

Jumping Meridians

By LINTON WELLS and NELS LEROY JORGENSEN

He glanced at his watch. The train she had just left was the one with which he would have connected had he continued on to Yokohama. By using his airplane Rogers had managed to overtake a previous train. It was nearly 10 o'clock. A sudden rush of steam from behind him warned him that his train was about to start.

Yet there was something that intrigued him about the woman who approached. Something in her carriage spoke of an innate courage and daring that would scorn whatever dangers there were here; it was so evident to him that he repressed his first intention of speaking to her and offering his escort.

"I wonder if she'd think I was rude—"

He broke off suddenly, with a sharp gasp of surprise and consternation. Without warning, there had sprung from out of the dark behind her five armed men—Chinese! He saw a knife flash against the dim platform lights and a long-lost sarong uncoiled as one of the men started toward her.

Forgetful of the waiting train—of everything—Jimmy dropped his bag and darted forward. A little cry of warning from his lips was echoed by her, just as she turned and perceived the thugs. She darted back, Jimmy, as he rushed forward, noted, without even pausing to classify the impression, that she did not scream.

There were no weapons among the Chinese besides the long knives they carried. A pistol, Jimmy realized, would finish him off before he could reach them. Yet, even in the brief seconds which intervened as he got across the few yards separating him from the scene, it was the woman who held his eyes.

There was something thrillingly courageous about the way she fought, with all the fury of a tigress, against the man who had attacked her from behind, and who was now attempting to twist the sarong in a knot behind her head and over her face—fought so wildly that a second man was forced to the aid of the first.

A low voiced order came from the thick lips of a squat-burly Mongolian, just as Jimmy reached the spot. The speed of his arrival carried forward the fierce, straight arm blow which he started from the shoulder in the same second. His right fist struck the squat individual squarely in the face and carried him tumbling backward.

There was something dangerous in Jimmy's eyes; with the very prospect of the fight—a tiny greenish flame had lighted far in their depths. He was suddenly a creature of unleashed, unutterable fury; the sight of the slim, gallant figure of this lonely woman in the hands of these men had set off some primordial spark inside him.

There had been a terrific crack as his right fist struck. Now, in the same motion which had sent him upon the leader of the thugs he half whirled, sidewise, and the edge of his doubled left hand met the jaw of a second man. A knife went clattering to the ground. There was a wild, high voiced cry. Jimmy whirled again as his second victim staggered to his feet—whirled to meet the rush of the three others.

He heard a low voiced, thrilling plea that was lost in the fury of the moment, but he knew he should know the woman's voice again—anywhere. Then the attack, in all its fury,

turned from her to vent itself upon him.

Jimmy had a swift vision of a long, wicked knife gleaming with a yellow flame along its edge in the light from the dim lamps along the platform. It descended, just as he leapt sidewise, avoiding it by scarcely an inch. The flat of his palm caught the man who held it and sent him backward just as the latter's two companions leapt upon him.

These, apparently, had no knives, but their wriggling, squirming bodies were like a mess of eels, he thought. He caught the throat of one man who had clamped on him from behind—buried his fingers deep in the hard flesh. With his feet he kicked out desperately, glimpsing, with wide, burning eyes, the leader of the cut-throats staggering doubtfully to his feet.

The girl cried out again—then she was lost in the haze of moving figures and dizzy lights. But this time she had cried for aid—for him!

"Run!" he cried. "Get going—I'll hold 'em!"

Whether she obeyed or not, he could not tell. He had forgotten the necessity there was for him to board the Moscow train; in his anger and the heat of the battle, he had forgotten everything but the woman. Something had happened inside him; merely his single glimpse of her had made her safety paramount.

But he was reeling now. Something heavy glanced off his head. He ducked instinctively and put up a feeble arm to ward off a knife thrust. He had no way of knowing how many men were on him; but he felt himself being borne down to the ground.

He was making a terrific effort to hold on to his senses, while a spurt of blood from a wound over his eye blinded him momentarily, and he was sensible that every muscle in his body was numbed from the blows he had received, when, suddenly, an English voice broke into his consciousness:

"Hold on, Jimmy!"

He gasped. "Saunders—help!"

There was a rush of feet—a curse in the Manchu dialect. He felt one of the winding arms loosed from around his throat and lashed out wildly with both fists doubling up and hurling himself at the figure of a man with a knife. There was a crash; Jimmy groped through a thick fog to come to grips with one of his antagonists who seemed eluding him.

Then that cheering voice again:

"Here we are—steady, son!"

There was the crack of a pistol—a wild cry. Through a haze that enveloped his mental and physical vision, he heard the spurt of steam from the head of the Moscow train. Arms were about him—friendly arms this time and he felt himself swaying as they held him. He heard Saunders' cool voice above him.

"You've got them all, boys. No more shooting—might hit someone else."

Jimmy tried to straighten. He dashed a hand across his eyes, and looking up, saw that his palm was covered with blood. Saunders was smiling cheerily.

"Not hurt, are you?"

"I—think not." Jimmy gazed about him wildly.

"Where has she—?"

"She?" Saunders cocked a questioning eyebrow.

Without replying, Jimmy swept the strange station with a startled, disbelieving stare. Saunders was beside him, the Englishman's arm lightly about

his shoulders. A few feet away, two of the Chinese lay stretched on the ground unmoving. A third stood with his hands bound cruelly up between his shoulder blades, while four of Saunders' men were grouped about. The other Chinese had vanished.

But along the whole length of the dimly lighted, still lonely platform, at the farther end of which the Moscow train chugged a last warning, there was no other sign of life. The woman in black whom he had risked his life to save from the thugs had completely vanished.

CHAPTER XIV

Jimmy felt unspeakably weak and dizzy. For a moment, with the realization that the woman was not in sight—the past few moments seemed like some nightmare; only his aching muscles and the blood which Saunders was wiping out of his eye, assured him that it was all real—these things and the sight of the motionless Chinese, with Saunders' men.

He shook his head feeling faint.

"Did you say 'she?'" his rescuer demanded.

"I did. Do you mean you didn't see a woman here when you came up?" Jimmy asked feebly. He felt a decided unwillingness to talk, a weakness that flooded his entire being, yet the mystery held him erect.

"No—nor pink elephants," Saunders assured him. "They must've hurt you more than I thought."

"No, no!" Jimmy grasped at his friend's coat lapels fiercely. "I tell you, I mean it, Tommy—there was a woman—a white woman. She got off the train from Fusan, the one I would have been on had I crossed Japan. I was at the other end of this platform, when these five Chinos jumped out of the dark and tried to kidnap her."

Saunders stared at him, his brow wrinkled. "I'm not sure, Jimmy, but that—"

He broke off at Jimmy Brandon's sudden exultant cry. The latter tried to leap forward; instead, he swayed as he started, and fell to his hands from weakness. Saunders caught him and then watched with surprise as the American gained his feet, clutching a stained, heel marked strip of fragile lace in his fingers.

"Here it is—hers!"

Jimmy carried the once dainty thing to his face, and his eyes half closed with the faint, delicate scent he caught.

"Black narcissus," Saunders grunted. "Jimmy, is all this straight?"

"Doesn't this prove it? I've told you the facts, Tommy. The question now is, where did she go?"

Saunders frowned at the lengthy string of dark coaxes. "I know there wasn't a sign of her when I came up. She must be in her car, but Heavens knows which one it'd be." He turned back. "We've got to put you aboard. It was just chance that brought me here, this way."

"What way?"

Saunders gestured toward the men with him. "Three of those are local police," he explained. "Didn't Welker tell you I was dining with the rail head?"

"Yes, of course," Jimmy's legs were unsteady as he started forward, aided by Saunders' hand under his arm. "Said you'd try to make it to say cheerio. But why the police?"

"How did you know?"

"That's just it," Saunders frowned. "I was in rather a pickle—saw no way of leaving there in time. Until, just before I did leave, news came that an American was going to be attacked as he left the Fusan train. How the authorities got hold of it, I don't know. But anyhow, I announced it was my friend, took my two boys and added the others, and dashed right down here.

anything good about our military. Every time an American uniformed man appears to make a mistake the Register gleefully seizes upon it to substantiate its position, whatever its position is. The Register consistently opposes every move to increase our defense. Irrespective of what other nations may do, let the United States even think of adding anything to ours and the Register screams militarism. Time and again in the past the Register has vigorously opposed movements to cut down what defenses we had, contending we had so much we appeared thirsty to the rest of the world.

Under existing conditions, does

It seemed quite logical when I saw you in the midst of that mess."

"But they didn't attack me!" Jimmy exclaimed.

"They attacked an American," Saunders retorted.

"Naturally, I assumed it would be a male American, but after all, that's only an assumption."

Jimmy halted before the steps to his car. Ahead, the train was jerking up ready to start. A guard waved to him to enter. He felt very weak. Yet his eyes, suddenly, had regained their fire.

"It's beginning to be understandable," he said slowly. "I was supposed to be on that train—only I wasn't. It was intended that it should be me all right." He swayed. "You'll have to help me a bit, old man; didn't realize I was so done in."

The blood had clotted over his eye, destroying his vision. The train gave a last jerk which threw him into Saunders' arms. Tenderly, the latter helped him inside the car and to his compartment. Jimmy made a last effort to smile as he realized the train was pulling away, and that the Englishman was walking a long beside the open window of the compartment.

"I'll never be able to thank you, Tommy," he managed, and put out his hand feebly.

"Forget it," Saunders grinned. "Wish I could stick with you. You'll be needing attention. But if you want to thank me at all—go on ahead and win! I've bet my next year's income on you, and everybody in the club has done the same."

"Righto!" Jimmy grinned in a fashion that was almost like his old self, though his weakness was overcoming him too swiftly for comfort. "I don't like the rules of this game, but I'll win. I promise."

"Luck! " Saunders' cheery voice floated into the night.

The train picked up speed and bore on toward Manchouli and Moscow. Jimmy tried to rouse himself to look out of the window and wave a final good-bye, but the effort was too much. His head swam dizzily through misty globules of light that floated about; he relaxed, settling back against the cushions of his seat with a feeling that he was sinking into oblivion. He put out his foot and touched the leather bag that Saunders had not forgotten to throw in.

With a sigh, now that the last responsibility was attended to, he slipped into unconsciousness. The last he remembered were the blinking, lonely lights of the outskirts of Harbin and the black, impenetrable pall into which the train was rushing as they bore on.

Unconsciousness. Yet there were dreams. Upon awakening, they seemed amazingly fragile and elusive. But something must have existed that was real, amid it all. He clenched his hand; the handkerchief he had picked up on the Harbin platform was gone.

He swore softly, and slowly his eyes opened. It was gone. Not even on the floor. And he remembered, suddenly, that it had been initialled; he might have discovered, had he retained a hold on himself, the identity of the woman in black.

Thinking of her, he jerked up his head at something familiar, and then gave a soft little exclamation.

"Narcisse noir!"

Faint, elusive, delicately palpable in spite of all, his compartment held a trace of the same fragrance that he remembered on the handkerchief.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

NOTHING "JUST AS GOOD" From the Cincinnati Enquirer Customer—Have you any varnish remover? Druggist—No, we sell only soft drinks, but you might try the speak-easy in the next block.

The Register favor the United States completely abolishing our defenses? The Register, to our knowledge, has never gone quite that far, but a concrete expression of just what it thinks we should have would be most comforting, for then we could know who in its eyes are in the class of prostitution supporters and who are not. That would simplify the debate in Iowa considerably.

Farewell to Thee. From Tit-Bits. "Dear, if you'd only grow you hair longer I'd marry you." "Thanks; I prefer to remain single."



FOR COLDS

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ASPIRIN

To break a cold harmlessly and in a hurry try a Bayer Aspirin tablet. And for headache. The action of Aspirin is very efficient, too, in cases of neuralgia, neuritis, even rheumatism and lumbago! And there's no after effect; doctors give Aspirin to children—often infants. Whenever there's pain, think of Aspirin. The genuine Bayer Aspirin has Bayer on the box and on every tablet. All druggists, with proven directions.

Physicians prescribe Bayer Aspirin; it does NOT affect the heart

Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid

Goblet of Friendship

Never Yet Exhausted

I have drained the sparkling beaker of the magical brew of Youth and been thrilled with the wild tumult of its impetuous urge coursing through my veins.

I have pledged my happiness with the blood-red goblet of Love and drank deeply of its sacred and intoxicating contents.

I have toyed with the tempting opal bowl of Ambition, but its dregs are bitter and may only be sweetened by libations from the crystal cup of Service to Man.

Then it was revealed to me that no one yet has drunk too deeply of the sacrament in the golden chalice of Friendship, without which even Youth and Love would lose their deepest meaning.—Dan Beard in the Pictorial Review.

Increased Their Thirst

Wife (seeing husband attacked by bees)—Run, honey, run!

Husband—Don't call me honey, for heaven's sake! You're making them desperate.—Pearson's.

Not Too Exclusive

"I hear she is very exclusive." "Well, I don't know. She associates with other people sometimes."

PAIN IN THE STOMACH

is not a pleasant feeling nor are headaches, gas, heartburn, feeling of fullness or that tired feeling after meals which are the stomach's signals that it cannot do its work and needs help. If your's is signaling you in any of these ways write H. Cole Watkins, Box 298, Scranton, Pa., for information about a formula worked out by a chemist and used for 17 years with amazing success in such cases.

Fooled the Monk

Somebody's monkey was running around loose at Los Angeles and a policeman was delegated to catch it. He tried various traps and lures, but the monkey would not remain within arms' reach long enough to be captured. Then thinking of the old saying, "monkey see monkey do," he made a noose, thrust his head through the noose several times and then extended the trap gently toward the animal. The monkey put his head right through the noose and lost his liberty.

Leave It to Her

Jim—You'll keep our engagement a dark secret, won't you Nellie? Nellie—I'll tell the world.

SCHOOLGIRLS NEED HEALTH



Daughter of Mrs. Catherine Lamuth, Box 72, Michawak, Michigan

"After my daughter grew into womanhood she began to feel rundown and weak and a friend asked me to get her your medicine. She took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Lydia E. Pinkham's Herb Medicine. Her nerves are better, her appetite is good, she is in good spirits and able to work every day. We recommend the Vegetable Compound to other girls and to their mothers."—Mrs. Catherine Lamuth.



Daughter of Mrs. Eva Wood Howe, 1006 South St. Street, Danville, Ill.

"I praise Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound for what it has done for my fourteen-year-old daughter as well as for me. It has helped her growth and her nerves and she has a good appetite now and sleeps well. She has gone to school every day since beginning the medicine. I will continue to give it to her at regular intervals and will recommend it to other mothers who have daughters with similar troubles."—Mrs. Eva Wood Howe.

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Pacifist Pleasantry.

From Iowa Legionaire. "A score of years ago the old red light districts had many apologists. There are today a considerably larger number of apologists for large military establishments. There is a strange similarity of note in the arguments advanced for both the licensed killing of war and the licensed prostitution of the old time red light districts. And in both the phrase 'human nature has not changed' appears frequently."—Des Moines Register.

How's that for nice, genteel, lady-like argument? Leave it to a theoretical pacifist to keep discussion on a high plane. He never calls any

one who disagrees with him anything that won't violate the postal laws. Now that we might see where we stand in the Register's opinion we should like a clear statement of what it calls a large military establishment. Since we strongly favor keeping what we have and other American Legionaires, Auxiliary members, President Coolidge and many more poor, misguided, vicious militarists, we fear we may have a mind like that of persons who favor licensed prostitution. Of course, prostitution and national defense are exactly alike. Objections to one could be used perfectly on the other. The Register rarely if ever says