

# Jumping Meridians

By LINTON WELLS and NELS LEROY JORGENSEN

They might be called to account for it, but that would be a little; that flashed through Jimmy's mind, too, as the speedboat neared the shore. Rogers would deny knowledge of them; they were a mongrel crew, anyhow, in all probability picked for just this type of work, and secretly his wealth would set them free from any consequences. The Faustian was out of sight. Who could ever prove who they were—or, for that matter, that Billy Crane had not injured his plane in landing.

But, beyond that—what did it matter what was proved or disproved, once the race was lost? Jimmy knew he would never fight the thing afterward. It would be a sorry business—the vanquished bringing up a thing of that sort. He couldn't stand it. No—if Austin Rogers won, by whatever methods, it was the end.

"Get ashore!" he shouted to his pilot. "We've got to fight."

They were almost to the beach. The boatman, a young fellow, tanned by sea and sun, but diminutive in size, nodded without reply. With a last, dexterous twist, he sent the power boat broadside to the beach just as it seemed they must pile up on the sands. The motor stopped. Jimmy, his fists clenched and his eyes blazing, leapt free, knee-deep in the water, just as the sailors reached Billy Crane's ship.

He saw his friend dive into the cockpit and emerge with a pistol. The vandals halted for a second, unnerved, as it was trained on them. Jimmy, hurrying over the sand, conscious that his pilot was behind him, gave a little gasp.

"That's not a revolver!" he cried, half to himself. "Can't the fools tell a Very pistol when they see one!"

"In a second, he knew, they would recover from their first surprise and see from its odd shape that the weapon Crane held was merely the pistol carried by fliers for emergency use in signalling. Its worst projectile was a flash of fire—like a Roman candle!

Jimmy stumbled, caught himself, and came on. The young pilot of the speedboat was at his side now, a wrench in his grimy hands. He grinned.

"Come on!" Behind him, Jimmy heard the roar of the seaplane's motor, but it was a vague impression. As he got to his feet, a scant 100 yards from where Crane's plane stood purring, with its propellers barely turning, he heard a shout from one of Roger's men:

"It's no pistol, y' damn fools! It's only a signal gun. Let's go!"

There was a blinding flash as they started forward, the searchlights raised for damage. A searing streak of red shot out from the cockpit of Billy's plane. The three men brought up, startled, half blinded by the flash. In the next second, Jimmy was upon them.

He saw the wrench raised; in the same instant, his first went out. Then he gave a cry of anguish as the young pilot, with a groan, sank to the sand under a fierce blow from one of the searchlights. Billy was clearing himself of the cockpit. With the pistol in his hand, he reached the ground.

"At 'em, fellers!" Jimmy, wild-eyed with fury and rage, lashed out with both fists. He was aware that two blows had struck him; he was a bit dizzy; but that did not

matter. Fiercely he tore into the men.

A moment later Billy, with an impotent cry, fell back under a fierce blow and landed against the body of his plane. Jimmy hesitated, then realized that their three foes were coming on him en masse. He saw the wicked searchlight raised again, above his eyes, and he threw up a hand weakly to protect himself.

Crack! He stood stunned for a moment, when the blow did not fall. Dully, he realized that he was staring at the searchlight where it lay on the ground. The wielder of it, with a broken curse, staggered backward; Jimmy stared at the blood running down his arm. The other sailors fell back as he straightened, looking about him wildly.

Billy Crane laughed hysterically. "Graham!" he cried. Swinging about, Jimmy first caught sight of the naval seaplane, its nose almost against that beach. A few yards nearer his friend stood, a short automatic resting on the crook of his arm.

"Put your hands up, you birds!" the officer commanded crisply. "High up—and back away from that ship."

The sailors obeyed. They were thoroughly cowed. In the presence of Graham's uniform, underneath the jumper he wore, and the business-like pistol, all the brute courage which had sent them so gleefully to their vandalism evaporated. Graham smiled.

"Go ahead, Jim," he said. "Do your best. I'll take care of these birds, and this kid, too." He jerked his head sideways toward the speedboat pilot, who was just sitting up dazedly.

Jimmy nodded. There was no time to be lost and he knew Graham well enough to be certain that the latter needed no help now. Between the young boatman and the officer, the sailors could be taken without trouble into custody.

"Let's go, Billy!" he cried, and waved his hand to Graham as he leapt into the rear cockpit. "We'll settle up later, old fellow."

"Just luck, Jim!" the officer shouted. "Make it—in some way, simply to square accounts."

Jimmy nodded. Billy leapt into the cockpit, adjusting his helmet and goggles even as he advanced throttle and spark. "All you've got!"

But all Billy Crane had, Jim Brandon knew, would not be enough. Rogers' start was too big now. He sat tensely forward while the plane taxied down the short length of the field, took its wheels from the ground before it should, and then, by expert maneuvering, winged free.

Jimmy's eyes lighted appreciatively, as they always did, at good piloting. They rested fondly on the impassive bulk of his friend's head and shoulders in the forward cockpit. Good old Billy! Always there in a pinch, even if it was too late now. How had he got the army plane, though? Jimmy glanced at the parachute harness over his pilot's shoulders, and remembered. Crane was a reserve officer, and he must have secured a ship from Mitchell field.

It didn't matter, anyway. He wondered if Rogers had landed as yet, and then saw, far off on the horizon, a tiny, winged speck. Too far off, he reflected. His rival must be almost over the field by now; in a few moments—before he could be within sight

of the landing place, Rogers would be purring toward the finish line of his race in a motor car.

Jimmy set his jaw. Was there no way—no way, after all he had done? After all Natalie had done? He wanted desperately to win, for her sake, even if he could forget his own.

Was there no chance? Jimmy racked his brain for some wild hazard, even if it meant the direst risk of life and limb; but none presented itself. As Billy came lower, he strained forward. Lower even than they were, a big airplane was gliding forward in a long dive over a fair patch of earth which must be the field. It would be a matter of scarcely two minutes now before Rogers was off, tearing toward the Hudson club behind a high-powered automobile motor.

He could never catch up. Jimmy's jaw muscles tightened. He was staring intently ahead, as though by the very ferocity of his gaze he could hold back his enemy's ship, when he suddenly jerked up with a start. His eyes fastened on his friend's parachute harness, over the rim of the cockpit ahead; his gaze narrowed speculatively and a cold, calculating light came into it.

In the next second, bent down beneath the protection of the cowl, he was scribbling a note: "Let me have the chute."

He pushed it forward. Crane, after a quick glance at it, looked back at him with surprise. Jimmy nodded vehemently. Then he grasped the duplicate control in the rear cockpit and took charge of the plane, while his friend stood erect and drew the cumbersome parachute harness from his shoulders. In another moment the big thing dropped into the after cockpit and Billy resumed control of the ship.

Jimmy slipped into the harness, his face set. There was one chance—just one—and that one was so desperate that he put off thinking of it until the moment should come.

Billy Crane's ship was almost over Roosevelt field when they caught sight of the plane which had carried Rogers, standing still below them. The millionaire was running toward a waiting motor.

Jimmy shook his head, biting his lip. No; it was too late now. Even a parachute jump to the field would not save enough time. Rogers was already off; the man had minutes to spare. Ducking under the cowl again, Jimmy found his stubby pencil and scrawled another note:

"Somewhere near southeast corner of Central park."

Billy Crane turned with a cry that was drowned by his motor. His round face was lighted by a quick admiring smile. He understood. The ship veered sharply, righted, and then tore on.

Over Long Island and across the river it roared with every ounce of its unleashed power, until, in the distance, Jimmy picked out the broad expanse of Central park. Nearer to it and nearer they swept, high in the air over New York's new East Side, until the northern reaches of the park were spreading out under their landing wheels, far below.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

Jimmy sat leaning far forward in his seat, every muscle of his body tense with realization.

Reaching over—it was with an effort that he moved—he tapped Billy Crane on the shoulder and pointed ahead and downward, to where there appeared a space of almost the area of a city block, slightly rolling but cleared except for an occasional tree.

Crane nodded briefly. The plane nosed downward expertly.

Jimmy's lips were very tight as he maneuvered forward along the footholds. As

he reached the forward cockpit, he caught his friend's hand and felt a swift, wordless clasp before he started to crawl out on the shining expanse of the wings. It was difficult work, for the ship was gliding downward steadily.

Bracing himself precariously by a wire, Jimmy glanced downward and caught his breath. He had never before taken a parachute jump; the ground seemed desperately far below, the thing on his shoulders woefully uncertain. Crane was circling above the open space.

"The last meridian!" Jimmy whispered to himself. He had jumped them all—all but this; and the end of this was to be victory or a defeat that he would not know.

A soft laugh came to his lips; the old, reckless glint returned to his eyes. Then, after another glance downward, as Billy swooped as low as he could, with a pale, sea face, Jimmy dropped off into space, the roar of the monster motor like a nightmare sound in his ears.

"Brodie Number Two!" he gasped, with a last laugh when the rush of the upward wind caught at his breath and tore the words away.

"One-two-three!" he had repeated slowly to himself before pulling the rip-cord to allow the uprushing air to open the layers of folded silk.

He was plunging down and down, like a falling meteor, the ground rushing upward to meet him. Would the parachute never open? Had Billy flown too low to give it the chance? Suddenly the white thing caught in the wind, fluttered—the swift drop was checked. The open space was below him, and Billy was roaring away to the eastward.

The rush of wind was lessening now; he was descending more slowly. Below him there stretched the widespread branches of a huge tree. He attempted to guide the parachute by means of the ropes hanging down, pulling at first one and then another in an effort to clear the tree. But each time he drew away, a slight breeze brought him back.

He swore volubly. But he was cool now. Unless he smashed up in the tree, there was every chance of his making a landing unhurt. But the tree persisted in being a menace. He had played the last trick against his rival—the last card in the long game. In some way, he knew that this final gesture was going to win. It had to win!

He loosed the knife which was to cut the straps on his chute, and became aware, as he glanced downward, that crowds were gathering. The traffic on the south side of the park was becoming congested. From every direction, people were running toward the spot where it seemed he must land. Nearing the earth, he could see the crowded steps of his club, on the avenue, and Frances' home, facing the park. Were they all watching him? he wondered, and did they know what it all meant?

The tree was just below him now. Jimmy gave a wild, frantic jerk to the cords that were supposed to guide his craft; but it was to no avail. The breeze had died and he was suddenly too near to the earth. Then it was just below, a jumbled mass of green shot with forks of brown that seemed waiting to catch his body.

A second later, Jimmy crossed his arms before his face—his feet brushed the top most branches, and he felt himself tumbling through the sea of green leaves. Dully he heard wild shouts below him.

## (TO BE CONTINUED)

Q. Where is the island of Socorro? E. A. O.

A. The Mexican Embassy says that the island of Socorro is the largest one of the Revillagigedo Archipelago in the Pacific ocean, near the coast of the State of Colima. It is 10 miles in length and seven miles in width, its highest point being about 3,600 feet above sea level.

days before my brother became the vice president."

"I wouldn't be surprised. I don't believe Nicholas ever has met Mr. Gann, however."

"Well, here's my car. Good afternoon, Mrs. Long—er—worth."

A little hint from the Atchison Globe to Marion Talley, who thinks farming is poetry: A report issued January 1, this year, by the department of agriculture, shows we now have the smallest farm population in the history of the country. People are leaving the farms because they can't live on sunsets and sunrises and poetry.

## Modern Law Givers.

Program Note—The Nebraska legislative session of A. D. 1929 bids fair to go down in history as the most shrewdly cautious legislative session ever held in this or any other state since the fall of Adam. (The Adam referred to here is not to be confused with Adam McEwen, who fell some 20 or 30 dispensations later.) For purposes of space conservation, the actors are designated as Solons. The appellation is not, of course, to be taken seriously. Solon was a great law giver. Let us commence.

Speaker (swinging gavel in menacing manner)—For what purpose does the gentleman rise?

First Solon (excitedly)—What's that? Who says I'm not a gentleman? I can lick any guy what says I ain't a gentleman! (Removes coat, vest, collar, tie and belt but is checked by a brother solon who whispers: "There are ladies in the gallery, fool!")

Speaker—You go outside and cool off. For what purpose does the next gentleman rise?

Second Solon—For the purpose of tying these dumbbells on that the capitol walls are crumbling. A brick fell on my head just now, as a matter of fact.

Third Solon (grinning broadly)—He, he, he! I got away with it. He tipped me!

Fourth Solon—In behalf of the sex of our state, Mr. Speaker, I desire to introduce a sheik bill which will put these slick-o-haired home wreckers who get sued for breeches of promise in the hoosegow.

Speaker—Hot stuff, friend, the sex of our state must be preserved at all costs.

Fifth Solon—Steady there, brother! How much cost? We've already squandered too much money on sex preservation in this state. Let's stick to the specifications or get a new archytek! (Cheers from the floor.)

Sixth Solon—I can lick the guy who says that!

Fifth Solon (beginning to disrobe)—So I'm a liar, am I? You come outside and—

Seventh Solon (rising)—Mr. Speaker, I got a couple of newspaper reporters I want to get thrown out o' here.

Speaker—The sergeant-at-arms will throw the two predatory animals to which the gentleman objects to the ash can without further ado.

Eighth Solon—What have they done?

Seventh Solon—They are telling how we boys vote, that's what they do. They're the dirty crooks! (Threatening growls from the floor. The two reporters are ejected.)

Speaker—What'll we do next?

Ninth Solon—Let's just sit here and talk a while.

Speaker—Good idea. We ought to do more talking. All work and no talk ain't good for man nor beast. (They talk.)

## East Is Indifferent.

From the World's Bureau in Washington Mr. Mitchell reports:

President Hoover's commission to study and report on law enforcement seems to be no nearer selection than it was months ago. He voiced the intention to appoint such a body in his speech of acceptance, so it has been in his mind for half a year at least. Naturally the impression is growing that Mr. Hoover's plan to solve the liquor question is not any more concrete than his program for the settlement of the farmers' troubles.

Whether or not these suspicions prove in the long run to be justified seems to us a little early for Washington to begin wondering why Mr. Hoover does not appoint the fact finding commission which he proposed last August. Commissions of this sort are not easy to assemble. Mr. Hoover is naturally looking for men with moderately open minds regarding prohibition. And looking for men with moderately open minds on prohibition 10 years after the country began to experiment with it is like looking for needles in a pile of hay. Moreover, it is fair to remember that Mr. Hoover has scarcely been in office long enough to turn around.

Within the range of our own observation what is most noticeable in the public's attitude toward Mr. Hoover's commission is not impatience with his failure to appoint it but widespread indifference toward the whole idea. And for this indifference the explanation, we suspect, is that Mr. Hoover's plan for a commission now seems to be a far less important plan in April, 1929, so far as prohibition is concerned, than it seemed to be in August, 1928.

Eight months ago, in his acceptance speech at Palo Alto, Mr. Hoover proposed "an organized searching investigation" into the "grave abuses" which have occurred under prohibition. To many of Mr. Hoover's friends this statement seemed to promise an investigation so searching and so open minded as to consider whether the Volstead act is capable of being enforced without some sort of modification.

One month ago, in his inaugural address he took the question of modification definitely out of the commission's hands by asserting that its duties would be merely to consider changes in administering the law.

Still more recently he has announced that the commission's study of the prohibition law will go hand in hand with a study of the narcotic law, the immigration law, the Sherman law and every other branch of federal government law enforcement.

What are we left with now? Prohibition has become merely a detail in Mr. Hoover's vague encyclopaedic plans. His commission in turn is pledged in advance to accept the status quo unquestioningly and merely tinker with administrative details. It is small wonder, in these circumstances, that nowhere is there any evidence that either the wets or the dries believe Mr. Hoover now intends to go to the bottom of the most troublesome question which his administration faces.

## Society Politics.

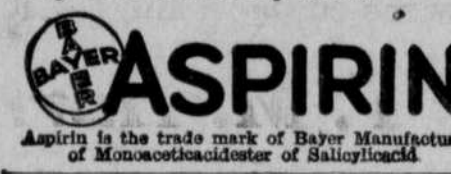
From Kansas City Star. "I certainly hope," says Mrs. Leonard W. Van Antin, "that we aren't going to get into a war with England over the sinking of the All Alone by the Wallflower. Although I do think it's outrageous the way England tries to force prohibition upon this country in defiance of our laws, don't you?"

Q. Who developed the plan for the city of Canberra, Australia? E. R.

A. The architect who laid out the ground plans for the capital city was Walter Burley Griffin.



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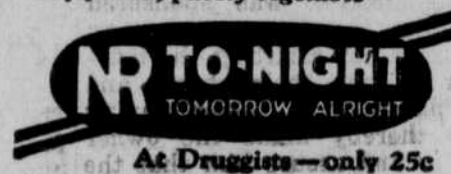


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Machetes, heavy knives which originated in the tropics and were widely used in South America for virtually every conceivable cutting purpose, are most popular in Brazil when of American make. About 1,500 are bought monthly and hardware dealers stock sharp, clean machetes imported from the United States.

## Unavoidably Absent

Brown (to employer)—Jones won't be at the office this week, sir, owing to a bereavement in his family.

Employer—Oh, indeed, and who's dead this time?

Brown—Jones, sir. —Everybody's Weekly.

## Ready to Loan His Tuxedo

First Student—Could I borrow your tuxedo tonight, old man?

Second Student—Sure, if you'll return it to Joe Brown and tell him to be sure and give it back to Tom Jones. —Life.

## It May Be Urgent



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## Alice and Dolly.

From Omaha World-Herald.

A Washington dispatch tells how Mrs. Longworth and Mrs. Gann, meeting at the capitol, talked amiably as they left the building together.

"How do you do, Mrs. Gann?"

"How do you do, Mrs. Longworth?"

"How is Mr. Gann—there is a Mr. Gann, I believe?"

"Oh, indeed! And how is Mr.—er—pardon me, Longfellow, isn't it—oh, how ridiculous of me! I mean

Mr. Longworth? So many names to remember, my dear, and—"

"Oh, then you really have met quite a few of the people here?"

"Oh, yes, very many!"

"Of course, it is easier for me. You see the best people are not so numerous and that makes it easier, my dear, don't you know?"

"Oh, I congratulate you, my dear. I really do! You know I hadn't seen you at any of the recent affairs and so, really, I had no idea—oh, pardon me—I mean I had so hoped you had met some of the best people, and isn't it lovely that you have!"

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Gann, I have lived

here—that is, Nicholas and I have been coming here for years, with him a member of congress, and all—"

"Yes, I've lived here for years, myself."

"Is it possible, my dear Mrs. Gann! You know, it is horrid of me, but I hadn't known—that is, still since last election, that you had even so much as lived in the district. Isn't it strange how—"

"Mr. Longworth is still in the lower house, I believe?"

"He is the speaker of the House, yes."

"I believe my brother, the vice president, used to know him in the