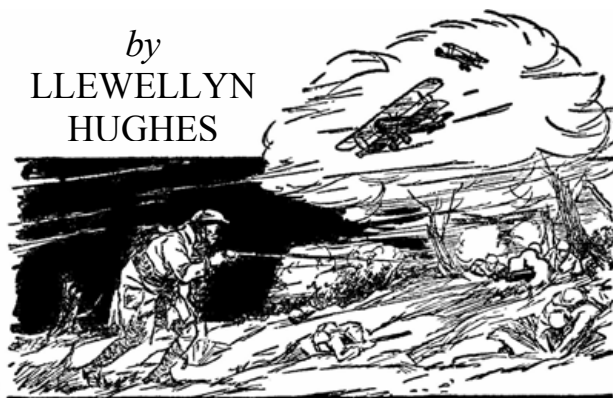


Gangster *in* Khaki

by
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"Cripes" he chattered, "I'll take them Krauts one by one." And he staggered forward, shooting with savage accuracy.

McBride was only a half-pint gangster in khaki, but a giant in courage when he finally decided to bump off the German army.

BACK some considerable distance from the front line a regiment was resting from its labors. More than half of its officers, N.C.O.'s and men had gone to pay the bill for Chateau-Thierry, but now—at midnight on the fourth day's relief from fighting—they were numerically up to strength again by reason of the newly-arrived replacements.

Up ahead, in the murky dark of a summer night, Chateau-Thierry lay mutilated and silent; but along the Paris-Metz road ammunition and supply trains went at full gallop, for the German artillerymen were spraying that important highway with shrapnel and explosives, frantic crashes that reverberated through the still, damp air in a series of sickening waves.

Bursts of hot, shrieking metal splashed out of the night in the most disconcerting fashion, landing anywhere. Camions bringing up the expected replacements were ordered to unload farther down the road. Squads came up over the dark terrain in single file. It was a lively baptism for lads who not many months ago had been wearing oxfords and fedoras.

At almost any hour the fighting qualities of the regiment would again be called upon. Gaunt men and youths who already had fought in the valley of death—fought and lived to tell the tale—would soon be mustered again and, with the fresh replacements, would set off up the road, creep through the waving wheat, branch across fields, and before the light of morn revealed their position they would be lined up in front of a patch of trees—a small wood.

Only G.H.Q. and the divisional and brigade commanders knew the name of that wood, its precise position, and the toll of lives that would be exacted before it was in American hands. They had studied the situation on their maps. Two kilometers west of Chateau-Thierry was a hill called Hill 204; to the north over other hills, small patches of woods, ravines and a network of fulsome trenches was Bouresches. About one kilometer west of Bouresches was Lucy-le-Bocage, and between these two shell-torn hamlets was the southern edge of a patch of timber, a narrow belt about three-quarters of a mile long. It was called Belleau Wood.

War and its trumpet call to the colors brings together men from widely-separated towns and districts, brings together—perhaps coincidentally—men who once were friends and who for various reasons have strayed apart and become lost to one another, brings together lifelong enemies and those who have good cause to hate. Often they might meet again in the same brigade, often in the same regiment, and sometimes actually in the same company. And possibly, by nature of illness, reason of adversity, or forgetfulness, one man is unrecognizable to the other.

In the rude shelter that was the company's dugout a captain sat on an empty ammunition box cleaning his army revolver. His name was Rawson, and the men subject to his commands called him Rawhide Rawson because of his brusque manner, his cold, harsh voice, the severity of his hard features, and his toughness and durability under fire.

The shape of his mouth—closed lips that formed a short, straight line; the ice-blue of the man's eyes, the grave pale face that was never creased by a smile—all suggested a man embittered, a man for whom life held little pleasure. An unhappy love affair—a disappointment in business? It might have been either. Anyway, it was evident that Captain Rawson had a deep-rooted grudge against someone or something and in consequence his company had become thoroughly hardened under his training, had, in fact, become a rip-roaring, smashing force of fighting men asking no quarter and giving none.

With him in the dugout was a young, thin-faced lieutenant. He had been watching Captain Rawson, studying him as the man absently cleaned his revolver, and he wondered what it was that occasioned such bitter expression, the revengeful thrust of the granite-like jaw, the premature gray above the temples and a forehead so noble in its breadth and height.

"What's the trouble, captain?" he asked quietly. "Thinking of the old days—back home?"

Captain Rawson switched his head round, switched it as though it were on a pivot—like a machine gun.

"What?" he said. "Thinking of *what*? No, what the hell's the use of that? We're out here to fight the Germans, aren't we—not to sentimentalize about the past."

The curt rebuff to a diffident and friendly overture made the young, thin-faced lieutenant flush; but all he said was:

"Yeah—I guess you're right about that, captain."

"You *guess* I'm right. You *know* I'm right. This is no place to be petticoat-dreaming or thinking of the days back home." He sprang his revolver with a vicious snap. "Forget all that bunk," he said. "We'll be trekking back up that road before morning."

The young, thin-faced lieutenant sat bolt upright.

"Back into the line? Before morning? Why we've only been out here four days—haven't had time to—" Silent a moment, he said: "Where we headed for this time, captain?"

"Where're we headed for? Where d'you think? The enemy, of course; that's where we're headed wherever we happen to find them."

A corporal came down the dugout steps.

"The last load of them replacements, sir. They had some casualties amongst 'em coming up here."

"Any better than that other bunch?"

"Cain't rightly see 'em in this dark, sir. Kind of scared-looking. Reckoned they got shelled all the way from Rocklincourt."

"All right. See they get some chow. And don't let them bunk-up together. Separate the lifelong buddies—the lambs from the goats—and distribute them amongst the old-timers. Get the idea?"

"Yes, sir."

TWO hours later the company commanders were summoned to the battalion dugout. Tomorrow evening, as soon as it got dark enough, the battalion would move up the line again, back to hell and glory. They would get further directions as to their objective from an officer stationed to meet them in Bouresches.

And so it was that late the following afternoon a company stood lined up for inspection in a sunken road back of Chateau-Thierry. Captain Rawson was reviewing his new replacements, men who were about to go into battle. In quiet words he told them a few things for the good of their souls. With a cold, keen eye he looked each man over from head to heel. Suddenly, as he walked down the column, he stiffened in front of a little rat-eyed individual whose mouth was twisted and whose uniform hung loosely from the frame of his narrow shoulders. Cruelty, cunning, and apprehension predominated in his furtive dead-white face.

"What's your name?"

The man hesitated the fraction of a second, then he said:

"McBride, sir."

The captain stared at him, stared hard.

"That your real name," he sneered, "or the name you enlisted under?"

Again the man hesitated.

"I've told ya what my name is."

"Where were you drafted?"

"Jersey City."

The captain continued to subject him to a close scrutiny.

"Ever in Graydon, Illinois?" he asked savagely.

There was a flutter of McBride's eyelids; the pupils of his sharp, little eyes contracted.

"Was I ever in Graydon, Illinois?" he repeated slowly.

"That's what I asked you."

"Naw, I never even heard of the place, Cap."

"Quite sure of that?"

Private McBride shifted. "Say!" he retaliated daringly, curling his lower lip, "what is all this? Some more of this army third-degree stuff—or somethin'? Ya heard me, didn't ya?"

Captain Rawson tensed the sinews of his neck. His eyes were brilliant as he attempted to control himself. He switched his head round.

"Corporal," he called, "take this man down to my dugout. Keep him there till I get back."

The company was dismissed. They were to fall in again at six o'clock—in marching order. Any man who wanted to smoke had better get it all over with before then.

With a set face Captain Rawson strode militantly in the direction of the company dugout. He dismissed the corporal, took one swift look at the young, thin-faced lieutenant sitting over in the corner, then turned his attention to Private McBride. For a while he studied him in silence.

"You measly, sniveling, little runt!" he suddenly swore. "I've been waiting for this moment. I swore to God that if I ever met you again, I'd take the law into my own hands and break every bone in your body."

Realizing that something unusual was happening, the young lieutenant got to his feet and came closer. The captain looked at him.

"Stand at the foot of those steps," he ordered tensely. "Stop anybody from coming down here. I want to talk to this man without being interrupted."

McBride hadn't moved. Furtive eyes followed the captain as he went to the back of a table and sat down. A candle waxed to a broken slat that was stuck into the clay of the wall illuminated Rawson's gray, stone-like features.

"Come here," he rasped. "Come here—where I can see you."

The man obeyed, came forward with shuffling steps, stood there, his arms at his sides.

"McBride, eh?"

"Yep."

"And never in Graydon, Illinois?"

"Ya heard me. I told ya I never even heard of the place."

"Never heard of it, eh? All right, take a good look at me. Maybe that'll help you. Ever seen me before?"

"No, sir."

"Haven't, eh?" With a sweep of his arm the

captain yanked off his steel helmet. There was a scar on his forehead that extended upwards into his hair. He pointed to it.

"See this?" he snarled. "Does this remind you of anything? Or have you conveniently forgotten that, too? Does that remind you of the time you held me up and grabbed that payroll—just a little over a year ago in Graydon, Illinois?"

McBride shifted nervously, cleared his throat.

"Looks like ya got me mixed up with some other guy, Cap."

"I haven't got you mixed up with anybody. You're the thug that held me up a little over a year ago in Graydon." Rawson, flinging the accusation at him, betrayed an undercurrent of intense, emotional feeling. "You're the gunman that backed me up against that factory wall, robbed me of my payroll, then smashed me over the head without giving me a chance to defend myself."

"Ya got me all wrong, Cap. Who's been stringin' ya, huh?" The tone of McBride's denial was growing fainter.

"I haven't got you wrong," said Rawson bitterly. "I know you, all right. I couldn't forget that face of yours—that dopey look in your eye, that hangdog expression round the corners of your mouth. A stick-up, a lousy little thug; and a snowbird, or whatever they'd call you. Thugs like you have got to dope yourselves up before you find the guts to go through with anything."

"I enlisted, didn't I? I come over here, didn't I? I'm ready to take my chances along with the rest of ya, ain't I?"

HE WAS beginning to stammer a little. His small, rat-like face was thrust forward in a forced pugnacity. In the foreground of war, within reach of its overwhelming destructiveness, within sound of its cannon, high-explosive and racket of death, Private McBride looked woefully small and puny.

"I'm ready to do my share along with the rest of ya, ain't I? Then, in a whimpering tone charged with a slight show of retaliation, he said: "So what the hell ya pickin' on me for?"

Captain Rawson, still keeping his eyes on him, moistened his pale, dry lips.

"Why am I picking on you?" he sneered. "I'll tell you. Back in Graydon I built up a business for myself. It took years. Then, like a prowling rat, you happened along. Your business was robbery and

murder—taking what other people had slaved for honestly. When you grabbed that payroll you put me back ten years—I had to sell my home—I had to— Hell!”

The captain was trembling now. His huge hands clenched, unclenched, and clenched again. Private McBride stood there in front of him in a posture of utter helplessness, at once pathetic, meager, and guilty. He said nothing.

“Ever since that day I’ve been on the lookout for you. And now!” he laughed, “I had to meet you here—over in France—both of us wearing the same uniform—you one of the men in my company.”

There was a silence.

“Well, that won’t stop me,” he said. “*You’re in the army now*—and I guess I can keep my eye on you. Let’s see how you’ll shape up out here, you runt! You’ll be in action in twenty-four hours and you won’t have a gat in your hands. You’ll have a bayonet. You’ll find you won’t be able to strike a man down while his back is turned. You’ll find the Germans waiting for you, armed like yourself. And you won’t find any dope to bolster up your courage, you little louse. You’ll have to go into it on what you’ve got in that narrow little chest of yours and that’s a heart that’s all shriveled up, a heart that’s black with crime. All right,” he shouted, “get out of here before I—”

“Listen, Cap—”

“Get out, I tell you!”

“What are ya goin’ to do? Be a heel an’ toss me in the brig, or what? Gimme a break, will ya, Cap? Listen. Ya got me right. I’m the one that stuck ya up, all right. I was all doped up at the time, an’—an’—” His voice trailed away. “Listen, Cap. I’m offa that game for life. I’m sorry for what I done to ya—honest I am.”

“Get out of here,” was the threat.

“I went crazy. That’s how it was. Only I’m cured now, since I been in the army. Ya can believe it or not. But listen, Cap, I hope if ever I handle a gat again—I hope to God this mitt of mine gets paralyzed.”

The stricken face of McBride the gunman looked into the stricken face of his company captain.

“That’s talkin’, ain’t it? An’ I mean every word of it, Cap. I’m through—I’m offa that crooked stuff for good. An’ I wanna tell ya right now I’m real sorry I was the cause of all that trouble that come to ya!” he whimpered, hanging his head.

But Rawson had jumped to his feet. “Get back to your squad,” he roared. “Get out there and be ready to march up the line. There’s something in store for you, McBride. You’re in the army now—and I’m going to see you get all that’s coming to you!”

Under his slack uniform a tremor of fear ran down Private McBride’s thin legs. Turning unsteadily on them, he went up the steps.

“Lieutenant,” said Rawson, “you’ll keep all this to yourself. Understand?”

“Cripes, Captain,” was the sympathy, “now I understand. Certainly hard on you, all right. And it’s tough—meeting him right here—that way. It’s a wonder you didn’t strangle him. I know I would have. I’d have killed him—the damned thug!”

“Give him the break he needs,” muttered the captain. “If the boys got to hear of it they’d— And if I’m any judge of character, he’ll need a buddy alongside him in the next twenty-four hours. The man’s yellow—I can tell by his face. Gangsters always are. Unless they’ve got a gat in hand, unless they’re all doped up, they haven’t the guts of a louse.

“That’s how I figure him. He’ll lie in a shell-hole shivering with fear. And that,” he concluded savagely, “will give me the opportunity I’ve been waiting for ever since that day in Graydon. I’ll just put a bullet between his little eyes and call it—quits.”

OUTSIDE, in the gathering twilight, the men sat on the ground, waiting. There was nothing else to do. Private Wesson, a veteran by reason of two weeks’ fighting, interrogated the little white-faced replacement sitting next to him.

“What the cap have to say to you, buddy?”

“W-what?” Private McBride started and showed an anxious, frightened face. “Aw, he gave me a callin’ down about somethin’—that’s all. Cripes! I deserved it—see?” With a shaky hand he produced a package of cigarettes. “Here, buddy—help ya’self to a smoke.”

“Thanks. He’s a tough hombre, Captain Rawson. Don’t believe that guy cracked a smile in all his life. Kindhearted and all that. Do anything for the lads in his company. He’s a prince that way, but tough as they make them when it comes to discipline.”

“Hold that match, buddy.”

But the light flickered and went out. Private

Wesson offered his lighted cigarette.

"Here, buddy—light off this."

McBride's spare, knotted fingers were trembling. Private Wesson noticed it, and turned away.

"You ain't seen no fighting as yet, have you?" he began.

"No—not yet I haven't."

"Boy! you got something coming to you. It's one hell of a picnic, all right, all right. That is," he hastily tempered, "until you get used to it."

"I ain't never goin' to get used to it, soldier. There's one thing I'm sure of."

"Listen," said Private Wesson. "Just don't give a damn, see? That's the only way. You gotta go through with it—see—same as me and the captain and everybody. We're in the army now—the whole mob of us. It don't make no difference—unless you're a general or something. So what's the use? You gotta go through with it. Just don't give a damn, then you'll be all O.K.—like me. See what I mean? If they get you—well, they get you. If they don't—well, maybe they're saving you up for the next time. So the best way is not to give a whoop!" He spat. "See what I mean, buddy?"

"Yeah—I—I get ya, all right."

There was a silence.

"Write your girlfriend yet?"

No answer.

"I writ mine. Told her I was feeling fine and dandy." Again he spat. "Listen," he said, "you stick alongside me, buddy. I'll show you the hang of it. Don't be scared. What's the use? Just don't give a whoop—that's all."

Something contracted in Private McBride's throat. It closed tight. He wanted to reach over, grasp that friendly hand—if only to warm his own—and thank him. He wanted to tell him about his misguided upbringing—it all seemed so clear now—how he had run away from home to live in dives and sleep in barns and freight cars, how he had fallen in with a gang of thugs and gone from bad to worse. But he said nothing.

And half an hour later he was trudging behind the man called Wesson, trudging on with quaking heart and eyes that showed their white, shivering to his very marrow, staggering on and on into an overwhelming and terrible *something* for which he was pitifully ill-qualified and ill-prepared.

In the course of a battalion's advance up the line over a shell-drenched, torn and lacerated ground,

across black fields nauseous with unfamiliar smells, under a steady downpour of rain that comes from a Godforsaken sky, when milky flares splash horribly against the horizon and you have a hard time keeping in touch with the man ahead of you; when the swish of shell goes by you and bracketed with the explosion comes the cry of wounded men; when your world has turned to Hades and your brain won't serve your muscle—that's the time to show the stuff that's in you. It's one or two things then. You're either steel or putty. And the lad who comes through smiling, on steady legs, with eyes alight and unafraid, has proved himself; and in respect of courage—if in respect of nothing else—the day of judgment will not find him wanting.

THE COMPANY reached its position shortly after midnight. It was a narrow, shallow trench. The battalion holding it had been reduced to a platoon. They had won that trench and lost, and won it all over again. Now it had to be held. "Hold your ground to the last man," was the substance of divisional orders.

There was another order delivered to Captain Rawson because of his leadership and gallant heart. It ran to the effect that he should try to establish his company in the north end of Belleau Wood and break up the enemy machine gun positions there.

Captain Rawson knew what this would mean, and for the time being he kept the news from his officers and men. Time enough when the dawn broke and they could see just where they were.

"How'd you feel now, buddy?" This from Private Wesson, lying in the shallow, water-filled trench. Orders were that there should be no talking, but the pouring rain drowned the sound of voices.

In the pitch dark, Private McBride's face was tortured; his eyes gleamed feverishly.

"Aw, hell!" he trembled. "I don't give a damn what h-happens."

"That's talking, buddy."

On the way up the company had suffered heavily from enemy shell-fire. Twenty-five of the new replacements never saw Belleau Wood. Some of them, civilians in Brooklyn and Jersey City a few weeks ago, were now on their way back there again, minus arms and legs.

Dawn showed Captain Rawson his exact position. The north end of the wood was a hundred yards in front of them. The wood itself, thick with German machine guns, rose up dripping, a

phantom thing in the rain and pale, gray fight, like the ominous wraith of a pirate ship.

About seven o'clock, enemy shell-fire began taking a further toll of them. The wounded were being taken back down a communication trench when, suddenly, the harsh cough of a machine gun started up. Private McBride, gripped by curiosity and fear, was trying to locate it. To his surprise he noticed a little line of mud run his way. The next instant he felt something prick the flesh of his arm, above the elbow. Automatically he ducked, shouted.

"Hit, buddy?"

"Cripes, buddy—I don't kn-know." He looked down at his left hand. To his amazement it was running red. "Cripes!" he repeated, "looks like I have been hit—at that!"

"Boy!" said Private Wesson, "you're lucky! That's a passport to heaven. Beat it down the line, soldier—and give my love to the mam'zelles back in some nice little billet where there ain't no lousy war."

"Beat it down the line?" Private McBride spoke as if he were cornered in a deliberate attack on his courage. He'd show 'em he was game! "What ya think I am? A quitter? I'm goin' to see some fightin' now I've come this far."

His little pinched body was shaking violently. He was blowing through his twisted lips as though he had great difficulty in breathing.

An order was passed along. Automatic rifles, fixed bayonets, hand grenades. The company would make a dash for the wood. Twenty-five yards, then down. Wait for the whistle. Then another twenty-five yards, and down again. Wait for the whistle once more—then into the wood and fight like the devil. Wait for the signal.

Captain Rawson had crawled along the trench to stiffen his men for the dash. He saw the blood running from Private McBride's hand.

"Here's a guy got it in the arm—and he won't quit," said Private Wesson.

The captain glared at the casualty. "You!" He cursed him under his breath. "So you helped yourself to a further lease of life, eh? All right, you little runt, report to a dressing station as soon as we get into that wood. Not before." The captain's lips barely moved. His face was a cast of frustrated revenge and hate.

"I ain't goin' down the line—not for no man, see? Ya think I'm scared, don't ya? Listen, Cap,

I'm stickin' with the show. Get that, will ya!"

"You'll do as I tell you," was the terse reply. "Report to the nearest dressing station as soon as we establish ourselves in that wood."

It was raining in torrents now. Through it the spluttering bark of machine guns seemed vague and unreal.

"I ain't goin' down the line, I tell ya. I'm goin' to take what's comin' to me—along with the rest of ya." He held up his arm. "This ain't anythin'," he chattered wildly. "I don't even feel it. I ain't afraid of their lousy machine guns. They can plug me again if it's coming to me. An' don't need no dope to go through with it, neither. Get that, Cap," he trembled.

A WHISTLE blew. In the rain a thin, undulating wave of olive-drab ran out, dipped and vanished. The racket in the woods became a confused and thundering roar. The thin wave rose again, undulated forward, disappeared. Private McBride ran out to join it.

In the wood, rancid with foul smells, fetid with rotting bodies, infernal with the spit of rifle, burst of hand grenade and shell, men sprang from tree to tree, rushed and tore from one boulder to another, and fought like gangsters and like animals tearing at each other's throats.

Private Wesson was crouched behind a fair-sized boulder. In avoiding the crossfire from a particularly near and vicious machine gun, he had scraped the skin from his nose and cheek. He was not a pretty sight.

Ahead of him, behind, and to the right and left, grim-faced men were digging in and swearing vengeance. Something suddenly threw itself beside Private Wesson; flopped down beside him with a thud. A shower of machine gun bullets splashed off the boulder and ricocheted amongst the trees.

"For the love of Pete!" said Private Wesson. "You here again?"

"I'm here," said Private McBride.

"Well, you must be nuts. That's all I got to say. A guy that gets ordered down the line—a guy that's wounded—then turns round and comes out to a hell-hole like this—" He spat. "Nuts," he concluded.

"Where is he?" said Private McBride.

"Where's who?"

"The captain."

"How should I know? Go find him if you want

to. Me, I'm staying here."

Captain Rawson was up ahead. From behind a tree he issued instructions to both flanks of his company, stiffened their resistance and encouraged them with a rare example of leadership and courage.

And with stricken eyes he watched the result of that resistance. The enemy machine guns were cutting his company to pieces. Individual sorties ended in failure. In the face of that withering fire it was impossible to move.

"Cripes!" chattered Private McBride, "if only I had a gat in my mitt I'd take them krauts—take 'em one by one." He threw away his rifle and bayonet. "This lousy thing ain't no use to nobody. Gimme a coupla them bombs."

Private Wesson looked at him. McBride was breathing noisily between closed, twisted lips.

"A gat's what I need," he stuttered. "I know how to use a gat. Why don't they serve us gats—like they do the officers?"

Bomb in hand, he peered round his side of the boulder. There, some twenty feet ahead of him and a little to the left, his small, beady eyes observed the dead body of a German officer. His breathing made a hissing sound, like some rundown engine straining to perform its duty, to struggle on and wheeze and cough until it spluttered out. With the quick and squirming movements of a weasel he darted out, dodged from tree to tree, and reaching the dead body, found what he hoped to find: a German Luger.

"Cripes!" he breathed, "now I'm all set."

His left arm was numb and useless. He ran boldly toward a clump of bushes dancing under the vibration of a steady *ta-ka-ta-ka-ta-ka*. Something left his hand. There was a flash and a blinding explosion.

About him, the trees, the boulders, the ground he crouched on became a cataract of unseen bullets. Private McBride, turning off at a tangent to the right, went on crazily, the hissing sound of his breathing coming in fits and starts. Again his teeth yanked a pin out of a bomb, again something left his hand, again there was another explosion and the silencing of another machine gun. He ran forward to complete the destruction with his Luger, shooting with savage accuracy.

He turned to the left. Something flashed near him. For a second he spun round, topwise—then he fell.

Captain Rawson, peering round the side of his tree, had seen all that happened. Now he gazed on a little twisted figure and watched the spouts of mud and dirt and twigs dancing 'round his head, his legs, his shoulders.

Actuated by some blind, ungovernable instinct—impulse—Rawson rushed up to a forward tree. From there he reached another. A little distance in front of him McBride lay on the ground. In an awful second unimportant details rose with remarkable clearness in front of Rawson's eyes; a wet leaf sticking to McBride's gray throat, the frayed thread of a missing blouse button—and the man's right hand. It was a jellied pulp. Without doubt it would have to be amputated. What had the little runt sworn to if ever again he held a gat in it? A twinge of pity shot through Rawson, for in that bloody mess of four fingers and a thumb was a German Luger.

Flinging a grenade at the nearest machine gun, Rawson sprang out, reached his man, and lifting him as easily as he might a child, he protected the puny body with the breadth and width of his own, ran for the shelter of a boulder, staggered, fell to one knee, rose painfully, went on drunkenly—hopefully.

LATER, much later, Captain Rawson opened his eyes in a dressing station. He had been dreaming of his wife—buried now a year—dreaming that once again he was resting in the blessed security of her arms. A dream—that's all it was—a dream.

Across the room, amidst a litter of stretcher-cases, a joyous voice hailed him. It was the young, thin-faced lieutenant. His arm was in bandages and he walked with a limp. He came over and stood at the foot of Rawson's stretcher.

"O.K., Captain?"

"I guess so."

"That was a wonderful thing you did—considering everything that little runt had done to you in the past. A wonderful thing, Captain—a wonderful thing!" The lieutenant sounded a trifle hysterical.

"How is he?" Rawson asked faintly.

"He'll pull through, I hear. They cut him up a bit—amputated his arm or something—but he'll pull through."

"That's good."

"Still and all—after all he'd done to you a year

ago. What made you do it, Captain?"

"Do what?"

"Go out there and risk your life—and—"

"I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"No, I don't know," said the captain, closing his eyes. "What's the use of talking about it?"