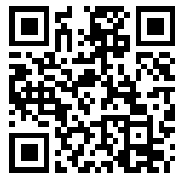

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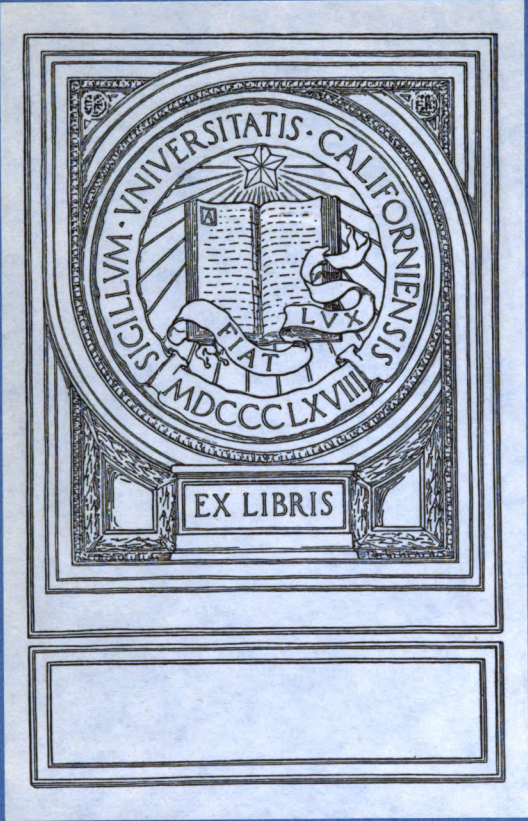
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SUTTON



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MAJOR-GENERAL F. A. SUTTON

One-Arm SUTTON

MAJOR-GENERAL
F. A. SUTTON

THE VIKING PRESS · NEW YORK

1938

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CONTENTS

Part I

I	BEYOND THE HORIZON	8
II	A MISFIELD HAND GRENADE	12
III	AN AFFINITY FOR BOMBS	22
IV	DAVID TO THE RESCUE	28
V	HAPPY TIMES IN PHILADELPHIA	34
VI	BREAKERS AHEAD	39

Part II

I	A MERCHANT PRINCE	47
II	THE YELLOW TERROR	63
III	EIGHT HUNDRED MILES TO GO	71
IV	A CUSTOM-BUILT SUIT	87
V	HOW TO CURE AN INFERIORITY COMPLEX	95

Part III

I	A SMOULDERING VOLCANO	101
II	FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS	110
III	AN OASIS IN THE DESERT	119
IV	TEN THOUSAND PAIRS OF SHOES	130
V	FACE	141

[v]

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CONTENTS

Part IV

I	MY TERRIBLE HAT	151
II	HIBERNATION	161
III	THE TRAGEDY OF BLAGOVYESHCHENSK	172
IV	ACROSS THE MANCHURIAN PLAIN	184
V	THE ARMOURER'S SONG	196

Part V

I	STOKES GUNS FOR CHINA	205
II	CHUNG-KING, CITY OF THE RATS	219
III	BOMBARDIER SUTTON	227
IV	THE WONKS OF CHUNG-KING	234
V	THE THREE ARMIES OF SZECHWAN	242
VI	THE SIEGE OF THE MINT	248
VII	MURDER UNDER THE WHITE FLAG	256
VIII	QUID PRO QUO RELIGION	264
IX	FAREWELL TO SZECHWAN	268

ILLUSTRATIONS

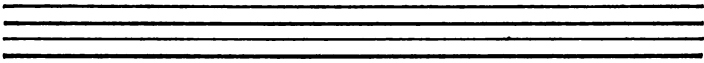
MAP OF SIBERIAN EPISODES	<i>Front end paper</i>
MAJOR-GENERAL F. A. SUTTON	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
AFTER A SNIPE-HUNT IN THE CHACO, 1901	6
MRS. SUTTON IN SOUTH AMERICA, 1918	7
ONE-ARM GOLF	56
SUTTON DEMONSTRATING THE FIRST STOKES GUN IN AMERICA, BUILT BY HIMSELF	56
THE FIRST BRITISH TANK TEST AT SANDY HOOK	56
EN ROUTE FROM VLADIVOSTOK TO Khabarovsk	57
THE SECOND STAGE: Khabarovsk to Blagovyeshchensk	57
RELOADING CARGO AT Khabarovsk: CHINESE STEVEDORES	72
BARGING UP THE AMUR	78
ANDREW	104
BLAGO: WINTER VIEW OF THE RIVER	104
AFTER AN ARTILLERY DUEL BETWEEN WHITES AND REDS, 1921	105
THE CRUSADERS, AN ORGANIZATION OF WHITES IN SIBERIA	105
THE DREDGE	120
KIRGHIZ HAWKERS	121
KIRGHIZ HOUSEHOLD AND GUESTS	121
CHINESE COURT IN HELAMPO	192

ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
TRAVEL IN CHINA: JUNK AND PALANQUIN	198
MARSHAL WU-PEI-FU	244
THE "SHU HUN," UP THE YANGTZE TO CHUNG-KING	245
MAP OF CHINESE EPISODES	<i>Rear end paper</i>

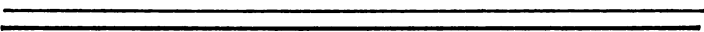
PART I

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CHAPTER I

Beyond the Horizon



I WAS born in England in 1884 of a North Lincolnshire family.

My grandfather was what is known in England as a Squarson—a Squire Parson. He owned some ten thousand acres. He preached, baptized, buried, managed his estate, and rode to hounds. He used to perform wedding ceremonies wearing his surplice over his hunting coat and top boots, while his impatient hounds gave tongue and fought outside the church.

I went to Eton and afterwards took an engineering course at University College, London, for about two years. I lived at a suburb called Acton and caught the eight-ten to Paddington every morning. The idea of becoming one of that army of season-ticket holders terrified me. Thousands of them, exactly alike: top hat, well-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

brushed clothes, umbrella to protect the topper, and goloshes to protect the boots, the *Daily Mail*, a knotted handkerchief protruding from the breast pocket, as a reminder to bring home a reel of cotton thread—and there you have him! Every morning his multiple image hurried along the station platforms, crowded into the carriages, sat unthinking and unseeing, behind steamy, smoky windows until the train disgorged him into the city.

On the nine-ten he was a professional man, lawyer, doctor, architect, engineer. On the ten-ten he was a bloated, pompous, self-satisfied man of affairs whose topper outshone all the other toppers, and who read *The Times*. He grew fatter and wheezier, until, driven to the station in a fine carriage, the most successful of him caught the eleven-ten.

This was the ultimate achievement, the splendid, shining goal toward which my companions of the eight-ten were striving. I could not share their enthusiasm, nor could I understand it. The prospect of spending a lifetime to achieve this end filled me with loathing.

The real business of life lay beyond the familiar horizon, down strange seas and across nameless, mysterious mountains. It was not enough to live safely and respectably within the limits of a stultifying tradition. I must

BEYOND THE HORIZON

strike out for myself. I reminded myself that in all likelihood I was destined to pass through this world only once, and I must waste no time finding out what it was made of, who lived in it, why it turned on its axis, and the colour of its complexion.

At twenty, I was already sub-contracting on the borders of Paraguay, constructing a line through swamps and forests, sweating, learning the way of the sons of Martha. It is a hard way and not always fair, but it is well to learn it early and to learn it well.

Right at the beginning I received an excellent piece of advice. I had come out from England in an old coal tramp. As we steamed into Buenos Aires harbour, a coal-grimed stoker came up reeking and clammy from the hold and leaned beside me on the rail, spitting rhythmically into the hiss and foam alongside. After a moment he squinted at me out of small quizzical eyes and asked me whether I had any money.

“Fifty pounds,” I said. I displayed my fortune, tied up in a leather pouch.

“Fifty quid, eh. Fifty quid! Well, young fella, throw it overboard! Give it to me, and let me throw it overboard for you. Better land broke. It’s a bad business, starting out in a strange country, an idler. Lots of young fellas start wrong. Come out here with a hundred pounds,

ONE-ARM SUTTON

white riding breeks, boots all polished up. And they go wrong from the first. Idlers! Hand me that fifty quid, young 'un, and start broke."

I suspected a possible sleight of hand by which philanthropy might become a cash asset, so I held fast to my fortune. But I am not certain, now, that his advice was not quite worth heeding.

As assistant engineer, I then helped to put a railway through uninhabited country, great fun for a youngster. Vast forests of quebracho and dense tropical growth barred the way, and it was literally a hand-to-hand fight with nature to get the tracks down and the line pushed farther and farther to the north.

Scattered through the forests were great swamps, cañadas as we called them, that held up our advance even more stubbornly than the dense timber. Our construction train would quake its way over these slimy bogs, the mud oozing and bubbling up each side of our earthbank. Mosquitoes, mosquitoes everywhere: fierce, black ones that disdained even to buzz, but drove in at you like swooping hawks, and buried their stings to the hilt.

Breeches were of little avail against them. If the knees or the seat were the least bit tight, they uncannily found the spot and struck as a boxer will do to find the weak spots in his opponent. Eventually I defeated them by



**AFTER A SNIPE-HUNT IN THE CHACO
1901**



**MRS. SUTTON IN SOUTH AMERICA
1913**

BEYOND THE HORIZON

wearing the loose bombachos and top boots used by the Argentine gauchos, a sort of glorified plus-fours, certainly the inspiration for the wonderful creations sported by the youth of today. I found these bombachos excellent for the quick tropical rains that descended in sheets; the warm sun that followed dried the loose cotton cloth in a short time, leaving no wet spots around the knee joints.

The animals suffered from the mosquitoes more than we did and often against the setting sun I have seen my horse's neck covered as with a red sheet—the blood-filled bodies of thousands and thousands of these thirsty pests.

But we had lots of fun, and I look back on those days as the happiest of my life.

Even now a good old bull-frog croaking on a swamp reminds me, not of the fierce mosquito hordes of the Chaco, but of the pleasant hours after the sun had gone down in a red glow behind the forest. Seated on a netted stoop, body tired, but mind at ease, smoke curling from my pipe, and a pint of good red wine where it rightfully belonged, dreams of a rosy future would drift before me like marionettes, each passing over the stage to make its little bow. The hoot of a locomotive still pulls my heart strings as nothing else, reminding me of rides

ONE-ARM SUTTON

home at night. We used to sit on the cow-catcher of the engine, singing hymns and ribald songs, and jumping like wildcats to grab the hand rail as some stray steer would suddenly cross the track into the beam of our headlight. Life was dear to me then, and I had no desire to finish it, squashed flat like a fly on the front of our train.

I learned Spanish from the workmen, a mongrel Spanish, perhaps, liberally endowed with potent and picturesque curses, but it served, and when, in 1909, after my marriage in England, I went to Mexico, it was my knowledge of Spanish that enabled me to become a member of Lord Cowdray's staff.

I learned a great deal from Cowdray, whose oil interests in Mexico were tremendous. The revolution of 1909 unquestionably had its roots in his association with Porfirio Diaz. Cowdray could not speak Spanish, yet he was a power in the financial and political affairs of Mexico. He sent me eventually to the south, where he was building an oil refinery, and for a year I laboured there, suffering bouts of malaria, enduring as well as I could the most damnable climate imaginable. There were only sixty or seventy white people in the place, and they lived by reason of their tenacious desire to escape. The drillers were Americans, Texans, big hard-headed

BEYOND THE HORIZON

fellows, who were fond of talking of God's country. I listened and believed. What sort of life was this for an able-bodied man? Too much of it meant surrender to the languor and defeatism which overtakes most white men in the tropics. I had, besides, a strong desire for personal liberty. I wished to work for myself and for my own account, and to face the responsibilities that such work entails. I loved adventure for its own sake. I could see no reason for building wharves that another man could build as well or for offering my body to hordes of Mexican mosquitoes bewitched by the unfamiliar blood of white men.

I left Mexico and worked my way north to New Orleans, then up the Mississippi. It was the coldest winter—of course—in thirty years. Ice coated the levees. Grey skies were reflected in the grey river. Whipping winds cut through my inadequate clothing. If this was God's country . . .

Tropical fever had thinned my blood and had deprived me of my hair. I looked like a very old and jaundiced tramp. This was a long time ago—1910, to be exact—and Englishmen were not at all popular in the Middle West. I was for ever being baited by some caustic-tongued labourer or other, who called my attention to my bald head, my clothes, or my nationality.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

I had many a good fight. My decrepit appearance concealed my strength, and I left a trail of surprised and prostrate mockers all the way from Louisiana to Michigan. Apparently they took me for a sheared Samson, and I valued the bitter, reluctant, exasperated victories wrung from my adversaries. I noticed that as my hair grew in, my baiters became more cautious. Eight years later, wearing the British uniform, I arrived in Detroit in a car decorated with the flags of the Allies, and was driven in state and with some acclaim to call on the Dodge Brothers. I enjoyed a very hearty, if inaudible, last laugh as I saluted the cheering labourers, some, perhaps, of whom may have bloodied my nose in the past. And whose noses, may I mention, I had bloodied in return. There were no hard feelings. Brothers, allies, we exchanged respectful greetings!

Beginning as a concrete shoveller, I finished as a foreman and, pocketing my savings, returned to England, where I joined my wife. Having two hands, a little money, and a new crop of hair, I again set out to conquer the world, this time in traditional fashion. The strong silent men of modern fiction, defeated by the safety devices of a cowardly and lazy civilization, go forth to build bridges in the wilderness. So did I. But not for purposes of fiction. There was a chance to make

BEYOND THE HORIZON

money in the Argentine, a great need of bridges and of men to build them. I was going well when War was declared. Here was an adventure, and a cause that suited me. I was not a soldier, any more than were the hundreds and thousands of Englishmen of my age who at once dropped everything and flocked to England from all corners of the globe. It seemed the right, the inevitable thing to do. It seemed the most satisfactory thing to do, not particularly serious and certainly not to last for long.

CHAPTER II

A Misfielded Hand Grenade

I WENT to Chatham where they fitted me into a uniform three sizes too small. The sergeant-tailor in charge eyed me, bulging as I was, and criss-crossed me with chalk marks. "We'll let out the seams, and give you a proper fit. Lift your arms! Breathe in! Breathe out! Right you are!" All he did was to rub out the chalk marks, return the tight squeeze to me, and charge me up for repairs. I began my military career ingloriously in a uniform intended for a man half my size.

They sent me first to Malta, and put me, a bridge-builder, in charge of searchlights, which were then, and still remain, a mystery to me. Malta was not the front. War seemed very remote. Life was pleasant. The polo was first rate, and everyone's boots were nicely polished. I wasn't sorry when they shipped me to Alexandria to

A MISFIELDERED HAND GRENADE

join the expedition against the Turks, for there was not adventure to be had in Malta.

The War, after all, was for most of us, professional men, bankers, builders, clerks, escape from the inevitable enslavement of a rigid and foredestined progress. It brought us together, brothers in arms, better still, brothers in freedom. I daresay there is not a man—unless he is grievously wounded and crippled—who survived the War, and is sorry for the experience. Strangely enough, many of us who were indifferent lovers of life, became, overnight, tenacious in our will to live. All the scattered forces, the blurred and uncertain ambitions, the restlessness and the questioning were erased by a common need to serve.

The reasons for service were, and I believe still are, obscure. I don't remember that there was much discussion of them in the beginning. It was only later, when the full scope of the catastrophe became clear, that we cast about for subtle or hidden meanings, reasons for sacrifice. It does not matter now, whether they were selfish, patriotic, or hysterical, cowardly or magnanimous. A trained psychologist, employing all the stuff and nonsense of his professional patter, can reduce the most exalted human behaviour to a pathological dung-heap. I am afraid of these fellows. England needs more

ONE-ARM SUTTON

Kiplings and fewer analysts. I cannot, in all honesty, recall a single instance of self-conscious patriotism among the men, although there was plenty of it higher up. The fighters were there because they were there, and that was the end of it.

At Alexandria, no one seemed to know what to do with me. I was a loose Lieutenant with no command. I did have a bag of golf clubs, and a bed roll, as it seemed likely that I would be assigned to construction work in the rear. Armed with these and full of hope, I was sent on to Cairo, where there were, I believe, over one hundred Generals collected. One of them returned me to Alexandria, to get rid of me, I daresay. The streets of Cairo were cluttered with morose, foot-loose Lieutenants, even as I. Finally I was packed on board a ship destined for Gallipoli. But first I wrapped up my bag of golf clubs in burlap, and marked them "theodolite legs," which seemed more in keeping with my profession. They gave me a detachment of thirty men, and there I was! An R.E. going to Gallipoli! This was better than Malta and a great deal better than Cairo.

Masefield has already written of the landing. We went ashore the end of April and I was responsible for perhaps the only laugh the Tommies got out of the

A MISFIELDED HAND GRENADE

day. I took my golf bag ashore with me, because, after all, you never know. . . . A piece of shrapnel hit the bag, tore open the sacking, and exposed the clubs. The fellows under the cliff cheered the ruddy toff who went to war with his golf clubs. I got them to the beach, however, and put them in a safe place.

Four- and five-inch shells were coming over at regular intervals, falling among the landing parties—a tangle of mules, horses, men, army transport carts, and duffle—doing small damage on the landing beach, but making everyone nervous. It was jumpy work. Every five or ten minutes the havoc repeated itself: there was no cessation of fire, no let-up of the deadly monotony and regularity of the shelling.

In May I was sent up to the end of the left wing of our line where the South Wales Borderers and Gurkhas held some forward lines. I was given permission to raise a mixed company of miners from among the New Zealanders, Australians, and British troops. I had convinced General Hunter-Weston that it was possible to give the Turks a shake-up. We could perhaps shift them by mining operations. The Turk had no love for bombs and mines. He hates to be blown to bits, for a scattered Turk doesn't get to the Turkish heaven. He must arrive

ONE-ARM SUTTON

at the gates of Paradise neatly assembled, and in good anatomical order to be "persona grata." I planned some mines for his undoing.

One night out scouting by myself I was caught by the daylight and unable to get back to our lines. I found myself in an isolated shell-hole about twenty yards from the Turks' forward position and held by five Gurkhas with a machine gun. They had not been able to sap out and it was impossible to relieve the section except at night. In April this had been a flowery hill slope where birds sang undisturbed. There were no flowers now, no birds. Fifty thousand men had died to effect this obliterating transformation.

When I dropped into the shell-hole I saw at once that it would be hard to dislodge us. The machine gun was placed where it commanded a good enfilading fire and two attacks by the Turks soon after daylight failed.

A wounded Tommy crawled over the edge, after a counter-attack from our lines. He was badly hit in the leg and quite helpless. We propped him up on the fire-step, with his leg elevated, and he lay there watching the fun. He was a good gallery, save perhaps for one thing: he was over-enthusiastic. I have good reason to remember his very partisan behaviour. He wanted our side to win, wanted it in the worst way. Turks don't

A MISFIELDED HAND GRENADE

always take prisoners, and this particular Tommy couldn't run.

The Turks soon tired of firing at us. One of their shells burst on the edge of our parapet and half-buried the crew and the gun. But we remained unharmed, and out of sight. Then they started pitching hand grenades about the size of cricket balls and set with an eight- or ten-second fuse. It took them three or four seconds to get over to us, and I was able to catch them and send them back so that the grenades exploded in the Turkish trenches. This much at least I had learned at Eton: I was always a safe field.

I was bound in course of time to misfield, and I did. One of the grenades came over high and fell spluttering and fizzing into the sand at my feet. I stooped to pick it up, saw that it was too late—eight seconds is only a split fraction of infinity—and pushed it as far into the sand as I could. I knew that the men would be clear and I intended, myself, to jump back and be ready for the next one. There was a dull explosion. I felt my arm jerk as if it had been struck a blow. I was thrown back across the shell-hole, half blinded, my eyes and mouth full of sand.

The five Gurkhas, however, distrusted my ability to go on catching the deadly missiles; they scrambled out

ONE-ARM SUTTON

of the hole, dropping everything in their mad flight. They preferred No Man's Land to my uncertain fielding. Only the Tommy remained, grinning a funny, stretched grin of sympathy and excitement and, for all I know, despair. It didn't look any too hopeful for either of us. My right hand was blown off at the wrist, but I had had no time to notice it. A big Turk, a regular whale of a Turk, tall as I am, and as broad, with clenched teeth and fierce eyebrows—jumped into the hole and came across at me with a fixed bayonet. I tried to get my revolver out of its holster, but couldn't, and for the life of me didn't know why. I was on my feet again, watching the Turk and the bayonet, stepping very carefully, spitting out sand, and trying to see.

He drove at my stomach. I got it in the leg by turning the point down. Then I saw my hand, or what was left of it: a few pink sinews, like string, and a spout of red—odd, what thoughts crop up in the mind at such a moment. I remembered in a flash what old Jimmy Braid had said to me one day: "Laddie, ye'd make a braw guid golfer, if ye did na' use your right hand so muckle!"

I remembered this, clear and sure, even as I closed with my Turk. We had a rough-and-tumble all over the floor of the hole, with ringside advice from the wounded

A MISFIELDERED HAND GRENADE

Tommy. It was against the rules of boxing, but perhaps justifiable. His turn was next!

This was a full-sized, two-hundred-pound Turk. I got him down; then he had me by the throat. He had fierce, sinewy, purposeful hands. I can feel his fingers on my wind-pipe, to this day and hour, pressing in and in, pressing the blessed air and life out of me.

Then it was that the Tommy took a hand. Reaching down, he picked up a big rock and heaved it at the Turk. It hit me! Half-strangled already, this blow nearly did for me, and the Turk got the top position. I groped about on the ground with my left hand, thinking to retrieve the rock, and touched instead the sharp curved knife of a Gurkha, abandoned there, and now a very useful and unexpected weapon. I had already bitten off my Turk's ear, without disturbing him at all, and now with my last strength I stuck the knife into his throat. He roared. I could smell his hot breath, reeking, suffocating. His blood spilled over me. I had him. Slowly—I will never forget how slowly—he relaxed. His fingers fell away from my wind-pipe, one by one. He jerked his head up and down to escape the insinuating blade, striking it deeper and deeper. Then very quietly, with a certain dignity and leisure, he rolled off me, and lay on his back in the sand.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

The Tommy set up a cheer.

I believe he thought he had helped me. At any rate, he fixed a tourniquet on my arm. He was grinning.

“Right ’and—too bad!” Yes, too bad. I was destined to miss that hand in years to come, but never as I missed it then, when I saw it reduced to a few useless threads. There was comfort in the thought that wounded and single-handed I had disposed of a fully armed Turk in ten minutes.

The future was not so gloomy after all. I promised myself that no man should ever hear me complain of my loss, and that I would learn to shoot with my left, that I would play golf with it, and that I could be instructed to sign my name. After all, I was alive. And not so much could be said for the Turk. His ear tasted acrid and bitter. I spat it out.

We stayed in the hole all day, not for any particularly heroic reason; it was the safest thing to do. I put the machine gun back in place and made good use of it. After dark, we covered the two hundred yards to our line and, since the Tommy was not a walking case, we went slowly.

As for me, I could not face the surgeons just then. It seemed easier for me to go down to the beach, and to sit where the waves could break over me. I was dirty,

A MISFIELDED HAND GRENADE

mud- and blood-stained, half asleep, groggy with just beginning pain. I remember that I slept in the sand. In the morning they took me to the dressing station. There weren't any anæsthetics, so one fellow sat on my head, while two more sat on my feet, and the doctor took off the rest of my wrist. Then he bandaged me up, and sent me aboard the hospital ship. But first I went back for the golf clubs hidden under the cliff. They were good clubs, and I was going home.

This is how I came to lose my right arm, and why, ever since, I have been called "One-Arm Sutton."

CHAPTER III

An Affinity for Bombs

I SPENT ten days or so in the hospital at Alexandria, but I was a walking case and was soon shipped off in a hospital ship to England.

Perhaps for having saved my own life in a hand-to-hand fight with a Turk, the King then awarded me the Military Cross. There was quite a batch of us in the ante-room waiting to be decorated in our turn, and I had just started a good cigar when my name was called. Pinching the end of my cigar to extinguish it, I hurriedly pushed it in my pocket, intending to finish it afterwards. We lined up and, as luck would have it, I was at the end of the line. Very soon I was unpleasantly aware of the fact that my cigar was still burning. Smoke curled out of my pocket, drifted up in thick blue eddies, and hung about my head like a halo. When the King

AN AFFINITY FOR BOMBS

approached me, I was unquestionably on fire. He bestowed the Cross, however, with his quiet dignity. With a twinkle in his eye he inquired the reason of the smoke barrage, and had a good laugh when he found out the cause.

Having an affinity for bombs, I was assigned to the Inventions Department of the Ministry of Munitions. There for two years my life was made wretched by crazy-eyed inventors who came to me with the most astonishing schemes for killing the Boche and ending the War. It was enough to provoke a philosophic bitterness in a most debauched and persistent optimist. Red tape littered the very halls of the Ministry. In its strangling coils the brisk and fierce-browed Colonels and Majors tripped and stumbled and tangled themselves. A war was going on in Europe: it was not the Boer War, nor was it the campaign in Egypt, nor was it the Indian Mutiny. It was a modern war calling for speed, imagination, ruthlessness, decision. Red tape had no place in it. Endlessly, tragically, ridiculously it unrolled until the obsolete veterans were all but strangled by rules and regulations. The old fellows worked. They were fanatical in their devotion, their zeal, their patriotism. But the younger men, those of us who had seen service and who realized the need for action,

ONE-ARM SUTTON

suffered a most paralysing disgust and humiliation.

I remember very well how my own time was wasted and my patience tried. But there were plenty of laughs. One earnest gentleman approached me, with all the customary tip-toeing and whispering. He had, he assured me, an idea that would astonish me. It did! Glancing furtively about my office to make certain that no spies lurked under the furniture, he whispered:

“I have thought of a way to get through the barbed-wire entanglements. Or, rather, to get over them! Shoot a roll of carpet across the wires with a trench-mortar. The men can then prance over it without a scratch.”

Another inventor brought elaborate plans and blueprints for a rifle with a curved barrel which would shoot around traverses! Dutifully, the fierce-browed Colonels and Majors passed these specifications from left to right across their desks. I felt like Alice-in-Wonderland. These people were all so serious, so deadly in earnest.

One chap evolved what I would term a musical bomb, set with a wireless fuse. For four or five days the enemy front lines were to be shelled with these apparent duds. They would fall, but they would not explode. The innocent Boche would inevitably use them as arm-chairs, porch ornaments, footstools, and paper-weights. At the moment of a general offensive, when the enemy had

AN AFFINITY FOR BOMBS

crowded into the shelled trenches, the inventor himself, perched like an infernal Pan upon a hilltop behind our lines, would blow upon a pipe. The dud shells along the German lines, tickled and mysteriously attuned to this shrill note, would then explode together in one great blast, blowing the enemy to bits, and enabling his forward trenches to be carried with small loss.

This was a most modern interpretation of warfare. It smacked of cubist art, and the hellish dissonances of futuristic symphonies. It was a purely literary conception. I was forced to remind the inventor that we were not producing a film. Neither had we caught up with H. G. Wells and Jules Verne. We must wait until the next war, when he might destroy cities by blowing on a penny whistle, or raze whole counties with tissue paper and a fine-tooth comb. His infernal harmonies were too much for my nerves.

I preferred the little fellow who actually produced a bouncing shell that first buried itself in the earth, and then, bouncing back again, exploded in mid-air. This was a tangible if impractical offering, and I tried it on the proving grounds. It bounced indeed, but it bounced the wrong way, and bit the hand that fed it, reducing the number of inventors by one.

Then there was the fat and prosperous publican who

ONE-ARM SUTTON

had spent his life doling out ale and beer in his cosy tap-room in the suburbs. His gun had a large pear-shaped explosion chamber filled from cylinders charged with hydrogen and acetylene gas, and measured out for my better understanding in pints and quarts!

This wonderful gun had twelve barrels with a small bomb in each barrel. When fired by a spark plug or magneto, the twelve bombs flew out all at once, like a covey of partridges! It was not bad, but it was too heavy to transport.

I was walking down the passage toward my office one day when I was amazed to meet a small, whiskered gentleman, wearing a top hat and a frock-coat and carrying across his shoulder an enormous cross-bow. Thinking he was a lunatic—I could no longer be certain who was sane and who was not—I stopped him.

“I am a serious inventor, sir,” he assured me. “I am a clerk in Gamage’s, the children’s toy shop. I have invented this cross-bow for throwing hand grenades!!”

Excited, thrilled, ardent, he displayed the primitive weapon. He was very old, and his thin, blue-veined hands shook with excitement.

“How much do you want for it?” I asked.

“Four pound ten; or four pound fifteen, varnished.”

I gave him a fiver.

AN AFFINITY FOR BOMBS

I found later from experiments that the thing could actually shoot grenades over two hundred yards! I hadn't the face to go to France with a cross-bow on my shoulder, so I took it over in sections concealed in my bed roll, set it up again, and had considerable success with it. When used at night the Hun thought he was being raided.

CHAPTER IV

David to the Rescue

I WAS perhaps the most thoroughly hated man in France. I tested guns over there, and my trench-mortars, used on the Boche, drew his fire. The boys along the line had to bear the brunt of retaliation. I was usually well away by this time, stirring up new hornets' nests. I had a special pass for this work and came and went as I pretty well pleased. It was better than the Inventions Department, although things improved greatly there when Lloyd George came in as Minister of Munitions. He brought new life to a half-dead office. His wonderful energy electrified others. He could seemingly ignite a corpse. His humour, his sanity, his great skill in circumventing tradition, cutting red tape, and getting down to cases saved the department from complete stultification. He was impatient, snappy, and I have never encountered a more inclusive consciousness:

DAVID TO THE RESCUE

he was aware of minor details, but his decisions, his policies were universal.

I well remember one incident that happened while he held this office.

There had been serious trouble in Glasgow, due to some mistaken policy or other. Lloyd George was undoubtedly at fault. The employers resented the stand he had taken, and sent a delegation to protest. I happened to be in the outer office when they arrived, eight or ten of them, dour, long-faced, obdurate business men, typically Scotch. They had been hit, it seemed, in their weak spot. Lloyd George had deprived them of a pound or two. They were ready for him. They were angry and rebellious, and spitting fire.

I had to smile to myself, knowing as I did how neatly, and with what guileless charm, David Lloyd George always disarmed his enemies.

He kept them waiting until their sour faces were flushed with rage. When at last he received them, he was seated at the end of a long table, smiling like a Cheshire cat, genial, unruffled.

He jumped to his feet and came forward to meet the delegation with his light, quick, young step. His memory for names and faces has always been extraordinary.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

Now he greeted each in turn, giving a sharp, warm handclasp of welcome.

“How do you do, Mr. McTavish!

“How do you do, Mr. McDougall!

“Well, Angus! How are you?

“I am delighted to see you. Sit down, gentlemen, sit down! Let’s clear up this little misunderstanding. Everybody makes mistakes. . . . Let’s look forward. Never back! For the country’s sake, we must let by-gones be by-gones. We must understand each other. We must work together. Sit down, gentlemen!”

So, with neatness and dispatch he took from them their only weapon and defeated them. They collapsed like pricked balloons.

In ten minutes the delegation filed out of the inner office, flattered, delighted, charmed by his affable manners, impressed by the lightning quickness of his mind. They were willing to fight for him and ready to subscribe to the very policies against which they had come to protest.

During my two years in the War Office, David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill impressed me as the most alert and fearless men then available to the country. They had none of the indecision and the fear of consequences that so afflicted the older generation.

DAVID TO THE RESCUE

Churchill and the quick-witted Welshman could sidestep and evade the traditional impedimenta of the barking Generals and empurpled Majors. This old obstinate military regime, in spite of their sincere patriotism, was undoubtedly Germany's greatest asset during the War, and probably explains the strict orders given to the Zeppelin commanders to steer clear of Whitehall.

The Zeppelins were not successful in their raids over England, although Germany's investment in them was justified by their scouting work for the navy. The Fokker raids were much worse, deadly, terrifying to the population. There is something particularly ruthless and threatening about a plane, whereas the Zeppelins were like great harmless fish, beautiful to look at.

I was privileged to witness the destruction of one of these silver monsters over London, when I was still in Millbank Hospital. It was one of the most spectacular battles ever fought in the air, the first successful night attack by a plane against a Zeppelin. I saw the beginning and I was in at the death.

We were wakened in the hospital about midnight by dull detonations coming closer at one-minute intervals from the south of London. There was no mistaking the sound; aerial bombs were falling in the suburbs. We scrambled out on the roof to watch. Lights out, of

ONE-ARM SUTTON

course, and a strange tension in the streets. Everyone who could was staring up at the sky where a myriad searchlights climbed and sought and concentrated upon a silver cigar that floated high in the sky toward us. It came serenely, smoothly. All around it, anti-aircraft shells burst with a brief blinding flash. Beneath it, at minute intervals, the dazzle and detonation of its own bombs. The noise was terrific, but the great Zeppelin seemed to be remote, beyond reach, indifferent to the ripping stabs of restless light, the soaring shells, the shreds and tatters of shrapnel. It floated directly over our heads, and dropped one of its eggs in the hospital yards, breaking all the front windows, and scaring the patients who were helpless in the wards. It must have been a nervous business lying there in the dark, waiting for a shell to come through the roof. Topside, it was not so bad. As a matter of fact, I was too interested, too impressed by the sheer beauty of the spectacle, to be afraid.

Suddenly the searchlights were switched off and the tornado of gun fire ceased. I have never heard so complete a silence. London held its breath and watched.

High up in the sky we saw a little red light like the tail light of a motor car: an aeroplane pilot's signal to cease fire and to give him his chance. The great Zep-

DAVID TO THE RESCUE

pelin, no longer silvery, showed like a shadow upon the smoky darkness of the sky. Two minutes. Then, as if a giant up there had struck a match to light his cigar, the first incendiary bullet hit the dirigible in front. A ribbon of fire ran the whole length of the envelope, swifter than the eye could follow. Then, all at once, she burst into flames and people eight or ten miles away could see to read newspapers in the glare.

The great burning ship tilted first one way, then the other, and a wild roar of cheering swept over the city from the East End to the West End. Everyone rushed into the streets. It was pandemonium.

She fell in a field in the suburbs of London. I crashed the hospital gates, eluded the sky-gazing guard, jumped into a taxi, and drove ten or twelve miles to the scene of the wreck. The red-hot framework, twisted, charred, spread over an acre of ground. The crew, of course, had perished.

CHAPTER V

Happy Times in Philadelphia

IN 1917 it was obvious that America was about to come in. I was anxious to go over there. I had several inventions of my own—trench-mortar improvements—on which I had spent large sums of money at a dead loss. An inventor is without honour in his own country. I thought it probable that I might interest the Americans in these guns of mine. They were good guns, and I wanted to see them used against the Boche.

I got over finally, as a representative of one of the biggest English armament firms, and for a year and a half superintended the manufacture of trench-mortars for the American government, with headquarters in Philadelphia. Here I made some of the best friends of my life. I got along well with the Americans. I liked them, and they apparently liked me. They nicknamed

HAPPY TIMES IN PHILADELPHIA

me "Sunny." There was no excuse to be anything else. The War was coming along nicely, my guns were overseas, and I was the recipient of the most genuine, heartfelt hospitality everywhere.

The more I saw of America's vast preparations the more I was convinced that the War was about over. Perhaps for the first time it occurred to me that I could not go on for ever making guns and speeches. I could not go on for ever wearing a uniform. Demobilization was inevitable, and with it the need to reassemble the scattered forces, to go back to the sober business of making a living. I was not ready to join the army of season-ticketers on the eight-ten, or even the nine-ten. They had won the right to discard their toppers for the post-War informality of felt hats, but they were fundamentally the same: they were destined to go on charging at life with an umbrella. It wouldn't do. I had no desire to be tied to an organized society. I could at best play only a perfunctory part in that particular drama. I care nothing for form for form's sake; make haphazard friendships for reasons, not always understandable to others, of my own; and insist upon freedom for myself. This is a purely personal need of detachment, if not of isolation. I do not offer myself as a model of behaviour; there is nothing mysterious or diabolic in

ONE-ARM SUTTON

such an attitude; it simply offers me the sort of life I am equipped to lead and in which I find myself comfortably adjusted. The eight-ten to London would destroy me.

In Philadelphia, in 1918, I met an English artillery officer who had recently received letters from a friend, a placer-miner, who was working two thousand miles inland in Siberia, and had found considerable gold. These letters aroused in me the most lively interest and convinced me that a big fortune awaited the man who had the courage to take modern dredges over there. I therefore sent money to an experienced dredge man I knew in Alaska and instructed him to scout for me over the same territory. He was to report to me as soon as he had definite findings.

I returned to England three weeks before the Armistice. It was good to be there in time to share the frantic happiness of those first few days of peace. I hurried to my headquarters, and discovered, to my intense disappointment, that I was the four hundred and ninety-fifth in the list for discharge. This looked hopeless. This looked like a long wait for the business of life.

A little red-haired vixen kept the records. I took her aside.

“See here,” I said, “I’ll give you the best hat in Lon-

HAPPY TIMES IN PHILADELPHIA

don if you will make a mistake and put me among the first twenty on the list.”

“A Bond Street hat?” she asked.

“A Bond Street or Whitechapel, it’s all the same to me. Only get me among the lucky first twenty.”

She did. And she sent me a bill for an eight-guinea hat, a Bond Street hat, a pretty one, I’ll wager. She was a pretty girl.

This was not much of a price to pay for a stenographic error, and in three days I was out, wearing a bowler hat and spats and carrying a cane.

The War was over. The inevitable reaction had set in. Most of the officers then being demobilized spent their share of the special War bonus recklessly. It was hard to be serious. It was particularly hard to buckle down to facts. We had spent four years face to face with an uncompromising reality. It was the opinion of the average man that Germany would be forced to pay the bills. To the victors belonged the spoils!

The very air seemed charged with recklessness. Everyone shrugged off care and restraint. It was impossible to get people to discuss the future soberly. It was easier to dance and sing, to spend money, and to postpone responsibility.

Night clubs sprang up all over London and here

ONE-ARM SUTTON

the demobilized officers sought amusement and forgetfulness. Jazz music, the savage tom-tom of a primitive race, drowned out the receding hymns of victory. The armies vanished down the corridors of Time. The War was over!

I had my own particular problem. I was minus my right hand. While I had a general knowledge of civil and mechanical engineering, and could build a bridge or a railway at a pinch, I realized that there was no place in England, Europe, or America for a Jack of all trades who was a master of none. It was true that I was a bit of a specialist in explosives and the manufacturing of guns and bombs; but bomb-making was at a discount. I would have done better as a piano-player or a trombonist.

CHAPTER VI
Breakers Ahead

LIFE looked dark. Already the scramble for jobs had begun. Many of my best friends, who before the War had been prosperous business men, well established, were now reduced to hunting for any work at all. Lots of them were shell-shocked, shot to pieces, nervously unfit for hard physical labour, or for confining office work. The tragedy of the readjustment caught them. It was worse than the trenches, for it was a battle minus the pageantry and excitement of ordered warfare, a battle of necessity fought alone, without the sustaining urge of patriotism, that abstract duty which must be performed for the common good, and in which man loses himself and knows both exaltation and peace.

Well, here I was. A citizen with a walking-stick. Bridge-builder or merchant, adventurer or tramp—

ONE-ARM SUTTON

time would tell. I was as absorbed in my own problem as I had for four years been absorbed in England's. Strange what quick work peace makes of armies, scattering them overnight into millions of individuals each tenacious in his will to live and to conquer! There were both obliteration and renewal: a painful sense of autonomy, of unfamiliar, creaky selfhood. We had to learn to walk and talk all over again.

It was not considered good form to discuss the War and for a long time we went about, rigid with repression, pretending that it had never happened. A War? Ah, yes. But it is over. Let's forget it. Some of us wanted to lie on the top of a green hill and watch the clouds go over. And some of us were seized with a great need to work with our hands. And there were others who thought of nothing but strange, far lands, new faces, new songs, new dreams. Peace came as a sort of adolescence, a difficult time, introspective, confused.

The older people tried to restore the shattered social system. They argued that if the broken pieces were skillfully patched together, the pitcher would be as good as new. It looked very well; the cracks didn't show. But it wouldn't hold water; it leaked. England, like the rest of the world, was faced with the necessity of fashioning a new system that would be strong enough to resist the com-

BREAKERS AHEAD

plex pressures of modern thought, invention, progress. The revolution was inevitable. But it was saddening. Old customs and traditions had to topple. England had to change.

I admit that so much false gaiety on the one hand, and such blind indifference on the other, depressed me. I could see the inevitable bad times ahead, and the rude awakening that was bound to come. I had enough money to settle down at home and live the quiet, uneventful life of a country gentleman: a little shooting, a little fishing, some tennis, and, for excitement, the secretaryship of a local golf club. The idea did not appeal to me.

I was delighted when I received a belated cablegram from the man I had sent to Siberia:

“Placer creeks better than reported. Great opportunity for dredging. Political situation improved. Country apparently secure under Whites.”

I decided at once to go to Siberia. This meant putting everything I had into what most people would have called a mad game of chance with all the odds against me, but anything was better than stagnation at home. I wired my scout to meet me in San Francisco, where I planned to buy machinery for a suitable gold dredge.

Before I left England, I had one good laugh. I was

ONE-ARM SUTTON

returning late from a convivial party. In the Underground, a miserable, moth-eaten little Tommy crippled by many wounds, spied my arm.

“Where’d you lose your bloomin’ fin, sir?”

“I lost it at Gallipoli, three years ago,” I explained.

“Gallipoli? I was there meself. Wounded I was, seventeen times. I’d like to show you where, sir.”

He pulled a sheet of paper out of his pocket and in the dim light of the half-empty train, spread it out for me to see. It looked like a map.

“What’s that?”

“A map, sir. Where I was wounded.”

Red crosses and stars dotted the strange traceries. I pointed.

“That’s where I landed,” I said; “the V beach, isn’t it?”

“V beach! Me ’at! That’s me armpit!”

The wonderful map I had mistaken for Gallipoli was a chart of the little fellow’s anatomy; the red gun-positions were wounds. I left England quite cheered by this encounter.

I went at once to San Francisco. My scout arrived from Siberia almost as soon as I did. He brought with him the traditional miner’s poke, greasy, thumbed,

BREAKERS AHEAD

from which he poured a handful of nuggets and gold dust on the table in my hotel bedroom.

“There’s plenty more where this came from. Gold aplenty. It only wants going after.”

It looked like a great chance. A new adventure. A new world. Perhaps a new self.

From the greasy miner’s poke there spilled a golden opportunity: the inevitable, tempting beginning of all such projects.

PART II

CHAPTER I

A Merchant Prince

I SPENT the first six months of 1919 in San Francisco, erecting and then dismantling the dredge I was to take out to Siberia for use along the northern tributaries of the Amur River.

A gold dredge of this sort is really a floating barge on which machinery is assembled. A line of buckets runs along an arm that dips with uncanny, almost human precision into the mud and gravel of the river bed, carries it thirty or forty feet aloft, and then shoots it through various screens and sluices, over riffles, ridges in which mercury amalgamates with the gold particles and separates them from the dross.

My dredge could handle and extract the gold from two thousand tons of gravel a day. I was faced, of course, with the problem of transporting three or four

ONE-ARM SUTTON

hundred tons of machinery across the Pacific to Japan, thence to Vladivostok, whence it would have to go, by railway and barge, some two thousand miles into the heart of Siberia. The boiler alone weighed eighteen tons, and there were other parts that weighed as much as seven tons. I did not anticipate trouble, and it was my intention to build the hull in Siberia of Siberian timber.

Unfortunately, I was bitten by the idea of becoming a merchant prince. My scout informed me that there was a shortage of goods in Russia: goods of all sorts. He made me believe—or perhaps I convinced myself—that a fortune awaited the far-sighted trader who had the courage to take a cargo into Russia while conditions were still unsettled.

“Don’t wait for reconstruction,” he said, “do it now. Take nails, shoes, cloth, clothes-pins—anything!”

I told myself that there was gold in them thar hills and roubles in the Russkies’ pockets. I’d go after them.

I invested everything I had, then, in a proper cargo, nearly a thousand tons of merchandise! For one thing, I bought ten thousand pairs of shoes: a hundred cases of women’s shoes and a hundred cases of men’s shoes of all sizes! This gave me quite a bit of anxiety. What sort of shoes would appeal to the young women of Russia? I spent hours with the wholesalers, wrangling

A MERCHANT PRINCE

over styles and lasts, heels and buckles. Were Russian feet large or small? Did Russian men prefer russet to black leather, and would the Revolutionist wear patent-kid shoes with fancy perforations? No one knew; I least of all. I breathed a sigh of relief when the cases were finally made ready for shipment.

I then purchased fifteen thousand barrels of assorted nails, since my scout assured me that nearly all Russian houses were built of wood, and that there was a shortage of nails. I confess the responsibility of disposing of seven hundred tons of them in a strange country staggered me when I thought of it.

A sympathetic friend in San Francisco, alarmed by my depression, induced me to buy fifty tons of horse-shoes for luck. He did not know—nor did I—that Siberian horses are seldom shod. I found that out much later. The shoes and the necessary nails were packed for shipment with the rest of my cargo and put aboard the *Venezuela*.

I took a good stock of clothes: enough to last for several years. I was going into a very cold country, where the thermometer drops to fifty below zero for weeks at a time.

My friend said: "You'll need plenty of flannels, wool stockings, heavy coats, mufflers, fur-lined gloves. And be

ONE-ARM SUTTON

sure to supply yourself with shirts: you can't buy them in Siberia."

For a merchant-gold-dredger I was fairly magnificent. But you never can tell. A turn of fortune might make a millionaire of me, a Monte Cristo of the Steppes. It was well to be prepared for emergencies. An Englishman is never so uncomfortable, so out of tune with himself, as when he wears foreign-made clothes. They make him feel scratchy, ill-at-ease, and over-size. Next to a decent hat there is nothing more peaceful than a properly cut coat, not too new. I regarded my luggage with a great deal of satisfaction, knowing that it contained enough equipment to carry me for two years at least.

I sailed the end of June for Kobe. The old *Venezuela* was taking a crowd of tourists to Japan and China. They were headed for the bars and dance halls of Shanghai; the race-courses, the gambling joints, the cosmopolitan drawing-rooms and resorts of that diverse and exciting city. They were a light-hearted, pleasure-seeking crowd, without responsibilities.

Yet, I was the most carefree passenger aboard. I was going to a new country. I was headed for adventure, for trouble, perhaps for success. One-armed, yes! But I had always felt that I could lick the world with one hand. It seemed to me that my entire strength and will to

A MERCHANT PRINCE

conquer flowed into my left arm and concentrated there.

We arrived in Kobe the end of July and landed the cargo. The little Jap stevedores gave it rough treatment. Then I had a long wrangle with the Japanese ship-owners before I could arrange for a small steamer to take my stuff over to Vladivostok, seven days away.

At last I was charterer of a ship! I inflated my chest with a brand-new sense of importance, swaggered a bit, feeling sorry for the futile pleasure-seekers who had gone to China aboard the *Venezuela*. I was really living. Life tasted good: it had the bitter-sweet flavour of responsibility and risk combined with freedom.

The journey reduced my inflated spirits, however. None of the crew spoke English. The food was terrible. The steamer was wooden-built, and leaked. We hit a typhoon. In the hold of that ungodly tub my precious cargo rolled and crashed from end to end, and back again. Badly stevedored at Kobe and already weakened, the typhoon put an end to it; many of the barrels split open and there were two feet of assorted nails in the bottom of the ship.

We arrived at Vladivostok feeling the worse for wear. The whole country, as far as the Urals, was under the White regime—or rather, the Pink regime. Like the deceptive radish, Siberia was both red and white and

ONE-ARM SUTTON

when bitten into had a peppery taste. Yet conditions, outwardly, were fairly good. Kolchak's success seemed assured and the Allies gave promise of sympathy and support.

We anchored in the harbour, and I went ashore to arrange for unloading. My first problem was to find someone who could speak English. There were about a thousand American troops in the town and one British regiment was stationed there. The streets were full of doughboys and Tommies, but they couldn't help me, since they knew incredibly little about conditions in Russia. They had warm barracks and a certain amount of amusement. I doubt whether any of them gave a second thought to the great battle even then in progress. Siberia was engaged in a death struggle with an obsolete idea. Kolchak advanced with the blessing of the Council of Four, yet his purpose was to establish only another autocracy. Omsk and all it stood for was still to come. In Vladivostok, as elsewhere, there was a sense of false security, of standing on the edge of a crater about to erupt. I got no help from the soldiers.

I was wandering along the waterfront, forlorn and disconsolate, looking for someone who could advise me how to get my cargo ashore, when I heard a stevedore cursing fluently in Spanish. He was supervising a gang

A MERCHANT PRINCE

of roustabouts who obeyed him with alacrity in spite of the fact that they could not understand his curses. I could. I hailed him in Spanish with delight:

“Hey-you, big boy, habla Vd. español?”

“Segura, señor, bastante bien.”

He proved to be a Russian who had spent twelve years driving a locomotive in the Argentine. He knew the lingo well. He had no English and only a few words of Chinese, but I engaged him, because I could make him understand that I had a cargo out there in the harbour and that it had to come ashore. My Spanish was exceedingly rusty, but it served. We went off, arm in arm, compañeros, brothers, chattering bastard Spanish and grinning from ear to ear.

“First of all,” I said, “we must have sacks and plenty of them.”

“Kharasho, está bien,” said my stevedore, or words to that effect.

He was irresistible when he translated my bad Spanish into a sketchy interpretation of what he thought I had said, and then turned the whole mess into Russian. The result must have been terrifying. But he got the sacks, and I paid for them.

Then the business of unloading began in earnest. A nightmare. A fantastic dream of confusion and cupid-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

ity. The stevedores fell upon the nails like vampires. They stuffed some of them into the sacks, it is true, but their chief concern was to steal as many as possible. To this end they secreted nails on their persons, concealing them inside their shirts, their trousers, their shoes, their hats, even their mouths. Take a stevedore by the seat of his pants, turn him upside down, and you could shake out five or six pounds of good American nails! It was a scandal and an outrage.

My talented foreman, whose name, by the way, was Aleck, snickered at this wholesale duplicity.

“Nichevo, son todos ladrones, y bandidos,” he said.

The dredge parts came next. We got the boiler off successfully (none of the roustabouts having taken a fancy to it), but the heavy upper tumbler of the bucket-line fell overboard into forty feet of muddy water and sank out of sight, I thought for good. This indeed was a catastrophe. It meant a year's delay at least, and my capital was not that elastic. Nor was my patience. I grow easily weary of waiting and waiting, and also I grow very weary of loneliness. Vladivostok was a lonely place for a restless man.

“I'll have to find a diver,” I said to Aleck.

“Bueno, muy bueno,” he said. He was a powerful

A MERCHANT PRINCE

optimist. He actually believed he could produce a diver for me in half an hour. He went off, swinging his great arms, whistling, with his visored cap very much over one eye and his blue chin thrust aggressively forward.

The harbour authorities were apologetic. The last and only diver in Vladivostok had been executed, shot by mistake, they could not recall just why. They could let me have his suit, but by no miracle could they supply me with a living diver. Now I had been down several times to inspect pier-heads in the Argentine, and with no more serious results than an ear-ache and a dizzy sensation. I decided to take a chance.

Two Russkies worked a hand pump and I descended into Vladivostok harbour, searching the muddy water for my precious tumbler. The fellows up above were over-zealous and, since with one hand I could not easily manage the stop-valve, they over-inflated me and very nearly blew me asunder. I signalled, and they hauled me to the surface bleeding profusely from the nose and ears. Twice more I descended, and the third time got a line around the tumbler by sheer force of desperation. I was more than half dead. Hereafter I shall leave diving to professional divers. Aside from the salvaged tumbler I got nothing from this experience save a well-developed

ONE-ARM SUTTON

case of claustrophobia. To this day I cannot bear small, close rooms or head coverings or upper berths in Pullman cars.

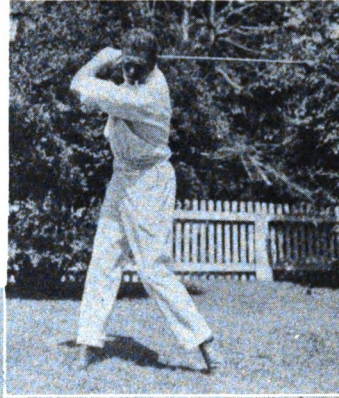
We finally got everything ashore, although I slept on the lighters four or five nights in succession, playing watchdog. It was horrible. The town was full of thieves; most of them worked for me. Aleck was a regular tiger; he knew how to deal with them, verbally and fistically. He was a rather fierce-looking fellow, really. His face was badly scarred, criss-crossed by raw, ugly sabre cuts like the face of a Heidelberg student. He told me that he had been in a fight in Khabarovsk a year before, and as a result he had no love for the Cossacks. It happened this way:

He was sitting at dinner with three Cossack officers, conceited, handsome, reckless, impudent fellows, and he fell into an argument. Aleck was always full of good spirits and energy, but when angered he was a dangerous adversary.

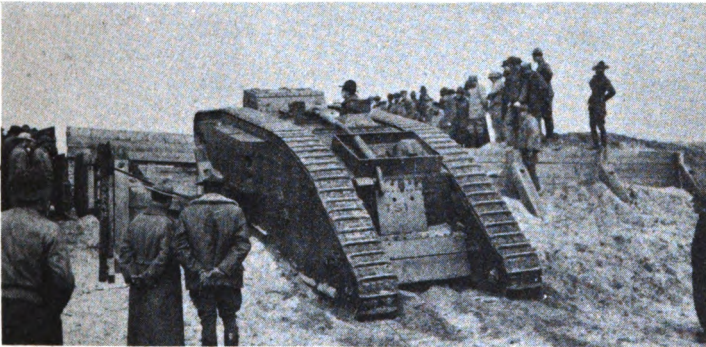
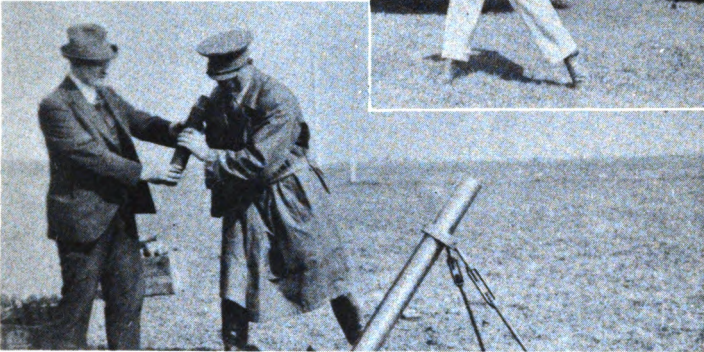
“You Cossacks can go to the devil, i, di, khortoo!” he said to them, throwing his revolver down on the table. “Put up your swords and fight me with your fists. I’ll take on all three of you.”

Instead they snatched away his revolver and attacked him with their sabres, laughing and hacking at his face.

ONE-ARM GOLF



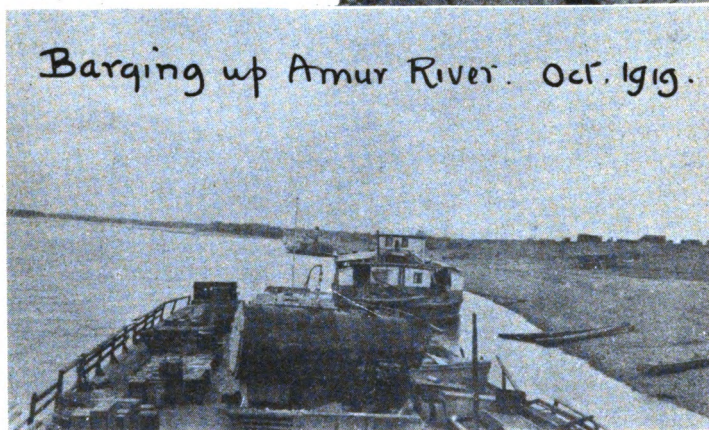
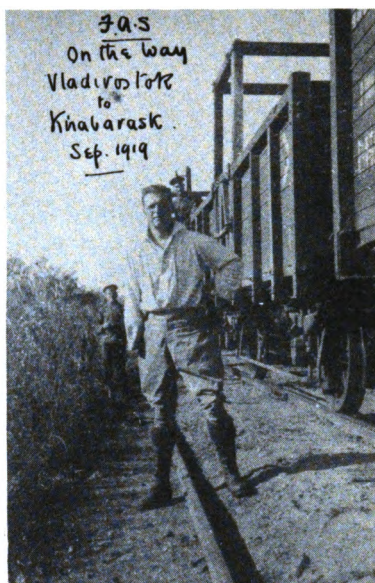
**SUTTON DEMONSTRATING THE
FIRST STOKES GUN IN AMER-
ICA, BUILT BY HIMSELF**



THE FIRST BRITISH TANK TEST AT SANDY HOOK

AMERICA, 1917

EN ROUTE FROM VLADI-
VOSTOK TO KHABAROVSK



THE SECOND STAGE: KHABAROVSK TO BLAGOVYESHCHENSK

A MERCHANT PRINCE

He tried to seize their swords and they cut his fingers to the bone. He was drenched with blood and half blinded. When at last he fell, with the face of a corpse, on the floor at their feet, they lifted him and carried him outside and threw him into an empty lot for dead, pitching him headlong over a high fence. Two or three months in the hospital did not cure his hatred for all Cossacks.

We were now faced with a seven-hundred-mile journey, north to Khabarovsk. We needed two full Russian trains in order to move the cargo, since the engines then in use were very poor and could haul only twenty loaded cars.

“Go to Authority,” Aleck advised.

“Is there any?”

Aleck shrugged. But he guided me to Authority in the person of the Governor, a big Russian with a grey moustache, whose face was vaguely familiar. It turned out that he had had a racing stable at Newmarket and that as a youngster I had often visited there. Having been military attaché to the Russian Embassy in London, he spoke English. When I explained my business, he told me politely that the government could not possibly spare forty cars. All the rolling stock was in use for the troops that were repulsing the vicious attacks of bands of Bolsheviks, who swooped down on the railway

ONE-ARM SUTTON

from their nests in the hills. This was a cheerful bit of news!

It looked like ruin for me, since I was playing against time. If I failed to get my dredge and goods to their destination before the Amur froze, sealing the waterways, a year would be lost.

I thought the game was up, when the Governor happened to remark that he was very poorly paid—his princely salary in roubles being equivalent to fifty dollars a month. He was trying to build a new house for his family on this miserable pittance. Suddenly I saw a way to his heart.

Excusing myself, I returned to the harbour and instructed Aleck to send ten barrels of nails to the Governor as a gift. By way of indirect compensation I then distributed baksheesh liberally among the members of his staff. When I again presented myself, I found that the official attitude had changed.

“I can let you have those forty cars, Captain Sutton,” the Governor said affably, waving me to a chair.

“I shall want a box car for myself as well,” I said.

“That can be arranged. And when you return to Vladivostok, Captain, I hope to have the pleasure of entertaining you in a house built entirely with American nails! Dosvedanya.”

A MERCHANT PRINCE

We got, then, two locomotives, forty trucks, and a car for ourselves. Aleck moved in with all the clucking importance and bustle of a brood hen. This filthy, odoriferous box was to be our home during the long journey to Khabarovsk. God knows to what use it had been put since the Revolution: judging from the remnants I found, it had housed both horses and refugees! Aleck scoured the interior with disinfectant, while I went off in search of an assistant and a cook, returning in triumph with an old Swedish captain, who spoke a little English, and a morose, oblique-eyed Chinaman.

I found Aleck on top of the box car. A crash up there answered my shout, and Aleck put a hole through the corrugated-iron roof. His blue-jowled face peered down at me through the opening.

“What on earth are you doing?” I demanded.

“Making a vent for the stove-pipe,” he said.

“But this car is government property,” I said. “You can’t punch holes in it to suit yourself, you idiot!”

“Can’t I?” said Aleck.

He proceeded to cut two windows for ventilation, making a very smart job of it, too! Things were soon ship-shape for the journey, even to a barricade of sandbags stacked four or five feet high around the inside of the box car.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

"We shall be sniped at, going up," Aleck explained.

So it was not to be a peaceful journey, after all! I had dreamed of swift progress across strange country, with the landscape unrolling like a strip of film, brief stops at picturesque villages, encounters with people, perhaps new friends. And here I was, barricaded as if for a running fight with a vindictive enemy.

We started loading. I had neglected to give the customs officials a squeeze, and, in retaliation, they unpacked all of the shoes, scattering them about the custom house, mixing styles and sizes hopelessly. When I came to collect my property, I found sixty pairs of shoes missing, eventually discovering them hidden under the floor boards in the inspector's office! There were many apologies and fantastic explanations, salutes, heel-clickings, eye-rolling, and bombast. I got my shoes and the customs men lost their squeeze. It was a case of misunderstanding all around.

Loading the nails proved to be a discouraging business. Happening to slip behind the box cars, I found two carts backed up on the other side, and a gang of men receiving the barrels as fast as they were loaded. They simply rolled them in one door and out the other! I explained their mistake to them in the only terms they could understand, and I do not remember ever having

A MERCHANT PRINCE

brought my fist into contact with a human jaw with more pleasure or more success. Aleck handled the men on his side and the nails were finally loaded and padlocked. I was taking no chances. Things were happening every day to prove the instability of the government and the bad temper of the people.

Just before we pulled out of Vladivostok I found myself in the middle of a serious fracas between the American troops and a street mob. The Americans, perhaps for amusement, had taught the Russkies curses and vile phrases, unspeakable words supposed to mean "Good morning," "Thank you," or "If you please." In all innocence, beaming with friendliness and pride in their linguistic accomplishment, the citizens of Vladivostok repeated these phrases like obscene parrots.

On this particular occasion a well-dressed, middle-aged Russian, a doctor perhaps, happened to jostle an American soldier. It was an accident—of this I am a witness—and the Russian, truly apologetic, lifted his hat, bowed, smiled and said distinctly, with great courtesy:

"Uzonuvovitch!"

The doughboy swung and cracked him on the jaw, a fearful blow, aimed to kill. The Russian fell. Immediately the street was filled with a screaming, fighting,

ONE-ARM SUTTON

milling mob, armed with cobblestones, sticks, revolvers, knives. The fight lasted two hours. Several people were killed. The poor, polite Russian was kicked to death, perhaps by his fellow-citizens, perhaps by the heavy boots of the infuriated doughboys.

Being a peaceful trader, I withdrew to a discreet distance, and, seeing that I could do nothing to explain the situation, or reduce the passionate fury of the fighters, I returned to my box car.

CHAPTER II

The Yellow Terror

WE left Vladivostok the end of July, jolting north at a slow pace, the box car bringing up the rear like an American caboose. Smoke and sparks trailed from the cook-stove chimney as the morose Chink prepared our meals. This was a rattling, chattering, bumping double-headed train, jolting its way along a rough bed. Bridges and large culverts were held by detachments of Japanese troops, little brown-faced, bewildered fellows subject to the waspish attacks of stray Bolshevists and bandits. Their lot was a dull one; their thoughts must have turned with longing to the cherry groves and pleasant farmlands of Japan.

Sleep aboard our train was a haphazard affair. Whenever we stopped, the rear trucks, one after the other, with a crash and clank, hit the trucks in front. Shunting

ONE-ARM SUTTON

engines puffed back and forth. I always got up and ran along both trains to count the cars and make certain that we had lost none. I had my own method of identification, and would have known had any of the cars been uncoupled during the night.

We travelled at about ten miles an hour, with many incomprehensible pauses, through a sad, brown country flanked by low hills. It was indeed a mean country, and I cannot imagine anyone having an affection for it. The villages were all of a drab sameness, even to the wooden triumphal arches erected for some forgotten royal progress that never came off. The streets were unpaved, dusty, and rutted, soon they would be knee-deep with icy mud. An occasional farmer, working in the fields; an occasional traditional blouse and visored cap, high boots and loose trousers.

Petty officials—whiskered, self-important, lazy devils—hung around the stations looking for excitement.

Our car attracted attention because of its windows and its belching chimney. Bullets peppered against the sides at night. Even in broad daylight we were annoyed by snipers taking pot-shots at us from the woods. As the dropping of water wears away a stone, so this insistent pat-pat-pat of bullets wore at our nerves. The Chink developed a temper, grew surly, disobedient; I woke

THE YELLOW TERROR

with a start one morning, wide-awake at once, with the knowledge that something was very wrong indeed.

The Chink was brandishing a big carving knife, long and bright and sharp. He had backed Aleck into a corner. Both of them were livid with rage, silent, like crouching cats on a fence. Aleck gave me a quick frantic look. He did not dare call for help lest the Chinaman put the point of the knife through his throat. His eyes flickered at me.

I crawled out of my sleeping bag, grabbed a log of wood, and hit the Chinaman a crack on the back of his head.

It was a silent rough-house. He crumpled, sighed, and went down in a sort of huddle, knees drawn up, yellow hands curled, feet toed in.

“Un hijo de un pero, señor,” Aleck said. He made a gesture under his chin, a flip of the hand, up and out.

The train was lumbering along at five miles an hour. Stepping over the Swede, who was still asleep under a tarpaulin, I dragged the limp Chinaman to the door and threw him out, pitching his box after him. After all, he would waken in a strange country, a long way from Vladivostok. . . .

“You’re a tender-hearted damned fool,” Aleck said. So there we were, cookless!

ONE-ARM SUTTON

I asked Aleck how it happened.

“He refused to build a fire, and I wanted tea. So I called him a name I know in Chinese.”

I’ll wager it was a potent name!

Both Aleck and the Swede were inveterate baiters. They liked to hang out of the box-car windows just as our train was pulling away from a station, shouting insults at the Cossacks on the platform. The futile rage of their victims afforded them a certain primitive amusement that, once at least, ended disastrously.

The Swede had picked out a swaggering big Cossack for a target. While the train stood still he did not dare let loose his choice invectives. He leaned out the window, grinning and licking his lips.

“You’d better watch out, Larsen,” I said, “those fellows are good swordsmen. Take a look at Aleck’s face and hold your tongue.”

The Swede snickered. I saw the thought that was slowly crystallizing in his mind.

“I ain’t afraid of no Goddam Russky, Captain, when this train is moving.”

He spat at the Cossack’s booted feet as the engine, snorting and heaving, jerked at the long line of heavy cars.

With a leap, a very cat-like leap, a single motion from

THE YELLOW TERROR

platform to moving window, the Cossack drew his sword and thrust it through the Swede's shoulder just above the armpit.

The Russian fell back and waved the red blade in farewell. "That for you! Durak! . . ."

I had to put the Swede off at Khabarovsk and send him home. All of the rest of the journey he was of no use to me, and made a terrific fuss over his wound. It was sharp, deep, and nasty. It cost him sleep, and, I daresay, moments of bitter reflection. I dressed the sabre thrust as well as I could while Aleck damned all Cossacks, in Spanish, Russian, Chinese, and several dialects.

So, there I was, cook, foreman, brakeman, doctor, trader, gold-dredger, stranger in a strange land!

There were days when we covered fifteen miles, others ten, and occasionally we went backwards, finding ourselves at familiar sidings where we had already spent maddening hours. It was useless to argue with the locomotive-drivers. They had panics of their own. Bolsheviks were reported ahead. Or marauding bands of armed horsemen were said to lie in wait at the next bridge, or perhaps the incessant sniping had weakened their nervous resistance. The cabs were sandbagged; yet the men had some narrow squeaks. They advised me to

ONE-ARM SUTTON

bank our cook-stove at night; the sparks called attention to the box car. I took their advice. After dark the country seemed strangely inimical; there was a threat in the unfamiliar shadows. Strangely exciting, too, the unexpected pauses; the sound of men running along the tracks, the splash and fall of water, the clank of chains and the bang and rattle of trucks, all mysterious because unfamiliar. I never knew where I was or what might happen. I enjoyed myself, nevertheless. There was something fine and free about the life. I slept well in spite of the constant vibration, as one sleeps on a steamer. And I had an appetite, a real desire for food, perhaps because I not only cooked it, but went hunting for it.

There was lots of game in that sad, brown country: pheasants and partridges and rabchick, a fine juicy bird, if split and roasted. Whenever we stopped to let a troop train by or take on fuel, I slipped off into the country and bagged our dinner.

It seemed to me that the sunlight was paler, the stars dimmer, in this land. I could comprehend now the bitterness, the futility, and the sadness of Russian literature, the haunting hopelessness of their songs. I could understand, too, why it is that there are so many students, poets, and artists among them; in such ways they escape from the sad monotony of the country. I had heard my

THE YELLOW TERROR

contemporaries speak of the literature of escape: now I realized that there was truth in the phrase. Where sunlight and beauty are a daily realization, as they are in southern countries, it is easier to dream than to do. In Siberia, beauty and sunlight are rare and elusive; the swift springs and brief summers give way to a long cold darkness. The sensitive man buries himself in work to protect himself against the apparently ineradicable commonplaces of life. And in Russia it seems to me to be more than usually commonplace. The landscape is colourless; the houses, so identical, so absolutely without imagination, are ugly; there is a ponderousness, a vastness about it that is depressing. The natural melancholy of the Russian soul finds relief in mad bouts of dancing and singing and in excesses, threats of suicide, drinking, recklessness, the ups and downs of a race that is emotionally unstable.

We arrived at Khabarovsk at the end of seventeen days, the cargo intact, but minus a Chink and a Swede. I continued to live in the box car while I made arrangements for barges and a tug to take the goods up the Amur to Blago. And again I was faced with the inexplicable red tape of petty officialdom. I required three big barges and one powerful tug. I might have been asking for the loan of the *Leviathan* or the *Carmania!*

ONE-ARM SUTTON

All the palms in Khabarovsk were dusted off and extended. I crossed them with roubles, yen, dollars, and gold, and it was no small mental feat to keep the rate of exchange in my head. It was easy to underpay one man and overpay the next. I remember giving a gang of roustabouts forty cents for twelve hours' labour. It was their own fault; they had asked for roubles and roubles happened to be cheap that day.

Canny whiskers, with an eye out for profit, always demanded gold or silver; to them I gave dollars, or else shavings from a gold-bar I carried with me. Like a plug of ripe tobacco, this bar was bitten off little by little; it vanished into the greedy maw of officialdom. I got my barges and a fussy tug and away we went up the Amur.

CHAPTER III

Eight Hundred Miles to Go

WE sailed before dawn. I remember the smoky dimness, the city fading into the brown twilight, the river opening up, cool and clean. I brought a towel on deck and told Aleck to pour some buckets of water over me. Then I dressed and had coffee in the bow, where I could listen to the ripple alongside. Cocks crowed on shore. The decks were wet and slippery. The men spoke in quiet tones as they always do before daybreak. I thought: "This is marvellous. Life is marvellous." And I looked at the string of barges swinging behind me up the river and reflected that I was indeed a trader. I felt pride and excitement and lively anticipation.

The river broadened as we advanced, and the shore for a time was lost in mist. Then it narrowed again, and the old, familiar wooden villages reappeared, twenty or thirty miles apart.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

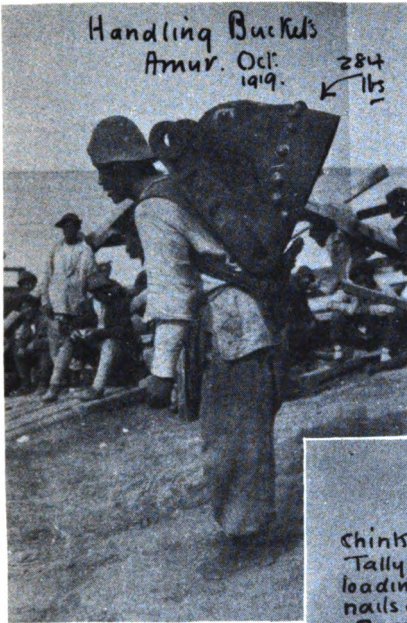
On the one hand, to the north, was Russia ; a rolling plain against a backdrop of wooded mountains. To the south lay China, Marco Polo's land, dark, frowning, uncultivated, sparsely populated.

The settlers on the Russian side were mostly descendants of Cossack soldiers who had served their time under the Tsar and had been given land grants along the banks of the Amur.

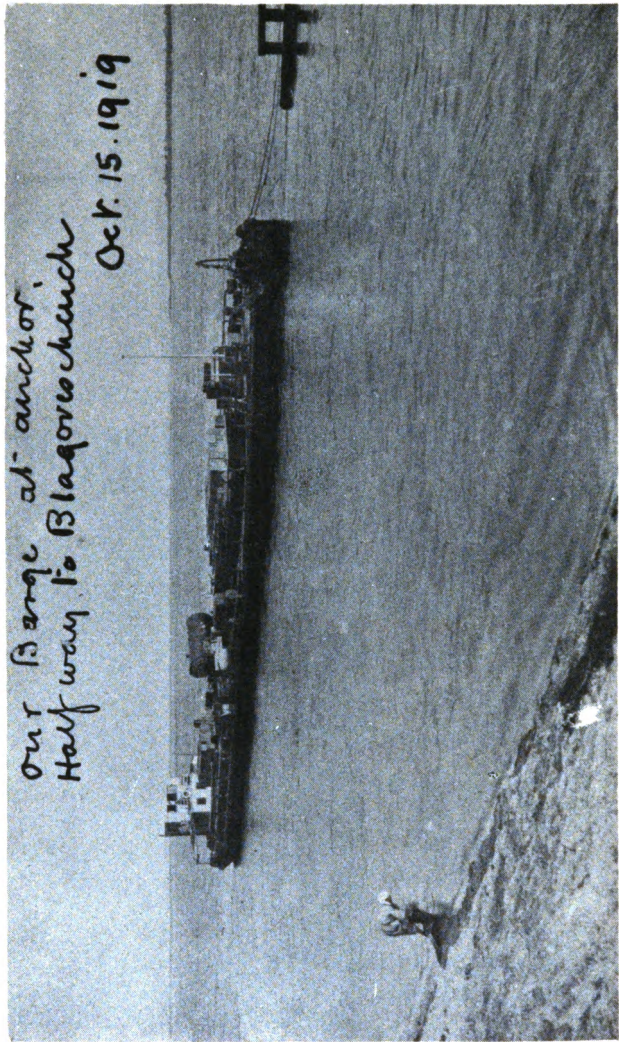
We had eight hundred miles to go, pushing our way slowly against a five-knot current. The Amur is broad and shallow, not easily navigable, as it is full of shifting sandbanks and treacherous narrows. The course is charted by wooden towers on the banks, difficult to follow at night since they were no longer lighted or tended.

The weather began to get chilly. There were sudden downpours of rain and stinging sleet storms that swept the river. Thousands of duck and geese passed overhead, honking their way south. In the early morning this immense migration sounded like the roar of an express train, and I have seen the face of the rising sun blackened by countless wings.

I lived by preference on one of the barges, with Aleck and two Chinese carpenters, who spoke a little English. The barge-master and his three-hundred-pound wife



RELOADING CARGO AT
Khabarovsk: CHINESE
STEVEDORES



Our Barge at anchor.
Half way to Blagoveshchensk
Oct. 15. 1919

BARGING UP THE AMUR

EIGHT HUNDRED MILES TO GO

occupied the deck-house. I had a choice of sleeping in the hold, in the deck-house, or on the deck itself. I chose the last. The atmosphere within was as thick as old cheese, altogether too gamy for my taste. Whenever I was forced to accept the barge-master's hospitality, I had to brace myself not to be actually ill.

I remember that he once offered me a cigar.

He rolled his own, it seemed.

From the reeking heart of an ancient mattress he produced a grey sock which contained the filthy makings.

Scattering the tobacco on the table before him, he asked:

“Do you like your cigar dry or moist, Tovarish?”

“Englishmen like them dry as a rule,” I said thoughtlessly, “but I’ve rather got into the habit of smoking them damp.”

He then took a mouthful of water, sprayed the tobacco, and, licking prodigally a leaf whose condition defies description, he spread the wet tobacco on it and, with a quick twist of his fingers, rolled it and presented it to me to smoke. That I did without being sick speaks well for my diplomacy.

I began to fear that I would lose the race, our progress was so slow. There was time enough for letting my

ONE-ARM SUTTON

imagination run riot. Here was a country as big as Canada and as fertile, a country whose vast natural resources were practically untouched, unheeded. I was passing through a wonderful wheat country. To the north there were great forests. Nearly every creek was a potential gold mine. And all of this magnificent country ready to the hand of the empire-builder.

I allowed myself to dream a bit, visioning a future for this land, a future in which with luck I might play a part. Perhaps I saw myself—another Cecil Rhodes or a Shaughnessy—creating successful States out of a wilderness, order out of chaos, business out of banditry. A one-eyed man among the blind! It is true, I was entering the field as an inconspicuous trader and miner. But my dredge was the first modern gold dredge in Siberia. And why limit myself to one? Why not ten dredges? Why not twenty? And with the gold, inevitable expansion, inevitable power. California came into existence by reason of its gold. Farming, manufacturing followed as a matter of course. As my mind ran ahead of the slow-moving tug, I dreamed of a Siberia thickly populated, humming with industry, awake, inspired to work and to progress.

I was to discover later that it is not possible to build a ship of State with defective timber. I had not con-

EIGHT HUNDRED MILES TO GO

sidered the human material, lazy, reactionary, ambitionless, with which I would be forced to deal. The human equation was to prove a bitter disappointment. Progress is so easily throttled by the Siberian brand of indifference.

Stops were made each day, now on the Chinese side, now on the Russian, to replenish our fuel supply from great stacks of sawed timber placed at convenient intervals for such river-travellers as ourselves. Here we wrangled over prices for hours on end. Russians enjoy nothing so much as an argument. The language itself contributes to their pleasure. Ask a Russian the time of day, and he rewards you with a torrent of words, a veritable harangue. He has more letters to his alphabet, more words to his vocabulary, more wind, more resistance, and more cheek than you have: he out-talks you every time. I am supposed to be a great talker. I know my tongue runs like the devil, and the faster I go, the faster my mind works, so that I am never able to keep pace with what I have to say. But I am a laggard compared to the average Russky. Whenever we stopped for fuel, I used to listen open-mouthed, silenced for once by the verbal fusillades of our captain.

One night—I think we were about five days out of Khabarovsk—the river mists lifted and it was decided

ONE-ARM SUTTON

that we were to keep on until midnight. There was a full moon, and the river was beautiful beneath a flood of calm white light. I crawled into my sleeping bag on deck, put my revolver under my pillow, and lay awake there for a long time, listening to the rustle of water, watching the red sparks from the tug's stack streaming across the sky. The river was navigable at this point, wide and deep, and we had no need of the neglected channel towers on shore. It is possible that all of us were lulled into a false sense of security. The two Chinese carpenters, after a long whispered sing-song, went below. Aleck followed them, stretching and yawning in a way he had, like a great cat.

“Buenas noches, señor,” he said. “Sleep well!”

The barge-master and his wife lowered their lantern in the deck-house. I was alone out there with the river and the bright moon. Presently I fell asleep.

I was asleep when our tug, edging slowly in toward the Chinese side, stopped for fuel. The barge, at the end of a fifty-foot tow rope, swung in also and came to a halt so quietly that I did not know we had stopped.

I was wakened by a volley of rifle shots, a sudden ungodly shrieking and howling. Bullets splattered all around me. Before I could untangle myself from my sleeping bag, or get hold of my revolver, a gang of

EIGHT HUNDRED MILES TO GO

Chinese bandits leaped from the bank to the deck of the barge and fell on me. There were eight or ten of them, tough, ragged fellows, armed with old army rifles. I saw their tight-skinned faces in the light of the moon. They were on me like leeches, one on my legs, another astride my middle, two on each arm, one on my head. I struggled up and down the deck, trying to shake them off. I was rolled in my sleeping bag like a winkle in its shell and, when I finally kicked out of it, freeing my legs, one of the bandits downed me with the butt of his rifle.

The tug was in a worse way. They had let a gangway down and the crew had started ashore when the attack began. More than a hundred of the bandits—Hun-Huntzes, as they are called in China—were concealed behind the woodpile. They swarmed out, firing at random, slid down the eight-foot bank, and boarded the tug. The attack was so unexpected, the noise so deafening, there might have been ten thousand of them.

I had my own troubles on the deck of the barge. They beat me unmercifully, kicked me, spat on me, bit me, and clawed at my face with fingers like talons. The harder I fought the tighter they clung. They were out for loot, not for murder, or they could have had me a dozen times. Finding a knife at my throat, I finally surrendered.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

They hauled me to my feet, and a pockmarked gentleman, evidently their leader, put a revolver to my head. Wobbly as I was, this was a nervous business; the revolver was old and decrepit and he had to hold the hammer back with his thumb. There was in his narrow glittering eyes the flicker of a doubt, a most damnable and terrifying uncertainty. I watched not his eyes, but his thumb. I have never been so interested in a man's thumb! It trembled on the hammer as he wrestled with the notion to kill me. Was I useful alive? Or was I safer dead? Or could he wound me, get what information he wanted, and finish me off at his leisure? His pockmarked face puckered with the stress of his indecision.

"Come along," I said in English, "decide and have it over."

This settled him. He jerked his head at his followers and holding me upright between them, we moved off in procession to the deck-house. The blow with the rifle-butt had certainly knocked the fight out of me. My knees were like jelly, and my head felt both enormous and empty, like a great bubble of air. They had torn my pyjamas into ribbons that fluttered at my elbows and ankles. I was bleeding, too, where the bandits had jabbed at me with their knives, pricking the skin. Very decent about it, they were. The idea was not to kill me. A dead

EIGHT HUNDRED MILES TO GO

foreigner can be embarrassing even to marauders from the hills who are sometimes hunted down and punished by detachments of soldiers sent out by the provincial governors or by the local war lords. These fellows were probably ex-soldiers themselves. Most Chinese bandits are. Some wore faded, tattered uniforms. I was glad when I saw that I had marked a few of them during the fight. One had a torn mouth; another nursed a broken wrist. And a third glared malevolently at me through red, swollen eyelids.

They shoved me ahead of them into the deck-house. The room was lit by an oil lamp turned low. It stank of grease and musty blankets and terror.

"You'd better let them search you, starek," I said into the shadows, "or you'll be sorry for it."

"Where's the captain?" the barge-master whimpered. "Aren't we going to have any help? Are they going to let us die like dogs alone?"

"They're having troubles of their own on the tug," I said.

He crawled out from under the table. His fat wife, wrapped in filthy blankets, shrieked suddenly and tumbled off the bed, begging for mercy.

"Shut up, Baba!" I said.

The bandits leaped at them with greedy snarls and

ONE-ARM SUTTON

searched them. They did a thorough job. One of them, the one whose eyes I had blackened, thrust his fingers between the old Russian's lips, pried his teeth apart, and searched his mouth. The poor old chap's face became gorged with the blood of his helpless rage. They tore at his wife's bodice, ripped off her skirt. All the while she screamed at them. They might have been deaf. There was neither pity nor amusement in their glittering eyes fixed within the lids after the fashion of Oriental eyes, motionless, inscrutable, and unseeing. Her cries and pleadings affected me horribly. I knew they were not hurting her, but it was hard to resist those feminine shrieks for help. I struggled in spite of myself, but the pockmarked leader kept his revolver at my temple and his thumb on the hammer.

The others continued their search until they had about a hundred roubles: twenty-five cents in good money! This did not seem to satisfy them. They grumbled and complained, poking at the two Russians with their knives, demanding more.

"Give them everything you've got," I said. "They're getting ugly. They'll kill you."

At this the woman burst into such blood-curdling howls that one of the Chinese carpenters came up from the hold and offered himself as interpreter. He did not

EIGHT HUNDRED MILES TO GO

seem pleased by the behaviour of his countrymen, but he did his best to make us understand that we must give the Hun-Huntzes everything.

“This man no belong proper, too muchee makee bobbery! Makee shoot, makee die, more better pay he, makee finish, chop! chop!”

Violently the fat woman shook her head.

“Niet! Niet! Niet!” she shrieked.

At that the strongest of the band seized her, turned her over a barrel, lifted her voluminous petticoats, and spanked her with a bamboo.

She kicked and cursed and foamed. It was a Rabelaisian scene. There was something horrible about it. Ridiculous and horrible at the same time. They hit her a dozen stinging cracks while her husband wept and pleaded. Great tears rolled into his beard.

“Stop them! Stop them! Oh, bednaia Anna! They are killing her!”

“Shut up, you fool,” I said. “Give them the rest of your money. I’ll make it good to you.”

At that he flung himself on his knees beside the bed and began fumbling under the mattress. There was a greasy pouch hidden there. He dragged it out and produced three hundred roubles.

But this didn’t satisfy them, either. The leader’s

ONE-ARM SUTTON

thumb trembled. He motioned to me to lead the way to the hold, where my belongings were.

“Master,” said the interpreter, “all man belong velly bad. He talkee me wanchee plenty clothes, cold weather come chop chop, more better you pay he plenty clothes. Cuttee throat, shootee. Maskee losey clothes, can catchee more homeside. . . .”

Aleck had been hiding down there behind a couple of oil barrels. They pulled him out in quick order, jabbing him with their knives to remind him that this was a serious hold-up, not a picnic.

He had made an attempt to conceal my smaller effects. With considerable presence of mind he had succeeded in hiding two rifles and a shotgun behind the cargo. But he had had no time to shift my trunks and dispatch-cases.

“Open them,” the pockmarked leader said.

“I have no keys.”

His thumb quivered on the hammer of that ever-present revolver, and I said to Aleck: “Tira las llaves!”

He threw them over. Trying to evade the issue, I fumbled at the locks, pretending that the keys didn't fit. This was great fun, but I knew that at best I could not stall for more than ten minutes. Unless help came from the tug, I would be forced to hand over my belong-

EIGHT HUNDRED MILES TO GO

ings to these starved wolves. They barked at me, showing their yellow teeth. Others kept arriving, clambering down from the deck like monkeys, until the hold was full of them. It seemed useless to protest. At last I opened the trunks.

They fell on my belongings. I saw my precious wardrobe snatched at and divided among them: evening clothes, heavy underwear, ties, vests, overcoats, shirts, mufflers, hats, caps, shoes, and socks. In these things, save only the collars and shoes, they attired themselves, grinning and chattering the while, more like monkeys than ever. I saw my good coats adorning the sharp-bladed backs of cadaverous Chinks who didn't know the meaning of soap and water. I saw my pants worn backwards by filthy simians who would have murdered me for a copper. My hats sat upon shaggy heads alive with vermin. My shirts, my decent English shirts, covered the rags and tatters of a dozen bravi who didn't know how to button them. My golf clubs puzzled but did not attract them.

The pockmarked leader, forgetful of me for once, pulled on a pair of white linen breeches, while a tiny wrinkled ancient, minus his teeth, donned my uniform. My gloves disappeared. My handkerchiefs. They ripped open the brief-cases to scatter wantonly papers and

ONE-ARM SUTTON

letters, precious documents, records, photographs. The hold was a shambles. My money was safe only because I had hidden it in a barrel of nails before I left Khabarovsk. At that I would have found it for them had they beaten me with a bamboo long enough. I thought myself lucky until by chance they found a box of cigars and five pounds of chocolate liqueurs that I was taking up to friends in Blago. They fell on the cigars and lighted up. I thought to soften their hearts with the chocolates and offered them with a disarming smile. But at the first bite the fiery liqueur spurted into their mouths, burned their throats, and, thinking themselves poisoned, they fell on me and beat me up again.

“For God’s sake, Aleck,” I cried, “eat one of the chocolates! Prove they’re not poisoned. Give me one, too. Quick! Pronto!”

He swallowed, grinned.

“See? No poison! Good! Fine!”

We rubbed our stomachs in ecstasy, and ate and ate and ate. Dropping me, the gang fell back, staring at me in the dim light of the hurricane lamp that swung from a cross-beam smoking terribly. Perhaps these dirty fellows had never before seen an Englishman. Most of them were half my size. My coats flapped about their heels and my hats fell down upon their ears. Inquisitive,

EIGHT HUNDRED MILES TO GO

curious, they now examined me, chattering with excitement. My best cigars glowed between their lips. They reached cautiously for the bonbons, tasted, swallowed, giggled. Indeed, a fine time was had by all, at my expense, and, now that they had satisfied themselves that I did not mean to harm them, they became all at once very friendly. The party was over. They swarmed out of the hold, over the side, and ashore. A pleasant good-night! A safe journey! And may we meet again! Hasta luego!

The tug was in bad shape, too. The bandits, after depriving the crew of their shirts and trousers, had tied them to stanchions, perhaps for decency's sake. The cargo of nails, machinery, and shoes was, of course, useless to them. They took everything portable, however, and fled into the hills.

I did what I could for the crew and returned to the barge to crawl dejectedly into my sleeping bag and wait for dawn. My revolver was still under the pillow. Had I used it, I would have been floating down the Amur by this time, a battered and nameless corpse. Of this I could afford to be thankful: bruised and sore as I was, I was alive. In return for my possessions, the Hun-Huntzes had awarded me life, leaving me only a pair of tattered pyjamas and a miscellaneous lot of shoes and

ONE-ARM SUTTON

collars. I am afraid I was ungracious enough to be surly.

When dawn came, as it does in movies and in dime novels, with a great burst of light, winter, not sunshine, came with it. A cold, insistent, prying wind blew from the north, ruffling the surface of the river, stirring up white-caps, whipping at my rags, and cutting me to the bone. It was bitter, grey, and gloomy. The sky was the colour of dung.

“Winter,” Aleck said, squinting at the smudge of light that was the sun. “Soon there will be ice. Then snow. Then darkness. You’d better hurry, señor, if you want to make Blago before the river freezes!”

CHAPTER IV
A Custom-Built Suit

I PICTURED myself arriving at Blago in my pyjamas!
“I’ll have to make a suit for myself,” I said.

Aleck and the Chinese carpenter helped me. We made a suit out of tarpaulin and lined it with cotton-waste! This was the most terrible suit ever fashioned for a white man, but it served. It had to!

Poor merchant prince! Only yesterday the world had belonged to me. Today, bleary-eyed and beaten, I felt more like a tramp than a potential millionaire!

My nose was swollen and uncomfortable: I had the morning-after stiffness in all my joints. But I took stock of my position while Aleck and the carpenter cut and basted the terrible tarpaulin suit. “I will buy a hat in Blago,” I thought. “Everybody has a hat, after all.”

When the suit was finished, I put it on, aware of the

ONE-ARM SUTTON

hysterical amusement in Aleck's eyes. He tried not to laugh at me. I was beyond laughing at myself. Buttons and buttonholes there were none, but holes and strings instead. Considering this extraordinary garment, I was seized with admiration for all tailors, even poor ones. Cutting a suit of clothes to fit a man is not as easy as it looks, and I salute Poole and his brethren. Perhaps they are responsible for man's superiority, his illusions, his colossal pretensions. I cannot imagine an ego powerful enough to defeat a tarpaulin suit lined with cotton-waste and tied with string.

A depressed crew, we started off again. The captain assured me that there were at least two hundred Hun-Huntzes in the gang that attacked us. I had lost interest after the first hundred and had stopped counting. I let him have it. Bitterly, I pictured two hundred Hun-Huntzes wearing my clothes and smoking my cigars.

Aleck had had enough.

"I'm not going the rest of the way, señor," he said. "You can put me off at Raddo, and I'll get back somehow. The last steamer ought to be going down in a few days. After all, I'm a man like other men. The girls in this part of the world are too fat and silly. I prefer

A CUSTOM-BUILT SUIT

them at Vladivostok, where they wear high heels y son muchas mas simpáticas!"

I reminded him craftily that there might be pretty girls at Blago. There were plenty in Khabarovsk. Had he missed them? Apparently the American soldiers had not. All the prettiest girls wore necklaces made of five-dollar goldpieces pierced and strung on a fine chain. I had questioned one of these girls, an attendant at the Khabarovsk steam-baths, a fine, husky, black-haired wench.

"Where did you get the goldpieces, krasotka?"

"My brother won them," she said, "gambling with the American soldiers."

"Your brother?"

"Yes," she said, pummelling me with her strong hands until I was a glorious pink. "Why not?"

"Have all the pretty girls in Khabarovsk got gambling brothers?" I inquired.

She disdained even to blush, but turning me over with a single effortless heave slapped me black and blue. . . .

"No," Aleck said now, stretching himself in the pale, cold light of that dawn on the Amur, "I prefer them gay and generous in Vladivostok! So I go! Buena suerte, caballero!"

ONE-ARM SUTTON

I put him ashore at Raddo, sorry as I was to lose him. He was a decent fellow and a good scrapper. I did not hear from him again for more than a year. Then I learned that he had been conscripted by the Whites at Raddo and put to work. When the Reds swooped down on the place a few days later, they caught him repairing a wire at the top of a telegraph pole, and, whereas he had climbed the pole ostensibly a White, he descended it an avowed Red, probably to save his skin. Aleck was always a diplomatist. At any rate, he missed the last boat down the river and had had to content himself with the robust feminine charms of the peasant women of the neighbourhood.

Four or five days after he left us, we had to stop for wood again. Since the bandits' attack, I had made it a rule to anchor about a mile before we came to our next fuel supply; going ashore in a boat, rifle in hand, I would make a long detour into the hills, then stalk up to the woodpiles from behind. If everything was clear, I would signal the tug to come on. These journeys into a strange and unfriendly land were both exciting and pleasant. This time, however, we saw that the precaution would be unnecessary. The fuel supply was stacked on the outskirts of a village, and as we drew in we saw that a brisk fight was going on in the village itself. Sev-

A CUSTOM-BUILT SUIT

eral houses were on fire, shots rattled and popped; a cloud of dust and smoke hung over the place. No one paid any attention to us when we anchored a hundred feet from shore and signalled that we required fuel. The inhabitants did not seem to be taking part in the show; they seemed, rather, to be indifferent, as if all this noise and waste bored them. They stood about in groups on shore, watching the fight with listless eyes.

Two years before, Siberia had gone Red. But reaction had set in. The Whites were in power now, all the active Reds having disappeared into the hills, where they lived like wild animals and made periodic raids over the countryside, terrifying everyone, looting, killing. The Whites were guilty of cruelty and bloodshed, too. One of their frequent, ruthless conflicts was in progress. Two or three hundred Cossacks were fighting against an equal number of Reds on the outskirts of the town. Why they were fighting was a mystery to me.

I went ashore with the tug captain to see whether we could interrupt hostilities long enough to replenish our supply of wood. I took with me my Remington 30-30 rifle and a pocketful of cartridges, as it seemed likely that I could do a little fighting of my own. Here was a nice ready-made war, and I had only to choose sides. Since the Whites represented law and order, I declared

ONE-ARM SUTTON

myself White and, leaving the captain to wrangle with a scared Russky at the woodpile, sauntered off alone down Main Street. Here I had two easy cross-shots and missed them both. It was like missing a right and left of partridges, and I suffered the humiliation of a man who disappoints his dog.

“I’d better get under cover,” I thought. Shots were splattering around me, kicking up puffs of dust in the wide, deserted street. I dodged behind a wall and squatted down, digging at a broken place with my fingers until I had widened it into a loop-hole through which I could watch the fight. I thought I was out of sight and had just picked an unsuspecting Red for assassination when two bullets, fired from behind, hit the wall close to my head. The brick dust blinded me for an instant. I swung around. Not fifty yards away two Cossacks were preparing to take another shot at me, unaware of my political colour. I must have looked like a Red. No one but a Bolshevik would wear a tarpaulin suit lined with cotton-waste! I did not stop to argue with them, but beat it at top speed for the barge. It seemed the better part of discretion to let the best man win.

I joined the captain, who was beating it, too, and we

A CUSTOM-BUILT SUIT

decided without argument not to stop for fuel. The Cossacks had retreated to the edge of town with the Reds in pursuit. Both factions fired at us as we scrambled aboard. I crouched behind a steel dredge-bucket on deck and had a few good shots, this time without political preference. Red or White, it was all one to me. It was very like shooting at a lot of rabbits. The boobish populace, indifferent to life and death, looked on with dull eyes, while their village burned, and wounded men writhed and howled in the streets. I am always for the weaker side, perhaps because it is the weaker side—why try to explain an incurable romanticism?—but in this instance I could not in all honesty determine which was the lost cause. They were, both Reds and Whites, resolutely, painfully comic. As for the innocent bystanders, they had all of the heroic resistance of cows. They stood, ruminating, while the ridiculous battle raged around them. There was, in their stolidity, their inanimation, all of the tragedy of Tsarist Russia, the futile groping and misapprehension of the future.

We chugged and chattered upstream again, toward Blago. "Soon," I thought, "I will be in a city, washed, shaven, clad in a decent suit of clothes. I shall see shops and women. I shall be listening to people talk and hear-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

ing church bells, and sitting down to a decent meal. I shall have a hat on my head. I shall have money in my pocket. And my dredge will be on the last lap of its journey. And I will be among friends.”

CHAPTER V

How to Cure an Inferiority Complex

I HAD risen in the cold and mist of before dawn to stare up the river, thinking these pleasant thoughts. Everything was as usual: the water was rippling against our anchor chains, the decks were wet and slippery, the barge-master's wife was making tea. The northern section of the sky was black as a great hole, but in the east a faint light was beginning. There was no wind. The river was like glass, cold, grey, and immovable. Fog isolated the barge, as we lay waiting for the break of dawn.

It was six o'clock. I remember speaking to the guard. He said he was no longer afraid of surprise attacks: we were too near Blago, organized patrols. "Nothing can stop us, then," I thought, "except the ice." The air smelled of ice already: there was a bitter taste to it, an

ONE-ARM SUTTON

unmistakable flavour of frost. I went to the side and peered down, looking for the first thin skim.

Suddenly I heard the ominous squeak-squeak of rowlocks in the fog. Someone was coming toward us, surely not on peaceful business, at six o'clock in the morning. I sent the Chinaman below for my rifle and, gripping it, waited.

The fog played tricks with the sound. Now I was certain that I had imagined it; then the squeak-squeak began again, louder, closer. There was something terrifying in this threat, this danger, this stealing up of strange men in a strange boat. How identify a sound? Fire? Shout?

All at once, as if a dingy grey curtain had been jerked aside, the fog cleared a bit, and we saw a boat, a good-sized boat, manned by a dozen men, coming at us swiftly from a short distance. Two men with rifles stood in the bow. In the dim light, I could not see whether they were Chinks or Russkies. I was only certain that this was no way to call on a peaceful trader.

I drew a bead on the two boys in the bow and toppled them overboard. Then I emptied the magazine of my rifle into the rowers. The boat circled, drifted off, and the fog closed around it. We heard shrieks and curses; then there was silence, complete, unbroken. I peered into

TO CURE AN INFERIORITY COMPLEX

the fog, and over my soul came a glow of content, like a glass of '87 port slowly sipped. Ever since the bandit attack, I had been suffering from an inferiority complex. My wounds were still sore, and I could not forget their dirty hands at my throat. This little exchange of early-morning pleasantries seemed to have washed all the ill feeling out. I was at peace with the world; even my tarpaulin suit ceased to itch.

Six months later I spent two weeks in a Red prison for this. I found out then, to my sorrow, that the men I had shot were Russkies, Bolsheviks, and it was only by the grace of God that I escaped a dirty end in front of a firing squad.

We arrived at Blago as the ice was coming down. There was a thickness in the water, a sort of frozen brown scum that broke like glass crystals against the bow. We tied up at the landing in a sharp, stinging shower of frozen sleet. In the morning the ice was running thick, and all navigation was closed.

Blago! Blagovyeshchensk! Priekoli!

We were there! November fifth—Guy Fawke's Day—and I felt myself correctly attired for the date. I went ashore intent on one thing only—to buy a hat and a good cigar!

PART III

CHAPTER I

A Smouldering Volcano

BLAGOVYESHCHENSK, or Blago, as I preferred to call it, proved to be a good-sized town. There were a few large brick buildings, stores and banks, but most of the houses were built of wood—even the onion-towered churches and the more pretentious residences. I considered my cargo of nails and rejoiced.

Outwardly at least, everything was tranquil. The town was in control of the White troops when I arrived, but I am certain that ninety per cent of the people living there were Reds at heart. Gangs of unemployed workmen loafed and quarrelled along the waterfront, or hung about the streets, staring sullenly at the more prosperous citizens. They were big, tough, ugly-looking fellows, these loafers, many of them ex-convicts, or descendants of Tsarist political exiles; consequently they

ONE-ARM SUTTON

had no sympathy for Kolchak or the White Army. They liked the Japanese troops even less.

Blago was going about its business in spite of war and revolution, and the officials were doing their best to maintain law and order. Yet there was an under-current of distrust, betrayal, terror. Fear stalked the streets, spoke in the eyes of the people; there was a distressing, omnipresent air of watchfulness and suspicion.

A few well-to-do families, owners of gold-placer creeks in the north, lived on the outskirts of the sprawling town in comfortable houses surrounded by gardens. For the rest, the people were down-at-heel. With every drop of the thermometer, the ragged loafers added another coat to their haphazard rags, increasing in bulk until they resembled great, shambling, ungainly bears, the symbolic creatures of their race. I have seen droshky drivers wearing as many as eight coats at once! Since the holes did not always coincide, the wearers achieved a degree of comfort if not of elegance.

I spent a week unloading my cargo and storing it in two large sheds. The dredge had to go five hundred miles farther north—to Selemdja River, a tributary of the Zeya. Already the Amur was frozen from bank to bank. Snow began to fall. It grew bitterly cold. I realized that I would have to hibernate in Blago unless I could

A SMOULDERING VOLCANO

find some way to move the machinery by sledge. As I had no knowledge of the language, I was at a disadvantage until I happened upon Andrew the Greek, who became my interpreter and who was destined to be my right-hand man for many years.

Andrew came from an island off the coast of Greece, and had always been somewhat of a wanderer. He had lived in the United States and in Canada, and spoke excellent Americanese. When I found him, he was selling alcohol in Tei-hei-ho, sending it across the Amur to Blago, where it was mixed with water and used in the making of vodka.

Andrew was an honest fellow, a typical man Friday. He and his father had made a fair-sized fortune before the Revolution as bakers for the Russian army under General Brusilov in the south. But the dizzy drop of the rouble had ruined them. They had seen their savings disappear, bit by bit, until nothing was left.

Andrew was glad to join me. He was of peasant origin and had the peasant's instinctive respect for officialdom, his instinctive fear of authority. But he was a good mixer, a sort of Greek glad-hander minus the Rotarian bluster. His eyes were large and appealing, the meek brown eyes of a spaniel; they had in them the protesting innocence and gentleness of a startled fawn. He had

ONE-ARM SUTTON

a moist, glistening face, a black moustache, and an inferiority complex. A dreamer, Andrew. A most tender-hearted, sympathetic, unselfish fellow. I never, in our long association, knew him to be impatient or angry without good cause.

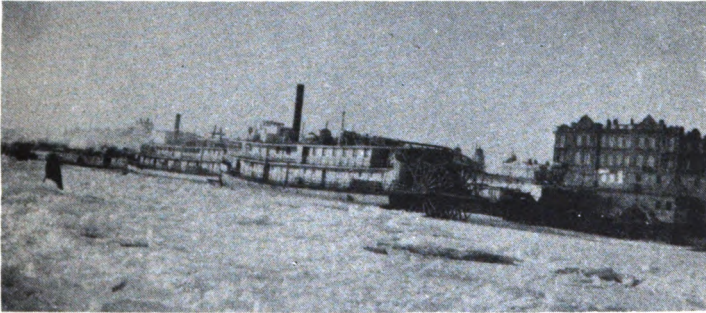
He was, too, a great pitcher lost to the Big Leagues, perhaps a throw-back to the Biblical David, the first southpaw, who downed Goliath with a mean spit-ball. Whenever Andrew threw anything, I was reminded of a jingle my nurse used to sing to me when I was a kid:

Goliath of Gath,
He made him a path
For himself to walk all alone,
But David, a lad,
A ruddy young cad,
Knocked him head over heels with a stone.

Once, in New York, Andrew's deadly speed and accuracy cost him his job as a grocer's clerk. Angered by a disagreeable customer's manner, he hurled a can of beans at the fellow's head, and hit him, of course. Andrew simply couldn't miss! He was a fearful fellow with a snowball or a hand grenade.

I rented a house in Blago, and Andrew and I moved

ANDREW



BLAGO: WINTER VIEW OF THE RIVER



AFTER AN ARTILLERY DUEL BETWEEN WHITES AND REDS



THE CRUSADERS, AN ORGANIZATION OF WHITES IN SIBERIA

A SMOULDERING VOLCANO

in. It was a comfortable little place save for the fact that there was no bathtub. I used to carry a pailful of water and a sponge out on the veranda before breakfast and splash about there, working myself up to a fine glow. It was thirty below zero, and, if I laid the sponge down, it froze immediately to the table and had to be cut away with a knife.

Andrew the Greek was not quite so meticulous. He shuddered at my morning ablutions and washed his hands and face indoors.

He attached himself to me with that positively medieval devotion which is so rare nowadays, a sort of paternal authority. He bullied but obeyed me.

Living was cheap in Blago, when reckoned in roubles. It was practically impossible to spend a dollar a day. Andrew and I scratched our heads, devising ways and means of squandering money. One of the Chinese carpenters was taken on as house-boy. We had a cook. A stove. A Chandler car. Plenty of vodka. And, for offices, two rooms in the best hotel in town! At that, we had pockets full of spare roubles. There remained only the matter of moving the dredge machinery and selling my cargo of shoes and nails. We had to find customers who had money, not roubles. As a last resort we tried to bar-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

ter our goods for furs, but the winter skins had not yet been brought in from the north.

Frankly, the situation was discouraging. There were sinister rumours of Kolchak's failure, his probable collapse. Andrew, who had a positive genius for espionage, brought me hair-raising reports. He had heard this and he had heard that. It was whispered that the Allies had withdrawn their support. It was said that Kolchak had been murdered. The Reds were only awaiting the signal. Der Tag! Revolution, ruin, chaos, death were imminent, inevitable. Typhus was again sweeping over Siberia . . . misery . . . executions. . . .

"Oh, shut up, Andrew," I said at last. "We're comfortable enough here. Don't believe everything they tell you!"

But I must confess, I did not like the look of the idle, sullen men I saw in the streets of Blago. Andrew spoke Russian. I did not. Without him, I might have been moving in a sort of vacuum of false security, believing only what my eyes saw: the Whites in control of the city, the Japs doing their bit, and business as usual! As it was, taking Andrew's lively imagination into consideration, discounting a good deal of what he said, I still felt that I would be better off almost anywhere else in the world. I was sorry that I had risked bringing in

A SMOULDERING VOLCANO

such a large cargo of goods. But there was no alternative; I had to stay.

Feeling myself at a disadvantage with only one hand, I decided to equip myself with a hook. I couldn't walk about the streets carrying a revolver or a club; the business men of Blago might have considered me unduly distrustful. But a six-pound iron hook is a valuable, innocent-looking weapon. Once you hook a man toward you, you can finish him off with a quick left to the jaw—like gaffing a salmon!

I had worn an artificial hand for some time after the War. It was attached to me by an elaborate system of straps, buckles, and strings. In order to open the fingers, I expanded my chest; to close them, I breathed out, hard. The thing caused me no end of embarrassment and worry. Once, I remember, I grasped my hostess's hand at a dinner-party, and, being very short of breath, couldn't let go again! It was frightful for everybody. . . . And then in a playful, sadistic moment, my bulldog bit off the index finger. When I got to San Francisco in 1919, thoroughly fed up with the contraption, I found a way to get rid of it.

Strolling down Market Street one day, I was approached by a man hawking papers. He was minus his left hand.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

“Paper, sir? All about the Big Murder!”

“Give me a paper,” I said, “and I’ll give you a new hand.”

“Aw, you’re kidding!”

“Kidding, am I? I’ll show you!”

Right then and there, while a curious, good-natured crowd gathered, I removed my coat and waistcoat and made the newsie a present of my artificial hand. He now has two right hands. And he still sells papers on Market Street. I saw him there a few months ago. He shouted greetings at me, breathing in and out furiously, to prove to me that the thing still worked. He is welcome to it!

In Blago, I needed a weapon, not a temperamental ornament dependent upon breath control. A local blacksmith riveted a half-inch iron bar into a leather socket which was attached to the stump of my right arm. I had him make the thing three or four inches longer than the hand itself would have been. A few inches’ reach won the world’s boxing championship, and my life was worth more to me than any ring battle ever fought for a million dollars! There would be no slipping out of clinches while I wore this thing; once I hooked my man, he was mine for punishment:

I faced the hazards of life in Siberia with new cour-

A SMOULDERING VOLCANO

age, and determined to move the dredge north at once. I did not fully realize what it meant to transfer so much heavy machinery five hundred miles over rough, broken ice. I knew that if I waited until May, after the thaw, the short summer would be gone before I could build the hull and assemble the parts. Winter would be upon me again, and another delay of six or eight months. There seemed to be nothing for it but to set out at once, hauling the machinery by horse-drawn sledges. Timber had already been cut and stacked at the creek in anticipation of my arrival; there were huts for the workmen; we would prepare for dredging operations in the spring.

We started in January; seventy sledges, two hundred horses, forty workmen, a Russian engineer, and myself—quite a procession.

CHAPTER II

Forty Days and Forty Nights

THE journey looked easy enough on the map. Journeys always do. Perhaps that is why infant Marco Polos so often become bank clerks or haberdashers! The first few miles were smooth going. But farther up the Zeya, where the stream narrowed, we encountered frozen ice jams six or eight feet high that had to be hewed down, blasted away with dynamite. Like the members of a Polar expedition, we slowly, laboriously conquered a few hard-won miles a day. We wore fur parkhas, fur hip-boots stuffed with hay, and mitts. It was forty below zero, and the steady, driving wind scattered ice particles, slivers like glass that blinded us and cut our faces and lips. Our breath froze, and little icicles hung from our moustaches. I was not troubled at first but, as my beard grew, I was as fantastically festooned as the others.

FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS

The Russians handled the job very well. I found them good men for hard work, lacking perhaps in initiative but strong and eager. We slept, sheltered from the wind by tarpaulins, beside the sledges. It was my job to hunt for the party. I got plenty of deer and pheasants. This was very different from sitting comfortably dressed on a shooting-stick at home and downing cock pheasants sailing serenely overhead. Here I trailed pheasants for miles by their tracks in the snow and, when a bird rose, I had to flip off the big fur mitt that was attached to a string around my neck and fire quickly before my fingers froze to the gun. I became a cold-hearted pot-hunter, and shooting a bird on the wing or running filled me with equal satisfaction. My hunter grandfather would have turned in his grave could he have seen me bowling over a fox with a charge of number six shot. We dressed and roasted the game over log fires built within a circle of sledges. The ruddy light stained the snow, flickered on the dark branches of trees and across the broad-cheeked faces of the men. A great column of greasy smoke rose on still nights to smudge the large, calm stars.

Forty days and forty nights, and we arrived at our destination. I was relieved to find everything as my scout had said it would be. The men were made com-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

fortable. There was sufficient wood. A full summer's dredging seemed certain.

I left the Russian engineer in charge of the construction with a few workmen and returned, myself, to Blago, travelling fast because I travelled light. I was anxious about my goods, fearful as to what might have happened in my absence.

As I came toward the city from the hills, I saw that it was burning in a dozen places. A great cloud of smoke hung over the place. I heard firing, shouts.

Andrew met me in the main street. He had a three days' beard, and his eyes were bright with terror and excitement.

"The hotel's burning! Our papers—money—everything! Kolchak has collapsed. Ruin! Revolution! We're lost!"

It was true. Some eight thousand Reds, who had been living in the hills, had swooped down on the city. They swarmed through the streets, big, whiskered fellows, their rifles slung across their backs. All the toughs and renegades swarmed out to join them. The Whites, terrified, fled across the Amur to the Chinese side. Some of them made it. Those who did not were being hunted like rats. The place was a madhouse. The White troops had retreated. The Japanese had disappeared, in good

FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS

order, of course, with characteristic grim formality. The Reds were in control.

We tried to save our furniture and records from the burning hotel and succeeded in getting a few things out.

Our house, Andrew informed me, had been seized by the Red Commander-in-Chief, who had made it his headquarters. This infuriated me. It was a pleasant house, and I had paid six months' rent in advance— at least five dollars in good money!

“They have appointed a new governor,” Andrew said. “Let’s go to him and make a complaint. You never can tell. Some of these fellows are bloodsuckers and some of them are cowards. Let’s have a look-see.”

“You’d better have a shave, first,” I suggested.

“You’re no oil painting yourself,” Andrew said.

Indeed I was a sorry sight. I still wore my fur parkha and hay-filled boots. Sixty days without a proper wash or a haircut had nearly obliterated my original outlines.

The Governor received us, in spite of our appearance, with affability. This was a new regime: the rigid formalities of the old school had given way to an ostentatious carelessness. We found this particular official a kindly, mild-mannered fellow, a retired schoolmaster, exiled for

ONE-ARM SUTTON

some petty political offence, some outburst, sporadic and surprising, that had meant the end of his career. He hadn't a great deal of power, now, or, if he had, he was not equipped to make use of it. Habitually timid and deprecatory, he informed us with regret that he could not restore our house to us. When we reminded him that we were the only foreigners who had dared to remain in Blago, he shrugged his shoulders. We told him, too, that we were peaceful traders, that we had no political affiliations. He lowered his eyes. Then Andrew grew eloquent.

"The Englishman," he said, "has a store of valuable goods. He has, too, a dredge—a modern dredge. Everything he touches turns to gold. He's lucky. If he remains, other foreigners will come. There will be trade, business. I advise you, Your Excellency, to treat him with respect."

The Governor rose suddenly and bowed politely from the waist.

"Come with me," he said. "We will drive through the city. Any house you like, you can have. Any house at all, save your own; that belongs to the Commander-in-Chief."

An orderly ran forward to assist him into his coat and together we went outside. He signalled, and a car

FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS

driven by a uniformed chauffeur drove up. The Governor invited us to step in.

“But this is my car,” I said.

Andrew explained, and the Governor, covered with confusion, apologized: “Such things are most embarrassing. But war and revolution are never polite!” I felt the car was lost to me anyhow. To make the best of it, I smiled and said: “Tell him the Chandler belongs to him—I hope he will accept it, with my compliments.”

We drove away in style, six cavalrymen clattering along beside us, the crowd giving way before us, with as much alacrity and respect as they ever displayed before a royal equipage. I was beginning to discover that authority is authority, whether it wears a golden eagle or a red cockade. No one was interested, fortunately, in killing us. But the shooting from house to house, from roof to roof, continued. It all seemed very futile and silly, a game of make-believe. People ran about like terrified chickens, dodging and screeching. Mobs of men, purposeless, enraged about something, they did not know what, charged along the wide streets firing at random or hunting down innocent Whites. Old grudges flamed into murder, lust. Old hates became active, destructive, concrete. No one was safe. No one trusted his neighbour. The zemstvos were gone; in their place,

ONE-ARM SUTTON

cocky, pretentious, ignorant Commissars, unaccustomed to authority, as dangerous as wild boars, and as silly as children with a jam-pot.

“Pick a good house,” Andrew whispered. “A strong house. A brick house!”

We were passing the Russo-Asiatic Bank, the best building in Blago.

“How about that?”

Andrew snickered, but he turned to the Governor and said: “The Englishman wants the Bank.”

“Very well,” the Governor said. “It is his.”

The car stopped, the cavalry clattered up on the sidewalk forming a protection against random shots, and we knocked loudly on the brass-trimmed doors of our new residence.

A very old man, a bookkeeper perhaps, withered by years of service behind the iron wicket of a teller’s cage, admitted us. He was grey with fear, chattering. And no wonder. We must have been a terrifying trio. He eyed Andrew’s blue chin, my hook, the Governor’s pedantic, pale-blue eyes, and, backing away before us, bade us enter.

We found the place in great disorder, as if exposed to the destructive wrath of a hurricane. Papers littered

FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS

the floors a foot deep: all the cheque-books, records, accounts, and correspondence of thousands of depositors for many years. The money, of course, was gone. There were cellars but no vaults. It was a hopeless mess, and even the Governor cringed a bit before the evidences of ruthless violence and stupidity.

We thanked him for his generosity and moved in, taking possession while the street fighting was still in progress and before the mob-will had been imposed upon the individuals of Blago. The bank manager had, of course, escaped across the Amur to Tei-hei-ho on the Chinese side, and we found his apartment upstairs very comfortable. We were lucky. Not only had we running water, thick walls, comfortable beds, and even a bathtub, but our social position was secure. After all, we had the best house in town and were sponsored by the Governor. Andrew suggested that we hang out a business sign: "Nails and Shoes." But I reminded him that roubles would not buy what dollars had paid for.

We hired a cook and recovered our China-boy, Lip-o-mi, who was an inveterate stammerer and conversed entirely in a sort of pidgin sign-language, comprehensible only to Andrew and me. As soon as we were settled, baskets began to arrive mysteriously at our back door.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

The Whites who had risked remaining in Blago were sending their wine to us for safe-keeping.

“This comes from standing in with the Governor,” Andrew said. “This comes from being a blooming swell!”

CHAPTER III
An Oasis in the Desert

WE soon had an imposing cellar. Bottles and casks crowded the musty shelves below. White wine. Red wine from Georgia. Claret. Port. Champagne. Beer. Vodka. Liqueurs. And all at once we found ourselves very popular. The Reds had tried to turn Blago into a bone-dry town. And the Russo-Asiatic Bank was an oasis in the desert. I am ashamed to confess that the Commissars and their friends called on us frequently. Every evening we gave a party for the leading Reds. They came in squads and platoons, big, hairy, noisy fellows with their girls. They used to wear three or four hand grenades attached to their belts, and when they danced the things rattled like castanets! Someone had sent us a piano for safe-keeping, and there was always music. They sang: the sad, haunting, passionate songs of the

ONE-ARM SUTTON

Russian gipsies, the river songs, the drinking songs. Then some young girl and her fellow would dance, stamping and flinging their heads back and shouting.

One evening a dozen of them were making merry when a little incident happened that interrupted the festivities. A bright-cheeked lad, a little drunk perhaps or a little mad, unhooked one of the grenades at his waist. It was as big as a soda-water bottle and contained three quarters of a pound of T.N.T. I had seen enough of the things in France to know how dangerous they can be and with what destructive force they explode.

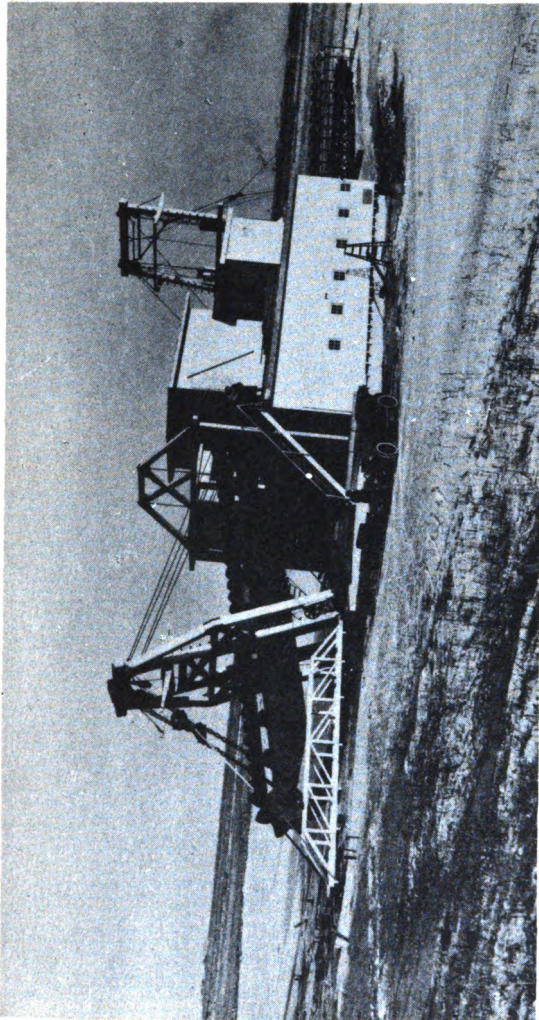
"I've carried this damn thing around with me for a year," the Russian lad said. "I don't believe it's any good!"

Slipping the safety ring off the handle before any of us could stop him, he pitched the grenade across the room against the wall. It bounced behind a sofa.

I slid for the door just as the thing went off. His question was answered. Every window in the bank was shattered. Two of my guests were grievously wounded, and there was a hole through the floor into the cellar.

After that I had a sign printed for display in the entrance hall: "Visitors will kindly leave hats, coats, and hand grenades in the hall."

I forgot to specify revolvers, and I was forced to



THE DREDGE



KIRGHIZ HAWKERS



KIRGHIZ HOUSEHOLD AND GUESTS

AN OASIS IN THE DESERT

regret the omission. Russians are curious people: they have a reckless disregard for death, indeed, they play with the idea of suicide, rolling it under their tongue like a sweet morsel. Passionately fond of life as they are, given to bursts of gaiety and mad pleasure, yet they slip easily into fits of depression, morbid speculation, and self-analysis. On one occasion I was annoyed by the antics of a middle-aged Russian, an official, a man of some breeding and intelligence, who insisted upon toying with suicide before us all in my rooms. He had a revolver with which he constantly played, twirling it, cocking it, and spinning the chambers on his arm, then firing it point-blank at his temple, his heart, his forehead.

“Funny, one of the chambers is loaded. I’ve fired the damned thing twenty times and it hasn’t gone off yet!”

I told him to get out and not to come back. I didn’t want him to kill himself in my presence. He was welcome to do so elsewhere, of course. He left, but with resentment, as if I had insulted him.

Entertaining on such a large scale was a strain on our resources. There were other expenses, connected with helping certain of our White friends whose houses had been seized by the Reds and who were literally forced into the streets by the unspeakable conditions under

ONE-ARM SUTTON

which they had to live. There was very little I could do except interview the Commissars on behalf of these people, paying liberally for any favours. In my opinion, this quartering of the Reds on White families was the worst feature of the Bolshevik regime, an abominable practice, devastating to the pride, the decency, and the self-respect of the victims.

Any White who owned a house was liable to be deprived of it entirely, or worse, told that he might occupy one room, where he must live with his entire family while three or four Red families took possession of the rest of the house. He must share the stove, the kitchen, the toilet with them. He must endure their filthy presence, their insults. If they chose to maltreat his wife or daughter, he must endure it or be shot. There was nothing else he could do. The house was his, yes. He had paid for it out of his own earnings; he had perhaps planned to spend the rest of his life under its roof. No matter. All property belonged to the people. He must share with them the fruits of his superior intelligence and industry.

These poor people came to me, begging me to help them. I will not write down here all the stories of cruelty and degradation to which I listened during that first

AN OASIS IN THE DESERT

winter in Blago. Needless to say, I could not help them all. Whenever it was possible, I bribed the Commissars and gained what relief I could for my friends.

Their gratitude sometimes embarrassed me. One woman, a refugee from Russia, died in Blago as a result of her experiences. She bequeathed to me her dog, a wretched, moth-eaten, wall-eyed, cock-eared Spitz that had survived war and revolution. I am not fond of the lap-poodle type of pampered canine, and my humiliation, when the old dog took a fancy to me, can be imagined. Wherever I went, the wheezy waddler was at my heels. Whenever I sat down he jumped into my lap and with a very moist tongue licked my face. I am ashamed to say that I was relieved when he came to a sticky end between two ice blocks in the river.

But my funds were getting low. I had plenty of shoes and nails to sell, but it was not unlikely that the Reds would confiscate them, despite the seals that were supposed to protect them.

Unfortunately we discovered, when we tried some of the shoes on our girl friends, that the average Russian foot is broad and high-arched. The shoes simply wouldn't meet. There was always a two-inch gap across the instep, no matter how we wrestled with the laces;

ONE-ARM SUTTON

whereupon we had woodcuts made, showing a pretty feminine leg and a small-size shoe with a two-inch space across the instep.

Andrew and I had a long argument as to where we would advertise. He read the *Amurski-Pravda*. I, of course, could not. Andrew said: "I'm a good friend of the editor. He'll give us space on the first page."

"I can't understand a word that's printed in the rag," I said, "but I notice that you yourself read the second page. What's on the second page?"

"The obituaries," Andrew said, "notices of executions. Everyone reads them. They're good and spicy. Russians tell the truth about their dead."

"Very well," I said, "we'll put our advertisement on the second page, right next to the post-mortems!" And so it appeared—"Latest Correct Fashion From America. Smartest Cut. Positively Authentic Fashion Hint from New York and Paris."

We convinced the ladies!

We had heard rumours that there were \$40,000,000 worth of gold bars and \$20,000,000 worth of platinum—the last of the Tsarist gold reserve—in the vaults of the Russian Government bank. This was good news, if it were true. "C—— may be able to tell us," Andrew said. "He has his ear to the ground. If there is gold in

AN OASIS IN THE DESERT

Blago, he will know where it is and how to get it. I suggest that we talk to him—diplomatically.”

“You mean . . . ?”

“Two or three thousand dollars.”

This looked like an unnecessarily large squeeze, but under the circumstances inevitable.

C—— lived in the suburbs. Andrew and I summoned a droshky and drove out there to call on him. I remember every incident of that momentous drive. Particularly is the image of the driver himself burned into my memory. He was a bulky, red-bearded fellow, round-shouldered, silent. We sat so close to him that we could have touched him. After the ridiculous fashion of Russian sleighs, this droshky was built so that the passengers had to share their conversation with the driver. We therefore confined ourselves to English, as practically no one in Blago spoke English and it was not likely that this great, hulking red-beard could understand a word we said. We were so accustomed to immunity in this respect that we talked very freely while the droshky slipped silently, smoothly over the frozen, packed snow.

I don't remember exactly what we said, but it was bad enough. We spoke of bribing the Red officials from the Governor down, discussed the White families we had aided and our plans to deprive the Reds of some of their

ONE-ARM SUTTON

gold reserve. I believe C——'s part in this was mentioned. At any rate, we paid our call and the same droshky took us back to Blago. The same red-bearded cabby presented his humped, immovable bulk to our indiscreet blabbing.

When we got back to our own quarters, Andrew went in, while I stopped to pay the cabman. I overpaid him, really. I gave him three hundred roubles.

To my horror, he shook his head and said in perfect if impolite English: "I don't want your ruddy roubles. Give us a silver dollar."

You could have knocked me over with a feather. It was as if a graven image had suddenly developed a tongue with which to confound me.

"Where did you learn English?" I asked.

"I speak and understand English as well as you do. I was twelve years in the mines in Australia."

"Well, here's your dollar," I said, "and come back in twenty minutes. I'll want you again."

I was really sparring for time. When I told Andrew what had happened, he said nothing. Only his eyes grew larger and brighter and, pulling out his big Greek knife, he began soberly to sharpen it.

"I'm no use with a revolver, Captain," he said, "but I'm a wonder with a knife."

AN OASIS IN THE DESERT

“What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to get that red-beard before he gets us.”

We were in a very tight place indeed. No doubt of it. We could beat it to Tei-hei-ho, but, once there, we would be no better off than thousands of wretched, penniless, starving refugees. If the cabby gave us away to the Workmen’s Union, on the other hand, we would be arrested at once and lucky if we escaped with our lives. Our friends, the Commissars, could not help us, since they themselves would be implicated. The workmen were getting a very different story: the Commissars were preaching brotherly love, unselfish devotion, share-and-share alike. What if it became known that we were bribing the very men who professed to be the workmen’s friends, incorruptible servants of the Revolutionary Party? What then?

What then indeed?

Furiously, we thought.

It was a case of red-beard’s life or our own, and selfishly we decided to sacrifice him for our own indiscretion. He had promised to return in twenty minutes. Very well. We would take him for a ride, this time to the river, the frozen Amur. We would question him and, if he had heard or if he stopped to argue, we would either leave him prisoner with some Chinese farmer on the

ONE-ARM SUTTON

other side until we were clear or, failing that, drop him through one of the holes in the ice, from which the peasants drew their water. His frozen corpse would perhaps turn up later, when the ice broke, a thousand miles down the river, but this would not inconvenience us.

Fortunately for red-beard, in twenty minutes a droshky drove up to the door, and a young boy on the box said: "Father couldn't come. He sent me, instead."

"Never mind," we said, and dismissed him.

We spent a terrible night, expecting to hear the tramp-tramp-tramp of the guard along the wooden sidewalks, the sharp, insistent clatter of revolver and rifle-butts against the door, the peremptory demand:

"Sutton, Englishman. Andrew, Greek. You are wanted by the Council of Citizens."

I did not sleep much. As always in Blago at night, there were outbursts of rifle fire at intervals, strange cries, the sound of men running frantically through the dark streets. But none stopped at our door, and when dawn came we fell asleep, tired out, not caring much, as men sometimes cease to care when their imaginations have evoked for them every conceivable trouble and torment. I had pictured myself shot a dozen times, and I have no doubt that Andrew spent the night in a cold sweat, a prolonged agony of doubt and anticipation.

AN OASIS IN THE DESERT

Nothing happened.

It was not until a year later that the mystery was explained. I was in Harbin and happened to meet the same driver there, old red-beard himself, big as life, sitting humped and motionless on the box of his droshky.

"Listen," I said, "do you remember me?"

"Certainly, in Blago. A year ago. I took you into the country and you gave me a silver dollar."

"Did you overhear my conversation on that day?"

"No. I had my ear-flaps down. I didn't listen to what you fellows were saying. I didn't care."

"That was lucky for you," I said, "damned lucky, my friend."

"Yes?" he said. He gave me a funny look out of his little blue eyes. "Give us a silver dollar, will you?"

"I'll give you five," I said, "for wearing ear-flaps."

CHAPTER IV

Ten Thousand Pairs of Shoes

BUT to return to Blago and the ten thousand pairs of shoes. We had made certain that there was gold in the banks. So now we wrote a letter listing our goods, a formal statement that struck Andrew as being very impressive and splendid. Armed with this, we called on the head of the buying department.

He received us in a small office thick with tobacco smoke, unventilated, musty as a rabbit hutch. Behind him, on a bench against the wall, five or six roughnecks in smocks and boots were smoking and drinking tea, watching the activities of the Commissar.

He read our letter quickly and slipped it under the blotting pad on his desk.

Then, amiably, he conversed with Andrew, not about shoes. Thinking that we had failed again, we rose to leave.

TEN THOUSAND PAIRS OF SHOES

"I will come to see you this evening," the Commissar whispered quickly. "Good afternoon."

We had planned to sell the shoes at a small profit for seven dollars a pair; therefore, when our friend the Commissar called at nine o'clock, we were surprised to hear him say: "Tear up your price list, my friends. We don't pay seven dollars for shoes. We pay fifteen. Let us leave it at that. I will call a meeting at which you will state your price and display samples. All I ask is a little commission of three dollars a pair, to be shared between myself and a few influential friends. You understand? Don't be upset if we are a bit rude to you at the meeting. We have to pretend loyalty to our own people. But there will be no difficulty. Do as I say. Here is your list. Make a new one, with the proper prices."

He then took his leave, after an exchange of pleasantries and a few glasses of vodka. He was a reasonable fellow; like all of them, out for himself. I do not doubt that there were instances of the most unselfish devotion among the Red officials. There were probably many of them who believed that out of the bloodshed and suffering would come progress and freedom for the individual. I do not question the profound need for a reversal of the system that had impeded Russia for hundreds of years. I hold no brief for a cruel despotism or

ONE-ARM SUTTON

for an autocracy blind to its own defects. I would not make idle jokes about serious men seriously trying to improve the condition of their country. But the Commissars of Blago were not for the most part serious men. I doubted their integrity as I doubted their intelligence.

When I approached the Commission in regard to the sale of my shoes, I found twenty of these fellows seated at a long table. Our friend the buyer acted as Chairman. No sooner had I displayed samples of the goods I was offering for sale, stating that I asked fifteen dollars a pair for my shoes, than a little dog-faced fellow leaped to his feet and, banging on the table with both hands, howled and foamed at us, calling us every vile name he could think of. He shouted that we were thieves, cannibals, fattening on the blood of innocent women and children, vampire bats, renegades, selfish foreigners, sucking the life from the feeble body of New Russia.

He quite convinced me. I was ready to withdraw, abashed, when he winked at me and sat down amid thunders of applause. One after the other of the twenty Commissars added their bit to the general calumny. I have never heard such opprobrious epithets, such gnashing of teeth, such obscene and hideous insults. I was called variously an English pig, an American cabbage,

TEN THOUSAND PAIRS OF SHOES

a louse, a lizard, and a nameless dog, son of a nameless dog. My antecedents were reviled, my person criticized, and my infirmity mentioned in terms of contempt and disgust.

I was in two minds whether to beat it. But when one has ten thousand pairs of shoes to sell at fifteen dollars a pair, one can endure, even with relish, insult. I pretended that I had heard nothing, that my tough English hide was impervious to such pin-pricks.

The Chairman called the meeting to order and offered me fifteen dollars a pair with a five per cent discount for cash.

To this Andrew objected.

“But we will accept,” he cried, striking the pose of a martyr-liberator, his meek eyes upturned and his hand raised, “because we are desirous of helping poor bleeding Russia in her hour of need.”

Then all those twenty honest men and true came with us to the storsheds, where the seals were broken and a few of the cases opened, inspected, and accepted. To our utter amazement, they immediately gave us a cheque on a Chinese bank in Tei-hei-ho.

We seized the cheque, hired a droshky and dashed across the frozen river, our hearts in our mouths.

Miracle of miracles. The cheque was good!

ONE-ARM SUTTON

We brought back with us a suitcase full of Bank of China dollar notes and, when the Commissars arrived that evening, the thirty-thousand-dollar squeeze was divided to everybody's satisfaction. I wonder whether I will be accused of irony if I say that our friends thus got a taste of blood. Like mosquitoes, they were intoxicated by the initial nip of the true elixir.

"Andrew," I said, "we are only at the beginning. Before we are done with Blago, we will have a million of that gold reserve for ourselves."

Almost at once we sold the nails at a profit. Then the horse-shoes. There remained only the dredge. But the dredge was safe for the moment. And, feeling very fresh and exuberant, we looked about for new fields to conquer. Our fantastic good luck led us to pig-bristles. Someone told us that Siberian pig-bristles were the best in the world and that they abounded along the railway line near Lake Baikal. They could be had for twenty-five cents a pound—magnificent, spectacular bristles, eight inches long and as strong as wire! In America they fetched seven dollars a pound. Our eyes bulged at this information. Licking our lips in anticipation of enormous profits, we boarded a train for Lake Baikal.

A train? A madhouse. A Lewis Carroll sort of train made up of odds and ends; ancient, dismantled wagons-

TEN THOUSAND PAIRS OF SHOES

lits, cattle-trucks, troop-cars. Our tickets—or, rather, our passes—were stamped on our palms. This was undoubtedly convenient for the Russians but confoundedly unpleasant for the Englishmen, who wash their hands oftener than once a week. The ticket-collector's progress through the train was like a Fascist meeting: arms were thrust forward, palms turned out in the old Roman salutation. One old fellow, however, refused to show his "ticket." He had boarded the train carrying a dozen incredible bundles tied in rags, and had taken his place near the stove where he made himself comfortable.

"Tickets?" the collector said.

"I have no ticket," said the ancient.

"No ticket? Why not?"

"Who does this train belong to?"

"To the people."

"Well," the old one said, spitting, "I am the People. I ride free."

"Who's to pay us collectors, then?"

"No tickets, no collectors," the ancient said tersely, and fell asleep.

Of course, they threw him off.

The two-day journey to Baikal took seven days. Every hundred miles or so the train stopped, and the passengers were conscripted to cut firewood. We all

ONE-ARM SUTTON

piled out and took a hand, the engineer and fireman enjoying a smoke and a cup of tea the while. It was all very informal—what the French call “dégagé.” There were no conveniences, and, of course, no dining-cars. We had no food unless the train happened to stop at a station where there was a refreshment counter.

We drew into the station at Baikal just as two or three troop trains disgorged their passengers: a thousand returning soldiers milled up and down the platform. They were an undisciplined lot, released from restraint and beating their way back to the farms. Something unruly and threatening about the crowd caused me to hesitate before leaving the train, but I was hungry, and so, followed by Andrew, I shouldered my way into the station restaurant. My hook served as a wedge, perhaps. At any rate we managed to get up to the counter, where a little old waiter, white-haired and habitually scared, relic of the lost Russia, served us with meat and tall glasses of strong tea.

While we were standing there, I noticed a better-class farmer slowly edging his way toward us. He was a middle-aged fellow, decent-looking, decidedly above the average. His rather sensitive, clean-cut face contrasted strangely with the brutal appearance of the soldiers. He carried a red bundle which he put down on a bench while

TEN THOUSAND PAIRS OF SHOES

he ate. Another man, following him, put his own red bundle beside the farmer's; there was little difference between them, and I do not imagine that either contained much more than a few ragged clothes, a pair of shoes, or an old coat.

I watched the farmer particularly. It seemed to me that he represented the best type of Russian working man and that as such he had suffered as a result of the Revolution. A little bewildered but not frightened, he braced his slender body against the surging vociferous mob fighting for food. He had a right to the place he occupied: he had paid for his tea and was doing no harm, causing no disturbance.

When he finished, he turned to the bench and, absolutely without malicious intention, picked up the wrong bundle. I saw how it happened, and I can swear to his innocence. At the door, he recognized his mistake—perhaps because of the weight of the bundle, or the unaccustomed feeling of the red cloth—and started back. But the crowd impeded him. He made slow progress.

The owner of the bundle, turning to claim his property, saw that a mistake had been made. He spied the farmer near the door. Raising a howl, a cry of "Thief!" he gave chase. "Hold hard! Here's a thief! Thief! Catch him!"

ONE-ARM SUTTON

All eyes turned. Curiously the crowd of men stopped fighting and shoving to face the two actors in this new drama. The farmer tried to explain.

"I am not a thief. I swear it. I picked up the wrong bundle. See—there is my own, on the bench by the counter. I am not a thief!"

A couple of men snatched logs from the wood-box near the stove and advanced on him, heads lowered, eyes narrowed, licking their lips. One blow knocked out the farmer's eye. Another cut his head open. He went down on his knees, calling on God to witness his innocence.

"I am not a thief! I am not a thief! I swear it!"

Andrew, always sympathetic, was sickened by the sight of the man's face streaming blood, his cries for mercy. The thing was unendurable, horrible. Andrew forgot everything except his own disgust at such wanton cruelty. He shouted at the mob.

"Lay off, you fools! The man's innocent."

"Ah!"

A sort of whisper went over the room, a hiss, an intake of breath. All those eyes were turned suddenly on us—the crowd advanced slowly, led by a short, thick-set fellow whose hands were thrust into his pockets where they rested obviously on revolver-butts. He came for-

TEN THOUSAND PAIRS OF SHOES

ward with a slouch, leering at us, the rest at his heels, carrying their blood-stained clubs.

“Bourgeois! Damned bourgeois!”

The old waiter behind the counter whispered:

“Quickly! Over here!”

We vaulted the counter just in time, darted through a door that led into the kitchen or pantry, and through another door into the trampled snow at the back of the station. Like terrified rabbits we scuttled forward along the troop trains, dodged between them, crawled beneath our own train and, running furiously back again, ducked into the carriage, concealing ourselves among the passengers.

The crowd outside was looking for us. They howled and shouted and rushed back and forth. We blew on the frosty windows, rubbed a peep-hole with our forefingers and watched them.

In a few minutes, apparently exhausted by their futile rage, they surged into the station again and came out dragging the body of the farmer, a limp, blood-stained body battered almost beyond recognition. Both eyes were gone. A thin trickle of blood ran from the corners of his mouth across his chin into his thin, pinched neck. Someone pulled down an acetylene lamp

ONE-ARM SUTTON

that was attached to an iron standard. They hung the farmer to it by his neck and, winding the ratchet at the base, swung his body twenty-five feet above the heads of the crowd. He hung there, twisting and turning—murdered, a victim of mob violence. Innocent.

The sight sickened me. "We will go back to Blago," I said to Andrew. "We at least stand in with the local cut-throats there. Here, we are helpless."

We had had a very narrow escape.

Losing interest in pig-bristles, we left the train at the next station and returned to the comparative security of our bank-residence in Blagovyeshchensk. The Commissars were little better than professional murderers there, but they had a very definite use for us and we for them.

CHAPTER V

Face

THE streets of the town were swarming with officials, each wearing a peaked cap and carrying a dispatch-case—usually empty. The dispatch-case, symbol of business activity, gave them face. Face. I was to meet that word again in China, to be confronted by its mysterious implications, its tragic subtleties. In Russia for the first time Face confronted me as a definite social problem, inexplicable, maddening. A word. A religion. A philosophy. A national cowardice. Either you had face, in which case you were solvent and respectable, or you hadn't it, and were mud. To lose face was to lose hope. A whole social system skated on this particular thin ice above the dark, deep waters of disgrace and defeat. You paid for face. You bribed face. You stole for it, murdered for it, pretended, aped, tipped, whispered,

ONE-ARM SUTTON

prevaricated. Face was God. Face was wrath. Face was Solvency. Or it was Power.

In Blago, the officials courted face with dispatch-cases.

One evening the Minister of Justice dined with us. He hung his dispatch-case on the back of his chair—a veritable rat's nest of a case, stuffed and bulging with papers. I thought: "If some poor devil's reprieve is in that lot, I'm sorry for him! He's as good as dead!"

On another occasion the Minister of Education, drawing an elaborate report of his manifold activities from the depths of his case, recited it to us holding it upside down. He could neither read nor write!

They were as pretentious as children playing a game. Carried away by an authority they did not understand, they aped the Tsarist officials, dread autocrats of other days, caricatured them, adding macabre touches of their own. They were not unlike the street urchins they encouraged to scrawl dirty pictures on the walls of public buildings that had belonged to the old regime.

Particularly at dinner, eating big chunks of caviare and sucking it off their beards, were they endearing. And as long as I live I shall never forget the odour of Russian boots, tanned with fish-oil, slept in, unchanged for months. These things may seem trivial. In reality,

FACE

they were not. They were indications of an inner confusion and carelessness, a profound, national indifference to those niceties which are an outward expression of an inner security. Bolshevism did not seem to me to work save in the abstract. Our bookkeeper, the old White who had admitted us to the bank, at first professed himself well pleased with the Red regime.

"After all," he said, "I am better off than I was. It isn't so bad. I have a job. I am free. And I have two pigs. I am fattening them up. My family will have enough to eat this year. I am a lucky man."

A month later he came to me in tears.

"They have taken my pigs!"

"What do you mean?"

"They have taken my pigs! I've got to share my pigs with thirty of my neighbours!"

"All right," I said cheerfully. "You'll get a share of your neighbours' pigs when they're killed, won't you?"

"That's just it. They haven't any. My family will starve. Damn the Reds! Damn Communism!"

He fell at my feet and wept.

All of these things caused me to arrive at my own conclusions. But I was obliged to be diplomatic, at least to temper my criticisms with a certain good humour. I had an axe to grind. I wanted to sell my dredge to the

ONE-ARM SUTTON

Reds and leave the country. When the Commissars asked me why more British and American merchants did not come into Russia with their goods, I replied to them, in the Russian way, with a fable from Æsop:

“There was once an old and mangy lion,” I said, “who had lost a good many of his teeth and a lot of his ambition. So he retired to his cave and announced that he had gone out of business. Whenever the other animals stopped to inquire how he felt, he seized them and ate them. He did quite well, what with timid deer and birds and small cats and gentle skunks and weasels. One day the fox halted outside the cave. ‘How are you, Mr. Lion?’ And the lion yawned and said: ‘I’m ill and weak. I’m hardly able to lift my paw. Why don’t you come in for a while?’ The fox grinned and waved his brush. ‘No, thank you, sir. You may be ill; I wouldn’t doubt your word—but I see lots of tracks going into your cave, and none coming out. So, if you’ll excuse me, I’ll be moving along!’”

The Commissars looked angry and a little surprised. They knew quite well what I wanted to say: “Who cares to bring goods into Russia only to have them confiscated or paid for in worthless roubles? Let me go out from Russia with plenty of gold, and I will send others. Traders will follow me. More and more of them. But let

FACE

me go out penniless, cheated, disgusted, and, like the lion, Russia will find herself hungry.”

Spring was approaching. The sun was warmer; the streets were deep with slush; the eaves streamed; the sky, no longer grey as slate, broke into patches of blue, and suddenly the river ice, six feet thick, began to move with a great roar, piling up, crackling, exploding, a marvellous, vital sound, as if winter growled and heaved in the arms of a powerful adversary.

As soon as the Zeya cleared, I boarded an old paddle steamer and returned by easy stages to the creek on the Selemджа where I had left the dredge. I found the men still there, the young Russian engineer in charge, and the dredge ready to dig. We built a bank across the gravel bed, floated her, and began operations, soon striking pay dirt on the bedrock at thirty feet. It was not long before we were getting two and a half pounds of gold a day. It ran eighty-five per cent pure, and for six weeks we averaged five hundred dollars a day.

I soon had twenty thousand dollars of gold in my cabin. This proved to be too great a temptation. The men, who had not seemed particularly affected by the spread of Communism throughout Siberia, began to question my right to the profits. I gave them two or three times more than they could earn elsewhere and

ONE-ARM SUTTON

paid them in silver dollars. They were well cared for, decently fed, and worked on short shifts. Yet, the Idea took possession of them. Who was I, a foreigner, an Englishman, to deprive them of their rightful share in the gold? Were they not doing all the work? Was the soil not theirs? They forgot, of course, that they had had no part in bringing the dredge into Siberia. I had paid seventy-five thousand dollars out of my own pocket to accomplish this, and had given a year of my time to it, had faced hardships and disappointments and failure. The risk was mine, not theirs. Yet, they approached me one afternoon with the demand that I divide the profits into twenty parts—I to keep one, the rest to be split equally between them.

Argument was difficult. They were armed with rifles. I felt that it would be wiser to prevaricate. I therefore pretended to be sympathetic. "I will think over what you have said and will try to make an equal division. Go back to work now. I'll talk to you tomorrow, here at six o'clock."

I thought it over, as I had promised, until three in the morning, and then decided to abandon the dredge. I hated to do it. It was like deserting an old friend. The great unwieldy thing seemed almost human in its precision and strength. I stood in my cabin door for a long

FACE

time watching the night shift at work. Incongruous, there in the wilderness, two thousand miles from anywhere, the blinding headlights on the bow, the rattle and hiss of machinery and steam, the great arm reaching out, scooping up gravel from the river bed, the joyous unceasing grind of buckets. . . .

“Well,” I said, “good-bye!”

The Russian engineer and the Chinese cook agreed to come with me. After all, who would pay them? They had done a little figuring of their own. We launched the motor-boat, shoved off into the stream, and paddled a mile before we started the put-put. No one saw us, no one heard us. We carried with us nearly a hundred pounds of gold. And the amateur Bolsheviks back in the creek stayed on their job until six o'clock in the morning, when, approaching my cabin with their rifles over their arms, they found the goose that laid the golden eggs gone and the nest empty.

I travelled down to Blago, crossed the Amur, and left my gold on the Chinese side, then returned to Siberia to solve the last problem—how to dispose of my dredge. It was obviously impossible to work it under the existing conditions. The same tactics I had employed to get rid of the shoes and the nails I found successful again, and within a week the dredge was sold to the govern-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

ment for a hundred thousand dollars. I paid the Commissars a squeeze of twenty-five thousand. It was just a year since I had started from San Francisco—a hectic year. As far as the dredge was concerned, I was just where I had started, not counting the ups and downs of that varied experience. A weight was lifted from my shoulders. At last I was able to leave Russia for good if I wished to; but . . .

There were still large reserves of gold bars in the government bank. It seemed a crime to leave it for the Communists to squander.

Andrew and I went into a huddle to decide our next move.

We were like escaped prisoners, deliberately thrusting our heads into the hangman's noose. We were ruddy fools. But we stayed.

PART IV

CHAPTER I
My Terrible Hat

THE shoes, the nails, and the dredge were sold, and I was again foot-loose—I walked the streets a free man.

Yet I hesitated to leave Blago, knowing as I did that the Reds still had twenty million dollars to spend. They had already squandered twenty millions in six months of ridiculous extravagance, literally throwing money away. Eighty thousand people in Blago were living on doles, while the unemployed stood about watching Chinese coolies cleaning the streets, planting trees, repairing roads and sidewalks, and cutting firewood.

I asked the Commissars why they complained of lack of work for the people of Blago, when gangs of coolies were doing what the unemployed Russians could do, and being paid for it in gold. They could not answer my question.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

The population was supported by a government that could see no farther than the end of its foolish nose. Everything was free. Food, shoes, and clothes were purchased at exorbitant prices and given away to the working classes or retailed in the government stores at a tenth of their proper value.

The Tsarist gold reserve was melting like snow on a hot day. While it lasted, the Reds spent with the reckless prodigality of witless inheritors, buying whatever struck their fancy, without rhyme or reason.

Yet there was no appreciable contentment among the people themselves. They spent their days lounging about the streets, grumbling, complaining, surly. They would have been better off on eight-hour shifts. Free living is no panacea for discontent. The giving of doles is a sure way to stir up the worst elements in human nature.

Andrew and I were in good standing. Citizen Sutton! Citizen Andrew! Fine fellows, generous and hospitable. Tovarish! We had been forced to soften the hearts of the Commissars and petty officials with money. We had no false or sentimental notions about our popularity. We were aware that we would never have sold our goods at all had we offered them for little or nothing. Our impulses might have been generous, our desire to help the

MY TERRIBLE HAT

Russians disinterested, but the results would have been negligible.

As it was, we were hailed as brothers and comrades. Our progress along the streets was in the nature of a triumphal procession. We were saluted wherever we went. Had we loaned these people money, they would have stood ready to cut our throats. But we had given generous commissions, and our hospitality had further endeared us.

Andrew confessed to me that he would rather have a statue of himself erected in Blago than all the money in the world.

“Why not both?” I asked. “A statue and a fortune?”

“I would like to be remembered as a benefactor,” he said, “Andrew, friend of the People, champion of New Russia!”

“Andrew, grafter!” I said.

Andrew was hurt. “Napoleon was a grafter,” he said; “so was Alexander. So was Peter the Great. So perhaps are we! But we are grafters by necessity, not by choice!”

I agreed with him.

My own pleasure in our popularity was spoiled by a very trivial thing, a ridiculous thing. No man, even though he be a hero to his friends, can swagger and

ONE-ARM SUTTON

throw out his chest when he has to wear a hat that is too small for him. This was my fate, that summer in Blago. Two hundred Hun-Huntzes were disporting themselves in my clothes somewhere in the hills, and among them must have been some who wore the treasured headgear brought all the way from England to adorn me during my stay in Siberia. While the thermometer stayed below zero, I could wear with impunity a fur hat. But now it was sunny and warm; the brief Siberian summer blazed on my head. I was forced to buy a hat—a straw hat—at once.

Now there were no decent hats in Blago or in Tei-hei-ho, although I searched through all the musty little shops with desperate thoroughness. I could not approach the Commissars hatless when by remaining covered in their presence I was able to convey to them my indifference and my contempt. Andrew used to snatch off his hat and sweat before Authority.

“For the Lord’s sake, put on your hat,” I said to him, “and keep it on!”

Decidedly, I must have a hat or else abandon the idea of growing rich in Blago.

I was forced at last to buy a little Panama with an up-turned brim, size $6\frac{5}{8}$, whereas I wear a $7\frac{1}{4}$. The only summer hats were a consignment from Japan. All the

MY TERRIBLE HAT

big ones had gone, or else the Japanese had failed to take into consideration the size of the average Russian head. I wore this terrible hat with a sort of dogged misery and desperation. And, wearing it, I could not share Andrew's naïve ambition. To face the immortality of stone, on a granite pedestal, wearing a Panama hat three sizes too small . . . ! It wouldn't do, and I said so.

But the Commissars had no such æsthetic scruples. In spite of my headgear, they invited me to organize their navy. I had not noticed that they had any, yet I listened politely to the delegation that was sent to sound me in the matter. They assured me solemnly that my reputation as a gunnery expert had gone before me and that I was the man for the job. Somehow an old six-inch naval gun had found its way to Blago, salvage perhaps of some defunct river cruiser. The Reds wanted me to repair it and mount it on a paddle-boat. The pedestal and breech block were in poor order and there were no shells. But if I could overcome these little difficulties, I would be hailed as founder of the Navy of the Far Eastern Republic.

This was a job that appealed to me. I accepted with alacrity.

I first made a cast steel pedestal, using a Siemens Con-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

verter in the foundry of a small shipyard. A wooden platform fourteen feet square was then built of twelve-inch timber on the forward deck. The old paddle steamer selected had to be strengthened to carry a long-range gun. The deck was strutted with angle irons underneath to the ribs of the boat. A fifty-calibre gun, twenty-five feet long, has a devil of a kick. It is no pop-gun.

I repaired the breech block and fitted sights. Then I set about making a hundred shells. There were obvious difficulties. I made them, finally, of cast iron with hand-made copper driving bands. To prevent gas blowing through flaws in the castings, I inserted tin linings the shape of cocktail shakers, in which T.N.T. taken from old field-gun shells discarded by the Reds was packed. I made and used some of my own percussion fuses and mining detonators as exploders. They were good shells, although perhaps they would not have passed Woolwich inspection.

The Reds were delighted. They painted the old paddle-boat a fine navy grey, polished the brass, scrubbed the decks, and hoisted a lively string of flags.

An Admiral and a staff were gazetted, a crew assembled. On the day of the trial run, they appeared in immaculate white cotton uniforms with top-boots. They

MY TERRIBLE HAT

astonished me by their snappy drill and generally salty atmosphere, two thousand miles from the sea.

We set out from the wharf in all our glory, bands playing on the beach, flags flying, river craft tooting, half the population of Blago crowding the waterfront to see us off. Andrew and I were on the bridge with the Admiral. Everyone saluted everyone else.

But I was anxious. This was to be a test of my ability as a gunnery expert, and I eyed the shells piled on the deck with considerable trepidation, hoping, in case one prematured in the gun, that I was far enough away to be safe. I wished the ship were longer and that the bridge were in the stern.

We steamed for three or four hours up the Zeya, then slowed to half-speed, and the Admiral picked a target—a farmhouse about two miles away. I confess I was shaken by this heartless choice and, when the engineer rushed up from below to protest, crying that the farm belonged to his old uncle, a worthy man and a true Red, I drew a sigh of relief. But the Admiral's forbearance was short-lived. He picked another farmhouse a little distance off. The unlucky owner had no relatives aboard, and besides there had been too many delays. The gun must be fired.

There ensued a violent argument between the Ad-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

miral, his officers, and the crew as to the distance—was the target four, five, or six versts away? The Admiral shouted at the crew, the crew yelled at the Admiral. The argument grew so hot that I thought they were going to elect a new Admiral. But eventually he gave in to the noisiest of the gun crew, who declared that it was five versts. Five versts it had to be. The sights were set for this range. When at last the gun was fired, the shell passed over the farmhouse and exploded against a hillside behind. It was a good explosion, and I received a hearty ovation that would have pleased Caruso himself. Through our field-glasses we could see the occupants of the house running in all directions like terrified rabbits. Luckily, no damage was done.

On the return trip we fired again, this time at a Chinese junk. The shell by luck cut the mast like a broken match and the junk men went overboard, frightened out of their wits. Most of them escaped, I believe, but their fate was of little importance to the Navy of the Far Eastern Republic. The Navy, drunk with success, steamed down river to Blago into the welcoming arms of the people.

I was more popular than ever. That night they gave a dinner in my honour at which, graciously, I removed

MY TERRIBLE HAT

my hat. Was I not founder of the Navy? Was I not an Immortal? Andrew basked in my reflected lustre, dreaming of greater glories still to come.

It was a wet party although Blago was supposed to be dry. A guard was thrown around the restaurant, perhaps to convince the populace that serious business was afoot. I was obliged by custom to drink a glass of vodka with each of the seventy guests. Starting with set, formal speeches, an exchange of flowery compliments, the meal soon began to degenerate into a rough-house. The guests disappeared one by one under the tables or fell among the dishes in sprawling stupors. The floor was littered with recumbent patriots, broken glass, bottles, and faded flowers. At last Andrew and I were the only ones left on our feet. I had swallowed glass after glass of the fiery liquor, meticulous to the end, determined to prove the superior resistance of Englishmen. I felt nothing save a premonition.

Andrew held a match to my cigar with a certain caution.

“What are you afraid of?” I asked.

“A backfire,” he said.

He gave me a curious look.

“Captain,” he said, “it is time to go home.”

[159]

ONE-ARM SUTTON

I made a formal bow, a little speech of farewell, and stepped slowly, with stately caution, across the fallen, to the door.

“Good night, gentlemen! Good night! Thank you for your hospitality. May the Navy prosper! Good night!”

Andrew gave me my hat. He opened the door, and we passed from the fetid atmosphere of the dining-hall into the cold night air.

My knees collapsed under me, and, as if struck by a club, I fell flat on my face. I was unconscious for twenty-four hours. And so a Navy was born!

CHAPTER II

Hibernation

THE newspapermen of Blago, particularly the editor of the *Amurski-Pravda*, had always been very friendly to us. They had undoubtedly helped us to sell the shoes. We decided to use them again.

I had purchased another Chandler car in Tei-hei-ho. More face! We were as magnificent as the Governor himself. With Andrew at the wheel, we drove to all the factories in Blago to discover, if we could, what the industrial situation actually was. We found the factories idle, for the simple reason that there were no available raw materials. There were a few good-sized shipyards and railway shops, but no work of any consequence was being done.

Armed with the facts, we started an editorial campaign in the newspapers. Andrew and I sat up at night

ONE-ARM SUTTON

scratching our heads and trying to get the hang of the thing. Literary style was a sealed book to us. But we turned out some fiery editorials, red-hot denunciations of the present system. We wanted to show the people that they were getting nowhere. Six months would see the end of the gold, the end of doles and commissions and irresponsibility. The citizens of Blago would then be faced with ruin and starvation, and there would be no cash left with which to buy materials for their factories.

We pointed out to them that the balance of the gold reserve should be used for this purpose.

Export was out of the question, of course. But if the unemployed were given work, if the local manufacturers met the local demand, time would be gained for the reorganization of the country; the farmers could be persuaded to raise crops and the gold mines put into operation again. The rouble was no good, but the peasants would be willing to exchange wheat for clothes and necessities, building materials, farm implements. . . .

We got results almost at once. The workmen wore as an emblem the device of the crossed hammers. We took as our slogan, "Use the Hammers! Make industry a fact, not a symbol!"

The Commissars began to place orders with us, each department vying with the other to put in the largest

HIBERNATION

order and to get the largest squeeze. Cheques for immense sums fluttered down on our desks like leaves, the Commissars adding a few naughts at random. They were so accustomed to dealing in hundreds of millions of roubles that a cheque for a few hundred thousand dollars looked niggardly. What were two or three naughts? Let's be generous with the boys!

Orders for a million and a half dollars poured in. They wanted iron bars, copper, zinc, tin, coke, pig iron, glass, and even more nails—two thousand tons of raw material. We received seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, cash down, the rest to be paid on delivery of the goods.

I banked the money in China, and set out at once, taking a river boat down the Amur, then up the Sungari to Harbin, going from there, by train, to Darien and across to Japan where I purchased the goods.

Our newspaper campaign had taken some time to carry through successfully; it was the middle of October before I got all of the cargo together in Harbin. History was being repeated. I chartered seven barges and two tugs and, travelling in the last string of barges myself, returned to Blago. I was spared the peculiar anxiety of the first trip, when my own goods went with

ONE-ARM SUTTON

me into the heart of a strange and inimical country. Now I was bringing up a cargo that belonged to the Reds and, while I had a sense of responsibility, I was not rendered sleepless by the approach of winter nor did I hang over the side of the barge watching for the first drift of ice-skim, the first hostile thickening of the river. We pushed ahead, racing against time. It was a point of pride with me to deliver the goods as I had promised my friends the Commissars.

I was therefore very much upset when one of the barges carrying three hundred and fifty tons of iron bars stuck fast on a sandbank, and had to be abandoned for fear the ice would overtake the entire string and both tugs. It was the same old story. Life in Siberia is divided into two periods—the long, dark, frozen winter, and the short summer—a summer so brief that there is hardly time to take off your overcoat before you have to put it on again.

We left the barge a hundred and fifty miles from Blago, and, as soon as I had delivered the balance of the cargo, I doubled back with one of the tugs in an effort to refloat it. We had a bad four days' fight. Sleet lashed the river, howling gales tore down from the north. We succeeded in moving the barge a few hundred feet, but the ice was running and the river fell six inches a day,

HIBERNATION

defeating us in spite of superhuman efforts. We finally abandoned the barge on the Chinese side. There was every possibility that the Russians would have spent all their money before it could be floated again in the spring, and it was just as well to leave it near a safe market. The Chinese agreed to guard the goods during the winter, and I hurried back to Blago one lap ahead of the ice.

The Commissars were surprised to see me.

“Why, hell,” they said, “you back? We didn’t expect you! None of the other purchasing agents ever showed up again!”

They had actually expected me to pocket the money and beat it out of the country. I was an anomaly—an honest man. They looked at me with amazement, as if I were a strange species, a sort of freak. “There goes Sutton! The damned fool went all the way to Japan, and brought back two thousand tons of raw material! Take a look at him, children! You’ll never see another!”

I had to laugh one day at Andrew, not because he was honest, but because he was singularly naïve. We were unloading and had to move one of our barges about a hundred yards down the river. I sent Andrew to talk to the barge-master. I saw them on the deck arguing and shouting, shaking their fists, waving their arms, stamp-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

ing and gesticulating like maniacs. Presently Andrew returned, very much crestfallen.

“The old blighter won’t move an inch, Captain,” he said. “He’s an obstinate devil. He says there’s too much ice, the anchor winch is broken, the current’s too fast. . . .”

“Hold hard, Andrew,” I said. “Let’s see if we can’t cure the old boy’s troubles. Take these two silver dollars. Give them to him and see how he reacts!”

Andrew glanced dubiously at the two dollars, shook his head, and returned to the encounter. For a man who boasted of being able to handle the Russians, he was very cautious. The barge-master was ready for him. He picked up a log of wood and advanced to meet Andrew with a growl, intending to continue the argument.

“Here,” Andrew said, and extended his palm, in which the two silver dollars nestled cosily.

The old Russky threw the log away and flung his arms about Andrew’s neck, embracing and kissing him.

“Why didn’t you show me that before?” he cried.

He moved the barge, and we proved again that there is one sure way to circumvent trouble in Russia.

We spent the next two months wrangling over the disposition of the cargo. A whole new batch of inspec-

HIBERNATION

tors had supplanted those we knew, and the process of winning them over with dollars and vodka had to be repeated. This would have troubled serious men, opposed to a little light-hearted entertainment, but Andrew and I knew the ropes. Our house rang again with laughter, and shook with the stamping feet of dancers. Corks popped. The piano jingled. Pretty girls and stalwart Reds enjoyed themselves at our expense, and in due course of time we got our final payments and the Commissars got their squeeze.

The period of hibernation set in. Like bears, the population huddled indoors, in dark, unventilated rooms, to suck their paws for another eight months. Strange rumours went around. The whole world, people said, was going Red. Soon the Utopia promised by the Communists would be realized universally, and Man would enjoy his Heaven while he was still on earth. Germany, France, England were swept by Bolshevism as by a prairie fire.

“And when England goes Red,” our friends said, “we will get all our coal free!”

Of course we got no news from the outside that had not been censored and garbled beyond recognition, but I knew that England had not gone Red and never would.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

I was not deceived by the propaganda that was fed to the Russians as gospel truth.

“Very well,” I said, “I will send any two volunteers to England to interview the Cardiff miners. Find out for yourselves, my friends, whether they are likely to work eight hours a day to supply you with free coal! All you’ll get will be a lump of coal in the eye!”

The editor of the *Amurski-Pravda* came to see me one day, chortling with delight because the circulation of his paper had jumped to about fifty thousand copies a day. As the population of Blago was nearly eighty thousand, of whom only five thousand could read, this was not only surprising, it was miraculous.

The truth was not flattering, so I did not tell him, then, that his sheet was being used by the Chinese shopkeepers as wrapping paper. The frugal Chinks, always with an eye out for a bargain, had discovered that a newspaper printed by the government at five roubles a copy could be used nicely to wrap up fish and chops. Paper bags were worth a good deal more. Perhaps this accounts for the Sunday editions of certain American journals. When the editor of the *Amurski-Pravda* discovered to what uses his precious sheet was being put, he shed tears of humiliation and disappointment.

HIBERNATION

The executions having decreased because of a shortage of suspected Whites, the people of Blago now turned to the theatre for amusement and stimulation. A really fine company was conscripted by the Reds from Moscow and gave performances in the Blago Opera House, a big, stuffy, musty auditorium heated by wood-burning stoves. The audience sat huddled together for warmth, wearing their coats and hats. The stink of boots and musty fur was almost unendurable.

The Commissars, a trifle more elegant, occupied boxes, and in the traditional manner bowed and smiled and exchanged pleasantries—quite as if they were at Covent Garden listening to Dame Melba in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Chaliapin sang—conscripted, too, I fancy—for an audience that somehow displeased him. He stood glaring at us, mopping his face with a big white silk handkerchief, while his accompanist, a scared little man, obviously embarrassed, made tentative beginnings.

Whenever some poor blighter in the audience sneezed, Chaliapin postponed the concert another five minutes. For a peasant, he was perilously autocratic and everyone was relieved when he finally opened his mouth and poured forth a torrent of sound, immense, shattering,

ONE-ARM SUTTON

magnificent. The crowd forgave him because he was a great artist. But I could not resist an occasional loud sneeze, just to see him glare. He had a positively imperialistic glare.

Since roubles were getting cheaper and cheaper, the management of the theatre found it impossible to costume the players or to pay for adequate scenery. The price of cloth was prohibitive. But as wood was exchangeable, tickets were offered in return for a log. A young fellow who invited two girls to the show had to bring three logs of wood! The theatre hour at Blago was like a woodcutters' convention.

The plays produced that winter were all of a typically morbid character: the sordid, depressing dramas of Ibsen, Tolstoy, Dostoievsky, Turgeniev, and Chekhov. I could understand the enthusiasm of the students, but when a children's matinee was given and I attended with a few youngsters of my acquaintance, I was horrified at the theatrical fare offered them. In the first act of the play a twelve-year-old child murdered his mother. In the second act, the sound of picks and shovels indicated that offstage a grave was being dug. The round-eyed Russian children were treated to the thud-thud of earth falling upon a corpse. I caught myself wondering what they would have thought of a Drury Lane pantomime, of

[170]

HIBERNATION

Little Tich, and the Fairy Godmother, and Marceline the Clown!

As the winter deepened, it grew colder and colder. A sort of rigidity settled over the city, a pall of bitter snow, frozen hard as stone. I saw a thing happen then that people will say is impossible. Yet, I have met Alaskans who insist that the same thing happens in Nome. So I will tell it for what it is worth.

I was driving along the Main Street of Blago, in a droshky, one day, when I heard two or three shots.

"I thought the fighting was over," I said to Andrew.

"It is," Andrew replied, "you heard horse-droppings."

He pointed. It was quite true. Fresh horse-droppings lay on the frozen road for a few moments, then leaped eight or ten feet into the air, exploding like giant fire-crackers. It was very funny, and I never failed to laugh at the phenomenon. Owing to the intense cold, the outside of the droppings froze instantly, and the gas on the inside expanded. Hence, the detonation and the bounce!

It is possible that neurasthenic reporters have mistaken these innocent explosions for rifle fire, and that the rest of the world has been misinformed as to the fighting in Russia.

CHAPTER III

The Tragedy of Blagovyeshchensk

WE celebrated Christmas of 1920 with the remnants of our White friends, on our own, not the Russian, feast day. With characteristic unreason, their Christmas comes thirteen days later. Andrew brought six bottles of champagne from the cellar; he put them in the snow outside the door to cool. Alas, when he went to get them, he found six round holes in the snow! Nothing was left, except a sort of Pompeian mould of six vanished bottles. Andrew fetched six more, and stood guard over them with a revolver while they cooled.

At midnight, when the fun was at its height, there came a resounding crash of rifle-butts on the door.

“Let us in, Citizens! Open to the People’s Guard! Open!”

The man at the piano played a nervous scale and

TRAGEDY OF BLAGOVYESHCHENSK

stopped, swinging around with a white, scared face. Two lively dancers scurried into a corner. Someone laughed hysterically.

Andrew glanced quickly at the company.

“Well, this doesn’t look too good,” he said. “We’re all Whites here, tonight!”

The knocking continued, now with a note of anger and threat. So I opened the door, and fifteen or twenty rough-looking soldiers pushed into the room. With fixed bayonets, they ordered us all to line up against the wall.

“What’s the meaning of this?” their leader barked. “Food? Drink? While Russia starves? I’m of a mind to shoot the lot of you for treachery!”

“We are celebrating Christmas,” I said politely. I did not care for the bayonet at my stomach.

“Christmas! Hell! That’s not for two weeks yet!”

“Tell them, Andrew, that I am an Englishman, and that we are celebrating the English Christmas.”

The leader shrugged his shoulders. He was an ugly brute, a bully. He straddled his legs, and let his eyes run over the frightened faces of my guests.

“Are you plotting against the Soviet?” he shouted.

“Invite him to join us,” I said quickly. “Be polite about it.”

ONE-ARM SUTTON

Andrew jerked his head back to free his throat of an embarrassing steel point, and with a sickly grin repeated my invitation!

“You are asked to share what food and drink there is, Comrades.”

The leader glanced over his shoulder at the loaded tables, the little Christmas tree gay with lighted candles, the fine array of dusty bottles. Perhaps he shrank from the bitter cold outside—the frozen white night beneath a sky like basalt. His tongue ran along his lips with the quick darting flash of a snake, and there came into his eyes a look of greed and longing, a look of shame-faced surrender to a powerful temptation. With a grim chuckle he ordered his men to stack arms. They joined us, giving no further thought to starving Russia.

I found such reactions more amusing than depressing. A country in a state of political and social metamorphosis, Russia presented more than one face to the observer. In retrospect, it seems to me that I had a very good time in Blago. This may have been due to my state of health, which was uniformly good, or to my incurable habit of seeing the funny side of things. Conditions in Blago were not always happy, of course. There was nothing humorous in the tragedy of the better-class families, people who were absolutely unprepared to meet

TRAGEDY OF BLAGOVYESHCHENSK

the humiliating conditions imposed upon them by the Reds. When we first arrived in Blago, the Whites were in control. The upper classes naturally held the reins.

There was in Blago at that time an exclusive girls' school, where the daughters of well-to-do families from all over Siberia were educated. It was a school very much like the typical English or American seminary, well run, dignified. The girls were sheltered, taught the graces and reticences of polite society, and instructed in music, the languages, and the less rigorous sciences. I often saw them, in 1919, walking with their teachers—pretty young things, red-cheeked, bright-eyed, gay and talkative as parakeets.

When the Reds swept over this city with fire and sword, murdering, threatening, stealing, and conscripting, all the Whites, who could, escaped across the river to China. They were forced, of course, to leave their houses and their acres, but they took with them, in the last frantic moments of panic, their jewels, perhaps a little silver, a few furs, the small, precious, intimate family trinkets. There was no time for more. Their lives were threatened. They belonged to an order that had long been hated and feared. No more could they boast of social superiority, immunity, safety. They fled. Some of the pupils in the girls' school escaped with their fam-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

ilies. Others, whose parents lived in the interior, had to go alone. The teachers opened the gates. It was "sauve qui peut!"

It was sad, terrible, afterwards, to meet these same girls in China, singing and dancing in foreign cabarets, earning their livelihood in low dives, unspeakable resorts patronized by the scum of the earth.

Andrew discovered two of them—daughters of a once prosperous land-owner in Blago—living with the Chinese in Tei-hei-ho. There was a look in their eyes which so wrung Andrew's sympathetic heart that he promised to help them to escape.

This he did, eventually. His manner of doing it was so spectacular that I shall not recount it here for fear of being accused of fabricating a melodrama.

The girls told us that their mother and father were living in Harbin, or so they believed.

I ordered my chauffeur to drive them across country to the Trans-Siberian railway—an expensive and difficult journey of about five hundred miles. I gave them enough money, besides, to get to Harbin, and live there while they carried on the search for their parents.

Andrew and I were disgusted when both girls reappeared three weeks later, travelling in style with two

TRAGEDY OF BLAGOVYESHCHENSK

Russian-Jew fur-traders, beastly fellows, worse than the Chinese from whom we had rescued them.

It was hard not to develop an ironical, if not a positively sardonic slant. These people were so often incomprehensible to me. Their reactions were unexpected, quixotic, maddening. I liked them, but I did not trust them. It was necessary to create an antidote: the transformation took place in one's mind, and eventually one laughed where perhaps tears were called for. A life-time of moral training had to be thrown into the discard in dealing with them. They neither understood nor respected abstract honour, self-sacrifice, charity. A friend became an enemy in a flash, and so delicately were the scales of rectitude balanced that, inexplicably, crime became heroism and thieving cleverness.

I was a long time coming to an understanding of my clients' methods. I remember particularly the first lesson, the first of many. I had purchased some furs from a Chinese merchant in Blago. I paid him in gold dust, pouring the dust on the table before him, so that he might appraise and weigh it in my presence. This he did with every indication of scrupulous honesty, while his Russian partner looked on. The Chinaman's nails were very long, lustrous, and dirty. He was proud of them.

[177]

ONE-ARM SUTTON

He flourished them for my benefit as he turned over the dust.

After every transaction I discovered that I was eight or ten dollars short. This surprised me, for I had detected nothing crooked. Then I noticed that the clever fellow was secreting gold in his nails, dropping it surreptitiously into the heavy folds of his skirt. One day I caught him suddenly by the scruff of his yellow neck, turned him upside down and shook out ten dollars' worth of dust.

He was not angry. Both he and the Russian regarded me simply as their match, and therefore an excellent fellow. Our business dealings were entirely amicable thereafter, and I acquired new dignity with them.

A few such experiences taught me that I must play their game in their own way unless I wanted to appear ridiculous. I enjoyed getting the best of them. On one occasion, Andrew was selling four or five big drums of alcohol to a Chinese merchant. This fellow insisted upon a test, to make certain that no water had slipped in by mistake. He brought with him a horn-rimmed student, product of the universities, spawn of civilization, who produced a long coil of rubber tubing. He was a smart alec, full of nonsense and theories, but thoroughly impractical. Instead of inserting the tube to the bottom

TRAGEDY OF BLAGOVYESHCHENSK

of the drum and siphoning out a sample, to our great delight he blew instead, puffing out his cheeks and emptying his lungs in a frantic effort to meet the requirements of his dignified office. He was an inspector and wanted us to know it. He blew and blew and blew. It was inevitable of course that the alcohol and water should be thoroughly mixed by this process. When he finally succeeded in drawing off a small amount, it passed the test perfectly and Andrew was richer by several hundred dollars. Neither of us suffered any twinges of conscience. We were simply beating the boys at their own game!

After Christmas we had another inspiration. The gold reserve was evaporating, and our chances of getting some of it were growing slimmer each day. We set in motion a new publicity campaign, this time calling attention to the great possibilities for successful gold mining in Siberia, and urging that the government buy ten modern dredges. We painted a glorious picture of Blago again a mining centre, enriched, as San Francisco was in the days of '49, by the resultant boom. Blago again on the map! Blago for the Blago-ites!

We guaranteed to get the dredges and to supply the skilled engineers to operate them. All we asked was one-third of the profits.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

Fair enough.

Blago was stirred by our appeal. Eighty thousand potential millionaires urged the immediate purchase of ten dredges.

We were given the contract. We were to receive a million in cash, a second million when the dredges were put in operation. I was to go to San Francisco, returning with the machinery and staff.

"This looks almost too good to be true," Andrew said. His eyes were big and black with excitement.

"It's a sure thing," I said.

We spent four days in the vaults of the government bank, weighing gold bars. Already, as we put aside that incredible million, we considered it our own. The future looked rosy. We allowed our imaginations to run riot, building castles, launching yachts, endowing universities. . . .

It was not our intention, of course, to bring back all ten of the dredges at first—we planned to bring five, thus to protect ourselves against a possible gold shortage—an inevitable disillusionment.

When at last the gold bars were set aside, we patted each other cordially on the back.

"Tomorrow," I said, "we'll move our million to the Chinese side, bank it there, and leave."

TRAGEDY OF BLAGOVYESHCHENSK

But a turn of luck changed our sure thing into a grave doubt.

Andrew came to me the next day in great excitement.

“They’ve called a meeting at the Opera House tonight, Captain! Maybe we won’t get our million, after all.”

“Why not?”

“Wait and see. Come along. It looks pretty bad to me.”

A thousand of the leading citizens of Blago gathered that night, summoned by the Communists to hear the impassioned speeches of two agitators from Moscow—men sent by the Red leaders in the capital for the express purpose of getting Blago’s gold reserve.

I did not understand much of what was being said, but I recognized the word “gold” repeated ominously.

The crowded theatre was electric with the emotions of the people. Swayed by the spouting, gesticulating agitators on the stage, they alternately shouted and wept. Tears rolled down their cheeks into their beards.

“What in God’s name are they saying, Andrew?” I asked.

“They are asking for the gold—our gold—all of it!”

“Why?”

ONE-ARM SUTTON

“They ask it for Mother Russia! Starving Mother Russia! And the crowd’s with them!”

“I know. I know. For God’s sake, Andrew, get up on your hind legs and tell them they’re mad! Tell them they’ll starve in six months! Tell them they need dredges! Get up! Get up!”

Andrew shook his head.

“They’d tear us to pieces. It would mean death. They’d turn the mob on us!”

To be on the side of the opposition in Russia in those unsteady days was to lose one’s life. I realized that Andrew was right. Forcing myself to remain in my seat, even to smile approvingly, I heard the resolution passed which deprived me of a fortune at one stroke of the pen.

The following day, sledge after sledge of gold was removed from the bank to the railway station, where it was loaded aboard a special train made up from the last of the wagons-lits and a few armoured cars.

A commission composed of ten citizens of Blago boarded the train amid the frenzied cheers and farewells of the People. Everyone wept. Who cared for tomorrow? This was a great, magnanimous gesture, a gift to Mother Russia, an offering to Moscow, food for patriots, food for Communism, food for Freedom!

Ten days later, the ragged, hungry, disgruntled

TRAGEDY OF BLAGOVYESHCHENSK

Commissars returned in a lousy box car. They had been thrown out by the Moscow Reds on their arrival, told to beat it. They were fools and not wanted!

The gold vanished into the maw of Red Russia.

Helpless, starving, like bewildered children, the people of Blago faced the future.

The gold was gone. Nevertheless the Commissars, with a fine flourish, wrote us a cheque for twenty-nine thousand dollars in payment for goods already delivered to them. This cheque came back to us from the Chinese bank with the cheering message: "No funds available." It was no wonder, then, that we found it advisable to have no further business dealings with the Soviet Government.

We had disposed of everything except the bargeload of iron bars that had been stored for several months on the Chinese side. The Russians could not buy this cargo for the simple reason that they could not pay for it. Because of an emotional debauch, they were penniless, already beginning to face the fact of hunger—there was a lean, wolfish look in their eyes that boded ill for their future.

"Let's go," I said to Andrew.

We moved to Tei-hei-ho.

CHAPTER IV
Across the Manchurian Plain

IT was then decided that we were to go to Shanghai, where my family awaited me, and that later Andrew was to return to Tei-hei-ho to watch our mutual interests there.

We had five hundred miles to go across country to the Trans-Siberian Railway. An impossible journey in summer, it could be accomplished during the winter by car at an average speed of thirty miles an hour. Hundreds of Chinese carts with lumbering wheels packed the snow down into a fairly smooth, hard surface, not a boulevard, exactly, but passable.

There were no gas stations along this highway, of course. Every motor had to carry enough gas and oil for the entire journey. There are only two or three towns on the Manchurian plain, and they offer no ac-

ACROSS THE MANCHURIAN PLAIN

commodations for the traveller. Since the country is infested by bandits, the trip from Tei-hei-ho to the railways is not exactly a Cook's tour to be undertaken lightly for pleasure.

The bandits are well armed. They work in gangs, efficient, well-organized battalions of two or three hundred men. Banditry is a business in this part of China. It has its spy system, its code, its designated leaders. No one is safe from the swift attacks of these ruthless, determined fellows. Sporadic efforts are made to clear the infested districts. After a particularly vicious attack against a village, troops are sent out. But there is never much enthusiasm in China for a purely magnanimous military expedition; no one looks to the government for protection, and the bandits continue to flourish, swooping down on farms and villages, terrorizing the countryside, leaving ruin in their wake.

Andrew and I set out from Tei-hei-ho before dawn one morning, accompanied by a Russian chauffeur who declared that he could drive to Harbin blindfolded if necessary, and our Chinese comprador, a sort of interpreter-head-office-generally-handy-man who did all our business with the Chinese. We carried with us over two hundred thousand dollars in gold, because I refused to pay the twenty thousand dollars the Chinese banks

ONE-ARM SUTTON

demanded for credit transmission fees during the winter months. For protection against possible attacks by the Hun-Huntzes, we took two rifles, three revolvers, and an automatic.

We had been careful not to advise anyone of the exact hour of our departure. A telegraph line follows the snow-packed road across country, and the bandits keep in constant communication with friends at the terminals, who inform them through an elaborate system of coded messages the exact hour when a car leaves and when it may be expected to pass a given point.

We pulled out at three in the morning in our touring Chandler with the top down, the Russian chauffeur at the wheel, Andrew, the comprador, and myself half buried in hay on the rear seat. The gold was carefully stored, and we were fairly certain that no one saw our swift flight. The cold was intense. The old city of Tei-hei-ho huddled in its narrow, dark streets, unseeing, unheeding. As always when I leave a place that has become familiar through long association, I felt a certain regret, a remote tug at the heart strings. Behind us lay Blago, frozen into its defeat and lassitude; before me lay a new experience in an unfamiliar land. It was fortunate that I could not see what awaited me. I might have turned back, to cast my lot with the Blago-ites—

ACROSS THE MANCHURIAN PLAIN

to stay where I knew the ropes, and was considered a person of consequence.

In my pocket I had the stumer cheque for twenty-nine thousand dollars—proof that I had not fleeced the Reds! Andrew sold the cargo of iron bars on his return, but at a loss, of course. The Bolsheviks had no use for them. The raw material I had been at such pains to bring them lay untouched on the beach for two or three years, while the Blago factories remained idle and the workmen, spoiled by the dole system, loafed, starved, and complained of fate. Eventually the material was resold for food, sacrificed at a quarter of its worth, because the Reds were too lazy to make use of it. This fact alone is an indictment of the system.

We drove for two or three hours toward the Khin-gan Mountains, a lofty chain that runs parallel with the Amur River on the Chinese side. At dawn we reached the summit; below us lay the Manchurian plain, a vast expanse of snow broken by dark forests and traced by the erratic coils of small, frozen streams. We saw no towns, no farms. No friendly cocks greeted the dawn. Snow. Silence. An expanse of white, gilded by the oblique rays of the rising sun, desolate, lonely.

At the top of the pass we paused before a small Chinese temple to pay our respects, being pious men of

ONE-ARM SUTTON

various and conflicting faiths. An old priest came out to greet us. To him we made cash offering in return for a blessing, three silver dollars for an extra special blessing, a thrice-potent prayer for a safe journey. We were going down into the Hun-Huntze's territory, and three dollars were little enough to assure us a personal intercession with whatever deity guides the footsteps of travellers in a hostile land.

The old priest, withered, dry as a gourd, retreated to his altar to plead for us. To plead three dollars' worth! And we, departing blessed and sanctified, drove a hundred yards down the hillside and blew out a rear tire!

"Prayer no good!" the comprador shrieked. "Priest belong bad man. Belong cheat!"

He leaped out of the car and sprinted back along the slippery trail to recover the three silver dollars.

But the priest, perhaps doubtful of his own power, had locked the temple door. He failed to answer the outraged comprador's lusty demands for an immediate refund.

We changed the left rear wheel and started down again, dropping from level to level, sliding and skidding perilously on the frozen road, until we reached the great Manchurian plain. All day we drove across this white expanse, not without alarms and excursions of our own.

ACROSS THE MANCHURIAN PLAIN

We met few travellers; an occasional cart; very rarely, another car. On these occasions we stopped, seizing our rifles, while one of us got out and advanced on foot to meet the strangers. It was dangerous to pass until we had made certain that we were not dealing with Hun-Huntzes in disguise. Like cautious dogs, bristling with suspicion, we sidled toward each other. A small cavalry unit might be a gang of cut-throats out for loot, since both bandits and soldiers wore tattered uniforms and rode Mongolian ponies—sturdy, rough little animals capable of extraordinary endurance.

Challenges and questions were exchanged before we dared to pass. Whenever the road skirted a forest, we made wide detours on the lookout for an ambush.

The cold was so intense that, in spite of our furs and our deep bed of hay, we were occasionally forced to stop the car and run around it like maniacs, stamping, slapping our arms, to keep ourselves from serious frostbite.

Toward night we came to a fair-sized town called Mergen. We had seen no evidences of the Hun-Huntzes, and congratulated ourselves that we had escaped an attack. When we drove into the town, we found the place in an uproar. Bells were ringing. Men were running in all directions, shouting and gesticulating.

“Are they welcoming us?” I said. “Has our repu-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

tation gone ahead of us? Are they glad to see us?"

The comprador lacked a sense of humour. He answered us gravely that Mergen had not turned out for the likes of us. There must be serious trouble afoot. He would inquire.

It seemed that Mergen was arming herself. The whole male population had been called out to prepare for a possible attack by a gang of Hun-Huntzes.

A town about three miles away had been surprised during the day and was even now occupied by the bandits, who were looting it at their leisure.

There were two hundred soldiers in Mergen, sons of the most prosperous business men, who had formed a sort of militia. Besides these trained youngsters, a thousand citizens had armed themselves with old muzzle-loaders, pikes, and rusty swords. They held themselves in readiness to defend the city.

When the comprador explained the situation to me, I suggested that we go to the rescue. Why not? We had a fast car, rifles, and an automatic. I was certain that we could drive the bandits out in a few minutes. I was eager to try it, anyhow.

The comprador shook his head.

"No, master," he said. "No! No! Stay here! No can do!"

ACROSS THE MANCHURIAN PLAIN

He went on to explain, in a torrent of pidgin-English, that, while Mergen might arm, her citizens must not go to their neighbours' rescue. Such an attack against the Hun-Huntzes would be considered unprovoked, and retaliation would be swift and merciless, immediate, dreadful, complete. They would come with larger forces and simply wipe Mergen and all her citizens off the map. In China, the comprador said, it is a case of each town for itself, each village for itself, each man for himself!

This, it seems to me, explains the utter lack of cohesion in China. The Chinese have no racial unity of spirit, no community interest, no national pride or ambition. A Chinese adorns his own dwelling; behind his garden wall there is beauty and harmony; but he will not clean the street before his gate. He steps through refuse to get to his own door. Bridges and roads and culverts are left in disrepair because no one will claim the responsibility of keeping them in order. Roads are bad because they belong, not to the individual, but to the State.

The Chinese are as indifferent to the public good as they are to the public woe. They step around an injured man, drawing their skirts aside. They seem to care nothing for death, for poverty, for suffering. It is as if they did not register these images. They feel the poetic and

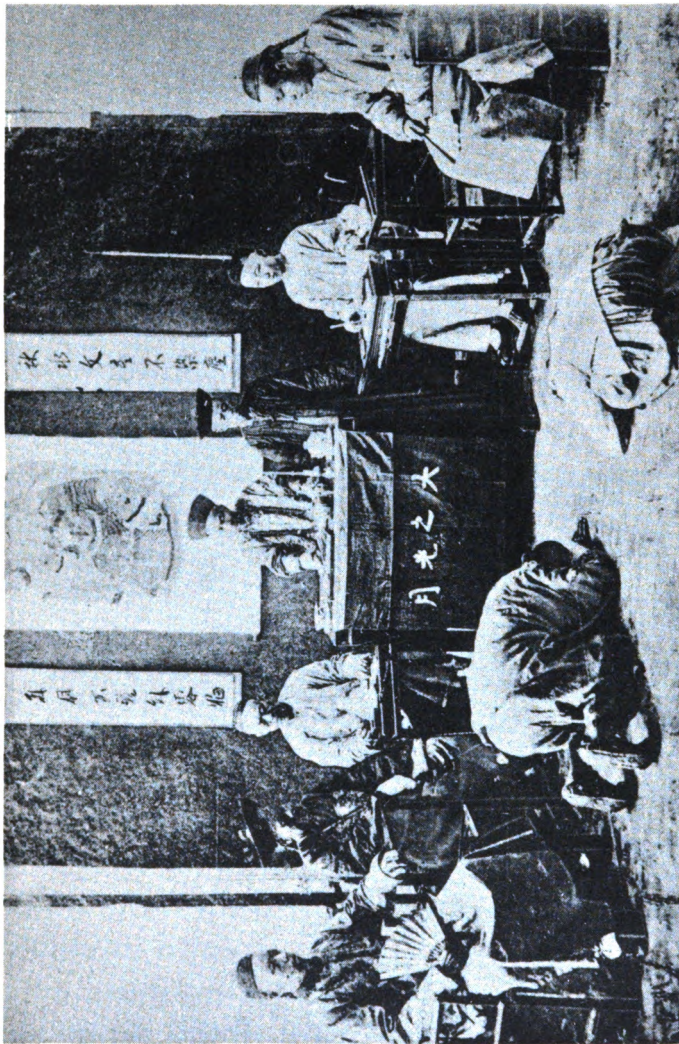
ONE-ARM SUTTON

wistful pain of unrequited love, the gentle woe of poets and maidens, and yet witness a gruesome execution without a qualm.

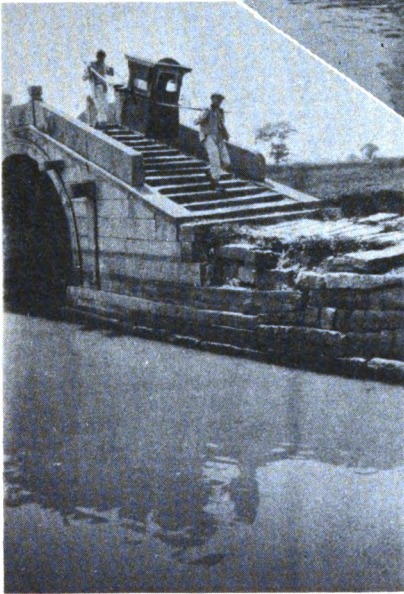
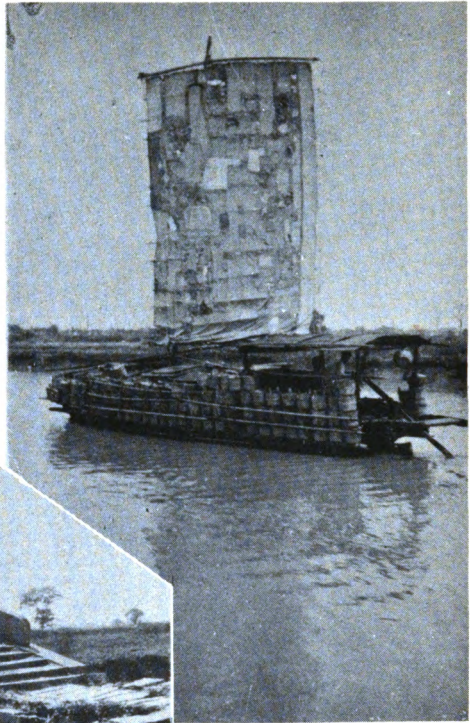
Mergen did not want our help against the Hun-Huntzes so long as they remained three miles away. The suffering of their neighbours caused these good citizens no regret. Distance had automatically erased such abstract and ridiculous emotions as pity and indignation. My offer of a punitive expedition was met with amazement, a stony, hostile silence.

We spent the night there, taking turns about to guard the gold. All night the shouting and the ringing of bells continued. In the morning we saw the bandits crossing the plain, moving away from the scene of their crime with loaded pack animals and carts—some of the men on foot, others mounted, a long procession silhouetted against the blinding whiteness of the snow. I could have run out with the Chandler and the automatic and, by simply passing up and down the line at a safe distance, could have wiped them out. As it was, no one thought of interfering. The Hun-Huntzes took everything—crops, winter food supplies, cloth, silver, animals. . . . The villagers were left desolate and starving. . . .

“Why should we be interested?” the people of Mer-



CHINESE COURT IN HELAMPO



TRAVEL IN CHINA:
JUNK AND PALANQUIN

ACROSS THE MANCHURIAN PLAIN

gen said with a shrug. "Our turn will be next perhaps."

By a curious mental twist they were unable to see the wisdom of a cohesive autonomy, a China united, solidified. They were the victims of an apparently deliberate stupidity, a weakness, a fallacious belief that has defeated them for hundreds of years, and in all probability will defeat them for hundreds of years to come.

Late that afternoon we decided to drive straight through to the railway, where we intended to board a train for the balance of the journey to Harbin.

The Russian chauffeur answered us that he could find the way. In fact, there was only one road. "It would be impossible," he said, "to miss it."

We drove all night, taking turns at the wheel. I have never felt such cold. Yet we were glad that we were not travelling in a closed car. It is no joke to be attacked by bandits, and the least you can do is to give yourself elbow-room and a clear lookout on all sides. We passed through dark woods, between steep banks, and I confess I did not like the feeling that armed men might be waiting for us, crouching behind trees and rocks or huge drifts of snow. In spite of two feet of hay in the bottom of the car, we were half frozen. Thirty miles an hour in an open car with the thermometer at forty below is a test of endurance. When I am tempted to indulge in

ONE-ARM SUTTON

back-seat driving, I remind myself of that journey from Mergen to Tsitsihar. The road was a ribbon of ice. We slept, woke again with a start, in a nightmare of discomfort and dread.

"We ought to be in Tsitsihar pretty soon," I said, after twelve hours of this.

The Russian chauffeur speeded up. "Yes," he said, "half an hour now! Ten miles!"

Through stiff lips we managed a cheer.

Then, as luck would have it, came the dawn! We were supposed to be travelling due south.

"Good God, Andrew," I said, "the sun's rising in the west! We're going north!"

Andrew stared.

The sun was on our right. It should have been on our left! This was too much, even in China, where the men wear skirts, and the women wear trousers, and everything is the wrong way around.

"Stop the car," Andrew said.

The chauffeur obeyed. I thought I detected in the startled turn of his head a certain shame and amazement. He, too, stared at the sun as if he could not believe his eyes.

"I must have lost my way," he said. "I don't know where I am. And that's a fact."

ACROSS THE MANCHURIAN PLAIN

Somewhere back on that white and featureless expanse of snow we had taken a wrong turn, following the dim tracks of farm carts or the half-obliterated trail of a cavalry unit on the march. We were two hundred and fifty miles off our road, and we were down to our last two or three gallons of gas!

Collectively and singly we cursed the Russian. We were stranded. No doubt of it.

I had no intention of abandoning that two hundred thousand dollars! I preferred to die with it, frozen to my fortune. I said so.

Andrew and the comprador were sympathetic but doubtful. They took the rifles and scouted ahead, returning in an hour or so with a cart and four ponies. They had come upon a shepherd's hut, the primitive dwelling of people who had never seen an automobile or a white man, and who were at first terrified by Andrew's appearance; two or three of them followed in the wake of the cart to stare open-mouthed at the mysterious machine. They had never heard of Tsitsihar, of Harbin, or of Blago. In fact, I doubt whether they knew that they were living in China. Ragged, dirty, ignorant, they tended flocks in summer and in winter dug themselves in.

CHAPTER V
The Armourer's Song

WE used their cart for luggage, and travelled on foot ourselves. Walking was preferable to riding in a cart whose wheels were octagonal!

We had two hundred and fifty miles to go—an easy trip in a swift high-powered car over good roads. It took us eight days and nights, plodding slowly beside the cumbersome, squeaking cart, stopping for food at shepherds' huts, and sleeping wherever we could find shelter.

Yet we arrived at Tsitsihar as fit as fiddles, hard as nails, cheerful, and full of hope. We had travelled through a part of the country that was too poor to support a band of respectable Hun-Huntzes. We had eaten food that would most certainly have killed us had we touched it at home. We tramped into Tsitsihar singing.

[196]

THE ARMOURER'S SONG

Is there not a suggestion here for travelling salesmen, for the parboiled victims of Pullman cars and quick-lunch counters?

Tsitsihar is a town of a hundred thousand people, ten or fifteen miles from the Trans-Siberian Railway; or, more exactly, the Chinese-Eastern Railway which crosses China and joins the Trans-Siberian on to Moscow and Berlin.

We sent the chauffeur back with the cart loaded with gasoline. He was to drive the car into Tsitsihar as soon as possible. I could not help wondering whether the shepherd's family were not by this time using the Chandler as a bedroom, parlour, and bath.

Our next move was to call on the Governor of the province. We found him very civil. He questioned us at length concerning our activities in Blago, and, when I told him of the Hun-Huntzes' attack on my barges, the theft of my clothes, and the beating I received, he presented me with a cheque for a thousand dollars to cover the damages!

It was not, I discovered, an act of courtesy. He was not at all sorry for me, nor had his heart been wrung by the story of my tarpaulin suit and my terrible hat. He was afraid that I might be going to Peking to make a complaint; and, since a year and a half ago I had been

ONE-ARM SUTTON

robbed in his province, he was taking no chances of reprimand.

“Conditions are much better,” he told me. “You can travel anywhere in my province today in perfect safety. As a matter of fact, you are as safe on the Manchurian plain as you would be in the streets of London. My soldiers are everywhere. Tsitsihar is a city policed by devoted, loyal troops.” He paused, glanced at his magnificent nails, and said gently: “I am informed that you left Tei-hei-ho carrying rifles, revolvers, and an automatic. I object very much to this show of arms in a peaceful country. I offer the foreign traveller protection and perfect security. This is my boast, my pride. I do not care for the implied criticism—you understand—an Englishman in what is practically an armoured car. . . .”

I smiled.

“Your Excellency,” I said, “your criticism is well founded, but I am reminded of an old Russian story.

“Once there was a ship’s captain who despaired of ridding his ship of rats. He set traps and scattered poison. But the rats increased, causing great damage to his cargo, and to his peace of mind. He therefore called a priest and said to the holy man: ‘I beg of you to invoke the aid of God to rid me of these pests.’ The priest

THE ARMOURER'S SONG

sprinkled the deck with holy water. He knelt and prayed, long and earnestly.

“When he had finished, he went down to the captain’s cabin, and they had a cigar and a glass of vodka together, according to the custom of that country. The priest said: ‘Captain, I have done my best. There is no doubt that my prayers will have the desired effect. But may I suggest, as a little extra precaution, that you buy a couple of cats and loose them in the hold?’ ”

The Governor saw my point. A strange light, a sort of humorous flash, passed across the dark brilliance of his eyes. Bowing formally, he said: “Very well. You may keep your rifles—your cats—Captain Sutton. I only hope that, while you are in China, you will have no occasion to use them!”

We hired a ramshackle car and drove fifteen miles farther to the railway. Discovering a Russian restaurant in the town, we stopped to dine before going to the station to board our train. I thought the proprietor seemed very solicitous. He hovered about the table, flicking at imaginary crumbs with a soiled napkin, and regarding us out of wide, dark eyes full of a mournful sympathy.

When we rose to leave, he followed us to the door and whispered: “Don’t go to the station unless you go to-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

gether. And keep a sharp lookout. There's danger. Great danger!"

"Danger?" I said. "What possible danger could there be in a town like this? We're armed, and we're able-bodied."

He glanced over his shoulder.

"The plague," he said.

"I'm not afraid of the plague," I said.

"Sssh! the police. . . ."

"The police? What are you driving at?"

"The police get five dollars from the government for every plague case they report. A lone traveller isn't safe. He may have the plague or he may not. He may be perfectly healthy, like yourselves. The police hit him on the head anyway, and drag his body to the burning place. They then turn in their report—plague case—and get five dollars! You understand? I warn you, gentlemen!"

"Thank you," I said. "I understand."

Andrew and I walked very briskly to the station, reminding ourselves that Chicago was a sylvan retreat compared to this town!

At midnight the train came in, and we clambered aboard with our luggage. It was the usual fusty Russian train, three hours late, crowded, unsanitary. The

THE ARMOURER'S SONG

entire railway system had of course been disorganized by the trouble in Soviet Russia, but travel had not been affected—the long chain of cars overflowed with people. Crowds stood in the corridors, jammed the compartments, slept in huddled heaps anywhere and everywhere. The odour of stale humanity was sickening. We sought the conductor and explained that we were going all the way through to Harbin and wanted a sleeping compartment. He shrugged his shoulders, dusting off the palm of his hand on his soiled tunic.

“Here,” I said, “take this silver, and find us a place.”

His eyes changed.

“Well,” he said, “I’ll try.”

And tapping at a locked door, he said: “There’s only one man in here. I’ll get you in.”

A roaring voice answered his timid, deprecatory knock.

“Who’s there?”

“Two travellers, desiring room. Open, please, sir.”

A tremendous voice, the voice of a bull, stentorian, terrific, roared: “Get away from that door or I’ll shoot through the panel!”

“Let’s go,” Andrew said. “It must be a big official, somebody of importance.”

So we ousted five or six Chinese who were asleep in

ONE-ARM SUTTON

the next compartment and, feeling satisfied that we had proved our racial superiority, dozed in great discomfort through the night.

In the morning, still groggy, half awake, I heard a scrimmage in the corridor. Andrew, who had brooded considerably over the affair, had been waiting outside the big official's door. When it opened, disclosing not a giant but a timorous red-headed Jew, less than five feet high, Andrew seized him by the seat of his pants and rushed him, howling and roaring, the length of the corridor.

Andrew was much happier after this encounter.

For a little man, the Jew had the biggest voice I have ever heard. Of course he had no revolver. He had bluffed us out of our places like the miserable little hound he was.

PART V

CHAPTER I

Stokes Guns for China

I LEFT Andrew at Harbin, and went on to Shanghai, where I joined my wife and children.

Russia was finished for me. I had to have a new field for my endeavours.

Shanghai was quite agreeable. We were entertained, charmingly, in the foreign community and began to feel that life in this European oasis could be very pleasant indeed. One can enjoy oneself in a variety of ways. There are gay restaurants and dance halls for the frivolous-minded, modern hotels for the tourist who takes his comfort seriously, clubs for the man of affairs, racing, polo, and gambling for those who like a game of chance, and all the gossip, scandal, intrigue, and petty diplomacy of an international bazaar. Wherever I went I observed the placid self-satisfaction and ob-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

vious prosperity of my fellow-countrymen. Lazy chaps, they were, bilious, opinionated, slow-minded, but they seemed to get along very well. They lived in large, airy, comfortable houses, raced their own ponies, drank too much, played cards for high stakes, and still had time for interminable hours of racing chatter. Ponies were the ruling passion of their lives.

“Well,” I said to myself, “if these fellows can earn a living in Shanghai, why shouldn’t I?”

I had some three hundred thousand dollars with which to play. I was healthy, young, hard as nails, and full of confidence in my ability to beat my slightly unfit compatriots at their own game. I speculated recklessly in dock shares—sound stock, I thought, safe as government bonds. In three months, the jaundiced, yellow-eyed capitalists of Shanghai had all of my money, and I was rich only in experience.

My family returned to England. I had nothing but an assortment of rapidly falling stock, and a sixty-thousand-dollar overdraft which the bank informed me must either be reduced or liquidated within six months.

I felt like kicking myself. My self-confidence had suffered a setback. I was no longer Citizen Sutton of Blago, but a man on the lookout for a job. And there were no jobs in Shanghai that would bring me more

STOKES GUNS FOR CHINA

than two hundred dollars a month. I needed two thousand at least.

I thought: "What's the use of being sorry for myself? There's more money in the world. I'll go after it."

All China was fighting. It seemed to be a most profitable business. I knew how to make and use guns. Why not profit by my knowledge?

I hummed to myself the *Armourer's Song*, from *Robin Hood*:

The Sword is a weapon to conquer fields ;
I honour the man who shakes it ;
But naught is the lad who the broadsword wields
Compared to the lad who makes it.

Then huzzah for the valiant, the squire or the knight,
Who loveth the battle-cry !
But here's to the swordsman that maketh them fight,
The Armourer, that is *I!*

Then I set out to look for a War Lord whom I might serve and from whom I might be able to extract sixty thousand dollars in six months!

The problem was, then, to evolve a weapon such as no one else had ever offered to my hypothetical War Lord. It would not do to tread where others had already

ONE-ARM SUTTON

trodden before me. I must take a new way and beat a path for myself.

To import arms into China was illegal. But to manufacture arms for a warring faction was legitimate. This I determined to do.

“China,” I thought, “is a country without good roads. Her wars are fought along the railroads or the rivers, since wheeled field-guns are not easy to move about and have to be transported by rail or by boat. I must build a gun that can be carried coolie-back wherever a man is able to walk. . . .”

In England and America during the last years of the War I had made a particular study of the Stokes gun—a light trench-mortar shooting a twelve-pound shell and weighing seventy or eighty pounds. This gun, as developed in Europe, was capable of firing up to twenty-five rounds a minute, but had a range of only eight hundred yards, and was therefore useless in China, since the Chinese prefer to fight at least a mile apart. The manufacturers, instead of simplifying the Stokes gun, added many refinements and complications; it became an elaborate instrument of death; no one could handle it successfully who was not intelligent, thoroughly instructed to its use. Range-finders are practically unknown to the Chinese, who cannot, as a general rule, either read or

STOKES GUNS FOR CHINA

write, and are easily confused by the mysteries of the modern scientist.

My problem was to find a gun that was easy to manufacture and operate, that would shoot at least a mile, and that would make a great smoke and noise on explosion. The Chinese are not easily disturbed by rifle fire. Bullets don't frighten them. Sssz!! Just another fly! But they are terrified by bombs that explode with a roar, and kick up a lot of dust! I therefore made it my object to build a gun that would be as easy to handle as an umbrella and as noisy as a broadside. I planned to give my War Lord's army lots of fun and not too much danger. A Stokes gun for every man and let 'em have it!

Yet it had to be a gun that could be turned out in primitive foundries and workshops, with such equipment as King Solomon used, centuries ago, to make swords and catapults. In the interior of China there have been no changes in the processes of manufacture for thousands of years.

The Stokes shell used during the War consisted of a cylinder, fitted with a very complicated fuse, which tumbled over and over in the air and travelled some seven or eight hundred yards. Instead, I had to produce a fish-shaped cast-iron shell fitted with wings, a shell

ONE-ARM SUTTON

that would fly two or three thousand yards and land on its nose, eliminating the need for an elaborate fuse. Rifling the barrels was too difficult.

I built my first gun in a Shanghai factory. I had no shells for it, but, since there was no sale for the gun in Shanghai, I decided to go to Hankow, and to complete the job there.

Hankow was about four days distant, six hundred miles or so up the Yangtze River by steamer. It was, at that time, the headquarters of Wu-Pei-Fu, who controlled nearly the whole of Central China, a War Lord after my fancy—a man of great personal courage, integrity, and ambition, a popular hero, respected, feared, and obeyed by his troops.

I arrived in Hankow in the autumn, and spent the next two months making shells for my gun and trying them out. This was not always easy of accomplishment. The farmers objected violently to such unofficial tests. Who was I, and by what right did I terrify and endanger the innocent people of this peaceful countryside? Who was I to come from afar with my silly gun and make a great stink and a great danger? I must go! I was an interloper! They crowded around me, mumbling and cursing.

I offered fifty cents to every farmer on whose prop-

STOKES GUNS FOR CHINA

erty one of my sand-filled shells happened to fall. As the farms were never more than two or three acres in extent, many arguments ensued as to who should receive the bonus. The farmers rushed out to every fallen shell, to measure, compute, and howl. Bribes and rewards were of little avail. I was pestered and annoyed by the losers every time I tested my gun.

One woman, complaining that I had damaged her crops, held her three-months-old baby in front of the gun, shrieking, "You shall not shoot again! Dog! Son of a dog!! Leave us in peace!"

Whenever I found a satisfactory gun-emplacement, it was defaced, ruined; buckets of manure were poured at my feet; I had to move to another, in self-defence. Things were not so easy for the blithe armourer, after all!

When at last I got the gun and the shells to my liking, I began in earnest to arrange for an interview with Wu-Pei-Fu. To this end, I engaged an interpreter, a smooth-tongued fellow, son of an Englishman and a Chinese amah, who combined the bad qualities of both races, and had besides the curious charm and elusive mystery of the true Eurasian. I had been warned that he was clever, untrustworthy, and quite likely to betray me. But I had so recently dealt with the Soviet Govern-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

ment that I felt the need of a sharp fellow to help me now in my business with the Chinese. I could not speak the language. Their mentality was an unknown quality to me. I knew nothing of them save what I had learned from the foreigners in Shanghai, and from those misleading books written by enthusiastic admirers of the Chinese who arrive at their romantic conclusions leaning on the Shanghai Club bar.

My interpreter—whose name must remain out of this story—assured me that he would devote his life to my service, and that if necessary he would die for me. He had been born, he had grown to man's estate, he now lived and breathed, for one purpose only—to listen to my words of wisdom, to obey me and serve me. I had only to command. The price for this devotion was so and so. . . .

An interview with Wu-Pei-Fu was arranged. We met in his Yamen in the outskirts of Hankow; and there, in his courtyard, in the presence of his staff and a motley group of soldiers, I displayed my gun and explained why it was particularly suited to his needs. It was all I could do to prevent him from firing the mortar then and there.

“Shoot 'em over the town,” he said, “and let's see how they go!”

STOKES GUNS FOR CHINA

I was able to prevent this unnecessary massacre of non-combatants only after the most diplomatic arguments and polite subterfuges. I believe Wu-Pei-Fu thought I had a weak stomach. He could not understand my reluctance to destroy a few houses, a few citizens of Hankow. He regarded me with an enigmatic expression, a deliberate appraisal of what he probably considered my squeamishness. Then he dismissed me, turning on his heel with a characteristic, quick salute.

As he turned away, he little thought that three years later, in his final test of strength with Chang Tso-Lin, the War Lord of the North, these same guns built by the same insignificant foreigner would defeat and crush his army of five hundred thousand men. Because of this very weapon he would be a fugitive, flying from his enemy on a battleship, his impregnable Great Wall stormed, a hundred thousand of his troops left prisoners, all his war material lost, and his reputation as China's greatest general ruined.

Then for over a month negotiations lagged. I discovered later that my interpreter had quoted double the price I asked in spite of the fact that I had promised him a generous commission. A simple business transaction is beyond the power of the average Chinaman. There must be bargaining, bickering, retreat and ad-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

vance, threat and cajoling, before a price can be arrived at and a contract arranged for. A direct, unequivocal statement of fact is offensive to the Chinese. They recoil before the sort of frankness we consider essential in business.

My interpreter could not understand my impatience. He was out to make money at my expense, and the process—to be enjoyable—must be lengthy. Otherwise, why go to the trouble of deceiving me?

One day he came to me with many suave compliments and disarming smiles and said: "You can do no business with Marshal Wu-Pei-Fu unless you enlist outside interest. The Marshal depends very much on the advice of his relatives and friends. I suggest that you talk to his blood-brother, the ex-Governor of Honan. He might possibly intercede in your behalf—you understand?"

I was beginning to weary of postponements, so I said: "Very well. Bring the ex-Governor of Honan to see me. I'll convince him!"

"In the proper Chinese way, Captain?"

"Certainly."

"Something in it for him? Eh?"

"Of course."

"Very well. Tomorrow I'll bring him."

Surely enough, the next afternoon a glittering limou-

STOKES GUNS FOR CHINA

sine stopped before my door, and there descended from it with regal dignity a most magnificent Chinaman. He had the pale, clear-cut features of a Mandarin, the drooping, shadowed eyes behind blue spectacles, the slender hands holding with a certain rigid grace and elegance a little painted fan. He wore silk clothes, a Mandarin's hat with its red button, embroidered shoes. Altogether, a most distinguished-looking person.

We met very formally, bowing, smiling, exchanging all the courtesies, while my interpreter, alternately assuming his European and Asiatic personalities as a lightning-change artist whips out of one coat into another, repeated my guest's compliments and my own banalities with equal suavity. For an hour the three of us talked around and about the issue. Finally, over ceremonial cups of tea, it became evident that the ex-Governor of Honan demanded twenty-five thousand dollars for his services. He would be glad, it seemed, to intercede for me with his blood-brother, Wu-Pei-Fu, in exchange for this insignificant sum of money.

When he had gone, I saw clearly that at this rate I would be doing all the work and the intermediaries getting all the profits. I decided to forgo the services of the ex-Governor of Honan. A year later there was a curious sequel to this encounter.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

Back again in Hankow, after a trip up the Yangtze, I called at my interpreter's house. I do not at this distance recall why, unless it was that I wanted to kick him in the seat of his well-creased European pants. I rang the bell, and the door was opened at once by his Number One boy, a slim, pale fellow in servant's clothes. I recognized at a glance the aristocratic ex-Governor of Honan! The encounter embarrassed him, but in the end he confessed, with many self-conscious titters, that he had received five dollars for his excellent performance as the wholly mythical ex-Governor of Honan. The interpreter had expected to make twenty-five thousand out of the hoax!

"He lose; I win!" the Number One boy giggled.

Not suspecting Wu-Pei-Fu's true reason for ignoring me and my Stokes gun, I stayed on in Hankow. There was nothing in particular to do there, so I went in for football—not so bad at forty—spending my time running around a race-course to get into training. After the most strenuous efforts in competition with two hundred younger men, I won my place on the Rugby fifteen and played in the big match of the year against Shanghai. I had left my hook behind me in Blago, but I found that, once I got possession of the ball, I could protect it by sheer height and weight. I did not miss my hand.

[216]

STOKES GUNS FOR CHINA

And I got more satisfaction out of making the Hankow team than I ever did winning my house-cap at Eton.

There is something peculiarly gratifying in the fact of physical fitness. I am convinced that discouragement and worry are diseases that can be defeated only by strenuous physical training. Hope returns to the most pessimistic failure when he finds that he can stand on his head, turn cartwheels, and touch his toes twenty times without losing his breath!

One day a well-dressed Chinaman called at my flat in Hankow.

"I am a General," he said. "I come from the Province of Szechwan."

This meant nothing to me. I had never heard of Szechwan.

"I was sent to you by the Governor of the Province," the stranger explained. "News travels fast in China. It travels in curious ways. We in Szechwan know that you have an excellent gun. . . ."

He produced a map which he spread before me upon my desk, unrolling it with the flourishing, theatrical gesture of a true promoter. Placing his finger on a little yellow patch, he said:

"The province of Szechwan, sir! Two thousand miles up the Yangtze River, bordering on Tibet!"

ONE-ARM SUTTON

I could not see the sixty thousand dollars I needed coming from that tiny pin-prick on the map of China. I said nothing. But I must have looked both doubtful and amused, for he said quickly:

“There are sixty-seven million people in Szechwan, sir! Twice the population of your England!”

CHAPTER II

Chung-king, City of the Rats

I MADE a quick calculation:

“Sixty-seven million people,” I thought. “A tenth of a cent from each person would bring me sixty-seven thousand dollars, more than enough to cover my overdraft at the bank in Shanghai! Surely my services are worth a tenth of a cent to the people of Szechwan!”

The General politely awaited my reply. He had the smiling self-complacence of a man who is sure of his ground. But I could not be certain that he meant business. Therefore I said: “Do you play poker, General?”

His eyes brightened. There came into his face the eager delight of the inveterate card-player who is invited to join a game.

“I am the best poker-player in Szechwan,” he said, bowing.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

“Then you know that it is customary to put up an ante?”

I turned to the map, tracing with the tip of my finger the tortuous coils of the Yangtze.

“Your province is a long way from Hankow, General. It may be easy to get in, but it would be hard to get out. . . . My ante is three thousand dollars.”

He bowed again.

“I will return in ten minutes,” he said, and left the room.

I thought I had seen the end of the emissary from Szechwan. I had called his bluff, but I did not expect him to call mine. I was astonished when he reappeared, ten minutes later, bringing three thousand dollars in notes which he threw on the table before me.

“There’s your ante! Now, Captain Sutton, will you come to Szechwan?”

I accepted, of course. I could do no less.

There remained only the difficulty of getting my gun aboard one of the river steamers. The customs officials knew that I had such a gun and were watching for a chance to confiscate it. I therefore armed myself with a bottle of whisky and a hundred dollars in cash, and went aboard the steamer that was scheduled to sail within a week. The engineer was an old Scotchman, bred,

CHUNG-KING, CITY OF THE RATS

like all ship's engineers, beside the Clyde. I found him sympathetic and the whisky further softened his heart.

Patting the hundred dollars lovingly with his broad, rough palm, he winked at me, and leaned forward to whisper confidentially: "If your gun has to go to Szechwan, it can go as a length of propeller-shaft . . . why not? And damn the Chinese!"

The following day, wrapped in burlap, it was carried aboard under the inspector's nose. Fifty shells, disguised as engine-room spares, followed. When the interpreter and I presented ourselves at the gangway, it was as innocent tourists, burdened only with the bags and boxes of our kind, not as professional war-makers, losers of thunder and lightning, hired mercenaries summoned by a Chinese War Lord to overwhelm his enemies.

For four or five days the river steamer proceeded slowly up the Yangtze, passing between levees beyond which lay endless miles of paddyfields. The river was swarming with junks, plying their way close to shore. It was in the spring of the year, and the vegetation was beginning to show signs of green.

We arrived eventually at Ichang, a small town at the foot of the Gorges. Here the Yangtze emerges from its battle with the rapids. From Ichang for a hundred miles our steamer fought its way through dangerous narrows,

ONE-ARM SUTTON

between the towering, dark walls of a rocky defile. The river rushed down at tremendous speed, now smooth and deep and black, like oil, now whipped into crested breakers, a mad churning of foam, fierce, threatening, invincible. Great trees, caught in the whirlpools, up-ended and disappeared as if snatched by an unseen hand into the depths.

The steamer felt its way, seeking paths through the swirl and smother, shaken by the might of the water, vibrating under forced steam. At times she came to a full stop, held in check by the current, then, nosing her way from side to side, hunted for a weak spot in her powerful adversary, the river.

High on the rocky walls, far above my head, I noticed painted numbers up to two hundred. We ourselves were at the zero mark. The Captain explained to me that these figures represented feet. The river at this point often rose to the hundred-and-eighty-foot mark when the snows in Tibet melted and poured their floods into the Yangtze.

At all times the down-boat has the right of way in the Gorges, since she has to steam through at thirty miles an hour and cannot deviate from her precarious course.

At Wanhsien the river broadened out. Again paddy-fields and farmlands. And for three hundred miles we

CHUNG-KING, CITY OF THE RATS

travelled through comparatively smooth-flowing water until we came to Chung-king, the treaty port of Szechwan, a city of about seven hundred thousand people.

We arrived early one morning and I shall never forget my first glimpse of the city. Built on the slopes of a high promontory, it poured into the river like a colourful glacier; a jumble of roofs, picturesque, prismatic; a dazzle of light, a riot of sound. The houses clung like swallows' nests to the hillsides, and steep flights of stone steps, worn thin and curved by countless shuffling feet, tipped sharply, like ladders propped against the precarious slopes.

Within a hundred miles of Chung-king there are no wheeled vehicles; everything is carried coolie-back, on long poles. Officials and rich merchants ride sure-footed hill ponies up and down the so-called streets. Everyone else goes afoot.

As we drew up to the wharf, I saw that a regiment of soldiers waited to receive us. I was enormously cheered by this show of martial courtesy.

I went ashore to the fanfare of trumpets, a roll of drums, and a smart exchange of salutes, to find awaiting me an imposing chair carried on the shoulders of four men in brilliant uniforms. I was invited to seat myself

ONE-ARM SUTTON

and told that General Yang-Sen, military Governor of Chung-king, awaited me at the Yamen above.

I took my place in the gaily decorated palanquin. The bugles blew, the drums rolled, and away we went, the bearers toiling up the steep steps—a triumphal procession! I could not resist lighting a fat cigar and blowing smoke-wreaths around my own head. I felt like Tiberius Maximus, carried in his litter through the streets of Rome, reclining upon a leopard skin and receiving with a lazy wave of his hand the acclaim of his serfs.

Again I enjoyed the dreams of Empire, the grandiose visions of the inveterate dreamer, who never knows when he has had enough. While the chair-bearers sweated and panted beneath my considerable weight, I reminded myself that Citizen Sutton of Blago might be about to undergo a transformation into Bombardier Sutton of Chung-king. This vision occupied me during my progress into General Yang-Sen's presence.

That night my interpreter and I were entertained by the leading officials of the town at a banquet lasting three mortal hours, at which I was expected to eat sharks' fins, swallows'-nest soup, Peking duck, twenty-year-old eggs, and to wash them down with brandy and

CHUNG-KING, CITY OF THE RATS

cognac. A great slug rose from the soup and gazed at me with the mournful eyes of Lewis Carroll's mock-turtle, begging me to save him. I hardened my heart, remembered that I was a guest, and pushed him back into the soup to drown.

This incident shook my nerve a bit, but it was nothing compared to the embarrassment I suffered during my interpreter's speech. Springing to his feet, with blazing eyes and a voice shaken by emotion, he plunged into a long eulogy. I heard myself described as a hero, a genius, the greatest gun-maker in the world, saviour of Szechwan and godfather to China. Awful! The Chinese officials at the long table listened with enigmatic expressions, their pointed fingers continuing to make accurate journeys to the heaped platters of food.

Yang-Sen then replied, murmuring many compliments, with repeated gracious bows in my direction.

"You have been awarded the post of Director of Munitions, Captain Sutton," he said.

Before I could gather myself together to express my appreciation, he went on to say that I might choose three of the prettiest dancing girls in Chung-king to take with me to my new residence.

Whereupon a whole bevy of sing-song girls entered

ONE-ARM SUTTON

the room behind lacquered screens and, turning their faces to the wall, made the horrible noises which pass for love songs in China.

This was true hospitality! Since I spoke no Chinese, I signified my delight by fishing around in the soup, rescuing the mournful slug, and awarding it to the prettiest girl.

That night I was entertained at the house of a wealthy political leader of Chung-king, one Lozenzu, who had, I discovered, been responsible for sending the envoy to Hankow to bring me and my gun back to Szechwan.

"We need men like you in China," he said politely. "Our methods of warfare are antiquated. We do not move with the times. We are like a sluggish river that crawls slowly forward between its banks, mirroring the tranquil sky, full of weeds . . . never getting anywhere. I look to you, Captain Sutton, to dig new channels, deeper, swifter, to the sea!"

CHAPTER III

Bombardier Sutton

IN the morning we boarded a government steambot and went five miles or so up the Yangtze to inspect the Mint, part of which was used—as is customary in China—as an arsenal.

The plant stood on high ground, a hundred feet above the river. Completely surrounded by a brick wall, it was like a fortified town. There were only three gates. Most of the workmen and their families lived in a village outside the wall. Narrow valleys, intricately terraced with paddyfields, sloped back to a range of hills. I wondered as I climbed to the gate from the steamer landing, how I should like this place, and what awaited me . . . you never know. . . .

In the centre of the arsenal grounds there was a lake, perhaps four or five acres in extent, planted with water-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

lilies and reeds. An old teahouse or pagoda, built upon an artificial island, reflected its quaint loveliness; an inverted image seeming to float upon the surface of the water. An ancient bridge, a rainbow in stone, arched from the shore and was the only approach.

“This,” the Director of the Mint said, “is to be your residence.”

I moved in at once and was duly installed as Director of Munitions, nominally under the Mint Director, but really left with a free hand to do pretty much as I pleased.

My first official act was to order the building of a second bridge across the lake to my house. I did not relish the idea of having only one exit and one entrance!

I found twenty old lathes, a small foundry, and a fairly adequate minting plant.

Yang-Sen gave me a guard of some two hundred soldiers, picked men, well uniformed, decidedly above the average; not quite up to the standard of the Grenadier Guards, but certainly better than none at all! The old Director of the Mint, Wang, informed me that seven hundred and fifty workmen were employed there. I hesitated to doubt his word, but I would have put it at three hundred. Since we seemed likely to disagree, I placed guards at all the doors and counted the men myself.

BOMBARDIER SUTTON

There were, actually, two hundred and fifty. The other five hundred were imaginary. Their pay was confiscated by the Director and his friends. When I informed Yang-Sen of this duplicity, he shrugged his shoulders and said: "It is the custom in China—pay no attention to such little discrepancies, Captain Sutton. Wang is an old friend of mine. An excellent man. An honest and upright man. Think no more of it!"

After two or three days of the usual wrangling, I came to terms with Yang-Sen.

I was to be paid fifty thousand dollars when I was able to prove that my gun could throw a shell made in their mint at least two thousand five hundred yards, and fire twenty rounds a minute.

I explained to Yang-Sen that as far as the guns themselves were concerned, there was no raw material from which to manufacture them in Chung-king.

"I can turn out a good stock of cast-iron shells," I said. "But I'll have to wire to Shanghai for a consignment of four-inch steel shafting. This can be cut in lengths and bored out for your gun-barrels, later."

"Very well," Yang-Sen replied. "Do as you will."

In about ten days I produced a stock of shells sufficient for a test. They met his requirements as to range and rapidity of fire, and I got my fifty thousand dol-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

lars! In addition, I was to receive a salary of twenty thousand dollars a month for six months. So it happened that within a few months of my discouraged departure from Shanghai, I was able to pay my overdraft and save my shares. I would be untruthful if I did not admit my gratitude. Yet I was all at sea in this strange foreign arsenal, working with a gang of Chinese, whose methods were beyond my comprehension.

I simply blundered ahead, supervising personally every part of the work from the first patterns to the finished shells. People who are inclined to believe that success depends on luck seldom stop to consider that luck is a matter of sweating, of patience, of resistance. It was a hot and steaming summer in Chung-king, enervating, depressing. The workshops were full of sulphur fumes from the foundry. I had to deal with obstinacy and wilful stupidity and to watch out for a swift, inclusive treachery. An Englishman who teaches all he knows is an Englishman too many—particularly if he draws twenty thousand a month!

The little clerk who works six hours a day bent over a desk has no further responsibility after he closes his ledger and leaves the office. His job is done. When such a fellow calls me “Lucky” Sutton, I remember the sleepless nights at Chung-king and the stew I got myself

BOMBARDIER SUTTON

into over my job. Strange, it seems, at this distance, the interest I took in Yang-Sen's shells! Eighteen hours a day, struggling with ignorant, treacherous workmen, that a Chinese General might defeat an army I knew nothing about, for a cause in which I had no interest!

Lucky? I wonder!

Not having availed myself of Yang-Sen's bevy of Chinese sing-song girls, I was alone in the romantic pagoda save for a couple of dogs. I didn't count my interpreter as a companion. There was a look of calculation in his eyes, as if he never ceased to appraise my resources with a view of extortion. His narrow palm itched, I am sure, when my payday came around! Every two weeks I reported to the Director of the Mint and received from him ten thousand dollars in silver. It took half a dozen stalwart coolies to carry the money across the bridge to my house. They staggered along, bearing three boxes that weighed six hundred pounds, while I brought up the rear, the interpreter slinking at my side, licking his lips at the sight of so much silver.

My pay! Very concrete, too! Much more exciting, this procession of heavy boxes, than a mere certified cheque! A slip of paper, announcing that ten thousand dollars has been paid to one's account at a bank, fails to stir the imagination, but there is something positively

ONE-ARM SUTTON

magnificent about three heavy boxes full of clinking silver coins! A mere salary thus undergoes a transformation, becoming miraculously a fortune, a hoard, a guarantee against insolvency. I could appreciate the sly interpreter's desire to run his fingers through the coins, to hear their insinuating musical tinkle.

The work at the Mint began to go more smoothly. I had the satisfaction of knowing that discipline and system get results even in China. When the steel shafting arrived, I turned out a fair quantity of shells and guns. Life at the Mint was not so bad. I had a high-powered motor-boat of my own, very speedy, in which I made almost daily trips to Chung-king. And with more leisure, a gradual lessening of the initial responsibility, my mind began to turn from Guns to Big Business. As my prestige in Chung-king grew, I permitted myself to dream again. I was, I fear, incorrigible.

"What can I do," I said to myself, "to occupy my spare time?"

And I cast about for ways to improve Chung-king, which seemed, all things considered, to be in great need of improvement.

For one thing, the population is held in great disrespect by all the rest of China. A hideous, repulsive people. Drawn, yellow, emaciated faces, protruding teeth—

BOMBARDIER SUTTON

no wonder they are called Chung-king Rats! I looked in vain for any qualities that might endear them to me. They were not even picturesque. Confirmed opium-smokers from childhood, they lived only to work and quarrel, to stink and to starve.

Opium is grown and sold openly everywhere in the Province of Szechwan. Having a certain tonic value, being cheap enough to suit the purse of the most poverty-stricken coolie, its use is a universal habit.

The city of Chung-king, built as it is on a promontory, is surrounded by water on three sides. Most of the seven hundred thousand people live on the plateau, three hundred feet above the Yangtze, within an old fortified wall pierced by seven gates.

Every drop of water used by the people of Chung-king is carried to them in buckets. Fifteen thousand coolies do this work, scooping the polluted water out of the river, climbing the precipitous stone steps with the precious cargo balanced on the ends of long bamboo poles, and selling it at two cents a bucket direct to the consumer. Bathing is naturally a pastime and a luxury, a hobby of the rich. A cent is a cent in China, and a man is lucky if he earns ten or fifteen cents a day. For two thousand years the people of Chung-king have bathed in the river if they have bathed at all.

CHAPTER IV
The Wongs of Chung-king

I FOUND an old map of the city which proved to me that no improvements had been made or even considered for many centuries.

The sewage system was an open scandal. Rivulets of filth drained down the gutters of the steep streets, uncovered save for occasional slabs of stone before shop doors, or before the entrance to some public building. These gutters streamed with unimaginable filth; odoriferous refuse, clogged up continually, flushed only by the rains. Wherever you walked in Chung-king you stepped across open sewers. It occurred to me that there was room for improvement. Sewage and water supply seemed to be the most promising field for my endeavours.

But when I came to look into the matter of building a new sewer system, I discovered that there was no

THE WONKS OF CHUNG-KING

money in it. The main part of the sewage was collected, and sold by the bucket to sewage-coolies, who in turn sold it to the farmers for manure. If I should go to the trouble of building modern sewers, they would never be used. Why waste valuable manure, throwing it down a pipe, when it could be sold for a copper? This was China! This was Chung-king!

The water system seemed more promising.

To determine how much water the city actually used, I stationed two soldiers at each of the seven gates. These guards were given one empty box, and one box full of beans. They were instructed to take a bean out of one box and to put it into the other each time a water-coolie entered the city. I collected the boxes and counted the beans every twenty-four hours. At the end of a week I was able to compute the amount of water used daily in Chung-king; a staggering total considering the primitive method of transportation.

I talked the matter over with Yang-Sen, the Mayor, and the Aldermen, or their equivalent in Chinese. At a solemn conclave of these dignitaries I drew up plans for a proper water supply for the city.

It is useless to discuss civic improvements with a Chinaman, unless one mentions reward and compensation. He wants to know first what his squeeze is going

ONE-ARM SUTTON

to be. He does not ask: "Is this a good thing for the city?" He asks, instead, with the most bland and disarming frankness: "Is this a good thing for me?"

The Squeeze System is not unknown in the Occident. In China, it is an accepted political fact. In outlining my plan for a pumping station, I was careful to dangle awards before Authority's nose.

"It is a fairly simple matter," I told them, "to pump water to the top of the hill and to store it in a reservoir on government property there. It would be a waste of time to build mains to supply individual houses on the meter system. One man in every street would buy water and sell it at a profit to his neighbours. I suggest, instead, that you establish, say, a hundred service stations at strategic points throughout the city, distribution centres where the water can be sold at a cent a bucket—or one half the coolie price."

I then dazzled them with facts and figures. Chungking's population equals that of San Francisco. It is easy to see that a pumping station could be made highly profitable. In my enthusiasm I dwelt upon the delights of the daily bath, the æsthetic advantages of soap and water. I pictured and scrubbed and rejuvenated Chungking. I waxed eloquent, even impassioned. Yang-Sen and the Aldermen listened with impassive faces, occa-

THE WONKS OF CHUNG-KING

sionally glancing at the dubious perfection of their nails. When at last I sat down, exhausted by my effort to convince them of the kinship between godliness and sanitation, Yang-Sen said:

“Very well; do as you will.”

I was then faced with the problem of surveying the city. I managed to find two Chinese surveyors, and to procure the loan of a level and a most terrible theodolite. The theodolite belonged to a Chinese engineer, who was inordinately proud of it, and allowed me to use it only after I had promised faithfully to return it in good condition. The bamboo legs were fastened together with a bit of string; the telescope rocked every time you turned it—yet, after local repairs, the thing worked.

I made the surveys at night, running down to the city by motor-boat and spending six or seven hours in the dark, deserted streets. The crowds would have made such a survey impossible during the daytime. And I was, besides, too busy at the Mint to accomplish the work otherwise. I had to use a small pocket-flash, instead of a ranging rod, to take the angles; my triangulation did not check by a foot, of course. And there were other difficulties. Great sewer rats scurried between my feet. From the darkened doorways there floated a sickly-sweet smell of opium pipes. The stench of a sluggish

ONE-ARM SUTTON

refuse was nauseating. Foul gases rose from the gutters.

I went armed with a sword-stick to protect myself against the Wonks—great packs of savage dogs that prowled along the waterfront feeding on dead bodies, both human and animal, which float down the river and drift inshore. These half-starved, wolfish creatures attack living men, if given a chance. Fresh meat is preferable to the gaseous, bloated corpses that constitute their principal article of diet. I often saw the shadowy, swift, desperate packs loping from alley to alley, snuffing in the gutters, pawing at the river refuse. And I heard their desolate howling beneath the clouded moon.

In six weeks the work was done: a great city had been surveyed by three men working with an antiquated level and a wobbly theodolite! Yet it was done to our complete satisfaction, and I turned to the next problem—how to design a pumping station that would meet the changes in the height of the river, a seasonal variation of nearly sixty feet.

There were two ways of doing this—either to mount electrically driven pumps on large pontoons, or to build these same pumps on platforms which could be raised or lowered up the sloping bank according to the height of the river. I chose the latter method as the most prac-

THE WONKS OF CHUNG-KING

ticable since the high-water floods are very unruly and fierce; junks and timber, all sorts of heavy flotsam and jetsam, get loose and tear downstream, crashing into everything, destructive catapults, disastrous to a floating pontoon.

I made the first sections of cast-iron piping at the Mint, and began to lay the big water mains through the city.

I had not reckoned on the human equation in the problem. No sooner were the pipes on the site than the fifteen thousand water-coolies, threatened with the loss of their jobs, fell on them with sledge-hammers, chipping and hacking at the flanges. Yang-Sen called in the militia, but nothing could hold the gang in check. There were bloody riots in Chung-king, fierce clashes between the population and the soldiers. Yang-Sen sent for me.

"It is useless," he said, "to attempt to modernize a city like Chung-king. I advise you to desist."

I cancelled all orders for machinery, and the work was "indefinitely postponed."

I was again defeated by defeatism—the profound lassitude and indifference of a race accustomed to "indefinite postponements." The coolies continued to toil up the

ONE-ARM SUTTON

stone steps balancing their buckets of dirty river water on long bamboo poles—as they have toiled for centuries in the past and doubtless will continue to toil for countless centuries to come.

I went back to the more comprehensible activities of the Mint, sending to Shanghai for a Scotch ship's engineer to help me with the work. Unfortunately, this association lasted only a week. It seems that I was destined to play a lone hand in Szechwan.

One evening the Scotchman asked the loan of my pony. "I'm going to have dinner with a friend on board an American ship anchored some three miles down the river," he said.

I let him have the pony, but when he started to leave the arsenal grounds, the animal refused to pass the gate, pivoting and backing again and again. The Chinese staff came rushing to me in great excitement. "Pony no makee run; foreign master makee die—pony he savvy more better bad joss—foreign man makee die."

The Scotchman laughed at this superstitious nonsense. Since the pony wouldn't take him, very well, he'd walk!

Sure enough. Late that night when he was leaving the American ship, he lost his footing, fell into the

THE WONKS OF CHUNG-KING

whirling waters of the Yangtze, and was drowned. His body was never recovered. It became, perhaps, food for the Wonks, and my China-boys bared their gums in sardonic grins.

CHAPTER V

The Three Armies of Szechwan

I WAS gradually absorbing some idea of the political situation in Szechwan. A crumb of gossip here, a crumb there, the veiled innuendoes of my staff, convinced me that trouble was brewing. I was not fated to sit for ever on my enchanted island, in the lily pond, smoking my pipe, and contemplating the perfect symmetry of a marble bridge.

The military strength of the great province was divided into three armies—the Second Army, Yang-Sen's force of fifty thousand men, in control of Chung-king, and the rich salt mines seventy miles away; the Third Army, stationed two hundred miles to the north at Cheng-tu; and the First Army, down the Yangtze at Wanhsien. Of equal strength, these three armies watched each other like malicious tomcats, each one

THE THREE ARMIES OF SZECHWAN

gathering strength to seize the prize—Chung-king, City of the Rats.

In China there are always three parties, two to fight, the other to sit on the fence, until the time is ripe to jump down and take the winner's side.

The Chinese are proper Nietzscheans. They have no pity for the under dog. The loser is out of luck, but he is not necessarily to be pitied. Sympathy is a destructive, wasteful, and futile emotion!

I remember that at about this time I was invited by five wealthy Chinese to be a share-holder in a river steamer, worth about three hundred thousand dollars, which was said to be making big profits. I was asked to invest fifty thousand dollars, for the privilege of being the sixth partner in the enterprise. I had often seen the steamer at anchor in the river, but I had never been aboard. It seemed a good investment, so when she came again into Chung-king port, I went out with the five partners, all in their rich silks and ceremonial accoutrement, to inspect her.

We sat in rigid formality about the baize-topped table, in the Captain's cabin, and the spokesman called for the voyage's profit *in toto!* It was placed before him—bills, coins, cheques, drafts, everything! The sum total was then divided into five equal parts, which the share-

ONE-ARM SUTTON

holders pocketed, leaving the Captain penniless. He had to rustle for the money with which to buy his coal for the return voyage to Ichang: beg, borrow, or steal, he must use his wits. Thus do the Chinese collect dividends!

“But,” I protested, “suppose I weren’t on hand to collect my share the next time the ship came in?”

“You’d be out of luck,” my friends said.

I lived up the river. The partners might forget to inform me of the ship’s arrival. On second thought, it wasn’t much of an investment for a confiding ass of an Englishman! Custom of the country again! With sweetly malicious smiles the share-holders parried my objections: “Today is today; tomorrow is tomorrow. Sufficient unto the day is the profit thereof.”

So I begged to be excused.

One night Yang-Sen sent for me in great secrecy.

“The First Army at Wanhsien,” he said, “is growing restive. They have heard that I am making good guns and, to embarrass me, they have been holding up my supplies. They claim that I am trying to get control of the entire Province of Szechwan.”

He gave me a curious, oblique look.

“Such rumours,” he said, “are false, of course! But I am going down river to discipline the First Army. I will leave six thousand troops to garrison the city.”



PHOTO BY EWING GALLOWAY

MARSHAL WU-PEI-FU

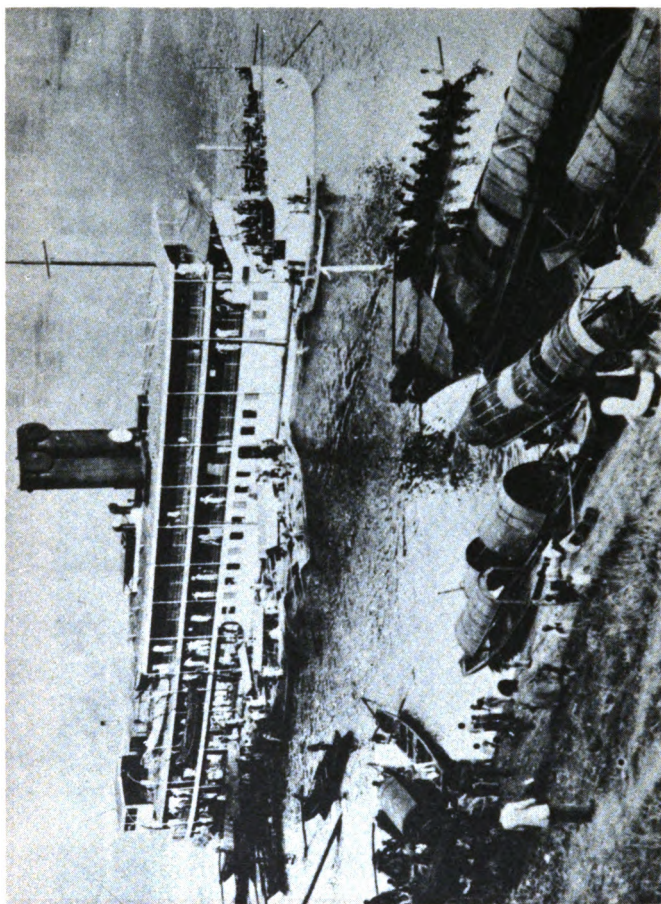


PHOTO BY EWING GALLOWAY

THE "SHU HUN," THE MOST POWERFUL OF THE STEAMBOATS
THAT BUCK THE RAPIDS OF THE YANGTZE GORGES UP TO
CHUNG-KING

THE THREE ARMIES OF SZECHWAN

“How about the Third Army at Cheng-tu?” I inquired. “What will they be doing in your absence?”

“They have given me their solemn promise to remain neutral. I shall be away only a few weeks. I leave you in charge of the mint, Captain Sutton.”

So there I was: Military Commander as well as Bombardier!

Yang-Sen's army departed down river by steamer and by junk. I was alone with my two hundred men. They were quite an efficient force, fairly loyal to me, thanks to my system of paying them regularly. I had trained them, section after section, to use my guns. Now, alarmed by rumours of defection in the north, I made a survey of the mint defences and drew up an elaborate plan in case resistance should be necessary, selecting the best gun-emplacements, and marking the valleys with white posts to indicate the ranges. I did this for the benefit of my men, who were thus made familiar with every part of the approach.

On many of the hilltops near the mint there were elaborately carved marble tombs. These lovely monuments made excellent gun-emplacements, and, in spite of objections, I mounted the Stokes guns above sleeping ancestors, who neither knew nor cared.

In addition to my own guns, I had eight machine

ONE-ARM SUTTON

guns, sent out to me by General Yang-Sen for repairs, which I had held in anticipation of a siege. I argued that they would be more useful at the mint than at Wanhsien. And as events proved, I was right. I put in a good supply of shells and held myself ready for whatever might happen.

Two weeks after Yang-Sen's departure, I heard that things were not going so well with him. At the same time rumours reached my ears that the Third Army in the north had come down off the fence and was preparing to march against Chung-king.

My interpreter had returned to Hankow, having tried too obviously to swindle me. He had been succeeded by a stupid but honest student of the modern horn-rimmed variety, a sensitive, shy little chap who was of practically no use to me.

"Which is preferable," I thought, "a clever crook or an honest idiot?"

A clever crook makes money for you even while he fleeces you, but an idiot by his very idiocy dulls your own wits and leaves you flat, unaware of great, if slippery, opportunities!

This new interpreter tried desperately to please me. His English was weird and wonderful; his tongue tripped over consonants and twisted itself hopelessly

THE THREE ARMIES OF SZECHWAN

around vowels. But he was a plucky little coward, engaged in a ceaseless battle with his own timidities, conquering by sheer force of will.

One day I decided to ride back into the hills and determine for myself whether the rumours of the advancing army were true or not. My interpreter accompanied me. We rode small, thick-set ponies, sure-footed and full of stamina.

On the third morning of a bright, cold day, having covered some sixty miles, we came to the summit of a mountain pass and, looking down into the valley beyond, beheld the whole Third Army of forty thousand men advancing toward us. An endless stream of men, horses, carts, equipment moved slowly, steadily, seeming to fill the valley, and to extend for miles. There might have been, not forty thousand, but a million soldiers! I thought of the little garrison at Chung-king and of my two hundred soldiers at the mint, and my heart sank.

Frankly, I was scared.

Two hundred against forty thousand! We mounted our ponies, turned, and raced back to the mint, the little interpreter riding like the wind, as if the Devil himself were at our heels.

CHAPTER VI

The Siege of the Mint

IT took the Third Army four or five days to get down through the hilly country to Chung-king.

Yang-Sen's garrison decided that under the circumstances discretion was the better part of a dubious valour. They were, perhaps, conscientious objectors. At any rate, they beat it to the hills, where they underwent the customary lightning-quick metamorphosis into peaceful farmers.

The Third Army occupied Chung-king, and I was cut off from retreat down the river. I had no way out.

About fifteen thousand men were then detached from the main force and sent against the mint with orders to take it over. They came down the river banks and took up positions on the hills.

Immediately two envoys presented themselves, hav-

THE SIEGE OF THE MINT

ing been sent, I presume, to accept our surrender. The Director of the Mint, being more of a financier than a fighting man, handed the responsibility for the defence over to me and left me in complete control. It therefore fell to me to explain to the envoys through my interpreter that General Yang-Sen had put me in charge of the mint and that I could not surrender my command to anyone but him.

They conferred rapidly in low voices, saluted, and returned to their headquarters three miles away in the foothills.

I could see the troops beginning to move in a semi-circle, as if a great lobster claw opened and then slowly closed again. They were preparing to attack.

In the morning we gave them a few rounds to make it clear to them that they must keep their distance. They replied before noon, sending shells over at brief intervals, to see how we liked it. We didn't like it very much, but no particular damage was done beyond shaking down a few tiles and smashing in a few roofs. I chased the workmen out, sending them down to the village outside the wall. They were in the way, untrained, too scared to be of any use to us. We laid in a good supply of food and prepared to resist a reasonably long siege.

The enemy employed three batteries of six guns each,

ONE-ARM SUTTON

Krupp field-guns, fifteen-pounders firing shrapnel. They took up a position three miles away, rather beyond the range of our guns. We had about twenty Stokes guns and the eight machine guns—as much as our two hundred men could handle. We needed at least five men to a gun, including ammunition-carriers. For this reason, the thirty or forty mortars we had in reserve were of no use to us. We had no crews to handle them.

The first night of the siege, the enemy made two unsuccessful attacks. We gave them what-for with shell fire and machine guns. None of us had any sleep, and it seemed to me that I was wanted everywhere at once. We lost a dozen men; the Third Army lost a good many more. My men had the ranges to a fraction; they knew where to shoot, and shot with deadly accuracy.

The fighting went on for eight days, day and night, and, in spite of the noise, the confusion, the effort, in spite of the fact that I knew from the beginning that eventually I would have to surrender, I enjoyed myself. There was no time for introspection, no time, as a matter of fact, to wash or to shave. For a military commander, my costume was unique: a pair of shorts, bare, dirty knees, a torn shirt, and no collar! I gulped down an occasional cup of coffee, but I do not remember eating much of anything. Withstanding a siege is an exciting,

THE SIEGE OF THE MINT

absorbing, thoroughly satisfactory game. I can recommend it to all sufferers from that type of boredom which the Germans call the "Weltschmerz."

The men remained loyal, perhaps because I paid them ten times more than they received in peace time—a silver dollar every day. At first the old Director of the Mint objected to such wanton extravagance, but when I explained to him that either way he was sure to lose, he shovelled out the coins.

I did not interfere in the care of the wounded. The Chinese resent the use of disinfectants, modern methods of sanitation, and surgery; they prefer their own antiquated cure-alls, strange herbs and packs and incantations. I let them alone. Had any of the wounded died when under my care, I would have been blamed. I might, indeed, have paid for my interference with my life.

There were two attacks from the river, but we discouraged them successfully with direct hits that destroyed the junks and spilled the troops into the swift, swirling waters of the Yangtze.

At night I sat in my pagoda, a dirty, tired, thoroughly happy commander-in-chief, and played the phonograph for the benefit of the soldiers around the lake. Alma Gluck's voice sounded clear and sweet above the crackle of machine-gun fire. "Fiddle and I" was the

ONE-ARM SUTTON

song she sang, and to this day I cannot hear it without recalling the incredible strangeness of those nights of siege: stars reflected in the lake, and a whine and a crash of shells; the fragrance of water-lilies, and the acrid pungency of powder; song and the cries of wounded men. Caruso's "Largo" and the *pluppf* of bombs. . . .

My poor little interpreter nearly died of fright: his progress in my wake was a series of quaking, spasmodic jerks. There was no longer anything behind which he could take shelter, nothing beneath which he could crawl or against which he might flatten his pitiful, quivering body. He died a thousand deaths in a week. Yet he remained on his feet and at my side. Wherever my manifold duties carried me, he followed, and his falsetto stammer echoed my commands like the piping of a spirit self, a disembodied alter-ego issuing orders from the ether! There was something ridiculous and pathetic in the little fellow's devotion to a destestable, terrifying duty.

As if the persistent shelling were not enough, the enemy captured a hilltop that commanded the mint. We were subject to continual sniping. It was altogether too risky a business to attempt to retake the position

THE SIEGE OF THE MINT

with our small force. We had to content ourselves with shelling it.

I was amazed to observe that work on the farms continued without interruption all during the battle. Fighting or no fighting, shells or no shells, the Szechwan farmer waded out into the paddyfields and went to work. His curious philosophy sustained him, perhaps. He knew that, when our little struggle was over and forgotten, his ricefields would still be there, that soldiers were as so much chaff, but that planting and garnering went on for ever. He paid no attention to the rattle and crash of artillery.

After the fourth day I had to move out of my picturesque little pavilion. The roof was gone and the marble bridge shattered—a rainbow in fragments! Dead carp littered the lake, floating upside down with sightless blue eyes and gaping mouths among the lily-pads and tall reeds.

On the eighth day two more envoys, a Colonel and his Adjutant, were brought in under a white flag by the outside guard.

I received them politely, and, after the usual ceremonious tea-sipping and genuflecting, my interpreter said:

ONE-ARM SUTTON

“They want you to return with them to General Ma-Yu-Ching’s headquarters to discuss terms of surrender. The General is very anxious to prevent further damage.”

“Damage?” I inquired. “To what? The carp? Everything else is gone. Even the phonograph. Tell them they have silenced Alma Gluck and Enrico Caruso. Damage enough!”

“Do not please be funny!” the terrified interpreter implored. “The General Ma-Yu-Ching is waiting. Maybe tomorrow it will be too late. . . .”

I interrupted.

“There seems to be a slight difference of opinion in Szechwan,” I said, “as to whom the mint belongs to. Tell this gentleman that there is very little silver left. The place is hardly worth taking.”

I did not add that my pay to date was safe in Shanghai! Yet it was a comforting thought and sustained me in a difficult moment. The Colonel spoke to his Adjutant, the Adjutant snapped at my interpreter. It seems that they promised me safe conduct. I was to approach their Commander under the white flag, secure in their promise that no harm would befall me or the garrison. I agreed at last to accompany them. There was nothing else to do. I had seventy casualties and no reinforcements. Besides, the dream was at an end.

THE SIEGE OF THE MINT

It was midnight, a black night, cloudy, blind, like the inside of a cupboard. My interpreter and I followed the two envoys out of the arsenal grounds, and, taking little paths across the paddyfields, mounted terrace by terrace to Ma-Yu-Ching's headquarters. I had to go as I was, bare-headed, dirty, with a week's beard and ragged shorts, but I buckled a second revolver and its holster to my belt, remembering the story of the priest and the cats.

Ma-Yu-Ching awaited me in a substantial farmhouse, one of a group of buildings. Two or three hundred evil-looking soldiers were hanging around the yard, unarmed, fortunately. As they stood aside to let us enter, the interpreter plucked at my arm and whispered: "They're going to kill us in there! I heard them say so!"

"We'll have to go in, nevertheless," I said.

CHAPTER VII

Murder under the White Flag

GENERAL MA-YU-CHING awaited me in a large room lighted by oil lamps that swung down from the beamed ceiling. He was seated alone at a table, his face in shadow. A little distance to one side five men stood at attention with fixed bayonets. Yellow faces peered in at every window. The doorway was packed with chattering, curious soldiers, shoving and quarrelling to get a better view. It was like the arena of a bull-fight. The interpreter quaked in his American boots. His lips were blanched.

“They’re going to kill us!” he wailed. “They’re going to kill us!”

The Colonel and his Adjutant introduced me to the General. He was dressed in a showy blue-grey uniform. He had a fine walrus moustache—most uncommon in

MURDER UNDER THE WHITE FLAG

China. It drooped over his mouth, after the fashion of a Chinese theatrical mask, giving to his face a saturnine expression, unreal and rather terrifying. John Russell's magnanimous savage would have taken a fancy to this square, black-thatched, moustached head. I felt a pang of recognition, the delight of a connoisseur who happens upon a rare specimen.

He rose and bowed to me across the table.

I didn't like the look of the five men standing to one side with fixed bayonets. I said to my interpreter:

"Tell old whiskers here that it is not customary in my country to have an armed guard present during a peace parley."

The terrified little fellow held up both hands imploringly.

"Don't make him angry, please! We are in great danger! Please, sir, don't make the General angry!"

"Do as I say! Tell him to order his men to unfix bayonets!"

I thought: "They're rotten shots, these fellows, but they could get me every time with those bayonets!"

The interpreter turned to the General and, with fluttering, deprecating gestures of his narrow hands, a deferential baring of his pink gums, made the request in Chinese. The General smiled and gave the order:

ONE-ARM SUTTON

“Unfix bayonets!”

One of the men, in complying, let his rifle fall with a crash to the floor. I turned my head quickly and heard the interpreter gasp, a sharp, warning intake of breath. I jerked my head around again, and found myself looking into the business end of a Mauser pistol. The General must have had it on a chair beside him, ready for use. The black barrel looked no bigger than a pencil; yet it held death for me. I reached for my own pistol, ducked my head to one side, as a bullet whizzed past my ear. I pulled my Colt .45 and, as he fired a second time, holding my gun horizontally I got him! There was no time for vertical sighting. I plugged him neatly between the second and third buttons of his tunic, and he fell forward, his head hitting the table with a crash, his pistol spinning out of his hand. He was a dead 'un, no doubt of it.

The guards were so occupied with the intricacies of unfixing their bayonets, that I had a chance—a split fraction of a second—in which to turn. A spatter of shots from the window. Spurts of flame from behind. And the poor interpreter, overtaken at last by the fate he had dreaded so long, got a bullet through the head and fell at my feet, curled up in his agony like a dying dog.

[258]

MURDER UNDER THE WHITE FLAG

I knew I could do nothing for him. I fired the remaining shots in my pistol, point-blank, into the crowd at the doorway, and charged head down as in a Rugby scrum. Had any of the yellow devils ever played Rugby, they might have known how to collar low, and I would have been finished; but it is hard to hold a heavy fellow by his head and shoulders. I gained the courtyard and dashed out through the gate.

Behind me there arose a great hue and cry, a barking and yelping, as of a pack of hounds let loose. I knew that if I plunged down hill and kept going, I would reach the mint. In the dark, the pack at my heels, I tore along the narrow footpaths between the paddy-fields, dodging and doubling, but dropping always from terrace to terrace.

Once, five of the pursuers took a cross-cut and tried to head me off, but I pulled my second gun and they decided to stand aside. It was safer to permit the other fellows to stop me. Why risk death to capture a crazy foreigner who seemed to be a human arsenal? The cautious soldiers ducked out of sight and let me go.

I broke the three-mile record for China that night, and none of the boastful pony-owners in Shanghai can dispute it.

Fortunately, my own outposts recognized me and let

ONE-ARM SUTTON

me through into the mint again. I must have been a sorry sight; splashed with mud to the waist, dripping with blood and sweat, my hair plastered down, my breath all gone.

Safe for the moment, I had only one regret; that I hadn't taken the General's head! Now that I stopped to think of it, I had refrained from marring that almost perfect specimen! And I had a Manchurian boar's head, over the mantelpiece at home, that would have matched the saturnine, ochreous splendour of Ma-Yu-Ching, properly cured and lacquered. Very nearly I turned back to claim my prize. But the dark hillsides were now alight with flares and torches.

The Third Army's punitive expedition had degenerated into a man-hunt. Any poor one-armed fellow, found that night in the paddyfields, behind the mint, would have been out of luck. I decided to stay where I was.

I felt certain that on the following day there would be a determined attack in retaliation for the death of their Commander-in-Chief. Yang-Sen was beyond reach. I could not hold out much longer alone. I decided abruptly to evacuate. Life was too complicated for a peaceful bombardier, in this place!

Summoning the men, I went down to the machine shop. We removed the slide-rests from the lathes, and

MURDER UNDER THE WHITE FLAG

cross-heads from the two 800 h.p. engines that constituted our power plant. These, together with the trench-mortars, and what ammunition was left, we pitched into the Yangtze. I allowed the men to take the machine guns themselves.

I then went to the Director of the Mint and demanded the balance of my pay—some twenty thousand dollars. At first he demurred, but a gentle, if insinuating, pressure of my pistol in the pit of his stomach caused him to change his mind. I gave him a receipt, out of respect for his curiously perverse and complicated sense of honour. He allowed me my six boxes full of silver. The remaining, and last, four boxes, containing more than ten thousand dollars, I divided among the troops. It was true that this was lavish generosity on my part; yet it was a ticklish thing to do. They were a hundred to one; they might so easily have shot me and divided my twenty thousand between them. One Englishman, more or less, and a riddled, nameless body lost in the whirling eddies of the river . . .

Strangely enough, they continued to obey my orders. The six boxes of silver were carried down to the beach and loaded into my motor-boat. Keeping up a rattling machine gun fire to conceal our movements, we then evacuated the men and the wounded in sampans. They

ONE-ARM SUTTON

got away across the river just before dawn, happy in the possession of the eight machine guns and a hundred dollars in silver apiece. I was left alone with my two house-boys and a mechanic.

I lingered, held by a fantastic desire to look upon the old mint again and to say good-bye properly by the light of day. I had lived in this place five months, five active, crowded, picturesque months. Now I waited until dawn in order to salute the ruined walls before they vanished for ever from my sight.

At dawn we four went aboard the motor-boat. We were fired at all the way down to Chung-king, and the boat, hit pretty badly, began to ship water. We came alongside a British steamer and were taken aboard just in time to save my luggage, the six boxes of silver, and our own skins before the launch sank. At that, I had a frantic argument with the Captain of the steamer before he would agree to take me. He expected to sail the next day, and my presence on board his ship was as good as a declaration of war.

"I'll be fired on all the way down to Wanhsien," he said.

"Who'll know that I'm aboard!"

"All China," he said, "will know tomorrow."

MURDER UNDER THE WHITE FLAG

I spoke of the sanctuary that, as a British subject, I might expect under my own flag.

“All right,” he said, seeing us awash on the sinking motor-boat, “come aboard, and be damned to you! But you’ll pay for any damage done to my ship as a result of your presence. You’re not wanted, I warn you. . . .”

Later, I signed a letter to the effect that I would reimburse the captain for any losses incurred by him on the down trip. I was destined to be a dangerous and difficult cargo and, as it proved, an expensive one. There was a price on my head.

CHAPTER VIII
Quid Pro Quo Religion

THAT night I went ashore to call on my friend, Lozensu. A very wealthy man, and one of Yang-Sen's political backers, I was curious to know what his position might be, now that Chung-king had changed hands and was in control of the Third Army.

I waited until after dark, and, throwing an old Burberry coat across my shoulders so that it disguised the fact that I lacked an arm, I went ashore and walked past the guard at the gate, trying to look like an inoffensive missionary. Lozensu lived on the top of the plateau in a great sombre house flanked by ornate gates and surrounded by a tiled wall. I climbed the steep stone steps—rather dejected, now, in comparison to the triumphant blare of my arrival.

I was in the enemy's camp, fearful of being recognized! I chose the most obscure and filthy alleys, the most

QUID PRO QUO RELIGION

precipitous streets. I could pity the convict in the treadmill as I toiled up those endless steps—up and up and up for ever, it seemed, a ladder four hundred feet high!

I arrived at last at Mr. Lozensu's house, a big Yamen, imposing, well guarded. The gate-keeper, with round eyes, admitted me as if I were one risen from the dead. News of the fight at the mint had of course reached Chung-king, and it was rumoured that I had been killed during the first attack.

Lozensu received me coldly. He did not seem to approve of my spirited defence of the mint; it was, it seemed, contrary to the ethics of China.

Lozensu was an ardent Roman Catholic. This had always puzzled me until I discovered that there was a *quid pro quo*: a "something-for-something" clause not evident at first glance. Across the street from his house there was a Catholic Church and monastery, which he supported loyally. Perhaps out of gratitude, the priests permitted him to dig a tunnel under the street directly into the church itself, a way of escape in case of trouble. Lozensu's religion had its practical side.

He talked with me a few minutes, parrying my questions with the most benign and damnable evasions, then rose, and, excusing himself, left the room to telephone.

ONE-ARM SUTTON

Curiously enough, the city of Chung-king lacked both a sewer and a water system, but was equipped with telephones. The exchanges were extraordinarily complicated, but the Chinese were ardent telephone fans; and, once initiated into the mystery, made constant use of the convenient contrivance.

Lozensu returned in five minutes. With a murmured apology, he continued our interrupted conversation, discussing his situation more frankly.

“Why don’t you throw in your lot with the Third Army, Captain Sutton?” he said. “Fine people. A brave, loyal party, devoted to the best interests of China. . . .”

I had already had dealings with one of their leaders! I smiled, but said nothing.

“I suggest,” Lozensu said, “that you go to the big arsenal at Cheng-tu with forty of your best mechanics, to take entire charge of the manufacturing of arms there. You could put the Third Army on its feet and enable it to conquer the entire Province of Szechwan. . . .”

Suddenly I heard the rhythmic tramp-tramp of feet in the stone-paved courtyard outside. Glancing through the window, I saw an officer and twenty soldiers entering the Yamen . . . summoned by Lozensu over the telephone, of course!

QUID PRO QUO RELIGION

If I refused to join the Third Army, I'd never get out of Lozensu's house alive. If I agreed to join them and succeeded in getting the Cheng-tu arsenal on its feet, I'd have even less of a chance to save my neck. The dead General's relatives would see to that!

I had to think quickly.

"I don't care which party I work for," I said. "I don't care who wins or loses. The politics of China are a sealed book to me, Mr. Lozensu. As an Englishman, I am under no obligation to any party in China. I am free, politically, morally, and spiritually."

"Ah," said Lozensu.

"I'll go down to the British ship, tonight," I said, "and get my plans and specifications. I can't work without them. I'll report to you, here, in the morning."

We bade each other good-night, Lozensu convinced that I was as much of a turncoat as he himself had proved to be; I shaken by the miraculous escape I had had from a quick execution in the Yamen courtyard.

When I left the house, the guard had already disappeared. I made my way back again, down the rat-infested streets to the waterfront, and went aboard the British ship. Sanctuary! I had seen the last of Chung-king.

CHAPTER IX

Farewell to Szechwan

I WAS not surprised to hear, six weeks later, that Lo-zensu had been arrested for treason and shot against a wall. This is the customary penalty for playing two sides at once. Lozensu made the mistake of staying too long on the fence. He was an able, even a brilliant man; his mind was as quick as lightning. But he came to a dirty end. That this often happens in China is proved by a glance at the Chinese *Who's Who*. So many illustrious biographies are concluded with the terse and illuminating word "Executed."

The British steamer departed from Chung-king early in the morning. I stood on deck to watch the old city disappear into the river mists as we dropped downstream.

"I am well out of it," I thought.

[268]

FAREWELL TO SZECHWAN

I went below to breakfast with a light heart, congratulating myself that my troubles were over. The small dining-saloon was just under the bridge. I found two of the ship's officers already there and the only other first-class passenger aboard. They regarded me with the unbelieving stares of men who look upon one who is miraculously alive after a prolonged and serious illness.

"I'll be glad," the junior officer said, "when we put you ashore."

"Nonsense," I answered, "you exaggerate my importance. The Chinese don't know I'm aboard this ship. Even if they did, they wouldn't care. . . . Ham and eggs, please, and a cup of coffee."

It was good to be sitting down to a well-ordered meal with men of my own race. I glanced at the clean cloth, the well-polished tableware, with the appreciation of an exile who comes at last within sight of home. Believe it or not, I was stirred profoundly by the bottle of Worcestershire sauce; something racial, patriotic, inexplicable . . . something proud . . .

"Did you know," I said, stretching out my hand toward the bottle, "that the trade name—Lea and Perrins—is written forty-two times on every bottle? You can bet on that——"

ONE-ARM SUTTON

Crack!

A bullet cut through the window of the saloon and I dropped the bottle and smashed it. I got more Worcestershire sauce than I had bargained for!

We all ducked for shelter, and, hugging the walls, crawling on all fours, went on deck. Bullets were ping-pong into the steamer from both banks of the river. The Captain was right! I was no asset! Word had flashed along the wires, thanks to Lozensu, advising every outpost and small garrison and itinerant patrol all the way to Wanhsien, of my presence aboard this particular boat. The soldiers were ordered to get me if they could. It did not matter how many of my fellow-passengers, both Oriental and British, were killed, so long as the boys disposed of me!

I ran along the deck to my cabin and got my .303 rifle. Things were pretty lively. Bullets zipped through the outside staterooms from side to side, terrifying the Chinese passengers, who very wisely fled below to the shelter of the hold.

Returning, I was very much amused by the terror of an aged Chinaman of the better class, who was lying, stark naked, save for a little cotton shirt, face down on the deck. Over his head, as a possible protection against the rifle fire from the shore, he had placed a little carpet-

FAREWELL TO SZECHWAN

bag, no bigger than a woman's purse. He had been sick, and had done everything else a man can do in the extremity of fear. I knew that if he were allowed to remain there, he would in all likelihood be killed; I tucked my rifle under my arm and, seizing him by one leg, pulled him thirty yards along the deck and shoved him head-long down a ladder into the hold. He was safe there, at least. He screamed like a stuck pig all the time I was engaged in saving his life. Indeed, he never thanked me for it. Later, when I happened to meet him—properly clothed and in possession of his dignity again—he became positively aggressive and accused me of brutality. It seems that I had bumped his craven head on the ladder!

The first-class passenger, the officers, and I took shelter on the bridge—the only armoured part of the ship. There, protected by steel-hinged shutters provided with slots for firing, we prepared to retaliate. We found the Chinese pilot lying flat on his face, terrified and useless. The Captain took his place, of necessity exposing himself to the fire since there could be no protection directly in front of the wheel. He remained there for hours, undisturbed by the ping and whine of bullets, calmly guiding the ship in her swift flight down the stream. I glanced at the funnels—bullet after bullet

ONE-ARM SUTTON

passed through the plates: they were like great pepper-boxes.

The Captain gave his officers Mauser rifles and told them to retaliate. This pleased them enormously, since on all previous trips they had been forbidden to return the fire of snipers on shore. These Szechwan soldiers came right down to the water's edge and took careful deliberate aim. They would have made excellent targets had the steamer not been travelling at such speed. The slots were narrow, and, at twenty miles an hour, a man whisks past before you can pop at him. I made the sand fly all round them in vain. It was like shooting rabbits in bracken, and I discovered many half-forgotten oaths during the long, disappointing day.

In the middle of the fracas, the old Scotch engineer came up from below, fuming and cursing.

"The damned Chinks put a bullet right through my new gramophone!" he stormed. "Cabinet model, too. Varnished. Worth ten pounds. Give me a rifle! I'm not going to stay down there and let 'em have their way with *me!* Give me a rifle, quick!"

He ran below to the main deck. "I don't want any of your peep-holes to shoot through," he shouted. "I'm not afraid of 'em! Bring 'em on! Got my gramophone,

FAREWELL TO SZECHWAN

they did! I'll show 'em. Damn their dirty yellow hides!"

From where I was, I could watch his offensive. He was a lumpy, broad-beamed fellow. He pulled two big tool-chests out of his cabin and barricaded himself behind them. For half an hour he fired his smoking rifle at random, stopping only to shake a red, clenched fist at the offenders on shore. He had no better luck down there than we had had on the bridge. His voice rose in angry protestation, rebellious wails, acute and piercing. He was a most profane and gifted Scotchman; he had the vocabulary of a longshoreman and the inexhaustible wind supply of the bagpipes.

Believing himself safe behind the tool-chests, he neglected to protect all of his considerable bulk. Suddenly he leaped to his feet with a scream and did a Highland fling.

"Got it right through the seat of his pants!" the junior officer chuckled.

The engineer dived below for first aid, reappearing in twenty minutes more determined than ever to take payment for the loss of his precious talking-machine. Yet they say Scotchmen are phlegmatic! This one certainly wasn't!

ONE-ARM SUTTON

All day we passed between a double barrage. There was a brief lull during the night, but the racket broke out again before dawn. The Captain's face was grim whenever he looked at me.

"This is going to cost you a lot of money, Captain Sutton," he said.

Fifty miles north of Wanhsien, we passed a small town where a brisk fight was in progress between two bodies of well-equipped troops. One of the Chinese on board the British steamer informed me that this was Yang-Sen at grips with the First Army. Yang-Sen's own headquarters were visible through the glasses, and I recognized the familiar flag of his command fluttering above a square white house a little beyond and above the town.

We anchored in the river, and I sent my boy—a plucky little devil—ashore with a letter for Yang-Sen. In it I explained that I had been forced to evacuate the Mint at Chung-king after an eight-day siege and that I was now on my way to Hankow. I expressed regret at the unfortunate turn of affairs which had deprived him of his arsenal and had naturally made my services superfluous. I begged him to consider me his faithful friend and most loyal admirer.

FAREWELL TO SZECHWAN

My boy returned immediately with a letter to me from Yang-Sen asking me to go to Ichang and to wait there until he communicated with me by wire.

That night we stopped at Wanhsien before the swift, exciting down-passage through the Gorges to Ichang.

At Ichang, I received a second letter from Yang-Sen in which he thanked me for my services, extolled my defence of the Mint, and asked me to proceed to Hankow, that I might enlist his friend Wu-Pei-Fu's sympathy and support. This letter was covered with many bright and impressive official seals. It was in fact a letter of recommendation, later to prove very useful to me.

I saw Wu-Pei-Fu at Hankow, but he was not sympathetic. There were endless parleys and discussions, and life was further complicated for me by the accusations of those friends of Ma-Yu-Ching, who insisted that he must be avenged. These zealots declared that I had walked into the General's headquarters and had murdered him in cold blood! As reliable witnesses can be purchased in China for a dollar, things began to look rather serious for me.

I decided to go north again to Russia. I had paid off my overdraft and had a little working capital. Szechwan had subscribed that tenth of a cent to my public

ONE-ARM SUTTON

issue! After the heat and muck of the Yangtze, I longed for the clean snows and bright skies of Siberia.

On the way, I stopped off at Mukden to see Chang-Tso-Lin. I had heard that he was a man of progressive ideas, ambitious, keen, possessed of extraordinary vitality. At this time he was Governor of the three north-eastern provinces, the richest in China, inhabited by hardy, reliable northmen, very different from the Rats of Szechwan.

“Perhaps I can make this little fellow, this little ruler of twenty million people, branch out a bit,” I thought. “Perhaps I can induce him to conquer the other four hundred million as the Manchus from the north did, centuries ago!”

I called on him.

Yes, he was little—but only as great Cæsar and Napoleon were little. In every other way the old Marshal of Mukden was a big man—plucky, ambitious, and yet with a fine primitive code of honour which many of our leading Western politicians would be the better for having.

This was the beginning of a five-year association with this extraordinary man, during which I became Chang-Tso-Lin’s Chief of Staff and Director of Munitions, and

FAREWELL TO SZECHWAN

during which he not only defeated his rival, the great Wu-Pei-Fu, but conquered the whole of China save only the southern provinces in the vicinity of Canton.

But this, as the Walrus said, is another, longer story!

THE END

[277]

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