorny shrubs, or a weed filled with wax that burned hotly.

At first the white-skinned girl marched with the column, keeping hidden from Doran and the others. Twice the Irishman sought her but she evaded him, and finally she disappeared altogether, not being seen even leaving a village on one side as the people marched in on the other. She was constantly in Andy's thoughts, and the only worry he had in these days was for her traveling over the country alone. He itched to know about her—whence she had come and why she was so far from friends.

De Vaca worried about something different—the matter of the trading. He, and Andy too for that matter, saw that it was becoming top-heavy. How could they escape from their promise to pay and award if some new tribe should refuse to give up a levy? Or if a tribe were too poor to reimburse with such a tremendous quantity of goods? Whenever he spoke of the subject the middle-aged Spaniard would wag a sad head.

"Cheer up!" Andy would admonish, slapping de Vaca's back. "A door always opens to the resourceful. You would stop? Not I. My father always said, 'If ye start, keep going,' and I mean to find the end o' this journey properly if we go till we wear our feet off to the knees."

Then one day they reached the domain of a chief named Ul, the All-Seeing. This was along a river—the Rio Grande at Presidio, Texas—that lay between mountains. The travelers had no way of knowing that it was the River of Palms more than two hundred leagues up its course from where they had expected to find it. There were wide cultivated fields being prepared for crops, and the first permanent houses they had seen—houses built of sticks and mud and thatch. Ul's people lived in the villages along the stream for many leagues.

Ul refused flatly to stand for the levy. The

escorting Indians, about fifteen hundred of them, grew exceedingly wroth at Andy and threatened to take him back. Ul rebelled at this and, on Andy's agreement to heal in every village along the river, made the payment. This was large, consisting of bows and arrows to every chief, two stacks of buffalo robes, spread out flat, as high as Andy's head; ten stacks each of jerked beef and dried squash as high as his head, and three thousand squaw's loads of maize. Andy knew he would never be able to double the amount to pay Ul back.

The four began their service of doctoring for Ul's people. This took them up the river for more than ten leagues on one side, and they returned down-stream on the other. Ul accompanied them with his standing army of about thirty warriors, and he assigned one soldier to each of the four daily as a messenger. Fifteen days were spent on the trip, so that it was February when they returned to Ul's main village where the River of Shells emptied into the stream between the mountains. Andy and the others made a formal matter of asking Ul to assemble his people to march west and collect his goods from the next tribe. The chieftain shook his head.

"There are no goods nor people toward the sun's bed," Ul said.

Andy's heart sank. If Ul could not be induced by the promise of a great payment to go west, how were the four to escape and continue their journey? They could not get away from their body-guards who served them as servants, or if they did they could not hope to work their way through the dozens of wide-spreading villages. The immediate prospect was that they would be held here perhaps for years. But Andy essayed an attempt toward action.

"Yet, O mighty chief," he said, "we would go on with our journey, healing the sick and winning favor in sight of the Great Spirit."

"Whither wouldst thou go? And how? There is naught to the south for food in seventeen days of hard marching. There is naught to the west or the northwest. Besides," Ul added, "thou art mine. Did I not buy thee?"

He turned away, ending the palaver.

Andy started back to his hut, disconsolate. He groaned. Paula had not been seen for weeks. He became more downcast than he had ever been before.

"Fie, Andee," Castillo admonished. "Why so windy with thy sighs? Are we not great men here, and is the food not plentiful?"

"And the maidens bright of eye?" added Estevanico.

Andy spat disgustedly.

De Vaca groaned.

"Thou two worry me. Since I smelled the Spaniards on that hawk-bell I have felt assured. They are somewhere, mayhap for all we know just beyond the next mountain range."



FOR a week Andy and de Vaca gloomed, though the Moor and Castillo were quite content, talking with enthusiasm of a great chieftains' dance and feast that the Indians were preparing for. This was a noted annual event at which head and sub-chiefs for the ensuing year were selected. One day Andy, having nothing else to occupy him, went with the others to the place where the ceremony was to be held.

Within a rincón, a horseshoe-like place that formed a natural amphitheater for thousands of spectators, a fire-pile with kindling ready to light had been made, and around it forming a circle was a ring of spiny cactus. Outside the thorny circle was stacked a great quantity of dry wood.

"A cooking-place fenced off," Andy surmised.

"Aye, a cooking-place it is," Estevanico agreed. "For men."

"Human sacrifices?"

"Nay. Give ear. I have heard the whole story." The Moor took pleasure in showing off his knowledge of the Indians, which he possessed in greater amount than the others. "Ul himself and all the lower chiefs and all men who aspire to be chiefs will enter the cactus ring at sunset and dance. A roaring fire will be built in the middle for light and to give the dancers something to endure. They will dance until they drop out from exhaustion, and he who stays longest will be the chief; and next to the longest, second chief, and so on down."

"But Ul has been chief a long time."

"He has won eleven years in succession."

Andy regarded anew the sides of the amphitheater; in his mind he saw the slopes lined with thousands of people. His vision went farther; he saw himself in the ring with the contesting warriors lying at his feet exhausted. When he started back to the village he was whistling thoughtfully, but as he went he remembered the mightily muscled Ul and the whistle petered out.

As he slept fitfully in his *jacal* that night he was brought up by a sound of scratching on the rear wall below the window opening. Jumping to the conclusion that one of his companions was there with some secret message concerning escape, he crossed the dirt floor cautiously so as not to alarm the guard outside the door.

The window was just large enough for him to put his head out, and he saw a figure, in the reflection of the moonlight from the sand, at one side.

"Paula!" he exclaimed under his breath.

"Andee!"

She raised her lips for him to kiss.

The warm touch thrilled him but she signaled with a finger over her lips for him to be silent.

"I returned this evening at sunset and saw you enter this place," she whispered.

"Paula, where have you been? Tell me about

yourself. Clamber in through this window. Day in and day out I wonder about you."

"Not now, Andee. Soon, an thou wish it. I have been far to the west and have come back for thee. Renew thy journey. Go south along the River of Shells for seventeen days. When thou reach the village of deer-skins turn west for an equal time. It is not much farther."

"But Paula, Ul has a mighty grip on us."

"Can not my Andee loosen it?"

Andy was silent for a moment before such faith that was a dare, then—

"Aye, girl, I can, and I will."

She touched his cheeks with the tips of her fingers and was gone, dancing in her blithesome way in the moonlight on the sand.

Early the next morning Estevanico hurried in from a jaunt to tell Andrew that Paula was back. For once Doran was ahead with his knowledge and he took delight in shrugging indifferently.

"She arrived about sunset yesterday," he supplemented.

"Why didn't you tell us? I learned something about her."

"What?"

"That she was here two years ago. She was sane then, and a prisoner of Indians who were carrying her north, a very fierce tribe not at all afraid of Ul. I surmise that she escaped them by acting as if her mind had slipped its cable."

"A remarkably intelligent woman," Andy vouched proudly.



THROUGHOUT that day the people of Ul assembled literally by the thousands for the chieftains' dance. As they arrived they sought places of vantage on the hill-sides of the rincón above the arena.

Long before sunset they were all there, tightly packed, making good-natured sallies as to who would enter the contest. No one was near the arena until a short time before the sun descended to the black humpbacked mountains in the west, then a medicine-man, the master of ceremonies, took his place by the cactus circle and proclaimed that all who aspired to be chiefs must gather outside the ring. About thirty men ran up, among them being Ul.

To the surprise of the throng, and even his companions, Andy dropped his deer skin robe and stepped into the ring of warriors. An audible gasp went up. Ul glanced at him scornfully and looked away. Andy trembled, inside, lest the master of ceremonies order him back, but instead of that the old man, whose hair was so oddly white against his dark skin, began to make what Andy took to be the formal announcement.

Doran knew much already of what he said and was not tensely interested until the grand-sire began to explain how the last man in the circle should conduct himself. Eventually, it

appeared, only two men would be left in the contest, then one of these would fall. The remaining one would then make a complete circuit of the ring alone and getting back to where the contestant lay on the ground, would set his foot on the fallen man's head. Whereupon the conqueror, so to speak, would be proclaimed king with all power.

The old man finished his talk and faced the west. The throng was silent, breathless. The medicine-man never took his eyes from the sun, nor did the contestants look away from him. The coppery ball was soon half-hidden. A second medicine-man sprang into the circle and lighted the dry fire-pile with a torch. The master of ceremonies, gazing unblinking, raised an arm. The warriors unconsciously tensed. The arm dropped. The thirty sprang over the cactus barrier and the dance was on.

The would-be chiefs were naked except for breech-cloths of soft deer-skin, and Andy was garbed like them. He fell in directly behind Ul. It was not a race; it was a contest of endurance, and every man kept a steady pace without trying to pass any other man. Doran looked them over. Only Ul, he thought, seemed superior to him with his long gaunt muscles and oiled, glistening copper skin.

Andy saw how he was expected to do within three steps. At first the gyrations looked foolish, for the stalwart, fierce visaged men danced in the manner of light-footed maidens—like Paula, a sort of skipping and hopping on the toes. He decided to stay directly in rear of Ul, because he believed the chief, to win eleven times in succession, possessed some method, some bag of tricks by which he had eased the contests for himself. He resolved to cling like a shadow and watch. He became a man of one thought.

At first they danced blithesomely. Andrew had no difficulty in keeping the pace, but it wasn't long before he was cursing the heat, for the January weather was warm enough in this mountain-enclosed country without the blazing fire in the center. Men on the outside steadily passed wood over the dancers' heads to the fire-feeder in the ring.

When darkness had fallen thoroughly, in something like an hour, the first man fell out. Andy's heart jumped. If they had no more endurance than that he would win easily! Then he saw that the Indian limped and surmised he had a sprained ankle. How this was possible Andy could not understand, for the treadway had been beaten down hard. While pondering this he suddenly tripped and fell headlong so that his hands went flat against Ul's back, almost shoving that savage off his feet. Ul grunted savagely over his shoulder. As Andy caught his balance he knew what had caused his, and no doubt the fallen Indian's mishap—a piece of stiff bark that had dropped from the

wood as it was passed in to the fire-feeder. This gave him something to watch out for, to think about. But his thoughts took to other fields too. He wondered what he would do if he won. Would the Indians proclaim him their chieftain? Or would he succeed only in winning the hatred of the best native contestant? Which one that would be he could not even forecast, for no man seemed to be doing better than his fellows.

Sometimes they folded their arms over their chests, sometimes had them at their sides—kept them anywhere, in fact, to ease their muscles and keep their balance.

They moved to the left, that is, so that the blistering fire in the center was on their left sides. The breeze was from the southwest; thus when they were on the northeast side the flames almost licked them. By the hour that Andy thought must be midnight legs began to lag; and soon after, five fell out pretty close together, and Doran did not wonder at it, for he was parched for a drink. His thoughts began to dwell on water, going back and holding to the time they were rained on day after day in the open and cold barges.

Shortly after the five, a sixth fell out, landing square upon the cactus barrier. The muscles of Andy's stomach flinched, for he knew the Indian must have been pierced through the abdominal wall in a dozen places by the sharp, long spines. Two wood-handlers lifted the man off.

By the middle of the after part of the night only five men remained besides Andy. Among them without warning appeared Paula, dancing. For a little she ran beside Doran, who slowly, in his suffering, became aware that she was singing in Spanish—an improvised tune.

"You must win—you must win—I will watch from the crowd—I will watch for your success—your woman will watch her man!"

She fell behind him and when next he saw her she was outside the barrier. Her presence revived him, took his mind off his dry and burning mouth and stiffening legs. So far as he could tell Ul had not faltered; the only sign he gave of weariness was a frequent changing of his arms from his sides to over his chest. Andy imitated his every gesture.

Two more men dropped out, one of them falling across the cactus spines. With the first hint of day only three were left. Andy's feet felt as if they were dead, but he kept behind Ul. This practice cost him dearly, for the Indian running with them stumbled over his own feet and fell down. Ul, unable to leap over him, fell also, and Andy, moving half-blind, sprawled over them both.

"Up! Up! Andeel!" bawled Estevanico. "You've won. Make another circuit!"

The only way Andy could tell that he had got to his feet was by the sense of sight. He could not tell that his legs were moving except that

the ground off to one side seemed to pass by him. As he went on around he saw Ul rise up before him, and again he was the follower.

A time came when he could not see well. His eyeballs felt shrunken. He kept to the course by following the bulk of Ul ahead of him. There seemed to be fiery flashes within his skull. He forgot the fire, the cactus, the girl, and kept on from the force of habit of willing all night to do so. His going, by the time the sun was ready to burst into day, was no more than an echo of his going through the previous hours.

Then Ul stumbled and fell. Andy shot over him and struck the ground flatly. The jar revived him for a few seconds so that he heard the voices of de Vaca and the others shouting for him to make one more circuit and win. He got to his feet and willed to keep on—and Ul, starting up also, fell over him. Both went down again.

"Upl Upl!" bellowed the Moor. "Go one round! One more round and you are king."

Andy got to his feet and staggered on. He heard a subdued scream from a thousand throats and somehow he knew that he was about to fall on the cactus or in the fire. He kept on, hours or minutes, he knew not, till a bulk loomed darkly on the ground ahead of him.

"On! On!" screamed a demoniacal voice. "Put your foot on his head and thou art king! One round after he falls. Your foot on his head. Six more steps."

Andy dully sensed that the black object ahead must be Ul. But he did not know. Everything became flaming darkness. He paused and tried to raise a foot. He tottered—and fell down. The last he knew was that a mighty shout was making the ground tremble.

## CHAPTER XII

### LUCKY HORSESHOE

CASTILLO sat in the sun with his back to a boulder sucking at a scrap of raw venison tallow. De Vaca hugged his knees and dozed. Doran lay supine on a flat rock. Only Estevanico was vivacious, and he kept his tongue going with all the enthusiasm of a born talker. In a pause Castillo took advantage of opportunity to remark:

"Fine food! I'll wager my stomach has contracted 'til it's no more roomy than a hen's egg."

"As I was saying," Estevanico went on, "when you raised your foot you set it on his chest instead of his head. Then you swayed and would have fallen on the cactus had I not touched you and set you off your balance in the other—"

"Yes, yes," Andy broke in testily. "You have told it no fewer than a hundred times. And I fell with one foot on his head, which

wasn't according to court practice but answered for the Indians. They proclaimed me king. Ul was satisfied. I rested twenty-four hours and soaked in steaming robes. Then I gave Ul back his kingdom, selected eight carriers, loaded them with venison tallow, and by the right of being chief and doing as I pleased, set out to march seventeen days up the River of Shells. We have come five days without a slip. The whole yarn in a coconut shell. Now we'll put it out of mind and turn our thoughts to the future. Understand, Steve?"

"Sí, Señor, but—"

"We've got twelve days more to go before we reach the village of skins. Save your breath, because we are going to travel faster than we ever traveled before. We've got to keep from starving. Few people, no food."

"And seventeen days west from the village of skins, not so, Andee?" de Vaca suddenly asked out of his dozing. "A long way, say I, for a man whose temples are gray."

"And the sooner finished the better. Come. The sun is the turn of an hour-glass beyond the zenith. Four leagues more today."

"Never a sign of a Spaniard yet," de Vaca grumbled as he groaned himself to his feet. "I would welcome finding e'en the Portuguese or the Britains."

Of all their traveling the journey up the River of Shells and westward seventeen days—thirty-four days in all—was the hardest that they endured. The monotony of the empty and silent land went unbroken most of the time. Food was scarce and the cold of the high mountainous and plateau country was intense, with February and March northers tugging at their buffalo robes eternally and suffocating them with dust. Andy had no idea where he was going but he knew why he traveled this way—Paula had said to.

They questioned every Indian wanderer they met about white-skinned men but not one gave them information. The monotony was broken but once. They fell in with a small bunch of Indians and eight of the savages died in one night. There was no obvious reason for this, so the Indians believed the Spaniards had caused the deaths. Instead of becoming vengeful they fell into a quaking fear and a steady unbroken silence. Andy came upon one mother frantically scratching the calves of her small boy's legs with mice teeth to hush his squalling!

Expecting Spaniards at the end of seventeen days to the west, they found—not even Paula.

A decided change was perceptible in the country. The people were agriculturists and raised maize. The women wore cotton garments. And the men told of great houses to the northward, each one capable of holding an entire tribe—the pueblos of New Mexico as later Spaniards learned. They decided to recuperate among these farmer Indians for a few days



and see if Paula would appear or send some message.

At evening of the third day they beheld a cloud of dust on the wind a league or so to the west. They could not understand it, nor could the Indians enlighten them. They waited expectantly, and in an hour were measurably rewarded. For between three and four hundred natives marched up and their leader told a story of flight from their own district to escape slave-catchers.

"What sort of slave-catchers?" Doran asked.

"Men like yourselves," the chief answered, including the four with a gesture. "But different," he added, "since they come from where the great salty water washes the land."

Andy and the others were puzzled. Men like themselves, from the west. And salty water. They could not conceive that they were approaching the South Sea—the Pacific Ocean as it was afterward named.

"Why do you run away?" Andy kept on. "Can you not fight and drive the slave-catchers out of your country?"

The Indian shook a hopeless head. "They are more numerous than pebbles in a mountain brook, and they carry long sharp lances, and sit on the backs of beasts mightier than the hump-backed cows of the north."

"He means horses," Estevanico interpreted. "By the saints, he must mean horses."

"What are the names of these people?" de Vaca questioned.

"Takers of slaves."

"Meager information," Andy commented. "O chief, do the slave-catchers come this way now?"

"Aye."

"How far off?"

The Indian shook his head. He made it evident that he had escaped from the wrath while he could, without waiting for too many details. The travelers regarded one another with questioning eyes, hope and excitement making their breasts rise and fall like erratic bellows. Yet they were almost tongue-tied with the feeling that something tremendous was about to happen. The leader of fleeing people, seeing that these strange white men had no more questions to ask, made a dignified obeisance in leave taking.

"Adios," he said.

The four at once broke into voluble excitement. The slave-catchers to the west must be Spaniards, or how could this savage know that. So they argued the night half-through and were off the next morning by sunrise—with the near four hundred Indians trailing back with them pleading at every opportunity to be protected from those "who rode on the backs of animals and fought with lances." The talk was of what they would do if they fell in with Spanish people, of what they would say.

"I shall at least get a square meal once more," Castillo vouched. "A fat goose baked on its back with its legs sticking up, and stuffed with olives and —"

"Fie," scoffed de Vaca. "Eat, eat, eat is your song. For me, give me a gallon of wine made from the grapes of Castilla, and bananas browned over a blaze in olive oil, and —"

"Gluttons!" shouted the Moor. "I ask naught, naught—except my two hands once full—twice—thrice full of dates dried in the sun."

They looked at Andy.

"Give me the taste of a woman's lips," he said. "I have not the coarse appetite of you wrinkle-bellied *patres*. A few thick slices of ham from a well-fed shoat, some bread of barley, a curd, hare stewed with olives, a —"



AND then they cried him down. So they traveled for days, wrapped in foreseeing and foretalking. Indians began to join them from all sides, and Andy, as of yore, doctored them with his herbs and the knife, while de Vaca said words and made signs upon all impartially. But gradually their spirits sank again. No more news came of the strange people. Andy mourned silently about Paula. Finally after many days some new Indians besought them to turn northward to the great houses where whole tribes lived. It came to be a question of what to do next, and just when they were in the darkest depths of indecision, they came upon Paula on the trail.

With two Indian men she was a stone's throw distant when they saw her. She saw them at the same time. She halted abruptly, flung something about the neck of one of the Indians and ran away. Andy started after her, but stopped to stare when he saw what the Indian carried.

It was a horseshoe and a belt buckle about his neck, slung on a thong, evidence of Europeans without a doubt.

They renewed their pace immediately—but Andy failed to catch sight of the golden-haired girl. On they went, due west in accordance to the messenger's instructions. This man led the way, with the emblems of civilization still hung to his neck. Estevanico, the pert as well as the glib, often went ahead, and on one of these occasions he came running back and shouting:

"Horses! Horses!"

He led the way to a spot under a tree and sure enough there were imprints of horses' shoes, and other signs of a camp. They were thrilled and with their joy was mixed a sort of fear, for these were the first actual signs of living Europeans they had seen for nearly eight years.

The horses, six or eight in number, had come in from the west, following a visible Indian trail, and the tracks led off north from the camping

place. After some discussion, Doran urged de Vaca and Estevanico to go on west in hope of meeting other horsemen, while he and Castillo would remain at the camping-place to see if the party returned. The six or seven hundred Indians now in the party remained with Doran.

The waiting proved difficult for Andy and Castillo. They were on nettles. Andrew tried to doctor his patients, but most of the time his eyes were roving over the barren country, seeming to see moving horsemen in every inanimate rock.

At night they could not sleep. By the third day they were worn out, and at noon resolved to seek a quiet place and try to get much-needed sleep. They went out on the westward trail and lay down on the ground beneath a shelving boulder. They did go to sleep—and were awakened by the jar of horses' hoofs around them, and the jingling of accoutrements.

They sprang up and stared, their breasts panting with emotion. Almost upon them were many horsemen, Indians largely; but there were three in the fore who were not Indians but Spaniards. Andy and Castillo regarded the strangers with pop-eyed curiosity and amazement. The fact of the existence of other white men than themselves seemed incredible after so many years of seeking and waiting.

Presently one of the strangers dismounted and came forward and they recognized him as a priest. His lips trembled as he saw them draw back when he offered his hand. And when they shook hands they were trembling all over.

"My sons," he said. "My sons." Then in a moment he added: "The other two found the captain and his company back there thirty leagues."

He meant de Vaca and the Moor.

The other horsemen came forward and spoke words of welcome, but all the time Andy and Castillo said not a word. The priest kept looking at Doran—and little wonder. Tall, lithe, tanned, he looked more like an Indian than a white man. And to increase the oddity of himself, unwittingly, he had cut off his sandy queue so that now his hair had a bobbed effect, hanging only to his shoulders, and it was held back from his face by a band of tanned hide around his forehead. He was naked except for the loin cloth, of cotton now; and he stood as straight as a lance.

"Art thou Andee—Dorantes?" the priest asked. "He of whom the girl Paula speaks?"

"Paula?" Andy's first word. "Dost thou—"

"Aye. She is with the company—" his eyes twinkled—"and speaks much of you."

"And has the company," Castillo now spoke, "real Spanish food in its possession?"

The dam of their silence gave way and a flood of questions came that kept the Spaniards busy the remainder of the day. The Spaniards had crossed Mexico, they learned, and come up the

west coast. Two settlements had been established, San Miguel and Culiacan, not far from tide-water.

Next morning the party, accompanied by all the six hundred Indians set out to join the company of soldiers, which was commanded by Captain Diego de Alcaraz. Castillo and Andy rode extra horses that had been brought, and they laughed like boys over the oddity of the sensation. As they rode Father Juan told Andy the story of Paula, and it began back in the time of Columbus. One of the men on that explorer's second voyage had married a native woman in the West Indies. Years later a daughter of theirs had been married by a blue-eyed Basque sailorman and this couple had gone to Yucatan with Cordova in 1517, where, soon after landing, Paula was born. She, three-quarters white, had every mark of a Basque girl; and she lived with her parents until they went to the west of Mexico, when, at the age of twelve, she had been stolen by the Indians.

"She is eighteen now," the priest went on. "She told me that the Indians carried her northward to where there are many high houses of two and three stories, then down a long river (the Red River of Texas), then northward—always being traded from tribe to tribe, you understand—until she reached a river called the Kaw. There she fell sick and when she grew strong she pretended that her mind was gone. Thou knowest the custom of the savages—not to harm those who, as they say, are with their Great Spirit. So she traveled alone from tribe to tribe, or made her way with migrating Indians until she found you, or you her, after which thou knowest the tale."

The old man smiled benevolently.

"Why did she—what was her reason—"

Andy was at a loss how to put his question.

"I know what thou would say, my son. Why did she lead thee hither?"

"Not that! But why did she flee from me?"

"Canst thou think of no reasons?"

Father Juan asked softly.

"She would be married by the church."

"That is one, and manly of thee to think of it. Another?"

"Nay."

"To save thy life! Tut-tut, my son. Had she waited for you to make love, the Indians would have become suspicious of her illness of mind. She would have been slain, and thee with her. She loved you. She longed to see you safe among us here. So she came ahead to avoid you and to prepare your way—to make the Indians expect you and be friendly. A woman, Dorantes, a woman fit for thee!"

"Aye, and as soon as we reach—"

"Hold! I have spoken indiscreetly." Father Juan's face clouded. "So happy have I been in the happiness of her and you that I forgot.

When I was leaving, Captain Alcaraz did inform me that his lieutenant, Charcon, would wed Paula. Both——"

"Wed Paula! Father, thou art the court in that matter."

"Aye, my son, but both men—Alcaraz and Charcon—are evil men, who care naught for the authority of the church. They capture and kill among the Indians without conscience, and mock me when I protest. If Charcon is determined in the matter I shall do all within my humble power to ——"

"I will kill him."

"Nay, my son. That would bring you naught but death to yourself at the hands of the captain. Be patient——"

"Thou wert never in love, Father. Patient! Like a hungry wolf!"

The old man reached across the space between their horses and patted Andy on the shoulder.

THIS day but one they arrived at the place where Captain Alcaraz and his company were encamped. The officer was in high indignation, for he and de Vaca had been quarreling over the matter of enslaving the Indians. Alcaraz was on a slave-hunting expedition and was chagrined and angry because they had hidden in the mountains and fled the country. De Vaca, loving the simple and honest savages who had befriended him on the long journey, threatened to carry the matter to the throne in protest and insisted, as the alternative, that Alcaraz use his influence with the governor of the colony to put a stop to the practice of killing and capturing Indians indiscriminately. So that when Andy and the others met the group of Spaniards, the commander was in a tempestuous state. He scarcely greeted Doran and Castillo. But Andy did not care. His first question was—

"Where is Paula?"

"See you *jacal* through the trees?" asked Alcaraz shortly. "There she is with her lover, Lieutenant Charcon, and my advice is that you do not interfere."

"This is an affair between the lieutenant and myself, sir," Andy replied. "You will do well to look the other way."

"Have care!" warned the commander.

Andy strode off toward the flimsy shelter, his heart in a tumult. "With her lover," Alcaraz had said. He looked back, fearing that some one might follow. Father Juan was following. Andy ran forward, his long strides seeming slow, but covering the distance rapidly. Turning the corner and coming abruptly to the front, he saw Charcon standing in the door chuckling.

"Paula!" he called.

A smothered cry, then the girl herself brushing by the officer, answered him.

"Andee!" She ran to his arms.

Charcon jerked her back roughly.

"Thou art mine, girl. Be not indiscreet lest I be forced to make thee regret." He looked at Doran. "So thou art the man she prates of? Well, I have bespoken her and have the authority of the church."

"You lie!"

"Lie! Why—you—naked—savage!"

"Touch her again and I will bend your neck backward until it cracks!"

"Dog!"

Charcon deliberately spat in Andy's face.

Andy slapped him. Then he struck him in the mouth. Charcon staggered back and spat out what looked like three of his front teeth. Andy struck again, half-tearing off the officer's left ear. Once more he struck with his hard right fist and Charcon's nose slipped loosely to one side. Then Andy, in the rage of a savage whose woman has been harmed by another, rushed in and whipped out Charcon's sword. Charcon ran, and Andy fell in behind him belaboring him with the blade.

*Whack! Whack!* He almost kept time with their pounding feet as Charcon fled toward Captain Alcaraz.

The captain ran toward them shouting.

"I will have thee hanged for this, Dorantes," he stormed when the two stopped. "At Culiacan will I have the governor to string thee up for striking an officer with intent to slay."

"Bah!" Andy retorted. "Beware of thy words, Alcaraz, else thou shalt suffer with this lieutenant."

"Would you strike me, me?"

"With pleasure, then lead you by an ear to the governor and have you punished for impudence to a superior officer of his majesty's expeditionary force. You know, thou enslaver of Indians, I am a captain under Narvaez with a commission older than thine. Ask Cabeza de Vaca, an thou doubtst."

De Vaca grinned.

"'Tis true, Alcaraz, and right well would I like for you to strike him. I could see you hanged for mutiny."

Andy glared a moment, then turned abruptly and started back toward the *jacal*, the two officers licking their lips in trepidation.

"Wait, Andee," called de Vaca, drawing a paper from the shirt he now wore. "I have something to show thee."

"Well?"

"Thou knowest we have reached the Spaniards. And that two settlements lie a few days southward of here? And that at last we have found the goal for which we have sought, in hunger and cold, for eight years?"

"Say it. I would go to her."

"Read the date at the top of this paper. See?"

"April 14th, 1536."

Andy read.

"Exactly. That is the day I joined Alcaraz and these others. Now read the last clause, there just above the captain's signature."

"It is further my belief that these four men are the first to have crossed from one ocean to the other, the first to cross the continent that must lie to the northward of us here."

"Great Stars!" Andy grinned, the Irish rising to the surface, "And we were naked too, and in no fit condition to be meeting strangers. Let me go. I want to tell a certain person what a great man I am!"



THERE isn't much more to tell. Andy and Paula were made happy in the mission church at Culiacan by Father Juan and the governor. As to the others, Castillo and de Vaca returned to Spain, where the latter was subject to political ups and downs for several years, and died finally in old age at Seville. The Moor was later killed by Indians in Mexico

because of indiscretions toward the wives of natives.

As to Oviedo, who remained with the Indian women on the Island of Ill-Fate, he was never heard of after de Vaca left him; nor was more heard of Narvaez after he disappeared over the horizon of the sea.

The fleet which the three hundred land explorers left on the coast of Florida cruised up and down for a year, then giving the expedition up as lost returned to the Indies. Cabeza de Vaca afterward talked with some of its people.

Captain Dorantes, ever itching for fresh sights, helped to organize an expedition in Mexico to explore to the northward, no doubt having in mind the pueblo country, but for some reason the company never made the venture. He remained in Mexico, however, where there was always a bit of adventure to season his days.

So ends the tale of the first Europeans to cross the American continent proper—one of the most remarkable adventures that men ever emerged from with their lives.