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Contents for First October, 1920, Issue

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

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from preceding page)

The Death Anthem at Black Mountain	Robert J. Horton	118
<i>A man-hunt in a forest-fire.</i>		
Yankee Notions	Farnham Bishop	124
<i>A pirate ship and New England wit.</i>		
The McIntosh <i>A Complete Novelette</i>	Charles Beadle	129
<i>The last of the clan takes a little shore-leave in Portuguese Africa.</i>		
The Camp-Fire <i>A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers</i>		147
Looking Ahead for Democracy		153
Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader		154
Ask Adventure		155
Firearms, Past and Present		156
Fishing in North America		156
Lost Trails		159
The Trail Ahead		160
Headings	Will Crawford	
Cover Design	Charles Durant	

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off the Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

BUSHFIGHTERS

"THE BUSHFIGHTERS," by Hugh Pendexter: A tale of the French and Indian War in New York, and of the dark year 1755, when Ticonderoga was lost and folk trembled lest the scalp-yell rise in the streets of Albany. Israel Putnam—"Wolf" Putnam—does the work of many men in killing Montcalm's "praying Indians." A full book-length novel complete in the next issue, by a man who knows.

Other stories in the next issue are mentioned on the last page of this one.



YANKEE NOTIONS

by
Farnham Bishop

Author of "Wood and Steel," "The Rest Cure," etc.

NAT GRISWOLD, by Judas!" cried Captain Bartley as the light of an upheld lantern revealed the face of the man just brought aboard by the jolly-boat's crew. "You Yankee sneak, what are you doing here at Pelican Island?"

"Listening to you swear by your patron saint, Bartley."

Naked, unarmed, and alone on his worst enemy's deck, Griswold smiled as the other burst into a roar of blasphemies and clapped his hand to the hilt of his cutlas.

"Go ahead—pull it out and hit me with it; that's a brave boy!" continued Griswold softly as if to encourage a frightened child. "Don't be afraid, Bartley; two of your men are holding me."

For a long ten seconds no man spoke or stirred on board the *Rover's Delight*. All hands had gathered in the waist about the captain and the captive. Above their heads the spars and rigging of the pirate brig scarce moved against the tropic stars, so easily did she ride at anchor in the little land-locked harbor of Pelican Island.

Starlight and the dim glow from the tiny holes in the iron battle-lantern gleamed faintly on the brass hilt and half-drawn blade of Bartley's cutlas, the tarnished lace on his coat and tricorn, the jagged teeth behind the snarling, bearded lips. The nude body before him, instead of standing out pale and distinct, was as brown as any Indian's.

The feet, planted parallel with each other, the slender, sinewy limbs, erect carriage, high cheek-bones, and long black hair clubbed with an eelskin after the fashion of 1784, would have made any one doubt that Griswold was a white man had it not been for a two weeks'

growth of strong black beard. His eyes twinkled in the lantern-light as if he were enjoying some delightful but entirely private jest.

"You're trying for it!" cried Bartley, slamming his blade back into its scabbard. "For a swift and easy death, and by—, you came near getting it! Now answer me straight and civil, or I'll trice you up to the shrouds and put a red-checked shirt on your naked hide! What have you been doing here on my island?"

"Waiting for you to come and careen."

There was a stir and murmur among the crew at this.

"Silence!" commanded Bartley.

The utter stillness that followed at once was proof of uncommon discipline for an outlaw craft.

"Who told you of my secret careening-place?"

"One of your pirates—"

"Stow that word!" thundered Bartley with a tremendous oath.

"One of your privateersmen, I should have said." Griswold corrected himself humbly.

"Of course you are a privateer, Captain Bartley. Were you not issued letters of marque and reprisal by the Continental Congress in '75? Before that, I remember, when I was a junior sophister at Yale, you were the loudest-shouting Liberty Boy in all New Haven. No truer patriot ever helped burn a Tory's barn or hustle his helpless wife and daughters on the Common. Do you still sail under the Rattlesnake Flag, Captain Bartley?"

"I'm not denying I was once a — Yankee rebel like you," answered Bartley in a tone that he tried to make indifferent. "But that's all past and done with—"

"Of course—ever since you besought and received his most gracious Majesty's pardon, and thereafter cruised and plundered on what you esteemed the winning side as merrily as you had done on the other. And now that the war is over you are cruising and plundering still. A most private privateersman!"

"And what are you," demanded Bartley, "but a sneaking, lawbreaking smuggler? Now that you've got your cursed independence, you're a foreigner and forbidden to trade in British waters by the Navigation Acts. Here in the West Indies you're fair game."

"Aye, for the King's frigates and cutters; but not for you. While Kingston folks want Yankee notions I'll manage to land my cargoes and run the risks of the trade. But you're too smart to run any risks like an honest smuggler or an old-time buccaneer. You never trouble an English ship, and who cares what you do to Americans, Dons and Frenchmen?"

"Let 'em catch and hang their own pirates!" say the governor of Jamaica and the admiral of the station, thinking of the late war and chuckling together over their port.

"And since Congress sends no more armed ships to sea, while the Spanish frigates idle in Havana harbor and King Louis' cruisers are few and slow, these are merry times for Captain Bartley of the *Rover's Delight*. It was a rare ill wind for you that brought the old *Reasonable's* head-sails round the point when you had laid me aboard off Cape Maysi and thought my vessel was your prize.

"You cut the grapnels in time to show your heels to the French frigates; but you left one of your wounded behind on the *Naugatuck's* deck. The French doctors healed him in the hospital at Port au Prince, where the *Reasonable* took us—and there I sold my cargo at better than Kingston prices. Having little love for you and less for the gallows, your man told me of Pelican Island. And so I am here."



GRISWOLD stopped as if there were nothing more to be said.

"Go on," growled Bartley. "What the devil were you up to, splashing about like that beneath my bows?"

"It was the shark that was doing most of the splashing," said Griswold almost apologetically. "The first I ever saw here. He must have followed you in this afternoon—it would pay a shark to cruise in your wake. I caught the white flash of his belly as he turned over and rose up below me; so I dived down and ripped him open as I'd seen the Jamaica boys do. It took more than one slash to finish him; and by that time your jolly-boat was right on top of me. As soon as I came up to breathe after the last dive somebody grabbed me by the hair, and a couple of others helped

him haul me aboard and take away my knife."

"Here it be," a deep voice spoke from the shadows.

A thick fist and hairy, tattooed forearm were thrust into the lantern-light, displaying a ten-inch blade still red with shark-blood. A braided lanyard hung from the sword-like hilt. Craning forward, the ring of pirates studied the weapon with keen professional interest.

"A broken hanger ground down to knife-length," commented one.

"Aye, and by a master hand," said its new owner proudly. "Sharper than broken glass."

"Thank you," said Griswold. "I did that myself just to pass the time."

"—you and your time-passing!" thundered Bartley. "Answer me quick and straight or I'll gut you with your own knife and heave you back to the sharks. You didn't swim here all the way from Port au Prince for the fun of shark-fighting under my bows. Were you trying to cut my cable or sneak aboard and cut my throat? And where's the craft you came in, and how many men came with you? Answer me or die!"

"Death is no nearer me than it is to you and every other man aboard this brig," answered Griswold in solemn tones that were all the more impressive after his own levity and the other's ungoverned rage.

The night was hot, but more than one of the pirates shivered at the sound of the baneful words.

"The *Rover's Delight* has made her last cruise and dropped anchor in her last harbor. She and all on board her are doomed to perish within the hour. Death lurks beneath her keel, even as the shark, but for whose presence you would have died unwarned!"

This fearful and mysterious prophecy, spoken in a deep slow voice, carried conviction and terror to many of the hearers; a fleeting, intuitive knowledge that the speaker's words were literally true. It was more than superstition; it was as if these debased and brutalized men had acquired some of the true brute's protective instincts in exchange for their lost manhood.

"Tis the devil's own brig!" cried an Irish voice. "And if the devil's waitin' to drag her down be the keel it's not me will be staying on board this night."

"Out boats! Out boats and leave her!" rang the general cry.

But Bartley beat back the rush with the flat of his cutlas and roared them down with soul-shaking oaths and unshaken common sense.

"Call yourself seamen?" he concluded. "Is the brig afire or pounding on a lee shore, that you're so crazy to leave her? Or is she lying safe and snug in her own haven with three clear fathoms betwixt her keel and a sandy

bottom? Can't you see that he's trying to frighten you into going ashore, where there's—know how many Yanks and Frenchies waiting for you in the dark and under the trees?

"Here, you!" he demanded, pricking Griswold's bare breast with the point of the cutlas. "How much of a force did you bring with you from Port au Prince?"

"Two full companies of *Infanterie de la Marine*" replied Griswold in the crisp voice of an adjutant making a report.

"The *Raisable* was too big and slow for this sort of work," he continued. "Moreover she had not a *matelot* to spare for a landing-party. So the soldiery sailed for Pelican Island in a Haitian schooner, and I let my mate take the *Naugatuck* back to New Haven and came with them to see the sport.

"The plan was that the schooner should set us ashore and leave us for a month, while she returned to Port au Prince. Our pilot—the man you abandoned on my deck—swore that within that time you would surely come and career your brig, as she was getting slow and foul. You came, and according to our plan we lay quiet in the woods while you kedged in and came to anchor at sundown.

"We knew that you would keep your crew aboard and sober tonight, and tomorrow morning run the *Rover's Delight* ashore at the mouth of the creek, heave her down and scrape her bottom, keeping everybody hard at it all day to get the work done before the big carousing in the clearing tomorrow night. Then would be the time, when you were all blind drunk and your weapons scattered hither and yon, for the soldiers to surround you and settle the business with the least trouble and expense.

"That was what I thought, and so did the French officers—all but one. And that one outvoted me and all the rest, for he was our commander. Major D'Hannibault, his name is; a girl-faced, eighteen-year-old younger son of marquis; a child scarce fit to be an ensign, but set above veteran captains older than his father because his birth is noble and theirs is not.

"He turned up his pretty nose at our plan and cried it to scorn. He had not come to catch drunken men asleep and drag them off to prison. He was not a low-born cur of a bailiff or a constable, *morbleu!* He was a soldier of France, a noble, an officer of the king! He stood there and prattled away about the splendor of battle and the glory of war.

"None of his officers dared gainsay him; it would have cost them their commissions, poor devils, and they knew it. And as soon as I tried to put in a word D'Hannibault told me to my face as politely as you please that he feared he must dispense with my advice as this was an affair for the military.

"I don't mind telling you, Bartley, that

that, and the way he said it, made me mighty hot.

"Look here, major," I told him. "I served in the corps of sappers and miners from Long Island to Yorktown. I know all about the splendor of battle and the glory of war—I wintered at Valley Forge. If you insist on having a perfectly needless fight, go ahead.

"And just to show you that I can be as reckless of my own life as you are of the lives your king has entrusted to you, I'll bet you a hundred louis d'or I can swim out and cut the brig's cable. Then the set of the ebb will beach her on the point, right under the new battery."

"What's that?" gasped Bartley. "What new battery?"



GRISWOLD looked extremely annoyed.

"I shouldn't have said that—it slipped out. However, there's nothing you can do about it, and no harm in telling you further. We found those long eighteens you'd mounted to defend the harbor mouth, and hauled them across the point to where they can rake the anchorage from the prettiest screened emplacements I ever built. Naturally a boy like D'Hannibault can't have a toy like that without wanting to play with it."

"I'll play with him! I've a long Tom forward, six twelves a side—"

"And no target to train them on," Griswold finished for him. "You'll waste your broadsides scattering sand and cutting down cocopalms while the French gunners pound you to pieces. Here in this narrow cove you've no more chance than a chip in a bucket of water. There's not a breath of wind to give you steerage-way.

"If you try to kedge, your boat-crews will be picked off by the musketeers ashore. You dare not land and try to storm the battery. Your fellows are bold enough when it comes to scuttling a helpless merchantman, but they'll never face trained troops in a stand-up fight.

"And you can't stay here. Soon enough you'll find yourself cutting your own cable and drifting down to your doom with a bonfire blazing to show you clear, and another adrift in your wake."

"What do you mean—a bonfire adrift in my wake?"

"You know the wreck of the bark you beached and plundered at the mouth of the creek?" asked Griswold, nodding toward the head of the narrow estuary. "There's a fine big fire-raft moored behind it, all ready to be lit and shoved off. I drifted down from there myself just now, and the current carried me slap against your bows. That's how the fire-raft will come at the end of the hour I told Sergeant Tissot to give me to return in. It must be nearly time now."

"Then, by —, I'll have you bound hand and foot and heave you into the hottest blaze of it when it comes alongside!" vowed Bartley.

Brave through he was, Griswold could not entirely repress the shudder that ran through him at this fearful threat. Bartley saw him wince and pressed his advantage shrewdly.

"You got me into this, Nat Griswold, and you'll get me out or roast alive!"

"But how?" cried Griswold. "But how can I do that?"

"That's for you to find," answered Bartley. "Best be quick about it, for once that lubber casts off his fire-raft 'twill be too late!"

Knitting his brows, the prisoner thought desperately, while those about him stared anxiously, now at his face and now at the dark silent shore.

"I have it!" Griswold exclaimed. "Put me in the jolly-boat with some one you can trust and row me down to the point, where I can call to D'Hannibault on the shore. Sooner than suffer me to be burned to death he'll agree to let you go. Will you swear to set me ashore free and uninjured if I persuade him to pass you out to sea?"

"I'll swear it on a dozen Bibles!" assented Bartley. "I'll go with you myself. Into the jolly-boat with him, you two," he added to the pair who were holding Griswold's arms. "To battle-quarters, the rest of you. Cast loose and provide, run out the guns, keep silence and stand by till I return."

With two men at the oars the jolly-boat put off from the brig. Griswold and Bartley sat side by side in the stern-sheets, the former on the port side, the latter to starboard. The pirate's left hand grasped the tiller; his right reached across his body and pressed the cold muzzle of a pistol against Griswold's naked flank.

"Sit tight and keep your hands on your knees," Bartley warned him grimly. "Make a sound or a stir and you're a dead man."

Rowing with the tide, they soon drew near to the long, curving point of land that all but closed the entrance to the harbor. At any moment a challenging, "*Qui vive?*" might come from the shore.

"Where's that — battery?" demanded Bartley in a hoarse whisper.

"A little farther along," murmured Griswold.

"Way enough! Rest on your oars, lads. Here, stroke, take this pistol and keep him covered, while I give the Frenchies a hail."

Standing up in the stern-sheet, Bartley filled his lungs and shouted through cupped palms:

"Ahoy the shore! Ahoy there!"

There was no answer.

"Ahoy there, Dannybow!" he roared.

Silence. Griswold shivered slightly as he

looked at the dim figure of the pirate who sat facing him, the starlight glinting faintly on the barrel of the pistol. Was that other gleam from the brass hilt of his own knife in the fellow's waist-sash? It was too dark to see—



AND then it was dark no longer! A sudden flash of ruddy light lit boat and bay and shore. Griswold could see the little bloodshot veins in the staring eyeballs of stroke and bow as they looked beyond him at the incredible sight astern.

They saw the stout hull of the brig broken in two amidships and hurled high in the air by a foaming mountain of water crested with leaping flames. Black against the glare, top-masts and yards, each trailing fragment of rigging, flew like giants' javelins. Bowsprit and poop sank down and away from each other, till they stood nearly at a right angle. The jagged plank-ends showed clear at the upheaved end of each half of the brig. Between them a volcano was erupting through what had been the waist of the *Rover's Delight*.

Hypnotized by the fearful sight and dazzled by the glare, the pirate holding the pistol had neither eye nor thought for the prisoner he was supposed to be guarding. Without stopping to look behind him Griswold struck. His left hand knocked aside the pistol as his clenched right swooped up against the open-mouthed starrer's drooping chin.

Snatching his own knife from the stunned man's sash, Griswold threw himself sidewise against Bartley, who was still standing upright, and now looking back over his right shoulder. The sudden impact bowled the captain over as the bow man fumbled at his belt. Bartley and Griswold came down together on the starboard gunwale, capsizing the jolly-boat and spilling the four men into the water.

Not till then did the sound of the great explosion reach their ears, so quickly had Griswold acted at the first warning flash. As they struck the water they heard the mighty roar go thundering past before they sank down to silent depths below.

The splash of falling fragments and the screaming of frightened gulls greeted Griswold as he reappeared. Swimming like an otter, he grasped the jolly-boat's painter, pulled himself up and lay face down on the bottom of the overturned craft. Two others came to the surface and swam after him—Bartley and the bowman. Stroke, knocked unconscious by Griswold's fist, had drowned without more ado.

Holding his knife ready, Griswold watched the two heads come bobbing to the attack. First swam the bow man, holding a dirk in his teeth; Bartley floundered after, handicapped by the length and weight of his cut-throat. The first pirate was within arm's length of the boat

when up from beneath it rose something long and white that snatched him down in a flurry of red-stained foam.

"Ha' mercy!" wailed Bartley, losing his cut-las as he opened his mouth to speak. "Ha' mercy! The sharks! The sharks!"

"Come aboard," invited Griswold, slinging his knife by the lanyard. Reaching down, he caught the other's coat collar as he came alongside.

It was well for Bartley that he did, for just at that moment the great wave thrown up by the explosion reached them and lifted the jolly-boat high on its foaming crest. Clinging to the keel with one hand and both knees, Griswold hung on despite the heavy drag of the other's body.

It was not for long, for the shore was near, and the wave was bearing them toward it at racing speed. Carrying the overturned boat far up the beach, the wave receded, leaving them high and dry.

Slipping down to the sand, Griswold dropped astride of the prostrate Bartley's chest, knelt on his biceps, and grasped his wrists with fingers that felt like iron pincers.

"Do you yield?" he asked softly. "Or must I break a few of your bones to mend your manners?"

"I yield," grasped Bartley. "I've felt your strength—you could shred a man to oakum with those fingers."

Releasing him at once, Griswold rose and patted the stranded jolly-boat.

"A good little craft. Tomorrow we'll fit her with a mast and sail from the wreckage of the brig and make shift for Port au Prince, where they'll hang you according to French law. Come, let's to camp."

"Where is your camp?" asked Bartley, "and what's happened to the Frenchies, that they're still keeping so quiet?"

"They are dead," answered Griswold solemnly.

"Dead?"

"Aye, dead as your own crew. You and I, Bartley, are the last men left alive on Pelican Island."



"OUT there, beneath that coral reef a mile off-shore, lies brave young D'Hannibault, with all his men. A hurricane caught us on the way hither from Port au Prince, dismasted the schooner, drove her on the reef and ground her to pieces before we could launch a boat.

"I alone won through the surf and reached the shore. That was two weeks ago. There I was, naked as you see me now, without a comrade or a weapon, to meet the *Rover's Delight*!"

"But there were plenty of shellfish and fresh water beside the yams you'd planted for your

crew and the pigs you'd turned loose in the woods. I needed no clothes; my skin tans but does not burn or blister in the sun. I picked up an old broken hanger that one of your men had thrown away and ground it to a point while I thought out a plan.

"I'd served in the corps of sappers and miners with Captain David Bushnell and Sergeant Ezra Lee, who cruised under-water in the Connecticut Navy's submarine machine, the *Turtle*, in '76. I'd helped Bushnell make the floating engines that he blew up the British shipping with at New London and Philadelphia. And I guessed I could make and use that kind of a Yankee notion myself.

"Gunpowder I needed—and found kegs of it stored at your shore-battery. Clockwork—you'd left behind a fine London-made chronometer when you plundered that bark up-stream, like the dead-reckoner you are. An auger—all Chips' tools were scattered over the lower deck where they'd spilt his chest, hunting for treasure. A gun-lock—I found an old rusty pistol with half a barrel blown off, and scoured it bright with sand and canvas. Oil—caught a fat fish and tried him out. Ropes—plenty on the bark. An empty barrel—you'd left me a hundred.

"All was ready a week before you came. I'd swum all over the harbor till I knew just where to shove off from the shore for the ebb to carry me and the barrel against your bow. It floated awash and no one spied us. There was no bump as we fetched up, either, for I fended off with my legs.

"I could hear the men on deck swearing over their dice as I set to work. I'd rigged a stirrup on the barrel to keep me afloat. I screwed the auger as far as it would go into the brig's timbers to serve as an anchor for my machine. Then I slipped out of the stirrup and pulled the coil of anchor-rope over one end of the barrel and the plug out of the bung-hole. Clapping my ear to the staves, I could hear the clock-work begin to click within. Then the buoyancy-chamber filled and the barrel sank till it fetched up at the end of the rope. I'd allowed enough for the tide to carry it under the brig till it lay below the magazine in the waist. It it hadn't been for that shark—"

Bartley interrupted him with an incoherent burst of admiring oaths.

"And you stood there on deck," he marveled, "talking away, when you knew that — — thing was under your feet, ready to go off any minute!"

"I had to spin some sort of a yarn to make you set me ashore," said Griswold. "And I'd fixed the clock-work to run an hour before it would pull the trigger and snap the flint-lock. Plenty of time for me to think up some kind of a notion."