



LIGHT DUTY

By L. PATRICK GREENE

When Trooper "Dynamite" Drury of the B.S.A.P. set forth on his tour of light duty, he little dreamt what lay in store for him. Nor, as he rode through the quiet Rhodesian veldt, did he know that under his very nose a fiendish crime was in the making!

SERGEANT-MAJOR BOWEN looked irritably at the tall trooper who lounged nonchalantly against the side of the *kyah*.

"My God, Drury," he rasped, "I know you've just come out of hospital—but that's no excuse for you looking like a B. D. S. {British Destitute Subject}." Trooper Drury grinned.

"It's the way I'm made, Sergeant Major, sir," he drawled, and there was a tang of Texas in his voice. "My old man had me ridin' a barrel afore I could walk an' I was forking a bronco afore most kids have cut their teeth—"

"Oh, cut it short, the sergeant-major interrupted. "I wasn't referring to your good looks—or lack of 'em. I was talking about—"

But hell! What's the good. You've always been a dirty soldier; you always will be. But you happen to be a sort of hard case Sherlock Holmes an' so I suppose the B. S. A. P.'ll have to put up with you an' make allowances."

The sergeant-major snorted indignantly. Trooper Dynamite Drury's lack of military smartness was a constant irritation to him. Just the same he was fully conscious of the fact that Drury was one of the most valuable members of the force and his voice; softened somewhat as he continued, "But how do you feel?"

"A bit tottery—fever sure does take it out of a man. Why?"

"You're down for light duty, aren't you?"

"Yep! Got a job of work?"

"Nothing in the special duty line, Drury. But I thought you might like to go on Commonage Patrol. Just a nice little ride around. Nothing to do. Take your own time. And if you call at Brabson's—they'll give you a good lunch.

"Of course you needn't go if you don't feel like it. But all the other duty men are out. And—"

"Sure—I'll go. There's nothing to it, is there? I just call on folks who live 'round about, get 'em to sign the Commonage book an' ask if there's any complaints. That's all there is to it—ain't it?"

The sergeant-major nodded.

"That's all. You might get a complaint or two of chicken stealing, or of niggers being saucy—nothing to worry about. It'll be a nice little ride. And, I say—if you go to Brabsons—and they always feed the police well—you might give Miss Brabson this note. And you needn't make a show about it either."

Drury chuckled.

"I reckon you're sending me on a Cupid's Patrol, sergeant-major, sir. Well—that's light duty, sure enough. Hand over the

billey doux!"

IT WAS nearing sundown when Drury turned his horse's head toward the *dorp*, seven miles distant. He had had a long day—but one which had filled him with a sense of well-being and utter contentment. For this day, Africa had been at her best. The heat had been tempered by a gentle breeze and Drury had drowsed in the saddle, permitting his horse to choose its own gait and its own course.

It had been a clean, health-restoring day; Drury's fever-thinned blood seemed to respond to the freshness of the veldt air and the sweet tang of mapani bush.

Everything had been conducive to Drury's ease of mind and body. The natives he had met, trekking to their kraals, had been dutifully respectful—with many of them he had exchanged greetings and had gossiped idly, surprising them with his knowledge of the vernacular. And at the homesteads he had visited, Drury had been received with a true Rhodesian hospitality by keen-eyed, sun-bronzed men and women. The men at one homestead—that of the Brabsons—were having a friendly shooting match when he arrived. Good shots, all of them, they were Drury's equal at a stationary target but he made them gasp with astonishment at his snap shooting and the speed of his draw.

They fed him well with delicacies unheard of in the police mess; they gasped at his capacity for holding liquor and they begged him to get a month's sick leave and go on a hunting trip with them.

"Yep!" he now muttered sleepily. "It's sure been a nice peaceful day. No worry, no noise—nothing. An' them fellers at Brabsons'—good guys all of 'em.

"Reckon I'm goin' to apply for sick leave an' go a-huntin' with them. Sure. Don't see why not. I'm a sick man I am!" He chuckled merrily, then groaned lugubriously adding in a mock tone of despair; "Sure I'm

weaker'n a cat. Ain't I just come out of hospital? Ain't I had a bad attack of malaria? Sure I have. Well then!"

He rode on for a while in silence. The sun had set and the veldt was bathed in the crimson light of its afterglow. The air had perceptibly cooled.

"Better hurry," decided Drury. "Doc said I wasn't to be out after sundown. Might bring on fever again. Guess he was just talking. Hell! Never felt so well in my life."

He yawned and stretched himself luxuriously.

Then he added with a grin, "Just the same, I'm going to be blame sick in the morning. You betcha!" He yawned again:

"Reckon I'll sleep sound tonight," he observed. "It's been such a damn restful day."

HE TIGHTENED his grip on the reins, intending to finish his day's light duty with a fast canter back to the police camp through the swift gathering darkness.

Then he tensed. His supernaturally keen ears detected the rapid patter of a horse's hard hoofs on the dirt road. He drew his horse to a halt and sat waiting.

"I'll have company back to the *dorp*," he said.

Expertly he rolled a cigarette and put it between his lips.

A horseman rode madly into sight. A few minutes later he pulled up opposite Drury, filling the air with a choking cloud of dust.

"Trooper!" the man gasped excitedly. "There's been a bad accident at Henson's place. Old man Henson—I've told him a hundred times to get rid of that blasted stallion—was kicked on the head. I'm riding for the doctor. Go on back will you an' sit with him. He's all alone and—"

The man dug his spurs into his horse and rode off.

"Hi!" Drury shouted, slightly

bewildered by the swift turn of fate which had capped his day of peace with tragedy. "Hi!" he shouted again meaning to call the man back.

But the rider appeared not to hear; at least he made no response to Drury's shouts and, in a few moments he had passed out of sight and hearing.

"The dumb fool," Drury grumbled. "What's he want to wish a job like this on me for. I could have sent a doctor out. Hell! I ain't no nurse."

But almost immediately his resentment vanished.

"Poor old Henson!" he exclaimed and, wheeling his horse, galloped to give what assistance he could.

Ten minutes later he reached the Henson homestead. Dismounting quickly he went into a hut where a light was burning.

On a bed was a man's body—strangely stiff and still.

"He's dead," said Drury and shuddered slightly at the horrible, bloody wounds which mutilated the old man's face and head. A clumsy attempt had been made to bandage the injuries.

"Must 'a' been kicked to death," Drury continued. "Wonder he lived at all after that lot. No wonder Timms was excited an' didn't know where he was at."

Timms, old Henson's partner, was the man who had ridden in for a doctor.

"An' all a doctor can do," Drury mused, "is sign a death certificate—hold on—what the hell—"

He stood for a little while in silence, looking down at the dead man, then he tip-toed out of the hut.

Half an hour later, having rubbed down, stabled and fed his horse, he attended to his own comforts.

Finding that he had no appetite for food, he went into the large living hut, lighted a lamp, and rolled and lighted a cigarette. But that, for once, failed to solace him and he only

persisted in smoking in the hope that it would afford him a respite from the cloud of angry, pinging mosquitoes which swarmed around him.

He closed his eyes, hoping that sleep would come—but his brain was too active.

“I’m acting like a blamed fool—but it’s too darned queer about that——” he grumbled. Then he opened his eyes and sat up, determined to give his mind free play with the things which were disturbing him.

“Old Henson now,” he said, giving voice to his thoughts, “he was a peculiar feller. Hard to get along with, accordin’ to talk. An’ yet—I dunno! He seemed a reg’lar guy when I met him this morning. Come to think of it, his partner, Timms, is the laddie who spread the rumor that Henson was a bit queer. But that way of thinkin’ leads us nowhere. Unless——” He shook his head. “I sure got a touch of fever, else I wouldn’t let my imagination run away with me that way. Old Henson was apparently kicked to death—no doubt about that. An’ it ain’t likely anybody—Timms, for instance—could train a horse to commit murder. Besides—there’d be no object to it”

He was silent for a while, his shaggy brows knit in an effort of concentration. Thoughts came and went. One or two persisted, although he told himself that he was a fool and probably suffering from fever delirium.

At last he roused himself and went over to the other hut and, gently removing the blood-stained bandages, closely examined the ghastly wounds. Whistling softly, he replaced the bandages and returned to the living hut. His attitude now had changed in some vague way. He became more impersonal; his brain took complete charge of his body. He became a cold, logical thinker and he concentrated on the problem he had set himself.

“But there ain’t no answer, there ain’t no problem,” he finally concluded. “I’m

barking up the wrong tree. I’m seeing things what ain’t.”

He looked round the hut. On the table was a portrait of a sweet-faced girl in nurse’s costume.

“Hell!” Drury exclaimed, recognizing the portrait to be that of one of the nurses in the hospital he had so recently left. “So she’s poor old Henson’s daughter. An’ I never guessed. Come to think of it, why should I have? This’ll be hard on her. She thought the world an’ all of her ‘Daddy.’ Aw hell! Always talking about him, she was. An’ she’s a good kid.”

Drury thought of the many kindnesses the girl had shown him, cheering him out of the fits of awful despondency which had retarded his recovery.

On the table in front of the portrait was a little pile of quartz. Drury picked up one of the stones, scratched it with his thumb nail, turned it over and over meditatively.

He examined the others in the same way.

“Looks rich,” he concluded. “Wonder where it came from. Wonder——”

He decided to question some of the native laborers—then realized that there were none on the place. At least none had appeared on his arrival tonight although there had been plenty in evidence when he had called that morning.

“Maybe,” he concluded, “they’ve all gone to a beer drink.”

And then his eyes closed; presently he slept.

DRURY was awakened by the arrival of Timms and the doctor. He blinked sheepishly at them as they stood before him.

“Yuh been a long time, Timms,” he complained, yawning and stretching himself. “An’ yuh might have saved yourself the trip. The poor devil was dead when I got here. As near as not I rode off, seeing as there was

nothing here for me to do. I ought to have been in before sundown. Yuh see: I've only just come out of hospital an'—"

"It hasn't seemed to affect your voice, Trooper," the doctor said curtly. He turned to Timms, shrugging his shoulders. "Well: There's nothing I can do—I could have done nothing even if I'd been here at the time. Wonder is that he lived at all. He spoke to you, you said?"

Timms nodded.

"Yes," he answered. "He—" the man hesitated—"asked me to look after his daughter. Asked me, as a matter of fact, to marry her. But—" he shook his head sadly—"I'm afraid she won't have me. Oh, well! I shall give her a fair price for her father's share of the farm and stock. It ain't worth much though. We've been sailing pretty close to the wind for a long time."

"So I've always understood," the doctor remarked dryly. "At least I've had difficulty in collecting an old account."

Timms shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll be paid some time, doctor," he said. "And now how about you staying the night? I can put you up comfortably and—" he hesitated—"I hate like hell the idea of staying alone tonight."

The doctor snorted contemptuously.

"Yes; of course I'm going to stay. Think I'm going to ride back to the *dorp* now—late as it is?" He looked keenly at Drury. "And you'll stay too, Trooper," he continued with a touch of his professional manner. "You look to me as if you're running a temperature. Just out of hospital, you say? *Hmph!* What did they put you on duty for? Shorthanded?"

"I'm on light duty—that's all, Doc," Drury drawled. "Reckoned to be back before sundown. Never thought I'd be running into anything like this."

The doctor, impatiently silencing his protests, felt Drury's pulse and took his

temperature.

"Just as I thought," he remarked complacently. "Running a temperature. *Hmph!* So you stay here the night. That's final."

"S O.K. with me, Doc," Drury said, and somehow felt immensely relieved. His head ached; his eyes watered.

"Gosh!" he muttered. "I'm almighty dry."

He made no protest when they half-led, half-carried him to one of the sleeping huts, undressed him and put him to bed.

He gulped down the medicine the doctor gave him; smiled at that man's assurance that he would be better in the morning, muttered, "Gosh, but I sure am ready to play shut eye," and the next moment was snoring heartily.

IT WAS sunrise when Drury awakened. The man Timms stood beside his bed, looking at him with every appearance of solicitude.

"How do you feel, old timer?" he asked. "Sleep well?"

"Too damn well, Drury replied. "Reckon I'm not awake yet."

He stared appraisingly at Timms, his eyes half closed.

"The Doc gone yet?" he asked.

"Not yet. He's having skoff. How do you feel? Well enough to ride back to the *dorp* with him? Or do you want to stay in bed a bit?"

"I'm getting up," said Drury. "Be with you in five-ten minutes. I ought to have gone back to the *dorp* last night. I'll get hell for staying out like this."

"Don't you worry," Timms replied soothingly. "They won't say anything—not when they know the facts."

"Well—I'll send a nigger in with some water. I'm going now to see the cookboy about some more grub. How'll bacon an' eggs suit you?"

“Fine!” said Drury. “Got an appetite like a horse.”

As Timms left the hut Drury got out of bed and commenced to dress. But the hut reeled round at a dizzy pace and he was forced to lie down again.

“Hell!” he exclaimed softly. “This won’t do. I got to pull myself together.”

A native came in with a bucket of cold water. Drury ducked his head in it, towelled himself vigorously and felt better.

He finished dressing and went outside the tent. He smiled as he saw that his horse and the doctor’s were saddled ready for their departure.

He went into the *skoff* hut.

The doctor and Timms had finished their breakfasts but still sat at the table.

The doctor nodded a curt good morning, adding:

“You look washed out, Trooper. But that’s natural. No temperature this morning? No. A little weak—naturally. Well— you’d better not eat much now—a cup of coffee and a little toast. Then we’ll ride back to the *dorp* together.” He looked impatiently at his watch.

“Don’t want a blamed thing to eat or drink. Not a blamed thing,” said Drury.

“Then we can start back now,” said the doctor, rising briskly. “I’ll send out the death certificate to you, Timms.”

“An’ what,” Drury drawled, “are you goin’ to certify was the cause of death, doctor?”

“Injuries to head—” the doctor rattled out a long technical explanation of the nature of the injuries which had caused Henson’s death.

Drury nodded.

“Accidental death, eh, Doctor.”

“Of course, of course.” He advanced toward the door but Drury, leaning against the upright, barred the way.

“Not so fast, doctor. This may not be according to Hoyle but I got to get all the facts

of the case so’s I can send in a proper report.”

“All you have to say, Trooper,” Timms put in suavely, “is that Mr. Hensen was kicked to death by a horse. That’s what happened.”

“Furthermore,” snapped the doctor, “I would have you know, Trooper, that I have a practice to consider. At ten-thirty I’m due at the hospital to perform an operation. A most interesting case. The patient——” He broke off suddenly.

“Let me pass,” he demanded.

“Yes—get out of the way, Trooper,” Timms said in support. “Don’t act like an officious fool. I’ve got enough worry—what with losing my old partner in such a tragic way—without having you add to them by damn fool, unnecessary investigations. You know Mr. Henson’s dead; you heard the doctor explain the cause of death. Well—that’s enough for anybody.”

“It ain’t enough for me,” said Drury quietly. “Us three are goin’ to have a little talk together. See?”

THE doctor fumed. “By what right do you detain, me?” he exclaimed.

Timms sprang forward with an oath—then halted and stared with astonishment at the revolver Drury leveled at him. The doctor stared too.

“A most interesting example,” the doctor observed, “of perfect muscular coordination. I barely distinguished your movements, Trooper. You drew your weapon with the speed and smoothness of a prestidigitator.”

“Aw, doctor,” Drury said bashfully, “that’s nothing. It’s only a trick. But it took years of practice.

“However—that’s neither here nor there. Yuh got to admit that this here is good authority for me holding a little investigation—an unofficial inquest, sort of. See? An’ the quicker you see reason, the quicker us can get the business over.”

The doctor shrugged his shoulders and sat down.

"This is monstrous," Timms blustered. "I refuse to be browbeaten by this clodhopper of a trooper."

"You ain't goin' to be browbeaten, mister," Drury expostulated mildly. "An there's no need to call names. I'm a-doin' my duty—that's all. I got to have the facts for my report. You see, mister," the continued, "You been an' accused a horse of being a murderer. Well—all I wants is the facts. An' if, so be, the evidence bears out what I suspects—why I'm agoin' to arrest the murderer."

"You damned fool!" Timms snapped. "You can't arrest a horse."

"I might—yuh never know. Now suppose you sit down, mister."

Timms looked at the doctor who shrugged his shoulders. That man was watching Drury with something approaching interest.

"He's delirious, doctor!" Timms said. "Are you going to humor the fool?"

"Quite!" the doctor said placidly. He looked at his watch. "I find that I can spare forty minutes to your unofficial inquest, Trooper. Is that long enough?"

"Quite!" Drury chuckled grimly. "Maybe fifteen'll be plenty."

The doctor nodded.

"Good. Sit down, Timms. Sit down, man. And, Trooper, you had better sit down too. At least, put away your revolver. I think I detected a slight waver—as if your hand trembled. Good God! Where have you put it!"

Timms seated himself; Drury also acted on the doctor's suggestion. He rolled himself a cigarette, lighted it and blew a cloud of smoke into Timms's eyes.

"Blast you," Timms bellowed angrily, leaping to his feet, thumping the table with his powerful fist.

"Sit down," said Drury.

Timms sat down; his face was white

with rage; his black eyes blazed malevolently.

"Now then," Drury said slowly, getting out his notebook, moistening the point of his pencil between his lips, "let's have the facts.

"You say, mister," he directly addressed Timms, "that Henson was kicked to death by a horse—a stallion, yuh said."

Timms licked his lips.

"Yes; a black, nigger-bred beast—a man-killer from the day he was foaled, if you ask me."

"An' I am asking yuh," Drury commented softly.

Timms stared uncomprehendingly and continued, almost glibly, "I begged Henson to get rid of the brute—sell or shoot him. But he wouldn't—he was obstinate at times, old Henson was. Well—he's paid for it, God knows."

"So the horse killed him, eh?"

"That's what I said," Timms said irritably.

"How do yuh know?"

"How do I know?" Timms shouted. "Why, I saw it, you damned fool."

"HOW was I to know you'd seen it?" Drury expostulated mildly. "If you'd said that before you'd have saved time. Anybody else seen it?"

"No!"

"No natives?"

"No. They'd all gone to a beer-drink. As a matter of fact," he confessed with a sudden show of frankness, "me and Henson had a few words about them going. He didn't want 'em to go—hard on his niggers, Henson was. Treated 'em like dogs. Anyway, when he heard I'd let 'em all go off to this beer-drink he was wild. Called me a damned nigger lover an' other things not so nice. He was still in a temper when he went to catch Darkie—that's the stallion. He added mournfully, "In a way, I feel responsible for Henson's death. If I hadn't made him mad he might have been more

careful in handling the horse.”

“I don’t think you need blame yourself for that, Timms,” the doctor observed.

“‘Course not,” echoed Drury. “No blame attached to you, mister, that way.

“Well—seeing as you was the only witness to the accident suppose you tell us how it happened?”

Timms passed his hand across his eyes.

“It all happened so quickly,” he said, “that my mind’s a bit dazed. I don’t quite know how it started. I mean I haven’t got all the happenings in proper sequence maybe.

“Henson and me both went down to the paddock where Darkie was turned out to graze. We were still arguing about the niggers. Henson said—”

“What did you go to the paddock for?” Drury interrupted.

“To strengthen the fence. That blasted horse had almost broken through in one place.”

“He’s shod—the horse, I mean.”

Timms nodded.

“Shod him myself, always. An’ a hell of a job it was too, let me tell you. Had to throw him before I could touch his hind legs. And once—”

“Never mind that,” Drury interrupted again. “Go on with the evidence. You an’ Henson went down to the paddock to mend some broken rails, you say. Go on.”

Timms snorted. “You getting a thrill out of this, Trooper?” he asked contemptuously.

“Shouldn’t wonder. Are yuh?”

“Get on with your story, Timms,” the doctor said, acting the part of a peacemaker.

Timms nodded.

“Well—when we got to the paddock fence I was so sick of hearing Henson lecture me on the proper way to treat niggers that I tried to change the subject.

“‘You ought to kill that horse,

Henson,’ I said, ‘before the brute kills one of us!’

“You see the stallion came tearing up to where we’d started work on the fence. Mad he was. Ears back, eyes red, tail cocked. He rushed at the fence, squealing. I drew my revolver—I was scared, I tell you. Wish to God I’d shot it then and there.

“But old Henson only laughed. He called me a white-livered coward. He said the horse was as gentle as a lamb. My God! He said it only wanted to be treated gently. And the old fool climbed over the fence.”

Timms shuddered.

“Yep! Go on!” Drury said matter of factly.

“You’re a blasted ghoul, that what you are,” Timms exclaimed indignantly. “You want all the nasty details, don’t you?”

“Well,” Drury drawled defensively. “I gotta make a full an’ complete report, mister, that’s the only reason I’m so blamed curious. Yuh see—I ain’t so very popular with the sergeant-major as it is an’ if I go back with a half-baked story—after staying out all night—he’ll be madder’n hell! Put me on the peg most like! So, mister, go on. Let’s have all the horrid details.”

TIMMS shrugged his shoulders. He looked at the doctor, but getting no encouragement from that man, continued.

“Well, Henson climbed over the fence and walks up to Darkie, holding out his hand and saying ‘Cup cup!’ Chucking like an old hen, he was. Twice that damned horse walked past him as quiet, seemingly, as an old cow. Then, as he came by the third time—old Henson had stooped a bit to get a handful of grass—he turned with a squeal and lashed out with his hind legs. Like lightning it was. Smash! Smash! God! It made me feel sick. I couldn’t move or speak. Henson—he went over backward. I fired at that blasted horse—but missed. Imagine I was all of a shake. But the

brute galloped away, neighing and prancing as if he'd done something to be proud of. Then I ran to Henson, picked him up and carried him to his hut. I saw things were pretty homeless, but I bandaged him up as good as I could. He was conscious for a bit.

"Take care of daughter," he said. 'Marry her, Timms.' And a minute later he said, 'You've been a good partner, Timms. I'm sorry I lost my temper about the niggers.'"

Timms hid his eyes for a moment with his hand.

"That's all," he concluded brokenly. "I saw there was nothing I could do, so I rode off for a doctor, saw you, Trooper, and—" he shrugged his shoulders—"the rest you know."

Drury nodded.

"Yep!" he said laconically. "The rest I know."

He turned to the doctor.

"You saw the body?"

"Of course."

"An' examined the wounds?"

"Yes."

"And in your opinion they could have been caused in the way described by Mister Timms."

"Undoubtedly. Undoubtedly. It is possible, Trooper, to trace the outline of the shoe."

"Ah!" Drury turned to Timms again. "You did say the horse kicked with his hind legs, didn't you, mister?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Only wanted to get facts straight in my report, mister, that's all. The horse didn't paw at him, did it? Didn't rear up an' strike Henson with his front feet or anything like that?"

"No!" Timms said curtly.

"Sure?"

"Of course I'm sure. It happened as I said—and I'm not likely to forget it."

Drury rose to his feet. He swayed a little.

"Gosh!" He exclaimed. "I feel like bed instead of all this investigating. But it's got to be done. Come on! We'll all just go an' have one look at the body. There's one or two points I want you to explain—then we can go back to the *dorp*."

The three went outside—Timms reluctantly—and walked over to the hut where the dead man was.

The doctor called attention to the horseshoe which was nailed over the door for luck.

"That," he said, "might be taken as indicative of bad luck if one were superstitious. The luck is spilling out!"

Drury barely suppressed a gasp then started forward.

"I'll put it the right way up," he said.

Timms's heavy hand grasped him by the shoulder, halting him.

"You leave that the way it is," he said, hoarsely. "It's always been that way—it's always going to be that way as a—" he hesitated and then went on to a stammering conclusion—"in memory of the best pal a man ever had."

The doctor looked at him shrewdly.

"The sentiments do you justice," said Drury and passed into the hut.

PRESENTLY the others followed. They found Drury standing beside the bed, looking down at the dead man.

The doctor went to his side; Timms, loudly objecting to what he called "An unnecessary and callous exhibition of petty authority," stood at the foot of the bed.

"There ain't much more I want to know," Drury said softly. "An' I ain't enjoyin' this, let me tell yuh, mister. But I got to get my facts straight. You can see that, can't you? I gotta write a full report an'—"

"Hell!" Timms snapped. "Get on with it man. Get on with it."

"I'll do that. Say, Doctor," the

redheaded trooper continued. "Yuh've heard Mister Timms, here, explain how the thing happened. Well now—are them wounds the sort of wounds you'd expect to see after such an accident."

"Quite," said the doctor positively. "No doubt about that at all. Surely," he was mildly sarcastic, "you are not suggesting that Henson was killed in some other way?"

"He's fool enough," Timms growled "to say poor old Henson committed suicide."

"I ain't, mister. Nothing further from my thoughts," Drury said slowly. I'm only aiming to get at the facts. An' if I'm a bit slow, you'll have to blame it on the fever. I ain't supposed to be doing anything like this. I'm on light duty, I am. But there yuh are. I happened to stumble onto this case—"

"It's not a case." Timms said testily.

"Call it what you like, mister, but you can take it from me there'll be nothing missing from my report that ought to be there.

"So, doctor, I asks you to examine them wounds again."

The doctor did so. He examined them thoroughly. He took measurements.

Timms moved restlessly.

"I'm going outside," he announced.

"You'll stay here," Drury countered flatly.

The doctor straightened himself and turned to face Drury.

"I've examined the wounds again, Trooper. Well?"

"And yuh've got nothin' to add to your first statement, doctor?"

"Not a thing."

"Aw, hell!" Drury seemed disconsolate.

"What did you expect me to find?" the doctor said curiously.

"Oh let it rest, doc," Timms exclaimed impatiently. "You've humored him enough and I'm sick of it. He's delirious. Take him back to the *dorp* and send him to bed."

Drury smiled wanly.

"When did old Henson locate that rich reef?" he asked abruptly.

"Yesterday after—what rich reef? What you talking about?"

"Just talking. I noticed some rich-looking quartz in the hut over yonder."

Timms laughed.

"Oh! Them specimens! A sundowner gave old Henson them hunks some time back. They came from somewhere up country, Wankie way I believe. They—"

He stopped abruptly. Obviously Drury was not interested. Indeed he had turned his back on Timms and was facing the doctor once again.

"Doc," he said, "don't it strike you as funny that the deepest part of the wounds is at the top?"

"No!" the doctor was genuinely bewildered. "I don't quite understand you, Trooper."

THEN let's put it this way, doc," Drury said patiently. "Henson was kicked by a horse, he was bendin' a bit at the time, yuh'll recollect. An' the horse was lashing out with hind legs. Well!—"

"He might have reared an' struck out with his forefeet too," Timms said hastily. "I told you I was sort of dazed about it all, didn't I?"

"Yep! But I reckon you was right about this. The mark of the shoe's there—an' it's a hind shoe, mister." Drury's tone was almost casual. "Well, doctor, what about it? Remembering it was a kick from the hind quarters—where'd yuh expect to find the deepest part of the wound? Where'd yuh expect to find the mark of the toe of the shoe? An' which way up would the mark of the shoe be—with the heels up, or the heels down."

"Why," the doctor replied slowly. "Of course—the deepest wound would be at the lowest part of the face, I imagine. The toe of

the shoe would certainly be marked there. An' the mark of the shoe would be right way up—this way." And he traced the outline of a horseshoe on his face. "The toe here—" he pointed to his mouth, "the heels here and here—" he pointed to his temples. "That is, of course, if the kicks landed square, as they did in this case, according to Timms. And as he was the only eyewitness of the tragedy we must take his word for it."

Timms moved impatiently toward the door.

"Come on," he said. "I've had enough of this. I've got stock to tend and——"

"Just a minute, I only want to ask the doctor one more question an' then, I reckon, my case is complete."

"Listen, doc, you've told me how the wounds ought to look. Well—I now asks: Do they?"

The doctor looked again at the dead man, then at Drury. There was a look of puzzled amazement in his eyes.

"By God, no!" he cried. "They don't. They're just the opposite of what they ought to be. The toe's at the top; the heels are at the bottom. The wounds couldn't have been made—Hi! Where are you going!"

Drury did no answer. He had suddenly realized that Timms was no longer in the hut and, cursing his own carelessness, he himself rushed outside just in time to see Timms vault into the saddle of the doctor's horse and ride madly away.

Drury mounted too and gave chase—and as he rode he spun the rope which hung from his saddle wallet.

The doctor, standing at the door of the hut shouted wrathful inquiries. Native laborers, talking excitedly watched the chase with wide open eyes.

With every stride Drury gained ground.

"Stop!" he shouted.

Timms turned in the saddle, his face

twisting with rage. A revolver glistened in his hand. He opened fire, but his aim was poor.

Drury bending low, spurred his horse to a still faster gait; Timms gave up his shooting when his revolver was empty, and concentrated on riding, spurring his mount continuously.

But his efforts were unavailing. Gradually Drury was closing the gap between them.

They were riding alongside a wire fence now, and a big black stallion galloped up on the other side of the fence—and raced neck and neck with Timms's mount.

Timms swerved suddenly to the right, away from the fence. The stallion swerved too, leaped the fence, and gave chase, squealing furiously.

White-faced, Timms looked back over his shoulder. The stallion was almost abreast of him.

"Shoot the devil!" he screamed. "He's mad!" Timms tried to swerve again and his mount went down in a heap, pitching him head-first onto a rocky outcrop.

The stallion propped. Then it reared, hitting out at the air with its front feet like a boxer. Then on sighting Timms who sprawled on the ground, it reared again.

It was then that Drury made his cast. The noose of his rope round the stallion's neck, tightened and pulled the brute over backward.

THAT was the last Drury remembered for a while. The fever weakness suddenly overtook him, as he afterward expressed it, "I passed out an' fell from my horse like a blamed tenderfoot!"

When consciousness returned to him he was lying on a bed in one of the huts. As he struggled to a sitting position the doctor entered.

"Ah!" exclaimed that man. "Sitting up and ready for nourishment, eh? Well now,

perhaps you'll permit me to return to the *dorp*."

"Sure," Drury exclaimed. "But where's Timms?"

"In his hut—he's all right except for a slight concussion and a broken thigh; it's my opinion, Trooper, you saved his life, I told him that but he didn't seem to appreciate it."

"He wouldn't," Drury said dryly. "I reckon he's goin' to lose it again in a mighty unpleasant way."

"You mean?" the doctor questioned wonderingly.

"He's my prisoner," Drury replied. "Gosh! I must go an' arrest him properly, an' warn him, an' all that."

"What are you arresting him for, Trooper?"

"Murder, Doc. He killed old Henson, you know."

"I was beginning to suspect as much," the doctor muttered as he followed Drury out of the hut. "But I can't for the life of me see where your proof comes in."

"HELL, Drury," growled the sergeant-major. "Why don't you use a bit of sense. You was on light duty, an' yet you go an' get messed up in an affair like this.

"I've been resting, sergeant-major, sir. Yesterday was a nice peaceful day!"

"Must have been," scoffed the sergeant-major. "Must have been. But I'm damned if I can see what set you off thinking an accident wasn't an accident."

"You'll find it all in the report, sergeant-major, sir. I wrote a very full one. An', besides, you got Timms's confession, haven't you? Well then."

"I've read 'em—but I want to know more."

"I thought things was funny before ever I saw poor old Henson's body," Drury said. "An' when I saw the wounds—I knew blamed well there was something queer about

it—but I was slow working things out. I reckon my head ached so much I couldn't see things properly."

"Well—there you are. As soon as I suspected things were wrong I couldn't let go 'till I'd proved 'em. An' it was easy, in a way, except there didn't seem no motive. I could only guess at that. I said: Supposing old Henson had dissolved partnership with Timms—but no one knew it yet—an' supposing old Henson had located gold on the farm. That 'ud be motive enough."

The sergeant-major nodded.

"We know now that was the motive. As a matter of fact the partnership had been dissolved over a year ago. Timms was only a paid employee. Henson kept him on out of pity and, as a sop to Timms's pride, let on they were still partners."

"Go on!"

Drury nodded:

"Well—I'd thought up a motive. With Henson out of the way, Timms planned to grab everything there was, buy from Henson's daughter her share in her father's estate, wait a few months then discover the gold for himself.

"But hell! Motive wasn't enough. I reckon most folks have got motives enough to kill somebody or other. But motives ain't proof. An' I couldn't see how the murder—if it was a murder—was done.

"An' I might still have been in the dark yet, if the doctor hadn't called my attention to that lucky horseshoe. Lucky! My Gawd! It was anything but. Yuh see I remembered that horseshoe. I seen it when I called at the homestead in the morning. An' it was right way up then! It was holding the luck all right. An' when Timms stopped me from taking it down an' hanging it up right way—why, I didn't really need that to prove my case."

The sergeant-major nodded sagely.

"It was a devilishly clever murder, Drury," he said. "And it would never have been discovered if anybody but you had been

on that commonage patrol yesterday.”

“Aw—now you’re kidding me, sergeant-major, sir. It was a piece of bull luck for me. But you’re right. Timms planned damn clever. But he made his first mistake when he nailed that shoe onto an ax handle an’ used it as a club to beat in the old man’s brains. He nailed it on the wrong way. See! He nailed it this way—he ought to have done it this way.” Drury drew two diagrams to illustrate his meaning. Thus:



“If he’d done it this way,” Drury continued, referring to his second crude drawing, “he’d have got away with his plan. That weapon ‘ud have made the sort of wounds consistent with his story.

“An” his second mistake, of course, was when he nailed back the shoe over the door the wrong way up. “An’ so I nailed him. That’s all, sergeant-major, sir. Except—I’m applying for a month’s leave. Do you think I’ll get it?”

“I shouldn’t be surprised, Drury. Not a bit. You need a rest!”

“Rest, hell,” scoffed Drury. “No more light duty for me. It’s too exciting.”