The Moon Men

By

Edgar Rice Burroughs

PROLOGUE

THE CONQUEST

IT was two years after I had first met him aboard the liner *Harding* that I came across him again. I had just been appointed Secretary of Commerce. He came to my office in Washington on official business during March, 1969. I invited him to my home for dinner and it was later in the evening that I importuned him for the promised story of Julian 9th.

He laughed good naturedly. "Very well," he exclaimed, "here goes!"

Let me preface this story, as I did the other that I told you on board the liner *Harding* two years ago, with the urgent request that you attempt to keep constantly in mind the theory that there is no such thing as time—that there is no past and no future —that there is only *now,* there never has been anything but *now,* and there never will be anything but *now.* It is a theory analogous to that which stipulates that there is no such thing as space.

I have told you of the attempt made to reach Mars in *The Barsoom* and of how it was thwarted by Lieutenant Commander Orthis. That was in the year 2026.

The son that was born to Julian 5th and the Princess Nah-ee-lah in 2036 was the great-grandfather of Julian 9th for whose story you have asked me, and in whom I lived again in the twenty-second century.

For some reason no further attempts were made to reach Mars with whom we had been in radio communication for seventy years. Possibly it was due to the rise of a religious cult which preached against all forms of scientific progress and which by political pressure was able to mold and influence several successive weak administrations of a notoriously weak party that had had its origin nearly a century before in a group of peace-at-any-

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

price men.

In the year 2050 the blow fell. Lieutenant Commander Orthis, after twenty-four years upon the Moon, returned to Earth with one hundred thousand Kalkars and a thousand Va-gas. In a thousand great ships they came, bearing arms and ammunition and strange, new engines of destruction fashioned by the brilliant mind of the arch villain of the universe. No one but Orthis could have done it. No one but Orthis would have done it. It had been he who had perfected the engines that had made *The Barsoom* possible, and after he had become the dominant force among the Kalkars of the Moon and had aroused their imaginations with tales of the great, rich world lying ready and unarmed within easy striking distance of them, it had been an easy thing to enlist their labor in the building of the ships and the manufacture of the countless accessories necessary to the successful accomplishment of the great adventure. The Moon furnished all the needed materials, the Kalkars furnished the labor, and Orthis the knowledge, the brains and the leadership. Ten years had been devoted to the spreading of his propaganda and the winning over of The Thinkers, or Kalkars, and then fourteen years were required to build and outfit the fleet.

Five days before they arrived astronomers detected the fleet as minute specks upon the eye-pieces of their telescopes. There was much speculation, but it was Julian 5th alone who guessed the truth. He warned the governments at London and Washington, but though he was then in command of the International Peace Fleet, his appeals were treated with levity and ridicule. He knew Orthis and so he knew that it was easily within the man's ability to construct a fleet, and he also knew that only for one purpose would Orthis return to Earth with so great a number of ships. It meant war, and the Earth had nothing but a handful of cruisers wherewith to defend herself—there were not available in all the world twenty-five thousand organized fighting men, nor equipment for more than half again that number.

The inevitable occurred. Orthis seized London and Washington simultaneously. His well-armed forces met with practically no resistance. There could be no resistance, for there was nothing wherewith to resist. It was a criminal offense to possess firearms. Even edged weapons with blades over six inches long were barred by law. Military training, except for the chosen few of the International Peace Fleet, had been banned for years. And against this pitiable state of disarmament and unpreparedness was brought a

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

force of a hundred thousand well-armed, seasoned warriors with engines of destruction that were unknown to Earth Men. A description of one alone will suffice to explain the utter hopelessness of the cause of the Earth Men.

This instrument, of which the invaders brought but one, was mounted upon the deck of their flag ship and was operated by Orthis in person. It was an invention of his own which no Kal-kar understood or could operate. Briefly, it was a device for the generation of radio-activity at any desired vibratory rate and for the directing of the resultant emanations upon any given object within its effective range. We do not know what Orthis called it, but the Earth Men of that day knew it as an electronic rifle.

It was quite evidently a recent invention, and therefore in some respects crude, but be that as it may, its effects were sufficiently deadly to permit Orthis to practically wipe out the entire International Peace Fleet in less than thirty days, as rapidly as the various ships came within range of the electronic rifle. To the layman, the visual effects induced by this weird weapon were appalling and nerve shattering. A mighty cruiser vibrant with life and power might sail majestically to engage the flag ship of the Kalkars, when, as by magic, every aluminum part of the cruiser would vanish as mist before the sun, and as nearly ninety percent of a Peace Fleet cruiser, including the hull, was constructed of aluminum, the result may be imagined—one moment there was a great ship forging through the air, her flags and pennants flying in the wind, her band playing, her officers and men at their quarters—the next a mass of engines, polished wood, cordage, flags and human beings hurtling earthward to extinction.

It was Julian 5th who discovered the secret of this deadly weapon and that it accomplished its destruction by projecting upon the ships of the Peace Fleet the vibratory rate of radio-activity identical with that of aluminum, with the result that, thus excited, the electrons of the attacked substance increased their own vibratory rate to a point that they became dissipated again into their elemental and invisible state—in other words, aluminum was transmuted into something else that was as invisible and intangible as ether. Perhaps it was ether.

Assured of the correctness of his theory, Julian 5th withdrew in his own flag ship to a remote part of the world, taking with him the few remaining cruisers of the Fleet. Orthis searched for them for months, but it was not until the close of the year 2050 that the two fleets met again and for the last time. Julian 5th had by this time perfected the plan for which he had gone into hiding, and he now faced the Kalkar fleet and his old enemy, Orthis, with some assurance of success. His flag ship moved at the head of the short

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

column that contained the remaining hope of a world and Julian 5th stood upon her deck beside a small and innocent looking box mounted upon a stout tripod.

Orthis moved to meet him—he would destroy the ships one by one as he approached them. He gloated at the easy victory that lay before him. He directed the electronic rifle at the flag ship of his enemy and touched a button. Suddenly his brows knitted. What was this? He examined the rifle. He held a piece of aluminum before its muzzle and saw the metal disappear. The mechanism was operating, but the ships of the enemy did not disappear. Then he guessed the truth, for his own ship was now but a short distance from that of Julian 5th, and he could see that the hull of the latter was entirely coated with a grayish substance that he sensed at once for what it was—an insulating material that rendered the aluminum parts of the enemy's fleet immune from the invisible fire of his rifle.

Orthis' scowl changed to a grim smile. He turned two dials upon a control box connected with the weapon and again pressed the button. Instantly the bronze propellers of the Earth Men's flag ship vanished in thin air, together with numerous fittings and parts above decks. Similarly went the exposed bronze parts of the balance of The International Peace Fleet, leaving a squadron of drifting derelicts at the mercy of the foe.

Julian 5th's flag ship was at that time but a few fathoms from that of Orthis. The two men could plainly see one another's features. Orthis' expression was savage and gloating, that of Julian 5th sober and dignified.

"You thought to beat me, then!" jeered Orthis. "God, but I have waited and labored and sweated for this day. I have wrecked a world to best you, Julian 5th, to best you and to kill you, but to let you know first that I am going to kill you—to kill you in such a way that man was never before killed, as no other brain than mine could conceive of killing. You insulated your aluminum parts, thinking thus to thwart me, but you did not know— your feeble intellect could not know—that as easily as I destroyed aluminum I can, by the simplest of adjustments, attune this weapon to destroy any one of a hundred different substances and among them human flesh or human bone. That is what I am going to do now, Julian 5th. First I am going to dissipate the bony structure of your frame. It will be done painlessly—it may not even result in instant death, and I am hoping that it will not. For I want you to know the power of a real intellect—the intellect from which you stole the fruits of its efforts for a life time; but not again, Julian 5th, for today you die—first your bones, then your flesh, and after you, your men, and after them your spawn, the son that the woman I loved bore you; but she-she shall belong to me! Take that memory to hell with

you!" and he turned toward the dials beside his lethal weapon.

But Julian 5th placed a hand upon the little box resting upon the strong tripod before him, and he it was who touched a button before Orthis had touched his. Instantly the electronic rifle vanished beneath the very eyes of Orthis, and at the same time the two ships touched and Julian 5th had leaped the rail to the enemy deck and was running toward his arch enemy.

Orthis stood gazing horrified, at the spot where the greatest invention of his giant intellect had stood but an instant before, and then he looked up at Julian 5th approaching him and cried out horribly.

"Stop!" he screamed. "Always, all our lives you have robbed me of the fruits of my efforts. Somehow you have stolen the secret of this, my greatest invention, and now you have destroyed it. May God in heaven—"

"Yes," cried Julian 5th, "and I am going to destroy you, unless you surrender to me with all your force."

"Never!" almost screamed the man, who seemed veritably demented, so hideous was his rage. "Never! This is the end, Julian 5th, for both of us." Even as he uttered the last word, he threw a lever mounted upon a controlboard before him. There was a terrific explosion, and both ships, bursting into flame, plunged meteor-like into the ocean beneath.

Thus went Julian 5th and Orthis to their deaths, carrying with them the secret of the terrible destructive force that the latter had brought with him from the Moon; but the Earth was already undone. It lay helpless before its conquerors. What the outcome might have been had Orthis lived, may only remain conjecture. Possibly he would have brought order out of the chaos he had created and instituted a reign of reason. Earth Men would at least have had the advantage of his wonderful intellect and his power to rule the ignorant Kalkars that he had transported from the Moon.

There might even have been some hope had the Earth Men banded together against the common enemy, but this they did not do. Elements who had been discontented with this or that phase of government joined issues with the invaders. The lazy, the inefficient, the defective, who ever place the blame for their failures upon the shoulders of the successful, swarmed to the banners of the Kalkars in whom they sensed kindred souls.

Political factions, labor and capital each saw, or thought they saw, an opportunity for advantage to themselves in one way or another that was inimical to the interests of the others. The Kalkar fleets returned to the Moon for more Kalkars until it was estimated that seven millions of them were being transported to Earth each year.

Julian 6th, with Nah-ee-lah, his Moon Maid mother, lived, as did

Or-tis, the son of Orthis, but my story is not to be of them, but of Julian 9th, who was born just a century after the birth of Julian 5th.

Julian 9th will tell his own story.

THE FLAG

I WAS born in the teivos of Chicago, January 1, 2100, to Julian 8th and Elizabeth James. My father and mother were not married, as marriages had long since become illegal. I was called Julian 9th. My parents were of the rapidly diminishing intellectual class and could both read and write. This learning they imparted to me, although it was very useless learning—it was their religion. Printing was a lost art, and the last of the public libraries had been destroyed almost a hundred years before I reached maturity, so there was little or nothing to read, while to have a book in one's possession was to brand one as of the hated intellectuals, arousing the scorn and derision of the Kal-kar rabble and the suspicion and persecution of the lunar authorities who ruled us.

The first twenty years of my life were uneventful. As a boy I played among the crumbling ruins of what must once have been a magnificent city. Pillaged, looted and burned half a hundred times, Chicago still reared the skeletons of some mighty edifices above the ashes of her former greatness. As a youth, I regretted the departed romance of the long gone days of my forefathers when the Earth Men still retained sufficient strength to battle for existence. I deplored the quiet stagnation of my own time with only an occasional murder to break the monotony of our black existence. Even the Kalkar Guard, stationed on the shore of the great lake, seldom harassed us, unless there came an urgent call from higher authorities for an additional tax collection, for we fed them well and they had the pick of our women and young girls—almost, but not quite, as you shall see.

The commander of the guard had been stationed here for years, and we considered ourselves very fortunate in that he was too lazy and indolent to be cruel or oppressive. His tax collectors were always with us on market days; but they did not exact so much that we had nothing left for ourselves, as refugees from Milwaukee told us was the case there. I recall one poor devil from Milwaukee who staggered into our market place of a Saturday. He was nothing more than a bag of bones, and he told us that fully ten thousand people had died of starvation the preceding month in his teivos. The word teivos is applied impartially to a district and to the administrative body that misadministers its affairs. No one knows what the word really means, though my mother has told me

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

that her grandfather said that it came from another world, the Moon, like Kash Guard, which also means nothing in particular—one soldier is a Kash Guard, ten thousand soldiers are a Kash Guard. If a man comes with a piece of paper upon which something is written that you are not supposed to be able to read and kills your grandmother or carries off your sister, you say: "The Kash Guard did it."

Three Saturdays a month, the tax collectors were in the market places appraising our wares, and on the last Saturday they collected one per cent of all we had bought or sold during the month. Nothing had any fixed value—today you might haggle half an hour in trading a pint of beans for a goat skin, and next week if you wanted beans the chances were more than excellent that you would have to give four or five goat skins for a pint, and the tax collectors took advantage of that—they appraised on the basis of the highest market values for the month.

My father had a few long-haired goats—they were called Montana goats; but he said they really were Angoras, and Mother used to make cloth from their Heece. With the cloth, the milk, and the flesh from our goats we lived very well, having also a small vegetable garden beside our house; but there were some necessities that we must purchase in the market place, it being against the law to barter in private, as the tax collectors would then have known nothing about a man's income.

After supper one night Father and I went out and milked the goats and saw that the sheds were secured for the night against the dogs. It seems as though they become more numerous and more bold each year. They run in packs now where there were only individuals when I was a little boy, and it is scarce safe for a grown man to travel an unfrequented locality at night. We are not permitted to have firearms in our possession, nor even bows and arrows, so we cannot exterminate them, and they seem to realize our weakness, coming close in among the houses and pens at night. They are large brutes—fearless and powerful. There is one pack more formidable than the others which Father says appears to carry a strong strain of collie and Airedale blood—the members of this pack are large, cunning, and ferocious, and are becoming a terror to the city—we call them the hellhounds.

After we returned to the house with the milk, Jim Thompson and his woman, Mollie Sheehan, came over. They live up the river about half a mile, on the next farm, and are our best friends. They are the only people that Father and Mother really trust, so when we are all together alone we speak our minds very freely. It seemed strange to me, even as a boy, that such big, strong men as Father and Jim should be afraid to express their real views to anyone, and though I was bom and reared in an atmosphere of suspicion and

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

terror, I could never quite reconcile myself to the attitude of servility and cowardice which marked us all.

And yet I knew that my father was no coward. He was a fine looking man, tall and wonderfully muscled, and I have seen him fight with men and with dogs. Once he defended Mother against a Kash Guard, and with his bare hands he killed the armed soldier. He lies in the center of the goat pen now, his rifle, bayonet, and ammunition wrapped in many thicknesses of oiled cloth beside him. We left no trace and were never even suspected; but we know where there is a rifle, a bayonet, and ammunition.

Jim had had trouble with Soor, the new tax collector, and was very angry. Jim was a big man, and like Father, was always smooth shaven as were nearly all Americans, as we called those whose people had lived here long before the Great War. The others—the true Kalkars—grew no beards. Their ancestors had come from the Moon many years before. They had come in strange ships year after year, but finally, one by one, their ships had been lost, and as none of them knew how to build others or the engines that operated them, the time came when no more Kalkars could come from the Moon to Earth.

Jim was terribly mad. He said that he couldn't stand it much longer—that he would rather be dead than live in such an awful world; but I was accustomed to such talk—1 had heard it since infancy. Life was a hard thing—just work, work, work for a scant existence over and above the income tax. No pleasures—few conveniences or comforts; absolutely no luxuries—and worst of all, no hope. It was seldom that anyone smiled—anyone in our class—and the grown-ups never laughed. As children we laughed—a little; not much. It is hard to kill the spirit of childhood; but the brotherhood of man had almost done it.

Father placed his hand upon Jim's shoulder.

"We must not weaken, my friend," he said. "I often feel the same way," and then he walked quickly across the room to the fireplace and removed a stone above the rough, wooden mantel. Reaching his hand into the aperture behind, he turned toward us. "But cowed and degraded as I have become," he cried, "thank God I still have a spark of manhood left—1 have had the strength to defy them as my fathers defied them—I have kept this that has been handed down to me—kept it for my son to hand down to his son—and I have taught him to die for it as his forefathers died for it and as I would die for it, gladly."

He drew forth a small bundle of fabric, and holding the upper corners between the fingers of his two hands he let it unfold before

us—an oblong cloth of alternate red and white stripes with a blue square in one comer, upon which were sewn many little white stars.

Jim and Mollie and Mother rose to their feet and I saw Mother cast an apprehensive glance toward the doorway. For a moment they stood thus in silence, looking with wide eyes upon the thing that Father held, and then Jim walked slowly toward it, and kneeling, took the edge of it in his great, homy fingers and pressed it to his lips. The candle upon the rough table, sputtering in the spring wind that waved the goat skin at the window, cast its feeble rays upon them.

"It is The Flag, my son," said Father to me. "It is Old Glory—the flag of your fathers—the flag that made the world a decent place to live in. It is death to possess it; but when I am gone, take it and guard it as our family has guarded it since the regiment that carried it came back from the Argonne."

I felt tears filling my eyes—why, I could not have told them—and I turned away to hide them—turned toward the window and there, beyond the waving goat skin, I saw a face in the outer darkness. I have always been quick of thought and of action; but I never thought or moved more quickly in my life than I did in the instant following my discovery of the face in the window. With a single movement I swept the candle from the table, plunging the room into utter darkness, and leaping to my father's side I tore The Flag from his hands and thrust it back into the aperture above the mantel. The stone lay upon the mantel itself, nor did it take me but a moment to grope for it and find it in the dark—an instant more and it was replaced in its niche.

So ingrained were apprehension and suspicion in the human mind that the four in the room with me sensed intuitively something of the cause of my act, and when I had hunted for the candle, found it and relighted it they were standing, tense and motionless, where I had last seen them. They did not ask me a question, for if they suspicioned correctly they knew that we must not talk upon the subject. Father was the first to speak.

"You were very carekss and clumsy, Julian," he said. "If you wanted the candle, why did you not pick it up carefully instead of rushing at it so? But that is always your way—you are constantly knocking things over." He raised his voice a trifle as he spoke; but it was a lame attempt at deception and he knew it, as did we. If the man who owned the face in the dark heard his words he must have known it as well.

As soon as I had relighted the candle I went into the kitchen and out the back door and then, keeping close in the black shadow of the house, I crept around toward the front, for I wanted to learn, if I could, who it was who had looked in upon that scene of high

treason. The night was moonless but clear, and I could see quite a distance in every direction as our house stood in a fair sized clearing close to the river. Southeast of us the path wound upward across the approach to an ancient bridge, long since destroyed by raging mobs or rotted away—I do not know which—and presently I saw the figure of a man silhouetted against the starlit sky as he topped the approach. The man carried a laden sack upon his back. This fact was to some extent reassuring, as it suggested that the eavesdropper was himself upon some illegal mission and that he could ill afford to be too particular of the actions of others. I have seen many men carrying sacks and bundles at night—I have carried them myself. It is the only way often, in which a man may save enough from the tax collector on which to live and support his family.

I did not follow the man, being sure that he was one of our own class; but turned back toward the house where I found the four talking in low whispers, nor did any of us raise his voice again that evening.

It must have been three-quarters of an hour later, as Jim and Mollie were preparing to leave, that there came a knock upon the door, which immediately swung open before an invitation to enter could be given. We looked up to see Peter Johansen smiling at us. I never liked Peter. He was a long, lanky man who smiled with his mouth; but never with his eyes. I didn*t like the way he used to look at Mother when he thought no one was observing him, nor his habit of changing women every year or two—that was too much like the Kalkars. I always felt toward Peter as I had as a child when, barefooted, I stepped unknowingly upon a snake in the deep grass.

Father greeted the newcomer with a pleasant "Welcome, Brother Johansen"; but Jim only nodded his head and scowled, for Peter had a habit of looking at Mollie as he did at Mother, and both women were beautiful. I think I never saw a more beautiful woman than my mother, and as I grew older and learned more of men and the world I marveled that Father had been able to keep her, and too, I understood why she never went abroad, but stayed always closely about the house and farm. I never knew her to go to the market place as did most of the other women. But I was twenty now and worldly wise and so I knew what I had not known as a little child.

"What brings you out so late. Brother Johansen?" I asked. We always used the prescribed "Brother" to those of whom we were not sure. I hated the word—to me a brother meant an enemy as it did to all our class and I guess to every class—even the Kalkars.

"I followed a stray pig," replied Peter to my question. "He went in that direction," and he waved a hand toward the market place.

As he did so something tumbled from beneath his coat — something that his arm had held there. It was an empty sack. Immediately I knew who it was who owned the face in the dark beyond our goat skin hanging. Peter snatched the sack from the floor in ill-concealed confusion, and then I saw the expression of his cunning face change as he held it toward Father.

"Is this yours. Brother Julian?" he asked. "I found it just before your door and thought that I would stop and ask."

"No," said I, not waiting for Father to speak, "it is not ours— it must belong to the man I saw carrying it full, a short time since. He went by the path beside The Old Bridge." I looked straight into Peter's eyes. He flushed and then went white.

"I did not see him," he said presently; "but if the sack is not yours I will keep it—at least it is not high treason to have it in my possession." and then without another word, he turned and left the house.

We all knew then that Peter had seen the episode of The Flag. Father said that we need not fear, that Peter was all right; but Jim thought differently and so did Mollie and Mother. I agreed with them. I did not like Peter. Jim and Mollie went home shortly after Peter left, and we prepared for bed.

CHAPTER II

THE HELLHOUNDS

I HAD just slipped off my tunic when I heard the baying of the hellhounds close by. I thought they might be getting into the goat pen, so I waited a moment, listening, and then I heard a scream— the scream of a woman in terror. It sounded down by the river near the goat pens, and mingled with it was the vicious growling and barking of the hellhounds. I did not wait to listen longer; but seized my knife and a long staff.

I ran out the front door, which was closest, and turned toward the pens in the direction of the hellhounds' deep growlings and the screams of the woman, which were repeated twice.

As I neared the pens and my eyes became accustomed to the outer darkness I made out what appeared to be a human figure resting partially upon the top of one of the sheds that formed a portion of the pen wall. The legs and lower body dangled over the edge of the roof and I could see three or four hellhounds leaping for it, while another, that had evidently gotten a hold, was hanging to one leg and attempting to drag the figure down.

As I ran forward I shouted at the beasts, and those that were

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

leaping for the figure stopped and turned toward me. I knew something of the temper of these animals and that I might expect them to charge, for they were quite fearless of man ordinarily; but I ran forward toward them so swiftly and with such determination that they turned, growling, and ran off before I reached them; but not far.

The one that had hold of the figure succeeded in dragging it to earth just before I reached them and then it discovered me and turned, standing over its prey, with wide jaws and terrific fangs menacing me. It was a huge beast, almost as large as a full grown goat, and easily a match for several men as poorly armed as I. Under ordinary circumstances I should have given it plenty of room; but what was I to do when the life of a woman was at stake? I am an American, not a Kalkar—those swine would throw a woman to the hellhounds to save their own skins—and I had been brought up to revere woman in a world that considered her on a par with the cow, the nanny and the sow, only less valuable since the latter were not the common property of the state.

I knew then that death stood very near as I faced that frightful beast, and from the corner of an eye I could see its mates creeping closer. There was no time to think, even, and so I rushed in upon the hellhound with my staff and blade. As I did so, I saw the wide and terrified eyes of a young girl looking up at me from beneath the beast of prey. I had not thought to desert her to her fate before; but after that single glance I could not have done so had a thousand deaths confronted me.

As I was almost upon the beast it sprang for my throat, rising high upon its hind feet and leaping straight as an arrow. My staff was useless and so I dropped it, meeting the charge with my knife and a bare hand. By luck the fingers of my left hand found the creature's throat at the first clutch; but the impact of his body against mine hurled me to the ground beneath him and there, growling and struggling, he sought to close those snapping fangs upon me. Holding his jaws at arm's length I struck at his breast with my blade, nor did I miss him once. The pain of the wounds turned him crazy and yet, to my utter surprise, I found I still could hold him and not that alone; but that I could also struggle to my knees and then to my feet—still holding him at arm's length in my left hand.

I had always known that I was muscular; but until that moment I had never dreamed of the great strength that Nature had given me, for never before had I had occasion to exert the full measure of my powerful thews. It was like a revelation from above, and of a sudden I found myself smiling and in the instant a miracle occurred—all fear of these hideous beasts dissolved from my brain like thin air and with it fear of man as well. I, who had been

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

brought out of a womb of fear into a world of terror, who had been suckled and nurtured upon apprehension and timidity—I, Julian 9th, at the age of twenty years, became in the fraction of a second utterly fearless of man or beast. It was the knowledge of my great power that did it—that and, perhaps, those two liquid eyes that I knew to be watching me.

The other hounds were closing in upon me when the creature in my grasp went suddenly limp. My blade must have found its heart. And then the others charged and I saw the girl upon her feet beside me, my staff in her hands, ready to battle with them.

"To the roofl" I shouted to her; but she did not heed. Instead, she stood her ground, striking a vicious blow at the leader as he came within range.

Swinging the dead beast above my head I hurled the carcass at the others so that they scattered and retreated again, and then I turned to the girl and without more parley lifted her in my arms and tossed her lightly to the roof of the goat shed. I could easily have followed to her side and safety had not something filled my brain with an effect similar to that which I imagine must be produced by the vile concoction brewed by the Kal-kars and which they drink to excess, while it would mean imprisonment for us to be apprehended with it in our possession. At least, I know that I felt a sudden exhilaration—a strange desire to accomplish wonders before the eyes of this stranger, and so I turned upon the four remaining hellhounds who had now bunched to renew the attack and without waiting for them, I rushed toward them. They did not flee, but stood their ground, growling hideously, their hair bristling upon their necks and along their spines, their great fangs bared and slavering; but among them I tore and by the very impetuosity of my attack I overthrew them. The first sprang to meet me and him I seized by the neck and clamping his body between my knees I twisted his head entirely around until I heard the vertebrae snap. The other three were upon me then, leaping and tearing; but I felt no fear. One by one I took them in my mighty hands and lifting them high above my head hurled them violently from me. Two only of the hellhounds returned to the attack, and these I vanquished with my bare hands, disdaining to use my blade upon such carrion.

It was then that I saw a man running toward me from up the river and another from our house. The first was Jim, who had heard the commotion and the girl's screams, and the other was my father. Both had seen the last part of the battle and neither could believe that it was I, Julian, who had done this thing. Father was very proud of me and Jim was, too, for he had always said that

having no son of his own. Father must share me with him.

And then I turned toward the girl who had slipped from the roof and was approaching us. She moved with the same graceful dignity that was Mother's—not at all like the clumsy clods that belonged to the Kalkars, and she came straight to me and laid a hand upon my arm.

"Thank you," she said, "and God bless youl Only a very brave and powerful man could have done what you have done."

And then, all of a sudden, I did not feel brave at all, but very weak and silly, for all I could do was finger my blade and look at the ground. It was Father who spoke and the interruption helped to dispel my embarrassment.

"Who are you?" he asked, "and from where do you come? It is strange to find a young woman wandering about alone at night; but stranger still to hear one who dares invoke the forbidden Deity."

I had not realized until then that she had used His name; but when I did recall it I could not but glance apprehensively about to see if any others might be around who could have heard. Father and Jim I knew to be safe; for there was a common tie between our families that lay in the secret religious rites we held once each month. Since that hideous day that had befallen even before my father's birth—that day, which none dared mention above a whisper, when the clergy of every denomination, to the last man, had been murdered by order of The Twentyfour, it had been a capital crime to worship God in any form, whatsoever.

We took the girl to the house, and when my mother saw her and how young and beautiful she was and took her in her arms, the child broke down and sobbed and clung to Mother, nor could either speak for some time. In the light of the candle I saw that the stranger was of wondrous beauty. I have said that my mother was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen, and such is the truth; but this girl who had come so suddenly among us was the most beautiful girl. She was about nineteen, delicately molded and yet without weakness. There were strength and vitality apparent in every move she made as well as in the expression of her face, her gestures and her manner of speech. She was girlish, and at the same time filled one with an impression of great reserve strength of mind and character. She was very brown, showing exposure to the sun, yet her skin was clear—almost translucent. Her garb was similar to mine—the common garmenture of people of our class, both men and women. She wore the tunic and breeches and boots just as Mother and Mollie and the rest of us did; but somehow there was a difference—1 had never before realized what a really beautiful costume it was. The band about her forehead was wider

than was generally worn and upon it were sewn numerous tiny shells, set close together and forming a pattern—it was her only attempt at ornamentation; but even so it was quite noticeable in a world where women strove to make themselves plain rather than beautiful—some going even so far as to permanently disfigure their faces and those of their female offspring, while others, many, many others, killed the latter in infancy. Mollie had done so with two. No wonder that grown-ups never laughed and seldom smiled!

When the girl had quieted her sobs on Mother's breast. Father renewed his questioning; but Mother said to wait until morning, that the girl was tired and unstrung and needed sleep, and then came the question of where she was to sleep. Father said that he would sleep in the living room with me and that the stranger could sleep with Mother; but Jim suggested that she come home with him as he and Mollie had three rooms, as did we, and no one to occupy his living room; and so it was arranged, although I would rather have had her remain with us.

At first she rather shrank from going, until Mother told her that Jim and Mollie were good, kind-hearted people and that she would be as safe with them as with her own father and mother. At mention of her parents the tears came to her eyes and she turned impulsively toward my mother and kissed her, after which she told Jim that she was ready to accompany him.

She started to say good-bye to me and to thank me again; but, having found my tongue at last, I told her that I would go with them as far as Jim's house. This appeared to please her and so we set forth. Jim walked ahead and I followed with the girl, and on the way I discovered a very strange thing. Father had shown me a piece of iron once that pulled smaller bits of iron to it. He said that it was a magnet. This slender, stranger girl was certainly no piece of iron, nor was I a smaller bit of anything; but nevertheless, I could not keep away from her. I cannot explain it—however wide the way was, I was always drawn over close to her, so that our arms touched and once our hands swung together and the strangest and most delicious thrill ran through me that I had ever experienced.

I used to think that Jim's house was a long way from ours—when I had to carry things over there as a boy; but that night it was far too close—just a step or two and we were there.

Mollie heard us coming and was at the door, full of questionings, and when she saw the girl and heard a part of our story she reached out and took the girl to her bosom, just as Mother had. Before they took her in, the stranger turned and held out her hand to me.

"Good night," she said, "and thank you again, and once more, may God, our Father, bless and preserve you."

And I heard Mollie murmur: "The Saints be praised!" And then I turned homeward, treading on air.

CHAPTER III

BROTHER GENERAL OR-TIS

THE next day I set out as usual to peddle goafs milk. We were permitted to trade in perishable things on other than market days, though we had to make a strict accounting for all such bartering. I usually left Mollie until the last as Jim had a deep, cold well on his place where I liked to quench my thirst after my morning trip; but today Mollie got her milk fresh and first and early—about half an hour earlier than I was wont to start out.

When I knocked and she had bade me enter and saw who it was, she looked surprised at first, for just an instant, and then a strange expression came into her eyes—half amusement, half pity—and she rose and went into the kitchen for the milk jar. I saw her wipe the corners of her eyes with the back of one finger;
but I did not understand why—not then.

The stranger girl had been in the kitchen helping Mollie, and the latter must have told her I was there, for she came right in and greeted me. It was the first good look I had had of her, for candle light is not brilliant at best. If I had been enthralled the evening before, there is no word in my limited vocabulary to express the effect she had on me by daylight. She—but it is useless, I cannot describe heri

It took Mollie a long time to find the milk jar, bless her, though it seemed short enough to me, and while she was finding it the stranger girl and I were getting acquainted. First she asked after Father and Mother and then she asked our names. When I told her mine she repeated it several times to herself in a low voice. "Julian 9th," she said, "Julian 9thl" and then she smiled up at me. "It is a nice name, I like it."

"And what is your name?" I asked.

"Juana," she said—she pronounced it Whanna; "Juana St. John."
"I am glad," I said, "that you like my name; but I like yours better." It was a very foolish speech, and it made me feel silly;
but she did not seem to think it foolish, or if she did, she was too nice to let me know it. I have known many girls; but mostly they were homely and stupid. The pretty girls were seldom allowed in the market place—that is, the pretty girls of our class. The Kalkars permitted their girls to go abroad for they did not care who got them, as long as someone got them; but American fathers and

mothers would rather slay their girls than send them to the market place, and the former often was done. The Kalkar girls, even those born of American mothers, were coarse and brutal in appearance—low-browed, vulgar, bovine. No stock can be improved, or even kept to its normal plane, unless high grade males are used.

This girl was so entirely different from any other that I had ever seen that I marveled that such a glorious creature could exist. I wanted to know all about her. It seemed to me that in some way I had been robbed of my right for many years that she should have lived and breathed and talked and gone her way without my ever knowing it, or her. I wanted to make up for lost time and so I asked her many questions.

She told me that she had been bom and raised in the teivos just west of Chicago, which extended along the Desplaines River and embraced a considerable area of unpopulated country and scattered farms.

"My father's home is in a district called Oak Park," she said, "and our house was one of the few that remained from ancient times. It was of solid concrete and stood upon the corner of two roads—once it must have been a very beautiful place, and even time and war have been unable entirely to erase its charm. Three great poplar trees rose to the north of it beside the ruins of what my father said was once a place where motor cars were kept by the long dead owner. To the south of the house were many roses, growing wild and luxuriant, while the concrete walls, from which the plaster had fallen in great patches, were almost entirely concealed by the clinging ivy that reached to the very eaves.

"It was my home and so I loved it; but now it is lost to me forever. The Kash Guard and the tax collector came seldom— we were too far from the station and the market place, which lay southwest of us, on Salt Creek. But recently the new Jemadar Jarth appointed another commandant and a new tax collector. They did not like the station at Salt Creek and so they sought for a better location, and after inspecting the district they chose Oak Park, and my father's home being the most comfortable and substantial, they ordered him to sell it to The Twentyfour. You know what that means. They appraised it at a high figure—$50,000.00 it was, and paid him in paper money. There was nothing to do, and so we prepared to move. Whenever they had come to look at the house my mother had hidden me in a little cubbyhole on the landing between the second and third floors, placing a pile of rubbish in front of me; but the day that we were leaving to take a place on the banks of the Desplaines, where Father thought that we might live without being disturbed, the new commandant came unexpectedly and saw me.

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

" 'How old is the girl?' he asked my mother.

" 'Fifteen," she replied, sullenly.

"You lie, you sow!" he cried angrily; 'she is eighteen if she is a day.'

"Father was standing there beside us and when the commandant spoke as he did to Mother I saw Father go very white and then, without a word, he hurled himself upon the swine and before the Kash Guard who accompanied him could prevent, Father had almost killed the commandant with his bare hands.

"You know what happened—I do not need to tell you. They killed my father before my eyes. Then the commandant gave my mother to one of his Kash Guard; but she snatched his bayonet from his belt and ran it through her heart before they could prevent. I tried to follow her example; but they seized me.

"I was carried to my own bedroom on the second floor of my father's house and locked there. The commandant said that he would come and see me in the evening and that everything would be all right with me. I knew what he meant and I made up my mind that he would find me dead.

"My heart was breaking for the loss of my father and mother and yet the desire to live was strong within me. I did not want to die—something urged me to live, and in addition was the teaching of my father and mother. They were both from Quaker stock and very religious. They educated me to fear God and to do no wrong by thought or violence to another, and yet I had seen my father attempt to kill a man and I had seen my mother slay herself. My world was all upset. I was almost crazed by grief and fear and uncertainty as to what was the right thing for me to do.

"And then darkness came and I heard someone ascending the stairway. The windows of the second story are too far from the ground for one to risk a leap; but the ivy is old and strong. The commandant was not sufficiently familiar with the place to have taken the ivy into consideration, and before the footsteps reached my door I had swung out of the window and clinging to the ivy made my way to the ground down the rough and strong old stem.

"That was three days ago. I hid and wandered—I did not know in what direction I went. Once an old woman took me in over night and fed me and gave me food to carry for the next day. I think that I must have been almost mad, for mostly the happenings of the past three days are only indistinct and jumbled fragments of memory in my mind. And then the hellhounds 1 Oh, how frightened I wasi And then—youl"

I don*t know what there was about the way she said it; but it seemed to me as though it meant a great deal more than she knew

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

herself. Almost like a prayer of thanksgiving, it was, that she had at last found a safe haven of refuge—safe and permanent. Anyway I liked the idea.

And then Mollie came in and as I was leaving she asked me if I would come that evening, and Juana cried: "Oh, yes, dol" and I said that I would.

When I had finished delivering the goats' milk I started for home, and on the way I met old Samuels, the Jew. He made his living, and a scant one it was, by tanning hides. He was a most excellent tanner; but as nearly everyone else knew how to tan there were not many customers; but some of the Kalkars used to bring him hides to tan. They knew nothing of how to do any useful thing, for they were descended from a long line of the most ignorant and illiterate people in the Moon, and the moment they obtained a little power they would not even work at what small trades their fathers once had learned, so that after a generation or two they were able to live only off the labor of others. They created nothing, they produced nothing, they became the most burdensome class of parasites the world ever has endured.

The rich non-producers of olden times were a blessing to the world by comparison with these, for the former at least had intelligence and imagination—they could direct others and they could transmit to their offspring the qualities of mind that are essential to any culture, progress or happiness that the world ever may hope to attain.

So the Kalkars patronized Samuels for their tanned hides, and if they had paid him for them the old Jew would have waxed rich; but they either did not pay him at all or else mostly in paper money that did not even burn well, as Samuels used to say.

"Good morning, Julian," he called as we met. "I shall be needing some hides soon, for the new commander of the Kash Guard has heard of old Samuels and has sent for me and ordered five hides tanned the finest that can be. Have you seen this Or-tis, Julian?" He lowered his voice.

I shook my head negatively.

"Heaven help us!" whispered the old man. "Heaven help us!"

"Is he as bad as that, Moses?" I asked.

The old man wrung his hands. "Bad times are ahead, my son," he said. "Old Samuels knows his kind. He is not lazy like the last one, and he is more cruel and more lustful; but about the hides. I have not paid you for the last—they paid me in paper money; but that I would not offer to a friend in payment for a last year's bird's nest. Maybe that I shall not be able to pay you for these new hides for a long time—it depends upon how Or-tis pays me. Sometimes they are liberal—as they can afford to be with the

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

property of others; but if he is a half breed, as I hear he is, he will hate a Jew and I shall get nothing. However, if he is pure Kalkar it may be different—the pure Kalkars do not hate a Jew more than they hate other Earth Men, though there is one Jew who hates a Kalkar."

That night we had our first introduction to Or-tis. He came in person; but I will tell how it all happened. After supper I went over to Jim's. Juana was standing in the little doorway as I came up the path. She looked rested now and almost happy. The hunted expression had left her eyes and she smiled as I approached. It was almost dusk, for the spring evenings were still short; but the air was balmy and so we stood outside, talking.

I recited the little gossip of our district that I had picked up during my day's work—The Twentyfour had raised the local tax on farm products—Andrew Wright's woman had given birth to twins, a boy and a girl; but the girl had died (no need of comment here as most girl babies die) —Soor had said that he would tax this district until we all died of starvation (pleasant fellow, Soor)—one of the Kash Guard had taken Nellie Levy— Hoffmeyer had said that next winter we would have to pay more for coal—Dennis Corrigan had been sent to the mines for ten years because he had been caught trading at night. It was all alike, this gossip of ours—all sordid, or sad, or tragic; but then life was a tragedy with us.

After awhile I took Juana over to our house to see my mother. She liked the house very much. My father's father built it with his own hands. It is constructed of stone taken from the ruins of the old city—stone and brick. Father says that he thinks the bricks are from an old pavement as we still see patches of these ancient bricks in various localities. Nearly all our houses are of this construction, for timber is scarce. The foundation and the walls above the ground for about three feet are of rough stones of various sizes and above this are the bricks. The stones are laid so that some project farther than others and the effect is odd and rather nice. The eaves are low and overhanging and the roof is thatched. It is a nice house and Mother keeps it scrupulously clean and meticulously neat within.

We had been talking for perhaps an hour, sitting in our living room—Father, Mother, Juana, and I—when the door was suddenly thrust open without warning and we looked up to see a man in the uniform of a Kash Guard confronting us. Behind him were others. We all rose and stood in silence. Two entered and took posts on either side of the doorway and then a third came in—a tall, dark man in the uniform of a commander and we knew at once that it was Or-tis. At his heels were six more.

Or-tis looked at each of us and then singling out Father he said: "You are Brother Julian 8th."

Father nodded. Or-tis eyed him for a moment and then his gaze wandered to Mother and Juana and I saw a new expression lessen the fierce scowl that had clouded his face from the moment of his entry. He was a large man, his nose was thin and rather fine, his eyes cold, gray and piercing. He was very different from the fat swine that had preceded him—very different and more dangerous; even I could see that. I could see a thin, cruel upper lip and a full and sensuous lower. If the other had been a pig, this one was a wolf and he had the nervous restlessness of the wolf—and the vitality to carry out any wolfish designs his crafty brain might entertain.

"So you are Brother Julian 8th!" he repeated. "I do not have good reports of you. I have come for two reasons tonight. One is to warn you that the Kash Guard is commanded by a different sort of man from him whom I relieved. I will stand no trifling and no treason. There must be unquestioned loyalty to the Jemadar at Washington—every national and local law will be enforced. Trouble makers and traitors will get short shrift. A manifesto will be read in each market place Saturday—a manifesto that I have just received from Washington. Our great Jemadar has conferred greater powers upon the commanders of the Kash Guard. You will come to me with all your grievances.

Where justice miscarries I shall be the court of last resort. The judgment of any court may be appealed to me.

"On the other hand, let wrongdoers beware, as under the new law any cause may be tried before a summary military court over which the commander of the Kash Guard must preside.

"And," continued Or-tis, "I have come for another reason—a reason that looks bad for you. Brother Julian; but we shall see what we shall see," and turning to the men behind him he issued a curt command: "Search the place!" That was all; but I saw, in memory, another man standing in this same living room— a man from beneath whose coat fell an empty sack when he raised an arm.

For an hour they searched that little three room house. For an hour they tumbled our few belongings over and over; but mostly they searched the living room and especially about the fireplace did they hunt for a hidden nook. A dozen times my heart stood still as I saw them feeling of the stones above the mantel.

We all knew what they sought—all but Juana—and we knew what it would mean if they found it. Death for Father and for me, too, perhaps, and worse for Mother and the girl. And to think that Johansen had done this awful thing to curry favor for himself with the new commander! I knew it was he—1 knew it as surely as though Or-tis had told me. To curry favor with the commanderi I

thought that that was the reason then. God, had I but known his real reasoni

Well, they searched for an hour and found nothing; but 1 knew that Or-tis was not satisfied that the thing he sought was not there, and toward the end of the search I could see that he was losing patience. He took direct charge at last and then when they had no better success under his direction he became very angry.

"Yankee swine!" he cried suddenly, turning upon Father; "you will find that you cannot fool a descendant of the great Jemadar Orthis as you have fooled the others—not for long. I have a nose for traitors—I can smell a Yank farther than most men can see one. Take a warning, take a warning to your kind-it will be death or the mines for every traitor in the teivos."

He stood then, in silence for a moment, glaring at Father and then his gaze moved to Juana, where she stood just behind my shoulder at the far side of the room.

"Who are you, girl?" he demanded. "Where do you live and what do you that adds to the prosperity of the community?"

"Adds to the prosperity of the communityl" It was a phrase often on their lips, and it was always directed at us—a meaningless phrase, as there was no prosperity. We supported the Kalkars and that was their idea of prosperity. I suppose ours was to get barely sufficient to sustain life and strength to enable us to continue slaving for them.

"I live with Mollie Sheehan," replied Juana, "and help her care for the chickens and the little pigs, also I help with the house work."

"Mm-m," ejaculated Or-tis; "house worki That is good—1 shall be needing someone to keep my quarters tidy. How about it, my girl? It will be easy work and I will pay you well—no pigs or chickens to slave for. Eh?"

"But I love the little pigs and chickens, I like to care for them," she pleaded, "and I am happy with Mollie—I do not wish to change."

"Do not wish to change, eh?" he mimicked her. She had drawn farther behind me now, as though for protection, and closer—I could feel her body touching mine. "Mollie can doubtless take care of her own pigs and chickens without help. If she has so many she cannot do it alone then she has too many, and we will see why it is that she is more prosperous than the rest of us— probably she should pay a larger income tax—we shall see."

"Oh, nol" cried Juana, frightened now on Mollie's account; "please, she has only a few, scarcely enough that she and her man may live after the taxes are paid."

"Then she does not need you to help her," said Or-tis with

finality, a nasty sneer upon his lip. "You will come and work for me, girll"

And then Juana surprised me—she surprised us all, and particularly Or-tis. Before, she had been rather pleading and seemingly a little frightened; but now she drew herself to her full height and with her chin in air looked Or-tis straight in the eye.

"I will not come," she said, haughtily; "I do not wish to." That was all.

Or-tis looked surprised. His soldiers, shocked. For a moment no one spoke. I glanced at Mother. She was not trembling as I had expected. Her head was up, too, and she was openly looking her scorn of the man. Father stood as he usually did before them, with his head bowed; but I saw that he was watching Or-tis out of the corners of his eyes and that his fingers were moving as might the fingers of hands fixed upon a hated throat.

"You will come," said Or-tis, a little red in the face now at this defiance. "There are ways," and he looked straight at me— and then he turned upon his heel and followed by his Kash Guard left the house.

CHAPTER IV

A FIGHT ON MARKET DAY

WHEN the door had closed upon them, Juana buried her face in her hands.

"Oh, what misery I bring everywhere," she sobbed. "To my father and mother I brought death and now to you all and to Jim and Mollie I am bringing ruin and perhaps death also. But it shall not be—you shall not suffer for mel He looked straight at you, Julian, when he made his threat. What could he mean to do? You have done nothing. But you need not fear. I know how I may undo the harm I have so innocently done."

We tried to assure her that we did not care—that we would protect her as best we could and that she must not feel that she had brought any greater burden upon us than we already carried; but she only shook her head and at last asked me to take her home to Mollie's.

She was very quiet all the way back, though I did my best to cheer her up.

"He cannot make you work for him," I insisted. "Even The

Twentyfour, rotten as it is, would never dare enforce such an order. We are not yet entirely slaves."

"But I am afraid that he will find a way," she replied, "through you, my friend. I saw him look at you and it was a very ugly look."

"I do not fear," I said.

"I fear for you. No, it shall not bel" She spoke with such vehement finality that she almost startled me, and then she bade me good night and went in to Mollie's house and closed the door.

All the way back home I was much worried about her, for I did not like to see her unhappy.

As I approached the house I saw that the candle was still burning in the living room—1 had left so hurriedly that I had given it no thought—and as I came closer I saw something else, too. I was walking very slowly, and in the soft dust of the pathway my soft boots made no sound, or I might not have seen what I did see—two figures, close in the shadow of the wall, peering through one of our little windows into the living room.

I crept stealthily forward until I was close enough to see that one was in the uniform of a Kash Guard while the other was clothed as are those of my class, and in the latter I recognized the stoop-shouldered, lanky figure of Peter Johansen. I was not at all surprised at this confirmation of my suspicions.

I knew what they were there for—hoping to learn the secret hiding place of The Flag—but I also knew that unless they already knew it, there was no danger of their discovering it from the outside since The Flag had been removed from its hiding place. So I hid and watched them for awhile, and then circled the house and entered from the front as though I did not know they were there, for it would never do to let them know that they had been discovered.

Taking off my clothes I went to bed, after putting out the candle. I do not know how long they remained—it was enough to know that we were being watched, and though it was not pleasant I was glad that we were forewarned. In the morning I told Father and Mother what I had seen. Mother sighed and shook her head.

"It is coming," she said. "I always knew that sooner or later it would come. One by one they get us—now it is our turn."

It was market day, and I went in with a few wethers, some hides and cheese. Father did not come along—in fact, I advised him not to as Soor would be there and also Hoffmeyer. One cheese I took as tribute to Soor. God, how I hated to do iti But both Mother and Father thought it best to propitiate the fellow, and I suppose they were right. A lifetime of suffering does not incline one to seek further trouble.

The market place was full, for I was a little late. There were many Kash Guards in evidence—more than usual. It was a warm

day—the first really warm day we had had—and a number of men were sitting beneath a canopy at one side of the market place in front of Hoffmeyer's office. As I approached I saw that Or-tis was there, as well as Pthav the coal baron, and Hoffmeyer of course, with several others, including some Kalkar women and children. I recognized Pthav's woman—a renegade Yank who had gone to him willingly—and their little child, a girl of about six. The latter was playing in the dust in front of the canopy some hundred feet from the group, and I had scarcely recognized her when I saw that which made my heart almost stop beating for an instant.

Two men were driving a small bunch of cattle into the market place upon the other side of the canopy when suddenly I saw one of the creatures, a great bull, break away from the herd and with lowered head charge toward the tiny figure playing, unconscious of danger, in the dust. The men tried to head the beast off but their efforts were futile. Those under the canopy saw the child's danger at the same time that I did, and they rose and cried aloud in warning. Pthav's woman shrieked and Or-tis yelled lustily for the Kash Guard; but none hastened in the path of the infuriated beast to the rescue of the child.

I was the closest to her and the moment that I saw her danger I started forward; but even as I ran, there passed through my brain some terrible thoughts. She is Kalkarl She is the spawn of the beast Pthav and of the woman who turned traitor to her kind to win ease and comfort and safety! Many a little life has been snuffed out because of her father and his classi Would they save a sister or a daughter of minel

I thought all these things as I ran; but I did not stop running — something within impelled me to her aid. It must have been simply that she was a little child and I the descendant of American gentlemen. No, I kept right on in the face of the fact that my sense of justice cried out that I let the child die.

I reached her just a moment before the bull did and when he saw me there between him and the child he stopped, and with his head down he pawed the earth, throwing clouds of dust about, and bellowed—and then he came for me; but I met him half way, determined to hold him off until the child escaped, if it were humanly possible for me to do so. He was a huge beast and quite evidently a vicious one, which possibly explained the reason for bringing him to market, and altogether it seemed to me that he would make short work of me; but I meant to die fighting.

I called to the little girl to run and then the bull and I came together. I seized his horns as he attempted to toss me and I exerted all the strength in my young body. I had thought that I had let the hellhounds feel it all that other night; but now I knew that I had yet more in reserve, for to my astonishment I held that great

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

beast and slowly, very slowly, I commenced to twist his head to the left.

He struggled and fought and bellowed—I could feel the muscles of my back and arms and legs hardening to the strain that was put upon them; but almost from the first instant I knew that I was master. The Kash Guards were coming now, on the run, and I could hear Or-tis shouting to them to shoot the bull; but before they reached me I gave the animal a final mighty wrench so that he went down first upon one knee and then over on his side and there I held him until a sergeant came and put a bullet through his head.

When he was quite dead Or-tis and Pthav and the others approached—I saw them coming as I was returning to my wethers, my skins and my cheese. Or-tis called to me, and I turned and stood looking at him, as I had no mind to have any business with any of them that I could avoid.

"Come here, my man," he called.

I moved sullenly toward him a few paces and stopped again.

"What do you want of me?" I asked.

"Who are you?" He was eyeing me closely now. "I never saw such strength in any man. You should be in the Kash Guard. How would you like that?"

"I would not like it," I replied. It was about then, I guess, that he recognized me, for his eyes hardened. "No," he said, "we do not want such as you among loyal men." He turned upon his heel; but immediately wheeled toward me again. "See to it, young man," he snapped, "that you use that strength of yours wisely and in good causes."

"I shall use it wisely," I replied, "and in the best of causes."

I think Pthav's woman had intended to thank me for saving her child, and perhaps Pthav had, too, for they had both come toward me; but when they saw Or-tis' evident hostility toward me, they turned away, for which I was thankful. I saw Soor looking on with a sneer on his lips and Hoffmeyer eyeing me with that cunning expression of his.

I gathered up my produce and proceeded to that part of the market place where we habitually showed that which we had to sell, only to find that a man named Vonbulen was there ahead of me. Now there is an unwriten law that each family has its own place in the market. I was the third generation of Julians who had brought produce to this spot—formerly horses mostly, for we were a family of horsemen; but more recently goats, since the government had taken over the horse industry. Though Father and I still broke horses occasionally for The Twentyfour, we did not own or raise them any more.

Vonbulen had had a little pen in a far corner, where trade was

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

not so brisk as it usually was in our section, and I could not understand what he was doing in ours, where he had three or four scrub pigs and a few sacks of grain. Approaching, I asked him why he was there.

"This is my pen now," he said. "Tax Collector Soor told me to use it."

"You will get out of it," I replied. "You know that it is ours—everyone in the teivos knows that it is and has been for many years. My grandfather built it and my family have kept it in repair. You will get outi"

"I will not get out," he replied truculently. He was a very large man and when he was angry he looked quite fierce, as he had large mustaches which he brushed upward on either side of his nose—like the tusks of one of his boars.

"You will get out or be thrown out," I told him; but he put his hand on the gate and attempted to bar my entrance.

Knowing him to be heavy minded and stupid I thought to take him by surprise, nor did I fail, as, with a hand upon the topmost rail, I vaulted the gate full in his face and letting my knees strike his chest I sent him tumbling backward into the filth of his swine. So hard I struck him that he turned a complete back somersault, and as he scrambled to his feet, his lips foul with oaths, I saw murder in his eye. And how he charged mel It was for all the world like the charge of the great bull I had just vanquished, except that I think that Vonbulen was angrier than the bull and not so good looking.

His great fists were flailing about in a most terrifying manner, and his mouth was open just as though he intended eating me alive; but for some reason I felt no fear. In fact, I had to smile to see his face and his fierce mustache smeared with soft hog dung.

I parried his first wild blows and then stepping in close I struck him lightly in the face—1 am sure I did not strike him hard, for I did not mean to—I wanted to play with him; but the result was as astonishing to me as it must have been to him, though not so painful. He rebounded from my fist fully three feet and then went over on his back again, spitting blood and teeth from his mouth. And then I picked him up by the scruff of his neck and the seat of his breeches and lifting him high above my head I hurled him out of the pen into the market place, where, for the first time, I saw a large crowd of interested spectators.

Vonbulen was not a popular character in the teivos, and many were the broad smiles I saw on the faces of those of my class; but there were others who did not smile. They were Kal-kars and half-breeds.

I saw all this in a single glance and then I returned to my work, for I was not through. Vonbulen lay where he had alighted and

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

after him and onto him, one by one, I threw his sacks of grain and his scrub pigs and then I opened the gate and started out to bring in my own produce and livestock. As I did so, I almost ran into Soor, standing there eyeing me with a most malignant expression upon his face.

"What does this mean?" he fairly screamed at me.

"It means," I replied, "that no one can steal the place of a Julian as easily as Vonbulen thought."

"He did not steal it," yelled Soor. "I gave it to him. Get out! It is his."

"It is not yours to give," I replied. "I know my rights and no man shall take them from me without a fight. Do you understand me?" And then I brushed by him without another glance and drove my wethers into the pen. As I did so, I saw that no one was smiling any more—my friends looked very glum and very frightened; but a man came up from my right and stood by my side, facing Soor, and when I turned my eyes in his direction I saw that it was Jim.

Then I realized how serious my act must have seemed and I was sorry that Jim had come and thus silently announced that he stood with me in what I had done. No others came, although there were many who hated the Kalkars fully as much as we.

Soor was furious; but he could not stop me. Only The Twenty-four could take the pen away from me. He called me names and threatened me; but I noticed that he waited until he had walked a short distance away before he did so. It was as food to a starving man to know that even one of our oppressors feared me. So far, this had been the happiest day of my life.

I hurriedly got the goats into the pen and then, with one of the cheeses in my hand, I called to Soor. He turned to see what I wanted, showing his teeth like a rat at bay.

"You told my father to bring you a present," I yelled at the top of my lungs, so that all about in every direction heard and turned toward us. "Here it isl" I cried. "Here is your bribel" and I hurled the cheese with all my strength full in his face. He went down like a felled ox and the people scattered like frightened rabbits. Then I went back into the pen and started to open and arrange my hides across the fence so that they might be inspected by prospective purchasers.

Jim, whose pen was next to ours, stood looking across the fence at me for several minutes. At last he spoke.

"You have done a very rash thing, Julian," he said; and then: "I envy you."

CHAPTER V

THE COURT MARTIAL

THAT afternoon I saw a small detachment of the Kash Guard crossing the market place. They came directly toward my pen and stopped before it. The sergeant in charge addressed me. "You are Brother Julian 9th?" he asked.

"I am Julian 9th," I replied.

"You had better be Brother Julian 9th when you are addressed by Brother General Or-tis," he snapped back. "You are under arrest—come with mel"

"What for?" I asked.

"Brother Or-tis will tell you it you do not know—you are to be taken to him."

Sol It had come and it had come quickly. I felt sorry for Mother; but, in a way, I was glad. If only there had been no such person in the world as Juana St. John I should have been almost happy, for I knew Mother and Father would come soon, and as she had always taught me, we would be reunited in a happy world on the other side—a world in which there were no Kalkars or taxes—but then there was a Juana St. John and I was very sure of this world, while not quite so sure of the other which I had never seen.

There seemed no particular reason for refusing to accompany the Kash Guard. They would simply have killed me with their bullets, and if I went I might have an opportunity to wipe out some more important swine than they before I was killed—if they intended killing me. One never knows what they will do—other than that it will be the wrong thing.

Well, they took me to the headquarters of the teivos, way down on the shore of the lake; but as they took me in a large wagon drawn by horses it was not a tiresome trip, and as I was not worrying, I rather enjoyed it. We passed through many market places, for numerous districts lie between ours and headquarters, and always the people stared at me, just as I had stared at other prisoners being carted away to no one knew what fate. Sometimes they came back—sometimes they did not. I wondered which I would do.

At last we arrived at headquarters after passing through miles of lofty ruins where I had played and explored as a child. I was taken immediately into Or-tis* presence. He sat in a large room at the head of a long table and I saw that there were other men sitting along the sides of the table, the local representatives of that hated authority known as The Twentyfour, the form of government that the Kalkars had brought with them from the Moon a century before. The Twentyfour originally consisted of a committee of that

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

number. Now, however, it was but a name that stood for power, for government and for tyranny. Jarth the Jemadar was, in reality, what his lunar title indicated—emperor. Surrounding him was a committee of twenty-four Kalkars; but as they had been appointed by him and could be removed by him at will, they were nothing more than his tools. And this body before which I had been haled had in our teivos the same power as The Twentyfour which gave it birth, and so we spoke of it, too, as The Twentyfour, or as the Teivos, as I at first thought it to be.

Many of these men I recognized as members of the teivos. Pthav and Hoffmeyer were there, representing our district, or misrepresenting it, as Father always put it, yet I was presently sure that this could not be a meeting of the teivos proper, as these were held in another building farther south—a magnificent pillared pile of olden times that the Government had partially restored, as they had the headquarters, which also had been a beautiful building in a past age, its great lions still standing on either side of its broad entranceway, facing toward the west.

No, it was not the teivos; but what could it be, and then it dawned upon me that it must be an arm of the new law that Or-tis had announced, and such it proved to be—a special military tribunal for special offenders. This was the first session, and it chanced to be my luck that I committed my indiscretion just in time to be haled before it when it needed someone to experiment on.

I was made to stand under guard at the foot of the table, and as I looked up and down the rows of faces on either side, I saw not a friendly eye—no person of my class or race—just swine, swine, swine. Low-browed, brute-faced men, slouching in their chairs, slovenly in their dress, uncouth, unwashed, unwholesome looking—this was the personnel of the court that was to try me—for what?

I was soon to find out. Or-tis asked who appeared against me and what was the charge and then I saw Soor for the first time. He should have been in his district collecting his taxes; but he wasn't. No, he was here on more pleasant business. He eyed me malevolently and stated the charge: Resisting an officer of the law in the discharge of his duty, and assaulting same with a deadly weapon with intent to commit murder.

They all looked ferociously at me, expecting, no doubt, that I would tremble with terror, as most of my class did before them; but I couldn't tremble—the charge struck me as so ridiculous. As a matter of fact, I am afraid that I grinned. I know I did.

"What is it," asked Or-tis, "that amuses you so?"

"The charge," I replied.

"What is there funny about that?" he asked again—"men have been shot for less—men who were not suspected of treasonable

acts."

"I did not resist an officer in the discharge of his duty," I said. "It is not one of a tax collector's duties to put a family out of its pen at the market place, is it?—a pen they have occupied for three generations? I ask you, Or-tis, is it?"

Or-tis halt rose from his chair. "How dare you address me thus?" he cried.

The others turned scowling faces upon me, and beating the table with their dirty fists they all shouted and bellowed at me at once; but I kept my chin up as I had sworn to do until I died and I laughed in their faces.

Finally they quieted down, and again I put my question to Or-tis and I'll give him credit for answering it fairly. "No," he said, "only the teivos may do that—the teivos or the commandant."

"Then I did not resist an officer in the discharge of his duty"; I shot back at them, "for I only refused to leave the pen that is mine. And now another question. Is a cheese a deadly weapon?"

They had to admit that it was not. "He demanded a present from my father," I explained, "and I brought him a cheese. He had no right under the law to demand it, and so I threw it at him and it hit him in the face. I shall deliver thus every such illegal tithe that is demanded of us. I have my rights under the law and I intend to see that they are respected."

They had never been talked to thus before, and suddenly I realized that by merest chance I had stumbled upon the only way in which to meet these creatures. They were moral as well as physical cowards. They could not face an honest, fearless man, already they were showing signs of embarrassment. They knew that I was right, and while they could have condemned me had I bowed the knee to them they hadn't the courage to do it in my presence.

The natural outcome was that they sought a scape goat, and Or-tis was not long in finding one—his baleful eye alighted upon Soor.

"Does this man speak the truth?" he cried at the tax collector. "Did you turn him out of his pen—did he do no more than throw a cheese at you?"

Soor, a coward before those in authority over him, flushed and stammered.

"He tried to kill me," he mumbled lamely, "and he did almost kill Brother Vonbulen."

Then I told them of that—and always I spoke in a tone of authority and I held my ground. I did not fear them and they knew it. Sometimes I think they attributed it to some knowledge I had of something that might be menacing them—for they were always afraid of revolution. That is why they ground us down so.

The outcome of it was that I was let go with a warning—a warning that if I did not address my fellows as Brother I would be punished, and even then I gave the parting shot, for I told them I would call no man Brother unless he was.

The whole affair was a farce; but all trials were farces, only as a rule the joke was on the accused. They were not conducted in a dignified or proper manner as I imagine trials in ancient times to have been. There was neither order nor system.

I had to walk all the way home—another manifestation of justice—and I arrived there an hour or two after supper time. I found Jim and Mollie and Juana at the house, and I could see that Mother had been crying. She started again when she saw me — poor Mother. I wonder if it has always been such a terrible thing to be a mother; but no, it cannot have been, else the human race would long since have been extinct—as the Kalkars will rapidly make it anyway.

Jim had told them of the happenings in the market place—the episode of the bull, the encounter with Vonbulen and the matter of Soor. For the first time in my life, and the only time, I heard my Father laugh aloud. Juana laughed, too; but there was still an undercurrent of terror that I could feel, and which Mollie finally voiced.

"They will get us yet, Julian," she said; "but what you have done is worth dying for."

"Yesi" cried my father, "I can go to The Butcher with a smile on my lips after this. He has done what I always wanted to do; but dared not. If I am a coward I can at least thank God that there sprang from my loins a brave and tearless man."

"You are not a cowardi" I cried and Mother looked at me and smiled. I was glad that I said that, then.

You may not understand what Father meant by "going to The Butcher"; but it is simple. The manufacture of ammunition is a lost art—that is, the high powered ammunition that the Kash Guard likes to use—and so they conserve all the vast stores of ammunition that were handed down from ancient times—millions upon millions of rounds—or they would not be able to use the rifles that were handed down with the ammunition. They use this ammunition only in cases of dire necessity, a fact which long ago placed the firing squad of old in the same class with flying machines and automobiles. Now they cut our throats when they kill us, and the man who does it is known as The Butcher.

I walked home with Jim and Mollie and Juana; but more especially Juana. Again I noticed that strange magnetic force which drew me to her, so that I kept bumping into her every step

or two, and intentionally I swung my arm that was nearest to her in the hope that my hand might touch hers, nor was I doomed to disappointment, and at every touch I thrilled. I could not but notice that Juana made no mention of my clumsiness, nor did she appear to attempt to prevent our contact; but yet I was afraid of her—afraid that she would notice and afraid that she would not. I am good with horses and goats and hellhounds;
but I am not much good with girls.

We had talked upon many subjects and I knew her views and beliefs and she knew mine, so when we parted, and I asked her if she would go with me on the morrow, which was the first Sunday of the month, she knew what I meant. She said that she would, and I went home very happy, for I knew that she and I were going to defy the common enemy side by side—that hand in hand we would face the grim reaper for the sake of the greatest cause on earth.

On the way I overtook Peter Johansen going in the direction of our home. I could see that he had no mind to meet me and he immediately fell to explaining lengthily why he was out at night, for the first thing I did was to ask him what strange business took him abroad so often lately after the sun had set.

I could see him flush even in the dark.

"Why," he exclaimed, "this is the first time in months that I have gone out after supper," and then something about the man made me lose my temper and I blurted out what was in my heart.

"You liel" I cried. "You lie, you damned spyi"

And then Peter Johansen went white and suddenly whipping a knife from his clothes he leaped at me, striking wildly for any part of me that the blade might reach. At first he like to have got me, so unexpected and so venomous was the attack; but though I was struck twice on the arm and cut a little, I managed to ward the point from any vital part and in a moment I had seized his knife wrist. That was the end—1 just twisted it a little
—I did not mean to twist hard—and something snapped inside his wrist.

Peter let out an awful scream, his knife dropped from his fingers and I pushed him from me and gave him a good kick as he was leaving—a kick that I think he will remember for some time. Then I picked up his knife and hurled it as far as I could in the direction of the river, and went on my way toward home
—whistling.

When I entered the house Mother came out of her room and putting her arms about my neck she clung closely to me.

"Dear boy," she murmured, "I am so happy, because you are happy. She is a dear girl and I love her as much as you do."

"What is the matter?" I asked. "What are you talking about?"

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

"I heard you whistling," she said, "and I knew what it meant —grown men whistle but once in their lives."

I picked her up in my arms and tossed her to the ceiling.

"Oh, Mother, dearl" I cried, "I wish it were true, and maybe it will be some day—if I am not too much of a coward; but not yet."

"Then why were you whistling?" she asked, surprised and a bit skeptical, too, I imagine.

"I whistled," I explained, "because I just broke the wrist of a spy and kicked him across the road."

"Peter?" she asked, trembling.

"Yes, Mother, Peter. I called him a spy and he tried to knife me."

"Oh, my soni" she cried. "You did not know. It is my fault, I should have told you. Now he will fight no more in the dark; but will come out in the open, and when he does that I am lost."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I do not mind dying," she said; "but they will take your father first, because of me."

"What do you mean?—I can understand nothing of what you are driving at."

"Then listen," she said. "Peter wants me. That is the reason he is spying on your father. If he can prove something on him, and Father is taken to the mines or killed, Peter will claim me."

"How do you know this?" I asked.

"Peter himself has told me that he wants me. He tried to make me leave your dear father and go with him, and when I refused he bragged that he was in the favor of the Kalkars and that he would get me in the end. He has tried to buy my honor with your father's life. That is why I have been so afraid and so unhappy; but I knew that you and Father would rather die than have me do that thing and so I have withstood him."

"Did you tell Father?" I asked.

"I dared not. He would have killed Peter and that would have been the end of us, for Peter stands high in the graces of the authorities."

"I will kill him," I said.

She tried to dissuade me, and finally I had to promise her that I would wait until I had provocation that the authorities might recognize—God knows I had provocation enough, though.

After breakfast the next day we set out singly and in different directions, as was always our custom on the first Sunday in each month. I went to Jim's first to get Juana, as she did not know the way, having never been with us. I found her ready and waiting and alone, as Jim and Mollie had started a few minutes before, and she was seemingly very glad to see me.

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

I told her nothing of Peter, as there is enough trouble in the world without burdening people with any that does not directly threaten them—each has plenty of his own. I led her up the river for a mile and all the while we watched to see if we were followed. Then we found a skiff, where I had hidden it, and crossed the river, and after hiding it again we continued on up for a half a mile. Here was a raft that I had made myself and on this we poled to the opposite shore; if any followed us they must have swum, for there were no other boats on this part of the river.

A mile west of the river is a thick forest of very old trees, and toward this I led Juana. At its verge we sat down, ostensibly to rest; but really to see if anyone was near who might have followed us or who could accidentally discover our next move.

There was no one in sight and so with light hearts we arose and entered the forest.

For a quarter of a mile we made our way along a winding path and then I turned to the left at a right angle, and entered thick brush where there was no trail. Always we did this, never covering the last quarter of a mile over the same route, lest we make a path that might be marked and followed.

Presently we came to a pile of brush wood beneath one edge of which was an opening into which, by stooping low, one might enter. It was screened from view by a fallen tree over which had been heaped broken branches. Even in winter time and early spring the opening in the brush beyond was invisible to the passers-by, if there had been any passers-by, which except upon rare occasions there were not. A man trailing lost stock might come this way; but no others, for it was a lonely and unfrequented spot. During the summer, the season of the year when there was the greatest danger of discovery, the entire brush pile and its tangled screen were hidden completely beneath a mass of wild vines, so that it was with difficult that we found it.

Into this opening I led Juana—taking her by the hand as one might a blind person, although it was not so dark within that she could not see perfectly every step she took. However, I took her by the hand, a poor excuse being better than none. The winding tunnel beneath the brush was a hundred yards long, perhaps —I wished then that it had been a hundred miles—it ended abruptly before a rough stone wall in which was a heavy door. Its oaken panels were black with age and streaked with green from the massive hinges that ran across its entire width in three places, while from the great lag screws that fastened them to the door, brownish streaks of rust ran down to mingle with the green and the black. In patches, moss grew upon it, so that all-in-all it had

the appearance of great antiquity, though even the oldest among those who knew of it at all could only guess at its age-it had been there longer than they could recall. Above the door, carved in the stone, was a shepherd's crook and the words, *Dieu et mon droit.*

Halting before this massive portal I struck the panels once with my knuckles, counted five and struck again, once; then I counted three and, in the same cadence, struck three times. It was the signal for the day—never twice was it the same. Should one come with the wrong signal, and later force the door he would find only an empty room beyond.

Now the door opened a crack and an eye peered forth, then it swung outward and we entered a long, low room lighted by burning wicks floating in oil. Across the width of the room were rough wooden benches and at the far end a raised platform upon which stood Orrin Colby, the blacksmith, behind an altar which was the sawn-off trunk of a tree, the roots of which, legend has it, still run down into the ground beneath the church, which is supposed to have been built around it.

CHAPTER VI

BETRAYED

THERE were twelve people sitting on the benches when we entered, so that with Orrin Colby, ourselves, and the man at the door we were sixteen in all. Colby is the head of our church, his great-grandfather having been a methodist minister. Father and Mother were there, sitting next to Jim and Mollie, and there were Samuels the Jew, Betty Worth, who was Dennis Corrigan's woman, and all the other familiar faces.

They had been waiting for us, and as soon as we were seated the services commenced with a prayer, everyone standing with bowed head. Orrin Colby always delivered this same short prayer at the opening of services each first Sunday of every month. It ran something like this:

> God of our fathers, through generations of persecution and cruelty in a world of hate that has turned against You, we stand at Your right hand, loyal to You and to our Flag. To us Your name stands for justice, humanity, love, happiness and right and The Flag is Your emblem. Once each month we risk our lives that Your name may not perish from the Earth. Amen!

From behind the altar he took a shepherd's crook to which was attached a flag like that in my father's possession, and held it aloft, whereat we all knelt in silence for a few seconds, then he replaced

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

it and we arose. Then we sang a song—it was an old, old song that started like this: "Onward, Christian soldiers." It was my favorite song. Mollie Sheehan played a violin while we sang.

Following the song Orrin Colby talked to us—he always talked about the practical things that affected our lives and our future. It was a homely talk; but it was full of hope for better times. I think that at these meetings, once each month, we heard the only suggestions of hope that ever came into our lives. There was something about Orrin Colby that inspired confidence and hope. These days were the bright spots in our drab existence that helped to make life bearable.

After that we sang again and then Samuels, the Jew, prayed, and the regular service was over, after which we had short talks by various members of our church. These talks were mostly on the subject which dominated the minds of all—a revolution; but we never got any further than talking. How could we? We were probably the most thoroughly subjugated people the world ever had known—we feared our masters and we feared our neighbors. We did not know whom we might trust, outside that little coterie of ours, and so we dared not seek recruits for our cause although we knew that there must be thousands who would sympathize with us. Spies and informers were everywhere—they. The Kash Guard and The Butcher, were the agencies by which they controlled us; but of all, we feared most the spies and informers. For a woman, for a neighbor's house, and in one instance of which I know, for a setting of eggs, men have been known to inform on their friends—sending them to the mines or The Butcher.

Following the talks we just visited together and gossiped for an hour or two, enjoying the rare treat of being able to speak our minds freely and fearlessly. I had to re-tell several times my experiences before Or-tis* new court martial, and I know that it was with difficulty that they believed that I had said the things I had to our masters and come away free and alive. They simply could not understand it.

All were warned of Peter Johansen and the names of others under suspicion of being informers were passed around that we might all be on our guard against them. We did not sing again, for even on these days that our hearts were lightest they were too heavy for song. About two o'clock the pass signal for the next meeting was given out and then we started away singly or in pairs. I volunteered to go last, with Juana, and see that the door was locked, and an hour later, after the rest had gone, we started out about five minutes behind Samuels, the Jew.

Juana and I had emerged from the wood, when we noticed a man walking cautiously in the shade of the trees ahead of us. He seemed

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

to be following someone and immediately there sprang to my thoughts the ever-near suspicion—spy.

The moment that he turned a bend in the pathway and was out of our sight Juana and I ran forward as rapidly as we could, that we might get a closer view of him, nor were we disappointed. We saw and recognized him, and we also saw whom he shadowed. It was Peter Johansen, carrying one arm in a sling, sneaking along behind Samuels.

Casting about in my mind for some plan to throw Peter off the track I finally hit upon a scheme which I immediately put into execution. I knew the way that the old man followed to and from church, and that presently he would make a wide detour that would bring him back to the river about a quarter of a mile below. Juana and I could walk straight to the spot and arrive long before Samuels did. And this we proceeded to do.

About half an hour after we reached the point at which we knew he would strike the river we heard him coming and withdrew into some bushes. On he came, all oblivious of the creature on his trail, and a moment later we saw Peter come into view and halt at the edge of the trees. Then Juana and I stepped out and hailed Samuels.

"Did you see nothing of them?" I asked in a tone of voice loud enough to be distinctly heard by Peter, and then before Samuels could reply I added: "We have searched far up the river and never a sign of a goat about—I do not believe that they came this way after all; but if they did the hellhounds will get them after dark. Come, now, we might as well start for home and give the search up as a bad job."

I had talked so much and so rapidly that Samuels had guessed that I must have some reason for it and so he held his peace, other than to say that he had seen nothing of any goats. Not once had Juana or I let our glances betray that we knew of Peter's presence, though I could not help but see him dodge behind a tree the moment that he saw us.

The three of us then continued on toward home in the shortest direction, and on the way I whispered to Samuels what we had seen. The old man chuckled, for he thought as I did that my ruse must have effectually baffled Johansen—unless he had followed Moses farther than we guessed.

Very cautiously during the ensuing week the word was passed around by means with which we were familiar that Johansen had followed Samuels from church; but as the authorities paid no more attention to Moses than before, we finally concluded that we had thrown Peter off the trail.

The Sunday following church we were all seated in Jim's yard under one of his trees that had already put forth its young leaves

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

and afforded shade from the sun. We had been talking of homely things—the coming crops, the newborn kids, Mollie's little pigs. The world seemed unusually kindly. The authorities had not persecuted us of late—rather they had left us alone—a respite of two weeks seemed like heaven to us. We were quite sure by this time that Peter Johansen had discovered nothing, and our hearts were freer than for a long time past.

We were sitting thus in quiet and contentment enjoying a brief rest from our lives of drudgery, when we heard the pounding of horses' hoofs upon the hard earth of the path that leads down the river in the direction of the market place. Suddenly the entire atmosphere changed—relaxed nerves became suddenly taut; peaceful eyes resumed their hunted expression. Why? The Kash Guard rides.

And so they came—fifty of them, and at their head rode Brother General Or-tis. At the gateway of Jim's house they drew rein and Or-tis dismounted and entered the yard. He looked at us as a man might look at carrion; and he gave us no greeting, which suited us perfectly. He walked straight to Juana, who was seated on a little bench beside which I stood leaning against the bole of the tree. None of us moved. He halted before the girl.

"I have come to tell you," he said to her, "that I have done you the honor to choose you as my woman, to bear my children and keep my house in order."

He stood then looking at her and I could feel the hair upon my head rise, and the corners of my upper lip twitched—I know not why. I only know that I wanted to fly at his throat and kill him, to tear his flesh with my teeth—to see him diel And then he looked at me and stepped back, after which he beckoned to some of his men to enter. When they had come, he again addressed Juana, who had risen and stood swaying to and fro, as might one who has been dealt a heavy blow upon the head and half-stunned.

"You may come with me now," he said to her, and then I stepped between them and faced him, and again he stepped back a pace.

"She will not come with you now, or ever," I said, and my voice was very low—not above a whisper. "She is my woman—1 have taken heri"

It was a lie—the last part; but what is a lie to a man who would commit murder in the same cause. He was among his men now—they were close around him and I suppose they gave him courage, for he addressed me threateningly.

"I do not care whose she is," he cried, "I want her and I shall have her. I speak for her now, and I speak for her when she is a

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

widow. After you are dead I have first choice of her and traitors do not live long."

"I am not dead yet," I reminded him. He turned to Juana.

"You shall have thirty days as the law requires; but you can save your friends trouble if you come now—they will not be molested then and I will see that their taxes are lowered."

Juana gave a little gasp and looked around at us and then she straightened her shoulders and came close to me.

"Nol" she said to Or-tis. "I will never go. This is my man—he has taken me. Ask him if he will give me up to you. You will never have me—alive."

"Don't be too sure of that," he growled. "I believe that you are both lying to me, for I have had you watched and I know that you do not live under the same roof. And youl" he glared at me. "Tread carefully, for the eyes of the law find traitors where others do not see them." Then he turned and strode from the yard. A minute later they were gone in a cloud of dust.

Now our happiness and peace had fled—it was always thus— and there was no hope. I dared not look at Juana after what I had said; but then, had she not said the same thing? We all talked lamely for a few minutes and then Father and Mother rose to go, and a moment later Jim and Mollie went indoors. I turned to Juana. She stood with her eyes upon the ground and a pretty flush upon her cheek. Something surged up in me—a mighty force, that I had never known, possessed me, and before I realized what it impelled me to do I had seized Juana in my arms and was covering her face and lips with kisses.

She fought to free herself; but I would not let her go.

"You are minel" I cried. "You are my woman. I have said it — you have said. You are my woman. God, how I love youl"

She lay quiet then, and let me kiss her, and presently her arms stole about my neck and her lips sought mine in an interval that I had drawn them away, and they moved upon my lips in a gentle caress, that was yet palpitant with passion. This was a new Juana—a new and very wonderful Juana.

"You really love me?" she asked at last—"I heard you say iti"

"I have loved you from the moment I saw you looking up at me from beneath the hellhound," I replied.

"You have kept it very much of a secret to yourself then," she teased me. "If you loved me so, why did you not tell me? Were you going to keep it from me all my life, or—were you afraid? Brother Or-tis was not afraid to say that he wanted me—is my man, my Julian, less brave than he?"

I knew that she was only teasing me, and so I stopped her mouth with kisses and then: "Had you been a hellhound, or Soor, or even

Or-tis," I said, "I could have told you what I thought of you; but being Juana and a little girl the words would not come. I am a great coward."

We talked until it was time to go home to supper and I took her hand to lead her to my house. "But first," I said, "you must tell Mollie and Jim what has happened, and that you will not be back. For a while we can live under my father's roof; but as soon as may be I will get permission from the teivos to take the adjoining land and work it and then I shall build a house."

She drew back and flushed. "I cannot go with you yet," she said.

"What do you mean?" I asked. "You are minel"

"We have not been married," she whispered.

"But no one is married," I reminded her. "Marriage is against the law."

"My mother was married," she told me. "You and I can be married. We have a church and a preacher. Why cannot he marry us? He is not ordained because there is none to ordain him; but being the head of the only church that he knows of or that we know of, it is evident that he can be ordained only by God and who knows but that he already has been ordainedl"

I tried to argue her out of it, as now that heaven was so near I had no mind to wait three weeks to attain it; but she would not argue—she just shook her head and at last I saw that she was right and gave in—as I would have had to do in any event.

I went to Pthav, who was one of our representatives in the teivos, and asked him to procure for me permission to work the vacant land adjoining my father's. The land all belonged to the community; but each man was allowed what he could work as long as there was plenty, and there was more than plenty for us all.

Pthav was very ugly—he seemed to have forgotten that I had saved his child's life—and said that he did not know what he could do for me—that I had acted very badly to General Or-tis and was in disfavor, beside being under suspicion in another matter.

"What has General Or-tis to do with the distribution of land by the teivos?" I asked. "Because he wants my woman will the teivos deny me my rights?"

Pthav's woman came in while I was talking and recognized me; but she said nothing to me other than to mention that the child had asked for me. Pthav scowled at this and ordered her from the room just as a man might order a beast around. It was nothing to me, though, as the woman was a renegade anyway.

Finally I demanded of Pthav that he obtain the concession for me unless he could give me some valid reason for refusing.

"I will ask it," he said, finally; "but you will not get it—be sure of that."

As I was leaving the house Pthav's woman stopped me. "I will do what I can for you," she whispered. She must have seen me draw away instinctively as from an unclean thing, for she flushed and then said: "Please don't! I have suffered enough. I have paid the price of my treachery; but know. Yank," and she put her lips close to my ear, "that at heart I am more Yank than I was when I did this thing. And," she continued, "I have never spoken a word that could harm one of you. Tell them that—please tell themi I do not want them to hate me so, and God of our Fathers, how I have suffered—the degradation, the humiliation—it has been worse than what you are made to suffer. The creatures are lower than the beasts of the forest. When his friends come he serves them food and drink and—me! Ugh! I could kill him, if I were not such a coward. I have seen and I know how they can make one suffer before death."

I could not but feel sorry for her, and I told her so. The poor creature appeared very grateful and assured me that she would aid me.

"I know a few things about Pthav that he would not want Orris to know," she said, "and even though he beats me tor it I will make him get the land for you."

Again I thanked her and departed, realizing that there were others worse off than we—that the closer one came to the Kalkars the more hideous life became.

At last the day came and we set out for the church. As before I took Juana, though she tried to order it differently; but I would not trust her to the protection of another. We arrived without mishap—sixteen of us—and after the religious services were over Juana and I stood before the altar and were married—much after the fashion of the ancients, I imagine.

Juana was the only one of us who was at all sure about the ceremony and it had been she who trained Orrin Colby—making him memorize so much that he said his head ached for a week. All I can recall of it is that he asked me if I would take her to be my lawfully wedded wife—1 lost my voice and only squeaked a weak "yes"—and that he pronounced us man and wife, and then something about not letting anyone put asunder what God had joined together. I felt very much married and very happy, and then just as it was all nicely over and everybody was shaking hands with us there came a loud knocking at the door and the command: "Open, in the name of the lawl"

We looked at one another and gasped. Orrin Colby put a finger to his lips for silence and led the way toward the back of the church where a rough niche was built in, containing a few shelves upon which stood several rude candle sticks. We knew our parts and followed him in silence, except one who went quickly about

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

putting out the lights. All the time the pounding on the door became more insistent, and then we could hear the strokes of what must have been an ax beating at the panels. Finally, a shot was fired through the heavy wood and we knew that it was the Kash Guard.

Taking hold of the lower shelf Orrin pulled upward with all his strength with the result that all the shelving and woodwork to which it was attached slid upward revealing an opening beyond. Through this we filed, one by one, down a flight of stone steps into a dark tunnel. When the last man had passed I lowered the shelving to its former place, being careful to see that it fitted tightly.

Then I turned and followed the others, Juana's hand in mine. We groped our way for some little distance in the stygian darkness of the tunnel until Orrin halted and whispered to me to come to him. I went and stood at his side while he told me what I was to do. He had called upon me because I was the tallest and the strongest of the men. Above us was a wooden trap. I was to lift this and push it aside.

It had not been moved for generations and was very heavy with earth and growing things above; but I put my shoulders to it and it had to give—either it or the ground beneath my feet and that could not give. At last I had it off and in a few minutes I had helped them all out into the midst of a dense wood. Again we knew our parts, for many times had we been coached for just such an emergency, and one by one the men scattered in different directions, each taking his woman with him.

Suiting our movements to a prearranged plan, we reached our homes from different directions and at different times, some arriving after sundown, to the end that were we watched, none might be sure that we had been upon the same errand or to the same place.

CHAPTER VII

THE ARREST OF JULIAN 8TH

A WEEK later, Pthav sent for me and very gruffly told me that the teivos had issued the permit for me to use the land adjoining that allotted to my father. As before, his woman stopped me as I was leaving.

"It was easier than I thought," she told me, "for Or-tis has angered the teivos by attempting to usurp all its powers and knowing that he hates you they were glad to grant your petition

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

over his objection."

During the next two or three months I was busy building our home and getting my place in order. I had decided to raise horses and obtained permission from the teivos to do so—again over Ortis' objections. Of course the government controlled the entire horse traffic; but there were a few skilled horsemen permitted to raise them, though at any time their herds could be commandeered by the authorities. I knew that it might not be a very profitable business; but I loved horses and wanted to have just a few—a stallion and two or three mares. These I could use in tilling my fields and in the heavier work of hauling, and at the same time I would keep a few goats, pigs and chickens to insure us a living.

Father gave me halt his goats and a few chickens, and from Jim I bought two young sows and a boar. Later I traded a few goats to the teivos for two old mares that they thought were no longer worth keeping and that same day I was told of a stallion— a young outlaw—that Hoffmeyer had. The beast was five years old and so vicious that none dared approach him and they were on the point of destroying him.

I went to Hoffmeyer and asked if I could buy the animal—I offered him a goat for it, which he was glad to accept and then I took a strong rope and went to get my property. I found a beautiful bay with the temper of a hellhound. When I attempted to enter the pen he rushed at me with ears back and jaws distended; but I knew that I must conquer him now or never and so I met him with only a rope in my hand, nor did I wait for him. Instead, I ran to meet him and when he was in reach I struck him once across the face with the rope, at which he wheeled and let both hind feet fly out at me. Then I cast the noose that was at one end of the rope and caught him about the neck and for half an hour we had a battle of it.

I never struck him unless he tried to bite or strike me and finally I must have convinced him that I was master, for he let me come close enough to stroke his glossy neck, though he snorted loudly all the while that I did so. When I had quieted him a bit I managed to get a half hitch around his lower jaw and after that I had no difficulty in leading him from the pen. Once in the open I took the coils of my rope in my left hand and before the creature knew what I was about, had vaulted to his back.

He fought fair, I'll say that for him, for he stood on his feet; but for fifteen minutes he brought into play every artifice known to horse-kind for unseating a rider. Only my skill and my great strength kept me on his back and at that even the Kalkars who

were looking on had to applaud my horsemanship.

After that it was easy. I treated him with kindness, something he had never known before, and as he was an unusually intelligent animal, he soon learned that I was not only his master but his friend, and from being an outlaw he became one of the kindest and most tractable animals I have ever seen, so much so in fact, that Juana used to ride him bareback.

I love all horses and always have; but I think I never loved any animal as I did Red Lightning, as we named him.

The authorities left us pretty well alone for some time because they were quarreling among themselves. Jim said there was an ancient saying about honest men getting a little peace when thieves fell out and it certainly fitted our case perfectly; but the peace didn't last forever and when it broke the bolt that fell was the worst calamity that had ever come to us.

One evening Father was arrested for trading at night and taken away by the Kash Guard. They got him as he was returning to the house from the goat pens and would not even permit him to bid good-bye to Mother. Juana and I were eating supper in our own house about three hundred yards away and never knew anything about it until Mother came running over to tell us. She said that it was all done so quickly that they had Father and were gone before she could run from the house to where they arrested him. They had a spare horse and hustled him onto it—then they galloped away toward the lake front. It seems strange that neither Juana nor I heard the hoof beats of the horses; but we did not.

I went immediately to Pthav and demanded to know why Father had been arrested; but he professed ignorance of the whole affair. I had ridden to his place on Red Lightning and from there I started to the Kash Guard barracks where the military prison is. It is contrary to law to approach the barracks after sunset without permission, so I left Red Lightning in the shadow of some ruins a hundred yards away and started on foot toward that part of the post where I knew the prison to be located. The latter consists of a high stockade around the inside of which are rude shelters upon the roofs of which armed guards patrol. The center of the rectangle is an open court where the prisoners exercise, cook their food, and wash their clothing—if they care to. There are seldom more than fifty confined here at a time as it is only a detention camp where they hold those who are awaiting trial and those who have been sentenced to the mines. The latter are usually taken away when there are from twenty-five to forty of them.

After I reached the stockade I was at a loss to communicate with my father, since any noise I might make would doubtless attract the attention of the guard; but finally, through a crack between two boards, I attracted the attention of a prisoner. The man came

close to the stockade and I whispered to him that I wished to speak with Julian 8th. By luck I had happened upon a decent fellow, and it was not long before he had brought Father and I was talking with him, in low whispers.

He told me that he had been arrested for trading by night and that he was to be tried on the morrow. I asked him if he would like to escape—that I would find the means it he wished me to, but he said that he was innocent of the charge as he had not been off our farm at night for months and that doubtless it was a case of mistaken identity and that he would be freed in the morning.

I had my doubts; but he would not listen to escape as he argued that it would prove his guilt and then they would have him for sure.

"Where may I go," he asked, "if I escape? I might hide in the woods; but what a lifel I could never return to your mother, and so sure am I that they can prove nothing against me that I would rather stand trial than face the future as an outlaw."

I think now that he refused my offer of assistance not because he expected to be released but rather that he feared that evil might befall me were I to connive at his escape. At any rate I did nothing, since he would not let me, and went home again with a heavy heart and dismal forebodings.

Trials before the teivos were public, or at least were supposed to be, though they made it so uncomfortable for spectators that few, if any, had the temerity to attend; but under Jarth's new rule the proceedings of the military courts were secret and Father was tried before such a court.

CHAPTER VIII

I HORSEWHIP AN OFFICER

WE passed days of mental anguish—hearing nothing, knowing nothing—and then one evening a single Kash Guard rode up to Father's house. Juana and I were there with Mother. The fellow dismounted and knocked at the door—a most unusual courtesy from one of these. He entered at my bidding and stood there a moment looking at Mother. He was only a lad—a big, overgrown boy, and there was neither cruelty in his eyes nor the mark of the beast in any of his features. His mother's blood evidently predominated, and he was unquestionably not all Kalkar. Presently he spoke.

"Which is Julian 8th's woman?" he asked; but he looked at Mother as though he already guessed.

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

"I am," said Mother.

The lad shuffled his feet and caught his breath—it was like a stifled sob.

"I am sorry," he said, "that I bring you such sad news," and then we guessed that the worst had happened.

"The mines?" Mother asked him, and he nodded affirmatively.

"Ten years!" he exclaimed, as one might announce a sentence of death, for such it was. "He never had a chance," he volunteered. "It was a terrible thing. They are beastsl"

I could not but show my surprise that a Kash Guard should speak so of his own kind, and he must have seen it in my face.

"We are not all beasts," he hastened to exclaim.

I commenced to question him then and I found that he had been a sentry at the door during the trial and had heard it all.

There had been but one witness—the man who had informed on Father, and Father had been given no chance to make any defense.

I asked him who the informer was.

"I am not sure of the name," he replied; "he was a tall, stoop-shouldered man. I think I heard him called Peter."

But I had known even before I asked. I looked at Mother and saw that she was dry-eyed and that her mouth had suddenly hardened into a firmness of expression such as I had never dreamed it could assume.

"Is that all?" she asked.

"No," replied the youth, "it is not. I am instructed to notify you that you have thirty days to take another man, or vacate these premises," and then he took a step toward Mother. "I am sorry. Madam," he said. "It is very cruel; but what are we to do? It becomes worse each day. Now they are grinding down even the Kash Guard, so that there are many of us who—;" but he stopped suddenly as though realizing that he was on the point of speaking treason to strangers, and turning on his heel he quit the house and a moment later was galloping away.

I expected Mother to break down then; but she did not. She was very brave; but there was a new and terrible expression in her eyes—those eyes that had shone forth always with love. Now they were bitter, hate-filled eyes. She did not weep—I wish to God she had. Instead she did that which I had never known her to do before—she laughed aloud. Upon the slightest pretext, or upon no pretext at all, she laughed. We were afraid for her.

The suggestion dropped by the Kash Guard started in my mind a train of thought of which I spoke to Mother and Juana, and after that Mother seemed more normal for a while, as though I had aroused hope, however feeble, where there had been no hope before. I pointed out that if the Kash Guard was dissatisfied, the

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

time was ripe for revolution, for if we could get only a part of them to join us there would surely be enough of us to overthrow those who remained loyal to The Flag. Then we would liberate all prisoners and set up a republic of our own such as the ancients had had.

It took time to develop my plan. I talked with everyone I could trust and found them all willing to join me when we had enough. In the meantime, I cared for my own place and Father's as well—I was very busy and time flew rapidly.

About a month after Father was taken away, I came home one day with Juana who had accompanied me up river in search of a goat that had strayed. We had found its carcass, or rather its bones, where the hellhounds had left them. Mother was not at our house, where she now spent most of her time, so I went over to Father's to get her. As I approached the door I heard sounds of an altercation and scuffling that made me cover the few remaining yards at a rapid run.

Without waiting to knock, as Mother had taught me always to do, I burst into the living room to discover Mother in the clutches of Peter Johansen. She was trying to fight him off; but he was forcing her slowly toward her bedroom, for he was a large and powerful man. He heard me just as I leaped for him and turning, grappled with me. He tried to hold me off with one hand then while he drew his knife; but I struck him in the face with one fist and knocked him from me, way across the room. He was up again in an instant, bleeding from nose and mouth, and back at me with his knife in his hand, slashing furiously. Again I struck him and knocked him down and when he arose and came again I seized his knife-hand and tore the weapon from him. He had no slightest chance against me, and he saw it soon, for he commenced to back away and beg for mercy.

"Kill him, Julian," said Mother; "kill the murderer of your father."

I did not need her appeal to influence me, for the moment that I had seen Peter there I knew my long awaited time had come to kill him. He commenced to cry then—great tears ran down his cheeks and he bolted for the door and tried to escape. It was my pleasure to play with him as a cat plays with a mouse.

I kept him from the door, seizing him and hurling him bodily across the room, and then I let him reach the window, through which he tried to crawl—and I permitted him to get so far that he thought he was about to escape and then I seized him again and dragged him back to the floor and lifting him to his feet I made him fight.

I struck him lightly in the face many times and then I laid him on

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

his back across the table and kneeling on his chest I spoke to him, softly.

"You had my friend, old Samuels, murdered and my father, too, and now you come to befoul my mother. What did you expect, swine, but this? Have you no intelligence? You must have known that I would kill you—speak!"

"They said that they would get you today," he whimpered. "They lied to me. They went back on me. They told me that you would be in the pen at the barracks before noon. Damn them, they lied to mel"

So that was how it was, eh? And the lucky circumstance of the strayed goat had saved me to avenge my father and succor my mother; but they would come yet. I must hurry or they might come before I was through, and so I took his head between my hands and bent his neck far back over the edge of the table until I heard his spine part—and that was the end of the vilest traitor who ever lived—one who professed friendship openly and secretly conspired to ruin us. In broad daylight I carried his body to the river and threw it in. I was past caring what they knew. They were coming for me and they would have their way with me whether they had any pretext or not; but they would have to pay a price for me, that I determined, and I got my knife and strapped it in its scabbard about my waist beneath my shirt; but they did not come—they had lied to Peter just as they lie to everyone.

The next day was market day and tax day, so I went to market with the necessary goats and produce to make my trades and pay my taxes. As Soor passed around the market place making his collections, or rather his levies, for we had to deliver the stuff to his place ourselves, I saw from the excited conversation of those in his wake that he was spreading alarm and consternation among the people of the commune.

I wondered what it might all be about, nor had I long to wait to discover, for he soon reached me. He could neither read nor write; but he had a form furnished by the government upon which were numbers that the agents were taught how to read and which stood for various classes of produce, live-stock and manufactures. In columns beneath these numbers he made marks during the month for the amounts of my trades in each item—it was all crude, of course, and inaccurate; but as they always overcharged us and then added something to make up for any errors they might have made to our credit, the government was satisfied, even if we were not.

Being able to read and write, as well as to figure, I always knew to a dot just what was due from me in tax and I always had an

argument with Soor, from which Government emerged victorious every time.

This month I should have owed him one goat, but he demanded three.

"How is that?" I asked.

"Under the old rate you owed me the equivalent of a goat and a half; but since the tax had been doubled under the new law you owe me three goats." Then it was I knew the cause of the excitement in other parts of the market place.

"How do you expect us to live if you take everything from us?" I asked.

"The government does not care whether you live or not," he replied, "as long as you pay taxes while you do live."

"I will pay the three goats," I said, "because I have to; but next market day I will bring you a present of the hardest cheese I can find."

He did not say anything, for he was afraid of me unless he was surrounded by Kash Guards; but he looked ugly.

The commander of the Kash Guard company must have noticed the crowd around us, for he rode straight toward me, alone. I would not give him the satisfaction of thinking that I feared him and so I stood there waiting.

The officer reined in before me.

"What are you doing here?" he barked.

"Minding my own business, as you had better do," I replied.

"You swine are becoming insufferable," he cried. "Get to your pen, where you belong—I will stand for no mobs and no insolence."

I just stood there looking at him; but there was murder in my heart. He loosened the bull-hide whip that hung at the pommel of his saddle.

"You have to be driven, do you?" He was livid with sudden anger and his voice almost a scream. Then he struck at me—a vicious blow—with the heavy whip—struck at my face. I dodged the lash and seized it, wrenching it from his puny grasp and then I caught his bridle and though his horse plunged and fought, I lashed the rider with all my strength a dozen times, before he tumbled from the saddle to the trampled earth of the market place.

Then his men were upon me and I went down from a blow on the head. They bound my hands while I was unconscious and then hustled me roughly into a saddle. I was half dazed during the awful ride that ensued—we rode to the military prison at the barracks and all the way that fiend of a captain rode beside me and lashed me with his bull-hide whip.

CHAPTER IX

REVOLUTION

THEN they threw me into the pen where the prisoners were kept, and after they had left I was surrounded by the other unfortunates incarcerated there. When they learned what I had done they shook their heads and sighed. It would be all over with me in the morning, they said—nothing less than The Butcher for such an offense as mine.

I lay upon the hard ground, bruised and sore, thinking not of my future but of what was to befall Juana and Mother if I too were taken from them, and the thought gave me new strength and made me forget my hurts, for my mind was busy with plans, mostly impossible plans, for escape—and vengeance. Vengeance was often uppermost in my mind.

Above my head at intervals, I heard the pacing of the sentry upon the roof. I could tell, of course, each time that he passed and the direction in which he was going. It required about five minutes for him to pass above me, reach the end of his post and return—that was when he went west. Going east he took but a trifle over two minutes. Therefore, when he passed me going west his back was toward me for about two and a half minutes;
but when he went east it was only for about a minute that his face was turned from the spot where I lay.
Of course he could not see me while I lay beneath the shed;
but my plan—the one I finally decided upon—did not include remaining in the shed. I had evolved several subtle schemes for escape; but finally cast them all aside and chose, instead, the boldest that occurred to me. I knew that at best the chances were small that I could succeed in any plan and therefore the boldest seemed as likely as any other and it at least had the advantage of speedy results—I would be free or I would be dead in a few brief moments after I essayed it.

I waited, therefore, until the other prisoners had quieted down and comparative silence in the direction of the barracks and the parade assured me that there were few abroad. The sentry came and went and came again upon his monotonous round. Now he was coming toward me from the east and I was ready, standing just outside the shed beneath the low eaves which I could reach by jumping. I heard him pass and gave him a full minute to gain the distance I thought necessary to drown the sounds of my attempt from his ears and then I leaped for the eaves, caught with my fingers and drew myself quickly to the roof.

I thought that I did it very quietly, but the fellow must have had the ears of a hellhound, for no more had I drawn my feet beneath

me for the quick run across the roof than a challenge rang out from the direction of the sentry and almost simultaneously the report of a rifle.

Instantly all was pandemonium. Guards ran, shouting, from all directions, lights flashed in the barracks, rifles spoke from either side of me and from behind me, while from below rose the dismal howlings of the prisoners. It seemed then that a hundred men had known of my plan and been lying in wait for me;
but I was launched upon it and even though I had regretted it, there was nothing to do but carry it through to whatever was its allotted end.

It seemed a miracle that none of the bullets struck me; but of course, it was dark and I was moving rapidly. It takes seconds to tell about it, but it required less than a second for me to dash across the roof and leap to the open ground beyond the prison pen. I saw lights moving west of me, and so I ran east toward the lake and presently the firing ceased as they lost sight of me, though I could hear sounds of pursuit. Nevertheless, I felt that I had succeeded and was congratulating myself upon the ease with which I had accomplished the seemingly impossible when there suddenly rose before me out of the black night the figure of a huge soldier pointing a rifle point blank at me. He issued no challenge nor asked any question—just pulled the trigger. I could hear the hammer strike the firing pin, but there was no explosion. I did not know what the reason was, nor did I ever know. All that was apparent was that the rifle missed fire and then he brought his bayonet into play while I was springing toward him.

Foolish man! But then he did not know that it was Julian 9th he faced. Pitifully, futilely he thrust at me and with one hand I seized the rifle and tore it from his grasp. In the same movement I swung it behind me and above my head, bringing it down with all the strength of one arm upon his thick skull. Like a felled ox he tumbled to his knees and then sprawled forward upon his face—his head crushed to a pulp. He never knew how he died.

Behind me I heard them coming closer and they must have seen me, for they opened fire again and I heard the beat of horses' hoofs upon my right and left. They were surrounding me upon three sides and upon the fourth was the great lake. A moment later I was standing upon the edge of the ancient breakwater while behind me rose the triumphant cries of my pursuers. They had seen me and they knew that I was theirs.

At least, they thought they knew so. I did not wait for them to come closer; but raising my hands above me I dove head foremost into the cool waters of the lake, and swimming rapidly beneath the

surface I kept close in the shadows and headed north. I had spent much of my summer life in the water of the river so that I was as much at home in that liquid element as in air; but this of course, the Kash Guard did not know, for even had they known that Julian 9th could swim they could not at that time have known which prisoner it was who had escaped and so I think they must have thought what I wanted them to think—that I had chosen self-drowning to recapture.

However I was sure they would search the shore in both directions and so I kept to the water after I came to the surface and when I was sure that no one was directly above me I swam farther out until I felt there was little danger of being seen from shore, for it was a dark night. And thus I swam on until I thought I was opposite the mouth of the river, when I turned toward the west, searching for it. Luck was with me. I swam directly into it and a short distance up the sluggish stream before I knew that I was out of the lake; but even then I did not take to the shore, preferring to pass the heart of the ancient city before trusting myself to land.

At last I came out upon the north bank of the river, which is farthest from the Kash Guard barracks and made my way as swiftly as possible up stream in the direction of my home. Here, hours later, I found an anxious Juana awaiting me, for already she had heard what had transpired in the market place. I had made my plans and had soon explained them to Juana and Mother. There was nothing for them but to acquiesce, as only death could be our lot if we remained in our homes another day. I was astonished even, that they had not already fallen upon Juana and Mother. As it was, they might come any minute-there was no time to lose.

Hastily wrapping up a few belongings I took The Flag from its hiding place above the mantel and tucked it in my shirt, then we were ready. Going to the pens we caught up Red Lightning and the two mares and three of my best milk goats. These latter we tied, and after Juana and Mother had mounted the mares I laid one goat in front of each across a mare's withers and the third before myself upon Red Lightning, who did not relish the strange burden and gave me considerable trouble at first.

We rode out up-river, leaving the pens open that the goats might scatter and posibly cover our trail until we could turn off the dusty path beyond Jim's house. We dared not stop to bid Jim and Mollie good-bye, lest we be apprehended there by our enemies and bring trouble to our good friends. It was a sad occasion for poor Mother, leaving thus her home and those dear neighbors who had been as close to her as her own people;
but she was as brave as Juana, nor once did either of them attempt

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

to dissuade me from the wild scheme I had outlined to them. Instead they encouraged me and Juana laid her hand upon my arm as I rode beside her, saying: "I would rather that you died thus than that we lived on as downtrodden serfs, without happiness and without hope."

"I shall not die," I said, "until my work is done at least, and then if die I must, I shall be content to know that I leave a happier country for my fellow men to live in."

"Amen!" whispered Juana.

That night I hid them in the ruins of the old church which we found had been partially burned by the Kalkars. For a moment I held them in my arms—my mother and my wife—and then I left them to ride toward the southwest and the coal mines. The mines lie about fifty miles away—those to which our people are sent—and west of south, according to what I had heard. I had never been to them; but I knew that I must find the bed of an ancient canal and follow it through the district of Joliet and between fifteen and twenty miles beyond, where I must turn south, and after passing a large lake, I would presently come to the mines. I rode the balance of the night and into the morning until I commenced to see people astir in the thinly populated country through which I passed. Then I hid in a wood through which a stream wound and here found pasture for Red Lightning and rest for myself. I had brought no food, leaving what little bread and cheese we had brought from the house for Mother and Juana. I did not expect to be gone over a week and I knew that with goat's milk and what they had oft hand in addition to what they could find growing wild, there would be no danger of starvation before I returned—after which we expected . to live in peace and plenty for the rest of our days.

My journey was less eventful than I had anticipated. I passed through a few ruined villages and towns of greater or less antiquity, the largest of which was ancient Joliet, which was abandoned during the plague of fifty years ago, the teivos headquarters and station being removed directly west a few miles to the banks of a little river. Much of the territory I traversed was covered with thick woods, though here and there were the remnants of clearings that must once have been farms which were not yet entirely reclaimed by nature. Now and again I passed those gaunt and lonely towers in which the ancients stored the winter feed for their stock. Those that have endured were of concrete, and some showed but little the ravages of time, other than the dense vines that often covered them from base to capital, while several were in the midst of thick forests with old trees almost entwining them, so quickly does nature reclaim her own when man has been displaced.

After I passed Joliet I had to make inquiries, and this I did

boldly of the few men I saw laboring in the tiny fields scattered along my way. They were poor clods, these descendants of ancient America's rich and powerful farming class—those people of olden times whose selfishness had sought to throw the burden of taxation upon the city dwellers where the ignorant foreign classes were most numerous and had thus added their bit to fomenting the discontent that had worked the downfall of a glorious nation. They themselves suffered much before they died, but nothing by comparison with the humiliation and degradation of their descendants—an illiterate, degraded, starving race.

Early in the second morning I came within sight of the stockade about the mines. Even at a distance I could see that it was a weak, dilapidated thing and that the sentries pacing along its top were all that held the prisoners within. As a matter of fact, many escaped; but they were soon hunted down and killed as the farmers in the neighborhood always informed on them, since the commandant at the prison had conceived the fiendish plan of slaying one farmer for every prisoner who escaped and was not recaught.

I hid until night and then cautiously I approached the stockade, leaving Red Lightning securely tied in the woods. It was no trick to reach the stockade, so thoroughly was I hidden by the rank vegetation growing upon the outside. From a place of concealment I watched the sentry, a big fellow, but apparently a dull clod who walked with his chin upon his breast and with the appearance of being half asleep.

The stockade was not high and the whole construction was similar to that of the prison pen at Chicago, evidently having been designed by the same commandant in years gone by. I could hear the prisoners conversing in the shed beyond the wall and presently, when one came near to where I listened, I tried to attract his attention by making a hissing sound.

After what seemed a long time to me, he heard me; but even then it was some time before he appeared to grasp the idea that someone was trying to attract his attention. When he did he moved closer and tried to peer through one of the cracks; but as it was dark outside he could see nothing.

"Are you a Yank?" I asked. "If you are, I am a friend."

"I am a Yank," he replied. "Did you expect to find a Kalkar working in the mines?"

"Do you know a prisoner called Julian 8th?" I inquired.

He seemed to be thinking for a moment and then he said:

"I seem to have heard the name. What do you want of him?"

"I want to speak to him—I am his son."

"Waiti" he whispered. "I think that I heard a man speak that name today. I will find out—he is near by."

I waited for perhaps ten minutes when I heard someone approaching from the inside and presently a voice asked if I was still there.

"Yes," I said; "is that you. Father?" for I thought that the tones were his.

"Julian, my soni" came to me almost as a sob. "What are you doing here?"

Briefly I told him and then of my plan. "Have the convicts the courage to attempt it?" I asked in conclusion.

"I do not know," he said, and I could not but note the tone of utter hopelessness in his voice. "They would wish to; but here our spirits and our bodies both are broken. I do not know how many would have the courage to attempt it. Wait and I will talk with some of them—all are loyal; but just weak from overwork, starvation and abuse."

I waited for the better part of an hour before he returned. "Some will help," he said, "from the first, and others if we are successful. Do you think it worth the risk—they will kill you if you fail—they will kill us all."

"And what is death to that which you are suffering?" I asked.

"I know," he said; "but the worm impaled upon the hook still struggles and hopes for life. Turn back, my son, we can do nothing against them."

"I shall not turn back," I whispered. "I shall not turn back."

"I will help you; but I cannot speak for the others."

We had spoken only when the sentry had been at a distance, falling into silence each time he approached the point where we stood. In the intervals of silence I could hear the growing restlessness of the prisoners and I guessed that what I had said to the first man was being passed around from mouth to mouth within until already the whole adjacent shed was seething with something akin to excitement. I wondered if it would arouse their spirit sufficiently to carry them through the next ten minutes. If it did, success was assured.

Father had told me all that I wanted to know—the location of the guard house and the barracks and the number of Kash Guard posted here—only fifty men to guard five thousandl How much more eloquently than words did this fact bespeak the humiliation of the American people and the utter contempt in which our scurvy masters held us—fifty men to guard five thousand!

And then I started putting my plan into execution—a mad plan which had only its madness to recommend it. The sentry approached and came opposite where I stood, and I leaped for the eaves as I had leaped for the eaves of the prison pen at Chicago, only this time I leaped from the outside where the eaves are closer

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

to the ground and so the task was easier. I leaped for them and caught them, and then I scrambled up behind the sentry and before his dull wits told him that there was someone behind him I was upon his back and the same fingers that threw a mad bull closed upon his wind pipe. The struggle was brief-he died quickly and I lowered him to the roof. Then I took his uniform from him and donned it, with his ammunition belt, and I took his bayonetted rifle and started out upon his post, walking with slow tread and with my chin upon my breast as he had walked.

At the end of my post I waited for the sentry I saw coming upon the next and when he was close to me I turned back and he turned back away from me and then I wheeled and struck him an awful blow upon the head with my rifle. He died more quickly than the other—instantly, I should say.

I took his rifle and ammunition from him and lowered them inside the pen to waiting hands, and then I went on to the next sentry and the next, until I had slain five more and passed their rifles to the prisoners below and while I was doing this, five prisoners who had volunteered to Father climbed to the roof of the shed and stripped the dead men of their uniforms and donned them.

It was all done quietly and in the black night none might see what was going on fifty feet away. I had to stop when I came near to the guard house. There I turned back and presently slid into the pen with my accomplices who had been going among the other prisoners with Father, arousing them to mutiny. Now were most of them ready to follow me, for so far my plan had proven successful. With equal quietness we overcame the men at the guard house and then moved on in a silent body toward the barracks.

So sudden and so unexpected was our attack that we met with little resistance and we were almost five thousand to forty now. We swarmed in upon them like wild bees upon a foe and we shot them and bayonetted them until none remained alive. Not one escaped. And now we were flushed with success so that the most spiritless became a veritable lion for courage.

We who had taken the uniforms of the Kash Guard discarded them for our own garb as we had no mind to go abroad in the hated livery of our oppressors. That very night we saddled their horses with the fifty saddles that were there and fifty men rode the balance of the horses bareback—that made one hundred mounted men and the others were to follow on foot—on to Chicago. On to Chicago, was our first slogan.

We traveled cautiously, though I had difficulty in making them do so, so intoxicated were they with their first success. I wanted to

save the horses and also I wanted to get as many men into Chicago as possible, so we let the weakest ride, though I had a time of it getting Red Lightning to permit another on his sleek back.

Some fell out upon the way, from exhaustion or from fear, for the nearer Chicago we approached the more their courage ebbed. The very thought of the feared Kalkars and their Kash Guards took the marrow from the hearts of many. I do not know that one may blame them, for the spirit of man cati endure only so much and when it is broken only a miracle can mend it in the same generation.

We reached the ruined church a week from the day I left Mother andJuana there and we reached it with less than two thousand men, so rapid had been the desertions in the last few miles before we entered the district.

Father and I could scarcely wait to see our loved ones and so we rode on ahead to greet them, and inside the church we found three dead goats and a dying woman—my mother with a knife protruding from her breast. She was still conscious when we entered and I saw a great light of happiness in her eyes as they fell upon Father and upon me. I looked around for Juana and my heart stood still, fearing that I would not find her—and fearing that I would.

Mother could still speak, and as we leaned over her as Father held her in his arms she breathed a faint story of what had befallen them. They had lived in peace until that very day when the Kash Guard had stumbled upon them—a large detachment under Or-tis, himself. They had seized them to take them away; but Mother had had a knife hidden in her clothing and had utilized it, as we saw, rather than suffer the fate she knew awaited them. That was all, except that Juana had had no knife and Or-tis had carried her off.

I saw Mother die then, in Father's arms, and I helped him bury her after our men came and we had shown them what the beasts had done, though they knew well enough and had suffered themselves enough to know what was to be expected of the swine.

CHAPTER X

THE BUTCHER

WE went on then. Father and I filled with grief and bitterness and hatred even greater than we had known before. We marched toward the market place of our district, and on the way we stopped at Jim's and he joined us. Mollie wept when she heard what had

befallen Mother and Juana, but presently she controlled herself and urged us on and Jim with us, though Jim needed no urging. She kissed him good-bye with tears and pride mingled in her eyes, and all he said was: "Good-bye, girl, keep your knife with you always."

And so we rode away with Mollie's "May the Saints be with you" in our ears. Once again we stopped at our abandoned goat pens, and there we dug up the rifle, belt and ammunition of the soldier Father had slain years before. These we gave to Jim.

Before we reached the market place our force commenced to dwindle again—most of them could not brave the terrors of the Kash Guard upon which they had been fed in whispered story and in actual experience since infancy. I do not say that these men were cowards—I do not believe that they were cowards, and yet they acted like cowards. It may be that a lifetime of training had taught them so thoroughly to flee the Kash Guard that now no amount of urging could make them face it—the terror had become instinctive as is man's natural revulsion for snakes. They could not face the Kash Guard any more than some men can touch a rattler, even though it may be dead.

It was market day and the place was crowded. I had divided my force so that we marched in from two directions in wide fronts, about five hundred men in each party, and surrounded the market place. As there were only a few men from our district among us I had given orders that there was to be no killing other than that of Kash Guards until we who knew the population could pick out the right men.

When the nearest people first saw us they did not know what to make of it, so complete was the surprise. Never in their lives had they seen men of their own class armed and there were a hundred of us mounted. Across the plaza a handful of Kash Guard were lolling in front of Hoffmeyer's office. They saw my party first, as the other was coming up from behind them, and they mounted and came toward us. At the same moment 1 drew The Flag from my breast and waving it above my head, urged Red Lightning forward, shouting, as I rode: "Death to the Kash Guard! Death to the Kalkars!"

And then, of a sudden, the Kash Guard seemed to realize that they were confronted by an actual force of armed men and their true color became apparent—all yellow. They turned to flee, only to see another force behind them. The people had now caught the idea and the spirit of our purpose and they flocked around us, shouting, screaming, laughing, crying. "Death to the Kash Guard!" "Death to the Kalkars!" “The Flag!" I heard more than once, and "Old Glory!" from some who, like myself, had not been permitted to forget. A dozen men rushed to my side, and grasping

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

the streaming banner pressed it to their lips while tears coursed down their cheeks. "The Flag!, The Flag!" they cried. "The Flag of our fathers!"

It was then, before a shot had been fired, that one of the Kash Guard rode toward me with a white cloth above his head.

I recognized him immediately as the youth who had brought the cruel order to Mother and who had shown sorrow for the acts of his superiors.

"Do not kill us," he said, "and we will join with you. Many of the Kash Guard at the barracks will join, too."

And so the dozen soldiers in the market place joined us, and a woman ran from her house carrying the head of a man stuck upon a short pole and she screamed forth her hatred against the Kalkars—the hatred that was the common bond between us all. As she came closer I saw that it was Pthav's woman and the head upon the short pole was the head of Pthav. That was the beginning—that was the little spark that was needed. Like maniacs, laughing horribly, the people charged the houses of the Kalkars and dragged them forth to death.

Above the shrieking and the groans and the din could be heard shouts for The Flag and the names of loved ones who were being avenged. More than once I heard the name of Samuels the Jew—never was a man more thoroughly avenged than he that day.

Dennis Corrigan was with us, freed from the mines, and Betty Worth, his woman, found him there, his arms red to the elbows with the blood of our oppressors. She had never thought to see him alive, and when she heard his story, and of how they had escaped she ran to me and nearly pulled me from Red Lightning's back, trying to hug and kiss me.

It was she who started the people shouting for me until a mad, swirling mob of joy-crazed people surrounded me. I tried to quiet them, for I knew that this was no way in which to forward our cause and finally I succeeded in winning a partial silence and then I told them that this madness must cease, that we had not yet succeeded, that we had won only a single small district and that we must go forward quietly and in accordance with a sensible plan if we were to be victorious.

"Remember," I admonished them, "that there are still thousands of armed men in the city and that we must overthrow them all, and then there are other thousands that The Twenty-four will throw in upon us, for they will not surrender this territory until they are hopelessly defeated from here to Washington—and that will require months and maybe years."

They quieted down a little then, and we formed plans for marching immediately upon the barracks that we might take the Kash Guard by surprise. It was about this time that Father found

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

Soor and killed him.

"I told you," said Father, just before he ran a bayonet through the tax collector, "that some day I would have my little joke, and this is the day."

Then a man dragged Hoffmeyer from some hiding place and the people literally tore him to pieces and that started the pandemonium all over again. There were cries of "On to the barracks!" and "Kill the Kash Guardi" followed by a concerted movement toward the lake front. On the way our numbers were increased by volunteers from every house—either fighting men and women from the houses of our class or bloody heads from the houses of the Kalkars, for we carried them all with us, waving above us upon the ends of poles, and at the head of all I rode with Old Glory, now waving from a tall staff.

I tried to maintain some semblance of order; but it was impossible and so we streamed along, screaming and killing, laughing and crying, each as the mood claimed him. The women seemed the maddest, possibly because they had suffered most, and Pthav*s woman led them. I saw others there with one hand clutching a suckling baby to a bare breast while the other held aloft the dripping head of a Kalkar, an informer, or a spy. One could not blame them who knew the lives of terror and hopelessness they had led—they and their mothers before them.

We had just crossed the new bridge over the river into the heart of the great, ruined city when the Kash Guard fell upon us from ambush with their full strength. They were poorly disciplined; but they were armed, while we were not disciplined at all nor scarcely armed. We were nothing but an angry mob into which they poured volley after volley at close range. Men, women and babies went down and many turned and fled; but there were others who rushed forward and grappled hand to hand with the Kash Guard, tearing their rifles from them. We who were mounted rode among them. I could not carry The Flag and fight, so I took it from the staff and replaced it inside my shirt and then I clubbed my rifle and guiding Red Lightning with my knees I drove into them.

God of our Fathers, but it was a pretty fight. If I had known that I was to die the next minute I would have died gladly for the joy I had in those few minutes. Down they went before me, to right and to left, reeling from their saddles with crushed skulls and broken bodies, for wherever I hit them made no difference in the result—they died if they came within reach of my rifle, which was soon only a bent and twisted tube of bloody metal.

And so I rode completely through them with a handful of men behind me. We turned then to ride back over the crumbling ruins that were in this spot only mounds of debris, and from the elevation of one of these hillocks of the dead past, I saw the battle

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

down by the river and a great lump came into my throat. It was all over—all but the bloody massacre. My poor mob had turned at last to flee, they were jammed and stuck upon the narrow bridge and the Kash Guard were firing volleys into that wedged mass of human flesh. Hundreds were leaping into the river only to be shot from the banks by the soldiers.

Twenty-five mounted men surrounded me—all that was left of my fighting force—and at least two thousand Kash Guards lay between us and the river. Even could we have fought our way back we could have done nothing to save the day or our own people. We were doomed to die; but we decided to inflict more punishment before we died.

I had in mind Juana in the clutches of Or-tis—not once had the frightful thought left my consciousness—and so I told them that I would ride to headquarters and search for her and they said that they would ride with me and that we would slay whom we could before the soldiers returned.

Our dream had vanished, our hopes were dead. In silence we rode through the streets toward the barracks. The Kash Guard had not come over to our side as we had hoped—possibly they would have come had we had some measure of success in the city; but there could be no success against armed troops for an undisciplined mob of men, women and children.

I realized too late that we had not planned sufficiently, yet we might have won had not someone escaped and ridden ahead to notify the Kash Guard. Could we have taken them by surprise in the barracks the outcome might have been what it had been in the market place through which we had passed. I had realized our weakness and the fact that if we took time to plan and arrange, some spy or informer would have divulged all to the authorities long before we could have put our plans into execution. Really, there had been no other way than to trust to a surprise attack and the impetuosity of our first blow.

I looked about among my followers as we rode along. Jim was there, but not Father—1 never saw him again. He probably fell in the battle at the new bridge. Orrin Colby, blacksmith and preacher, rode at my side covered with blood—his own and Kash Guard. Dennis Corrigan was there, too.

We rode right into the barrack yard, for with their lack of discipline and military efficiency they had sent their whole force against us with the exception of a few men who remained to guard the prisoners and a handful at headquarters building. The latter we overcame with scarce a struggle and from one whom I took prisoner I learned where the sleeping quarters of Or-tis were located.

Telling my men that our work was done I ordered them to scatter and escape as best they might; but they said that they would remain with me. I told them that the business I was on was such that I must handle it alone and asked them to go and free the prisoners while I searched for Juana. They said that they would wait for me outside and so we parted.

Or-tis' quarters were on the second floor of the building in the east wing and I had no difficulty in finding them. As I approached the door I heard the sound of voices raised in anger within and of rapid movement as though someone was running hither and thither across the floor. I recognized Or-tis' voice-he was swearing foully, and then I heard a woman's scream and I knew that it was Juana.

I tried the door and found it locked. It was a massive door, such as the ancients built in their great public buildings, such as this had originally been, and I doubted my ability to force it. I was mad with apprehension and lust for revenge, and if maniacs gain tenfold in strength when the madness is upon them, I must have been a maniac that moment, for when, after stepping back a few feet, I hurled myself against the door the shot bolt tore through the splintering frame and the barrier swung in upon its hinges with a loud bang.

Before me, in the center of the room, stood Or-tis with Juana in his clutches. He had her partially upon a table and with one hairy hand he was choking her. He looked up at the noise of my sudden entry, and when he saw me he went white and dropped Juana, at the same time whipping a pistol from its holster at his side. Juana saw me too, and springing for his arm dragged it down as he pulled the trigger, so that the bullet went harmlessly into the floor.

Before he could shake her off I was upon him and had wrenched the weapon from his grasp. I held him in one hand as one might a little child—he was utterly helpless in my grip—and I asked Juana if he had wronged her.

"Not yet," she said, "he just came in after sending the Kash Guard away. Something has happened. There is going to be a battle; but he sneaked back to the safety of his quarters," and then she seemed to notice for the first time that I was covered with blood. "There has been a battle!" she cried, "and you have been in it."

I told her that I had and that I would tell her about it after I had finished Or-tis. He commenced to plead and then to whimper. He promised me freedom and immunity from punishment and persecution if I would let him live. He promised never to bother Juana again and to give us his protection and assistance. He would have promised me the Sun and the Moon and all the little stars had he thought I wished them; but I wished only one thing just then

and I told him so—to see him die.

"Had you wronged her," I said, "you would have died a slow and terrible death; but I came in time to save her and so you are saved that suffering."

When he realized that nothing could save him he began to weep and his knees shook so that he could not stand, and I had to hold him from the floor with one hand and with my other clenched I dealt him a single terrific blow between the eyes— a blow that broke his neck and crushed his skull—then I diopped him to the floor and took Juana in my arms.

Quickly, as we walked toward the entrance of the building, I told her of all that had transpired since we parted and that now she would be left alone in the world for awhile, until I could join her. I told her where to go and await me in a forgotten spot I had discovered upon the banks of the old canal on my journey to the mines. She cried and clung to me, begging to remain with me; but I knew it could not be, for already I could hear fighting in the yard below. We would be fortunate indeed if one of us escaped. At last she promised on condition that I would join her immediately, which, of course, I had intended doing as soon as I had the chance.

Red Lightning stood where I had left him before the door. A company of Kash Guard, evidently returning from the battle, were engaged with my little band that was slowly falling back toward the headquarters building. There was no time to be lost if Juana was to escape. I lifted her to Red Lightning's back from where she stooped and threw her dear arms about my neck, covering my lips with kisses.

"Come back to me soon," she begged, "I need you so—and it will not be long before there will be another to need you too."

I pressed her close to my breast. "And if I do not come back," I said, take this and give it to my son to guard as his fathers before him have," and I placed The Flag in her hands.

The bullets were singing around us and I made her go, watching her as the noble horse raced swiftly across the parade and disappeared among the ruins to the west. Then I turned to the fighting to find but ten men left to me. Orrin Colby was dead and Dennis Corrigan. Jim was left and nine others. We fought as best we could; but we were cornered now, for other guards were streaming onto the parade from other directions and our ammunition was expended.

They rushed us then—twenty to one—and though we did the best we could, they overwhelmed us. Lucky Jim was killed instantly; but I was only stunned by a blow upon the head.

That night they tried me before a court martial and tortured me in an effort to make me divulge the names of my accomplices;

ABBYY PDF Transformer 2.0 Click here to buy www.ABBYY.com

but there were none left alive that I knew of, even had I wished to betray them. As it was, I just refused to speak. I never spoke again after bidding Juana good-bye, other than the few words of encouragement that passed between those of us who remained fighting to the last.

Early the next morning I was led forth to The Butcher.

I recall every detail up to the moment the knife touched my throat—there was a slight stinging sensation followed instantly by—oblivion.

It was broad daylight when he finished—so quickly had the night sped—and I could see by the light from the east window of the room where we sat that his face looked drawn and pinched and that even then he was suffering the sorrows and disappointments of the bitter, hopeless life he had just described. I rose to retire. "That is all?" I asked. "Yes," he replied, "that is all of that incarnation." "But you recall another?" I insisted. He only smiled as I was closing the door.