The San Francisco Sunday Call

WOMEN'S HOUSEHOLD GIRLS'

PAGE OF FICTION | TWO PAGES OF RECIPES AND IDEAS | PAGE FOR MISSES

BLUE BLAZES

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AFTER Senator McBain had made his famous speech on the policy of the administration in Tanong he was the recipient of many congratulatory letters.

From Omega, which had rejoiced in the honor of his patronage for 35 or 40 years, and was the chief city of the state which returned him, came a blare of praise. In the Second Methodist Episcopal community, of which he was a member, feelings were stirred to such an extent that it was proposed to meet him with a brass band at the depot.

An austere, solid man of business was Angus McBain, with dour Scots blood in him, as you may tell from his name. He was born east, but had spent the best part of his life in the middle west. McBain's stores, as every one knows, may be found in 10 states and they pushed Angus McBain into politics.

A hard headed man, McBain, with good judgment in business and a resolution to back it up. He knew his own mind and stuck to it, never deviating from a purpose until it was achieved. He worried his opponents out of their resistance; he was a "stone-waller"; he was Fabius Maximus Cunctator. He never forgot an idea, and he had infinite patience in carrying it out. He was a perpetual source of annoyance to his own party, as well as to the other. He asked inconvenient questions; he took up inconvenient attitudes; he espoused inconvenient causes. That of Tanong was one of these. No one wanted to hear of Tanong. Every one was sick of Tanong.

The rebellion, or war, in progress there (call it what you will according to your color) had exasperated the people and worn out the endurance of even the newspapers. Reports from Tanong did not receive any special prominence; they were not displayed; they were tucked away in corners at the foot of columns, in type that didn't matter. Tanong had bored the American public. They were not getting anything for their money out of it, and anyway it was a long way off. There had been a time when scareheads had been devoted to the proceedings of Farao, but that was when his insurrection was in its prime, and no one knew what would happen. Every one knew what was happening now, and would go on happening—skirmishes and encounters and sallies of a dull, unexciting nature, surprises on both sides, for an indefinite time, and then perhaps the end. The end would probably be honored with a little larger type when it came. Private letters reaching the states gave indications that even the Thirty-eighth infantry was tired of chasing Blue Blazes, as Farao was very improperly styled.

This was the state of affairs when Senator McBain moved. He had not had his hands on a first class grievance for months, and here was one, not quite ready made, but of good promise. His attention was first attracted to Tanong, of which he had only vaguely heard before, by a letter from Hongkong written by a member of the Second Methodist Episcopal church who was visiting China for business purposes. This man, one Colborn, a dyspeptic, respected and thoroughly orthodox member of the church, had made inquiries in Hongkong and elsewhere, and he had heard sad reports of affairs in Tanong. He asked the Second Methodist Episcopals at Omega if they were aware of what was going on in the island in the name of civilization and with the sanction of the United States. This drew the attention of Senator McBain. He had always understood that the United States of America, under the proud stars and stripes, stood for freedom, for responsible government, for democracy, for the new conditions of the world as against the old, time worn, effete traditions of Europe. He examined the statements in Colborn's letters, which were inspired with a genuine humanity. Some of the charges were categoric; their gravamen was derogatory to the honor of the United States. One Jongo had been taken prisoner and tortured into a confession (probably false) as to the details of a conspiracy against the foreign government. Item: three natives had been shot at a station called Ojaga, without trial, on a vague charge. Item: the women and children of a tribe under the rule of the chief, Farao, had been driven into compounds and had there died like flies. Item: Farao had been (without specific details) unjustly treated for his merely patriotic movements in respect to the island, and was naturally in rebellion and giving General Fortis trouble. Behind all, as Senator McBain clearly saw, loomed the fact that the greater principle—on which the constitution of the United States is based, namely, the right of free people to govern themselves—was being over ridden with roughshod heels. Senator McBain unlimbered and opened fire.

There was a tariff crisis on, but that was of minor importance. The senator was like a certain man who had a standing grievance against the way in which the cuisine was managed in his club. He worried the committee with complaints all the time, and on one occasion when a general meeting of members was called to consider a grave financial crisis in the affairs of the club, he attended. When the opening statement by the chairman had been made, the situation was set forth, and a certain course of action was proposed as a remedy, the meeting was invited to express its opinions.

"I should like, Mr. Chairman," said the malcontent, rising, an Irishman without a sense of humor, "to make a complaint about the way the potatoes are cooked in this club!"

Well, McBain just got up to complain about the potatoes. That is to say, he delivered a speech on the iniquities of the United States' policy in Tanong, with especial references to General Fortis, the commander of the forces in that island. It was, as the Omega Herald declared, "a weighty speech, flamed with just indignation, defying response and emulating Demosthenes and Cicero in its Philippic intensity—" Senator McBain was much pleased by this description, and had a thousand copies of the Herald distributed in suitable places—one of which was the White House. But his real reward came from his post bag in the first place and from Omega in the second.

Nice, kind, sentimental people from all over the country wrote him enthusiastically gratulatory letters; he was the prey of the autograph hunter, and smilingly signed dozens of photographs for sale at charity bazaars. This was agreeable enough, but his public reception at Omega was even more satisfactory. It was, as has beeen hinted, a brass band affair, with the Second Methodist Episcopals in force, and it included a speech from the hotel in which the senator took refuge ere his ultimate flight to his comfortable suburban house in Omega. He stood at the window surveying the thousands before him, many of them earnest church workers—more, amiable idlers in search of a "sensation." In his hand he held a newspaper. It was the moment of Senator McBain's life. He rose to that greeting and that reception.

"Is this to go on?" he shouted, brandishing the newspaper in his hand. He pointed to scareheads. Senator McBain, it seemed, had raised the Tanong question once more into the first class dignity of large type. An opportune movement in the tiresome game between General Fortis and Farao had been cabled from Allay. "Is this to go on?" shouted the senator. "Seven prisoners shot while trying to escape—a village raided and the women and children seized while their husbands and fathers were shot down. I ask in the name of the United States, in the name of Washington, in the name of Freedom, are you going to allow this to go on? What did we fight the south for? Was it for this, to butcher innocent people struggling for their righteous freedom? To throw their families into jails? We spent hundreds of millions of dollars and lost thousands of lives to put down slavery in 1862, and we are spending millions of dollars and good lives today in making slaves in Tanong. Are you going to stand it?" A negative burst in a roar from the crowd; their enthusiasm had been fired by his and answered it; and the culmination of emotion was reached in the quotation from Lowell's stanzas on Freedom, with which the senator concluded his speech.

"They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and the weak;
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth they needs must think;
They are slaves who dare not be
In the fight with two or three."

Following upon this magnificent testimonial came the action of the Methodist Episcopals in Omega. A resolution of congratulation and thanks to the senator was passed unanimously, and steps were taken to carry on the agitation. It was then that the senator made his dramatic announcement. He had made up his mind to visit Tanong and personally to investigate the conditions on the island.

Angus McBain was a shrewd man of business and he had noted the advance of Japan in the occidental markets. He had come to the conclusion that if people were going to buy flimsy Japanese goods they might as well buy them from him. It was time, he decided, to attach a Japanese department to each of his stores, and get ahead of his rivals by intelligent anticipation. A personal visit to Japan would not come amiss in this connection; and business and philanthropy could therefore march together. While in Japan he would take the opportunity of going south to those dependencies of the United States which had been troubling his conscience. In his own mind the senator thought that the United States ought to slough this caudal appendage altogether, but he would report at length on a close examination.

From Tokio he went to Hongkong with Helen, his daughter, to keep him company, and from Hongkong a tramp steamer took them to Allay, where General Fortis was already growling at the reports which he had received by his mail. There was a wise, bold man at Washington who, however, never foresaw, one must suppose, the actual course of this narrative. Leading papers had paid some attention to the reception given to Senator McBain in Omega and, as a matter of fact, reports of his speech were in the mail over which General Fortis was growling. The reports had reached Washington in due course and had caused the aforesaid wise man to ponder. He had, after an hour's consideration, which included other things, indited a long letter to the general in charge, in which he had suggested that when Senator McBain arrived he should be treated with all courtesy and kindliness, given every opportunity of obtaining information and—given rope enough.

These were the wise man's actual concluding words. They did not, however, commend themselves to General Fortis, a grandiose, conscientious and rather dull person, who had just read his newspaper and mail. He swore at his orderly and exchanged vicious confidences with his senior colonel on the strength of it.

"Sending that swine here with letters of introduction, God bless you, after——"

But the general pocketed his indignation and entertained the senator.

"You see, general," explained the senator, "I'm not picking any holes in the army or in any individual in it. It's the system, I guess, it's the general policy—I want to look around and see. I have no doubt you will be glad to be released from this exile."

General Fortis was understood to swallow the wrong way at that moment, and in the consequent explosion of coughing a reply was rendered superfluous.

"I'm not one that suffers fools gladly," bitterly complained the general to his senior colonel, but that astute officer shrugged his shoulders.

"It's wise, sir, perhaps, sometimes to answer a fool according to his folly," he quoted back.

"Give him every opportunity——" The general snorted as he repeated a sentence from his instructions. "Well, he shall have it. He shall go to Ojaga."

"There's the girl," interjected the colonel hastily.

"That can't be helped," said his superior grimly. "All good little girls should be in bed. Besides, there's Graham. Send him special instructions to keep an eye on her. He can let the old man wander where he will."

"It's a question of raids," the colonel explained later to the senator. "We're obliged to keep our forces extended over the hilly country for the protection of the peaceable folk. Otherwise the valleys would be pillaged."

McBain adjusted his glasses and surveyed him with a withering smile. As if he, McBain, had not disposed of that absurd pretense long since in several speeches! Farao was fighting for the freedom of his native land and for the enfranchisement of the very natives whom these military imagined or feigned that he would pillage.

"Of course if we could pen them in we could solve the whole problem at once," pursued the colonel. "But he is as slippery as an eel. Why, I guess he's for us about what DeWet was for the Britishers in the Boer war."

The comparison struck the senator as apt and pat. He nodded. "That's so," he said more grimly than ever. "But I never heard of the British protecting the Boers from DeWet.

The colonel shrugged his shoulders. Yes, he had better be passed on to Graham with a word of warning about the girl. Nothing would ever persuade this obstinate philanthropist except the verdict of his eyeglasses.

"We're sending you a mule," he wrote informally to Basil Graham at Ojaga. "Deal with him as you will. He wants to know. Perhaps you can help him. The chief here is tired, and I'm afraid of an explosion. Our orders are to entertain him, and so we shift him on to you. You've got the best seats in the circus. Mind the girl. She's worth it, I should gather."

The colonel, being engaged to a charming girl in Philadelphia, had no particular need of Helen McBain, but it was otherwise with Graham. When the cavalcade came down from the hills to his huts on the plateau his heart beat like a hammer and he was aware of a flush in the brown of his face. Fair haired, slender, of a splendid animation and with a child's zest in things, Helen McBain was a vision to cheer a lonely outstation. Basil Graham was in charge of the Ojaga post, first because he was a favorite of the chief's, second because it was a danger zone, and lastly because he had won a reputation for "bush" warfare. One hundred men served under him and enjoyed the miasmas of the valley. The post was central for the observation of the northern valleys, and somewhere in the broken land of the south lurked Blue Blazes, waiting an opportunity. Willie Van Hort, shaking like a reed with marsh fever as he stuttered his jests, helped him to entertain the senator and Miss McBain.

"We'll open the champagne, old man," said Willie to Graham. "This call needs celebration. Have you got lobster a la Newburgh on the menu tonight? He'll expect it. We're living in luxury, we are, battening on the blessed niggers and enjoying ourselves in ballroom style."

This was after the senator had exchanged some views with Willie. Later that night, after the champagne had been opened and the miasma was rising on the plateau from the hollows below, Willie entertained the senator with facts, while Graham talked to Miss McBain.

"The point is," said Willie, knocking it in with his forefinger, "that the government is wasting money on this island. You see for yourself how it is. Look round on the luxuries in which the army is lapped. Consider the prospects of Ojaga as a health resort." Here a fit of shivers took him and he reached for his quinine capsules. "Senator, the people in the United States don't know half what goes on here," he concluded in an awesome whisper.

"Sir, you are quite right," said the senator, "but it is my mission to open their eyes."

Willie shook his head sadly. "It is an impossible task, an heroic, but an impossible task. They look upon this Blue Blazes as a criminal, when we who know him realize his great qualities. It has gone to my heart, sir, to have to pursue and persecute that noble man—but business is business," said Willie, coughing over his capsule. Basil Graham through his agreeable talk with Helen McBain caught snatches of this conversation, and grew uneasy.

That night in the seclusion of the apartments which Captain Graham had courteously placed at his disposal, Senator McBain proffered to Helen certain opinions.

"I'm glad I came, Helen," he said. "It's opened my eyes wider. From what I gather there's been a heap more going on than I ever suspected. It's worse than we thought," he reflected. "A nice, frank, intelligent fellow, that Van Hort. He don't cotton to the job, and that's the fact. I shall find him useful! Graham seems a bit frosty."

Helen was not of this opinion, and said so. "He is a very nice man, and look at those flowers. I'm sure he's put them here." She buried her nose in the wild blossoms with an exclamation of disappointment. "Well, any way, they look nice if they haven't fragrance," she declared. "As for Mr. Van Hort, father, it seems to me he was jollying you. This Blue Blazes is a terrible creature. Captain Graham says; he's got no feelings or heart. He's an ogre."

"That," observed McBain calmly, "is precisely the story I should have expected to hear from official quarters. They pour it into the ears of babes and sucklings. You go along, Helen, and enjoy yourself all you can. Leave your old father to get on with the business."

As for the shameless Willie, he was taken to task by his superior.

"Look here, boy, none of that," warned Graham. "It's not what we're here for; and besides, the girl saw it, I'll swear. I won't have you teasing her like that."

"H-hang it," stuttered Willie, "you're robbing me of my one sport, a little thing all my own. Here I've been 18 awful months, and never been at a play all that time. Now you rob me of my ewe lamb," he wailed.

It is, however, hard to convince an obstinate man, and even if Willie had "turned turtle" on his previous statements McBain would have adhered to his opinions. As it was, he avidly employed Willie's "facts" as a base of operations.

"As you said, Lieutenant Van Hort," he said later, "it's nonsense, at the least, keeping you here to chain up an innocent native only bent on the good of his country. That is a view I strongly hold."

"Yes," said Willie meekly.

Meanwhile the senator pursued his personal investigations. He moved about among the villages in the neighborhood, putting questions; but as these questions as well as the answers of the natives had to be interpreted, he did not find it very satisfactory. He suspected the interpreter, all the more that most of the answers favored the character of Blue Blazes as a desperado. There were, he reflected, two explanations of this—the one that the interpreter was "faking" the answers, the other that the natives were terrorized by the presence of the military and bore false witness. You will observe that the senator did not allow for the possibility of the answers embodying the true views of the natives.

"There's one thing, sir, strikes me about your people here," said he to Willie Van Hort, "and that is the lies they tell."

Willie, under great temptation, relapsed. "Ah," he said, shaking his head sadly, "think of the lives they lead, of the strain upon them."

"Precisely, sir," said Senator McBain, snapping his jaw on it, as Willie threw up his hands in a wordless gesture. "What you say is very sensible and to the point."

It must, of course, be said in Willie's favor that he had no idea of the use to which these "facts" and exposures of his would be put. He was, in the colonel's phrase, answering a fool according to his folly. Still less had he any prevision as to the course of action which his remarks might generate in the senator. What happened was undoubtedly a surprise, and a surprise that left Willie agape and conscience stricken.

It happened in this way: There was trouble at a village in the Fongan valley and Graham, with an escort to uphold the dignity of the United States, had gone down much against his will to settle a tribal quarrel, leaving Willie Van Hort in charge of the post. On the second day arrived a rumor that Farao was out and active. It came in the form of a native, ragged and man handled, from the district of the chief Saranyong, concerning whose loyalty suspicions had long been entertained. Leaving an interesting discussion with Senator McBain on the prospects of a possible Second Methodist Episcopal mission in the island, Willie hobbled off with a party of men, enraptured at the chance of action.

"A mere formality, of course," he explained to McBain. "Consider how we are compelled to strut in feathers before these folk and pity us for circus riders."

Senator McBain spent the next few hours very dully in the absence of the agreeable lieutenant, as dully as did his daughter in the absence of Basil Graham. He re-read his notes on the "Situation in Tanong," questioned the sergeant in charge, and finally was inspired by an idea. "Charlie" was the name of a native boy employed in the captain's compound, and Charlie had already shown himself friendly to the newcomers, run errands and sat in admiration, so to speak, at Helen McBain's feet.

"Charlie," said the senator, "it is reported that the chief Farao is moving again. Where would that be?"

Charlie grinned and spread his arms widely southward to the rugged hills.

"No can tell," he replied. "Somewhere—out there—beyond Sarlong."

"Charlie," said the senator, wheedlingly, "Missy and me—you like us Sarlong."

Charlie hesitated; his eyes glistened at the gold coin flourished in the senator's hands, and he finally surrendered.

"Can take Sarlong—no more. Charlie no belong more."

It was, however, at a village one mile from Ojaga that one Haslem was encountered and annexed, who had theories as to the country outside Sarlong, and thus a little party of four on mules, quite unarmed, moved along the bush tracks and up the ravines on the borders of the bad lands. To Helen McBain it was an opportunity for further sight seeing. She had been pent up in the immediate environment of the post for a week or more, and she rejoiced in her enlargement—during the absence of Captain Basil Graham. To Haslem and Charlie it was a mere question of money, combined in the latter's case with an anxiety to oblige Missy. To Angus McBain it was the chance of a political lifetime. He had conceived the colossal idea of interviewing Blue Blazes.

Twenty hours after the departure a native staggered into Ojaga camp, gulping out a horrid tale. Blue Blazes had fallen in with the party, had killed one, wounded another and held the two whites in the hollow of his awful and bloodthirsty hand. Graham, who had arrived from the valley, listened with a bleak, blanched face, and late that night Willie Van Hort, who had come in with his captive, blubbered on the shoulder of the older man, as he cursed himself and whimpered.

"I never dreamt—God's my witness I never thought—he would do such a thing. Oh, my God—Graham! And the girl! She told me she'd meet me in Washington, laughing, when—"

Graham made no response; he merely issued his orders. They marched at moonrise.

When the senator's outfit had been seized quite unexpectedly on the confines of Sarlong, no harm had been done beyond a slice in Haslem's leg. The party made no resistance and was hurried without any regard to its feelings or its physical comfort to Blue Blazes himself.

Senator McBain was aware of a man of large proportions, with a fat yellow face and a sinister gleam in the eyes. He put inquiries to his men, and stared at the two white prisoners. The senator thought it the plain opportunity for a little address at this juncture, and he spoke to the point. He had come as a friend, not as an agent of war; it was his design to explain and interpret Farao's sentiments and schemes to the United States government. While he spoke, he observed to his chagrin that the chief's eyes had wandered from him to his daughter, on whom they rested greedily. Without waiting for the senator to finish, Blue Blazes suddenly gave an order, whereupon the report of rifles rang out, and Charlie fell forward on his face in silent death, while Haslem was seen by the stricken senator to be wriggling in torture on the earth. No attention was paid to either the dead or the wounded; but Helen, white faced and clinging to her shaken father, was snatched away by rude and ruthless hands, and McBain himself was roughly taken in charge and marched from the scene. All that night he spent in a guarded hut, in anxious speculation as to what was to happen, particularly to Helen, and divided in his mind as to old and obdurate convictions and opinions. When morning came he was hauled into the presence of the chief, whose lowering countenance and bloodshot eyes searched him savagely. Near by was a smiling little man, yellow of face and Mongolian of feature, who had evidently been imported for his services as interpreter. He had lived in the treaty ports and at Singapore, and had picked up a knowledge of English which was peculiar and racy.

"Chief ask what you dam come for?" he said to the senator, who cheered up at the sound of his broken English. Here at last was the chance to explain, to vindicate himself and his ideals.

"I have come," said he, boldly and with dignity, "to see Farao himself in order to help contribute to the settlement of this unhappy war."

The interpreter addressed Blue Blazes, and having received his instructions, turned to McBain.

"Chief say he go through your dam pockets—see what you got," he announced.

This was a sad surprise to McBain, who had thought to see the native respond loyally to the mission of peace and good will. He smiled in deprecation.

"I am afraid I have nothing of value upon me," he said, feeling his distrust in interpreters revive once more. "But I have something more valuable to offer, and that is my services in regularizing the position of the chief, in making it right with the people of the United States, who, I am convinced, would, once acquainted with the true nature of this war, never consent to allow—"

"Chief," interrupted the interpreter, to whom Blue Blazes growled, "Chief say he dam well hang you on tree."

This was certainly discouraging, not to say disconcerting. Into McBain's mind began to creep doubt, and a little shadow of fear fell on his heart. He looked about the circle of hostile and merciless faces, and something which he had never before experienced surged in him. He had seen Charlie shot down ruthlessly, and Haslem writhing in the agonies of death. The horrid sight came back to him, flashing instantaneously and involuntarily upon him. He did not want to look at it, but it came. He was a man of theories, a man of peace, a man of mind; the conduct of the world by mere physical violence had always been inconceivable to him. He had never seen anything of it. His life throughout his 60 years had been sheltered from the crude realities. People had died and people had lived, but not in such terrible, primitive ways. He was civilization, in a word, face to face with barbarism, and he was afraid. Chill fear gripped him. He spoke with earnestness and vehemence.

"Tell the chief that he is mistaken. I am here on a mission of peace. I am prepared to use all my influence to secure peace and the withdrawal of the soldiers. I have pleaded his cause in the United States senate. I am prepared—"

Once more Blue Blazes interjected words to the interpreter.

"Chief say what you pay he let you go?" inquired the yellow faced man.

"Pay!" The senator stared and stammered, his old faiths ebbing fast, his carefully constructed world crumbling under him. "I am prepared to pay a ransom," he said in distress. "But I am a senator of the United States, influential with the government."

The little interpreter, looking at him through oblique eyes, spoke to the chief, and McBain hung on the results of their conversation. Blue Blazes was manifestly affected at last; his face had undergone a great change. Ah, Senator McBain had after all not then been wrong? There was no doubt that Blue Blazes had earned his dominant position by a civilization of gifts. A sense of the situation penetrated to him even through the dull medium of the interpreter. Here was an emissary from the United States offering terms. His eyes gleamed and he delivered a long speech to the yellow man.

"Excellency hear you," said the latter to McBain, rapidly promoting his master. "He satisfied you. You go talk government. But excellency want dam money—crops ruined, must build dam houses." He emphasized with a wave of his hands to the valleys, as well as by the impressive adjective he had picked up in the haunts of the white man. "Chief say how much you give?"

It sounded much nicer putting it that way. The senator was relieved. No doubt the chief would require money to assist the moral and economical regeneration of his people. The thought did him credit.

"I will give $5,000," said McBain, adjusting his glasses, "as my personal contribution to the restitution fund."

The news was communicated to Blue Blazes, who grunted. The interpreter turned.

"Excellency says dam good," he remarked.

"Then I take it that my daughter and I will be free at once to return to Ojaga," remarked the senator a little anxiously.

The question was conveyed to the chief, who replied through his mouthpiece.

"Chief says you go free at dark. No can before for fighting."

McBain understood that military precautions dictated this necessity. "And my daughter," he persisted.

"Girl go too. She join you. Chief send soldiers." McBain breathed his relief in a big sigh. So! He had effected his purpose, though he had some doubts as to whether he wholly approved the character and methods of Farao. Anyway he had got what he wanted, freedom; and he had achieved what he had come out for, an interview, not quite satisfactory from all points of view, but still interesting and instructive. He made inquiries of the interpreter as to the whereabouts of Helen, and learned from that amiable dunderhead that she was in the other camp, quite safe. He was a little uneasy at this, but reflected that all would be readjusted in a few hours. The yellow man explained that he would be escorted to a certain point from which he could easily make his way to Ojaga. So he waited with what patience he might until the fall of dusk.

Shortly after that he was visited by the interpreter and three natives all armed, and was given to understand that the hour had arrived for his enlargement. The yellow man was equipped with a piece of paper which he set before the prisoner.

"Chief say you write dam well, ask send $5,000; say build houses, make crops."

"Certainly," said McBain, "though he need not have doubted my good faith." He took out his pencil and wrote to his agent at Shanghai and having addressed it, handed it to the other, who scrutinized it gravely, nodded, and put it in his pocket. A few minutes later they set out. The course lay through a scrub down the slope of the hill on which the camp was placed. McBain anxiously inquired for his daughter, and was informed that she was ahead with another party.

"We join, we catch 'um," explained the interpreter.

For half an hour they descended in a jungle, and at last reached the bank of a river where the ford led to an open track northward.

"Him way there," grinned the yellow man, who seemed of a sudden to have taken on an evil aspect.

"Where is my daughter?" demanded the senator with growing suspicions.

"Girl, she all right." The yellow man grinned wider and his eyes gleamed. He gave an order in the native tongue and the natives came to a halt. One came forward and seized McBain's arms, jerking them backward, while another began to tie them with a rope.

"What's this? Why do you do this? Let me alone," cried the amazed and horrified senator.

The yellow man never ceased to grin, but no one paid any heed. He was bound and fastened to a sapling, and the natives retreated 10 paces. They had raised their guns. In a flash, what it all meant broke with thunder upon the unhappy man. They had got what they wanted of him and had no further use for him. But where was Helen? Amid all the horrors of the moment that thought was the most horrible. The rifles were leveled—his voice rang out in a wild cry, as it were a cry to heaven for vengeance.

Across the ford where the track ran, the thin moonlight flickered on a figure, then upon another—upon others. A horse was beating the wafer noisily as it struggled across under the spur of a wild rider. There were shouts—the reports of rifles cracked in the air.

The yellow man twisted about and took in the situation with his sharp eyes. The three natives bolted without waiting for orders, and were lost in the jungle as Captain Basil Graham's horse came floundering ashore; 30 seconds later Willie Van Hort ran down a squealing native as he made along the bank; and thus the yellow man changed masters once more.

McBain was babbling out his story. "Helen! Captain Graham—I don't know what's become of her—what they've done—"

Graham snapped his orders on the evening air.

"Bring him along," he shouted to Willie. "He may have an idea as to Blue Blazes' whereabouts. Anyway, we've got the scab there."

The scab, alias the interpreter, having recovered himself, was harmonizing himself to the new conditions. He volunteered to point the way to the camp and Graham, pushing on with alacrity, found himself within striking distance in a couple of hours.

"I wish we'd settled the hash of those fellows," muttered Willie Van Hort savagely. "They are certain to have got back and given the alarm."

But Graham had made a shrewd interrogation of the yellow man and had learned of the divided camp. He was not so sure. This was the second camp in which Helen McBain was held that was before them. His object was to rescue her and deal with Blue Blazes at the other place later. Earthworks surrounded the camp, but there was no alarm.

"They haven't heard yet," said Graham, "so far, good."

Stealthily the troops crept around the circle, and at a signal the advance was made. Graham stormed the earthworks at the head of his men, Willie shouting from the other side. There was a heavy fusillade for some time, and the enemy were routed from hut after hut where they had lain in careless sleep. The scab, following his new masters, plucked Graham by the arm.

"Well?" the officer snapped.

"Big hut dam chief's. Girl pidgin belong."

Graham swerved and looked; at the same time a volley rattled against the hut in question and the door broke open. Graham was the first to recognize in the darkness that flying figure. He arrested his men and ran forward to her.

"Miss McBain!" he shouted, and she fell against him, crying hysterically and clasping him. She was still crying when McBain reacher her, and took her to his bosom.

"Father, father—" she wept and murmured in his ears.

Willie Van Hort, meeting his captain breathlessly, called out, "Blue Blazes is here. He was in this hut. He's off that way!"

White faced, wild and shaking, the senator confronted Graham, with his clinging burden clutching him tightly.

"Kill him!" he cried hoarsely. "Do you hear, kill him!" cried the light of the Omega Second Methodist Episcopals, with a gulping sob.

It would have been a satisfaction to Basil Graham if he could have reflected that his hand had struck the wretch down. But as a matter of history Blue Blazes fell to the bag of some persons unknown. He was found shot dead with two bullets in him just outside the earthworks. Basil Graham hoped that one of these was his, but Mrs. Graham did not.

"I am glad he is dead," she told her husband long afterwards when they discussed the awful memory, "but I don't think I want you to have shot him."

On receiving General Fortis' reports the wise man at Washington read them through carefully and tossed them over to his secretary.

"All's well that ends well," he observed rather gravely. "It's all right, Jenkins. We sha'n't hear any more of Tanong, I think." He paused reflectively. "I don't know. Well, yes, perhaps we shall for the last time. Arrange for these facts to go into the press tomorrow. I think it looks a promising story, eh?"

So Tanong rose once again—and for the last time—to the dignity of scareheads.

"Sir, you are quite right," said the senator, "but it is my mission to open their eyes."