Dime Adventure Magazine, October 1935

His knife flashed at Jansen's breast

Lebrun hit him again and again, but the American paid no attention to that. While the other convicts stood silently watching he returned blow for blow. Five years in exile had prepared him for the bitter fight that was about to take place.

GUIANA TRAP

By TOM CURRY

PITFALLS that would plunge him down to ruin and death lay in Jansen's path. The recent past and present of his life were too terrible to contemplate; it was hope in what might come which kept Jansen alive, as well as other prisoners in the French Guianan prison.

He lay on his canvas strip in the long barrack, an arm flung across his tanned, burning face, light hair bleached tow color by the sun, rangy body draped with coarse prison uniform, his number stenciled on.

He listened to the grating voice of Pierre Lebrun, the big French thief who had come out from France to jungle exile in the same convoy as Jansen. Pierre spoke for the amusement of a group of *bagnards*; he kept his growl loud enough so Jansen might hear. Lebrun amused himself by annoying the American; on several occasions they had come close to blows.

"So the Yankee kid—Jansen, I mean—slipped off the log, fell head down into the river. The guard yelled at him, raised his rifle, thinking Jansen meant to escape by swimming under water. 'Don't shoot—please don't shoot,' sputtered Jansen, coming up. 'I'm just washing my ears, *M'sieu!*'" There was a faint murmur of amusement at this yarn, which had a modicum of truth, in that Jansen had fallen into the river at the sawmill that morning.

But Jansen paid no heed to his tormentor. A scowl twisted Pierre's dark-skinned face; he hurled an empty salmon tin, from which he had been eating, at Jansen, catching him in the side.

"It's so, *n'est-ce pas*, American?" he cried.

Jansen sat up quickly. The long, low-raftered room, with biting flies buzzing through the bars to torment the prisoners, contained eighty men. It was noon, siesta hour, when gangs from factories, road and sawmill rested before resuming hard labor under the equatorial sun. Some lay on the canvas strips, forty along each wall, forming beds. Many had malaria, sickness of some kind; the climate, and the poison breath of the mightiest jungle in the world were as murderous as the bad food, ennui of far-off exile and the guns of guards.

Half-starved by the insufficient prison fare, with

a touch of fever, Jansen fought to find the determination to confront his enemy. He spoke fluent French, with only a trace of accent. He drew in a deep breath of the fetid air; it was drizzling outside, muggy, the atmosphere lifeless. The pall of the steaming jungle to the south hung over him, hemming him in with a thousand miles of virgin bush; to the north the truculent Atlantic beat on a treacherous coast.

Jansen pushed himself up with his right hand as he slowly rose and faced Pierre. His breath quickened, ears hummed.

"I don't care what you say," he growled, "but keep your junk to yourself, Lebrun!" He kicked the can, which had fallen off to the floor, at Pierre; it struck against Pierre's ankle.

Lebrun took a step toward him, black eyes narrowed, hulking body crouched, fists doubled. Upon his arrest in France, Jansen had retired into a shell of sullen fury, nursing the grievance of his unjust conviction. He smoldered with a desire for revenge. "Five years in Guiana—five years in exile after the prison term." That was his sentence, the hated "doublage" making the liberated convict remain in French Guiana twice as long as his cell term.

Jansen closely watched the Frenchman. Attempts to conciliate Pierre only made the latter think his opponent a coward. His annoying way had reached the point where it predominated the misery of imprisonment.

"What'd you kick that can at me for?" Lebrun snapped.

"Why'd you throw it at me?" countered Jansen. He braced; he knew what must come: he had to fight or knuckle under to an existence made torture by Pierre.

Lebrun was older, a seasoned criminal; he had advanced his bullying to the point where he could not retire without seeming ludicrous to his fellows.

"You young monkey," he snarled, "I'll teach you to talk back to your betters—and I *am* your better. I could break you in two with one hand. Lie down and keep still!" His dirt-stained hand flicked out, caught Jansen in the chest, hurling him back so he tripped on his cot, falling across it.

The hard thud Jansen's head made as it hit the floor cleared his brain of everything save a desire to get at Lebrun. He came up on his knees, underlip bitten between his teeth, stayed a moment, a hand on the floor, the other gripping the edge of his bed. Then he sprang into the aisle, threw a wild haymaker at Pierre's face. The Frenchman ducked back, hit him a clip in the cheek as Jansen bored in, fists flailing. His knuckles connected with his enemy's flesh, and satisfaction surged through him; he beat Pierre back to the wall.

LEBRUN hit him again and again, but Jansen paid no heed to that. His face was puffed from the blows, breath came hard, but he pounded at the older, heavier man until Pierre suddenly turned, leaped a cot and crouched, snarling and cursing, on the other side.

The fight had taken but a few moments; the other convicts had stood back, silently watching. Now, as Lebrun seemed to quit, they began laughing, and one big *soldat*, soldier from the *Bat' d'Afrique*, slapped Jansen on the back. The American turned toward him.

"Look out," the soldier roared.

Lebrun was coming back at him. Pierre had snatched a knife from a leg sheath concealed by his trouser leg. His breath hissed in escape as he threw himself in, knife flashing at Jansen's breast. Groggy on his feet from the fight, Jansen was slow moving; he thought he felt the contact of the blade, but it was the soldier who had reached out, elbow digging Jansen out of the way, as he caught Lebrun's wrist. For a moment the three were tangled together.

"That's enough," the soldier growled, holding Pierre in an iron grip. The knife fell on the floor. "The kid's got nerve; let him alone—"

"Attention!" The order came from the iron grille at the end of the barrack. It was an army guard in white uniform, tropical helmet, Ruby pistol strapped at his side. The *bagnards*, eagerly viewing the scrap, had neglected to keep watch. Fighting was forbidden, a punishable offense; it had to be carefully gone about. Sometimes the body of a prisoner would be found in the lavatory in the morning, stabbed to death; no one ever knew anything about it when questioned by authority.

The soldier accompanied Lebrun and Jansen to the grille, but the guard waved him aside. "It's not you I want; I can see who was fighting, I heard you interfere. Lebrun, American—march."

Luckily for Pierre, his knife had been hidden by the soldier's body, and another prisoner had quickly put his foot on it before it had been seen. Lebrun, head hanging in chagrin at being caught,

shuffled out past the *surveillant*, whose nose wrinkled in disgusted pleasure at having arrested them. Not caring much what they did to him, Jansen followed Pierre.

"That way," the guard ordered gruffly, shoving them along the passage. "The commandant's strict about fighting, *bagnards*; you'll probably get thirty days in the black cell, if you're not sent to the Island."

The Island! It was hard for a prisoner on the mainland to hear the dreaded name of Ile St. Joseph without shuddering; Jansen felt dread coldness touch his heart. He had been told harrowing tales of the terrible solitary confinement pits on the islet, in the group of three rocks rising from the sea, Joseph, Devil's Isle of Dreyfus fame, Royale.

The guard, pleased at being able to prove his vigilance, took them across the damp courtyard to the official quarters of the commandant in charge for the day. He pushed them into a hall, tapped at a half-open door.

Jansen could look in, see a man seated behind a table piled with official papers. Bracing himself, he still felt that the worst had happened, for the man at the table was Commandant Henri, strictest disciplinarian in the prison. Henri believed in making convicts toe the mark. He was not cruel but he seldom forgave infractions of rules. He was a stocky, broad Frenchman, with close-clipped black mustache—a fine army officer. He wore a white suit of expensive linen, black leather puttees, an officer's sword-and-gun belt.

"What is it, Riche?" Henri demanded, frowning up from his papers. His face was brown, seamed by the tropic sun.

"Two *bagnards* fighting. I caught them at it, M'sieu le Commandant."

"H'm, that's plain," Henri said, staring first at Lebrun, then at Jansen, seeing the injuries both had sustained. A trickle of blood flowed from the corner of Pierre's mouth; Jansen's cheek was puffed. "What have you to say, men?"

Jansen stayed sullenly silent. Pierre began, fawningly, a greasy smile on his face, "*M'sieu*, it was just a little rough-house. The American lost his temper, and we marked each other. *C'est tout*—that's all it was."

"Is that right?" Henri asked Jansen.

Jansen stared into the stern, light-blue eyes of the commandant. He found them cold, official; just such eyes had spoken his unjust condemnation. He hated Henri, no longer cared what happened, what they did. The solitary cell meant nothing.

"Why should I bother to talk," he snarled, "when no one believes what I say? I was sent here by a dirty trick, and that's all I ever get."

Riche, appalled, gasped; then his fist caught Jansen a hard blow in the stomach, whirling him back.

"Don't dare speak like that to the commandant!" he bellowed.

Jansen, doubled up, crouched a moment, lips baring his teeth. Nothing but the urge to fight stayed with him. His knees straightened, he started for Riche, who took a quick step back, hand flying to the butt of his pistol.

"Stop!" Henri's commanding voice reached Jansen's consciousness, checked his rush. The commandant rose, stepped between Jansen and the guard. Jansen hated Henri, as he hated everybody. "Riche—take the *zephyr* back to barracks; I'll see about him later. I want to talk to this prisoner."

RICHE saluted, shoved Lebrun out. Henri deliberately closed the door into the passage before resuming his place behind the table.

"Stand there, before me, Jansen," he said gruffly. He was watching Jansen closely, all the time, as he might a wild beast.

"You nearly finished your career that time," Henri went on, a curious note in his voice; he was weighing Jansen. "If you had struck Riche, I'd have sent you to Ile Joseph for five years, provided he hadn't shot you down. To hit a keeper here is a mortal offense, you know that. Since you obeyed me, I'll give you a chance. Speak up, now, tell me your grievance. Is it food, the work you do? How old are you?"

"Nineteen," Jansen found himself replying. He wanted to maintain his hardness, defy Henri as he defied the world.

"Younger than you look; I suppose it's the life."

"I hate it here," he said, with repressed emotion.

A grim smile touched the commandant's stern features. "Who doesn't? All the prisoners, surely, and most of the guards. I don't like it myself; but it's my duty. However, we'll speak of you; you've decided to fight the world, Jansen. That will lead only to your own destruction."

"I'm innocent, sir—I haven't said that for a long time, since they always laugh at me, even the other convicts."

"*Certainement*. Why not? Haven't you heard a thousand others claim that? No man ever really believes he deserves the punishment he gets; most of those convicted claim innocence, the rest, extenuating circumstances to excuse even murder. It's the way of mankind, for each to think himself better than the next. And no one really cares save for himself, unless he trains himself to do so. But perhaps you don't understand all this."

Jansen took in the words; the clear logic of the Gallic mind was good for his tortured consciousness, seemed to make his lot easier for the moment. So that when Henri said, "Let's have the whole story," he spoke frankly: "I shipped on a freighter out of New York when I was seventeen." Jansen's voice was low, steady. "I was looking for adventure—I got it, all right." Henri nodded at the half jest.

"I worked very hard—painting, doing dirty work—didn't mind that. It was a tough life. Then we reached Marseilles, I went ashore on leave for the evening. I was strolling along an alley that night; suddenly I heard yells behind, turned, and a man bumped into me, grabbed me and held on. He was breathing hard from a run, and he shouted, 'Here he is! I got him!' At first I just tried to make him let go, then I fought to break free. We were gripped together when gendarmes dashed up, two from either end of the alley, and seized us. 'That's the man you want—I saw him run away,' the Frenchman cried. The police searched me at once, took a leather wallet filled with money from my side pocket. They also found a bloodstained knife in my other coat pocket. I swear I never saw either before.

"A few blocks away was a wounded man; he had been stabbed from behind, robbed. A police patrol, answering the victim's cries, hurried up; the injured man had seen the back of the robber turn into the alley, and the gendarmes split and came in from both sides—and they arrested me. As the victim hadn't had a clear view of the man who attacked him, he was soon convinced I'd done it. The loot was found on me, and the man who had grabbed me swore as a witness he'd seen me commit the crime, and had chased me. I couldn't speak French very well then; I lost my temper; at the trial they seemed to take it for granted I was guilty. I had no money; even my lawyer seemed to think I was lying, though he did all he could. I hardly knew what was happening before I was convicted, sentenced to Guiana. They said I was lucky the injured citizen didn't die."

Henri listened carefully, watching Jansen's animated eyes. At last, he shook his head, shrugged. "I'll look over your *dossier*. Did the police investigate this fellow who seized you?"

Jansen nodded eagerly. "Yes. He had a good reputation; his name was Louis Delys. They couldn't shake his story."

"I understand." Henri was silent a moment, then he said, "I know Fleury, chief of detectives in Marseilles; he's an old friend of mine. He's a good *flic*—a fine cop. You're sure you've told me the truth?"

His piercing eyes searched Jansen's. Having had experience with thousands of convicts, Henri was not easily taken in. On the other hand, such experience might harden a man.

"I'm going to give you a chance, anyway, here in the prison," he continued. "You're excused from the sawmill. You can come to work at my home—I have a house at 36 Rue des Palmes. I need someone to tidy it up for me, run errands. It's easy work. Would you like that?"

"Yes, sir," cried Jansen. To get away from the sloppy, back-breaking labor of rolling heavy mahogany and purple-heart logs from the Maroni would be heaven.

Besides, he would get better food, which would give him needed strength to escape Guiana. For it was the hope of freedom that made it possible for him to face the future.

Henri went on, slowly, "Don't forget this, Jansen. For me to take a new, untried prisoner and give him such freedom is a heavy responsibility. You'll report and sleep at the prison; otherwise you'll be on your own, but you mustn't leave the town. I'll put you on your honor. If you run away, it will leave me holding the bag. You promise?"

Jansen felt no hesitation in giving his word; he looked straight at Henri, saying, "On my word of honor, *M'sieu*."

"*Bien*. Get your hat and what you'll need through the day and I'll send you to my house."

LATER, passing through St. Laurent's littered streets, filled with black Chinese, South American vultures thick on vine-covered walls, Jansen's heart was lifted. With his whole day free, he would be able to plan, perhaps to steal enough money to get away. He meant to use Henri

ruthlessly, for his own purposes.

Henri was a bachelor, lived alone in a whitewashed, single-storied house. It was in disarray, and Jansen set about tidying up. Later he served supper to the commandant, who came in about six o'clock; then, after eating the first good meal in a year, he washed up, before leaving for the prison barrack. Henri, reading a French paper, nodded goodnight to him.

To return to the lockup after the afternoon's freedom was a letdown; but he looked forward to morning, when he would again go to Henri's. The turnkey checked him in.

The prisoners lay around, burning kerosene in small milk cans, with rags for wicks; some played cards, others plotted escape—the main occupation of those condemned. To get away, a man needed money to buy his way through the jungle with bribes to the Djoekas, Negro lords of the bush, or to purchase a boat and provisions for the long sea voyage of six hundred miles to Venezuela.

Jansen walked slowly between the cots. Talk ceased as he appeared; then several, including Jean, the big soldier who had saved him from Lebrun's knife, crowded around him.

"What'd you say, how'd you hypnotize that old rascal Henri?" demanded Jean. "Why, you've landed on a mattress sure enough, American. I'd cut off my arm for the chance you've got!"

Jansen shrugged. He saw Lebrun approaching. "The commandant just decided to give him a break," he told Jean.

He tensed as Pierre shouldered his way in. But Lebrun's face was contrite; he said, "I ask your pardon, Jansen. I'm sorry I bullied you, glad Jean stopped me from cutting you. The way you faced Henri and that guard made me see you're a real man, with plenty of guts. You're no fool kid, and I'm willing to admit I made a bad mistake to think so. Will you shake and be friends?" He held out his hand.

Jansen was affected by the apology; he shook Lebrun's paw, turned to his cot, lay down. He did not speak of his plan to escape; he would keep it to himself, though he knew that when the moment came he would need others to go with him. Paddlers and helmsmen were necessary to sail the ocean—Jansen would go by water. Sailor that he was, the black jungle gave him the horrors, with its swamps, snakes and wild beasts. Mind filled with bright new plans, he quickly slept.

For a week, Jansen worked during the day as apprentice for Henri, keeping the house spick-and-span, running errands. Henri was careless about money, often left sums lying on his bureau, enough to take a man away from Guiana. Though strict about how the tasks were done, he was usually kind. Jansen tried hard to please; he did not want to lose his chance. At all times escape was in his mind; during the night, before falling asleep in the prison, he drew out older men who had attempted to get away, only to be recaptured. Several, among them Jean, had done time on St. Joseph for repeated attempts. Lebrun had not yet made a try, but all knew he planned to do so. He had not been punished by Henri for the fight. Lebrun had a way of insinuating himself to the leadership of the crowd; he pretended to know much more than he did. But he never annoyed Jansen again, even tried to do him favors.

ONE night, coming in after his work, Jansen realized something was up. Jean, Lebrun and three other convicts who stuck with them, had their heads together. They had quickly hidden something as the guard opened the gate to let Jansen through; but they brought it out again when the way was clear.

"Here, Jansen," Lebrun said, touching his arm. "See what I have. Bought it from a native. A map of the Guiana coast all the way to Venezuela, places where we can land and get help without fear of the police."

Jansen's heart leaped; he stared greedily at the white paper, lines and figures traced upon it, picturing the way to freedom. If he could reach Venezuela, he could ship from La Guayra or Maracaibo, return to America, and that was the burning desire animating him.

"But a boat," he asked quickly. "Suppose a storm hits us—what then? No canoe could stand against the sea." He spoke with a sailor's wisdom.

"The kid's right," cried Lebrun, patting Jansen. "He sees what I did. I've got a real sailboat, and the six of us are going out of here, Jansen."

"You—mean I go along?" asked the American.

"Sure you do," Lebrun replied heartily. "You can bring some money, can't you, to use when we reach Venezuela? You ought to be able to steal some from Henri. I got provisions; everything's arranged. I'm taking you tomorrow because you're a brave one, you got guts, you deserve a break. We

ought to make Venezuela in three weeks, then—freedom!"

Jean almost wept with joy at the prospect; the others were greatly stirred at the chance of escape. Jansen could picture himself back in America, with a clean bed, fine food, the air of freedom, no fear of arrest.

"I'll go," he agreed eagerly. "I'll be ready, I'll have money. Where do we meet?"

"I got it all planned," Lebrun told him. "You know the broken dock below the main wharf? Come there tomorrow, fifteen minutes past noon. We'll slip away before being marched back to prison for siesta. There's a deserted hut close by where we can hide. Don't fail, Jansen; be there on time or we'll start without you."

Jansen pressed Lebrun's hand. "I'll be there!"

That night he dreamed only of freedom. In the morning there was a drizzling, muggy rain blotting out all save the dull green jungle, the yellow amber of the wide Maroni river to the west. Jansen's eager feet took him to Henri's. The commandant, who had been on duty at the prison until midnight, rose and dressed about nine o'clock. He seemed morose, his face was yellow, piqued. He hardly spoke to Jansen beyond giving necessary orders.

After coffee, Henri took his umbrella—used as a sunshade as well as for rain—and started to the prison. Jansen looked in the bedroom, saw a wad of paper francs lying on the bureau. Excitedly, he worked around the house to pass the time.

At 11:45 he hurriedly donned a pair of Henri's boots, rolled clothing and food in a blanket, pocketed the money, and. slipped out.

Behind the gray mist the sun beat; the heat was oppressive, choking. The townspeople had gone indoors to sleep through the middle of the tropic day; few were on the streets. Jansen's gray form passed swiftly along, headed for the river. On another avenue he saw a work gang from the sawmill, heads down, bare feet slapping the dirty pavement as they were herded back to the prison. He did not see Jean or Lebrun; his heart rose a beat as he realized the escape had begun.

Cutting in from the street to the Maroni, he saw a tiny catboat tied to the broken log pier. The door of the shack was open, and inside were the five convicts.

Lebrun seized Jansen's wrist. "All set, boy? Now, you run the boat a mile down river, where I'll meet you. I must hurry and pick up a gun at the Chink's. The food's stored in the bush below, you'll see a hut with a white cloth tied to the door, close to the bank. Pull in and wait for me; I'll be there almost as soon as you."

"Listen, Pierre," Jean growled nervously, "I'm worried. Henri's on duty now; and no *bagnard* has made a successful getaway with him in charge. Maybe he's lucky, he's nabbed a hundred who've tried to beat it. I'm no coward but I don't feel right inside; I'm going to hook back to prison and check in. Suppose Henri's spyin' on us, waiting till we start, to arrest us?"

A couple of the others agreed with Jean; no one could call the soldier yellow.

"So you think Henri's on duty?" Lebrun cried. "Well, he's not. He's in the prison hospital, flat on his back. An hour ago he was stricken with a terrible fever—malaria, it hit him as it sometimes does. He's raving sick. I'm no fool, I know what I'm doing. A substitute's on duty; they're excited about Henri, and off guard."

A strange sensation passed through Jansen. His high spirits, anticipation of escape, dropped suddenly from him; his heart sank. He was irritated, tried to throw it off, not comprehending what made him feel as he did. He recalled how down in the mouth Henri had appeared that morning; evidently the fever was rising in him then, had spurted up high in the middle of the day.

Then he realized that what he felt was pity for the commandant, who was helpless in delirium. The francs he had stolen from his benefactor burned his flesh through the thin lining of his trousers. To him then came full knowledge of what he was doing: he was betraying his friend, who had tried to help him. His escape, made easier because of his position in Henri's household, would react to the detriment of the commandant, make Henri the butt of jests, call him up to answer before the governor for having foolishly put such trust in an unknown. He forgot himself and his own plight, as he thought of Henri.

His nails dug his palms; Lebrun was starting out the door, when Jansen said, "Pierre, I'm not going."

Lebrun turned on him. "Why not?"

"I—I don't want to cheat Henri."

Lebrun scowled. "You little sap. You can't back out now; you might squeal on us."

"I won't, I'll keep quiet. But you can get away without me, you don't need me. I'm going back. Goodbye, and good luck."

He tried to push past Lebrun. Pierre put a burly arm across the opening; his face was flushed. "You're going with us or I'll kill you!"

"Look out; let me go," ordered Jansen.

Lebrun hit him, sending him reeling. Jansen sprang back; he was watching for the knife this time, caught Pierre's wrist, twisted it back. He was stronger now, good food, hope, had helped him. For a moment the two men strained, Jansen's spine pressed against the door; he wrenched up on Lebrun's arm with both hands, taking kicks and bites from the Frenchman. A hard jerk, and Lebrun dropped the knife.

But the fight had just begun. Pierre was furious, determined not to be bested again. He threw hard fists at Jansen's head and body, jolting him severely. Jansen squared off, hit skillfully, aiming for the face. He jabbed a left feint at Pierre's ribs; Lebrun's hands went down to ward off the blow, and Jansen quickly put all his weight behind the right-hand uppercut to Lebrun's chin, felt his knuckles meet fair and square on the point.

Pierre stopped fighting suddenly, arms dropping to his sides, eyes glazing. He was already out as he slumped and fell, face turning down, across the sill. "Goodbye—boys," gasped Jansen.

"Adieu—luck to you," growled Jean.

STEPPING out, Jansen started for the street. Looking back he saw them lugging Lebrun's unconscious form toward the boat; maybe they would all gain freedom. As for himself, he was returning to prison. When he looked again, they had shoved off into the current. He wanted to run after them, go along, but thought of Henri, his friend.

Hurrying to the house, he put back the money and belongings. Then he started for the prison.

"May I go in, can I get to see Commandant Henri?" he eagerly begged the turnkey.

"No, you can't enter now, can't see Henri."

Jansen shook his head; no use to argue. He returned to the house, waited, miserable that his friend was sick, might die. Bound by ties of gratitude, he could not run away.

It was after three when he heard a familiar step, and Henri came in, stopped short, stared at him. Jansen was amazed, delighted; he seized his benefactor's hand. "Lebrun said you were very sick, of fever! I'm glad it's not true, Commandant."

"Lebrun said that, eh?" growled Henri. He looked queerly at Jansen. "Lebrun's plainly as great a liar as he is a rascal. Said *you'd* planned to escape, to take several with you, gave me their names in advance. I hated to believe you'd cheat me. I knew of the plot, was waiting to see what you'd do. Had you gone, nothing would have saved you from solitary. It was a nasty business. There was a fight below; one of my guards was wounded."

"Lebrun—told you of the escape?" Jansen gasped. He was so dazed he blurted, "But—Lebrun planned it all!"

Henri's brows drew together as he heard Jansen's quick story. "I finally understand. Lebrun acted as spy on a plot hatched by himself. He came secretly to me, said he could turn up several who were going to escape. He was supposed to meet us, lead us to the spot where we could capture them, but didn't show up. However, we sighted the boat and caught them as they landed at a shack below. Had Lebrun not been in the boat, I wouldn't know what to think; now I can punish him."

"The others—they were betrayed by Lebrun; he said you were sick, to make them go."

"I'll deal lightly with them. It's evident Lebrun hoped to gain favor by working up and then telling on the plan; maybe he wanted your job with me, or thought that he might gain a pardon for himself. Instead, he goes to Joseph—alone!"

IT WAS a month later that Henri came in at supper-time. The commandant's features relaxed into a broad smile as he shook Jansen's hand.

"I have it," he cried.

"What's that, *M'sieu*?" asked Jansen.

"Full pardon for you—the quickest way out of Guiana. You recall I told you of my friend Fleury, chief of the Marseilles Surété? Just after Lebrun's attempted plot, seeing how well you had behaved, I wrote Fleury, convinced you were a good man. Fleury checked up on Delys, that witness against you, and caught him doing a similar robbery! Fleury finally obtained a full confession from Louis Delys that Delys had done the crime for which you were convicted. Delys, realizing he was trapped in that alley, shoved the wallet and knife into your coat pockets while he struggled with you in the darkness. You're free, Jansen."

Jansen knew that it was by escaping from himself that he had finally won freedom from Guiana.