



Richard Lee Merritt
4428 23rd St.
San Francisco, CA 94114-3114

(A)

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt (Copy # two)

MAYNARD FAMILY

Stanley Huntington Maynard (1815-1895)--pioneer financier,
built Villa Toscana in 1859, SE of Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Stanley Huntington Maynard II. (1840-1921) U. S. Senator
married Letitia Willard (1852-1930)

Stanley Huntington Maynard III. (Hunt Maynard, 1874-1946)
married 1905 to Mrs. Madge Templeton Fulton (1879-1954),
widow of Arthur Fulton.

Stanley Huntington Maynard IV. (Buddy Maynard, 1908-1985),
married first in 1935 to Gretchen Reisfeld (1911-1973).

Married second to Josefa Holečková (1912-1979).

GOLDSCHMIDT FAMILY of Stuttgart, Germany
in 1937.

Dr. Konrad Goldschmidt (1887-1937)

Trude Goldschmidt (1894- ?)

Aaron Goldschmidt (1917-) (later Alberich Wolke)

Josef Goldschmidt (1918-)

David Goldschmidt (1919-)

Monika Goldschmidt (1924- ?)

Erma Goldschmidt (1926- ?)

Benny Goldschmidt (1932- ?)

Also long-time nanny, Hanna Böcklin (1897-1973)

(B)

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

MAYNARD FAMILY (Continued)--children and grandchildren of Buddy and Gretchen Maynard.

Stanley Huntington Maynard V. (Nogg Maynard, 1937-1974)

Eric Karl Maynard (1939-)
married in 1961 to Alice Petrie.

Roderick Monty Maynard (1963-)

Helena Rosalie Maynard (1964-)

Gretchen Hanna Maynard (1966-)

Eric Jr. (1968-)

Stanley Huntington Maynard VI. (1975-)

Eric attended Dartmouth, graduated in Animal Husbandry from Montana State College, Bozeman in 1961. Married classmate Alice Petrie, daughter of Stillwater County, Montana, rancher. Eric bought a ranch forty miles NE of Yellowstone Park, next to the Petrie Ranch.

Griselda Glamorgan Maynard (1939-)
married in 1962 at Villa Toscana to Dr. Nicholas Lowell Greenfield.

John Everett Millais Greenfield (1965-)

Beatrice Dante Greenfield (1966-)

Griselda graduated from Radcliffe in 1961 and in 1963 received a Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of Iowa. Nicholas got his doctorate the year they married and became art professor in succession of colleges.

(C)

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

How Helena Rosalie Maynard is related to
the Absaroka (Crow) Nation.

Yellow Coyote

Deer Woman (full-blooded Crow)
m. (1870) Bill Meldrum

Suzy Meldrum m. (1892) James Petrie

Grayson Petrie (1894-1954) m. (1915) Clara Tellin

Jack Petrie (1917-) m. 1937 Lorene Mason

Alice Petrie (1940-) m. 1961 Eric Maynard

Helena Rosalie Maynard (1964-) m. Stan Goldsmith

Bill Meldrum, born circa 1831 in Kentucky, was a mountain man and guide who led parties of settlers to the Montana gold fields in the early 1860s, taking a route west of the Big Horn Mountains. He married Deer Woman, an Absaroka girl, was adopted into the tribe, and ranched Crow land near the Stillwater River, driving cattle to market in Bozeman and the Virginia City mining camps.

Grayson Petrie and Jack Petrie were both ranchers and members of the Montana State Legislature.

In the above it can be seen that Helena's great great grandmother was Suzy Meldrum who was one-half Crow and who lived from 1875 to 1950.

(D)

THE TUSCAN VILLA--by R. L. Merritt

Alphabetical Listing of Ancillary Characters

- Bailey, Shad--Florida student,
Buddy's tutor in 1916 visit
- Bocklin, Hanna--(1897-1975) nanny,
housekeeper to Maynards
- Clout, Ephraim--Nogg's Calif. atty.
- Czermaká, Libuše (1934-)--later
Libby Putnam--dtr. to Josefa
- Di Rico, Jimmy--NYC breadline, 1932
- Ellington, Schuyler--banker, estate
mgr.
- Elsner, Albrecht & Fred--uncles
to Goldschmidt boys
- Feldstein, Allen--NYC broker
- Forbes-Barton, Regina--D.A.R. zealot
- Foxworth, Irene--traveling vamp
- Glamorgan, Anita--NYC grande dame,
philanthropist
- Goldsmith, Stanley--son to David
- Goldsmith, Konrad Aaron--David's son
- Grieder, Hilda--Villa housekeeper
- Groll, Karolina--elderly cousin
to Josefa
- Havergill, Emily--elderly piano-
teacher
- Johnson, Eastman--(1824-1906)
famed portrait artist
- Lawrence, Jenny--(1924-)wife to
David Goldsmith
- Leggett, Trevor--house trailer creator
- Lowry, Frank Sr. (1886-1968)
- Lowry, Frank Jr. (1924-)
Attys. to Maynard Estate
- Luckner, George (1907-)
Villa gardener
- Luckner, Jimmy--schoolboy, nephew
of Pete
- Luckner, Pete--(1954-)grandson
of George
- Lumsden, Porter--(1880-1964) estate
aide to Hunt Maynard
- McIntyre, Glenn--student works on
Villa tower, 1932
- Mendoza, Marquita--housemaid at
Villa in 1932
- Merritt _____ --Mont. Telephone supt.
- O'Shea, Reefer--addict at Nogg ranch
- Parker, Angel--sells piano to Buddy
- Peckenpaugh, Alberta "Bertie" (1889-
secretary to Hunt
- Jared--her brother
- Alma--his wife, gardener
- Toby--their son
- Petrie, Alice--wife to Eric
- Petrie, Jack--Montana rancher
- Powell, Mrs.--Villa housekeeper
- Putnam, Libby--dtr. to Josefa
- Ragazzo, Tony--NYC school chum of
Nogg

(E)

THE TUSCAN VILLA--by R. L. Merritt

ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF ANCILLARY CHARACTERS***(continued 2.)

Reisfeld, Abraham--(1857-1948)--
NYC bookdealer

Reisfeld, Dr. Emanuel & Emma--
parents to Gretchen

Reisfeld, Gretchen--wife to Buddy

Robbins, Johnny--student works on
Villa tower, 1932

Ruster, Orville--invents garden
tiller

Tabb, Frederick Douglass--(1865-)
coachman

Tabb, Varina--cook at Villa

Templeton, Monty (DeWitt Clinton)
(1906-)Montana rancher,
cousin to Buddy
Rosalie--his wife
Clinton Roderick--his son
Laura "Lolly"--his dtr.

Toner, Jeff--architect, builder

Townsley, Seth--Lake Placid farmer
Bobby--his son

Travulaire--the house trailer

Tyler, Melissa- (1896-) villa cook
Abe--her husband
Marcie--her dtr., pianist

Wolke, Alberich--assumed name of
Aaron Goldschmidt

Wood, Grant--famed artist of
Cedar Rapids

(F)

Richard Lee Merritt
4428--23rd St.,
San Francisco, CA 94114

THE TUSCAN VILLA

by

Richard Lee Merritt

(copy # two)

Richard Lee Merritt
4428--23rd St.,
San Francisco, CA 94114

(Copy # two)

novel started about August 1993
completed July 1996

①

THE TUSCAN VILLA
by Richard Lee Merritt

Raw gusts of November wind tugged at the last of the sere leaves still clinging to the giant, half-dead elms that lined the drive up to the imposing Victorian estate. No sign of sun this morning...

Under its low-pitched tile roof, the square Tuscan tower of the mansion stood dark and defiant against threatening gray clouds that in the night had sprinkled Cedar Rapids with the first snow of the season.

A blue Buick sedan turned in from the Iowa City road to make its way slowly up to the ancient carriage house which had a tipsy decorative dovecot and some remains of fineals, lightning rods and rusty iron cresting. Here the door stood open so the car pulled in to park near some companions-- another dust-covered Buick and over against the wall, a 1912 Detroit Electric runabout, up on blocks, and a closed carriage or brougham that had served the owner's grandfather in the 1890s. These older vehicles, appropriate for a museum, were dimly outlined under dusty plastic sheets.

Hilda Grieder, the housekeeper, had noticed the two little Volkswagens parked outside exactly where they had been before her trip, so Stanley Goldsmith and Helena had not yet returned from California. She turned off her engine before stiffly alighting from her car. Plump and sixty-ish, she made a shapeless figure in her winter coat and muffler. She retrieved a small suitcase from the trunk, then walked to the porte-cochère entrance of the house. There, tall double doors with etched glass opened to a small vestibule where another set of doors impeded the entry of winter winds. Now she was in a wide hall with carved oak paneling and parquet floor. Even now in this weather, a subdued pleasant light filtered through a great stained-glass window

THE TUSCAN VILLA/R. L. Merritt

depicting German peasants, reminiscent of Breughel, harvesting lush crops of grain or engaging in sensual pursuits among the hay ricks. The light flowed down past the carved newel posts and balusters of a winding oak staircase to reveal an imported fireplace of Italian marble, and the warm colors of a superb Shirvan carpet.

The house felt overheated to her. Hilda went to her room at the back of the house to remove her coat. She had just returned from a few days visit with elderly cousins in Columbus Junction. In the big kitchen she started heating water for coffee then noticing how warm the house seemed, she checked the thermostat. It had been turned to 85° Fahrenheit! "Mein Gott, bei ihm ist eine Schraube los," she muttered, remembering a favorite expression of her grandmother. She turned the indicator back to 70°. "Someday he'll burn down this house!"

*My God,
he has a
screw
loose!"*

Donning her apron, she went upstairs to see what Mr. Maynard would like for breakfast. The unused big bedrooms were all closed but Mr. Maynard's bedroom door stood open. She ventured in. His four-poster had been slept in but he was not there. In the corridor she called his name a couple times. No answer. Perhaps he was in his study in that large square room at the top of the house. There he did his writing, and there, over the years, he had concentrated his favorite books and reference works though there were also the proper library on the ground floor and a small office where the Maynards conducted some of their family business. Stanley Maynard

THE TUSCAN VILLA / R. L. Merritt

(3)

liked the expansive views in four directions out over his own land and along the Cedar River though some 20th Century changes such as the blinking lights of a distant shopping center, were anathema to him.

In the tower, he fancied himself rather like Michel de Montaigne, the 16th Century French essayist whose works he had first read in their quaint old French, at Dartmouth. Montaigne wrote of his sanctum sanctorum--an especially private place of books and contemplation that he had created in the stone tower that surmounted the gate to his château.

Reading Montaigne, Stanley thought immediately of his own tower back in Iowa. What undeveloped potential it had! In his boyhood, it had been his special playroom. It was unfinished since the builders of the house had placed two large wooden water tanks there to supply the house and reduce the threat of fire. After leaks developed, his grandfather, the old senator, had had a separate water tower built outside, but the old empty tanks remained in the Tuscan tower. About 1912, his grandfather had doors cut in the tanks so Stanley could have playhouses to amuse himself and his friends who might come out from Cedar Rapids.

From 1914 to 1926, young Stanley (the fourth of that name,) democratically attended the public school system in Cedar Rapids, being taken into town a few memorable times with his grandfather in the old brougham carriage drawn by a pair of sleek black horses and driven by mulatto Fred Tabb in a high silk hat.

THE TUSCAN VILLA / R. L. Merritt

(4)

Usually however, Fred, without the silk hat, drove him in an inconspicuous car, since his father didn't wish to set the boy off from his fellow-students with blatant displays of wealth even though touched, as this was, with an amusing archaic eccentricity. Cedar Rapids had for the most part eschewed the horse.

During these same years, young Stanley (called Buddy by his classmates), evinced an aptitude for music and the piano. His grandmother, Letitia Maynard, who lived until 1930, took him for a week or two each year, sometimes to Chicago or Baltimore, but mostly to New York City where they would stay in the Plaza Hotel, hearing two or three concerts or recitals a day and fitting in the museums. Letitia, a Baltimore native, was an excellent pianist so she undertook to instruct him. It was a no-nonsense immersion with two or more hours of practice each day on the great, heavy square Bechstein that the original Stanley Maynard had brought by river boat from Pittsburgh.

The boy showed such promise that in 1924 his grandmother bought him a Baldwin grand so they could do duets in the music room. They did Mendelssohn, Mozart, Chopin, Scarlatti, Schubert, Schumann and a host of others, but especially they loved Bach, spending countless hours playing the Well-Tempered Clavier, the English and French Suites, the Brandenburg Concerti--filling the old house with wonderful, contrapuntal sounds.

THE TUSCAN VILLA / R. L. Merritt

(5)

In those Coolidge days the entire household, servants and parents alike, conventional and not musically-gifted, nonetheless would listen to the daily concerts from the music room with amazed wonderment and unbounded pride. In the kitchen, Varina Tabb, rolling dough for pies or quietly scouring pans, would give Fred some coffee while remarking, "Dem two! Dey sho' knows how to make dem pianos sing!"

Buddy would always recall his grandmother's lament on first hearing the dulcet tones of the new Baldwin in situ in the music room--"Oh why, oh why, did I wait so long to get a different piano?" Just as in her portrait, she played the Waltz in C-Sharp Minor with superlative feeling then turned slightly with a sweet smile tinged with regret.

The Bechstein, a truly beautiful creation of rosewood and fat, carved legs, was old in the 1890s when they returned from Washington, and technology certainly had passed it by. Grand pianos and even uprights were vastly superior in resonance and pitch. For a while Letitia considered retiring the Bechstein completely. She could get a second grand piano--there was space in the music room--but once Buddy went to college in 1926, there was no second pianist in the villa, so the Bechstein sat quietly against the wainscot awakened from its sleep only by periodic visits from the tuner.

Buddy's parents were loving and indulgent, but it was Letitia who had most to do with his rearing...she who encouraged his intellectual proclivities and interest in the arts.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

(6)

His father liked boating, fishing and business affairs. His mother, Madge, pretty but somewhat vacuous, was largely concerned with her fashionable clothing, her bridge club, her beauty salon, her D. A. R. genealogy, or the pursuit of diets and expensive ointments or cosmetics designed to prolong her youth.

In the early 1920s she would sit there at her dressing table, as he recalled, examining incipient wrinkles, intently applying fragrant pomades or powders, or arranging her recently-bobbed hair with her electric marcel iron. She would tolerate him for a few moments then, with easy dismissal, "run along while mama gets ready." So he would go find his grandma who always had time for him, or he would go to the kitchen or barn to talk with the servants.

The boy's great-grandfather, the first Stanley Huntington Maynard, born in Pennsylvania, had made a fortune in river boats and early railroad development. It was he who built this mansion when he decided to move to Iowa to be near his principal investments.

He engaged a young Chicago architect, Adolphus Reinig, who had studied architecture in England. Maynard and his wife were thinking of having another Greek-Revival house like the one they had in Pittsburgh, but Reinig showed them English pattern books and a new book called Villas and Cottages just published by Calvert Vaux, a young English architect who had come to the United States. Reinig, smitten by the

Italian or Tuscan-Villa style propounded in these books, persuaded the Maynards to build one of these on their gentle hill overlooking the Cedar River, but great-grandfather Maynard only opted for the Tuscan design after a trip east in 1858 when he was entertained at the new Tuscan mansion in Brooklyn of Edwin Litchfield, an associate in railroad construction.

In 1859 the mansion was completed with its distinctive square tower, the wide roof overhangs supported by brackets, its round-topped windows, bays and balconies, loggias, porte-cochère and handsome chimneys. People from miles around drove out to see this remarkable house. It was built of brick but covered with a smooth, beige stucco, incised to simulate limestone. The first Stanley said, "We will call it the Villa Toscana," but some neighbors said Tuscan Villa or Italian Villa, or easiest of all, the Maynard Place.

The second Stanley was already at Dartmouth when the house was built. When the Civil War broke out, he could have paid a substitute as wealthy young men often did in those days, but instead he volunteered for the Fifth Iowa Cavalry. He survived many battles and some superficial wounds, then participated in General James H. Wilson's sweep through the Deep South at Selma, Columbus and Macon in the final days of the war. After mustering out as a major, he finished his education. Later he was induced to enter a political career that culminated in two terms in the United States Senate. In 1872 he married Miss Letitia Willard of Baltimore.

The third Stanley, always known as Hunt Maynard in this

THE TUSCAN VILLA / R. L. Merritt

(8)

family of many Stanleys, was born two years later in the ornate, neo-Gothic, walnut bedstead in their commodious marital chamber on the second floor, while servants scurried and the future senator nervously smoked cigars with his father in the library downstairs.

In the 1870s and 1880s the Maynards, father and son, built some impressive business blocks in Cedar Rapids, Iowa City and Davenport. The fortune grew as they founded or financed new businesses.

When old Stanley, a widower, died in 1895, the Villa Toscana was occupied only by servants until Senator Maynard and Letitia returned the following year from Washington, D. C. They contracted with a Chicago firm to do an extensive renovation of the interior of the house. That's when the new water tower was built. Inside were new bathrooms, heating system, kitchen, electricity, much oak paneling and many stained glass windows.

Senator Stanley Maynard brought back the shiny-black brougham carriage from the capital and would use it until his death in 1921, causing a bit of a stir in Cedar Rapids on his occasional forays. He also brought a courtly, mulatto coachman named Frederick Douglass Tabb. Tabb's wife, Varina, became cook at the Villa. They lived in the low-ceilinged rooms at the top of the carriage house.

Meanwhile, Stanley III (Hunt), had first attended Dartmouth then the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania

where his business and managerial acumen could be honed for his future rôle of controlling the family fortune. In 1905 he married Mrs. Madge Templeton Fulton, a young socialite widow from New York. Thereafter, they lived mostly at the villa with his parents. There was plenty of room for all. Stanley IV was born in 1908 just down the corridor from where his father had been born.

This latest Stanley Maynard developed into a bright boy, handsome, brunet, free of guile and surprisingly unspoiled despite having grown up a single child, surrounded by wealth, doting parents, grandparents and servants. The heavy mantle of an illustrious family seemed not to overburden him. At school he was popular with the other students, participating in swimming, tennis and soft-ball, along with the academic in which he naturally excelled.

In 1926, Stanley IV was off to Dartmouth College for four years of liberal arts, with weekends in Boston or New York City--well-spent for the most part. In 1930, he sailed on the Bremen for what he called his Wanderjahr in Europe. The Wanderjahr became two years, first at the University of Goettingen, then at the Sorbonne in Paris. As sometimes happens with those who have the musical ear, his command of several languages became near-perfect.

At the Sorbonne, or rather down the rue des Ecoles from the Sorbonne, he sat many a day in the old-fashioned brasserie Balzar where Louis, the garçon, knew him well enough to furnish him with a distingué (an out-sized glass) of dark Alsatian beer and a table knife

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

for cutting the pages of the numerous books he read there. He re-read Montaigne's Essays, feeling once more across the centuries a strong affinity for that old French skeptic who sat in a beloved tower, writing of the goodness of humanity and the need for toleration. Stanley felt mysteriously drawn by the story of Montaigne, liking to think of himself as something of a modern re-incarnation of the great Frenchman. Certainly having a first-class tower room helped! He decided that when he got home, he would have the finest tower-room-study in all Iowa! Maybe the wisdom and philosophy would follow!

During the spring break, he persuaded another student, a Czech girl, to go with him to the Dordogne region (which has been called profound or real France). They paid an old peasant, a sort of custodian, to let them visit several times the tower room in Montaigne's château--his celebrated study. Stanley wanted to fix it in his mind.

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

He took pictures in the four directions and overhead, where philosophical sentences and the wisdom of the sages had been carved and painted on the beams. Here, Montaigne had surrounded himself with books, but he had also a 'coign of vantage' from which he could see what was happening outside on his domaine.

Stanley's Czech friend was Josefa Némcová, a nineteen-year-old piano student at the Conservatoire, who lived in the Pension Dampierre in the rue-de-la-Harpe. They had first met when Stanley arranged to take some of his meals at the pension. She was charming--petite, vivacious, with brown curls and laughing brown eyes. Her French and German, like his, were near-perfect, but she wanted to learn English, so they used that language as they strolled the boulevards or visited the Luxembourg or Tuilleries gardens. She invited him to some concerts at the Conservatoire. They heard Heifetz at the Salle Pleyel, Josephine Baker at the Folies-Bergères, Mistinguett at the Moulin Rouge, Maurice Chevalier at the Casino de Paris, Rubinstein doing Chopin.

Of course, they also went to the Opéra, and to the Comédie-Française (for some Molière productions--le Médecin malgré lui, le Tartuffe, l'Avare), then they would eat in one or another of the myriad of fine small restaurants one finds in the Latin Quarter and Saint-Germain-des Prés.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

One afternoon she agreed to go with him to his rooms in the rue de Vaugirard. They drank some pleasant Beaujolais, then for two hours, acquitted themselves well, though somewhat awkwardly, in the game of love, making up with ardor what they lacked in skill and expertise. She had cried a little. He had been surprised that she was a virgin.

Afterward, she rushed away, saying she must be back at the pension in time for the potage. She had some Czech friends at the pension from whom she thought it best to conceal her private life.

The TUSCAN VILLA / R. L. Merritt

When Stanley protested that he should be of more value to her than a 'mess of potage,' she smiled a little, saying, "Ah, but the potage of Mme. Dampierre is superior and worth some sacrifice! But seriously, mon Stanley, you have met Eliška and Maria at the pension. We are all from the Malá Strana in Praha. Our parents are friends, and our papas said we could not go to Paris (a most wicked city,) unless we kept each other out of trouble. In summer we are supposed to return to Praha, how should one say, unsullied, and in due time we will marry good Czech boys who are known and acceptable to our families.

"Eliška and Maria should be encouraged to think that I am spending all my time at the Bibliothèque or shopping along the Quai. If they knew what we have done, it would be only one day before my papa himself, full of rage, would be here and I would be packed off to Praha to live like a nun in prison. Yes, I think I must not come here again. Oh, what we did was wrong!" Her face full of remorse, she squeezed his hand, hugged him a minute then slipped out the door.

Stanley slumped in a chair not knowing what to do. Out the open French windows across the sunlit, stone-paved courtyard he saw the bright red geraniums on a neighbor's balcony. Below, he saw the concierge's lace curtains flutter as Josefa hurried by on her way to the street.

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

Thoughts flooded his mind. The sudden emptiness of the room without Josefa--how oppressive. He must be in love. He must get her back. Should he follow her now? He could never again find anyone so superlative. He remembered her delicious sense of humor--how she posed herself in the manner of each of the different, historic, French ladies whose stone statues adorned the Luxembourg Garden. He remembered the spirited discussions and disagreements they had about each musician's performance. How that young Italian, (was it Pardini?) had butchered the Eleventh Mozart Sonata. Too fast, too slow, too loud, too soft! What a fight they had! How alive she was! No other girl could discuss these things--no other girl that he knew.

He recalled the day they had found some exceptional perfume in a tiny boutique near the Place Vendôme. Singularly expensive it was, but he bought her a large bottle over her protests. Every day they met she would use it, but she had to hide the bottle so the other girls (on tight budgets,) wouldn't ask questions. Even now, the hint of that fragrance in his room only enhanced his longing for her.

Unlike most of the students, Stanley had plenty of money though he lived in a quiet, unostentatious way. In 1930, he had attended his beloved grandmother's funeral then discovered she had left him a small fortune. Additionally, his father had assured him the family resources were intact, despite the

economic crisis, and in time it would all be his. At the American Express he had an unlimited letter of credit, at least until he tried to buy the Eiffel Tower or the Louvre.

But money meant nothing now if he could not get Josefa back. Thus he sulked in a hopeless state known to lovers. He went walking up and down the Boulevard St-Michel from the Panthéon down to the Seine, stopping near the rue-de-la-Harpe to drink three apéritifs in a street cafe, hoping he might see Josefa.

Next he went to hear a ~~sublime~~ Bach concert played on the famed organ, greatest in all France, in the vast Église St-Sulpice. But his mood would not change. After examining the Visconti fountain--la fontaine des quatre in Place St-Sulpice with its four famous bishops, and searching for solace in the features of Fénelon, whose Télémaque he had studied at Dartmouth, he wandered back toward the Seine, thinking of ending it all by throwing himself in from the Pont-Neuf. Unfortunately, he was a good swimmer--his father had seen to that, so he dragged across the Parvis Notre-Dame to the little Square Viviani to see an ancient tree, a Robinia pseudacacia or black locust imported from America, planted in 1601, supported by a great crutch and said to be the oldest tree in Paris. Then he sauntered disconsolately to the fontaine de Médicis in the Luxembourg Garden where he and Josefa loved to watch the evening light change in the tree tops. Students and other lovers strolled there, but he was desperately alone.

Thus it continued for a couple days until he heard a light tap at his door. It was Josefa! "I couldn't stay away. I tried and it would be better, but it's no use." They were embracing. She touched the dimples on his face which had just switched from

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

morose to elated. She was sobbing. "I think I'm in love! Isn't that silly?" She pulled a little fist across her cheek.

"Me too," he whispered between kisses.

Several weeks later when Eliška and Maria had gone for the spring vacation to the Côte d'Azur, Josefa begged off, saying she would stay in Paris for extra study. Then Stanley took Josefa to Périgord where they rented bicycles to tour the ancient countryside east of Bordeaux. They stayed in little auberges sampling the fabled food and wines of the district. That's when they found Montaigne's small château.

Stanley told Josefa about the tower room in Iowa. When he went home he would really make something of it.

Following a few more days of sight-seeing in the Dordogne Valley, then to Rocamadour, Albi and Périgueux, they took the train back to Paris. Stanley accompanied Josefa to the door of the pension, then went to his own rooms. Next day, they would meet at noon at the little Restaurant-des-Deux-Mondes in the rue Saint-André-des-Arts.

When Josefa didn't appear at the appointed hour, he waited an hour more, then walked over to the pension. Mme. Dampierre came out of her kitchen clearly very upset. "Ah Monsieur Maynard, you are now here! It has been such a scene! It is not proper to treat honest people this way. So much turmoil! So much screaming! I protest, this house is respectable. Never have we seen or heard such things. Up and down the street we are the laughing stock. They came last evening, yes? They were in a large touring car, three of them together. They had the great moustache all, and all so angry! You cannot imagine the anger.

THE TUSCAN VILLA by R. L. Merritt

They were the papas--all big like Max Schmeling! They speak not the French nor any civilized tongue, so who knows what is happening? Up and down the stairs! Through the corridors! Such bedlam! In the chambres, in the salon, in the salle-à-manger, même dans la cuisine. It is répréhensible. No one goes in the cuisine without my permission. On ne fait pas ça dans les pays civilisés!"

Mme. Dampierre collapsed into a chair. "My pension, it is now ruined. All will turn aside and go elsewhere."

Stanley tried to calm her. He must learn what had really happened. After a few moments during which she calmed herself with two cognacs, she resumed the story. "Mlle. Eliška, she have a moment in the pantry when she hide from the wrath of her papa. She very afraid but she tell me those girls they have all first come here to Paris after telling the pères they will be good girls and will study only the books and the musique. Now, she and Maria they are bad girls at the Côte d'Azur, but it is all right since the papas, they don't know, yes?

"Then they come back to Paris, yes, and Mlle. Josefa, she is not here, but she have tell them she will be here and will only study at Bibliothèque-Sainte-Geneviève, and she will play the piano. But she is not here, so Mlle. Eliška, she send wire to Prague to Papa Nemeč that Mlle. Josefa is lost, perhaps in the Seine, who knows, yes? So in one day all those three papas they are here. They are so angry all, you don't know. They say girls must go back to Prague à l'instant, and already enough damage has been done. It is all over. It is termine! Such foul accusations they make against l'honneur français! Epouvantable!

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"So at once everything is packed up and the girls are dragged to the touring car. Oh, les girls, they are so sad, so distract--the hair it is not comb; they are dress for the boudoir, yes, but not for the street. But by these villainous papas all is piled in and the car is gone. All the neighbors in the rue-de-la-Harpe they are watching, and how they gloat, it is for them so amusing spectacle. But Monsieur Maynard, it is for me the désastre! Je vous jure, ça m'énerve!" Madame Dampierre poured two more cognacs--one for Stanley. "But Monsieur Maynard, I have forget. Mlle. Josefa she is giving to me for you this leetle note. It is perhaps, yes, the billet doux?" Pulling the note from her apron pocket, Mme. Dampierre gave him a fleeting conspiratorial smile.

Stanley, not about to share the note with Madame, thanked her and departed after a few soothing words. He too, was vastly upset by this sudden, violent change. He made his way to a bench in the Place Saint-Michel overlooking the Seine and Notre-Dame. There he opened the note.

"Stanley, mon cher, such a catastrophe! I have only a second to write this. Our papas, all three, have discovered that we do more than study. It is as they expected since they had a low opinion of Paris. They say that in Paris all virtue is lost. So now they have come, all three, and we have no choice--we must all return to Praha. Please, please, do not follow. For us,

you and me, it is over. You do not know my father. I will try to write later when things are more calm. My father is so angry he could kill someone. Please, dear Stanley, be happy. Try to forget me. It is over. I will think only some day of a philosopher in a beautiful tower far away.

Josefa"

Stanley, in the pit of despair, hadn't a remote idea of what to do. He threw himself totally into his studies, early and late. He would also go to the Conservatoire where he was permitted to use a practice piano.

Two weeks later, the concierge gave him a letter from Prague. It was from Josefa. There was no return address.

"Mon cher Stanley, you will not hear from me again. I am now married! It will work out all right. My husband is Antonin Holeček who is an engineer. He is twenty-six. He is very good to me. He says he has loved me for ten years and was waiting for me to grow up! I suppose I am now grown up!

"My father was unbelievably furious in Paris. Only when Antonin and I were married did he once more smile. He can be a loving papa but in our family his word is law. Don't think the Czechs have a medieval society. We are really very modern. Only my papa doesn't yet know it.

"I will finish my studies here. Most probably

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

I will be a piano teacher. We have in Praha a fine musical tradition, for many hundreds of years. Even Mozart himself lived here for a time.

"Remember our ridiculous discussion of the A-major Sonata as played by the little Italian, Luigi Pardini? You said, 'Execrably done.' I said, 'Well done.' Now I have a confession to make. I agreed with you entirely, but I needled you. I was the advocate of the Devil, isn't it, to see your face with its controlled anger, its disdain, its condescension, and I am all along making you defend your hypothesis, (and secretly agreeing)! It is thus the professors make our brains work. That was part of our education in Paris. It was a delicious springtime in France. When I hear the A-major Sonata, I will think of Stanley de la tour toscane!

Josefa"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

1932

In July, Stanley took the boat train from the Gare Saint-Lazare to sail home on the Mauretania. He had a steamer trunk and four wooden boxes of books.

A few days later, after a smooth crossing, the great liner majestically moved past the Statue of Liberty to be eased to its North River berth. Stanley shed a tear or two while reciting to himself Scott's words, "Breathes there the man, with soul so dead, who never to himself hath said, 'This is my own, my native land!'" He pulled his hat down and faced the water to hide his emotion from the fellow passengers.

Now he was approached by Irene Foxworth, a flapperish twit from Galveston who had indefatigably plagued him on the journey. She envisioned some sort of liaison. Her unimproved Texas accent followed him everywhere. She had changed to his table for dinner. He tried to avoid her but she would magically materialize to shamelessly flirt in every situation. He was too gentlemanly to definitively send her packing. Now, she caught him with the patriotic tears on his face.

Irene said, "You must come to my cabin now for a little champagne. I have had some sent up just for you and me. We dock in an hour. Later, we can meet in New York. I'll be staying at the Astor in Times Square. There's plenty to do in New York. You will call me, won't you? We can have such fun together. I've heard there are oodles of speakeasies! Why,

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

even on West Fifty-second Street, ever so many!

I know that because one of my boy friends took me there in April when we went abroad. We had a swell time I can tell you, but some fellas don't have a lot of class like you. I think I better be careful about who I go out with. A girl has to take care of herself these days." She winked at him and chucked him under the chin. "Oh, I wanted to feel that dimple-chin, you're cute you know. I can't resist boys with dimple-chins!"

He thought she was a little amusing, like an amateur Mae West, but he didn't have time for her. He excused himself precipitously on some pretext of last-minute packing. He managed to evade her during customs. Looking back from his taxi window, he saw her surrounded by her baggage, searching the scene for him. He had escaped! New York was big enough, he would be safe there! He went to the Plaza Hotel for several days.

Weather was unseemly hot but he walked around renewing his acquaintance with the great city. On the Plaza, near his hotel, the great Vanderbilt mansion that he remembered, had disappeared. A new commercial building was there. There were some notable new buildings--all started before the market crash--the Empire State, the Chrysler Building, the new Waldorf and the Rockefeller Center complex.

That evening, after calling his parents to announce his return,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

he went to Greenwich Village to a little, intellectual speakeasy he remembered from Dartmouth days. Depending on politics and payoffs, speakeasies came and went, but this one was still there. A diminutive, thirtyish woman with a sad, sophisticated air, competently played Chopin on an old Steinway grand. The clientele were mostly budding writers, artists, poets and journalists, plus students from nearby N. Y. University.

Stanley had several drinks. They were serving real Scotland Scotch smuggled down from Canada. He started to speak with the pianist whose name was Maude. He bought her some drinks. She found him attractive as indeed he was when the alcohol loosened his habitual reserve. He was well-heeled, well-dressed, young, handsome, intelligent, pleasant, in a word, impossible to resist.

When Maude went home, Stanley went with her. She had a little apartment in a four-story, Federal-style, brick house near the Jefferson Market Court House. Later, he recalled only hazily the things they did that night. They were totally uninhibited, undressing one another, seeking every possible sensation of love-making, except the most obvious, that they were not in love. But they were good for each other for that night. When it was over, they wished each other well and went on their way.

Stanley, worse for wear, left the apartment about six A.M. Near the Courthouse, a florist was setting up his display.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Stanley bought a couple dozen roses, red and yellow, which he took back to hang on Maude's door. When Maude went looking for her milk bottle, she found the roses. "Now, that was a mensch," she laughed to herself. Maude felt wonderful.

Stanley ate some ham and eggs at a small restaurant then found the subway back to the Plaza, where he slept most of the day. The best way to weather a hangover was to stay asleep!

One day he went to the old-book stores down on Fourth Ave. below Fourteenth Street. He found another couple boxes full of books which he had shipped to Cedar Rapids.

Another day, he was walking along West Forty-third Street when he came across a great line of shabbily-dressed men, four or five abreast. The line was several blocks long. "What's happening?" he asked a young man in the queue. The man sized him up. Stanley felt uncomfortable in his good clothing. He was the only man with a decent pair of shoes in the block.

"Well, ya see, (dis heh's a line o' guys dat ain't got nuttin' to eat. Quite a lot of dem ain't dey? An' dey's more across da country. I guess America don't need us no more. Ain't no jobs, ain't no way to feed yer kids, ain't no way to pay da rent. Shoes all busted out. Hoover, he sez prosperity's jes aroun' da corneh. I tell ya, dey's gonna be a revolution one o' dese days. When dem reds starts to talk down to Union Square, it makes sense to us. We're honest guys for da most part.

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

We wanna woik but dey ain't no woik, an' more's losin' jobs ever day. My las' job wuz toiteen mont's ago. Well, we come oveh heh an' stan' in line for two hours an' we git a meal, a hot meal--oh, it ain't much, mostly beans an' cabbage, but sometimes a little meat. But da time don't mean nuttin' to us, cause we ain't got nuttin' to do anyway.

"Dey's some o' dem rich people like Rockefelleh an' Vanderbilt maybe--I don't know none o' dem, but dey gives money to pay fer dese-heh meals. It's called da One-Cent Restaurant, but dey gives twen'y meals fer a dollah donated, an' dat makes five cents don't it? Hey, misteh, ya ain't got a match, have ya? I got dis heh butt dat I jes foun' on da street."

The line wasn't moving so they sat down on a low brick wall. Stanley gave the man a small box of matches. "Where do you go at night? Where do you sleep?", he asked.

A Sixth Avenue elevated train clattered by.

"It's a long story, misteh." The young man's blue eyes crinkled with a knowing smile. "Dey's flop houses an' settlements an' doorways, an' sometimes oveh-night movie houses or maybe park benches 'til da flatfoots chase us off. Now my ma, she's got a cramped, little place oveh in Brooklyn an' I go deh onct in a while, but it's sleepin' on da floah wit' two liddle bruddehs. Still, I can do

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

some laundry an' take a bat' down da hall an' my muddeh,
she gives me some oatmeal or somethin'."

Just then, a bushy-browed, hulking man in a stained, shapeless fedora addressed Stanley belligerently, "Hey mister pretty pants, we don't allow no buckin' da line. Git back to da end o' da line like everybody else. I bin watchin' you!"

The blue-eyed young man interposed, "Come on Jake, relax. Dis heh is my frin' dat ain't in da line. Ya can see he don't need it. Me an' him is sittin' heh talkin' oveh da problems of da woikin' class. Leave us be." The bushy-browed man appeared mollified.

Now the blue-eyed young man introduced himself. "I'm Jimmy DiRicco an' dis heh," indicating another man, "is my buddy, Joe. He's from oveh in Joisey. We bin lucky, Joe an' me--we got us a piano box oveh in our Hooverville--dat's East Forty-second by da East Riveh. (Joe says he can really sleep peaceful deh wit' four walls an' a roof!) We wuz oveh to Foist Avenue one day an' da piano box jes falls off a truck so me an' him, we hersted it an' got ourselves a ready-made country villa! We sleep deh mos' nights but it ain't gonna be so grand when da snow flies. Den, I guess we rents out da villa an' heads fer Florida, huh Joe? We can try sleepin' unner dem palm trees. Ha, Ha!!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Joe gave a gapped-tooth grin.

In the New York papers, Stanley had been reading about thousands of jobless people living in shanty-towns called Hoovervilles under bridges and along railroad yards.

He read how Governor Roosevelt had been nominated for president by the Democrats in Chicago a couple weeks earlier. Roosevelt had promised a New Deal. He would try anything to find the right formula to restore prosperity.

"What's yer name, misteh?" Jimmy asked suddenly. You talk kinda funny--classy-like, like on da radio or maybe oveh to one o' dem fancy hotels!"

Stanley smiled. "Like maybe the Plaza?"

"Yah, da Plaza, dat's it, or da Waldorf, one o' dem places."

"My name is Stan Maynard, and I'm from Iowa. That's probably why I speak differently from you."

"Ioway, wow!" blurted Jimmy. Dat's out west o' Joisey ain't it? I ain't neveh knew nobody from out deh! Guess dey got Indians an' buffaloes, an' all dat? I seen it in da movies.

Stanley laughed. "No, it's pretty much just farms and little towns. But tell me more about where you eat."

Jimmy resumed. "Well, we come heh to dis place, an' dey's also a place called da Municipal Lodging House dat has a

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

breadline, an' dey's da Salavation Ahmy. Den usually on Fridays we goes to my goylefrin's place. I got dis goylefrin' Maisie, see, dat still has a job. She slings hash on Toid Avenue an' her an' anuddeh hasheh, dey have dis apahtment where dey give spaghetti pahties on Friday night. Dey whips up a big bucket o' spaghetti an' about six o' us guys goes to git somethin' to eat. Dey let us take a bat' deh too, but da lan'lord, he don't like it-- us usin' all dat hot wateh an' all. He says he don't want all dem bums hangin' aroun'. Guess dat makes me one o' dem bums from Brooklyn, huh? Ha, Ha!"

Joe gave another gap-toothed, appreciative grin.

They watched a couple street-sweepers working down the gutter. Joe cleaned his nails with a pocket knife. "It ain't good times, mister. We used to have good jobs, but now they ain't nuttin': We even tried fer street-sweeper jobs, Jimmy an' me, but they wuz maybe four hunert guys an' two jobs! Why, we'd go anywhere fer a job, even up to Poughkeepsie!" This was not meant as a joke. Stanley mused how Poughkeepsie might be ultima Thule for some people.

They stood when the line started to move. Stanley pulled a twenty dollar bill from his wallet, handing it to Jimmy. "Give this to Maisie to help buy some more spaghetti."

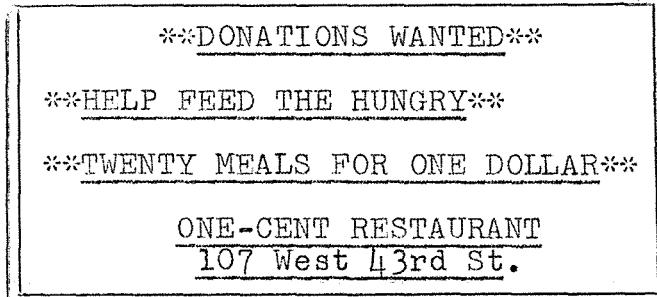
Jimmy protested, "We ain't beggars, misteh."

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

Stanley said, "I know that, Jimmy. Maybe sometime things will take a turn, and you'll be in good shape again. Then you can help somebody else."

They shook hands and parted. Jimmy looked like he was about to cry.

Stanley was overwhelmed as he looked up and down the row of defeated, hungry and sad faces. For the first time, the real meaning of the world economic crisis penetrated his consciousness. "Talk about living in ivory towers," he thought. "What's happening to America?" He went to the head of the line where there was a sign:



He copied the address and that evening in the elegant hotel room he made out a check for one thousand dollars to put in the post.

Next morning he took the train home--the Twentieth Century Limited to Chicago, then the Rock Island to Cedar Rapids.

Coming out of the home station with his hand baggage, he saw an elderly cab driver sitting in a shiny Model-A Ford. "Do you know where the Villa Toscana is--out near Bertram?"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"Sure, you mean old Senator Maynard's place? Who don't know where that place is? It's the biggest house around here. You know them people?"

"I sort of know them, yes," Stanley smiled back. "Could you take me out there?"

"Sure mister, hop in. Been travelin'?"

"Yes, I just got here from New York. I saw a lot of hungry and unemployed men there a couple days ago. How are things out here?"

"Things ain't good here nor nowhere, mister, but we're better off than the big cities, being close to the food supply. But we had banks went bust, and farmers can't pay their mortgages, and some of the businesses been going belly up. People are scared. It ain't good times. I had a little carpet business I lost early this year, couldn't pay my bills, so I took this old Model-A and went into the taxi business. It's pretty slow too, but me and the Mrs., we got a paid-for house and a couple acres that we just planted full of tomatoes, potatoes and everything to eat, so our family ain't going hungry, nosiree. But we're better off than some. Right this minute the wife's puttin' up one hundred quarts of this and that and she'll be doin' it all summer--some to eat and some to sell."

Stanley looked about at the clean, wide, well-paved streets with their giant shade trees and neat neighborhoods. The pioneers had built a fine town here. It didn't appear poverty-stricken though he noticed some boarded-up store fronts with "for lease" signs. Some buildings needed paint.

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

31

In a few moments, the taxi turned up the elm-lined drive to the villa, coming to a stop under the porte-cochère where the doors stood open as they often did on warm summer days. Stanley leaped up the steps to bellow in an unaccustomed and indecorous way, "Anybody home?"

He gave the cab driver ten dollars for the two dollar fare before recovering his bags. Just then his parents appeared, both fairly transported with bliss to have their remarkable son home after two years absence. Such kissing and hugging! The startled cab driver broke into a wide grin when Stanley winked and called out, "I'm home now! Thanks for the ride!"

As the cab departed, Stanley looked about at the grounds and up at the familiar facade where a luxuriant Boston Ivy climbed nearly to the Tower balconies. "It all looks wonderful--so prosperous!"

His parents, too--definitely prosperous and more portly than he remembered them. His father answered, "We had all the wooden parts, windows, cornices, painted last fall and now we have a new gardener, George Luckner, who really knows his business. Green thumb, I guess. He spends a lot of time up on ladders pruning back that vine because we don't want it on the painted wood. But come inside. We surely have a lot to talk over. Not married yet?"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"Dad, I'm barely twenty-four. It's not too late. I thought I found a girl in Paris, but she married another man, so I'm still looking!"

His mother, quite interested in this subject, interjected, "We don't want you marrying one of those foreign girls--especially from Paris--the things one hears! Goodness, there are plenty of fine, wholesome, American girls, beautiful, accomplished, all you could ask. Why I could make up a big list just from here in Cedar Rapids. We'll have parties here or at the country club. Just wait until they see you! They'll all be after my boy! Somebody will be lucky to get you!"

"Mama, you embarrass me," Stanley chuckled. I can't be that good. Anyway, you let me take care of things like that. No plotting, no parties."

They had moved into the spacious entry hall with its soft colored light from the leaded window above. "Look at those busy old peasants! I love that window," Stan exclaimed.

His mother made a wry face. "Well, I don't like it. The colors are all right, but the subject matter! Shocking! Certainly not fit for a private house. I tried to get your father to have it replaced and he just won't hear of it. In fact, if I had my way, we would move into

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

a nice new house in town, in a good neighborhood, and all modern. Surely would be an improvement over this old pile out in the middle of nowhere!"

Both Stanley and his father were disturbed to hear the old villa referred to in this way by Madge. The villa was a central part of their lives. Stanley senior soothed her, "Madge, the town is only five minutes away. You've got more of everything desirable than 98% of the women of Iowa. Why can't you be happy? Besides, the villa's only 73 years old.

Madge sniffed, "We'll talk about that later. Now Stannery, (Stanley's self-given baby name) your room is all ready. You go up and wash your face. Do you want a nap, darling boy, after that long train ride? We have so much to talk about. I declare, your letters were so short, you'll have to tell us everything about Europe!"

Stanley had been away for most of six years. The old servants he remembered were all gone, all replaced. He missed his grandmother, especially in the music room where they had spent so much time together in his early years. But the great house, its contents and surroundings, appeared basically unchanged. The pianos needed tuning. He summoned the tuner next day.

He visited the carriage house where his parents' two new Buicks sat side by side. Then, as when he was a child, he went to sit first in his grandfather's brougham,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

then in his grandmother's electric car. These vehicles, though not used for years, were kept polished by the servants. He smiled, thinking how he used to pretend he was driving. The electric car had a stick rather than a steering wheel.

Saving best for last, he finally climbed the stairs to the tower room. Would it be as pleasing as his memory had painted it? The heavy walnut door at the top landing stuck a little before yielding. The room was dark. There was no electricity here. All the round-arched windows, two to a side, had fitted, interior shutters with adjustable louvers, now closed, which could fold back into the thick masonry walls. Stanley edged over to open a shutter. Light flooded in. The room was magnificent! His family had ignored its potential long enough! It was about twenty-five feet square like his grandparent's bedroom just below, but unfinished, with rough underflooring and a ceiling open fifteen feet to the substantial rafters. The old, black water tanks with his "playhouse" doors were still there. He opened the shutters all around, taking in each splendid vista. He looked inside the tanks, thinking back to when his dignified grandfather, with cane and white beard, had first shown him how these were to be his special places--where he would keep his most valued possessions--polished rocks, shells, arrow heads, a collection of old coins, a stamp album, a box of marbles, a harmonica, a toy violin.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

The light inside the tanks was scant, but then he remembered his grandfather had them wired for electricity in about 1912, saying, "We don't want little Stanley burning down the Villa Toscana with candles or coal oil." The switch was placed low for a four-year-old. When Stanley pressed it, the clear bulbs with pointed tips, thick with dust, glowed weakly but faithfully.

There the collections were, just as he had left them, (each in a cedar-wood, cigar box from his grandfather.), lined up on low shelves alongside his child's writing desk. There were several children's chairs of rattan and a couple small hooked rugs his grandmother had made for him.

From the marble collection Stanley picked out a glassy that had been a favorite. It had swirls of blue on one side and brown on the other. He had won it fair and square in the playground at Jefferson School. He lifted the box to inhale the delightful fragrance of the cedar with its hint of tobacco. Wondrous that this scent could hold over the years! The boxes were stamped with the picture of a mustachioed hidalgo and the words Miraflores Habaña. Perhaps these boxes had seen the fabled "smoke-filled rooms" of Washington where weighty decisions were made in the 1890's.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

On the little desk were his stamp album and some childhood adventure books--Tom Swift, the Hardy Boys, the Rover Boys. All his later books were downstairs in his bedroom, the music room, or the family library.

He had rarely come to the tower after 1920 or so. Here the earliest memories crowded in. He recalled one exciting day in 1918 when he and some school friends had defended this citadel from a determined, German attack. The Huns, Hussars, howitzers and Zeppelins were closing in with a frightful bedlam of simulated warfare, bombs and clattering machine guns. The tiny garrison had been saved when his parents and grandparents advanced up the driveway in the big, black Buick. Then the wounded and exhausted heroes were treated in the kitchen with peach jam sandwiches and buttermilk administered by his good old friend, the mulatto cook, Varina Tabb.

Stan thought about the Tabbs. They had always been there when he needed a friend. Old Fred Tabb, who seemed older than he really was, would tell him stories about Reconstruction days in Northern Virginia and Washington, D. C. "I wuzn't nevah no slave, Mistah Stan, but I sho' wuz da nex' thing to it! I wuz bo'n in Washington, jes toward da end o' da Civil War--no pa, yunastan', leastwise, none yo' could lay a hand on, an' my ma, she wuz a

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

'contraband,' one o' dem slaves dat had belonged to da Tabb fambly, but she done excaped to freedom an' wuz a housemaid.

"I growed up dere an' become a coachman, den married wit' Varina. Yo' grandpa, he hired us bot' when him an' Mrs. Letitia come to Washington, so dat's how we ended up heah. We dint nevah heah o' no places like Ioway back in dem days!"

Stanley resolved to go call on the Tabbs who had retired after Letitia died. Hunt gave them a generous pension and a little rent-free, brick house in Cedar Rapids.

At length, Stanley pulled himself away from this flood of reverie. When he went below to ask his parents permission to create a study in the tower, his father said, "Why not? It's been your room already for twenty years!" So the project started.

In town, he found a young, impecunious architect, Jeff

born 1907
app 23 m
1932

Toner, who was also a fine craftsman, eager to work.

Together they made the plans. The job was done that autumn and winter with the aid of two young students.

Stanley felt a nostalgic pang as the old tanks were dismantled to go crashing, bit by bit, out the window to the driveway. The students, Johnny and Glenn, cut and stacked the old wood for kindling. Heating ducts, water

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

pipes, and a proper electrical system were extended from below. There was a new, small bathroom. The walls and ceiling were insulated, then paneled with oak, like the entry hall of the villa. The beams were left exposed to be incised and painted in the manner of Montaigne's 'librairie.'

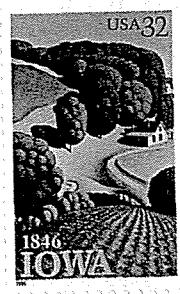
THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Built-in oak bookshelves lined much of the walls. The young builder, duplicating the ample, beautiful woodwork of the house, framed the windows and door. At the end, a maple floor went down. The shutters and all the woodwork were finished in a warm, golden oak. The old walnut door was re-finished to match the other wood.

It was an admirable tower room, certainly far less austere than Montaigne's, but this was a different century.

One day in Cedar Rapids, Jeff Toner introduced Stanley to the noted regional artist, Grant Wood. Jeff had been a student at Wood's art colony in nearby Stone City on the Wapsi River. Wood, hearing of their project, was greatly intrigued because of his strong interest in old Iowa houses and the pioneer heritage. Stanley invited him out to the Villa. Wood, also a notable craftsman, had been building beautiful traditional houses in the area. When Wood saw the views from the tower, he said, "I'd like to paint these scenes, all four of them! There aren't so many high places in Iowa from which to paint unless you go up in a balloon!" Stanley pounced on the idea. Wood was busy, but in the spring of 1933 he managed several weeks in the tower, completing four oils titled simply Vista From Villa Toscana, East, West, North and South. In these paintings he expunged evidences of the twentieth century. They resembled his

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt



40

← detail from
Young Corn

much better-known Young Corn or Stone City--stylized rolling Iowa hills, partly ploughed, rich with fertility, nostalgia, wind mills and tidy farms. Stanley bought the paintings on the spot--(eight hundred dollars for the four,) then hung them, each on the correct wall.

When Madge discovered that Grant Wood was in the house, she was both excited and dismayed. She had read in the papers that he was a celebrity even in Chicago and New York City. She knew vaguely, that he was widely praised in the art world. On the other hand, his recent painting, Daughters of Revolution, had infuriated many of her friends in the D.A.R., especially a certain Mrs. Regina Forbes-Barton, who correctly considered it a scarcely-veiled attack on themselves and their honored traditions.

In recent years, some of the D.A.R. leaders had objected to the installation of a Wood-designed, World War memorial leaded window in the Veterans' Building, because Wood had the window made in Germany. Thus, a feud had started between Wood and the patriotic organizations.

Madge kept herself out of the way so she wouldn't have to meet the artist on the stairway. She entertained the Daughters with a tea about that time, but made certain Wood wouldn't be there that day, nor would she permit the ladies to visit the newly-renovated tower room even though some asked to see

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

it. She felt trapped. The D. A. R. must not know that Grant Wood had been in her house. Conversely, she knew that to remonstrate with her son would have little effect, so she bore her cross in silence.

42

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

For Madge, the greatest problem was Mrs. Forbes-Barton and her coterie. Letitia had known how to handle her. Madge did not.

Mrs. Regina Adams Forbes-Barton, stalwart D.A.R., had blood of enviable blend. She had five ancestors from five different original colonies, who had taken up the sword to throw off the burdensome yoke imposed by the British tyrant, George III. She never tired of recounting how, at a certain convention in Philadelphia, the President-General herself, had asked Mrs. Forbes-Barton to come sit on the podium with three other ladies of near-equal lustre, to receive the accolade of the assembled Daughters.

Mrs. Forbes-Barton had led campaigns in 1917 to rid Cedar Rapids of Meissen porcelain and other such nefarious materials. Personally and publicly she had smashed three Dresden dancing figurines. "Go ye and do likewise," she thundered. "Patriotism is more than just an abstract concept. Rather must we live it and so govern our lives that our blessed republic will be ever safe from those who plot its destruction!"

Most of the ladies, with patriotism less fervid, hid their Teutonic dishes on back shelves or in attic chests, so not to incur condescending, withering stares from Mrs. Forbes-Barton or her acolytes.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Mrs. Forbes-Barton wanted to eject, or at least persecute the large Bohemian community, the first of whom had come to Cedar Rapids in 1852. She said they were born in the Austrian Empire, consequently being as responsible as the Germans for the war. She reluctantly gave up that plan when other Daughters argued that the Bohemians by now were mostly American-born and that these Czechs opposed the Hapsburg Monarchy as much **as did** America itself.

She did, however, organize a boycott of a German-born butcher who, though a citizen since 1897, kept his German name--Klaus Harzheimer,--cut his meat in the German way, wore a Kaiser Wilhelm mustache, and was heard to use the German language in the back of his shop when speaking with his wife.

The butcher-shop business was saved only because after the Allied Powers defeated Germany in 1918, Herr Harzheimer was no longer perceived as a threat, and his pork, (from the nearby German Amana Villages,) was known to be especially succulent.

Once the war was won, Mrs. Forbes-Barton knew she had found her métier. The republic, ever beset with peril, needed a vigilant champion and she would be it!

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

In 1920, she headed a local committee in support of Attorney-General Palmer's Raids to round up all 'alien Bolsheviks' and anarchists for deportation. She applauded when anarchist Emma Goldman was sent back to Russia. She warned darkly of subversive elements still not ferreted out in Des Moines and Davenport. All labor unions were suspect. All foreign-born individuals must be closely watched. She cultivated her like-minded contacts in the American Legion.

After disposing of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927, she took up the cudgel against Grant Wood for installing his German-made, stained-glass, memorial window in the Cedar Rapids Memorial Building.

To her chagrin, most of the ladies could not engender wild enthusiasm for her assorted campaigns. She believed the current generation of Americans scarcely measured up. She could be caustically critical even of her sister D.A.R.s.

She was not often received at the Villa Toscana during Letitia's lifetime, that is, before 1930. Letitia found her insufferably offensive, particularly after a certain day in 1918 when Madge had entertained the D.A.R. group. Mrs. Forbes-Barton, in her peremptory manner, had blatantly and tactlessly told Letitia the stained-

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

glass window should be removed from the villa stairway since it was so obviously German, in addition to being "repellently licentious."

Letitia had coldly looked up and down the imposing bulk of the D.A.R. crusader, shriveling her down to size. Then, in her most genteel Baltimore tones, slowly and clearly for all the room to hear, "Mrs. Forbes-Barton, you are here as the guest of my daughter-in-law, therefore you may stay. I assure you, however, you will not be asked again. Further, you should know that over the generations, the Maynards have proven competent to make their own decisions. I personally chose this window in 1896 and have not regretted the choice. If changes are made in the Villa Toscana, we, the Maynards, will make them. We do not seek, nor require, your advice. Good afternoon!" Thereupon, with a slight bow, a smile and nod in the direction of the Daughters gathered there in shocked silence, Letitia regally walked, silk dress rustling, from the drawing room.

Never had the Daughters seen anyone so thoroughly dispose of the combative Forbes-Barton dragon. Secretly, many were pleased. Forbes-Barton herself, at a loss for words, was confused and crest-fallen. In a couple moments she gathered her knitting, her reticule, hat and

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

cape, to be driven back to Cedar Rapids by a sympathetic friend.

Letitia had never before been known to address anyone in this manner. She was always the very essence of propriety and grace, but Mrs. Forbes-Barton with her over-bearing, ex-cathedra manner, had a genius for arousing opposition in every quarter.

On the way home, Mrs. Forbes-Barton uttered scarcely a word to her companion. She had lost face in the presence of those she considered her friends and supporters. No one had spoken in her defense. For perhaps the first time she knew humiliation--a most unpleasant state. She fulminated with dark thoughts of 'the haughty Mrs. Maynard and her German window, while our boys are dying on the Marne!'

She rallied in ensuing weeks, but bitterly realized she must not attack or malign the Maynards. They were simply unassailable! In Letitia she had met her match. She had been bested! She must find more vulnerable targets.

She would have success in other areas of the struggle. In November 1918 she forced the Kaiser from his throne. She sent the anarchists and communists packing in the early 1920's. Then she went after Grant Wood's German window. The window was installed but not dedicated. That was only a partial victory.

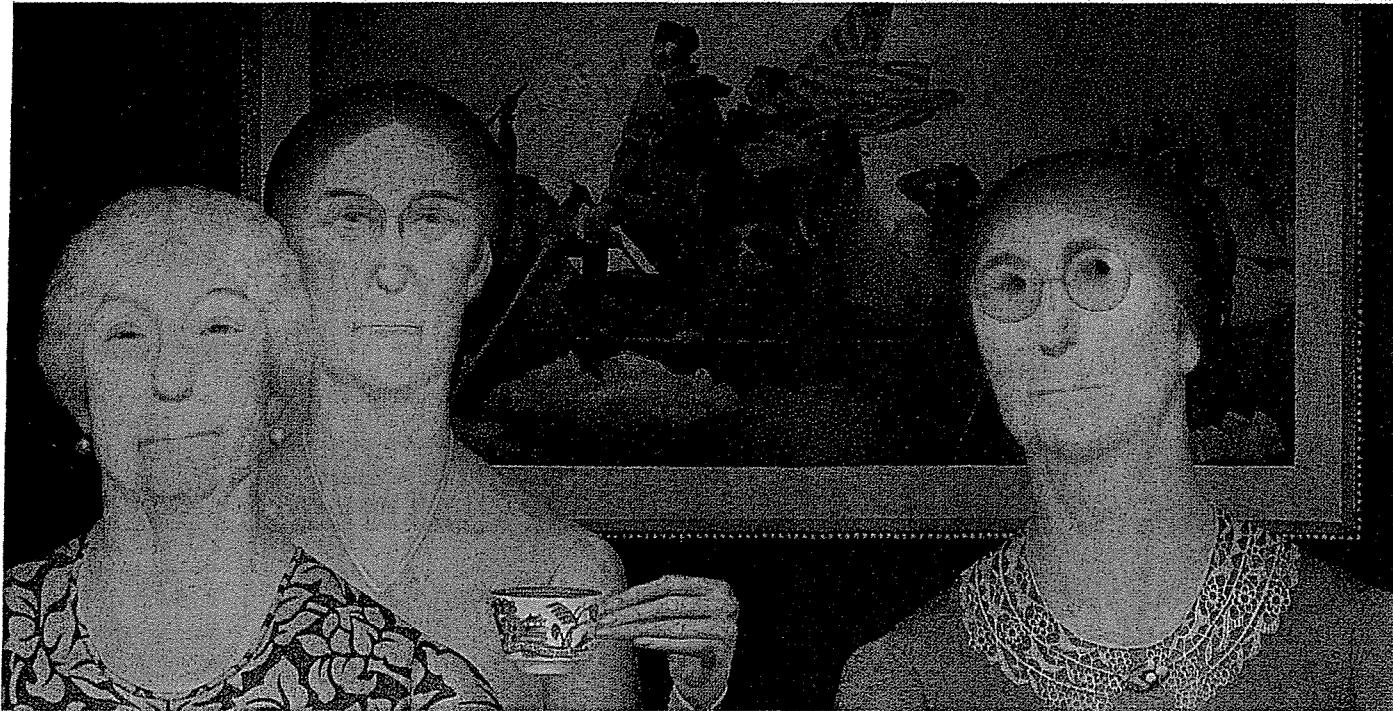
THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

In 1932, Grant Wood responded to the D.A.R.'s part in the Memorial Window controversy. He painted the famous work Daughters of Revolution, which hangs today in the Cincinnati Art Museum. Therein are three self-satisfied, formidable, old females, toasting with tea the FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY, who in the background crosses the Delaware. It is commonly reported that Wood used no local subjects for this picture, but the creature on the left has a Forbes-Barton look about her!

Forbes-Barton finally went to the great Valley Forge in the sky in 1939, rejoicing in what she felt was her last triumph. She had persuaded some of the local Daughters to add their names to a letter of commendation she wrote to the Washington, D. C. headquarters which had refused to allow Marian Anderson to sing in Constitution Hall. "Our Founding Fathers," she wrote, did not allow negroes to vote, nor would they allow them to present concerts in public places. Unthinkable then and reprehensible now!" With these noble thoughts, she parted this earth.

Serious About Satire

Even for a lighthearted purpose, Grant Wood understood that a painting's overall unity is key to its success.



COURTESY OF THE CINCINNATI ART MUSEUM; THE EDWIN AND VIRGINIA IRWIN MEMORIAL. © ESTATE OF GRANT WOOD. LICENSED BY VAGA, NEW YORK, NY.

Elements Working Together

Daughters of Revolution
(1932; oil, 20x40)
by Grant Wood

Artists will sometimes say that a good painting "hangs together well." In other words, the painting has unity, which is partly the result of the artist's inclusion of only those details that support the picture's theme. This approach is particularly useful for satirical paintings, in which theme is especially important. In painting *Daughters of Revolution*, Grant Wood (American, 1892-1942) made this clear by including a wealth of details that all help to make his mischievous point.

This painting is a gentle mockery of what the artist considered the self-righteous

posing of the Depression-era members of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and Wood's strategy is to contrast these prim and proper matrons with the idea of rebels and martyrs suggested by their heritage. Virtually every detail in the painting tells this same story: the thin lips, thick eyeglasses and watery eyes of the ladies; the fragility of the hand holding the teacup; the dull, monochromatic image of the iconic *George Washington Crossing the Delaware* (in reality a far more dramatic painting), set squarely parallel to the frame; the carefully balanced, almost static

composition. All of these elements suggest the irony of these dour dames being the heirs to a revolution.

Whatever your subject matter or theme, remember that every part of your painting can be used to contribute to the unity of the piece, and the more you keep this in mind, the more forceful your painting will be. So take a tip from Grant Wood and revolutionize your painting by making every detail count. ♦

Connoisseur of sharp satire
GREG ALBERT is editorial director for North Light Books.

row-gauge decimal-numbered car (.02) back to Denver. It was noticeably faster than the standard-gauge car. At dusk running down a street, our car met a narrow-gauge train of coal-carrying hopper cars drawn by doubleheaded steeple-cab locomotives, surely an unusual sight.

The next day, July 1, was clear as we headed toward Colorado Springs. After driving through the Garden of the Gods, we went to Manitou Springs where we tried unsuccessfully to buy tickets on the Manitou & Pike's Peak Cog Railway. I was able to photograph the then-new GE diesel-electric two-axle locomotives pushing the very lightweight streamlined coaches, and was lucky to encounter steam locomotive 6 pushing a snowplow. The crew told me they had just made the first trip of the season to the summit. No. 6 spouted vapor in all directions, yet was smooth and fairly quiet as it pushed its plow-equipped flatcar up the grade by the shop.

IT WAS TIME to head back east, but the vacation was far from over for me. We headed back north to Denver, then northeast to pick up U.S. 30 along the UP's main line. A parade of 4-6-6-4 Challengers and the mighty 9000-class 4-12-2's went by, interspersed with diesel-powered Streamliners and Pacifics hauling heavyweight passenger trains. Again I was lucky—floods had delayed the Streamliners, so they passed us by day rather than at night. These were the original custom-built diesel-electric trainsets, and they passed at a very high speed, probably 90 mph. For the first time I used my 1/400-second shutter speed.

In due course, we passed through Omaha and Council Bluffs, where I photographed more streetcars. Omaha had elderly but modernized ones; the interstate line had two-man rear-entrance cars; and Council Bluffs employed single-truck Birneys. It was a classic street railway soon to disappear.

Now following U.S. 6, we passed through Des Moines, where I photographed the relatively modern cars of the Des Moines Railways. In addition, the entire roster of the Des Moines & Central Iowa's interurban fleet was parked, idle, on high ground where it awaited floodwaters to recede. Included were the three large 1918 Jewett cars from Cleveland's Lake Shore Electric that DM&CI got in 1939 (LSE 170, 179, and 180 became DM&CI 1710, 1712, and 1714). My parents and sister saw some not very scenic sights: railroad yards and sidings in rundown industrial areas.

Our next stop was Iowa City and the Cedar Rapids & Iowa City Railway (the "Crandic"). Again leaving the family, I bought a one-

way ticket to Cedar Rapids, and boarded one of Crandic's former Cincinnati & Lake Erie high-speed lightweights. The car was packed with college students (evidently attending summer school). I managed to find a standing space behind the motorman. Speed was brisk, perhaps 60 mph, not the 80 once achieved on the C&LE. A meet at the mid-point occurred at a single-ended siding, the conductor handling the hand-throw switch and trolley pole. I pondered the fact that C&LE lightweights were designed as one-man cars but were operated in Iowa with two men. I left Iowa feeling fulfilled, having photographed ex-OHIO cars on two interurban lines.

I beat my parents to Cedar Rapids, since they had to detour while driving from Iowa City, but they eventually got there. Meanwhile I wasn't concerned and kept busy taking pictures of Crandic equipment. We picked up U.S. 30 again at Cedar Rapids and headed east.

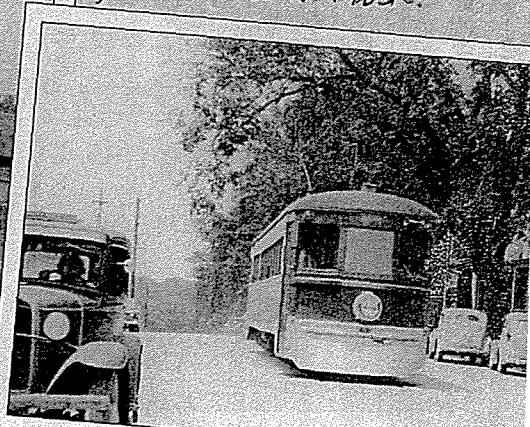
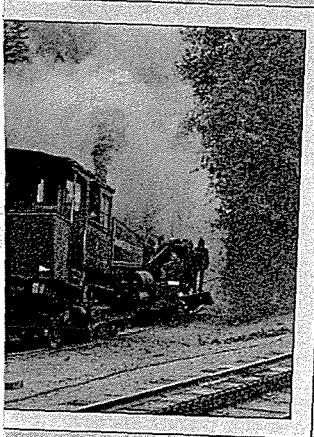
Toward the end of the day, 30 brought us into Aurora, Ill., one terminus of the Chicago Aurora & Elgin. I made a quick photo, and we ate dinner in a restaurant adjacent to the station.

On the final day, we drove straight home to Lakewood, Ohio, on Cleveland's west side, via U.S. 30, U.S. 20, and Ohio 2, which passed by near our home. We were weary but completely satisfied with a magnificent vacation.

The next day I disappeared into my basement darkroom (an expropriated fruit cellar), mixed up some D-76 developer, and began developing my film. I was largely gratified, except I discovered to my sorrow that I lost the roll or rolls that I had taken on the IC and South Shore on the south side of Chicago. The remainder—20 or so rolls, including scenes in Yellowstone Park and of other non-railroad attractions—turned out well and remain in my collection. I

J. W. "BILL" VIGRASS, now of Cherry Hill, N.J., graduated from Lakewood High School in January 1948 and began his transportation career as a messenger in the Erie Railroad's transportation department at Cleveland headquarters for \$187.50 per month. That September, he entered Allegheny College in Meadville, Pa. Soon after joining the Erie, he discovered, began reading, "and nearly memorized" the "Official Guide" and "Pocket List of Railroad Officials," vowing someday to be listed in the latter. Indeed he would be, from 1968 to 1988 under Port Authority Transit Corp., Lindenwold, N.J., where he served as superintendent of equipment and later as assistant general manager. Since 1988 he has been employed by Hill International as project director on several jobs for public transit agencies. A noted transit enthusiast, he has had a half dozen TRAINS bylines dating from 1971.

this was his 1947 vacation using car, trains & interurbans - he was a rail-fan - They went from near Cleveland Ohio to Yellowstone N. Park.



snowshovels on the season's first run to Summit; UP's City of Denver streaking east; and the Crandic's ex-C&LE car 117 passing the office of the Cedar Rapids Gazette.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

(1932)

The tower didn't take all of Stanley's time in the first months after his return. Early on, his father had called him into the ground floor office. He opened point-blank, "We must talk about what you plan to do with your life. Mind, you don't have to do anything. You're one of the lucky few these days, having a large family fortune, being a sole heir, etc. When I was young, my situation was similar to yours. My father sent me to the Wharton School of Finance after Dartmouth, as you know. I can't remember demurring since, at the time, I had no strong objectives in life beyond some vague notion of going to Montana or Alaska to live with the Eskimos, hunting bear and catching salmon! At Wharton, I developed a genuine interest in business and finance, (as the Senator hoped I might), thus being properly trained to run our family businesses. For me, this has been a good life. I confess, I still enjoy walking into the offices over in the Maynard Building to meet the daily challenges. With you, it may be different. You are more intellectual--like your grandmother, always concerned with music and the arts. Have you thought seriously about all this?"

Stanley played with a stone paperweight on his father's desk. "Dad, I always thought somewhere in the back of my mind that one day I might have to run the family affairs but it was just a fleeting thought. You and mom were there.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

The Villa Toscana with all its solidity and permanence was there. I preferred to think things would remain forever the same."

His father smiled. "Of course things will not remain the same forever. I'm fifty-eight now. I hope to be here for some time, but not forever! Maynard family affairs are in relatively good shape considering how bad business generally is in the country. I use trained consultants who gave me some priceless advice in 1929. Particularly Porter Lumsden, who works in our Cedar Rapids office. You remember him. He kept pestering me (as I thought) to sell everything we owned! At first I thought he was crazy, but he persisted and convinced me. Prices were wildly inflated in the stock market. People thought it would go up and up forever. But finally we went about selling off those stocks and investments before the crash. We even parted with things your grandfather and great-grandfather held sacrosanct. We sold the barge company, railroad stocks we had had for seventy years, coal mines, Minnesota timber, oils, utilities, General Electric, A. T. & T., flour mills--it hurt to sell those things. At night, I lay awake wondering if I were doing the right thing. However, we did it, then put the money in government bonds and solid banks. The result was that the fortune was not swept away. It's pretty much intact. Now, I'm starting to buy back some of those same investments at a fraction of what we sold them for.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

I try to be especially generous with Porter Lumsden because, truth is, he saved our family fortune. He is the kind of adviser one wants to keep!

"But back to your personal future. As of now, you are extremely well-prepared to be a professional dilettante. Perhaps you could be concert pianist or a piano teacher at sixty cents an hour. I'm not qualified to say. But you don't have to hold a job and make money because the fortune is there. You are the only heir. You would have to do something egregious to be disinherited.

"Someone however, must supervise the family investments. This is an important, exacting job. Private bankers can be paid a fee to manage personal fortunes. You might want to do that one day. My own suggestion, not a dictate, you understand, is that you at least study some basic business courses so you can read profit and loss statements, perhaps understand what is happening with our affairs. I would like you to go to business school--Wharton would be ideal, or Harvard, but we have the university just down in Iowa City. You could go there part of the time and sit with us here in the estate office part-time while you learn the ropes. I must say your parents would be pleased to have their wandering son at home again!"

Stanley agreed to matriculate at the School of Commerce as it was known, at the state university twenty-five miles away.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

In a few days, he and Hunt drove down to confer with Hunt's friend, Dean Chester Phillips, a specialist in money and banking, who gladly made arrangements for Stanley since the Maynards had always been generous patrons of the university. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays Stanley would attend selected classes, keeping the other mornings for the Cedar Rapids office of the Maynard Estate.

When the 1933 model autos came out in the fall, he paid six hundred dollars for a new Chevrolet coupe that had a pleasant, banana-oil, new-car smell inside. He could drive down to school in half an hour.

Two undergraduate students, Johnny Robbins and Glenn McIntyre, were soon riding with him when he drove, since they also lived in Cedar Rapids and could save money by living at home. On days when Stanley didn't go, these boys used the interurban electric railway known as the Crandic Way to Iowa City. Mornings Stanley would pick them up at the little white Robbins bungalow, a Sears Roebuck mail-order house that Johnny's father, an electrician, had personally built in 1914. Johnny's older brother, Hank Robbins, now an electrician in Des Moines, had been a football star when Stanley was in high school.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Johnny and Glenn were both about four years younger than Stanley. They were the first in their families to ever go to college. They had part-time jobs and some help from their fathers, but money was scarce.

When they insisted on buying gasoline for Stanley's car, he asked them if they would help him and Jeff Toner in the tower renovation job. They agreed, thereby paying with work for their transportation to the university.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

While they did much of the hard, manual work, moving materials, etc., they also learned much from Jeff, the master-builders.

Because Madge and Mrs. Powell wanted to contain the mess if possible, the workmen used the servants' stairway at the back of the house. They also rigged up a pulley system for hoisting material up and down to the tower window.

But the first day they were there, Stanley, taking them through the great entry hall, saw that the boys were in absolute awe of the old mansion with its vintage luxuries. He smiled at their obvious, respectful wonderment. "Guess you'd like to get a look at the old museum, while we're here!"

He showed them some of the beautiful, high-ceilinged rooms with their ornate, marble fireplaces, their velvet draperies, their rare, old carpets, the furniture gathered by generations of Maynards. They saw the two large Hudson-River paintings by Frederick Church, the Thomas Moran painting of the Yellowstone Canyon.

In the book-crowded library were oil portraits of his grandfather and great-grandfather, bearded and solemn captains of industry, along with paintings of some of the

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

early, outstanding Maynard river boats, built on the Monongahela in ante-bellum days, before they ranged over the continental river system from Pittsburgh to Fort Benton, to the Gulf of Mexico, to create the family fortune.

Stanley's grandmother still reigned in the music room. The memories, the belongings, the music, the pianos, were all here, but also there was the delightful portrait, commissioned in the 1890's by the Senator, who had lured the elderly, New York artist, Eastman Johnson, to come to the Villa Toscana to do the portrait in this room. Stanley's grandmother, in a yellow gown with a diamond necklace, is seated at the old, Bechstein piano, but turning with the slightest of smiles, as though she had just rendered a bit of music for some listeners. Indeed, on the piano, one can *espy* Chopin's Waltz in C-Sharp Minor. In the background is a meticulous delineation of the room and its contents, with the marble busts of Bach, Chopin and Mendelssohn that Letitia had found on some European trip.

The Kazakh carpets are there just as now, the crimson swirls of the wall coverings, the gas jets in crystal chandeliers where electricity had been unobtrusively added. The room remained as it always had been, except for the Baldwin grand piano of 1924. Heavy, oak-paneled wainscots

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

rose five feet, then the crimson satin of the upper walls climbed to the substantial cornices, fifteen feet above. The ceiling, as in all the principal rooms, was garlanded with gilded plaster, fortunately of a restrained, pleasing pattern seldom seen in later Victorian structures.

There were tall, glass-doored, oak book cases and music cabinets. There were large, pastoral paintings by obscure European artists. The fireplace, matching that of the entry hall, was of brown, Italian marble, striated with red. A number of vaguely-Biedermeier chairs, crimson-upholstered, ranged around the walls, since musicales were frequent here in Letitia's time.

Through wide, high, west-facing windows in a slanted bay, light flooded to be reflected by two gold-framed, giant mirrors, by the glass, cabinet doors and by the highly-polished wood of the pianos, especially afternoons and summer evenings. Then Letitia's gown and smile glowed. But the full charm of the room was felt, even by Philistines, only when there was music, for this truly was a music room!

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

Coming from the music room, the boys met Stanley's parents--those prosperous, beautifully-dressed, good-looking, pleasant people, of whom they had read in the society and business pages of the newspapers.

Deferentially, the two young students doffed their hats, stuttering such commonplaces as their tongues could conjure.

Next, they climbed the main stairway up past the leaded, stained-glass window, down a corridor, then up the narrower stair leading to the wonders of the tower with its unrestricted vistas.

Stanley, in ensuing days, attempted to put them at their ease by working along-side them, eating lunches with them in the kitchen, or shooting a few baskets with them where he had his old basketball hoop at the end wall of the carriage house.

He started dressing as they and most of the college boys did, that is, in soiled corduroys, scuffed leather jackets, old sweat shirts and tattered sweaters. His mother fussed to no avail at his unseemly attire. But the other students soon accepted him as one of them.

The boys had lively discussions about the up-coming presidential election. Stanley was automatically Republican as were his family and most of their friends. But these discussions with the boys from a working-class background,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

along with his own observations since landing in New York, altered his outlook sufficiently that he chose to vote for Roosevelt in November. It seemed clear to him that the country needed some big changes. With business at a stand-still and people starving, something must be done. Roosevelt promised action and hope.

At dinnertime one October evening, his parents had asked him to assist in some of their Republican activities. Stanley reddened a little, put down his fork, then faced them squarely. "I can't do that. You may think this is some awful betrayal after our family have been good Republicans since 1856, but I can not help you, because I have decided to vote for Roosevelt. I've already been helping the Democrats!"

His mother dropped her jaw and her soup spoon simultaneously. Her Prussian-blue eyes widened in disbelief. "You can't be serious? Helping the Democrats!" Here was a kind of embarrassing Maynard Family deficiency that Mrs. Forbes-Barton would relish pouncing upon! Madge cast an agonized expression down the table to her husband. "Did you hear that, Hunt, dearest? Can't you do something to straighten him out? He's only twenty-four and it's his first election. He's just a poor boy in need of guidance. Oh dear, oh, dear, I don't understand what's happening these days. These young

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

people are too much! What will they say at the country club?"

Stanley's father was not happy with the news, but accepted it in a more philosophical way. "I suppose a few people will be voting Democratic this year-- maybe even some at the country club! Madge, maybe you haven't looked lately but your son is a man, full-grown, and it looks like he's made up his mind. We Republicans will just have to get more votes, that's all!"

Madge sputtered, "Well, it's beyond all understanding, and now when we have such a fine man in the White House, and Mr. Hoover born right here in Iowa, only thirty miles away. It isn't as though we've been suffering. Stannery, have you been suffering?"

"No, of course not, mama. We have good health and a great deal more money than we know what to do with. I had no idea there was anything wrong in the country until I got back to New York City in July. I came across a bread-line four blocks long! I talked with those men. They can't find jobs, can't feed their families. There are millions like them across the country. They're living in shanty-towns made of cardboard. And then Hoover and MacArthur used tear gas on the Bonus Marchers--World War Veterans!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"Stannery, poor, deluded Stannery, everybody knows those are communists and trouble-makers--always looking for a hand-out. Decent people just work hard and save their money. But the ones you're talking about--they spend everything, then when times get a little hard, they come demanding that the government or somebody take care of them. You're a good boy, always generous and thoughtful, but maybe just a touch immature." She reached over to stroke his somber face.

Hunt jumped in, "Since Stanley feels the way he does, I think we should declare politics off limits at dinnertime until after the election."

"Humph," snorted Madge, then with a wide, coquettish smile asked, "How do you like this nail polish? I think the salmon color is just right with this dress, don't you?" She held her fingers out in the light of the chandelier then against her ultramarine, silk dress. Her two diamond rings sparkled. "Stannery, I was feeling so happy with this polish. My hair-dresser found it in Chicago--an absolute treasure of a find, then you almost spoiled it for me with that Democratic nonsense. I'm sure I don't want to hear any more about politics and all those so-called workers who don't want to work."

Her bobbed, loosely-arranged, gray-blond hair was freshly marcelled with a chemically-created silver-platinum color.

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

Her face had no lines for at age fifty-three, she was plump but careful enough with her diet to avoid being downright fat. She was generally considered a beautiful woman. She was vain and self-centered but could exert considerable charm on occasion.

Several times a year with a friend, Mrs. Hull or Mrs. Faymont, she would take the train to Chicago or New York for protracted shopping sprees. They would stay in the Palmer House or in the Plaza Hotel, haunting the dress salons or having clothes made to order. Madge was partial to shades of blue which accented her eyes. She favored fashions from the old Parisian houses of Worth, Molyneux and Jean Patou. She had her own fortune but Hunt Maynard gave her anything she wanted.

Since her marriage to Hunt in 1905, she had regularly made these trips, seldom with Hunt, and never with her young son. They would only interfere with the important business of buying clothes. At different times Stanley would go to New York with his grandmother. Of course they all stayed in suites in the Plaza where they were quite well-known.

When Stanley pled to go with his mother, she would say, "Mama's going to be very busy in New York. No, her little darling can't go along. Why he would just have to sit

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

all day in the hotel room with nothing to do. That wouldn't be any fun, would it? Stannery must stay home anyway and practice the piano with grandma."

Madge had little to do with running the Villa Toscana until the last year or two of Letitia's life. She had always been content not challenging the suzerainty of the senior Mrs. Maynard whose long-established authority was absolute. Letitia's regimen was thorough-going. She would plan periodic house-cleanings, redecorations, garden and flower arrangements, while in little conferences with the house-keeper or the cook, she planned menus well in advance, even for several weeks if she were going traveling.

Madge and Letitia always maintained a 'correct' relationship, each careful not to invade the other's prerogatives. Madge admired Letitia's patrician bearing, her cultural accomplishments, her rapport with the servants, the ease with which she ran the estate.

Letitia, for her part, had hoped that Madge, over the years, would develop some latent talent and become more than the beautiful, thoughtless clothes-horse Hunt had brought home. Alas, that was not to be. But Madge was a quite successful clothes-horse. Fortunately, the two women rather liked each other. Letitia was grateful to Madge for providing her with a gifted grandson who became the joy of her last years.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

MISTRESS MADGE

In October 1929, several months before her death, Letitia, bed-ridden, asked Madge to come to her bedside. "Pull up that chair, Madge."

In an unaccustomed maternal gesture, she briefly squeezed her daughter-in-law's hand. "Madge, my dear, just imagine! It's almost twenty-five years since you came to live here. I have always run the house by a sort of tacit agreement we had, though you were mistress as well as I. We never spoke of it that I remember. But now you see me all withering away." Her voice too, was only a whisper. "The doctor says I won't be here much longer.

"I need to talk with you about practical things. You may or may not agree that running a house is an art. It is basically creating and maintaining a clean, pleasant, nurturing environment for the family. I have tried to do this. Now, it must be your turn.

"The Tabbs have been with us forever. They know exactly what must be done in each occasion, but they are hoping to retire. Varina has been complaining for a couple years about the 'miseries' in her back and in her hands. We have always run the house with six servants, as you know, that is, the Tabbs, the house-keeper, the gardener and two housemaids. Mrs. Powell (the house-keeper) has been

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

here since the war. She knows pretty much how to keep things in order. I suspect she could run the house efficiently without supervision. Unfortunately, she is worried about her mother's health. Her mother who is about eighty and had two heart attacks, lives alone in Dubuque. Mrs. Powell keeps threatening to leave us to go live there.

"I would like to keep Mrs. Powell. She's only fifty and might stay for another fifteen years if we could do something about her mother. Now I think we must get the old lady moved down here. They could live together in the housekeeper's apartment which we could enlarge by adding that old storage room for a bedroom. Or there is the gatehouse--it's a perfectly good house but empty just now. It's very near. We would have a phone there and Mrs. Powell could speak with her mother at any time. The Maynard Estate has a few houses here and there which often come in handy. We must try to persuade Mrs. Powell and her mother in this matter. Competent house-keepers are hard to find. It's going to be difficult if the Tabbs retire. Good cooks are as rare as good house-keepers. Fred Tabb is a wonder as a general handyman. So if we don't want a first-rate crisis here, as they seem to be having in Wall Street just now, we better hang on to Mrs. Powell!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Reluctantly after this conversation, Madge first started to be mistress of Villa Toscana. She didn't like the job but it was plain to her that the job would be overwhelming if Mrs. Powell didn't stay. So she set about implementing Letitia's plan to keep the house-keeper.

When Mrs. Powell said she would prefer to have her mother close by in the Villa rather than in another house, Madge asked Hunt to have a door opened into the adjoining, disused store room where they then arranged a pleasant new bedroom furnished with some of the old lady's own furniture. Mrs. Powell and her mother were delighted.

Madge felt triumphant when all was accomplished. It had been Letitia's plan, but Madge didn't disdain to take credit for it. To Hunt she said, "I'm exhausted by all this domestic turmoil. Now that I've finally got it all straightened out, I must have a little vacation!" So she went to New York City for two weeks.

After Letitia died in January, the Tabbs announced their forthcoming retirement, but agreed to try to find replacements. Madge feared another major crisis until Varina Tabb produced her niece, Melissa Tyler, who was an excellent cook. Melissa, only thirty-four, had been working for a wealthy attorney in Des Moines who, fortuitously for the Maynards, died at this juncture. Melissa's husband could drive, but his other skills, if any were unknown. That didn't upset

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Madge, who was most intent on getting a good cook.

The Maynards did their own driving now, anyway.

So Madge weathered her second domestic storm. The Tabbs retired after a month of indoctrinating their successors.

Melissa and Abe Tyler with their three year-old daughter Marcy, moved into the rooms over the carriage house when the Tabbs moved to a retirement house in Cedar Rapids.

Now, Madge had a good cook and a good house-keeper.

She would do what was necessary to keep them. She told them to do their jobs without involving her, except in dire emergencies. Under this system, the house seemed to run well enough, if not brilliantly as in Letitia's day.

There was some difficulty planning menus until Melissa told Madge about her previous employer who had planned out menus for every meal for six weeks. Then, each week was numbered I. through VI. That way, the cook could follow the scheduled meals straight through unless the employer wanted a substitute or exception. There would be ample variety.

Madge found a book of menus in Letitia's desk where the older lady had kept a record of the most successful meals since the 1890's. Next, Madge borrowed Alberta Peckenpaugh, Hunt's secretary, for two days. Alberta came out to the villa office to type up in triplicate the menus they chose.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Soon they had a booklet of menus suitable for both Hunt and Madge. The mistress, the housekeeper and the cook each got a booklet of 126 menus. Now Madge could go in the kitchen to say, "Number Six this week, Melissa," and the menu planning was over.

Characteristically, Madge had exhausted herself once more by all this labor, most of it done by the others, while she boasted to Hunt and her friends how she had developed an ingenious solution for a vexing problem. She rewarded herself with another New York vacation.

She made sure the housekeeper and cook were happy with their wages, which she enhanced with surprise bonuses from time to time. Also, on occasion, they got some of her fashionable garments when her closets were too full.

Madge had an ample store of intelligence hidden behind the beautiful, empty facade seen by the world. For the most part she enjoyed her existence at Villa Toscana. She would not jeopardize it foolishly. Neither she nor Hunt was strongly sexed, so conjugal encounters were infrequent but pleasant enough. Generally, she and Hunt led independent lives. She had always been faithful, even during all the New York vacations when dalliance could have occurred easily, were she so inclined. She went to New York for clothes, not love. Recognizing that demands on her were minimal,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

she did what was required for a "happy married life." She had her big bedroom and Hunt had his nearby.

STANLEY'S LOVE LIFE (continued)

One day in October 1932 when the tower project was starting, Stanley, mounting the stairs two at a time, stumbled over a new housemaid. She had far too much rouge. She was half-heartedly waxing and polishing the balusters. Stanley could see her ample, well-developed body under the maid's uniform.

"Hello, what hath God wrought on the stairway?" he grinned.

"You must be Mr. Buddy Maynard--I've heard about you." She used a nick-name he had had in high school. "I'm Marquita Mendoza. Mrs. Powell just hired me last week. I've been looking forward to seeing you. Some of the girls told me you wuz a dreamboat, a real piece of change!" She gave a wide, carmine smile revealing a slight mal-occlusion. She had wide-set, sultry, brown eyes with good, regular features. Her bleached hair showed brown at the roots.

He was so busy annotating her attractions that he tripped over her leg, then grabbed her for balance.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"Wow, now ain't this somethin'. Yer squeezin' me kinda hard considerin' our short acquaintance," she whispered, quickly accomodating herself to the impromptu embrace. "They warned me about rich, young boys bein' passionate with the hired help!" He felt her hands moving over his body. He was a little flustered because of the time and place, but lustful thoughts crowded his mind.

Anybody might appear suddenly. He pulled himself back. "Glad to meet you, Marquita. We'll meet again, no doubt. Gotta go!" He dashed up the stairs, hoping she hadn't seen his embarrassment.

Three days later, when he had been sleeping late after a student party, he awoke to find Marquita sitting on his bed. She had placed some clean sheets on a chair. She was watching him contemplatively. His head throbbed from last night's gin. His faculties returned slowly. "What time is it? "

She started pushing his body through the blankets. "It's eight-thirty, so you better let me change these sheets like Mrs. Powell sent me to do."

He groaned, "Go away. I have to sleep some more. Oh, have I got a headache. Marquita, will you get me a couple aspirin out of that cabinet over there?"

She brought him the aspirin and a glass of water. He had

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

to sit up to swallow the aspirin. His pajamas were unbuttoned, his chin a black stubble, his brown eyes blood-shot, his curly hair uncombed. Nonetheless, she found him well-nigh irresistible. He had that effect on women, only increasing their ardor when he tried to avoid them. Marquita slipped both her hands inside his pajama top to caress his well-knit, hirsute torso. With a sort of tango rhythm she was crooning, "How we luv sweet Buddy's torso, how we'd luv to get some more so." He was instantly aroused, as she noticed. She jumped across the bed to close and lock the door, then doing a kind of suggestive dance, she shed her clothing on the way back.

He was astonished by her brazen audacity--he had never experienced such conduct except from professional prostitutes. But when one is male, twenty-four, healthy though hung-over, what can one do except one's duty in such circumstances?

But first, while appreciatively watching the dance from the corner of his eye, he hopped to the lavatory vigorously to rinse his mouth with Listerine and his face with Lifebuoy, then two leaps back to the bed for the call to action.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

The author has considered revealing some lubricious details of this and other similar encounters but, deciding to spare the gentle reader, has drawn a veil of secrecy around the lusty lovers, thus to save everybody embarrassment. The things those lovers did--gross, gross! Pleasuring each other with unbridled licentiousness! Readers will thank the author for not recounting all this!

They performed in a trice, so not to invite Mrs. Powell's curiosity. The secrecy and rapidity made it all the more exciting. Marquita's Woolworth perfume smelled like raspberries to him. But at least, she wore perfume which was an improvement on nature.

When it was over, they both felt it had been rather special. They showered together, playing little wanton games, then he helped her change the sheets. At last they sallied forth, their faces studies in modest decorum.

Afterward, for several months, they met in his bedroom. Sometimes she would suggest meeting in other places where the danger of discovery, (therefore the satisfaction), was greater. They

7

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

met in the tower room one day when the workers were due any moment. Flushed and disheveled, they were just arranging their clothing when Jeff Toner and Johnny Robbins burst in the door. Jeff and Johnny had suspicions.

A couple of other times the lovers met in the back seat of Madge's Buick,

In the spring it ended. Marquita was gone. She told him her father ran an itinerant, Mexican dance company known as the Mendoza Family. She would join them again to dance flamenco on a circuit of American cities. Stanley was sorry to see her go since she had considerably enlivened his existence.

Years later he learned she had undergone a metamorphosis. A sophisticated, wealthy patron had smoothed out her rough spots. An orthodontist corrected her teeth. Experts revamped her grammar, her diction, her cosmetics, her dress, her hair, her movements--all were re-created. Her Latina past was hidden away. She emerged as Miss Carol Norwood, the Hollywood mega-star of the 1940's and 50's.

Stanley sometimes would see her films to look for a vestigial, errant gesture to remind him of an insane episode in his youth. In one of the films, Clark Gable or someone had said to her, "You sure are a lot of woman!" Stanley agreed.

NASCENT PHILANTHROPIES

By March 1933, the tower renovation job was completed except for the planned incising and painting of the beams. Stanley hoped to find an expert wood-carver who could re-produce overhead some of the wise, philosophic sentences quoting the sages, which Montaigne had had carved in his tower. These would be thoughts with which he wished to govern his life. He had not yet chosen the exact texts which might be in English and German, as well as French.

Jeff Toner was gone, looking for jobs in another city. Johnny and Glenn were helping Stanley move his books to the new shelves of the tower. He had a great many spread about the house, and in the carriage house, boxes full that had not been unpacked awaiting the completion of their new home.

It was a warm, bright day, so warm in fact, that they had opened the windows all around to admit gentle movements of sun-warmed air with mixed odors of thawing humus, melting snow patches, precocious spring flowers. In the tower, the smell of new wood, paint and varnish, by no means unpleasant, was still strong.

They felt the euphoria of youth and impending spring. The boys bounded up and down the stairs, transferring

the books that Stanley had chosen, then piled on the floor in the library, the music room and his bedroom. The collection which would grow throughout his lifetime, was already impressively large, for he was a reader and bibliophile with an unlimited budget.

Not all the books were going to the tower, but many were. In later years, there would always be a movement of books to and from the rooms below according to Stanley's inclinations.

On this March day, a table radio with wooden case shaped like a Gothic arch, sat on one of the wide window seats. Stanley tuned in some music from Des Moines. The station was playing popular tunes mixed with local advertising. There was some Gershwin--Of Thee I Sing, I Got Rhythm, Embraceable You, then a cheerful bit of nonsense about finding a Million Dollar Baby in the Five and Ten Cents Store. Johnny, hearing this, sashayed about the room, dancing with an imaginary Baby and hollering, "Boy oh boy, could I use one of those!" The others were laughing at him. "Hey, Buddy, how come you haven't got a younger sister? Guess she would be a million-dollar-baby, huh? You haven't got a little sister for your college chum, have you?"

"If you would get to work and stop fooling around, you'd be a millionaire yourself, dummy," Glenn said.

With moon-struck face, Johnny picked up a box of books and danced the room around, then fell exhausted in front of the radio.

Now the announcer told them they could have first-rate tires or re-caps if they would go to the Zenith Tire Company in Des Moines. This was the fifth of March. The day before, the new president had taken office. Mixed with some static, they heard his speech, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself..." The boys were all elated, unlike Stanley's mother below, who grimly foresaw one disaster after another now that the Democrats were in firm control of the government.

Stanley's father was on middle ground. He realized the profound problems of society needed some new, drastic solutions. Perhaps the new administration had some answers. He would wait and see.

Now a radio vocalist was singing Brother Can You Spare a Dime. The words reminded Stanley of his meeting with Jimmy DiRicco in the New York breadline. Stanley vowed to send a check that night to the One-Cent Restaurant. Next, the announcer told them that the Hawkeye Roofing Company was at their service, offering highest-quality

materials and workmanship at rock-bottom prices, and ten per-cent off for cash.

April In Paris took Stanley's thoughts back to Josephine, whom he had truly loved in Paris the year before. Gone forever, the little Josephine. He smiled a little ruefully to himself as he thought of her last letter--its reference to himself as "Stanley de la tour Toscane." Yes, that's what he was!

He placed books on the shelves in no particular order. Arranging them would come later. The radio station switched to a news-announcer from Washington, D. C. President Roosevelt had declared a nation-wide "bank holiday!" All banks would close while federal officials audited their accounts. People were told not to worry. The banks would re-open and the government would stop the flood of bank failures and runs.

Stanley whistled to himself with some concern. A large part of Maynard assets was in banks, as he had learned during his days at the Estate offices. Would the banks really open again? Would the assets still be there? He must talk of all this with his father and Porter Lumsden.

Just then, Johnny came puffing in with another large box of books. Stanley said, "They're closing all the banks in the country!"

"Oh, my gosh," Johnny moaned. "Does that mean the Cedar River National? I got eighty-eight dollars in there for school next fall. If I lose that, I can just forget about ever graduating."

Stanley answered, "It means all the banks, I guess. That's what the radio said. We'll have to wait to see the newspapers. But it doesn't mean you will lose your money. The banks will re-open after they are checked out by the officials. They want to stop all these bank-failures."

Stanley felt a decided camaraderie for these two younger boys. They had been regularly together all winter. They were much like younger brothers to him. He felt protective, being older and very much richer. They were smart, clear-eyed, good-looking, cheerful, and so naively brave in the face of circumstances, principally monetary, that threatened to engulf them every moment.

When Stanley heard Johnny's reference to an eighty-eight dollar bank balance that stood between success and failure, it focused his mind on the boys' problems. His own situation was fairly clear to him. He personally had about four hundred seventy-five thousand dollars, inherited from his grandmother. His mother had a separate fortune of over two million, and the Maynard Estate, not so easy to add up, was worth well over twenty million

even allowing for the shrinkage of half-empty office buildings and un-saleable farm land. The Estate offices handled these fortunes in separate accounts. Somehow, the money kept rolling in.

His father had explained that after quitting the stock market before the 1929 Crash, they put large sums in government bonds and in Chicago and New York banks, particularly Brown Brothers, Harriman, a very old, conservative, private bank with which they had relations going back before the Civil War. "Brown Brothers financed some of those old river boats you see hanging in our library," his father told him. "Now, they handle a lot of our money. I know most of the partners personally. It isn't a regular bank. They don't bother with small accounts, but they give close attention to those large accounts which they accept."

That afternoon, Stanley drove the boys home in his little Chevrolet. They were good friends now and would not resent questions about personal finances. He started by asking, "Johnny, is that eighty-eight dollars all you've got?"

Johnny grinned, "Well, I've got it provided they open the bank again, otherwise..." He drew his finger across his neck to show his throat would be slit.

"And you, Glenn, how about you?" Stanley continued.

"How much money have you got to finish college?"

Glenn did some adding in his head. "Maybe four hundred just now, but we try to get summer jobs, and I hope I can get a gas station job part-time. But it's going to be hard. Johnny's brother helps him a little, and our families try, but nobody has much to spare. My grandmother gave me two hundred dollars she saved up for her funeral. I have to pay that back."

They were all quiet for a while. Then Johnny said, "I'm just hoping for that Million-Dollar Baby!" The little Chevrolet pulled up in front of Johnny's house where a little, spotted dog on the porch raised his ears and beat his tail expectantly on the floor.

Stanley said slowly, "You have seen the way I live. It's no secret the Maynards are well-off. I'm embarrassed by the big difference in our bank accounts, but I will speak frankly. You will both be juniors in the fall. I would be very sorry to see either of you forced to drop out because of insufficient money. I want you to get those degrees. So here's what we have to do. I want to make two thousand dollars available to each of you--that is one thousand each for each remaining year of college. When you graduate, pay me back when, and if, you can. Self-reliance is an admirable trait, so hang on to it,

but your old buddy, Buddy, will be giving you that little, extra push!"

At first the boys protested that they could somehow manage. Nevertheless, it was apparent that they must find help where they could.

That's how Stanley got involved in a decades-long personal program of financing college-training for a great series of students. Those first two students graduated in the class of 1935, getting degrees in civil engineering. Stanley, as proud as any parent, attended commencement with the Robbins family. In later years, both boys paid him back--Glenn from a job building bridges in Colombia, and Johnny, from Fort Peck, Montana, where he worked for several years on the giant, earth dam across the Missouri.

There was a rambling letter with Johnny's last payment. "We have two seasons here--winter for nine months and summer for three. Generally, it's pretty miserable for people, though the gophers, snakes, bobcats and coyotes seem to like it. Down from Canada we get blizzards, snowdrifts, and rarely a Chinook wind that only makes things worse with mud puddles everywhere. We live in tarpaper shacks and barracks with oil-drum stoves. Of course, there's been a growth for years and there's lots of dust year-round with the wind always blowing and the prairie

grass dug up for miles. This is an earth-fill dam, the biggest in all history. We wear sheep-skin coats most of the time. We do have a movie theater and Saturday nights we usually go sixteen miles to the big city of Glasgow, which has been a boom-town with all the construction workers. We have beer-busts to forget our misery, drinking gallons of Kessler beer, shipped in from Helena. In every bar there are dissolute, half-breed, Indian "maidens" and dozens of professional camp-followers from across the country. So there are girls, but they can cause plenty of trouble. It's easy to catch V.D., then the guys get drunk and brawl over the women. Somebody gets knifed once in a while.

"Remember in 1933 I was looking for a Million-Dollar Baby? I've looked in the Glasgow Five and Dime but she's not there. This is not a good place to be looking. The men outnumber the woman by far. Even lots of married men don't bring their wives here because it's a rough place to live--scarce housing etc.

"I don't know how much longer I'll be here. The job is winding down, but now they are planning to add a hydro-electric power plant, which was held up by politics. It's true there's nothing but prickly-pear cactus and lonely hills and coulees for hundreds and hundreds of miles around, so who knows what they'll do with the electricity?

Only congress knows.

"When I finally leave, I'll be sad. I'll miss the misery and probably look back with pride that I had something to do with this enormous project. I'll always remember the winter nights. Frozen, icy, sometimes so still. The sky so black, immense with every star up there--trillions of them. The Milky Way across the middle and the Northern Lights jumping up and down in an unbelievable way!

"Buddy, I'll tell you a secret. I have asked an Iowa girl to marry me--she's Margaret Runcford. I don't think you knew her because she's three years younger than I. We were neighbors in Cedar Rapids. She went to State Teachers College in Cedar Falls and now she's teaching in Winterset. We're going to be married but not until I find a job in a somewhat civilized place... She's quiet, thoughtful, wonderful to be with--worth a lot more than a million, I'm convinced.

"Thanks again for this money. I hated taking so long to pay it back. You have been a great friend--a friend in need, that gave Glenn and me hope when things looked impossible!

"I hope all is well in the Tuscan tower!"

By 1938, when that letter came, Stanley had helped

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

82

a number of students whom he privately called his "Maynard Alumni." Only he was aware of the extent of his philanthropy. Letters like this from Johnny, (his first alumnus,) were getting frequent. Early on, he had decided to ask eventual re-payment from the students rather than giving them the grants, as he might have done. He was sure it built their self-respect to know they had made their own way. It also made possible further philanthropy.

But let's return to 1933. His study in the tower room was complete and occupied after March. Then, Grant Wood was there doing the four landscapes. By June, Stanley completed the business courses recommended by the dean for his special situation. He spent a good many hours at the Maynard Estate offices learning of the fluctuating value of the many possessions he hadn't known they owned. There were business buildings, now only partially-occupied, chief of which was the big brick and terra cotta Maynard Building itself, built in 1926, seven stories high and an entire city block in Cedar Rapids. That's where the offices were. But they also had other buildings in Cedar Rapids and in nearby cities. They owned much rich farm land, as well as houses and small businesses acquired over the years.

His father and Porter Lumsden told of selling stocks like A.T.&T. in 1929 when it was near three hundred dollars a share, and now buying it back in ten-thousand-share lots at seventy dollars. It was boggling at first to think of these numbers. They were buying back General Electric stocks, New York Central and U. S. Steel for one-tenth of what they sold them for!

Privately, Hunt told Stanley that he had given a beautiful Tudor-style estate to Porter. This was a twenty-room, brick and stone house on ten acres at the edge of Cedar Rapids. It had come to the Maynards in a foreclosure. Several times before, Hunt had told his son how valuable he considered Porter's services and advice. Porter's prescient insistence in 1929 had saved the Maynard fortune.

In the autumn, Hunt asked Stanley to go to New York City to represent their interests and to confer regularly with Brown Brothers directors. Hunt said, "We want you to get experience and to make some decisions on your own."

Through the 1930's Stanley spent more than half his time in New York City where he leased an apartment of six well-proportioned rooms in River House, an elegant, new high-rise on East Fifty-second Street overlooking the East River.

17 Mar

He was attracted there by the indoor tennis courts, the swimming pool, the view out over the river, across Welfare Island toward the Queensboro Bridge. It felt a little like his tower. The previous tenant, probably a bookish person, had left a great many built-in book shelves, now empty to be sure, but Stanley set about remedying that.

He had a Steinway grand installed there, but made no expensive alterations beyond re-decorating in pale grays, blues and apricot, warmed when the morning sun flooded in from Long Island through tall windows with hinged, paneled shutters.

Stanley was familiar with certain milieus of the big city where books were to be found. He was recognized by some of the book dealers on Fourth Avenue who remembered good customers with special tastes and deep pockets. They might save special items for him, or call his attention to newly-arrived treasures.

1935

One day in 1935, after a couple hours in the Strand Book Store, he drifted into a neighboring bookshop kept by an elderly German-Jewish man, Mr. Abraham Reisfeld. Since Stanley had been there often, Mr. Reisfeld greeted him with some warmth, then showed him some belles-lettres in green morocco.

After some general conversation about books, Mr. Reisfeld asked if he might be interested in buying an entire library, small and select, of literature, principally in German, English and the Romance Languages, in quality editions and bindings. He explained that his nephew, Professor Emanuel Reisfeld, with wife and daughter, had managed to get out of Germany after bribing some local Nazi officials; that Emanuel had lost most of his property, but did get to New York City with his books; that Emanuel had recently died from a heart attack, leaving his wife with nothing but the books.

Now, Emma Reisfeld, the widow, was in desperate straits. She and her daughter lived in a little flat nearby in Greenwich Village. She must sell her husband's books, her only asset.

Abraham was helping them, but he had little money. His shop was presently over-stocked, so he, himself, couldn't buy the books.

Stanley was intrigued. They arranged a visit to the refugees' flat where one room was half-filled with books in packing boxes up to the ceiling. In the other corner of the room was a narrow day-bed.

Emma and her daughter, Gretchen, both home when Stanley arrived, proved to be quite attractive, dignified,

well-dressed women. They found they could speak to each other in three languages.

Frau Reisfeld explained, "We really had an ideal life in Germany. We had a charming, old, brick house in a hill-side orchard near Jena. There were trees everywhere. We had lived for generations in Thuringia--at Weimar, Erfurt and Jena. For years, my husband taught literature and philosophy in the university. We thought it would always be that way until the Nazis said we had no right to be there, that we were sub-human, that we were destroying the German race. Both Emanuel and I had Lutheran mothers but our fathers were Jewish. You've heard all those vicious calumnies, so I mustn't bore you with it.

"As you see, we did manage to get away with our lives, and here is dear Emanuel's library, or the parts of it we saved. We had to leave behind some valuable illuminated manuscripts and incunabula--just too ponderous to pack around the world. I think that's when Emanuel's heart broke. My darling Gretchen here, who is all I have left, has found a job in a publishing house, but we badly need money for rent and food. So while we regret parting with something so precious to Emanuel, we must sell the books.

"Please look them over--of course it's difficult in this cramped space. But pull down some of those boxes and spread the books on the couch. We will help."

Stanley, with Gretchen's help, looked through several boxes. Frau Reisfeld went to the kitchen to make coffee. Soon there was a grand aroma that he recalled from his days at Goettingen. They went to a little kitchen table for some Blechkuchen and delicious coffee.

Stanley was becoming interested in Gretchen who seemed bashful, mostly keeping her wide, gray eyes studiously on her plate, but also watching him with furtive glances. She was dressed in a dark, plaid, woolen skirt and embroidered jacket that had an alpine air about it. Her light-brown hair, very long, was braided, then attractively arranged in a bun at the nape of her neck.

"Are you really an American, Mr. Maynard?" asked Frau Reisfeld with genuine interest, for it's possible in New York City to live for months without knowing a native-born American.

Stanley laughed. "Oh, I guess so. The Maynards have been here as long as anybody, except for the Indians. I think they were Huguenots who came here to New York to New Rochelle. They were persecuted by Louis XIV. in France so they went where they could find refuge. Some to England, or Holland, or even Berlin. But many came to

America."

Frau Reisfeld murmured, "Like the Jews! We've been here now only six months, but Abraham took us to a little Shearith Israel Jewish cemetery somewhere down the island. The Sephardim came here very early when this was a Dutch colony."

Later, Stanley continued looking at the books, finding one curious gem after another. He could only skim the surface in that crowded room. He looked through about fourteen boxes of the forty or fifty stacked there. He had decided he must have the collection when he came across an old German translation of Montaigne's Works, with extraordinary woodcuts. Yes, he must have these books!

When he asked Frau Reisfeld what she would sell the books for, she answered, "We know very little about such things, but Abraham said that six thousand dollars for the lot would be the best we could expect, and if we sold it to a dealer, he would pay less."

Stanley hadn't examined the bulk of the collection but he told her, "I will give you seven thousand, and when I get these up to my apartment where I can look them over, I may pay a bit more, if there are some treasures we haven't unearthed today! But I must ask you to lend Gretchen to me. I would like her to come up to my apartment on East Fifty-second Street . . .

to help unpack the books. I have a lot of empty shelves." Gretchen, smiling shyly, stole another glance at him. "Gretchen, you know something of your father's books. You would be invaluable in arranging them. Will you help?"

"I have a job, Mr. Maynard, but I could help on Saturdays and Sundays."

Frau Reisfeld was trying to hide the tears rolling down her cheeks. "This means so much to us, Mr. Maynard, you can never know what it means. We have had one disaster after another since 1933. I admit I have thought of suicide after Emanuel died. It's so difficult to adjust to a new country when one has no money. Now I'm going to find a job somehow, and we'll make a new life." She wiped her eyes on a dish cloth.

Stanley gave her a check, then arranged for a moving company to bring the books to River House. He explained to Gretchen how she could get to the building by bus, elevated, or the Lexington Avenue subway.

In the next few weeks they got to know each other better. Gretchen was charmed by his apartment, which had a Spartan feeling with its empty shelves, bare floors and scarce furniture. He planned to furnish it slowly and only if he came across just the right piece. There was no hurry. He told her his real home was in Iowa.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

90

She loved watching the East River where ships and barges plied the choppy waters. Down below were some yachts belonging to wealthy tenants who could hop from their boats directly into the elevator to their luxurious dwellings.

She loved the piano. The first day he discovered she was a creditable pianist when she played bits of Mozart and Beethoven. "I'm more of a violinist," she said, "My papa used to play the piano and I played the violin."

Stanley played Bach's Prelude and Fugue in C Minor and then some of Chopin's Fantasy Impromptu. Gretchen sat on a box, her face registering amazement with blissful delight, for he was so gifted, especially with Bach.

They started opening the boxes which the movers had left scattered about all six rooms, since shelves were everywhere. They had dust cloths. Each book required a little conference since Stanley wanted to bring some semblance of order. He had decided to shelve separately the history and philosophy. Literature would be the largest section by far, with books alphabetized by author regardless of the language. Thus Montaigne, for example, though appearing in three or four languages, would all be shelved together. They were leaving significant open shelf space for future accessions, for Stanley knew all too well

his proclivities.

She felt curious about him--so handsome, young, poised, talented, apparently not married. Obliquely she posed little questions. She learned he was still twenty-six but would be twenty-seven in a few months; that he had studied in Europe, even at Goettingen; that his home was Cedar Rapids, Iowa, but he was also quite at home here in New York City where he spent much time, even from childhood. He did some mysterious business here for his family, therefore, he kept this apartment. He had no servants here, though many of the neighbors did. Some, very rich, had several servants in fifteen-room apartments on two floors! But when he moved in, he hired a cleaning woman who came in twice a week and who also stocked his refrigerator. He got along quite well this way. He didn't keep a car in New York City where it would be more trouble than it was worth.

"But don't most real Americans have cars?" she asked.
She had read that.

"Oh, I expect so," he smiled at her. "I have a little car in Iowa and my parents have cars, too. But here in New York City it's best to take the bus. I have rented a car a couple times to drive up to Tarrytown or the Catskills. That's up the Hudson River a hundred miles

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

92

or so."

"We had an old Mercedes, but the Nazis got it. But then we lost almost everything--my grandfather's house, and a little Bauernhaus that papa bought in the Thuringian forest." Stanley gently questioned her about these recent traumatic events. She paused. With a catch in her voice she said, "Mama can scarcely speak of it. She cries and perhaps wonders how it can all be put back together. But I know it's all gone forever. There was a Gauleiter, Herr Schieler--that means Mr. Squint-Eye, you know, looking in two ways! He had been our friend in the 1920's.

"But we found he was looking in two ways. He became an influential Nazi in our area. Of course then he acted like he had never known us, because we were half-Jewish. Both my grandfathers were Jewish. We were mixed-- Jüdisch versippt" --she smiled.

"The Party was soon persecuting Jews in little ways which grew more monstrous each day. Father was dismissed from his post. We didn't know where to turn. Jews were disappearing. Fear was everywhere. Then one very dark night Herr Schieler appeared at our door. He was alone and not in uniform. He and father, just the two, conferred in the library--surrounded by these same books you see here!"

"Next day, papa told us that Herr Schieler claimed to be our friend and had offered a proposition which papa felt he must accept. We would leave Germany. He had made a deal with Herr Schieler. We would simply abandon all our property, which naturally Schieler and the Party would appropriate. In return, Schieler would facilitate our escape. With altered passports, we could get to Czechoslovakia--it was only one hundred kilometers away. Papa said it was time to go. We mustn't wait to see if Hitler would learn to love the Jews. We had heard too much already.

"Papa had begged to take his books. Herr Schieler said, 'Why not? The new Reich doesn't need books like these.' So we hastily packed up the books, not all by any means, then with little else, oh, we sewed some silver and jewelry into our hems--we were loaded on a van that took us across the border to Eger, in the Sudetenland. There were Nazis there too, but they weren't running the country. I suppose one could say Herr Schieler kept his part of the bargain.

"Papa had friends in Eger who gave us money. We managed to get to Prague, then Vienna, then Switzerland. We cabled Uncle Abraham, then haunted the American Embassy until we were permitted to come to New York City.

"It's not a happy story except that mama and I are alive. Even papa lived long enough to see the Statue of Liberty. You can't know what that meant to us, especially papa. He used to have a picture of it hanging in our house. When we passed it, he said, 'Now my little Gretchen is safe,' and he was hugging and kissing us. He had been under a terrible strain for years. He was a quiet, gentle man, not fit for battling barbarians. His taking these books on such a forlorn odyssey tells the story. He loved books and ideas before everything.

"Here in New York City he seemed lost and resigned. He couldn't unpack the books. We had no room. It was as though he thought his life's work was done. Then he died." She was crying.

Stanley went to her, pulled her close in an embrace. He kissed her forehead, her eyes. They stood there for a moment, then she pulled back, embarrassed.

He tried to lighten the moment with a joke about the ubiquity of Goethe and Schiller who appear inevitably to take central position in every German library. He told her how he had traveled in Germany where every little town seemed to have its revered house where plaques revealed Goethe had stopped briefly or slept overnight, one hundred fifty years before. "Look at all these Goethe books!"

"And there are more!" said she, smiling once more.

"Did you go to Weimar and Jena? Goethe and Schiller lived there for years. Schiller taught at our little university."

Stanley felt a wave of well-being. For the first time this apartment was more than just a place to sleep. Her presence dissipated his loneliness. He loved having her here. Glorious books, representing the excellent taste of their former owner, were spreading steadily along the shelves.

"Gretchen, it's very good to have you here," he said quietly. She busied herself at one of the shelves. "This all reminds me of a job I did at home two years ago. I have a tower in Iowa, did you know that?"

"A tower?" she looked doubtful. It seemed a non sequitur to her. Was that the Latin she wanted here? Anyway, let him explain about a tower.

He continued. "There's a tower on our house with a large, beautiful room that no one thought of using. My father let me move my study and library there. We did that a couple years ago. We re-modeled it and moved my books there. Now it's my bailiwick."

"What's a bailiwick?" she asked.

"Dies ist mein Amtsreich," he responded. "It's a domain where one is the undisputed ruler. It's a beautiful,

retreat where we were unpacking and shelving just like here today. Two young students helped me. I'm a dedicated bibliophile wherever I go, as you may have surmised. When I go to Iowa I sit up there, surrounded by books and gaze out over our land and the Cedar River. It's quite different from here, but with similarities. There the scene is pastoral, whereas here it is urban and industrial, but I took this apartment because it reminded me of my tower."

He showed her some of the Montaigne translations. "Montaigne had a tower room also--back in the 1500's. His tower study was over the gate to his château near Bordeaux. I first read about it when I was at Dartmouth. That's how I got the idea."

"I'd love to see your tower some day." She dusted a shelf.

Ruminatively he answered, "Maybe you will. It's a Tuscan Villa. Our family built it in 1859. We've always lived there. Of course I'll go back. That's home--this is just visiting here. But I love the city, too, with all the excitement, the music, the museums, the book shops, the night-life, the theatre. This is where things happen. My grandmother used to bring me here to the Plaza Hotel when I was a boy. We had to hear as

much music as possible in two weeks. Then, she was my piano teacher until I went to college in 1926."

It took several weeks to complete the shelving job. In truth, both wanted to draw it out so they could be together. When it was done, they found other reasons to meet. He would buy lunch for her in lower Manhattan. One day they met to watch the mammoth new French liner, ¹⁹³⁵ Normandie, come to dock. They danced at the Glen Island Casino, and had one mad evening at the Cotton Club in Harlem. The era of the big bands was beginning-- Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington--young people had to hear them all. Then there was the theatre-- They saw Helen Hayes in Victoria Regina. They saw Anderson's Winterset at the Martin Beck Theatre, Odets' Awake and Sing and then Kingsley's Dead End at the Belasco.

But more often, they heard the symphony, the opera, various musical recitals and concerts. Sometimes, Stanley took her to auctions where they might buy an old oriental carpet or some antique for his apartment or for Frau Reisfeld's, which also had been nearly bare.

Day by day, Stanley's respect grew for Dr. Reisfeld, whom he could know only through this superlative collection of books and through conversation with Emma and Gretchen.

There was a lifetime of study here, with German literature and culture accented, as might be expected. But fully half the books were by authors of other nations.

Here was a volume of Walther von der Vogelweide, poet of the Age of Chivalry. He saw a translated quotation suitable for the beams of the tower room: Who loves a woman good and true, Can never aught ignoble do." He saw Parzival and the folk-epic, the Nibelungenlied, along with numerous works on Medieval and Renaissance art and architecture. He saw much Martin Luther and Grimmelshausen. He saw the eighteenth and nineteenth century writers-- Lessing, Herder, Heinrich Heine, Goethe and Schiller abundantly, the Schlegels, the brothers Grimm, von Kleist, Hölderlin, Ludwig Uhland, Eichendorff, Grillparzer, and so on through the Romantic and later movements. Sudermann, the Impressionist, von Liliencron, the Naturalists Arno Holz and Gerhart Hauptmann; Nietzsche, the controversial philosopher; modern writers of war-protest--Franz Werfel, Ernst Toller, Georg Kaiser; Arthur Schnitzler, Ricarda Huch, Jakob Wassermann, Herman Hesse, Stefan Zweig. There were whole shelves of Hauptmann, Rainer Maria Rilke and

Thomas Mann.

Music was not slighted in this library, which included bound volumes of music from Leipzig, biographies and critical works on composers and musicians from the Minnesingers and Meistersingers through the glorious days of Dresden, Leipzig and Thuringia, where Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt, Wagner and Luther had all been active, and which gave the world its greatest composer, Johann Sebastian Bach.

One day Stanley gave Frau Reisfeld another two thousand dollars, which surprised and delighted her. He told her how valuable the books were to him. Another evening, he invited them both to a catered dinner at

River House so that Frau Reisfeld might see the books in their new locale. He told her that if she saw some books that would be special to her, because of their association with her husband, then she must take them home.

Frau Reisfeld was charmed by Stanley. He helped make her feel they had found a new home at last. He was a real American and a friend. She began to feel life wasn't over for her after all.

Also she had found a job as a receptionist for a Jewish refugee organization where she could do most of the duties very well, especially the linguistic calisthenics. They wanted her to learn to type, so at age forty-eight, she was in typing school in the evening.

When Gretchen told her Stanley had proposed marriage, the mother was ecstatic. If Gretchen had any reservations, Frau Reisfeld soon dispelled them. Gretchen said, "I haven't met his parents. Maybe they won't like me. Maybe they're anti-Semitic. There are Nazis here in America, too."

"Nonsense," her mother exploded. "What total nonsense. You know nothing about his parents except that they produced a wonderful son. Besides, you're not marrying his parents. He wants you to marry him. I don't think

you could find a better, kinder, more thoughtful young man, (and not poor either), on either side of the Atlantic. And so handsome!"

Gretchen had to agree. She loved him unquestionably. She felt so safe and fortunate with him, it frightened her.

*1935
wedding*

They were married in September 1935 in an Episcopal rectory near River House. Stanley considered this the most private of acts. It was a Sunday afternoon so Emma and Abraham were there. But his own parents heard about it only a few weeks later. They quickly adapted, because it was the rule at Villa Toscana that each generation was entitled to complete privacy. They were pleased he had married, though Madge wondered if this unknown girl would be as appropriate as certain of the Iowa belles. But then she too, had been a New York girl!

Madge did call the local society editors to insert sketchy stories:

"Mr. Stanley Huntington Maynard IV. of the old Cedar Rapids family, has been recently married in New York City to Miss Gretchen Reisfeld of New York. Mr. Maynard, who is widely known locally and who lives at the family estate, Villa Toscana, when he is in Iowa, is a son of the senior Stanley Maynards and a grandson of the late U.S. Senator

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

102

Stanley Maynard II.

After attending local schools, young Mr. Maynard graduated from Dartmouth College in 1930, then attended the University of Goettingen, the Sorbonne in Paris, and the University of Iowa. Presently he is engaged in the family business.

Your newspaper regrets that we have no particulars on Miss Reisfeld at this time, but we will keep our readers apprised."

Stanley took Gretchen to Lake Placid for their honeymoon. They found a little guest cabin where food was simple and plentiful. For several weeks they tramped about in the glorious colors of an Adirondack Indian summer. Now they loved each other deeply. They chopped some wood, fed the landlord's chickens, helped build a fence, petted the local dogs, rode horseback, floated about the lake in a rowboat. The cabin had no electricity so there was no radio. They couldn't hear the latest horror stories from Germany or of the social problems of the U.S.A.

Briefly, they were in Arcadia. Stanley told her it would be possible to stay forever. But winter was coming. He thought they must go meet his parents.

Also, they must seriously make plans for their lives. He supposed they would live, as he had done, in Iowa

and in New York City. However, he wanted to make a 'real difference,' if he could, by using family money in socially-beneficial ways. "Too many people in the world today have just nothing." He told her about meeting Jimmy DiRicco in that queue of destitute men back in 1932. He often walked over by the One-Cent Restaurant on West Forty-third and he sent them checks, but he had never seen Jimmy again.

autumn
1935

"My father runs the estate now. He's sixty-one, very active and not interested in retiring, but one day I'm supposed to take over. So he has me here sort of 'being trained' by conferring with financial advisors and bankers. It's not a difficult job, at least it takes very little time--a couple hours a week on average! I'm sure they would all get along very well without me. See how you've married a very lucky guy!"

"I have my own money, left me by my grandmother, and up to now I have lived on income from that only. That is, I don't use any of the estate money although father has said it is all mine, or will be! I have no brothers or sisters or cousins."

After their honeymoon at Lake Placid, they returned to River House. Gretchen felt totally beloved and safe there with Stanley, and surrounded with her father's familiar books. She was happy beyond measure. She had

104

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

given up her job. When she asked Stanley if she might buy a few things to make the apartment more 'gemütlich,' --perhaps some chairs, some drapes, some oddments-- he opened a checking account for her, telling her to get what she wanted. She had carte blanche. They often would go together, not only to auctions as before, but to antique stores and decorator's salons. He discovered that she was very careful about spending. She would look, get ideas, but spend little.

One cloudy, chilly, November day he returned from Wall Street to find a lot of furniture set haphazardly in the room. There were splendid, comfortable chairs and sofas covered with a bright, floral chintz. Rich draperies were thrown helter-skelter on the chairs and piano. Gretchen was not there. A large, marble-top side-table stood in the center of the room. A Georgian mirror in heavy, golden frame with a broken-pediment top, leaned against the wall. A couple of rolled rugs were by the door.

He went to the kitchen to make a peanut-butter sandwich. Gretchen must be up to something!

Just then he heard the door being unlocked. Gretchen burst in carrying four large cushions which she deposited on one of the sofas. She directed two young movers to place a glistening, mahogany, dining table in the next room.

When they withdrew, she looked at Stanley, started laughing, and fell breathless into a chair. "Oh, I'm so exhausted! You'll never guess what happened. Do you like these things? I surely hope so because they belong to us now!"

She didn't give him time to respond. "This is the way it was. I was going down the elevator when I discovered the tenant just below us, that is, Mr. George Handler, was moving out and I saw some beautiful furniture. I got out of the elevator and started talking with him. It turned out his apartment is exactly like this one--windows the same size, etc., and he wanted badly to be rid of the belongings without a lot of fuss. He needed money--he's moving to Mexico! Anyway I started to buy a chair, then thought of buying the drapes. It developed into a large transaction. Finally, I bought all these things, you'll never guess for how much!"

Stanley was vastly amused by her enthusiasm. "How much? Maybe three thousand dollars? I don't know." The bell rang. The movers delivered a large, rolled carpet about fifteen feet long. "Gosh," he amended, "Maybe five thousand?"

Gretchen laughed with palpable pleasure. "Buddy," (she had learned his nick-name,) "It cost six hundred dollars for everything! He's throwing in a couple

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt 106

pastels by Childe Hassam. Do you know that name? Also several Lalique vases! I better go down to get those before he forgets! He must be out of the building today. He's very pleased to be rid of these things! The wonder is that all these drapes will exactly fit our windows. I measured to be sure! He says the fabrics are Brunschwig--that's very good, elegant and expensive!

Stanley flopped next to her, embracing and kissing her. "These sofas are very comfortable indeed! How clever is my little Gretchen! She has learned how to survive in a cruel world! These furnishings are gorgeous! It will be so grand when we get them all in place."

"Büdchen," (a special diminutive she developed for him after telling him Gretchen meant 'little Margaret.'), "Mr. Handler says these carpets are rare old ones shipped here by the Soviet Union. The Russians are selling all the furnishings confiscated in the old, ruling-class homes. They need money from the west. He says it's easy in New York to find old linen, porcelain and samovars!"

The large carpet proved to be an old Karabagh in superb condition. It was a feast of colors--black, olive, ivory, red, green, blue, yellow, brown, with a border of square, blue botehs around a black central field covered with polygons and stylized flowers. It was from the Trans-

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Caucasus and probably had graced some Russian nobleman's house before the revolution.

The two smaller carpets were a Kazakh-Lambalo and a Gendje, both Caucasian. The Lambalo had six wide borders surrounding a very narrow central field of deep blue, where a couple star-like motifs floated. The Gendje had a central field of diagonal stripes. Carpet identifications were stitched to the reverse sides.

The building service people were called to hang the mirror and the drapes. Büdchen and Gretchen themselves arranged the furniture. The Karabagh, with the sofas and chairs went in the large living room. The mirror went over the marble fireplace. The side-table went in the entry hall; the mahogany table in what might be a dining room.

That same month, Gretchen had bought at auction two oil paintings of the Biedermeier period. She told Stanley they reminded her of paintings in her grandparents' house in Jena. They were pictures of family groups, one by Van Amerling, one by Peter Krafft, which, as it happened, were great bargains that day, since few buyers were present and central-European artists were not in vogue nor well-known in America. So she got the paintings for four hundred dollars.

The apartment was certainly developing character.

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

108

1935

In December, they took a taxi to Grand Central to catch the train west. Gretchen was apprehensive about meeting his parents, though excited about seeing more of the United States and seeing Stanley's home. In their compartment at night she wanted to sleep next to the window...she wanted to peek out around the drawn curtain to see the cities and darkened countryside through which they were passing.

She delighted in eating in the diner where jovial, black waiters plied them with rich coffee, thick cream, sizzling steaks and Peach Melba. How different from the appalling steerage conditions on the Italian vessel in which her family had crossed the Atlantic. It took twelve frightful days from Marseilles. It was all they could afford. The food was scant and poisonous. They had all been seasick most of the way. In New York, Uncle Abraham had closed his shop so that he might meet them after Ellis Island. He took them in a cab to the tiny apartment he had rented for them. Could she be the same person who had suffered such misery only months before? She marveled at this great change of fortune.

Before their trip, Stanley took her to some dress salons on Fifth Avenue to expand her wardrobe. He

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

wanted her to have a fur coat, but she chose a Worth coat of brown wool. She found a Jean Patou walking dress of blue and red check wool. She found two Molyneux suits--a rich, Burgundy-colored woolen cape suit trimmed with nutria, and a yellow, woolen jersey with a tweed-lined duster. She got hats, shoes and accessories.

Stanley said, "Get them all! When my mother sees those labels, she will love you forever. I should warn you, fashionable clothes are what she thinks of most of the time. So if you want to win her heart, just talk that sort of women-talk with her.

"Father is more complicated, but he will love you from the start as I did. Don't worry about your in-laws."

Briefly Stanley had dashed home in June when Johnny Robbins and Glenn McIntyre graduated from college. They sent him invitations to a commencement he did not want to miss.

This visit would be for a month so that Gretchen could get acquainted. The train raced from Chicago across the frozen, flat Illinois countryside, then the Mississippi River, partly frozen and less imposing than in other seasons, for its edges were ill-defined and snow-covered.

When they pulled into the Cedar Rapids Union Station,

Stanley said, "They know when we arrive. I don't know if or how they will meet us. We might have to take a cab, or, because it's a grand occasion with a new daughter-in-law, they might send Abe Tyler. Melissa Tyler, the cook, is his wife. When the Tylers were hired, Abe was supposed to be driver and handyman, but times change. My parents do their own driving, so now, Abe has a job in town, I think. But he lives with his family at the villa because my mother wants to keep Melissa at all costs! The husband comes with the cook, you see. Mother says good cooks are hard to find!"

As they alighted, Stanley espied his parents who had come personally to meet the train. "There are my folks! This means it's the grandest of possible occasions when they come to meet the train together!"

They were smiling and waving and approaching each other. "This must be Gretchen," his father shouted over the hiss of the locomotive.

"Of course, Hunt, who else could it be?" Madge turned a glistening, youthful face on them.

"Mama, Dad, this really is Gretchen." They were embracing all around.

"We're so very pleased to meet you at last!" said Madge. "We thought this rascally son had quite forgotten us. We want to know all about you. Maybe you already

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

11

know about us and our big old pile of a villa! We're very excited. You're the first new daughter in our family since 1905, and that was when Hunt, here, brought me home to the villa. Oh, you'll hear about those ancient days."

Now, Gretchen with a shy smile said, "But it's not possible that one so young is Stanley's mother!"

Gretchen was not dissimulating, for Madge truly was beautiful and youthful-appearing, especially when broadly-smiling as now. The compliment had precisely the right note to open a happy relationship with her mother-in-law.

They found their baggage which a porter brought to the car. Hunt beamed, "Welcome to Iowa! It's cold and snowy now, but we have a warm fire at home." Madge insisted that Gretchen sit in the back seat with her.

Stanley sat in front with his father who drove them home. Hunt told him, "We have Abe Tyler who sometimes drives, but we don't really need a driver like your grandparents used to have. We don't pay him salary any more either, because he got a job in the oats mill in town, though he still lives with his family in the carriage house. It keeps Melissa happy and she's worth her weight in gold to us. Now, in the winter, he tends the furnace.

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

112

We have a new mechanized stoker, so he fills it up night and morning and pulls out the old clinkers. It takes only a few minutes then he's free for his other job. But listen to me! We have this beautiful new daughter-in-law to hear about, and I'm busy talking about coal stokers!"

In the back seat, Madge was approvingly assessing Gretchen's coat. "How nice! It does suit you. Let me guess. Is it by Worth?"

Gretchen laughed. "It is, exactly! How could you guess just like that? I hope you don't have one like it. That would be so embarrassing!"

Madge smiled. "You will find that I know fashions, particularly from Paris and London, maybe not the other places. I've spent a shocking amount of time in the New York salons over the years. Hunt and Stanley may tell you I don't know much about anything else. We won't keep that a secret. But you have the slightest accent. Tell me, you were not born in New York?"

"No," Getchen answered, "I'm from Germany. We lived in Jena, but with the Nazis in power, my father decided we must try to escape. We managed to get to New York early this year. Then my father, who was a professor of literature, died of a heart attack. Mama lives in

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

113

New York now, and I also have a great-uncle there who owns a small book store."

"Oh, you poor thing, refugees!" said Madge. Those Nazis just get more evil every day. I can't bear to read about it. I wondered about your name. I looked in the dictionary and it means 'little Margaret!' My name means Margaret, too! Isn't that something! I'm big Margaret and you are little Margaret." She emitted a little trill of laughter.

"But you are not so big, nor I so tiny," Gretchen objected.

"Oh, you wait until we take off these coats, my dear," Madge rejoined, "Then you'll see how your new mother-in-law is fighting the bulges!"

In a few moments Hunt turned the big, black Buick into their driveway past the quaint, brick gatehouse, which was a miniature version of the villa itself. They wound up along the rows of bare elms to stop at the porte-cochère. Gretchen, wide-eyed, looked up at the vine-covered great house with its square tower. "Oh, Stanley, it's a veritable Schloss!"

Stanley laughed apologetically. "Maybe a small Schloss. See the tower? And that's all our land there to the south. It's about eight hundred acres

isn't it, Dad?"

Hunt answered, "Well, we did have eight hundred here, and you remember, we had the Turnwood Farm further south. That was three hundred twenty acres. Then Alfred Bunker went broke--he owned this farm just south, so he wanted to sell his land and we bought it. So now, in this piece we have fourteen hundred forty acres all together. I got Bunker to stay on and farm most of it. It worked out fairly well this year." While they talked, they went into the entry hall where they met apron-clad Mrs. Powell and Melissa Tyler.

Hunt, turning to Gretchen, spread his arms wide and said, "Now you've come to our little, old homestead in the west. Welcome to Villa Toscana. We hope you will learn to love it as we do!"

The housekeeper said, "We've been all on pins and needles since we heard Mr. Buddy got married. My lands, Buddy, you've kept us waiting! So this is Miss Gretchen! Well, she certainly is a beautiful, young lady! Miss Gretchen, you got yourself a prince, a real prince! I've been here for almost seventeen years watching him grow up. Now that you are here, we want to make sure you both are as comfortable as possible, so let us know anything you need."

Melissa was smilingly nodding agreement with all these statements. "I runs the kitchen. We'll cook up anything you want whenever you want it. That's what we're here for!"

Just then, George Luckner, the gardener-handyman, came in from the kitchen. Hunt asked him to bring in the luggage and run the car into the carriage house.

Madge questioned Stanley, "We weren't sure if you wanted to use your own bedroom or perhaps move into your grandparent's room. It's larger there. But we have them both ready."

When Stanley said, "Oh my room, of course. The rooms are all large!" A veritable procession mounted the stairway with Gretchen spouting compliments: "Such a grand fireplace...that glorious old carpet... see how this stairway glistens...what an extraordinary leaded window, is it German?"

Hunt told her the window had been chosen by his mother in the 1890's when the house was re-modeled, and yes, it was German.

Finally the young people were installed in Stanley's bedroom with its book-lined walls. There was a bright fire in the marble-faced fire-place--just a welcoming gesture, for the room was pleasantly warmed by the furnace. A pleasant fragrance from the crackling, oak fire and from two large bowls of American Beauty roses

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

116

permeated the room. The parents and servants had withdrawn. Stanley was telling Gretchen how careful people were here about privacy. Just then, a knock at the door. One of the maids had brought a thermos of hot toddies. "Mr. Maynard said you would need this after your cold journey."

Stanley grinned, "Oh yes, thank you."

They sipped toddies as Gretchen went about the room reading titles on the books, examining old tennis and swimming trophies, school certificates and pennants, framed photographs. "I thought you had moved the books to your fabled tower."

He laughed, clasping her in light embrace from behind. "Don't you know you have married an incurable bibliomaniac? We did move hundreds and hundreds from here and from the family library downstairs, and from the music room. I thought they would all fit up in the tower, but I kept buying more--just like in New York City--and now there are books everywhere. My father says I will collapse the villa with all this weight. I try to keep the books a little organized by subject so it isn't impossible to find something. It doesn't look like we took any out of here, does it? But we did!"

They had showered and were in their robes. The toddies

were giving them a pleasant glow. In due time they tumbled on the bed to make love. Buddy whispered to her, "Dinner isn't until seven. We have three hours!"

About six-thirty, Gretchen murmured, "May we go see the tower?" She had heard too much of its grandeur, its magical ambience, to postpone her first visit.

They dressed quickly and fairly bounded up the stairs. The retreat proved to be all that Stanley had claimed. When he switched on the lights, Gretchen caught her breath--it was that handsome! Books were everywhere. Light reflected from the maple floor, the polished furnishings and gilt bindings.

"See that coffered ceiling up there in the gloom? Those beams will be carved and painted some day with appropriate words and thoughts that I'm collecting. You know my obsession with Montaigne and his tower with carved beams. I took some pictures at his château in 1932. Now I'm waiting for the right artist to come along.

"Last month in New York I was at Brown Brothers Bank waiting to talk with one of the partners. On a table I saw an open scrap-book that had pictures of a large, Gilded-Age, country home called Brighthurst. It had a tower or two, a porte-cochère, innumerable gables,

shingles laid in patterns up a steep roof with dormers and iron cresting. It reminded me of some mansions I saw in Alpine towns in Austria. The style was hard to identify--let's say eclectic--that leaves room for error! Anyway, a grand house, but what caught my eye was an interior view of a book-lined room where oak beams were carved and painted with inscriptions in English, French and German. I copied a couple down and have them here in my wallet." He read from a slip of paper. "'A tout oiseau son nid est beau,' and 'Home, like a delicate, sensitive Instrument can only be kept in perfect Tune by constant Care.' I was intrigued to learn that Montaigne and I were not the only beam-carvers!"

"Then I got called to another office before I could inquire about Brighthurst. Later, the scrap-book was gone. The young woman in that office knew nothing about it. So I wonder if Brighthurst still exists and if one might visit it."

Gretchen didn't want to dampen his enthusiasm by telling him she had seen a good many carved beams in central Europe.

The tower windows were round-arched with inside and outside shutters, all now closed, but Stanley threw some open so she might see the view. Biting December

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

119

air flooded in. The gently-rolling Iowa hills were brightened despite the early winter darkness, because a full moon shone down on a light dusting of snow. Skeletons of denuded trees and bushes marked the fence lines and rivulet courses. A small animal, perhaps a fox or dog, ran across a field leaving tracks. Distant farm lights twinkled.

"That's mostly our land, and see over there, that line of trees winding about? That's the Cedar River.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

120

My great-grandfather came out here in the very early days, the 1840's, when they were just settling Iowa, and he bought this tract of land. Later, he decided to build his house here on this hill. He brought the family out from Pittsburgh. So we've been here for nearly a hundred years, though the house is only about seventy-six now."

He showed her the Grant Wood paintings. "You'll see these in the daylight, but the best time to see them is on a spring day when you can compare them with the views out these windows. Grant Wood is a regional painter in Cedar Rapids. We're very proud of him. He came up here to the tower a couple years ago to do these four paintings. Oh gosh, it's almost seven. We can't be late to dinner. That's the rendez-vous de rigueur in this house ever since my grandfather's time!"

They rushed down the stairs to the dining room. The table was set with Letitia's delicate old Sèvres porcelain--a rich, deep blue with gold decorative edges. Stanley told Gretchen the occasion had to be very special indeed, to bring out this dinnerware.

"Of course it's very special," smiled Madge.

"How many times do we welcome a new daughter-in-law?"

Madge had promised Virginia Luckner, George's wife, who was the young maid serving dinner, and who would wash the dishes later, that she could have an extra day off if she were careful with the rare, old Sèvres. It was seldom used and each piece must be washed and dried individually. In the morning, Mrs. Powell personally would replace the Sèvres in the cabinet where it normally resided. This was museum-quality ware. A piece broken could not be replaced.

At dinner, when the senior Maynards discovered that Gretchen played the violin but had lost her instrument in the flight from Germany, Hunt asked Madge, "Where did we put father's violin?" Old Senator Maynard had been a better-than-average violinist who on occasion had regaled political meetings with Turkey-in-the-Straw and lively square-dance tunes. It was said he gained many votes that way.

Madge answered, "It's up in Letitia's closet where they always kept it. After dinner, we'll go find it. Gretchen, do you think you could play an old, senatorial violin?"

"I would love to try, Madge." She had been asked to use their first names. "The old violins are often the best, if the strings are good."

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

122

Later, they all went to the great, master bedroom, unoccupied since Letitia's death, but always maintained. A rose, floral Brussels carpet stretched to the walls. The furnishings were heavy walnut, mid-Victorian, neo-Gothic. They had been moved here when the house was built. Hunt had been born in that lofty, ornate bed. There were chairs with petit-point made by Letitia.

Unlike most houses built in the 1850's, this house had closets because of the foresight of the able, young architect. Indeed, the closets in the bedrooms were so commodious, that during the modernization of the 1890's they permitted the installation of bathrooms without destroying the proportions of the rooms.

Madge, finding the violin case on the closet shelf, handed it to Gretchen. "Maybe you can make this sing again! Oh, you should have seen Stanley's grandfather back in 1910! He had a white beard. He was as distinguished as they come, with dignity enough for ten senators, but he would forget all that, go to barn dances and play for hours! He had such good rhythm. He tapped his feet and danced about. The farmers all loved him so much they would have sent him right back to the Senate if he wanted to go!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

123

Gretchen opened the case. The old violin and bow appeared intact. It was an Austrian violin made in Innsbruck by Anton Meierhof.

Hunt said, "I think I remember mother had this violin re-strung about 1928. Nobody played it after my father died, but mother looked at it one day and found a couple broken strings. She said, 'We must keep these things in order.' Remember Madge, mother was like that."

Gretchen tuned it a little, then did some arpeggios and improvisations. "It does have a nice tone. Buddy, can we try something with the piano?"

They all went below to the music room which Gretchen had not yet seen. "Such an elegant room, so large!! You could have chamber concerts here."

"That's what grandmother used to do. But she had some difficulty finding the musicians and the audiences. The people hereabout like folk music more than classical. Maybe that will change. She didn't go to grandfather's barn dances, but he would often assist at her little concerts. There's grandmother's portrait. It's by Eastman Johnson and was done here in this room. It's a good likeness, but best in the afternoon when the sun lights the room."

Gretchen was intrigued by the portrait of the regal lady of the 1890's. Also the background, delicious

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

how things had not changed in forty years, and the marble busts of composers, still there!

Madge said, "We had both pianos tuned again as soon as we knew you were coming home." She and Hunt sat down.

Following a discussion, Stanley and Gretchen settled on the haunting Schubert Trio in E-Flat, which they both knew well. There was no cellist for the important third part, still, the music brought the old room alive.

When they completed the final movement, Hunt apologetically told them he and Madge must go to meet some friends at the country club. "Would you like to come along?"

"Not tonight, dad, thanks. We'll just do a bit of practicing here."

Hunt showed them a new electric radio-phonograph he had placed against the oak wainscot. "First new thing in the music room since your Baldwin piano in 1924! You will want to buy some of your favorite recordings."

After the parents went out, Stanley and Gretchen played bits of Beethoven and Bach... Gretchen's eyes roving over the room, caught a movement at the open door. A small black face with wide eyes, was peeking in. Gretchen could see the braided, black hair, the little yellow ribbons. Now the face was gone. Now

it was back again, drawn by the music.

Still playing the violin, Gretchen beckoned to the face to come in. The face disappeared. Then it was back. Smiling, Gretchen beckoned again.

The little creature showed itself for the first time, swaying back and forth with its hands behind its back.

It was little Marcy Tyler. When Gretchen beckoned again, Marcy slowly advanced into the room, glancing sideways to make sure her retreat was not cut off. She wasn't supposed to be in this part of the house. Usually she helped with the dishes, but tonight, Virginia was doing it all.

Stanley saw her for the first time. "Oh, here's Marcy Tyler!" He stopped playing the piano. "Marcy, this is my new wife, Gretchen! Marcy, you are growing like the Iowa corn! Gretchen, this is Melissa's little girl. Marcy, do you like the music? Come over here, sit here by me. See if you can make some music too! How old are you now, Marcy?"

"I'm almost eight," she mumbled. She raised her eyes shyly. Now she felt braver. "I'm in the third grade already. We have some music at school on Fridays.

A teacher ... comes and plays records for us. There's a big Victrola that stands on the floor and she winds it up and it makes good music too! It's got a little villa

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

white dog sittin' in there an' it's made of yellow oak all polished with a big lid on top where Miss Deane puts in the records and changes the needles when things get scratchy.

"We all like Miss Pauline Deane that teaches us music 'cause she is fat and jolly an' tells us all kinda stories, but las' week she tol' us she's goin' to Fergus Falls, Minnesota to git married, an' she won't be back no more never! So we wuz all really sad 'cause we wisht she wouldn't go, an' it seems like the nice teachers always go an' git married an' the mean ones jus' stays forever!

"Anyway, she plays Dance the Cob an' it's spooky 'cause she says the ghosts are all dancin' around, an' they can do that in the middle of the night when it's plenty dark, but all of a sudden the rooster crows an' that means the sun will come up pretty soon, so all them ghosts gotta hightail it back to the graveyard! They can't stay out in the sun, you see.

My friend, Maisie Hope Olsen--she's a Norwegian, but she's real nice jus' the same--she says them ghosts is afraid they'll git sunstroke! Anyways, that music is plenty scary but us kids all love it an' we ask for it ever Friday even though we have to run when we go by Prairie Grove Cemetery in case some of them spooks is still out! Mama likes Cab Calloway but I think Dance the Cob is best!"

"I know that music," Stanley told her. "Sit here and I'll show you how to play it on the piano!" He showed her how to pick out the opening notes of Danse macabre.

They were having a fine time when Melissa came to the door. "Oh Mr. Stanley, I'm sorry she came in here. Marcy, you know we're not supposed to go beyond the kitchen."

"But mama, I heard the music and now Mr. Stanley's showing me how to play Dance the Cob on the piano!"

"It's all right, Melissa," Stanley said. "We want to find out if Marcy is going to be a famous pianist."

The result of this encounter was that Stanley and Gretchen during the remainder of their visit taught Marcy some rudiments of piano. Before they returned to New York City, Stanley called Miss Emily Havergill, an old friend of his grandmother's. Miss Havergill

was a Cedar Rapids piano-teacher of long standing. Stanley thought Marcy showed promise, so he arranged weekly piano lessons for her at Miss Havergill's home. He had a good, used, upright piano moved into the Tyler's apartment over the carriage house. The lessons cost a dollar a week. He paid Miss Havergill a hundred dollars in advance.

To Melissa he said, "Make sure she practices regularly every day. That's the secret of success. After a year or so we'll see how she's progressing."

Melissa was overjoyed since she hoped her little girl could have some of the advantages usually reserved for the white, middle class. Stanley told her that in June, Miss Havergill's students would present a recital in one of the downtown hotels or auditoriums. Marcy must work hard so she could be a star up there on the stage, playing for the whole town to hear!

The days of the visit passed quickly. There were parties at the villa and in town. They set up a Christmas tree in the bay of the drawing room, bringing out ornaments and decorations of great age. Hunt could remember some from his own childhood in the 1870's--some that had been brought by river boat from Pittsburgh.

There wasn't much time for the tower, but it was pleasant just knowing it was there waiting.

One day, Stanley and Gretchen took Christmas gifts in the little Chevrolet to Fred and Varina Tabb. The old couple lived rent-free in a tidy little brick Victorian house that belonged to the Estate.

Stanley discovered that their antiquated furnace no longer functioned. They were living mostly in the kitchen where they kept warm by the old, coal range. The old folks were reluctant to mention the problem to Hunt or the Estate office since they believed themselves very fortunate in being allowed to live rent-free.

"Mister Stan! I do declare! Varina, look who be heah! We wuz wonderin' when we gonna see you agin! An' dis be yo' new bride, I 'spect! Ain't she a pitchah! Come on out to da kitchen. We sets out dere durin' dese cold spells."

They brought in chairs from the living room. Varina was giving them coffee and generous helpings of a delicious pie made with brown sugar, nuts and other secret ingredients, maybe some brandy.

When Stanley questioned them about sitting in the kitchen, Fred slowly said, "Now we jes don't want to do no complainin'! Mr. Hunt, he bin jes as good to us as possible! He call us up on da phone ever' month.

Da truf is, dis heah ol' furnace, it done give up da ghost. But we pleny comfortable heah in da kitchen. We seen real hard times when we wuz young an' dis heah kitchen ain't no hardship at all compared to dem ol' cabins wit' da wind blowin' through where we growed up. Us kids wuz sleepin' on da flo' an' six to a bed an' da quilt not big enough to reach across. If'n yo' be on da outside edge, yo' be froze by mawnin'! Ever' night dey be a fight ovah who gonna be in da middle!"

Stanley told Gretchen how the Tabbs had always been at the villa in his childhood; how Varina had passed the noble art of cooking on to her niece, Melissa.

"Varina knows just about everything about cooking. She used to wipe my nose and give me goodies when I was in trouble some way."

Varina, now fat and slow-moving, was smiling thoughtfully. "Mr. Stanley I recollects dat day back when yo' an' yo' frins be fightin' da war up in dat ol' towah. What a racket! Dat ol' villa ain't nevah heard da like befo'! Den you-all has to have pies n' cobblahs an' buttahmilk to heal up yo' wounds! He, He, He," she shook with laughter. "Dem wuz good ol' days!"

When they left, Fred Tabb touched Stanley's sleeve.

"Mr. Stanley, we knows we's lucky heah. We has good food an' good health, an dis heah sweet, lil house. We ain't got no complaints nohow! Don't yo' bothah Mr. Hunt about dat ol' furnace. It gonna be spring pretty soon, anyway!"

After this visit, Stanley drove directly to the Krater Heating and Plumbing Company which was partly owned by the Maynard Estate, to arrange for a new furnace for the Tabbs.

Stanley and Gretchen visited friends high and low in Cedar Rapids, generally avoiding the alcoholic, non-intellectual gatherings of the wealthy at the country club.

Down south of the river in the Czech community, he had some friends with whom he had attended high school. Karl Murka and Rosa Liehmann, who had later married, were now running a small family bakery. They were all interested in serious music. At the Murka home one evening, they met Josef Kolar, a young cellist, who had played in chamber groups in Prague and Brno. He was Rosa's cousin and had recently emigrated. He was making a precarious living with sporadic appearances in a Chicago chamber group.

Gretchen asked if he would join them in some three-

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt 132

part bits of music. He told them he never missed an opportunity to play his cello. Thereupon, the young Maynards asked the entire group from the Murka house to come out that same evening to the Villa Toscana. Josef must bring his cello, Karl his popular recordings, and they would buy a keg of Czech, home-made beer on the way. Stanley called to warn Madge who told him she and Hunt would be at the country club until late.

There would be such an impromptu party in the music room as it had never seen before. The Czech girls were in native, festive costumes.

Stanley asked the Tylers to help. They brought in som wooden packing boxes to hold the keg. Newspapers and towels were placed on the floor to catch the drippings. Melissa brought in a tray of glasses, with heaping bowls of Bohemian-made pretzels and cheese, and some Amana Würstchen and Senf (mustard,) plus kolaches,--fruit-filled rolls from the Murka Bakery.

Then the Tylers, with little Marcy, sat down with the group--there were about ten of them--to hear the musicians do Danse macabre. Marcy got Ovaltine while the adults drank beer. After Danse macabre, the Tylers went home with Marcy bubbling about the ghosts doing their dance.

The musicians now did the Schubert Trio in E-Flat,

their musicianship seeming to improve with the beer. They tried some Mozart, then Smetana. The Czechs were all frankly in tears when the familiar strains of Vltava and other parts of Ma Vlast filled the room. From birth they had known these sounds, so evocative of the Czech spirit and the centuries-long struggle for national independence.

Gretchen told them, "We need more musicians. We were doing trios with two people, and now quartets and orchestral works with three! But the beer will have to make up the difference!"

Later, they danced to Karl's recordings--mostly Cole Porter songs. Stanley showed the guests the big Christmas tree in the drawing room. When the beer was gone, they loaded the keg in Karl's car, put the boxes behind the kitchen porch. Letitia seemed pleased when her room returned to normal.

Next day, Madge noticed an odd, beer-like smell coming from the music room. She found the beer-soaked towels on the floor. "That Stannery and his friends were up to something last night. Smells like a saloon! But still, it's a pretty good smell! What would Letitia think of all this?" She looked up at the portrait, which smiled back with total composure.

Stanley and his father had some conversations in the villa office and also at the Estate office in town. Hunt asked him how his personal finances were--if he did not need more money from the Estate now that he was married?

"Dad, you wouldn't believe how careful Gretchen is with money. I think in our case two can live cheaper than one. I twisted her arm to get her to buy some fancy clothes so she could impress mother on this trip." His father smiled knowingly.

"We get by easily with the income from grandmother's money. I don't spend principal. But there is something I want to talk to you about. I would like to do some real good with all this money. There are so many needs I see almost every day, and that's without going looking for them! We live in such luxury. What must it be like for all the people who are just scraping along or even worse!"

"Just making more money is not enough." He told Hunt about his "Maynard Alumni," the group of students whose educations he had helped finance. He told about helping the soup kitchens and about Marcy's piano lessons. "These are all little, penny-ante gestures, but I would like to do a lot more. Oh, and I got a new furnace for

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

the Tabbs. They were sitting in their kitchen to keep warm. The old furnace broke down and they didn't want to bother you about it!"

Hunt was smiling broadly at him. "That shows I must keep closer tab on the Tabbs! I'm very proud of you. These are good ideas. Certainly the need is everywhere. Perhaps I personally have too much of the acquisitive instinct. Yes, the Estate needs someone who can dispense as well as acquire. I think we should transfer a couple million dollars into your personal account. Mother's fortune ~~was about~~ a million, so this will triple your annual income. Can you do some good with that?"

"Dad, I'll sure try. Gretchen and I both want to do this. We have to share our good fortune. Also, you should know, I've asked the students to pay me back when they can. Some have done so already. That makes it possible to help others."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"Ah, you've a head on your shoulders. You do see the importance of maintaining and building the Estate since that's the vehicle which permits the philanthropies!"

Now Stanley told of a proposal one of the Brown Brothers partners had made. They were planning to back a new enterprise in Sandusky, Ohio. A certain Trevor Leggett had developed an automobile trailer-house, self-contained with beds, table and kitchen. He was planning a new, all-metal, streamlined model, perhaps with bathroom. Sales were rapidly increasing. Conditions were improving for this kind of product, what with the new

federal highways and developing tourism.

If all went well, Brown Brothers were going to finance Mr. Leggett's expansion. He hoped to take over one of the old Willys factory buildings in Sandusky. The bankers planned to visit the site in January. The partner had asked Stanley if the Maynards would like to add about a million dollars to the contemplated ten million of financing. The bank considered it an excellent opportunity for venture capital.

Stanley told his father he wouldn't make such a weighty decision on his own. They decided to both go to Sandusky when the bankers were there, to hear Mr. Leggett's plans.

When Stanley and Gretchen returned east in January, Hunt went along as far as Sandusky so they could all confer with the bankers and Mr. Leggett. After hearing the presentation, Hunt asked Stanley what he would do. Stanley said, "I think I would go for it." So it was decided. This undertaking proved to be a happy one for them all. The Maynards acquired stock in the Leggett Company. It had its ups and downs but eventually doubled and re-doubled and re-doubled again in value as the nation's economy grew and changed.

Mr. Leggett promoted his product widely by naming it TRAVULAIRE[®], then refusing to tell reporters if the U were long or short. Arguments and discussions erupted across the land—"It's Trav-you-laire!!" "No, it's Trav-uh-laire!" This riveted attention on the Leggett trailer. Sales soared.

Popular magazines--Collier's, the Saturday Evening Post, even the National Geographic, pictured happy, smiling, all-American families posed by their trailers. The captions were: Go everywhere with your Travulaire![®] With envy, folks will stare, at your shiny Travulaire![®] Life is free from care in a Super Travulaire![®]

Ten years later, after the Second World War, the campaign would still be on. In one 1946 advertisement two owners have met in an Oregon campground. One fastidiously-dressed owner with a Massachusetts license plate is being addressed by a good-ol'-boy, pot-bellied Arkansan in a plaid shirt. "Maybe yours is a Trav-you-laire, but mine is a Trav-uh-laire!" In the background their grinning, blond broods gather around their respective trailers. Of course, the time of minorities had not yet dawned in American advertising.

The Leggett product was a good one; the promotion adept. Many thousands of trailers were sold with much

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt 139

profit for the Maynard Estate.

This felicitous investment, made because Stanley in January 1936 uttered seven fateful words: I think I would go for it, allowed Hunt to credit his son with a business acumen the younger man didn't really have. Stanley didn't relish the battles, skirmishes, plotting and scheming of the business world, from which he was generally spared by his indulgent father, by the solid good sense of the Brown Brothers Bank, and by the wise counsel of Porter Lumsden.

That same January, by a simple accounting procedure in the Estate office, Stanley's income was tripled.

Jan. 1936
Now it would average out to one hundred fifty thousand dollars a year, or over twelve thousand a month, in a time of low prices and low income taxes.

At this rate, the Estate office was re-investing a part of his income so that his principal grew each year. One winter morning at River House, he and Gretchen, considering their new financial situation, decided they could easily live on one-half or one-third of the income, as indeed, they had been doing already. The unused income would remain in their account at the Estate office and build principal.

From time to time, they would be able to finance some of the good works Stanley had in mind. "The first

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt 140

thing I would like to do is set up a system of modest scholarships for indigent students with excellent scholastic records." He told her about his amateurish, first efforts in this direction--his 'Maynard Alumni'.

"Now, let's make a serious move. We can contact the administrations of several colleges. They have mechanisms for choosing the recipients. Our program will differ from some of the others in that we expect the students (when they are able) to re-pay the money some time after their graduation. This enables us to help more students in the future. The program will be open to everybody, male and female, every discipline, no restriction except scholastic excellence.

"I've been thinking a lot about this. We will work with four or five colleges only, to keep it simple. We won't go to Dartmouth College though that's my Alma Mater, and more than that, the Maynard Alma Mater for four generations! We Maynards have all had the same given names, and my great-grandfather graduated back about 1835. So when I was there, I felt like part of a national monument--say like a pillar in the Lincoln Memorial! My grandfather in his will in 1921 endowed a scholarship fund there, so the faculty were all familiar with the name, treating me with a deference I didn't deserve. At commencement, as I stood blushing

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt 141

and stammering before the multitude, the dean made remarks about the historic significance and munificence of the Maynards, so I had to suffer before getting my diploma!

"Anyway, our new program will be at other schools. I've started with the University of Iowa at Iowa City, but now we can try to expand--perhaps to Ames--that's the agricultural college, perhaps also to New York University down by Washington Square, to City College of New York, and the Juilliard School of Music. That's already five! We will give ten one-thousand dollar scholarships each year at each institution. That's a total of fifty thousand dollars a year, and after several years, some of the students will begin to pay back--so these are not grants but rather open-ended loans.

"I would like to call this program the 'Emanuel Reisfeld Scholarships' to honor your father and carry on his work. I infinitely regret never having met him, but somehow, I feel I know him a little since he's here among all these books and with his daughter!"

Gretchen was overcome with emotion. Such a beautiful idea. Her dear, quiet, scholarly father had not come to a tragic end! These scholarships given out to

1936

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

142

young people across the land could change the ending of his story to one of hope and triumphal renewal! Her face shown with delight, even as the uncontrolled tears rolled down.

1936

In July and August, (when the city could be unpleasantly hot and muggy, even for the privileged,) they returned to that simple, blissfully-remote, honeymoon cabin on Lake Placid. The New York Central went directly to the village where their landlord, Seth Townsley, met them in an old Dodge touring car. Connections couldn't be much better though they seemed so far from the city. A short taxi ride to Grand Central, a few hours on the train, and here they were!

Seth lived in a large, weathered farmhouse only a few hundred yards from their cabin, but out of sight because of the trees. He had two gas pumps in front and a small general store in the house. Through the tourist season his wife could rent out seven or eight bedrooms in the old house, which had been built by an early Townsley, probably about 1830, in a time when farm families were large. Seth had rowboats and saddle horses for the guests and for hire. The Townsleys fed their guests in a large farmhouse dining room.

Everything was quiet and pleasant as it had been the previous year. Mrs. Townsley brought them extra hand-made quilts for the cool mountain nights.

The Maynards made occasional excursions to nearby points of interest--one day by bus to Lake Saranac to see Dr. Trudeau's famous tuberculosis sanitorium; other times to the vicinity of Mount Marcy, highest peak in New York State, or to the outlook on White Face Mountain where a fine new access highway had been opened in 1935. From there they could see east to Lake Champlain and the Green Mountains of Vermont. Hundreds of picturesque glacial lakes hereabout drained partly north to the Saint Lawrence and partly south to the Hudson.

They visited the farm at North Elba where John Brown and his family are buried. This was the spot where Brown, according to Richard Henry Dana, was a "kind of king," among a little colony of freed Negroes, before he was called to save Kansas from the slave masters, and raid the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry.

Stanley tried to explain to Gretchen why the tears were rolling down his cheeks as they looked at the graves nestled there among the gigantic boulders--rocks large as houses deposited there by retreating glaciers. He thought

back to a time--it seemed to him he had always known the strange, tragic, epic story of John Brown. He could remember hearing it on his grandfather's knee. He must have been four or five. The old senator, that white-bearded old Union cavalry officer, eyes shining with tears, had managed to convey to his little grandson the fearful drama, the mad nobility of John Brown, along with some of the passion of the days when the nation was violently sundered and Iowa boys sang John Brown's Body.

How many millions of people had heard "John Brown's Body lies a-mouldering in the grave," without knowing or caring who John Brown was or where the grave might be! But this was the grave. John Brown, executed in Virginia, and his two sons, killed at Harper's Ferry, were buried here after an arduous journey from the South and a difficult passage by sleigh over the snow drifts of December 1859.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt 146

Wendell Phillips and some abolitionists joined the bereft family and grieving black neighbors at the burial.

Stanley told Gretchen a little of the significance of Brown in American history. "When we get back to the city, we will find some books. I remember reading God's Angry Man--that's a fictionalized version of Brown's story--it came out about 1932. Brown was a fanatic, determined to wipe out slavery in the United States. Those boulders there are so symbolic. Only a glacier could move them and only a glacier could move Brown, in the sense that once he determined his course against slavery, he never deviated."

After these forays or other hikes up and down the forested mountains, horseback riding or rowing on the lake, they would return famished. Mrs. Townsley served plain but copious fare with many home-grown delights--fried chicken, mashed new potatoes, strawberries, fruit cobblers with thick cream, baked fish, pork roasts. Stanley and Gretchen knew they would want to come back here. They decided they must make some permanent arrangement.

One day Stanley asked Seth if they might not perhaps have a long-term lease on the cabin. Seth was opening a gate to turn his eight Guernseys into a clover-filled pasture. His faded-blue overalls were clean but patched many times over. His face was lined and brown from a lifetime of harsh,

Adirondack winters, but his blue eyes sparkled under a shapeless, stained and frayed straw hat. "So you like it here, maybe?" He shooed the cows through. "Well, I never thought of makin' no leases, and anyway, that wouldn't solve my little vexin' problem, which is the bank is breathin' down my back. It's real embarrassin' to me, though it ain't exactly my fault, bein' a general condition across the country. We always done tolerable well 'til the last couple years. We been here, the Townsleys, for a hundred-twenny years or more--come over from Vermont and the New Hampshire Grants. I had a great great great with the Green Mountain Boys. We been fighters, ain't none of us gives up easy. So I figure now ain't no bank gonna git this here farm away from me as long as I'm alive and kickin'. Sure thing, I dasn't borrow no more!

"Now I been lookin' at you and your pretty little missus this year and last, and I like you and would be flattered to have you for neighbors. More than that, I figure your one of the few people in the U. S. of A. what seems to have a little bit of money--livin' like you do in the city and comin' up here when you feel like it, and stayin' for as long as you like! 'Course I know all that ain't none of my business.

"Now I do odd jobs for people--can do all sorts of things, haul with my truck, plough, farm, paint and carpenter--

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

148

ain't nothin' I can't do; and we work hard, dawn to dusk, my wife and the kids too. So we've always got by, but just now the tourists don't have much money neither, and they don't stay so long, and they ain't many of them like used to be. So we got ourselves in a bind with the bank, though we ain't never had debts before, and don't aim to have them in the future. Now I got ten thousand dollars insurance and I could shoot myself so we could keep the farm for the kids and grandkids, but maybe there's a better way! Would you be interested in buyin' the cabin with say, about twenny acres? You could have about three hundred feet on the lake with that little old boat house and pier."

Seth owned about three hundred acres of lake-front land with some meadow and tilled fields, but mostly luxurious second-growth forest of hemlock, white pine, and hardwoods which blazed with color in the autumn. "I could sell you that cabin and twenny acres for four thousand dollars cash, then maybe you could agree to sell it back to me or the family iffn you didn't want it no more, and if we ever get in shape to buy it back. See, we been here so long, it don't seem decent to part with this here land. Course, I wouldn't want to sell it to nobody that I didn't like, havin' him for a close neighbor and all. But if you wuz to buy it, we could go on like always--us bein' always here, could keep

an eye on your cabin and keep it ready for whenever you wanted to come up. You could try us different seasons too. Folks come here in snow time. Tarnation, you shoulda saw us during the Olympics back in '32! Now, it ain't the most perfect cabin in the world, but I could do some fixin' on it durin' slack time and fix it jes like you want!"

From honeymoon days, Stanley and Gretchen had loved the cabin with its fresh, mountain air, its sylvan setting, its tranquil change of pace from life in the city, (or in the Villa Toscana for that matter). What if they were to discover some year that the cabin was rented to someone else?

Stanley was surprised and not a little amused by the downright garrulous monologue of Seth Townsley. Seth had always seemed taciturn. His utterances were succinct and far-between. Clearly, Seth's bank-debt weighed heavily on his mind.

Stanley slapped Seth on the shoulder. "Come on over to the cabin with me. I have my checkbook there. We'll settle this right now before you sell it to somebody else!"

Seth appeared dazed as though he couldn't believe what was happening. When Stanley gave him a check for four thousand dollars, he sputtered, "Jumpin' Jehoshaphat, this here can't be real! I ain't never saw that much money in my life!"

24-89

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt 150

Stanley grinned. "Oh, it's real all right. I'm just luckier than most people these days. No thanks to myself, you understand, but my family have a little extra in the kitty, and I'm allowed to write checks now and then for important things. Now, what do you say we walk around here to get a general idea of where the property line will be. Your land will still be all around on three sides, except the lake front. Once we decide, we can go into the village to the bank and maybe a title company--get it surveyed, recorded, and all that business."

It was July 1936 when Stanley bought the cabin. Gretchen was enchanted. They both enjoyed the pretense of basic, old-fashioned living. They recognized that they were dilettantes--dabblers in the art of survival--but it was fun chopping wood, filling kerosene and Coleman lamps, bringing in buckets of water from the ancient well, or using the old outhouse, the interior of which Rachel Townsley had rendered brightly-inviting with white enamel paint trimmed with blue.

Stanley, fresh from reading Stefan Zweig's biography of Marie Antoinette, remarked that they compared favorably with the French queen who had a rustic 'Hameau,' or village built at Versailles where she could play at being a milkmaid. Like the queen, the Maynards need do only what they chose to do.

In the Townsley General Store, they each bought two pairs of blue overalls which proved so spacious and comfortable that they bought more to take back to Manhattan where such garments were unlikely to be found. Sometimes they would walk the streets of the Upper East Side, delightedly confusing urbanites who could scarcely conjecture whence came these uncouth bumpkins!

As weeks went by, plans were developed for the cabin. While much of the charm was the absence of modern, basic comforts, Stanley decided to have electricity and telephone service run over on inconspicuous poles from the Townsley house. There would be an electric pump, a septic tank, an enlarged cabin with kitchen, bathroom, two more rooms, a stone fireplace, and a full porch facing the lake, half open, half screened. Heavy wooden shutters all around would keep it dry and secure in snowy winters.

There would be a new cedar roof overall as well as a re-built pier. Seth Townsley and his seventeen-year-old son, Seth Jr., called 'Bobby,' agreed to do the work in the coming year--that is, all except the fireplace, which would require the skill of a local, expert stone-mason. The new construction would be logs on a stone and cement foundation. All the material was available locally.

Stanley knew Seth was honest as the day was long. He told Seth, "Keep an account of expenses. Let me know each month and I'll keep it paid, plus I'll pay you and Bobby an hourly rate for skilled workers. So keep a good record of the time you put in on the job."

Seth and Bobby were 'right pleased,' to find they had remunerative jobs for the winter. "Don't that beat all get out," enthused Seth, "Havin' a job right here to home when they ain't scarcely no jobs nowhere!"

"I'll be dinged," whooped Bobby.

"My stars and body," opined Rachel. "Now we can keep clear of the bank an' maybe have a little to spare!"

That same day Gretchen went over to teach Rachel how to make blintzes. Rachel confided that Bobby wanted to go to the New York School of Forestry at Syracuse in 1937, after he finished high school, but they hadn't seen any way to help him. "He's a really good, serious boy, studies hard. That's not jes: a mother talking. It jes twists my heart that we can't help him. He ought to be a forester. He jes loves all them trees, calls 'em by name!"

When Stanley heard of Bobby's aspiration, he asked the boy to walk with him down to the lake front. There they stood trying to double-skip flat rocks on the water. "Tell me about the trees here. What's that big, wide shade tree

there?"

"Why that's an American sycamore, but we call it buttonwood. It's hard wood. You can tell it by the way the bark peels."

"What else do you have around here?"

"Oh, we have everything that grows in this climate. There's loads of maples. Sugar maple is beautiful and really useful." He indicated some nearby. "It's the state tree of New York and Vermont, too. We make syrup. We learned that from the Indians. Sugar maple is good for lumber and shade. We also got black maples, silver and red. There's all kinds of ash, green, black and white. We got black walnut and butternut, which of course, we call 'oil nut' because the nuts are edible and oily. We got hickories, basswood, elms, birch, beech and aspen, willows, cherries, oaks. There's no end to it, to say nothing about hemlocks and pines.

Stanley was intrigued. He always loved trees without having thought much about it. "You seem to know a lot about trees!"

"Yeah, I guess so! But see, Mr. Maynard, that's the main thing we have here. I'd have to be pretty dumb not to know about trees when I live in a forest preserve. This seems beautiful to us today, but did you know this is almost

all second-growth! Shameful how they cut it and burnt it in the nineteenth century. Think what it must have been like back when the Indians had it. But they say there are parts of the Preserve over west and north of here that have never been cut. You have to hike in 'cause there are no roads. I'd sure like to see that! I've got a book that tells about trees, tells their Latin names and all! One of my high school teachers gave it to me."

Stanley managed to toss a flat stone that skipped three times before sinking. "I heard that you are interested in going to the Forestry School in Syracuse next year."

"Oh boy, that's what I'd like to do more than anything! I've always wanted to study forestry since I first heard about it. All through high school my folks and my teachers have told me, 'Keep your grades up--keep your goal in mind and maybe it will happen.' I've stuck with college-prep courses--English, Latin, science, math, chemistry, botany--always getting ready, but there's never been much money, so I don't know." He hitched his thumbs in his faded overalls giving Stanley a dejected smile.

Stanley said slowly, "I'm betting you can swing it. Here's how. First, you'll be working spare time on my cabin this winter. Try to save every penny you make. Second, keep

your grades all high as you can, like you have been doing. There are scholarships available, but they go to the students with the best grades, and there's plenty of competition. Third, I happen to know about a Reisfeld Scholarship Fund that operates at some other schools in Manhattan, and I have some influence with them. I think I could persuade them to grant a scholarship or two at Syracuse. These are bare-bones scholarships--only one thousand dollars a year which you can receive for four years so long as you keep your grades in the top fifth of your class. You have to augment this with your own money from odd jobs, but it means the difference between going and not going for many students. Also, the Reisfeld Fund asks that you re-pay the money, without interest, at some time after graduating, if you are able. This allows the Fund to help some other student in the future. So think about all this. I believe you can get one of those scholarships. Keep your nose to the grindstone!"

Bobby was grinning. "Oh, I know how to do that, Mr. Maynard! That's what we do around here most of the time!"

Back in Manhattan in September, Stanley found four good books on public and private forests, on the science of trees, their nomenclature and their place in the environment. He asked Abraham Reisfeld to mail them to Bobby. In each one

Stanley wrote, WE'RE BETTING ON YOU, BOBBY!

Bobby saw the Reisfeld Bookshop label and felt he hadn't been overlooked by the Reisfeld Scholarship Fund. He re-doubled his efforts.

In this way, he and later his younger siblings, Williston, Estella and Bernice, (known as Bunny), all received Reisfeld assistance. The first three graduated from college with some interference from World War II. but eventually entered successful careers and paid back their money. Alas, poor Bunny! In her first year she strayed from the academic, thereby losing both her stipend and her virtue. She was a vivacious, playful little beauty, whose college trajectory soared and sank like a rocket. Luckily she managed to be possessed both sooner and later by a reasonably prepossessing young man who acknowledged his malefaction. So they set up housekeeping in Schenectady and even Bunny, by 1950, had paid back most of her college money!

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

The presidential campaign was hot during their visit to the Tuscan Villa in September 1936. Madge made things plain at the start. As they came into the entry hall her welcoming smile suddenly changed to a look of distaste. "I warn you, we mustn't mention politics! Even when you're in New York, it's forbidden here now! I'm so upset. That father of yours has announced he will vote for Roosevelt this time! Everybody at the country club hates us and it's certainly not my fault. Some of them won't sit at the same table with us. But he blandly goes about arguing for Roosevelt, no matter who the audience is. He has fun teasing me because I'm the only one left in this family with any sense of what's right for us and for the country. Oh, he admits some of those New Deal schemes are hare-brained all right, like killing the piglets, pouring the milk down the ditch and paying the farmers to plough up their crops. But despite all logic he's set on putting that gang back in office for another four years! I'm exasperated out of countenance. What would his father, the dear old senator, say? I always thought I had married a sensible man.

"Then there's that Eleanor with her unsavoury friends! Goodness, where does she dig them up? Sara should sit on that bunch. She knows what's best. Of course the

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

real quality in that family are the Delanos! My grandmother used to know some of them at Newburgh.

"Now that your father has defected, I must work doubly hard for Governor Landon, although, I must say, he's not half conservative enough for me. I'm sure you will all gang up on me--just like wolves ready for the kill, but I'll fight back, tooth and nail. There will be fireworks!"

Sept 1936

Chuckling, Stanley kissed his mother. "What a greeting! What a collection of metaphors! You didn't tell us you're glad to see us. But you've got spunk, mama. Keep fighting! I wouldn't want a mama that anybody could push around! If we can get away from politics for a minute, I think Gretchen has some news that will please you!"

As Gretchen embraced the older woman she said, "The doctor told me I'm going to have a little Maynard in the spring. Do you suppose it's a Stanley the fifth?"

Momentarily forgetting politics, Madge gave Gretchen a special hug, then standing back with a studied air, her soigné, left index finger extended along her carefully-powdered cheek, "But it doesn't show. Oh, I wish I had a figure like that! Where did you get that precious, little, wine-colored jacket?"

Gretchen laughed. "It shouldn't show yet. We think

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

it's only about two months old. We think it happened the first night at the Adirondack cabin when we didn't have enough blankets, and so had to devise a way to keep warm until morning!"

Madge pretended to be shocked. "You mustn't be so graphic, my dear. Remember I'm a Victorian woman. I was twenty-one when the century began. Babies come from the stork. Mothers are in a 'delicate condition' before babies arrive, and the less known about the process the better! But I'm deeply pleased; Hunt will be too. With the Maynard Estate we always need an heir, just like a royal dynasty. I remember all the to-do before and after Stannery was born."

160

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

June 1874

MISS HAVERGILL

During that September of 1936, Stanley checked on Marcy's progress. Melissa gave a glowing report as one might expect from a proud parent. "Oh, Mister Stan, you should have been here in June! Miss Havergill had her recital in the ballroom at the Linn House Hotel. Of course Marcy was all excited. She loves her music so much we have to sometimes make her stop practicing until she gets her other home work done! Well, in spring Miss Madge heard about the recital and she said we couldn't go to no recital without havin' a special dress fixed up for Marcy since this was an important social occasion! So Miss Madge had us come up to her closet and Marcy got to choose one of last year's dresses to be made over. There was a lot of blue, that being Miss Madge's favorite color, but Miss Madge said a yellow silk would look especially fine with Marcy's brown skin and black eyes and she was right. Miss Madge knows all them things. So then the dressmaker fixed that dress for Marcy--all the way down to the floor with a big bow at the back. Oh, she was a picture, and the audience all clapped before and

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

after, maybe because she was the only colored girl there. We was so proud, I can't tell you! Mr. Hunt and Miss Madge was there too, and about three hundred people, all dressed fit to kill and smellin' perfume!

"The hotel has a big grand piano, longer than what's in the music room, and Marcy wasn't a bit afraid like some of the other pupils. She just marched right out, but then she had been practicing that march too, so she wouldn't stumble over that beautiful gown! She looked just tiny at that big piano but she knew what she was doing all right! She played Beethoven's Minuet in G. I didn't used to know about minuets and Beethoven but I sure do now! I've heard that plenty of times this year, believe me! She did a really fine job. She didn't make no mistakes. When she was done, she stood up and bowed three times, right, left and front, then she marched right off. Such a lot of music we heard!

"Miss Madge had some big bouquets sent over from the garden to decorate the stage, and then at the end, Miss Havergill got a bunch of American Beauty roses as a reward for her year's work. And all the folks afterwards was comin' up all smiles tellin' us what a fine musician Marcy was and how they expected big things from her! I can tell you we was fair bustin' and blushin' with pride, Marcy and Abe and me! Marcy was somebody that night!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

162

For a more disinterested evaluation of Marcy's talent, Stanley visited Miss Havergill. He hadn't seen her for several years. Now she was plumper though not overly-so. Her bright, black eyes behind round, bi-focal spectacles contrasted pleasingly with her fair complexion and the masses of wavy white hair swept loosely back to a bun. Her simple black silk dress was set off by a silver brooch and a subtly-figured, navy-blue scarf.

"Marcy's a quick-learner, Mr. Maynard. I'm so pleased you sent her to me. Apropos of Marcy, let me tell you there is a certain rivalry among piano teachers. We attend each other's recitals, partly out of friendship and professional camaraderie, but also a bit as scouts to discover how well our rivals are doing. There are presently six or seven well-known piano teachers in town, among whom are Frances Hopkins Gerald, Renée Marceau Arlington and Octavia Larch. They have more students than I now, since I'm semi-retired. Frances Hopkins was one of my first students back in the nineties! I started teaching about the time your grandparents returned from Washington. Your grandmother and I became such good friends she let me have my earliest recitals in your music room at the villa. That's where Frances Hopkins got her start.

"Excuse me Mr. Maynard for weaving such a long story.

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

163

We tend to do that when we get old. Anyway, Frances and Octavia Larch were at my recital in June and both remarked about Marcy. She stood out--quite remarkable for an eight-year-old. She has poise, a fine touch and a sense of timing. She's limited, of course, by her small hands, but she will grow. We teachers get a bit of reflected glory and enhanced prestige when we can produce such an exceptional student.

"She has learned more about music in nine months than many of our rich little boys and girls do in nine years--yourself excepted, naturally."

Stanley laughed. "Well then, I expect you think the lessons should continue?"

"By all means, yes!" Miss Havergill said.

"Then I'm going to give you a check for two hundred dollars for the next couple years."

She demurred, "But the first one hundred isn't used up yet."

"Nonsense," Stanley returned, "A good teacher is hard to find. Grandmother always said you were the best. I think you should consider charging more for your teaching. I know of some music teachers in New York, not so experienced or skilled as you, who are paid far more. At least charge those beastly, untalented rich kids who can well afford it and who waste your time!"

Miss Havergill, emitting a merry trill of laughter, was grateful to Stanley for this advice. "I do need the income, Mr. Maynard. Look about you." They were seated on tottery Eastlake chairs! The pattern was worn away from most of the Brussels carpet except along the walls where people didn't walk. They were in the parlor with the two vintage Steinways, each with its protective Spanish shawl and battered metronome. "You see here tattered elegance. Time and the sun have done their work. My father built this old brick house in 1882. It was the only house hereabout in those days and the brickyard was near. It's a fine enough house but now it needs a lot of fixing that I can't afford."

Stanley stayed for two hours as he probed to discover her real financial condition. She had some little postal savings and government bonds but no significant assets except the big ten-room house with its carriage house. Like many artistic people, she lacked a practical nature beyond her systematic frugality. Since she and Stanley had known each other from his childhood, he persuaded her to call him Buddy as she had done then. They proceeded to discuss her situation.

"Father died in 1927 and mama and my sister Evangeline soon after. I always had this parlor for my students. I lost some money in the crash like everybody, but things worked

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

well enough while I had about thirty students. Now I have cut back because I tire easily."

Stanley asked what was upstairs. She responded, "There are five big bedrooms with bay windows and an ancient bathroom. I moved downstairs years ago--there's another little bathroom behind the kitchen. The carriage house is empty except for trash and old boxes that should be cleaned out. Above that there's a nice little three-room apartment where our cook and coachman used to live--all empty and dusty beyond belief. The rooms upstairs here are furnished but I don't have them cleaned so I hate to think about them. I do feel guilty because mama would be so upset with me--letting it all go like that!"

Stanley asked if she had thought of renting rooms to increase her income. Miss Havergill said, "Of course that's the first thing one thinks of, but I'm frightened by it all, so I've simply procrastinated for the last five years!"

"Have you heard of my tower room project?" Stanley inquired.

"Oh yes," she answered, "Everybody in town has heard about that, but I haven't seen it--you must show it to me. Your mother has invited me often but I don't believe I've been to the villa since your grandmother died."

"We will show you the tower and you will meet Gretchen, my wife. The reason I mentioned the tower is because we had a very good construction crew. I found Jeff Toner, a young architect and builder and we hired some Iowa University students. Those boys graduated last year but we can find some others. What I think you should do is have your second floor and the carriage house re-furbished in some simple, inexpensive way so that they could all be rented out to increase your income. This house is your great asset but you are not profiting from it. If I can find Jeff Toner, would you like to meet him and talk it over?"

"That would be wonderful, but I couldn't possibly afford it. I sometimes don't get the taxes and electric bill paid on time and I'm only saved because they all know me in those offices!"

"That's where the Maynards come in," said Stanley. "We are a business family. We would treat this as a business proposition. The re-modeling will cost a sum of money which we will lend you, using the house as collateral. But your income will be so increased that you easily will be able to meet your regular expenses and also re-pay the loan. We will do this because you will be paying interest each month for the use of our money. That's business."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

The idea of being free from constant, nagging money problems was attractive to Emily. Such a proposition from someone else might be suspect, but this was Letitia's grandson, a fellow musician, scion of the Maynards whose name meant probity. It seemed like something that could and should be done. Therefore, she said, "If you can find Jeff Toner, please bring him over."

Now she questioned him about his piano career. "I'm just an over-trained amateur," he modestly told her. "I had an instructor at Dartmouth and for part of a year at Goettingen too. I was in Paris for a year--came home in 1932--but I didn't have a teacher there. I used to practice often at the Conservatoire. In New York, Gretchen and I have a place at River House on East Fifty-Second Street. You'll be happy to know I have a Steinway there. Gretchen plays also but she's better on the violin. Dilettantes we are, but we don't forget our music."

"Stanley, you must play a bit for me," Emily proposed.

"Yes, all right. Here's one of grandmother's favorites." He began to play the Prelude and Fugue in C-Minor. She smiled thoughtfully then seating herself at the other piano, started playing along with him. They chuckled at slight variations in tempo and emphasis.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

When they triumphantly completed the interpretation, Emily cried out, "We must go on tour together! Maynard and Havergill, the Famous Piano Duo! That has a ring to it. How well you play, Stanley. We thought you might become a professional. Anyway, here today, we two pianists have sealed our business contract!"

That evening Stanley made some phone calls tracing Jeff Toner to Iowa City. Jeff, between jobs, said he could come to Cedar Rapids the next morning on the interurban electric Crandic Way.

After explaining the incipient project to Gretchen, Bud took her with him next day to meet Jeff at the Crandic. Since the little Chevrolet was a tight fit for three, he borrowed his mother's Buick so later to be able to bring Jeff and Miss Havergill to the villa to see the tower. Madge and Melissa planned to give them all lunch and it would be in the Tower Room so Miss Havergill could see Jeff's handiwork. Jeff too was anxious to see his masterpiece again now that it was furnished.

The two friends who hadn't seen each other for three years had much to relate. Jeff, after completing the tower, had worked in Minneapolis for two years rehabilitating a row of old wooden houses. "Last year I was teaching part-time at

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

169

the university, but the Minneapolis people want me back there after Christmas, so just now I'm free for a spell. That's why your summons was so welcome."

Stanley told Jeff that the Havergill project was only the first glimmering of an idea that had popped up yesterday. Miss Havergill, an old friend of his grandmother's and last of a once-prosperous pioneer family, owned a big old house but had inadequate income. "If she rents out some of those empty rooms she should get by nicely. She's a piano teacher. I don't think she has any debts since she's quite careful about spending. I told her the Maynard Estate Company could finance this project, which is more simple face-lifting than anything costly--perhaps a new bathroom and some painting--we don't know until we tour the house and discuss it more with her. She hasn't agreed to anything yet, you understand, but she is interested."

They quickly arrived in Miss Havergill's street which Stanley laughingly pointed out was called Havergill Street and was in the Havergill Addition near the center of town. "Her grandfather and father had the Havergill Clay Products Company--bricks, tile etc., and owned all the land hereabout at the time. See these big old houses--mostly late nineteenth century and this neighborhood is in good condition, not run down." They drew up in front of the Havergill house, a

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

170

handsome, brick, three-story, Queen Anne occupying half a city block. Tinged with early-autumn yellow, mature elms shed leaves on the lawns and herring-bone brick walkways.

"What a fine house," Gretchen mused. "It does remind me of my grandfather's house in Jena." They walked around to see the house from the side. A deep, shingled, belt cornice sheltered the windows of the main floor where there were bays of all kinds--round, slanted, square, with porches great and small on the first two levels. The windows with much stained and beveled glass were surmounted with granite lintels. There were graceful brick chimneys on three sides. The gables of the third floor were shingled in patterns with sunbursts set in at the top. The house boasted a liberal use of decorative ceramic tiles, as befit the residence of the man who owned the brickyard, nor had spools, knobs and general gingerbread been ignored. A rare, beautiful ceramic cresting on the high, sloping roof stood out against the sky. A substantial wooden picket fence topped a low brick retaining wall around the property.

The carriage house, also of brick, was a smaller version of the main house. To Jeff's practiced eye, all looked square and plumb, though some of the wooden parts needed paint.

At ten A. M. as they proceeded up the brick walk to the entrance, the pleasant odor of burning leaves wafted their

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

way from up the block. They heard some Czerny Exercises, laboriously rendered from the interior of the house. So, not to interrupt the music lesson, they detoured for several minutes to look at the garden. Most of the spacious lot was covered with vigorous, impenetrable bramble bushes which aggressively covered the brick walkways and climbed the fruit and ornamental trees. Clusters of fat, ripe blackberries went unharvested.

"Oh see," enthused Gretchen, "Just like grandfather's, though he kept his a bit under control. How we loved picking the berries. But one must proceed with caution. Why doesn't someone invent a bramble bush without stickers?"

They all picked some lush berries while looking about at that side of the house. Two small, unpainted, wooden structures collapsed under the weight of the berry bushes. The young people then went to ring the doorbell. A little boy with impish smile, carrying music manuals, darted away to freedom before he could be introduced. Also smiling, Miss Havergill greeted them. "That little Tommy Henderson! I'm afraid he's just hopeless--oh, he'll be a good baseball player, I expect, or maybe a good engineer, but a pianist? No, never! I told his mother but she wants him to get a 'patina of culture' as she phrases it, so the lessons go on! So this must be

Buddy's beautiful wife! And this must be Mr. Toner! Do come in. I notice you've all got blackberry juice on your lips and hands. That's evidence! I may be getting old, but I'm observant. Well, you're welcome to all the berries you want. You can see I have too many. The neighborhood children are always harvesting out there but the bushes fight back and are capable of protecting themselves."

She led them into the parlor with its two pianos and two pyramid metronomes. "Please find seats." They looked about at the old room with its faded, satin, brocade drapes, its gracious bays where luxurios Boston ferns reached to the worn carpet from their wickerwork stands. A Victrola stood against the wall with a cupboard of records. A gas chandelier hung from an ornate medallion in the twelve-foot ceiling. There were some old-fashioned electric lamps, Spanish-Revival style with fringed shades. The walls still had the embossed, rose-patterned covering hung in the 1880s, now faded and murky with age. She noticed them looking about. "Things don't change here much--more decayed, more threadbare, that's all. We got the lamps and that Victrola way back when, but otherwise it's all pretty much 1880!" There was a large, brick fireplace set with ceramic tile with Iowa corn motifs. There were glass-doored book cases where Stanley could discern the Memoirs

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

of Ulysses S. Grant, the collected works of Mark Twain, Ralph W. Emerson, James Russell Lowell, and In Darkest Africa by Henry M. Stanley.

Buddy introduced everybody properly. When Miss Havergill learned that Gretchen was from Jena, she was pleased and excited. "Child, I must tell you I studied in Leipzig for a year in 1899. I was already teaching here in Cedar Rapids but my old instructor, Wilhelm Bacher, in Chicago, arranged for me to study with his maestro, Georg Eckermann, in Leipzig. Such a great opportunity--yes, it was the highlight of my life! I knew German then. I would speak it with you now, but it's so rusty. You must go visit the people out at Amana--they don't forget their German. Someday I'll tell you a funny story about Letitia and Mrs. Forbes-Barton and the Germans. But now, we must talk business! Buddy here quite revolutionized my life with a few words yesterday--galvanized ideas I've been playing with." She turned toward Buddy. "I confess, I'm deathly afraid of going into debt. Father always said that's when one starts down the path to perdition!"

Stanley laughed. "We will make certain you don't end up in that unpleasant place. I believe you own your house and are free of debt?"

"That's right," she smiled. We used to own a lot of these

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

houses in this neighborhood. My grandfather had a farm here in the 1860s, then built his first brickyard just up the street. Then, as the town grew, he decided to move the brickyard further out south and sub-divide and develop this land for residences, so we had quite a few large, brick houses-- really too elaborate for ordinary rentals. We had plenty of brick, you see. He would lease the houses to well-to-do families. Later, father sold them off one by one. It was like having money in the bank. In fact, father sold the other half of this block in 1898 and he said it was to get money to send me to Leipzig! We used to have the whole block for a garden and orchard. That was before the blackberries took over. Now, I'm down to the last house--no more money in the bank! So I'm ready to hear how you can save me."

Stanley began, "Miss Havergill, Jeff Toner here is a very competent architect and craftsman who by pure luck is available just now, if you decide to go forward with this. He can find other workmen and supervise, but he will be going to Minneapolis after Christmas. We've come to talk it all over. We have walked around outside. Now if you could show us the rooms upstairs as well as the carriage house, we will discuss what needs to be done and what it might cost."

Emily led the little procession up the broad staircase to

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

a wide hallway lit by a stained-glass skylight. All the doors were shut but she opened them in succession, raising window blinds. Dust and cobwebs were thick. "I warned you, it's not a pretty sight, all this dirt. I seldom come up here. Mrs. Dobler, my cleaning lady, comes in once a week but she just vacuums and cleans downstairs. I'm sure the main problem up here is that the old furnace barely heats the ground floor. The pipes are all in place and the radiators, but this floor has always been cold in winter. We didn't seem to mind. I suppose we were conditioned to it over the years. We just went downstairs or went to bed.

"Evangeline and I learned to play a little game when papa started the furnace in the autumn. As the warm water started to move through the system, the most frightful cacophony of gurgles and burps would develop--still does! We would lie on the floor up here, our ears next to the radiator pipes in different rooms. The first one to hear a gurgle won the game! I'm happy to say we were honest little girls and didn't cheat!" She smiled.

"Much of the year it's very pleasant up here. There are porches at each end of the hall and there's a full-finished attic above, so it seldom gets too warm in summer. Father had the electricity and pipes re-done in about 1925. There are fitted and numbered storm windows all around. I've just left them on up here--it's such a chore with ladders getting them up and down as we used to do.

"The house faces south and we usually referred to the

bedrooms by direction. This is my parents' room, the south bedroom, and it has a door onto the little porch." She drew up some more blinds. "Goodness, how filthy these windows are. They look better after a raging rain storm when Mother Nature gives them a wash." Light flooded in. "It's magical with these big bay windows--all the rooms, even on the north side are quite light and get some sun each day."

They looked about at the dusty furniture, démodé but sturdy. This room also had a small, brick fireplace with decorative tiles. "The old furnace was considered a marvel of modern technology in the 1880s, but my parents would often have a fire on that hearth to make up deficiencies. In those days we always had a German or Czech girl about, to haul the fuel and ashes up and down the back stairs. You can see how smoky everything is in here. Those German serving girls were good. You're not looking for a job are you Gretchen?" She cast a mischievous glance at them.

"Come out to the balcony. Isn't this pleasant? Evangeline and I used to love to sit here playing with dolls. Those dolls are still up in the attic. The trees were much smaller then and we could see 'way up the street to see when papa was coming home. We loved being at the level of the treetops. We thought we were robins or bluebirds in our nest! Some days we would go up to the stratosphere--up to the attic--maybe it's a little like Buddy's tower. You can see the river from up there but the windows are small."

So the inspection proceeded. They saw the five big bedrooms each with armoires, and the antiquated bathroom. They then sat

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

in the cool west bedroom making a list of things that must be done. "You're noticing the water damage in here. The roof leaked the spring after mama died so I had a complete new roof put on but never got this wallpaper fixed."

Jeff had been mostly silent but missed nothing. Now he said, "We could build a new wooden stairway outside to the rear balcony so the tenants can go and come without disturbing Miss Havergill. We could extend existing plumbing to re-model the small northwest bedroom into a small kitchen and also create a second bathroom next to the existing bathroom. Then you would have four large rooms to rent with kitchen-access, and no traffic jam in the bathrooms. The biggest item may be the furnace which probably must be replaced."

Stanley said, "I've had a bit of experience about that. Let me check it. I got a new furnace for my friends, the Tabbs, about a year ago." He looked out the window at the jungle of blackberries. There's a wonderful garden area down there and room to park cars too. Maybe Miss Havergill will find tenants who like to garden."

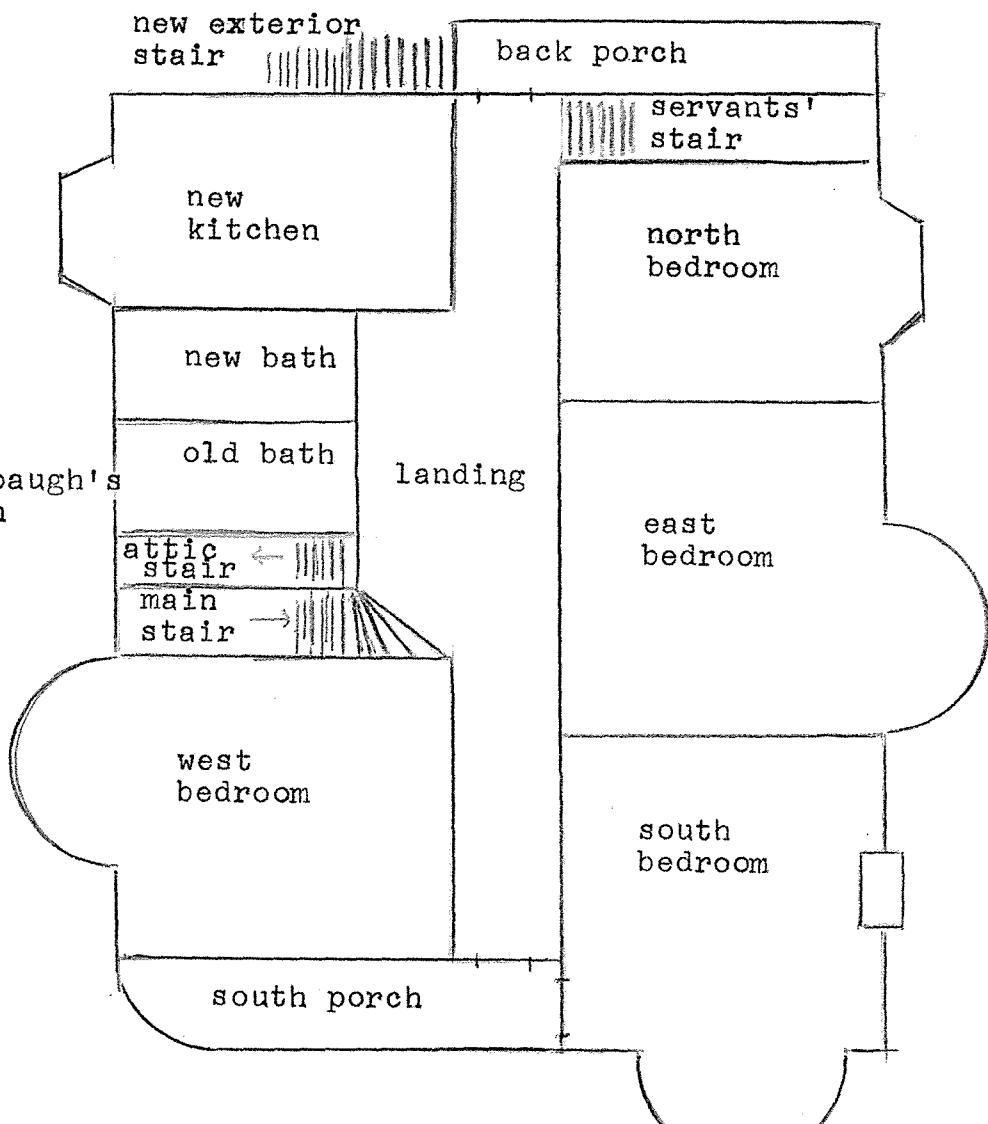
To Emily Gretchen said, "We're going back to New York next month so I won't apply for that serving-girl job but I would love to help you pick wallpaper and do color schemes, and I know Madge would be thrilled to help. It's her specialty."

Carriage House

after p. 177

N.

rear driveway



Second floor of
Miss Havergill's
Queen Anne house--
built about 1882.

S.

Havergill Street

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

They now visited the old, monster furnace in the basement, then, the carriage house apartment which was in quite good condition, needing only cleaning and a bit of paint. "I had tenants there until 1934."

By noon they were on their way to the Tuscan Villa. Stanley and Miss Emily were in the front seat when he told her, "When we get this all ready, you will want to pick your tenants carefully so they will be quiet, unobtrusive and compatable."

She chuckled. "I've thought about that. Musicians are sensitive to extraneous sounds. Of course it works both ways. No doubt there are those in the world who would abhor countless hours of badly-rendered Czerny Exercises and perhaps even those who dislike piano music. They will have to dwell elsewhere. But the house is solid and sounds are muffled. Further, I have some friends in the public library. My sister Evangeline worked there. Librarians are quiet as anything going about shushing people. They have asked if I knew of rooms for rent. I also have some teacher friends. There should be no problem with the renting."

Stanley then told her the Maynard Estate in the Maynard Building owned a variety of houses in the Cedar Rapids area and had a property-management office. "You know Miss Bertie Peckenpaugh? She's my father's secretary but she also runs the

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

management office. They oversee maintenance, find tenants, collect rents, etc. You could have them take over if you wish. They would collect the rents and send you a check and statement each month. Bertie can advise us about what rents to charge. She's an expert. For management, the estate office takes five percent of the rent but it relieves reluctant landlords (and ladies) of worrisome details."

As they approached the villa, Miss Havergill looked pensive. "How beautiful it is --just a picture out of early Victorian days." She wiped a tear from her cheek. "I've come here many times and often in horse and buggy. I truly expect to see Letitia. Well, she's gone now, but you must let me see the portrait and the music room. It was your grandmother who urged me to go to Leipzig, did you know that? Yes, it was she who said I must go. I was frightened quite to death with the idea. But Letitia was a woman of the world. She had friends everywhere. To her, crossing the Atlantic was a little thing. She said I must go on the Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse--it was just a new liner then and very fast--so elegant! But not so large or fine as the Queen Mary is today. Letitia said I must speak only German when I left the pier in New York, and she said I must stay at the Plaza--that's the old Plaza Hotel--not the one you know but the first one

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

in the same location. That fine ship is at the bottom of the sea now. Sunk by the British in the war off the coast of Africa. Letitia cabled a young consular official in Hamburg to meet me and help me find my train to Leipzig and in Leipzig I was to live with her friends, the Von Paulchens. Mercy me, I was already twenty-five years old. I'd studied three years in Chicago and practiced German for several years, but Letitia wasn't going to let me get lost in this cruel world! Victorians didn't think proper, young, unattached females should be traveling alone. Maybe all that solicitous protection is why I'm still unattached?" She chuckled, her black eyes sparkling.

When the Buick drew up to the port-cochère, Madge and Melissa emerged with wide smiles. Madge embraced Miss Havergill "Why have you not visited us? How long since you were here? Years! We know you're busy with all your students, but you must fit us into your schedule. Don't you love our new daughter-in-law? And Mr. Toner, Jeff, how nice to see you again. Stanley tells me you all are planning a new project. Mr. Toner is a master-craftsman, Miss Havergill. You'll see."

Emily stepped back to get a clear view of the villa. The great Boston Ivy vine was showing the first tinges of autumnal red. "It is a Schloss, is it not, Gretchen?"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Gretchen burst into laughter. "You see Buddy, it's just what I said last year when you brought me home. It's a Schloss! Yes, Miss Havergill, we agree!" She hugged the older woman.

Stanley joined in, "We might call it the Castello Toscano or perhaps das echte toskanische Schloss but it's late to change its name and our Iowa neighbors would say we were ridiculous or insufferable or both."

They were all chortling as they entered the mansion. Madge announced, "We thought of having our lunch in the dining room, or the music room, but since you are here to see the tower room, we will have it there. Melissa has prepared some special tid-bits for us and we have been carrying it all the way up there. Stanley, will you and Jeff please bring those two boxes there?" She started up the stairs.

"May we first have a peek at the music room?" Miss Havergill urged.

"But of course, Miss Havergill. I should have thought of your special relationship with the music room." Madge led the way. "You'll see it's not changed. Letitia told me you had your first recitals here." While Melissa took some table linen to the tower, they trooped into the music room.

Miss Havergill's bright eyes glinted. "Yes, it's the same. Oh, just see that wonderful portrait of Letitia. That artist knew his craft. I remember her just so. Handsome and regal-- and why not? She was a Schlossherrin. You see, Gretchen,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

I have^{not} totally forgotten the Deutsch! Maybe ten words remain! But here's an electric phonograph. That's new, and the Baldwin is practically new--was it 1924 when she bought that? And not a scratch on it. But look at the background in the portrait Almost exactly as today! It all takes one back! Oh, thank you Madge, I so love this room!"

Madge said, "Stanley had a beer-party here last year--can you imagine? Still he's not generally so bad!" She put her arm around her son, rolling up her greenish-blue eyes en coquette. "Miss Havergill, it has occurred to me that you might wish to have a recital here again. It would have to be a mini-recital, not so large as at the hotel--maybe five or six of your favored students and the audience about thirty or so. We would love to have you. Hunt and I are not especially musical, but we do miss the soirées musicales of Letitia's time."

Now they all started up the stairway past the great German stained-glass window, the young men bearing the boxes.

"I can remember when that was plain glass," Emily said. It was 1896 and the house was near forty years old--considered old-fashioned, so Letitia and the Senator got a Chicago company--wasn't it Marshall Field?--to completely re-do the inside. That's when Letitia chose this window. She showed me a catalogue of suggested designs which one could pick and they were then made to order in Bavaria."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Madge shrugged. "I've never liked it, but Hunt and Stanley think it's wonderful, so I guess I'm stuck with it! Remember Mrs. Forbes-Barton? She doesn't get out these days, but back during the war when feelings were high, she was working to eliminate all German influence in Cedar Rapids. In retrospect it's silly, but she believed strongly that to win the war we must break our German dishes and run the German shopkeepers out of town. She was completely without tact. One day she came here and roundly condemned the window, not only for being German, but for being licentious as well. Letitia practically ordered her out of the house. As always, Mrs. Forbes-Barton spoke all too plainly. She said that Letitia, to show proper patriotism, should have the window pulverized. It was a Donnybrook of a D. A. R. meeting, shocking then, but funny now. No one there will ever forget it."

Emily remarked, "The story was all over town. My mother was there that day. She told me most of the ladies took Letitia's side."

Puffing a little, the group at last got to the tower where they found Melissa plugging in a percolator beside the beautifully-prepared table--snowy linen, gleaming cut-glass bowls, silver, epicurean delights of all description.

Taking it all in--the glorious big room in bright September

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

light, the wealth of books, the Vista paintings, the colorful Kazakh carpets on the light maple floor, Emily was speechless, shaking her head with disbelief. Then she burst out, "What fun to be rich and also to have good taste!" It's just superbly beautiful. It takes my breath away!" Burst of laughter.

Stanley, pointing at the beams overhead, said, "Someday I hope to have maxims and aphorisms carved up there but it should have been done first. I'm still trying to find the appropriate maxims. Grant Wood could have done it--he loves to do things like that, but he's much too busy and famous now."

Jeff whispered, "Grant's teaching at the university in Iowa City now. Maybe he can recommend a talented student to do this. Remember that bench outside the principal's office at McKinley High School? Wood had his students do that years ago. It has three sad faces carved on it and the sentence, 'The way of the transgressor is hard.' It's called a 'mourners' bench.' "

Madge asked them to sit at the table, also asking Melissa to join them. When Melissa started to say it wouldn't be proper, Madge said, "Nonsense, Melissa, haven't I come out to the kitchen to have lunch with you countless times? Anyway, we are all celebrating because Marcy, your daughter, is doing well with her music and Miss Havergill, her teacher,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

has favored us with a visit. So you sit!"

Melissa had prepared a cream of spinach soup then mountains of chicken salad specially flavored with lemon juice and zest. A big glass bowl was filled with melon balls--casaba, cantaloupe water melon and Persian. There were other delights with a dessert of warm, flaky-crusted peach cobbler doused with thick yellow cream. They got iced tea, then rich, black coffee in some of Letitia's bone-China cups--(not the Sèvres--it had been decided not to risk the Sèvres on the stairway).

They talked about Marcy's progress and about the new project at Emily's house. When they finished lunch, Melissa started below with some of the dishes. She brought back Mrs. Powell, the housekeeper, and the new maid, Lois Zimmer. The three of them quickly cleared away the dishes.

Meanwhile the visitors examined the treasures of the room, starting with the ancient cigar boxes filled with childhood keepsakes as Stanley told how fierce battles of the great war had been fought here and how the old, black water tanks had stood here.

"Lucky my papa didn't pass this way," Gretchen interposed. "He was in the war too, but on the German side, of course. He was on the Eastern Front--wounded at Tannenberg early in the war, then in non-combat duty. It's trite to say, but

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

we hope somehow there won't be another war, but with the Nazis, who knows?"

Stanley showed them how the paintings must be compared with the vistas. They examined some of the books while hearing the story of his finding Gretchen along with the Reisfeld books in New York City. "They call that a 'job-lot' in the trade--I had to take Gretchen in order to get the books." He cackled as Gretchen rained ineffectual blows on him. "These are just part of the books--most of the Reisfeld books are at our place in New York." He and Jeff explained what the cavernous, old playroom had been like.

Madge, who had an engagement, withdrew while the others sat around a library table planning Emily's project. They would get a new furnace, a new exterior back stairway, a new bathroom and kitchen, new carpeting and drapes. The new tenants could use the old furniture or provide their own as they wished. Emily and Gretchen would choose new wallpaper and paint for the rooms. They would start immediately since Jeff's time was limited. Jeff undertook to find some Cedar Rapids college boys who needed part-time work. Thus the project got under way quickly at the Haverhill house.

Some boys were set to work scrubbing woodwork after moving

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

all the furniture into the northeast bedroom. The carriage house apartment was scrubbed and painted before one of the bedroom sets was moved there.

A footing was poured for the new stairway. Stanley arranged for the Krater Heating Company to install a new furnace which they got with a twenty percent discount. Old carpets and drapes were removed. Some of the boys with shovels and hoes attacked the blackberry bushes. Most were removed--a job not easily accomplished without vigilance, as gardeners know.

By branching sewer and water pipes from the old bathroom, they created a new adjacent bath and a new kitchen in the area of the old northwest bedroom.

After the woodwork was painted an eggshell white and the walls prepared, a professional paper-hanger was engaged. Finally, Stanley called in the Grolier Carpet Company, (also partly owned by the Maynards,) to lay new carpeting--a pleasing innocuous design of good quality.

Emily, struck with the bright beauty upstairs, had her parlor and two downstairs rooms done as well. She had no trouble finding tenants--four older, unattached women, for the four bedrooms--two teachers and two librarians who would share the kitchen and two bathrooms.

Then Stanley suggested she find a married couple for the carriage house since a man would be useful around the big property--if he were the right man. A handy-man sort of

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

person was required. One who could change fuses, check the furnace, oil squeaky hinges and locks, move ladders, dig in the garden, etc. Alberta Peckenpaugh, the estate property manager who had been called in for advice and consultation now produced her own brother, Jared and his wife, Alma, whose children were grown and who needed a small apartment. Alberta said Jared and Alma were just right. He was fifty, a superintendent at the oatmeal works, and good for many little, odd jobs, though not a notable gardener. Happily, his wife was an avid gardener who longed for garden space since they had sold their home to keep their three boys in college.

Thus the Peckenpaughs moved in. By mid-October, the project was complete. In the ensuing year, /in return for four months free rent, scraped and painted the cornices, brackets and other wooden parts of the two buildings.

Jared
Gravel was dumped in an area near the carriage house to make a parking space for cars. Three cars could be housed in the carriage house. Jeff told Emily that in the future, if she desired, two simple brick end-walls could be erected to make a roofed, open shed for more cars. For the time being, it was not a pressing matter since only Jared in the entire establishment had a car.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

The rents, as Alberta suggested, were thirty-five dollars a month for each bedroom and forty dollars for the apartment (plus utilities.) Emily now had new income of one hundred eighty dollars a month. The project altogether cost six thousand four hundred thirty dollars for labor, materials and equipment. The Maynard Estate lent \$6500 to Emily for ten years, the amortization of which cost her eighty dollars a month, with the right to pay the loan more quickly should she desire.

At first, Emily was apprehensive with the debt, but it melted regularly away. Then she realized her life was greatly improved in many ways, not least by having pleasant people nearby who shared joys and concerns. They visited back and forth, had coffee and bits of apple pie, picnics in the newly-established garden.

Emily thanked her stars for the friendship of the Maynards--good, noble Letitia, and now Buddy, whose thoughtful generosity had wrought this miracle.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Buddy and Gretchen had taken an active part in the Havergill project. They also had scrubbed woodwork, done some painting and helped eradicate the bramble bushes even unto digging sections of garden to remove the ubiquitous rooted canes.

Alma Peckenpaugh, the new chief gardener, was known by reputation to Emily for having won countless blue ribbons for years at flower and garden shows. So when the Peckenpaughs arrived, Emily told Alma, "I'm fortunate to have Linn County's most famous gardener here. You have carte blanche--absolute authority in the garden. Of course we can discuss any changes you plan, but please proceed as if it were your land. Whatever you do will surely be an improvement over the way it is now." She looked toward the apple trees. Despite their half-dead appearance, the four aged trees had respectable crops partly hidden by the rampant blackberry branches which threatened to engulf them. Alma asked what variety the apples were.

Emily answered, "I believe there is a Newtown Pippin, a McIntosh, a Jonathan, a Northern Spy, or a York Imperial. Those names are all in my mind. We used to have all those in an orchard on the other side of the

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

fence, but they were cut down when my father sold that land. These poor trees look almost dead to me. I suppose they must be removed."

"Oh no, Alma said, "Apple trees can be surprisingly long-lived. What these need is some expert pruning. We can cut out about a third of the old wood each year for three years and we will get strong young trees with large root systems. They will send out new shoots. We will start pruning in winter during dormancy."

On a couple of weekends, the Peckenpaugh sons, Toby, Tim and Sandy, came home from Iowa City. They did a large part of the serious digging because they had been trained to help their mother in her gardens. They were strapping athletes who dwarfed their parents. Alma was surely less than five feet tall but she was the director of this show. Buddy kept an amusing picture in his mind of these healthy, Gargantuan boys docilely receiving orders from their tiny, plump taskmistress. She directed them to dismember the two collapsed shacks, then saw up and stack the wood for Emily's fireplaces. The boys slept on cots downstairs in the carriage house.

Toby was a three-letter football star due to graduate in engineering in 1937. Tim and Sandy, sophomores in

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

journalism, did some softball, some swimming, tennis and basketball.

Toby told Buddy he knew both Johnny Robbins and Glenn McIntyre who had graduated in 1935. "Sure, I knew them in high school and at the engineering school too. But they were important upper-classmen when I was just starting." Buddy told Toby about those boys working on his tower project and how he, himself, had been a student at Iowa Commerce School back in 1933.

Buddy realized he had been sounding out the Peckenpaugh boys as prospective recipients of "Maynard Alumni" assistance, but he determined they would make it on their own. All the better for that!

The gardeners found the old, partly-buried network of brick paths which divided the space into small beds. Alma said that were it not for these paths, they could have had a tractor or horse in to do all the plowing, but "many hands make light work." Indeed they had many hands. At times there were fifteen or more workers using shovels, rakes and wheelbarrows, tools borrowed from all over the neighborhood. Everyone wanted a part in this game. It was like an old-time barn-raising.

During all this digging, Toby told Buddy that a college

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt*Ruster Ruster*

friend of his named Pudgy Ruster, ("His name is really Orville Ruster, but he used to be fat in grade school so he got the nickname,") had invented a small garden tractor for use in places like this. "He wants me to go in with him and start a company when we get out of college but the tractor needs a lot of refining and we don't have any capital or hardly know where to start."

Buddy thought it sounded like a good idea. There were a few small tillers on the market (he had seen advertisements), but the demand would grow. He told Toby that when they were ready and had a demonstrable model, he and Pudgy must visit Toby's Aunt Bertie and talk with Hunt Maynard and the people at the Estate Office. "I'll tell my dad you might come over there some day. They are always interested in financing a new business, but it has to have a good chance for success. Don't expect too much, but if they decided to cooperate, they could help a lot."

When the blackberries were conquered and the digging done, a mildly-pungent, six-inch layer of mixed manure and fallen leaves was spread over the newly-turned earth. They had let the neighborhood children know that leaves could be dumped here. Alma, holding a gloved hand up to her face, whispered to Buddy and Gretchen, "Most people

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

don't know the value of leaves. Leaves are pure gold in a garden. Still, everywhere folks will rake them up and burn them--just like burning government bonds!

"What's going to happen here is this material will decay and settle through the winter under the snow. The earth-worms will be delighted, multiply without compunction and enrich the soil. In spring we will turn it all again then plant our crop. Just you come back next summer. It's going to be a sight, I guarantee. We'll have the tallest corn in Ioway and that's going some!"

Some days, the boys with boundless energy, would organize a sudden softball game, attempting to teach it's intricacies to Gretchen who showed some athletic promise.

Each evening the young Maynards arrived back at the villa, paint-spotted, grimy with garden soil, exhausted and ecstatic. "I never saw the like," Madge avowed, "To take such pleasure from all that manual labor! Stannery, sometimes I think the Maynard fortune is wasted on you. So many young men would gladly change places with you. You could do their dirty labor and they could enjoy your money. You are certainly an odd one. None of the other young people at the country club are remotely like you. But through it all, your mother still loves

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

195

you!"

Stanley, long before, had realized the futility of trying to explain his developing philosophy and motives to his mother. He hoped the fortune was not wasted on him because he was going to make it work for humanity. He thought of himself as a philanthropist, albeit a beginner, but the fortune would provide the means for significant benefactions in the future.

He thought of the Great Gatsbys, the Tommy Manvilles, the wealthy heirs of the society pages who dissipated their wealth and youth in yacht parties, gambling, serial loveless marriages, alcoholic binges and meaningless displays of sumptuous ostentation. Then there were the others--those who had great fortunes and, as if in a trance applied themselves single-mindedly to the business of building their fortunes ever larger, acquiring vast power over their fellows, with little thought of the purpose or consequences. Stanley met many like this in Wall Street. He personally hoped to husband his fortune but only because it provided the means for financing philanthropy.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. MerrittA Visitor Comes to River House

In mid-October as they sped east across Illinois on the Chicago and Northwestern, Buddy and Gretchen congratulated each other on their thoroughly satisfactory vacation. It had cost very little but done wonders for Miss Havergill and her old house, and for the tenants, the neighbors, and for the young Maynards themselves who had great fun working with their hands. "But good we left when we did. It was smart to get away from mama before the election. She's going to be very upset."

In Chicago, between trains, they took a taxi to the Art Institute to see among other works, Grant Wood's American Gothic, which the artist had sold for three hundred dollars in 1930 before the painting, wildly praised and condemned from coast to coast, had built its national reputation.

One morning back at River House--it was Wednesday
1936 after the Roosevelt landslide in November--the Times and Herald-Tribune were still scattered about the apartment--Stanley sat at the piano playing and re-playing Bach's French Suite # 5 in G Major, especially the Gavotte. He wanted the touch and timing to be precisely perfect

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

as he could remember Letitia playing it.

Gretchen had gone downtown as she regularly did nowadays to work as a volunteer with her mother at the Jewish Rescue Agency. The Reisfelds and their friends in Germany always spoke Hoch-deutsch, but Emma and Gretchen also had enough skill with Yiddish and the Slavic languages to make themselves invaluable at the agency. They met the stream of dispossessed newcomers, helping them in many ways--finding housing, jobs, lending money etc.

Earlier in the morning Madge had phoned from Iowa to announce she was withdrawing from politics. "I don't want to see any more newspapers! I don't want to hear any news on the radio! Stannery, I don't know why I'm telling you this. You were the first traitor in the family. Well, now you will all have to suffer while those frightful Democrats do their best to ruin the country. Don't say your mother didn't warn you. Roosevelt said it himself. They'll tax us and tax us until we'll all be in one of your bread lines. Heaven knows where the bread will come from. They'll destroy the hard-working middle class. How will you feel when you see your mother lined up to beg for some thin soup? And what will I wear? Oh, by the way, I'm going to be at the Plaza later this month. I'll call you.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Maybe we can all have lunch or dinner together?

I thought I might pick up a few things--maybe a winter coat and some shoes. Your father sends his love. He's grinning widely at me now like I said something silly. I know there won't be much to smile about at the country club. All our friends will be in mourning. It's hard to keep one's faith in a democratic system when the country is just bursting with Democrats. I might move to Maine or Vermont. Don't think I won't. They still keep their senses up there. Now your father is outright laughing at me, but I mean it!"

*2 Republican state
in the Democratic
landslide of 1936*

Stanley, chuckling a little, replaced the telephone then resumed his piano practice.

An hour later the phone rang again. "Is this Mr. Stanley Maynard?"

"Yes."

The man's voice asked, "Are you related to Mrs. Madge Templeton Fulton who married Stanley Maynard in 1905?"

Stanley said, "Those are my parents, but who's calling?"

The man's voice hesitated, then: "This is DeWitt Templeton. I believe I'm a sort of cousin of yours. My father was Roderick Templeton, born in Newburgh in 1878. He lived there until 1889 when my grandparents took him to

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Lewistown, Montana where they were going to try ranching. My dad told me how he used to play with his pretty little cousin named Madge and how she cried when they moved away. Later, out in Montana, they got news clippings when she married, first to Arthur Fulton who died and then to Stanley Maynard. We heard nothing more and I don't think any of the family is left in Newburgh.

"My folks died about ten years ago so I run the ranch though times have been hard. I may still lose it all, but I won't worry you with that. I would like to meet you to talk things over."

Excited, Stanley said, "Wow, I didn't think I had any cousins. We'll have to compare notes. Where are you staying?"

"I'm at the Astor Hotel on Times Square, but tell you what. I can meet you at a little restaurant called the Tambourine at the corner of Seventh Ave. and Forty-sixth. Is tomorrow morning at eleven a good time? I'll have on a white Stetson and cowboy boots and I'm six feet tall--the only real cowboy on Forty-sixth Street!"

Stanley agreed to meet him.

Next morning they sized each other up. Stanley had

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

no trouble picking him out. He was in a corner booth, blue eyes bloodshot, nursing an Alka-Seltzer. They ordered two coffees. "I mostly never drink unless there's a good reason to celebrate. But some people I met last night took me to some big clubs around Times Square and I guess I got carried away--big orchestras, lots of cocktails. Anyway this is some party town."

His boots and Stetson appeared brand-new and his face seemed altogether too pale to Stanley. DeWitt said he had been running the ranch since his dad died in 1926. Stanley thought of farmers he knew and had gone to school with in Iowa. Universally they had brown, tanned faces, usually with white foreheads where their hatbrims had stopped the sunlight.

When queried about how recently he had been ranching, DeWitt said, "I was chasing the dogies just four days ago. I just got in on the Twentieth Century Limited day before yesterday. I got me a partner, Jim Weaver, and he's running things right now. We shipped a load of steers last week, so I thought I'd take a little vacation. Never been east except for Oklahoma. Miles City before¹ People out there don't often come this far east. Chicago is back east to us--ha-ha!! But I was thinking how the family used to be New Yorkers so I came back to see what it looked like. Then I looked in

20

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

the phone book and found your name and thought maybe you were a cousin." He removed his Stetson. "Guess polite folks take off their hats in the big city, ha-ha!! We don't much bother out in Montana, at least not Lewistown-- maybe in Billings or Helena!"

His wavy brown hair, parted in the middle, was slicked back with Brilliantine. He was passably handsome though his teeth were uneven. With shaky hand he offered a green cigarette package to Stanley, then lit a Lucky Strike, blowing a cloud of smoke toward the wall. I don't smoke much either--dirty habit--but I'm kind of unsettled this morning. When we're out looking for the critters, and they got a thousand places to hide, we talk and sing and light up cigarettes 'cause there's nothing much else to do to pass the time."

Stanley noticed the uneven teeth and DeWitt's smooth hands. He thought of the farm boys in Iowa whose hands were rough and calloused from hard labor in all manner of weather-- their finger nails cracked, often ringed with black. As a pianist he had always been especially conscious of hands. "Do you hire people to work for you? How big is your ranch?

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

102

"It's just Jim Weaver and I who run things. Of course in summer we put up hay and we hire men to come in with their mowers and rakes. I have a thousand acres and so has Jim, and we have grazing rights too, on the mountains. Jim is married and lives in Lewistown. I live on the ranch and was married but Annabelle took a fancy to a Piegan Indian, a sort of a medicine man named Tom Red Eagle, and they took off for Alberta or somewhere. She always said I loved the dogies more than her and I guess she was right. I didn't go try hunting her down like I do the dogies, ha-ha!!

"But tell me about you. Shall I call you Stanley? You can call me Monty, that's what they call me usually since DeWitt Clinton Templeton is a mouthful for a cowboy. See, I used to go to the steer-roping contests down in Cheyenne and all over and they started calling me Monty."

Stanley grinned. "You might call me Bud Maynard which is short for Stanley Huntington Maynard IV. We've all been named Stanley for four generations though they call my dad Hunt Maynard. We've lived in Cedar Rapids, Iowa since the 1840's. Mother used to live in New York until they were married in 1905. I'm an only son and my father

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

asked me to live here in New York for a few years to help tend the family business. I don't have much to do. It's an enviable sort of job. I got married last year and we live on the East Side. My wife works harder than I do--she's a volunteer in an office in lower Manhattan.

"It's hard to get used to the idea of having a relative! All the family branches seem to have died out and we just hung on by our fingernails, having one child in each generation. We were sure we had no living relations. Now Gretchen, she's my wife,--she's German--she has a mother and great-uncle here in the city but I guess no other family in the world. They escaped from Hitler last year. It's been a novel experience having some family besides my parents. Now another cousin drops out of the blue! How long will you be here?"

Monty shrugged. "I don't have to hurry back to Montana. Maybe a couple weeks or so. There's lots to see and do and who knows if I'll ever be here again?"

Stanley suggested, "How about lunch?"

Monty grimaced, "I better walk a while and get some air."

Stanley laughed. "Come on, let's walk up to Central Park. It's thirteen short blocks up. We'll get plenty of fresh air and then we can walk over to my place--that's

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

another mile or two. I know lots of restaurants along the way. We even have food in the apartment! You should meet Gretchen--she will be home after five." They ambled along, sight-seeing as they went.

When they passed under the Sixth Avenue El, a couple trains of old, wooden coaches rattled by overhead. It was one of the wonders of the Big City. Stanley pointed up. "That's a good, inexpensive way to see the city. Go between ten and three when the cars aren't crowded. Just think, they used to have coal locomotives with the sparks and ashes everywhere, then they converted to electricity. But now there's a plan to tear them all down completely. The merchants and people who live along the lines hate them because they are noisy, (they run all night,) they make the streets dark, they're bad for business and property values and they violate privacy--you hear all these arguments. If you had an apartment on the second or third floor, you would have to keep your shades drawn all the time with these trains roaring by. They still have pot-bellied coal stoves up in those old stations for winter time! Old-fashioned for the metropolis! But you can be sure when they are gone we will all miss them."

Stanley knew the town better than most natives, re-calling long-gone buildings from as far back as the World War

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

when his grandmother started bringing him here for a round of concerts and museums. As they passed Rockefeller Center, he told of mansions and rows of brownstones sacrificed for the new skyscrapers. In Central Park they found a sunny bench near the Pond.

Near a Stay Off the Grass sign some children and dogs noisily chased each other on the grass while their elders smiled indulgently and chattered in some exotic tongue. A fat four-year-old with sticky fingers, drooling lips and an all-day sucker stopped to solemnly examine Monty for a moment, then, as he ran off, hollered, "You got funny shoes!"

Pigeons, sparrows and gulls vied for bits of bread and popcorn on the walk--the gulls generally winning the contest because of their superior acuity, speed and size.

"I used to come here a lot. My grandmother would bring me to New York and we would stay at that hotel right there--he indicated the green mansards, the turrets, oeils-de-boeuf and gables of the Plaza, visible over the tree tops. "I would beg to stay in one of those towers or up where those funny little windows are, but grandma would say, 'We would get dizzy if we went up that high,' so we would always stay in the same rooms on the fifth floor. Maybe those high rooms are not even for rent. Maybe the staff uses them."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

They had topcoats, but in the chill of the lengthening shadows they resumed their walk down Fifth Avenue to St. Patrick's, then east on Fifty-first Street under the noisy elevated railroads on Third and Second Avenues, and at last to River House, where Monty was surprised to see the uniformed doorman give Stanley a smile and brisk salute: "Good afternoon, Mr. Maynard!" Monty was glad they had finally arrived. The new cowboy boots were not designed for long walks. This place looked pretty fancy. In a moment the elevator brought them to the seventeenth floor.

Stanley turned on some lights. "This is our hideaway." Monty saw immediately this was no ordinary workingman's apartment. The spacious rooms, the Steinway grand piano,

THE TUSCAN VILLA by R. L. Merritt

107

the endless shelves of books, the rare carpets and paintings--only a wealthy person could have these things in Manhattan. He went to look out the tall windows at the darkening East River scene where boats with lights moved up and down. "That's Welfare Island just opposite, and Queens, Long Island, beyond. It's one of five boroughs of New York City. Just to the left here is what we call 'our bridge,'--it's the Queensboro Bridge. It takes autos but also a trolley car and the Second Avenue El. Welfare Island has a lot of hospitals and such institutions. My favorite for architecture is that old smallpox hospital but don't go near it!

"Now maybe you're ready for a drink. I've heard that's good for a hangover. We'll wait until Gretchen gets here and decide about dinner. We can go out or have something sent up. I can make peanut butter sandwiches and scramble eggs but we can probably do better than that." Soon, they were sipping bourbon and ginger ale.

Monty felt healthier, livelier and hungry as the hangover wore off. He looked at the music on the piano, then at the book shelves. "Gosh, these are all kinds of languages! I don't think I would even understand the ones in English! Do you read all these? Where did you get them? You got lots more than the Lewistown Public Library!" I bet you got

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

208

more books than all Fergus County put together!"

Stanley told him about finding both Dr. Reisfeld's books and Dr. Reisfeld's daughter the previous year.

"He was a university professor in Germany. I'm a hopeless book collector. Truth is, these are only part of my books. Most are in Iowa. I have a tower room in our house crammed full of books and with windows with big views like here."

Just then Gretchen came in, breathless from a breezy walk over from the Lexington Avenue Subway. Monty was charmed by her vitality, her European style, her bright gray eyes and her precisely correct English, almost completely free of German accent.

"So, is it possible," she smiled, "we have an unknown cousin, and a cowboy. Oh, delicious! I've heard of Montana--that's definitely OUT WEST--much more so than Iowa. Stanley's going to show me all of the U.S.A. sometime. Has he told you my family came to America only last year? We have so much to learn, so many things to see.

"Büdchen, didn't your father say he had been fishing in Montana one time? Buddy's father likes to go fishing each year in far-away places. But you must need your dinner. Büdchen, let's call Raymond and have dinner sent

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

209

up." Raymond was the in-house caterer. They ordered roast beef dinners with all the trimmings and red California wine for three. Raymond provided excellent food very quickly to the wealthy clients who paid promptly and tipped generously. He liked to be called RayMON, affecting a pseudo-French accent, but he was really Raymond Rizzo from Hoboken where accents were less polished.

Stanley and Gretchen rarely had guests, so Gretchen delightedly produced some beautiful rose and gold Limoges porcelain for their repast. She had found the set, nearly complete for ten people, at an auction in lower Manhattan. With her usual acumen in such matters she got it for 'a song.' She loaded it in a taxi to bring home. That day Buddy found her lovingly washing dish by dish before putting them away on their new shelves. "Can you believe it Büdchen," she bubbled, "forty dollars plus taxi fare! It's so beautiful and no one seemed to want it. We would have paid more to get dishes at the movies!" She was referring to the depression custom in some neighborhood theatres of luring in customers on certain nights by giving away free dishes. Thrifty housewives across the nation could build dinner sets this way if they attended enough movies. She and Stanley

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

210

one evening had paid fifty cents each for a double feature, two cartoons, a Fox Movietone News and a dish. They got two plates that night and went back another time for a cup and saucer--sturdy china though not inspired.

"Monty, we haven't completely furnished our apartment. We do it bit by bit, so you will have to put up with these candle-holders. She brought out six candles in wax-encrusted wine bottles, placing them on saucers to protect the surface of the mahogany dining table.

Monty laughed. "I still don't have electricity at the ranch but we might get it some day. We have a cooperative and have borrowed money from the R.E.A.--that's a government program for rural electrification. Maybe in a year or two? We use candles but generally coal oil and gasoline lamps. We think it's funny how city folks who have electric lights like to use candles while we're hoping some glorious day we will have electricity! They're building Fort Peck Dam out there now, on the Missouri River. They say it's one of the biggest dams in the world. We might get electricity from there but we'll get it from somewhere all right. Of course they've always had it in the towns. I read that Helena had electric lights back in 1882! That's the capital,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

211

and when you get rich you move there and build yourself a mansion. Sort of like New York City but not so big, ha-ha!!"

Heedless of time they talked on, learning of each other's very different backgrounds. Stanley made a fire in the marble fireplace. Gretchen told of her pleasant school days under the Weimar Republic and of the harrowing escape from the Nazis. Stanley modestly reviewed the Maynard story. "My folks have a house in Cedar Rapids that my great-grandfather built. That's always been home through the generations. We've all had our close connections with New York City so we function pretty well in both places."

When Monty asked what kind of business they were in, Stanley explained, "Oh, we had some old river boats a hundred years ago and then some railroad bonds, and now we have some farm land and real estate and a little stock in this and that--not like the Rockefellers or the Mellons but it's a living. Tell us about your grandfather and Montana."

Monty cocked an eye about at the low-keyed opulence of the apartment. "It's like this--the Indians and buffalo always had central Montana until 1877, then big cattle-growers moved in on the open range. It's the best grazing

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

212

land in the world but the winters can be unbelievably severe with the wind and blizzards down out of Canada. In 1886-1887 there was a winter that finished off most of the big herds and those ranchers went bust. They had over-loaded the ranges and didn't have winter feed or shelter for the cattle.

"My grandpa, (more guts than brains), came out there in 1889, got some land and cattle and started up, but this time they had learned they had to have hay for winter or the cattle would die, so they started putting up hay and later irrigated big hay fields. Grandpa did pretty well and my dad had the ranch up to two thousand acres, but he died from a heart attack in 1926. The local bank failed about that time and we lost money. They had sent me to Bozeman--that's the state agricultural college. I was going to be a hot-shot scientific rancher, but I had to go home in 1926 to run the ranch. Then my mom died and my sister, Dorothy, got married and moved to Missoula--that's three hundred miles further west.

"So there I was, alone on the ranch. Jim Weaver had the next ranch and we joined forces, then lost some of our land in the depression years. It's touch and go in that business, but we did a little better this year.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

213

It's the only thing we know how to do, so we stick it out."

It was after midnight when they called a cab to take Monty to his hotel. In the night Buddy and Gretchen whispered to each other about suddenly having a cowboy in the family. Monty didn't talk like the Hollywood or radio cowboys but he did have high-heeled boots and seemed the genuine article.

"One thing puzzles me," Buddy said as they drifted off to sleep. "He has such a white face and smooth hands, like he worked in an underground office, but he says he always works outside. He should be tanned and weathered!"

Next morning Buddy phoned Madge. "Mama, do you remember a cousin, Roderick Templeton, up in Newburgh who went west in 1889 with his family?"

For a moment silence, then Madge burst out, "How would I possibly remember back that far? What is that, forty, forty-seven years ago? Now how could your mother remember things back that far?"

"Mama, you're talking to your son. You don't have to put on that act about being thirty-five years old. Now tell me about 1889."

"Humph! Very well then, though I don't know why you must embarrass me this way. Yes, I had a cousin Roderick

Templeton and I had a sort of crush on him, though I was a very young child. His father, my Uncle DeWitt, decided he had to go west to be a rancher. Aunt Laura was quite upset but had to go along. So they went, and we never saw nor heard from them again. Why do you want to know about that ancient history?"

"Mama, a curious thing happened yesterday. Roderick's son has come to New York from Montana. He is DeWitt Templeton though they call him Monty, and he found my name in the phone book! He says they had some old newspaper clippings about your marriages and so he recognized the Stanley Maynard name. Isn't that amazing? So we have a cowboy cousin! He owns a ranch in Montana. His parents died ten years ago. He's pretty close to my age and his wife went away with an Indian shaman!"

"Shame on her!" Madge couldn't resist a good pun when she could think of one. "It's not smart to go looking for relatives. Who knows what you'll find? This is all too much just after this ghastly election. I must go lie down now. I'm sure I'm going to have a frightful migraine. My greetings to Roderick's son, of course. Tell Gretchen she must stop that foolish volunteer work and riding the subway. She might get germs. Goodness, it's only four months until the baby comes.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

215

We're so excited. I'll be at the Plaza soon. I'll give you a call. Mama loves you. Bye Bye!"

This was typical of the less-than-satisfactory conversation he usually had with Madge.

Still troubled by the unexplained pale complexion of his new outdoor cousin, he decided to do some detective work. His atlas showed that Lewistown, Montana was the county seat of Fergus County. Next, he phoned the Fergus County sheriff's office to ask if they knew the Templeton ranch family.

"Who's calling? Noo Yorrk City!! I'll be durned! Just a minute." Another voice came on the phone. "You're asking about the Templetons? Sure, we got Monty Templeton out here. Won a lot of rodeo trophies, he did. The boys say he's travelin' back east now. Say, ain't nothin' happened to Monty did they? His dad, that was Roderick Templeton died some years back. They wuz pioneers. Monty's place is a few miles south of town. Now if you want to know about them, you want to call Jim Weaver--he's Monty's partner. Or else call Fergus Brisbin--he's a reporter over at the Fergus Gazette. Him and Monty wuz always close pals right through school."

Now Stanley called the Fergus Gazette to talk with Fergus Brisbin. "Say, Fergus, there sure are a lot of

Ferguses out there!"

Fergus laughed. "Yeah, I guess if you want a Fergus this is a good place to call. I was born in Fergus County and am related to the Fergus family. What can I do for you?"

Stanley said, "This is just a discreet inquiry about something of no great importance. Monty Templeton has turned up here in New York City and says he's my cousin. Now, keep this quiet, especially from him, but he says he's a rancher and your sheriff says he's a rancher, and I'm wondering why he's so pale after working out in the Weather all his life?"

Fergus Brisbin fairly cackled with laughter. "Everybody always wonders that! Monty and I have been friends since the first grade and I'll tell you quick! He has a skin condition called vitiligo--a partial de-pigmentation that normally causes spotty skin since the de-pigmented part will not tan--but in his case his whole face is de-pigmented. The doctor has him wear gloves and a wide-brimmed hat to protect the skin. So he doesn't look like the other ranchers. But he's one of the best. You should have asked him and not called across the continent."

Stanley explained he was pleased to have a new cousin

and more pleased to learn that Monty was all that he claimed to be.

Later when they talked on the telephone, Stanley asked Monty if he ever heard of Fergus Brisbin. Monty exploded, "Now where in the devil did you get that name?"

Then Stanley said he couldn't have imagined a rancher or farmer who didn't have a tanned face and that it bothered him so much that he called the Fergus County sheriff and the Fergus Gazette where he had talked with Fergus Brisbin who told him about Monty's vitiligo.

"Old Fergus Brisbin--yes--he was the one to talk to. We went through school together and to rodeos up to Calgary and down to Oklahoma and I never got tanned though I got beat a few times! I learned to live with it. I used to wish I could get a healthy tan like other folks but now I don't think about it much. You have a sort of cousin who is a Montana rancher with a pigment shortage!"

Thus the mystery was solved. Monty was amused rather than resentful at being investigated.

One day Stanley rented a car and drove Monty up to Newburgh in Orange County. They went to the public library in search of their Templeton ancestors. A kindly old librarian in pince-nez glasses showed them county histories

and maps telling of Templetons settled there with other New Englanders, Dutch and Germans, long before the revolution. With aid from some mimeographed booklets that listed and indexed county graves, they found a little hillside cemetery quite overgrown with bushes and vines, and thick with fallen leaves, crisp and fragrant in the autumn sun. There, sure enough, were stones for Madge's and Roderick's grandparents as well as for many earlier Templetons.

Five brown dairy cows in an adjacent meadow all walked over to the cemetery fence, arranging themselves in a semi-circle to watch intently the unaccustomed activity in the tiny burial ground. With jaws moving mechanically, ears flicking back and forth, tails swishing flies, they stood there.

"I'll talk to them," Monty grinned. He gathered great handfuls of lush grass, holding it temptingly over the rusting iron barrier. One cow, then another, stepped daintily forward to accept the gift. The ground on their side was closely cropped. They must have often looked longingly at the cemetery grass. Monty emitted a perfectly enunciated MOOO. The cows, in their bovine way, seemed somewhat startled, then tentatively returned a chorus of MOOOs.

Now, as Monty and Buddy both fed them, Monty said, "I've

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

been talking to cows since I was born!"

Buddy asked, "What are they saying?"

"Oh, they're telling us 'Welcome back to Orange County. Come any time, we'll always be glad to see you, especially if you give us some of that grass!'"

That weekend, since the superb Indian summer weather continued, they took Monty up to the Lake Placid cabin so Buddy could check the progress of the re-building program. Seth and Bobby Townsley had already built the two new rooms, the porch and the new over-all cedar roof. It was first-rate carpentry. The fireplace and plumbing were not yet done, but the luxurious white-painted outhouse awaited them and made a hit with Monty. They were not too late to see the grand show of millions of deciduous leaves taking their last colorful bow.

Monty clearly enjoyed this adventure, spending much time talking over agricultural matters with Seth and helping move the cows around the pasture. He felt back in his own element. "I admit this makes me feel homesick. I reckon I've seen enough of the Big City. That beautiful privy gives me an idea! When I get home

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

120

I'll head straight for Montgomery Ward to get me some paint to doll up our old privy--it needs to be brightened up. Yes, it could be the best in Fergus County!"

Back in the city again, Stanley conducted his cousin on one last tourist day, going to the 86th and 102nd floors of the Empire State Building whence they could see fifty miles into adjoining states. They located Welfare Island, the Queensboro Bridge and what they thought was River House. To the far northwest they could see the outline of the Orange Mountains. "That's where the Templetons used to live. Newburgh is up that way."

They went to South Ferry for the famous bargain five-cent ride on the Staten Island Ferry. The old, barn-red boat got them over and back in forty-five minutes during which they gazed enthralled at all the maritime activities. One giant ocean liner headed for the Narrows, another being nudged to its pier up along the Hudson. Tow boats, fishing boats, garbage scows, sailing boats, freighters, ferries--engines chugging, gulls swooping, bells clanging, whistles piercing; everything and everybody in a great hurry; the energy of this city like no other; even the cumulus clouds racing to cross the sky. The structures of man--the great bridges and the breath-taking rise of buildings as if out of the water itself; Brooklyn on the

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

21

east, Jersey on the west, and Manhattan, the jewel that renders inadequate any words of description--but there, more of everything--more grandeur, more wealth, more squalor, more poverty, more hope, more despair--a place of superlatives.

When they returned to South Ferry, they hurried over to the Bedloe's Island Ferry which cost them thirty-five cents each--less of a bargain, but worth every penny! With hundreds of other visitors they climbed up the 168 steps to the crown of the Statue of Liberty, then at the base read Emma Lazarus' poem:

"Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

Stanley, overcome with emotion, turned away for a moment. This was like his return to America in 1932--He couldn't see this statue or read these words without strong feelings being evoked. Now they meant infinitely more to him as he thought of his dear Gretchen and the Reisfelds.

"Homeless, tempest-tost,"-- the words described the Reisfelds exactly and they had found a refuge here. Stanley mustn't let Monty see him crying. Cowboys and real men didn't cry.

Next morning Monty took the train to Chicago and the Milwaukee Road would get him home. Stanley met him at

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

111

Grand Central Station to say good bye.

Monty poked him saying, "You tell your dad to be sure to come to Lewistown when he comes fishing in Montana next time." Stanley had explained that his mother and father never went on trips together. "We have a famous fishing stream right in Lewistown called Big Spring Creek, and we have ghost towns and sapphire mines. But I like fishing and could take him around. I've got a 1935 v-8 pickup that we could put our gear in. You sure better come too!

"I have a rodeo buddy at Sheridan, Wyoming that can take us to fishing streams in the Big Horn Mountains that nobody but grizzly bears know about! He's the best fly-fisherman that ever was. Or we can go to the Absarokas, even over to Beaverhead County--gosh, we have more fishing streams than you can count! I know you don't mind using a privy. I'll get mine all painted up like yours! I'm not much of a housekeeper since Annabelle left, but let me know when you're coming and I'll get it all cleaned up. I got the cabin grandpa built and a two-room frame house that they hauled over from Fort Maginnis when it was abandoned in 1897. After I was born they figured they needed more space so they added two rooms in 1908--ha-ha!"

The trainmen were singing 'All Aboard.' Time to go.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"Oh yes, I've got a phone too, but you can't depend on it. Better to write. But if you try the phone just ask the Lewistown operator to ring the Templeton Ranch. It's a fifteen-mile cooperative line with eight ranchers. We have to maintain the wires and they go along fence lines or trees--whatever is available, so it's out-of-order half the time. If that wire touches the ground anywhere, forget it! The phone company won't take care of it but we can't afford to have them build a proper line. Maybe when the R. E. A. gets there we can have the phone line on those poles."

He clapped Stanley on the shoulder and grasped his hand. "Take care of yourself, Buddy. Take care of that pretty little Gretchen. Wish I could find me one like that. Thanks for everything. Great having a cousin--but I've decided you're really more like a brother!"

Then, at the last minute, carrying his cheap, striped suitcase, he walked down the platform to his car with that slightly-topsy-gait of cowboys in high-heeled boots--like they were walking on tip-toes through hot coals. At his car, he turned to wave--his engaging crooked smile full of crooked teeth.

Stanley glimpsed him once more, imperfectly through the reflections of the window as the train moved out. Monty

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

had found a seat. Not realizing he was being observed, his face now held an expression of devastated sadness that fairly wrenched Stanley's heart. Here was a part of Monty that Stanley hadn't known or divined during the visit. Monty couldn't let the world know how he suffered from his crushing loneliness since Annabelle left.

We can only guess what is truly going on with people, Buddy mused. What was it that made this cousin so likeable? He's strong and self-reliant, but with a simplicity, a fetching ingenuous quality rarely encountered in the Big City and certainly never in the Cedar Rapids Country Club. Ingenuousness and vulnerability went hand-in-hand.

When Buddy occasionally met such people, he always felt moved to protect or assist them in some way. He understood his own strength came from the Maynard fortune. What if he were on his own with no fortune, no training, no Villa or River House to go home to? Awful to contemplate.

His thoughts went back to Monty. How dissimilar their backgrounds. But yes, they were like brothers! How he hoped things would go well for Monty!

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. MerrittBACK IN FERGUS COUNTY

In ensuing months they received several letters from Monty who probably theretofore had not written ten in his lifetime. He wrote tersely on lined, notebook paper. He and Annabelle were divorced. Everything was fine. It was plenty cold, but that was normal. In the winter, a professional square-dance caller named Curly Grover came to town and they organized a large square-dance group that met every Saturday night in the high school gym. Curly made a good living going from one small town to another through the week. He brought his music with him and Monty's favorite was Alabama Jubilee. All that jumping around--it was a great way to keep from freezing, but real hard to get the cars started at midnight to go home. There were about sixty couples and some strays. Among the strays besides himself was a quiet and pretty little lady-- a schoolteacher that looked familiar to him. It developed that she was a ranch girl from Broadwater County named Rosalie Cooper Kindall, whom he had known during his brief college career in Bozeman. Her hair style was quite different from 1926. She re-introduced herself to him having recognized him immediately because of his pale face. Her husband, Gordon Kindall had died in a 1933 auto accident

226

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

leaving her alone, but she made her living teaching English and art in high school.

May 1937

Monty liked her more and more. Soon they were regular partners at the dances. Then he thought of asking her to marry him. Rosalie agreed it was a good idea, so they got married on Decoration Day at Fergus Brisbin's house.

Rosalie said she wanted lots of lilacs at the wedding so everybody in town picked lilacs for them.

Before the wedding when Monty learned of her passion for lilacs, he bought two hundred little lilac bushes, purple, white and hybrid, from a nursery to plant a long hedge from the county road up to the ranch house. He figured that ought to be enough for Rosalie, at least in the month of May. There were already two, large old bushes planted by his grandmother who had brought them west from New York in 1889. They came on the Northern Pacific to Billings, then 125 miles by wagon to the ranch site. Grandmother Laura had steadfastly watered and tended the little bushes which were her link with her eastern home.

Before the wedding, sister Dorothy came home from Missoula for a long visit and she and many friends pitched in to clean and paint-up the ranch house. The privy was beautiful.

297

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Rosalie, no stranger to ranch life, was delighted with her new home and husband. Since she kept her job, in September 1937 they bought a 1934 Ford so she could drive into town each day.

That autumn, Hunt who had been apprised of the existence
1937 of their new cousin, took Porter Lumsden with him on the Milwaukee Road to be received for the first time at Monty's ranch. They had such a fine time that this became an annual affair. Monty took them on fishing expeditions to places they would never otherwise have seen.

"I could take you to the Smith River," he told them, "but I was there a couple years ago and got driven away by great swarms of deer flies. They were nasty. The fishing is good but you need a suit of armor against those flies! But we have lots of other places to go."

Hunt and Porter, those quintessential entrepreneurs, quickly sized up the situation at Monty's ranch. It was a beautiful location with distant vistas of the Snowy and Judith mountains. Their host was well-informed and personable but no sophisticated businessman.

Gently, Hunt told Monty, "Buddy says he thinks of you as a brother, so let's say I'm a sort of father or uncle to you. Your ranch is not my business and I see how fiercely

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

independent and self-reliant you are. Great qualities! But I can also see that you could use some extra money when the price of beef is down or some of the stock dies... also, if you broke a leg or had a minor disaster you could use more income. It's good to provide for all that. Porter and I like it here very much and we like the fishing places you have shown us.

"It occurred to us that you could build a little new business and make extra money by receiving paying guests... like a dude ranch but not on a big scale. We're going to pay you whether you like it or not, because we can afford it and we've had a wonderful time. When we get home, we can recommend you to other prospective guests. You could have a little dude ranch operation that would fit in with your regular ranching. Maybe build another cabin or two. This place is so remote and yet has good rail connection. We came all the way on the Milwaukee Road, right from Cedar Rapids, and it goes to the bigger towns, too. A lot of eastern people would love just being here--maybe riding horseback or sitting around looking at nature and those Snowy Mountains--and they would pay you for it! Keep it simple. You could print up a little brochure to explain what you have, then receive two to four guests at a time in good weather. Let them do things for themselves like

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

getting firewood and buckets of water. You'd be surprised how many rich city people think that's fun. They love doing that and will pay you for the chance!"

Monty's reaction to all this was similar to that of Miss Havergill when her project had been first suggested. "Oh, I wouldn't know how to do that. I'm just good for trailing dogies and I sure don't have any money to go building cabins!"

Hunt retorted, "Our business is helping people get started on new ventures. In this case it would take very little outlay and you wouldn't have to do anything more for guests than you've already done for us. So you've already got experience. You've even got plenty of logs growing right here on the ranch. You could probably have two cabins built for five or ten thousand dollars."

Monty looked doubtful but thoughtful.

Rosalie had been listening quietly. "Monty, we really could use the money. I could easily cook for some extra people until school starts. I cooked for the hay crew and they loved my berry pies!"

Hunt continued, "Porter and I run the Maynard Estate Company that has been in business for over a hundred years. We've stayed in business by being careful with investments. We make sure we'll get our money back before we invest.

230

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

We're not starry-eyed dreamers, (not even Buddy, though he dreams a little bit), so we think you should consider this carefully and when you determine what it will cost, we're prepared to lend you the money, and since you are family, it will be at two percent which is better than you could get anywhere else!!"

Monty's resistance crumbled, so that before Hunt and Porter returned to Iowa, the plans were well-developed. The Maynard Estate lent Monty \$15,000 at two percent per annum. The new cabins were ready for the 1938 season. Monty re-paid the debt in three years.

In Iowa, Hunt made sure some of his wealthy associates who enjoyed fishing, hunting and a taste of the simple life, were directed to the Templeton Ranch each summer.

MEETING MADGE

In late November 1936 they saw Madge two or three times during her stay at the Plaza. One day they had lunch at the Fifth Avenue Cafe. She gave them a copy of Gone With the Wind which she had just finished reading on the train. "You must read it this instant. Poor, poor Scarlett! She had such a lot of trouble with servants and men. I know exactly how that is! Then, I just felt for her when she had to make a new dress out of her mother's drapery. Of course, I don't think the weight of the material would be right. Then too, moss green is a tricky color. Maybe it would go with the right accessories and it depends on one's own coloring. But Scarlett had no choice--no choice at all!

"Now I looked at the draperies at the villa and again here at the Plaza and I didn't see anything I would want to use to make a dress!" Buddy and Gretchen had no idea what she was talking about.

Madge seldom bestirred herself to read a book, but this one had such success and such publicity that she felt compelled to read it. Everyone across the country was talking about it and speculating about which screen stars should make the movie.

Stanley ruefully thought his mother was addle-pated,

or presented a facsimile thereof to the world. He hoped it wasn't hereditary. She always placed her own peculiar twist on things. He and his father had long-ago discovered it was best to let her vent her petty enthusiasms or peevish temper until she ran out of steam, whereupon she would amiably change the subject.

So it was now. She was soon warning Gretchen about germs in the subway and the deleterious effect they might have on the forthcoming baby.

Soothingly, her daughter-in-law pointed out, "I usually use the Elevated, Madge--it comes closer to River House. Anyway, I'll probably just work for another week. The doctor says it's best. We want to be sure there will be a healthy baby with no problems."

"You can't be too careful, my dear,--any public transport--going about with all those hoards of common people with their garlic, their tobacco, tuberculosis, odors, diarrhea and runny noses," Madge sniffed. "Hoi polloi is hoi polloi--no two ways about it!"

Buddy couldn't resist asking, "Do you think having the Maynard money makes us aristocratic and above the common herd?"

"Stannery my love, I couldn't say about the Maynards but you must know that Grandmother Templeton was related to

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Chancellor Livingston and to the Stuyvesants.

Gretchen dear, Chancellor Livingston administered the oath to General Washington. It's immodest to mention that but Stannery has goaded me. We must maintain standards--that's the cross we must bear--that's nobless oblige!"

"Such unmitigated nonsense," Buddy expostulated, as she gave him a sweet and pitying smile before delicately tasting a petit four and dabbing her lips with a snowy linen napkin.

She turned to Gretchen, "See this glorious little sapphire bracelet I found today at Tiffany's! You're missing out, my dear, when you don't go shopping with me. I know where

the treasures are! Do you suppose these sapphires came from your cowboy cousin Monty's sapphire mine?"

Gretchen smiled, "Monty didn't say he owned a mine. He said there were sapphire mines in Montana. Anyway, Buddy and I are on a kind of budget--usually staying out of these expensive shops, but I have found some beautiful things at auctions when the price is right. You must come see our rose and gold Limoges porcelain. It's old-fashioned but in perfect condition."

Madge showed some interest. "So, she's civilizing you Stannery! Last time I saw your place there was nothing

but all those old books and nobody to do the dusting." Then she warned Gretchen, "Better get busy and spend some of Stannery's money my dear, before those New Dealers get it all and spend it for you. They've got serious plans. Don't think they won't try!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

After leaving his mother, Stanley walked briskly north with Gretchen through Central Park. There had been snow flurries but today it was sunny and pleasant. As they passed the Zoo they talked about Madge. "That bracelet! It was beautiful, but I hate to think what mama paid for it. Tiffany's can be as expensive as they get. And she already has boxes of jewelry at home. Clarissa Faymont is like that too! That's why mother and she come to New York together."

Mrs. Faymont was supposed to have been at their luncheon, but Madge told them, "Clarissa is having her hair done-- it's going to take all afternoon. She found a coiffeur straight from Paris who charges shocking prices, but Clarissa says there's nobody else who can do it right."

Mrs. Faymont was a wealthy widow who's husband had built the Faymont Iron Foundries in Chicago before conveniently dying, thereby allowing Clarissa to return to Cedar Rapids, her birthplace, where her considerable means permitted her unfettered life style. She and Madge were kindred spirits in the land of thoughtless extravagance. The Depression with its misery and deprivation had made almost no impression on these two supremely self-centered matrons who carried egocentrism to new heights. Their friend, Nora Hull, was another of this stripe.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"Mama never fails to embarrass me. She has her own money that came from Arthur Fulton, so I suppose she should spend it as she likes. Then too, it's invested so that she probably has a good deal more than she had back in 1905! Still, her colossal unconcern about poor people and the suffering in the world is so galling. Never a word about helping anyone but herself. She's always been that way. Generous gestures from her are calculated or accidental. Never a five dollar check to the Salvation Army or Red Cross. She even inveighs against helping poor, working-class people, saying they are responsible for their own misfortune and must consequently suffer. I love her, but her vanity and selfishness are so furchtbar (he smiled with the German word) that I think she's ready for a psychiatrist, though she would never consent to that."

Dolefully the young Maynards chuckled and hugged each other. Gretchen now challenged Buddy to a serious hike up around the Croton Reservoir, then by some new, unexplored route back to River House. This day, leaving the park at Ninety-second Street, they passed the Warburg and Carnegie mansions then proceeded east on Ninety-first to Carl Schurz Park and Gracie Mansion. Buddy explained what he knew about Carl Schurz.

"He was a German revolutionary who came to America as a young man, was a political leader, a friend of Abraham Lincoln, and later, a New York Evening Post editor."

"Oh, there's our island!" Gretchen had caught sight of Welfare Island which stretches up the East River for a mile and three-quarters. "We must be close to home!"

"Yes, it's our island, but we have forty blocks to go. Do you still want to walk all the way?" They were in the German Yorkville section on East Eighty-sixth. "Let's stop here for some coffee--oh look!! They have feines Gebäck and Pasteten! That should make you feel at home!" This was a large German Konditorei. Inside a German girl served them. As they sipped the excellent coffee, Buddy reached for a newspaper in a wooden binder on an adjoining table. It was the Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter, organ of the German-American Bund. They hadn't seen it before but quickly recognized its blatant, anti-Semitic, Nazi bias.

Buddy took the paper up to the counter and told the Fräulein in German that she should throw it out because it was Nazi.

With a steely cold stare she retorted in German, "Ja, it's Nazi and you better read it carefully because

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Amerika, also before long, will be Nazi!" Several customers smiled and clapped their hands upon hearing this.

Buddy stormed back to their table. Throwing down some money he growled, "Let's get out of here! These are a bunch of Nazis! We don't belong here!"

Once outside, they were overtaken by a chanting, singing, rowdy group of youths in black trousers and caps, white shirts and Swastika armbands. These young hoodlums paraded to the German Central Book Store on Eighty-fourth Street where they smashed the window to loot and destroy the anti-Hitler display. When the police came moments later, the Nazis had disappeared and most of the neighbors were too frightened to tell what they had seen or to identify the miscreants. One man said, "We have to live here with these Nazis. We have to lay low or they will be after us and our families."

Gretchen was cringing. "They were like that in Germany, Büdchen. It was fearful. They were in the cities but finally everywhere. So violent the good people dared not speak out."

Buddy also had seen some of the Nazi manifestations in 1931 in Göttingen. "We're not going to let them take over here," he said bravely to comfort her, but

at the same time he wondered how they could be stopped.

NOGG, HANNA AND THE GOLDSCHMIDTS

March fourth was the traditional presidential inauguration day, but in 1937 Franklin Roosevelt began his second term on January twentieth--the first president to do so, because of the so-called Lame-Duck Amendment to the Constitution.

This March fourth however, was memorable for the Maynards because Stanley Huntington Maynard V. chose to be born that day. When Gretchen felt preliminary labor pains, they took a cab to the Maternity Division of New York Hospital where the newest Stanley arrived in due course. Emma had been summoned from lower Manhattan. All went well except that Emma had some difficulty calming the agitated young husband. Women seem to know more about the business of being born.

When they had discussed possible names for infants, Stanley only reluctantly agreed to have yet another Stanley in the family. "It's been overdone, but he can be named after my father and grandfather. Tradition and continuity are important to dad. It's so much like a dynasty. Gosh, do you think we'll ever get up to

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

eighteen? France had eighteen kings called Louis!

The child was a wonder, bursting with good health and appetite. He had gray eyes like Gretchen and brown curly hair like Buddy. They argued about whose nose and chin he had. The nose was a turned-up baby blob. "Büdchen; I hope he gets that loveable cleft-chin of yours! But now he's so fat it's impossible to tell!"

At Buddy's behest, Emma found a refugee Kinderpflegerin or nanny, named Hanna Böcklin, who seemed right for them. Hanna was about forty years old. Buddy wanted somebody who could live in the apartment acting partly as housekeeper and partly as nanny. Hanna had worked for twenty years for a Jewish family in Stuttgart until her employer, Doktor Konrad Goldschmidt, had disappeared after being arrested.

Then her mistress told her they would all try to get to France. Hanna's brother and father who were Social Democratic labor leaders, urged her to go also. "You will be safe outside Germany. Come back when Hitler is gone." Hanna was not Jewish but the Nazis would consider her an enemy to be intimidated or destroyed because of her own family and her association with the Goldschmidts.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

(1937) On a cold February morning they had slipped inconspicuously out of the Goldschmidt house, crowding into the small Opel sedan of Frau Pfeiffer, a gentile friend, who took some risk in helping them. Frau Pfeiffer drove them to the rail station to board the train to Baden-Baden where they could transfer to the Paris train.

At Baden-Baden, Frau Goldschmidt, her three smallest children and Hanna sat in the station cafe apprehensively watching the clock. (The three older boys, now employed in a Düsseldorf metal concern, were going to attempt to get over the border to an uncle in Rotterdam.) The train would depart in about thirty minutes. They were sure their passports were in order. They had their rail tickets to Paris. They had often made this journey in happier times--perhaps all would go well.

Just as the Paris train rolled quietly into the platform, two S. S. officers appeared, glanced about the room then approached their table. The older officer with a salute, a clicking of heels and a kindly, disarming smile, addressed Frau Goldschmidt: "Entschuldigen-Sie die Störung, but you are Frau Konrad Goldschmidt from Stuttgart, nicht wahr?" And then those words of ominous portent in Nazi Germany: "Ihre Papiere, bitte--your papers, please." He patted little Benny's head. "These are your children, ja? Such a handsome little boy--he looks a real Aryan! Frau Goldschmidt, you and the children will please come with us to our office. It's just a technicality with your papers. You will be back here in five minutes--plenty of time for your train."

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

242

Trude Goldschmidt, her plump, maternal face distorted as she tried unsuccessfully to hide her tearful, blue eyes from the children, protested that the train had already arrived.

"The train, gnädige Frau, does not leave without our permission. You will please come."

With resignation, Trude told the children to pick up their bags and come along. When Hanna rose to go also, the second S. S. officer said, "The Fräulein stays here."

As they left, Trude Goldschmidt hastily handed her diamond engagement ring to Hanna, urgently whispering, "Go, Hanna go! Don't wait for us. Go! If you find the boys, give this to them!" Trude's usually pleasant and placid countenance, now become peremptory, engraved itself in Hanna's mind, shaking her to the core. They both knew it now. There could be no doubt, this was a fearful, climactic moment. Hanna slipped the ring into her coat pocket as she slumped back into her seat.

The second S. S. officer, lighting a cigarette, barked loudly, "Come along now! We don't have all day for this business!" The Goldschmidts were herded around the corner of the building out of Hanna's sight. She waited a few seconds then, peeking around the corner, saw them stepping from the dirty, decaying snow into a black sedan--Frau Goldschmidt with a distraught air, thirteen-year-old Monika, pretty little Erma, only eleven, and five-year-old Benny,

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

his solemn, inquisitive eyes missing nothing.

In a couple more minutes the train started taking on passengers, so Hanna, filled with alarm, found an empty compartment, then stood on the platform hoping the Goldschmidts would re-appear. But they didn't return. Hanna, overcome with a mood of desolation, was hurried back into the train by an officious trainman.

So she crossed the Rhine without incident and should have exulted at the appearance of French uniforms and the stops at Strasbourg and Nancy. She had escaped. But she was leaving her country and family, perhaps forever. The traumatic kidnapping of the Goldschmidts weighed on her mind. It was so smoothly done. No fuss. The Nazis wouldn't want any 'incidents' at Baden-Baden, that popular international spa where numerous foreigners could bear witness.

Having lived for twenty years in the prosperous Goldschmidt household and known their friends and employees, Hanna was more aware than most Germans of the pernicious, threatening activities of the National Socialists as they pushed their way to total dominance. The Jewish bourgeoisie whispered and conjectured about what was in store for them. Many couldn't believe

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

that German society would permit the outrages that were bruited about. It was this disbelief which disarmed them when they might have still saved themselves.

In 1937 the prevailing Nazi policy for German Jews was Entjudung or enforced emigration. This was relatively humane compared with what followed. The Nazis wanted the Jews out of Germany. Relentlessly they tightened their anti-Semitic doctrines and laws, but differed among themselves about the 'ideal solution.' Some wanted Jews confined to ghettos as in medieval times and up until emancipation. Others believed that if all the Jews went to Palestine or New York, Germany could be 'racially pure.' Many dreamed of a more violent solution.

Why then did these S.S. officers prevent Frau Goldschmidt and her family from leaving? The hidden truth was that Doktor Goldschmidt was at that moment at Dachau being tortured, because the Nazis believed him to be a part of a 'Jewish-Bolshevik' organization working against the regime. The Totenkopfverbände (Death's Head guards) wanted Doktor Goldschmidt to name his fellow-conspirators, but he could only gasp out repeatedly that there was no conspiracy and he could name no names.

"Is it not true that you have employed in your household an Aryan woman under the age of forty-five, in

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

direct violation of the Reich Citizenship Law?"

"Yes, but she has lived with my family and cared for our children since 1917 when I was at the Western Front."

One interrogator smirked at the other. "You see, Karl-Heinz, if he has defied the law in this important way, then he surely has other secrets to divulge."

Then, addressing the prisoner, "Goldschmidt, spare us these tales of being a hero in the World War. I should tell you your wife and children have just been apprehended while trying to escape the Reich. Now why would they try to do that? Perhaps your wife was carrying a message to the Jew-Bolsheviks in Paris or New York? A little affair of spying, perhaps? We have ways of dealing with that.

"Don't feel like talking today? Es ist sehr schade-- what a pity. Perhaps tomorrow, jawohl?" Doktor Goldschmidt, stripped to the waist, sat tied to a chair. The S.S. man extinguished his cigarette against the Doktor's white abdomen, educing a cry of pain. "You Jews with your fat bellies! Parasites! Why must we be bothered with you? Guard! Guard! Take this loathsome Schwein back to his cell."

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

After the prisoner was gone, the interrogator put his papers away and offered Schnaps to his fellow. "Papa Eiche" -- (Inspector of Concentration Camps, murderer of Röhm, and one of Himmler's favorites) -- "Papa Eiche has taken special interest in this case. We must produce some results. It seems this Jew Goldschmidt has been implicated in a plot by another Jew-Bolshevik that we had at Sachsenhausen. Unfortunately, that prisoner died because our guards were over-zealous. We will be more careful with Goldschmidt. Papa Eiche favors regular beatings and tying prisoners to trees, but we must keep this Jew alive until he talks." The officer smiled. "If we tied him to a tree in this weather he would get pneumonia and die. Jews are that perverse. Goldschmidt has six children. The three oldest are still hiding in Düsseldorf but the Kripo (Kriminalpolizei) will get them. Now, let us forget these unpleasant matters. Another Schnaps?

"Oh, Karl-Heinz, Übrigens--by the way--don't forget our little tea-dance--at seven in the Klubhaus. Käthe and her two sisters will all be there and they want to meet you. They have some new phonograph records. Then also, you must come to our house afterwards for coffee. Erika is decorating the nursery for little Elvira and she says only you, being an artist, will know which wallpaper to use! Bring your watercolors. Erika loves your scenes of Goslar and the Harz Mountains. She says we are fortunate to have

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

247

such a talented person here at Dachau. I should be jealous, should I not, but then I know how you yearn for Käthe!" He clapped Karl-Heinz on the shoulder as they went out into the snow.

Frau Goldschmidt and the children were brought to the Konzentrationslager Dachau in due course. They were tortured in various ways in the presence of Doktor Goldschmidt in this diabolic effort to make him talk. He couldn't satisfy the officers since he had nothing to tell.

What happened to this beleaguered family is hidden away in the cold statistics of the Holocaust. They were victims of "good Nazi family men, just doing their duty." If death came quickly, they were fortunate.



Richard Lee Merritt
4428 23rd St.
San Francisco, CA 94114-3114

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

248

On the Paris train, Hanna, with a tear-streaked face, watched the drear, frozen landscape slip by. The Goldschmidts had been her family. That warm, nurturing environment was destroyed. Where were they all now?

She tried to analyze her own situation, to make some plan. If anyone were ever alone it was she. She had had a friend, Wolfgang Grünberger, who used to be so jolly and full of life. They had even talked of marrying one time back in 1932, but then he joined the Nazis and told her she must leave her position with the Jewish Goldschmidts. She wouldn't hear of that, so their little affair was finished.

She remembered an uncle and aunt, Karl and Katerina Grohbrugge, who had emigrated to the United States in about 1912. Her mother used to get Christmas cards from them for a while after the war. They lived in Milwaukee. Were they still alive? She tried to think where Milwaukee was. One thing kept coming to mind. Millions of Germans had emigrated to the United States over the years. She had read somewhere that one-third of Americans had some German blood. It couldn't be so strange and difficult there.

While she was still on the train she decided to try to get to the United States.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Upon emerging from the Gare de l'Est in some unpleasant snow flurries, she saw several hotels opposite along the boulevard de Strasbourg. She picked the Hôtel Moderne which seemed small and old-fashioned enough to be inexpensive for her. Her French was quite good, but it was reassuring to be addressed in strongly-accented German by the elderly attendant who proved to be the proprietor. He had a great white moustache, a gold watch-chain, and in his lapel a red carnation. He said, "I know a German when I see one. Fräulein ist German, nicht?"

He was Herr Klingelschnur, who had come here from Alsace in 1905. He had saved his money and bought the hotel in this boulevard de Strasbourg, named for his native city. Herr Klingelschnur took a great liking to her when he discovered that she was anti-Nazi. He proved to be very helpful in the next few days, first taking her to the United States Embassy in the avenue Gabriel to get a visa. He introduced her to an officer who said, "You don't know how lucky you are--there are some openings today!"

Another day they went to the avenue de l'Opéra to arrange tourist passage on the Ile de France to New York City. He made sure she found her place on the boat train. Getting the passage had been easy since it was the worst time of the year to cross the Atlantic.

Herr
Bell-rope

Rough seas and freezing winds threw salt spray high over the decks to form thick clumps of blue ice on every surface along the lifeboats, cables and scuppers. Only the most hardy of passengers ventured on the slippery decks, while below, the staff essayed to maintain French gentility in the face of nature's assault. The great liner plowed on, however, and in less than two weeks after leaving Stuttgart, Hanna was delivered at a North River pier.

On shipboard some Jewish refugees had told her to go to the refugee agency (where Emma worked) to find help getting settled. Carefully they printed the lower Broadway address on a card.

After customs and a cursory immigration questioning and much frightened by the size, noise and relentless activity of this city, she managed upon showing her card to the driver, to get a cab to take her to the agency. As luck had it, she was interviewed by Emma.

"The crossing was so stormy! Aber ich war nicht seekrank." No mal de mer! She was proud of that. "I still have a sensation of heaving up and down and side to side from that ship. It doesn't feel like solid ground to me yet! Unbedingt - to be sure I need a job and a place to live. I have a little money but it won't last long. I must also try to find the three older Goldschmidt boys." She reviewed her story. "I love the Goldschmidt children like my own. I've been with them for twenty years. I have no address for their uncle in Rotterdam--I don't even know his name. The boys are Aaron, Joseph and David and they are twenty, nineteen and eighteen. I think they also

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

have an uncle in London. There was some whispering about trying to get to London. Under the Nazi laws they were not permitted to enter the university so their father arranged for them to have jobs in the Falkenmetallgesellschaft, a firm

in Düsseldorf which does much business with Latin America. They hoped to later be posted abroad."

Emma had been writing down this information because part of the agency work was to try to locate and re-unite displaced families.

Emma now told her, "You will want to improve your English, but that can wait a day or two! I may just have a place for you. My daughter and her husband have had a new son, and they hope to find a combination nanny and housekeeper. They both speak perfect German so you can communicate, but don't neglect the English. There are classes in English all over the city since this is a city of new-comers."

That afternoon Emma took Hanna by taxi to River House where Buddy interviewed and hired her on the spot. Clearly she was meant for the job. He gave Emma several hundred dollars to take Hanna shopping at Macy's and Gimbel's to re-build her wardrobe.

For his prospective housekeeper he had already leased a single room with bath near their apartment door. Hanna would do some cooking and light housework but the regular cleaning woman would continue to come in twice a week. Hanna would eat with the Maynards, principally being a nanny, and later a governess, which was of course

a professional position and not a servant. She had had special training as Erzieherin (governess), as well as her long experience with the six Goldschmidt children.

When Gretchen and the new baby came home, she and Hanna immediately became fast friends, partly from being Germans who shared the experience of escaping the Nazis, but also because neither had a sister and both had always regretted that deficiency. They regarded each other more and more in a sisterly light, complementing each other in ability, experience and knowledge.

Hanna proved very good at running the apartment, preparing meals, and caring for the child. Gretchen was wealthy, thoughtful, generous, and anxious to help Hanna with English and her other concerns such as finding the three older Goldschmidt boys.

Soon Hanna was studying English on the kitchen table. Gretchen or Buddy sat with her a couple hours each day surrounded by dictionaries, elementary readers, grammars, notebooks and parts of speech. It was agreed that all conversation in the apartment would be in English. This was difficult at first, but Hanna was forced to sink or swim. She chose to swim, memorizing lists of words and improving her pronunciation. They decided she should

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

attend a free class for beginners at Hunter College. She learned to go there on the Lexington Avenue Subway for two-hour sessions three times a week. She was being totally immersed in English. Buddy told her to listen to the teacher and not the other students, whose English might be worse than hers. He even went with her one day to the class to make certain the teacher wasn't afflicted with a Brooklyn accent. "Brooklynites often pay good money to lose their accent, so best to learn Standard English the first time around!"

Gretchen spoke British-accented English as Europeans commonly did in those years before the Second World War , and Buddy's English was that of the literate, upper-class American, free from regional peculiarities. They both welcomed the opportunity to create à la Henry Higgins a new speaker of English. Buddy warned Hanna that New York City was full of fantastic pronunciations, so she must choose her teachers carefully.

With these resolute mentors, Hanna developed a near-perfect command of the language which concealed her German past from all but the most discerning ear. Also her German clothing was largely supplanted after Gretchen took her to a Madison Avenue tailor to be fitted for a new spring suit and a coat of Scottish woolen. She got a new Knox hat and dropped the umlaut

from her name since mystified Americans could only guess what sound it represented. She was a new, recreated Hanna. She wanted to become an American citizen but Emma told her she must first live in America for five years unless, like Gretchen, she married an American citizen, in which case the waiting period would be three years. Gretchen hoped to be naturalized in 1938, but Emma must wait until 1940.

January that year, Gretchen, pursuing her frugal ways, had bought for twenty dollars a baby crib and carriage from another tenant. She washed them down with Lysol so no latent microbe could endanger her forthcoming baby. She spread the New York Times on the floor in the corner of an empty bedroom then placed the purchases there with turpentine, brushes and two small cans of enamel paint--one pink and one blue. Buddy promised to paint them the appropriate color when the sex of the baby was known. On the fifth of March he painted them blue.

For her part, Madge had arranged for a lavish layette and bedding to be delivered from a Fifth Avenue shop. Emma brought a baby-record book and, from Uncle Abraham, a wooden rattle.

Thus the baby had a good start in life. Though he was

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

256

heir to a princely fortune, he slept on a pillow in a laundry basket for several weeks until Gretchen decided the odor of new paint had subsided sufficiently for him to occupy his blue crib, which was then placed alongside the parental bed so that he could be suckled during the initial months. All three adults were devoted to his welfare, making the burden light. Even Grandma Emma on days off was eager to do a share.

They puzzled over what to call him. Certainly he needed a good nickname. Buddy regretted giving him the ancestral appellation. "Gosh, why didn't we call him something simple like Wapello or Fiorello Maynard? Then he would be one of a kind. It's plenty far-fetched, but until we think of something better, let's call him NOGG--that's short for Inauguration Day which was when he was born if they hadn't amended the Constitution!" The three German women looked blank in the presence of this convoluted thinking, but they accepted NOGG as a serviceable-enough name for this new eight-pound individual. So Number Five went through life as NOGG Maynard, never meeting another Nogg. He was unique.

On gentle, spring days someone would take him in his blue carriage out for a neighborhood stroll around Beekman Place and Sutton Place, where poor and rich

people lived cheek by jowl. Buddy and Gretchen had seen Kingsley's play Dead End about slum life in New York, then discovered that the putative setting was the old wooden dock on East Fifty-third Street just by River House. Here on warm days to escape sweltering, over-crowded tenements, working class boys would gather to dive and swim in the polluted East River waters. The boys got to recognize the shiny blue baby carriage. They would giggle and shout, "Heh comes Noobaugh! Hey, howya doin' Noobaugh?" Dripping, they would gather for an instant laughing down at the gray-eyed mite, then race to dive off the end of the dock or climb up to sit atop some weathered, splintery piles where they would poke, tickle and tease each other and generally disport themselves as boys do when they have lots of time, no jobs and no money--trying to keep cool on a hot day.

Two boys with bony ribs, narrow shoulders and a wealth of freckles discovered that the Nogg family lived in River House, that bastion of privilege. "Hey, Noobaugh, got any tips fer da mahket today? I jes got me dis toity grand, see, an' me n' my pal heh is lookin' fer a quick toinover!" Gales of laughter then they raced to leap into the River with a mighty splash.

Buddy told Hanna that these dead-end kids had a

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

258

picturesque way of speaking, but that she was to learn her English elsewhere.

South of River House were a couple small parks with benches where nannies and small children could congregate. This was where Nogg spent part of each day though he may not have been aware of it since he was usually asleep.

In July, Emma phoned Hanna to report excitedly that her agency had just received a cable from a Jewish organization in London which said two boys named Goldsmith had arrived in London and were staying in Whitechapel with an uncle, Fred Elsner. "The boys are Joseph and David Goldsmith, about eighteen or twenty years old. They may be refugees, but we have few details. They are at 44-A Whitlock Street. If your agency wishes, we will investigate further. Please affirm if these are the boys you are searching for."

Hanna felt breathless. She was certain these were the Goldschmidt boys. "Ja, Trude's maiden name had been Elsner. What must we do now?"

Emma told her, "We must send a cable to alert the boys so they won't move somewhere and get lost again. Then we must write a careful letter with all the details to be sure we're dealing with the right people. I'll come up to River House this afternoon about two.

259

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

We can talk it all over. We want to know all about their circumstances. Do they have money? Can their uncle help them? Do they want to stay in London?-- all those things. I'll be there at two!"

When Emma arrived, they all worked on the wording of a reply cable that Emma could send that evening to be at the London office the following morning.

"Fräulein Hanna Böcklin is searching for Aaron, Josef and David Goldschmidt, sons of Doktor Konrad and Trude Goldschmidt of Stuttgart, Germany. Fräulein Böcklin who can be reached % Emma Reisfeld at this address, is now a resident of New York. Ask boys to confirm by cable if they are the right family. Fräulein Böcklin has news of their family and is prepared to help them if need be. URGENT! "

They talked of Hanna's writing a letter but decided she should wait until they received the return cable and could be certain they had the right boys. Buddy said, Letters take about ten days to cross the Atlantic--who knows why, when some of the ships do it in five or six days."

Two days later Hanna had her cabled answer. "Dearest Hanna, Yes, we are your own Josef and David who lived at

Lothringenstrasse 86, Stuttgart. Please, where is mama? Our letters returned. Overjoyed to have your message. We are lost in the world, no friends, no money. Uncle Fritz can't help much. Sending letter today. Love from Jo and David."

Hanna, in turmoil, wanted to do something instantly but Buddy urged her to wait for the letter which finally came.

Josef wrote that Frau Goldschmidt had sent them a letter, hand-carried by a trusted friend, when they were still at Düsseldorf. Frau Goldschmidt feared they were all under surveillance. She told the boys to go immediately to their Uncle Albrecht Elsner in Rotterdam. Above all they must get out of Germany while there was still time. She feared for their father's life. She had heard nothing from him. The house was being watched. The Nazis had spread rumors about them and could strike at any moment. Friends of long-standing were snubbing them. She and dear, faithful Hanna were thinking of taking the children to Paris, but there was a serious difficulty about money. She must be extremely cautious. Bank accounts were watched. She enclosed 300 Marks and 200 Dutch Guilder. If they got to Paris they would

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

261

contact Uncle Albrecht or Uncle Fritz in London.

Josef continued, "We three had a conference then and there. We decided to pack little rucksacks with some clothes and food. We had a little money and our passports were in order. We would make it look like we were carrying a few books across the street to school.

"Aaron had the plan. He said we must go one by one and take the train or streetcar south to some nearby towns. I went to Leverkusen and David to Solingen. There we changed our mufflers and put on caps, then next took the train to Duisberg where we met at a place we all knew at the Bahnhof. We switched jackets and caps all around and bought tickets for Emmerich but didn't go that far. We got out at Wesel then bought tickets for the next train to Holland. We hoped the Polizei would not find us. Aaron said if the S.S. were watching us, we must try to confuse them. They would expect us to go toward Holland and take baggage along. So we went south with our little sacks, hoping they would relax their guard. Aaron said they will expect us to go on a fast train, therefore, we will go on a slow train.

"It all worked perfectly. At least we got to Holland safely and you may be sure we were trembling

when those officers looked at our passports! We told them we were just going over for the day.

"We didn't know what Aaron was secretly thinking all the time, but when he made sure we were safe with Uncle Albrecht, he told us he was going back to Stuttgart! He said we couldn't leave mama to deal with all that business by herself. He had to help. He told us to stay with Albrecht or go on to Uncle Fritz in London. He would get mama and the children out of Germany by some means. He knew where he could sell some valuable things from the house, like silverware and clocks, to get money. What was most important was to get the family out. 'You'll hear from us within the week,' Aaron told us.

"We waited and waited and we wrote four or five letters to Stuttgart from Holland and from London, but they came back Adressat Unbekannt-(addressee unknown). We wrote to some gentile friends and got no answer, not even from Frau Pfeiffer.

"Uncle Fritz is old, crippled and very poor. He's married to an English woman who is a part-time clerk in an office. She should have retired years ago. They have a small two-room flat where we sleep on the floor each night. They really need help more than we do

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

263

since we, at least, are young and healthy. They have been very cordial and generous with what they have, but we mustn't stay here.

"We think constantly how we might find mama and get papa back, but no workable ideas come forth.

"We would like to come to the United States. We found that passage, third-class, is about forty-five pounds-- maybe less on some slow boats. We don't know if the United States wants us. No country welcomes Jews these days. But we will work hard if we can find jobs. The first thing we want to do is get our family away from Hitler.

"I tried to get a job here in London teaching languages but there are already a few thousand experienced teachers ahead of me! Not far from here is the famous, old Whitechapel Bell Foundry, and across the road are some silversmith establishments. I tried for a job there but they only laughed at me. I told them my name was Goldsmith and my ancestors probably did that kind of work, and I was willing to do anything. One rather kindly old proprietor told me that his workers started when they were maybe eight or nine years old and served a long apprenticeship. He said my name alone was not enough-- that I had no experience and that there were no jobs

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

available anyway, and if there were, they would hire some of the trained silversmiths who were out of work. He said he was sorry for me and suggested I go to Canada! He said he heard of jobs in Toronto.

"David has a job sweeping out a produce market. The British workers resent us since there are not enough jobs to go around. David makes two pounds a week and at the end of each day gets some of the left-over produce--potatoes, carrots, beetroot, maybe some fish and tripe. He gives that to Aunt Maude and so we squeak by.

"Who would have thought we would be in such a situation? Since we have no money, we walk about sight-seeing a good deal in the East End and in the City. Whitechapel has an old Jewish community. We're rather close to Saint Paul's Cathedral, the Tower of London and even the Bank of England, but they don't have any money for us now! We like to go watch the trains at Liverpool Street Station and we go sit by the Thames to watch the boats go by, imagining we are starting a trip somewhere. We watched the coronation procession in May. So, you see, we are doing a lot of watching!

"We think about how rich we used to be when the family all came here in 1929 and stayed in the Russell Hotel in

965

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Russell Square. Hanna, remember those funny little balconies on our rooms? I walked over there last week to look up at them from the street and sort of imagined that mama came out to wave at me.

"Another time we stayed at the White Hall Hotel in Bloomsbury Square. Now if we got jobs sweeping out in those hotels, we would be lucky! That was the time papa said we must go see the Rosetta Stone and the Elgin Marbles, then later we must see the church of Saint George's, Bloomsbury, because it had a replica on the top of the Tomb of Mausolus! Then he tried to get a snapshot of all of us, including the top of the church, but couldn't squeeze it all in. Now, all the photos are lost. Alles kaputt--our family, our home, our country.

"We wish we could enjoy visiting this beautiful old city but our thoughts, always on the disaster befallen our family, give us no respite.

"You mentioned having 'family news.' We pray the family got out, but if they had, they would have contacted us immediately, so we just worry and know nothing.

"If you can help us get to America, we will not rest until we have repaid you. Liebe Hanna, we anxiously await hearing from you.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

266

Your loving Josef."

"P. S. (David says ja, this is all exactly as he
would have said it if he knew how to write
a letter!)"

After Hanna and the others read and re-read the letter, Buddy asked Hanna, "You do want them here, of course?"

Hanna burst out, "More than anything. They are what's left of my family. They need help so badly now. I can't turn aside, and yet as you know, I have just nothing--only what you have so generously given me. Maybe you would advance me the money for their passage and I will gladly work for nothing to pay it off!"

Buddy laughed. "I think I can do better than that. All the time I've spent down on Wall Street with the great movers and shakers of the world should pay off now. You just wait a couple days--maybe I'll have good news for you!"

That same day he took the letter, the cable addresses and all pertinent matter down to Brown Brothers, Harriman Bank where he went into the office of Schuyler Ellington, one of the partners who was a special friend. That day they used the transatlantic telephone and other facilities to arrange the rescue of the Goldschmidt boys.

Entering enthusiastically into Buddy's plan, which was business of a somewhat different kind--humanitarian business--Schuyler Ellington enlisted the aid of a counterpart in London. They talked with Brown, Shipley

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

268

and Company of 128 Pall Mall, London.

Someone in London was to go find the Goldschmidt boys. Fifty pounds were to be paid to Fred Elsner. The boys were to be taken to Bond Street to be provided with new shoes and such apparel deemed necessary for a sea voyage to New York. They were to be conducted to Grosvenor Square to receive U. S. visas at the embassy. They were to be given first-class tours of London. Finally, tourist-class passage should be secured for both on the Queen Mary or equivalent vessel, at the earliest possible date. Each boy was to have fifty pounds pocket money.

All the costs and expenses were to be charged to the account of Mr. Stanley Huntington Maynard IV. at Brown Brothers, Harriman Bank, New York City.

Buddy thought, in cases like this, it's handy to have that imposing moniker. It gets results every time!

Not many days later there was another cable for Hanna: "Arriving 4 August on Queen Mary, Love, Josef and David."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

269

On August fourth Buddy and Hanna took a taxi cross-town to meet the boys at the North River pier. Man-built structures of every kind allowed them only brief tantalizing glimpses of the docked behemoth, then the greatest ship in the world. For a second they saw the three noble funnels and a part of the great bulk. Then they dismissed the taxi and entered the pier.

Passengers were already emerging, baggage in hand. Buddy said the Americans should get out faster since they needn't go through immigration. Also, first class would disembark first.

They found a strategic spot where they could watch the scattered stream leaving immigration. For twenty minutes they watched as Hanna's heart faltered--perhaps the boys had missed the ship? Maybe they were being detained? Then she felt a light touch on her sleeve. "Hanna, bist Du's? Is it you, Hanna?" She turned. There was her Josef!

"Ja, natürlich, Ich bin Hanna! Oh, little Josef! At last you are here!" They were embracing with both laughter and tears. "But where is Davy?"

"Just over there by that steel pillar. He's guarding our bags. We've been waiting for half an hour. We

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

were afraid we were lost again. We looked at the people around here and looked at you several times but were not sure it was you. You look so elegant, Hanna!"

David had been watching them. Now he picked up the two bags and came running over. "It was Hanna after all!" He and Hanna embraced in turn.

Hanna brushed tears from her eyes. "Meine Buben, you must meet our great benefactor, indeed, our savior! This is Mr. Stanley Maynard who is my new employer. He has been so generous, so noble, in our great need. We must be forever in his debt!" It looked like Hanna wasn't going to stop her paean anytime soon.

Stanley was embarrassed. "Stop, Hanna! I did what was necessary. You all needed help. I was able to help. It's simple as that!" He was shaking hands with the boys. "Call me Buddy. I don't think I'm more than ten years older than you two, so consider me an older brother. Hanna let me read your letter so I know about Aaron and about your escape from the Nazis. But let's get a cab, Hanna, and take the boys back to River House where we can all get acquainted and do a lot of visiting--much better than standing in this cavernous old shed."

It happened to be a cool, cloudy day so they were

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

all dressed more warmly than normal for New York City in August. The boys had identical blue Shetland pullovers, brown soft-felt hats, polished brown oxfords, white shirts and blue plaid ties. They carried tweed jackets over their arms and each had a brown leather suitcase. They were handsome boys, both with blue eyes, good features, rather athletic builds and sandy hair. This good appearance and their easy, British-accented English had undoubtedly speeded their interview with the immigration agents who regarded them as practically 'clean-cut, All-American' boys who might have come from, let us say, Cedar Rapids, except for their accent. Certainly they were no threat to the republic.

In the cab David burst out, "Tell us, Hanna, what you know about mama!"

Hanna told about the events in Baden-Baden when Frau Goldschmidt and the three children were apprehended by the S. S. David morosely said, "It's just what we have feared all along. How awful! We don't know where any of them are or what the Nazis are up to, but it can't be anything good. And Aaron! He just disappeared too. Eight of us in the family--and you too, Hanna--nine in the family, and now only we three!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Hanna patted his hand. "We mustn't give up hope. Maybe somehow they will be released and if they are, we will find them. There are a number of groups working to find and help refugees."

The boys were suitably impressed by the tall buildings they passed on the way across the island. In the elevator at River House they enthused, "Seventeenth floor? We've never gone higher than four or five! Europe has the Eiffel Tower but we don't know of any skyscrapers where people live and work!"

Buddy explained what was planned about lodging. Hanna had moved into the empty bedroom in the apartment and they had put an extra mattress on the floor in Hanna's bedroom so that the Goldschmidt boys could stay there. It had its own bathroom and they could all eat together in the apartment. The boys dropped their bags, jackets and hats in their bedroom before meeting Gretchen and Nogg.

When they congratulated Gretchen for her excellent German, "far better than most Americans," the Maynards and Hanna roared with laughter. Hanna told them Gretchen was German like themselves, having only come to New York City two and one-half years earlier. "To be sure

she speaks das beste Hochdeutsch!"

The boys were flustered but put at their ease when Gretchen offered them roast chicken in kaiserröll sandwiches with sliced tomatoes, ice cream and Schlitz beer. Then they learned that most American beer was made by old German families with German recipes.

The conversation ranged widely over their experiences in the past year. Josef recounted that they had had little to celebrate until that day in July when the man had come from Brown, Shipley Company. "Oh yes, he was grand. We couldn't believe he was looking for us. He was gray-haired, ram-rod straight, dignified, military mustache, all tweedy! We thought he was a royal duke but discovered he was just a knight! Just a knight! He was Sir Rodney Arbuckle, who was quite important in his firm, but also important and influential all over London. He had a big green Bentley with a chauffeur and he personally took us around on three different days. He seemed to enjoy it all immensely. He took us to shops in Bond Street where we bought two of everything. When we asked who was paying for all this, he said, 'Never mind, it's paid all right. Don't look a gift

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

horse in the mouth! He gave Uncle Fritz fifty pounds then gave each of us fifty pounds also, for spending money. He told us we were going to New York, so we all went to Cunard to get the tickets for the ship. And he took us to the American Embassy where everybody seemed to know him and even defer to him! With such help, getting visas was a simple matter! Just that alone was miraculous as we knew from talking with other refugees!

"On our last day he arranged a great tour of London, not only for us, but also for Uncle Fritz and Aunt Maude. We suspect, Buddy, that we owe you for all those remarkable, fortuitous arrangements. Sir Rodney was a 'chevalier sans peur et sans reproche,' as Hanna taught us to say. You couldn't have found a better agent, most pleasant and unassuming, considering our abject situation. I believe he genuinely enjoyed the mission. He said he did--that it was a delightful, welcome change from the drudgery of day-to-day business.

"Hanna, are we right in believing Buddy did all this for us?" Hanna nodded, her eyes filling again with tears.

"Well then," Josef pursued, "I and David owe an enormous debt of gratitude to you, Buddy! We marvel that anyone would do these things for total strangers across

the sea, but we assure you we will try to repay you and make you proud that you brought us to your country!"

David broke in, "That's all exactly what I wanted to say--EXACTLY!" They all laughed then, ending the solemnity of the situation.

Nogg was at the gathering, sleeping in his laundry basket but occasionally opening his round gray eyes to observe the activity. He gurgled a bit, especially when Stanley played some bits from Schumann's Carnaval--the Préambule, the Valse noble and Coquette. At the end of Coquette Nogg emitted such a piercing cry that Gretchen took him from the room to be nursed. When they returned, Nogg dozed happily away once more. Stanley smiled, "I would play some Schubert lieder like Gretchen am Spinnrade or Erlkönig, but they're all so woeful with maidens and babies dying."

Later, Stanley told the boys, "This is a new and strange country for you. We want you to stay here with us at least for several weeks. You are welcome. You can go about getting acquainted with the city and its ways. You will have to make decisions about finding jobs and going to college, or both. Many American college students have part-time jobs to help pay their way. I think this is far more common here than in Europe, since we have

276

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

a number of families with little means, whose children are a first generation in college. This is a key to success later in life. There is a more democratic approach here to education for the masses, while the European tradition has been more élitist."

Both brothers evinced a lively interest in this subject. Josef repeated what Hanna had told the Maynards: "If it weren't for the Nazis, we all, Aaron included, would be in the university. It was what we did at our age in our family and in the families of our Jewish friends. But the Nazis control everything. Jewish students and professors are not allowed, so papa found us those little industrial jobs at Düsseldorf. We hoped we might later be sent to Brazil or somewhere to represent the firm.

"We want very much to go to a university, but as you know, we have no means. One thing for sure, we're through with Germany. We almost threw our German passports overboard when we saw the Statue of Liberty. We want to be Americans if America will have us. And we want to go to the university here.

"We have talked a lot about it, haven't we David? In London and on the ship we thought how papa and grosspapa were medical doctors and how our generation

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

277

was losing out. But it's not too late. I'm still nineteen and David is eighteen. Still, we will work first to pay you all the cost of bringing us here. Then we may devise a way to become students."

Stanley left it at that, but he recognized two good candidates for his Reisfeld Scholarship program (which was at that moment over-subscribed, but he was sure two more scholarships could be squeezed out with some little economies).

In the next couple weeks, with and without guides, the boys ranged far and wide about Manhattan, quickly mastering the transportation system and learning the street patterns. One day, after Gretchen had suggested they go meet and talk with her mother at the Jewish Rescue Agency, they found their way down to her office on Broadway below Canal.

Emma and the boys liked each other instantly. They told her of their hopes and concerns. They must first pay Buddy for his largesse and they hoped to return to school. They needed jobs and a permanent place to live since they wished not to overstay their welcome at River House. Both boys were tri-lingual. If they were in school, Josef would choose to study literature and David preferred mathematics and physics.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

When Emma asked if they wanted jobs right away, Josef told her, "We mustn't wait. The sooner the better."

Emma consulted a list on her desk. "You already know that my husband, Dr. Emanuel Reisfeld, was a professor at Jena. He died soon after we got to New York, but his uncle, Abraham Reisfeld, was a great help to us. You will hear the story of how Abraham sent Buddy to us to buy Emanuel's books, and how Buddy acquired Gretchen at the same time!"

"Abraham, who is elderly, has a book store on Fourth Avenue near Fourteenth, and he asked me to find a young man who knows languages to be an assistant in his shop. This would involve addressing and mailing packages and letters, sorting, buying and selling books--that sort of thing. I think you, Josef, might like that job. It doesn't pay much, but good jobs are scarce.

"As for you, David, here on my list is a job as a 'runner' for the Feldstein, Orbach Brokerage Company at 38 Nassau Street. That's near Wall Street in the Financial District. We received this list yesterday, so if you want the job, I'll call them and tell them I'm sending you down. A runner is a messenger who gets to see a good bit of the city. The economy has slowed down again this year so there aren't many jobs to choose

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

from. You should probably try for this one.

"As for school--New York University has a Washington Square College of Arts and Sciences where Josef can get his literature and David, his mathematics! Abraham's book store is quite near there.

"Now here's another proposal. My apartment is also near Washington Square. I have one or even two rooms you could rent if you are interested in moving there. We first had one room filled with all Emanuel's books in boxes--those are the books you've seen at Buddy's apartment--and also, Gretchen's bedroom is not now occupied. I could rent you one room for thirty dollars or two rooms for fifty a month. You could use the kitchen, of course. This would help me with my rent since I, also, am a poor immigrant!

"If you want those jobs, don't lose any time--this is a city in a hurry. Go first to see the employers then, perhaps tomorrow, go see the dean of the Washington Square College. It may be possible to work and also attend college. Many do. The autumn classes will start next month.

"About finances, don't fail to talk with Buddy--perhaps you already have. He has helped some other students get through school."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Exhilarated by this friendly, optimistic interview, the Goldsmith boys (who had decided to Anglicize their name), studied their street map on the Broadway curb, then walked south past city hall, the mansarded bulk of the old post office, the Woolworth Building, Saint Paul's Chapel, and on to Trinity Church. Emma had directed them: "Go down Broadway to Trinity Church. Wall Street is narrow, (smaller than its reputation), and enters opposite Trinity. Go left on Wall one block and left on Nassau. Feldstein is in a white terra cotta building on the ninth floor. Ask for Mrs. Kepler."

In due time they found Mrs. Kepler, a no-nonsense business-woman in a black suit, who inspected them through very thick lenses. "Ah, Mrs. Reisfeld sent you? Yes, she just called me. But we have only one opening."

"It's David here who wants the job. We are brothers. I hope to get a job somewhere else." Both boys smiled disarmingly.

Mrs. Kepler warmed to them. "David, you look intelligent, young, healthy and presentable. Fill out this form for me, please. The pay is thirty dollars a week, the hours seven to four with an hour for lunch, Monday through Friday. You will be delivering and picking up letters, documents and packages, mostly in the Financial District.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

I see you have your map of Manhattan. Study it carefully and the job will be easier."

When David had completed the form, Mrs. Kepler took it into an adjoining office. The boys held their breath. In a couple minutes she returned smiling to say, "David, you have the job. Be here sharp at seven next Monday morning. Punctuality is very important here because there are large transactions that can't wait. We will start you for a couple weeks on a provisional basis. If you do well, it will be permanent. Don't forget-- seven A.M. sharp, Monday." She gave him a slip of paper with the hour and date hurriedly dashed off. The boys thanked her, waiting until they were on the street to break out into laughter, slapping one another on the back before the startled glances of busy passers-by.

Since it was early afternoon, they decided to proceed to the Reisfeld Bookshop near Fourteenth. Emma had given them the address. They discussed how to get there. It looked fairly far on the map. When they bought hotdogs from a vendor, he told them they could take the I. R. T. Subway near Trinity Church. With some help from people along the way, they learned about that system and

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

managed to get out at the right stop. Here were book stores and delicatessens, German and Jewish and German-Jewish, where odors and mis-spelled signs proclaimed the mouth-watering specialties--Knish, Knödels, Schmierkäse, Bagels, Wurst, chicken soup mit Mehlklösse.

Jo and David were tempted but had learned to husband their slim resources, so they stoically proceeded to the Reisfeld Bookshop, small among its neighbors.

There, waiting on a customer, was the old man in a gray smock, his straggly gray hair escaping from a black silk cap. Abraham had black sateen oversleeves held in place by elastic bands. His round bi-focals had slipped a bit down his aquiline nose. He was thin, stooped, and wore an old-fashioned wing collar. Behind his counter was an ornate brass cash register and a small gas ring with a battered, blackened aluminum coffee pot and a box of wooden matches.

Books were everywhere, shelves climbing to the high tin ceiling back to the dim recesses of the shop. Ladders stood here and there, and tables loaded with more books. Nothing had seen paint in this century.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

When the customer left, the boys introduced themselves. "It is Herr Reisfeld, ja? I am Josef Goldsmith and this is my brother David. We were Goldschmidt last week but we're going to become Americans so now we are Goldsmiths! You have heard about us, I'm sure, since we are staying with Gretchen and Stanley Maynard. Gretchen had us come down to talk with Emma. We are refugees from Stuttgart where the Nazis have arrested six of our family.

"We need jobs and hope to go to the university. Emma has helped us tremendously all in one day. She sent us to Nassau Street where David got a job one hour ago, and she told us to hurry here because you needed an assistant in your shop. We speak German, English and French with a smattering of Italian and Spanish and Dutch. We've been living in London for about six months before coming here. We completed the Gymnasium but the Nazis would not allow us to enter college so we worked in Düsseldorf for a few months in a metal firm, then got to London."

Herr Reisfeld was smiling, frowning and nodding, "Ach, Schrecklich! Sehr gut! Ja! So! But young man, you must use the first person singular. You must say, 'I speak three languages.' It is you who seeks the job, ja, since already David has a job, nicht wahr?"

They all laughed. "David always let's me do the talking, so I usually talk for both of us--but yes, it is I who hope to be your assistant."

The old man sighed, but smiled. "I am getting now so old that the eyes, ears, joints, all those things, don't work so well. I have not so much energy. I have been warned not to climb the ladders because I have not such good balance. Business, strangely, has been good in this shop even though they say we are again back in the depression. I do a lot of business by mail. Emma has been prodding me to hire a young person und this year I can afford it although I can't pay much. Could you work for thirty dollars a week? There's a lot of moving books about so it takes a strong back, but also it needs the brains, ja? You must address und mail many packages. The Schreibmaschine, ja, you can run it?" He pointed at an old Woodstock.

"Gut, already you have been introduced to me since this moment Emma has called on the telephone. Emma und Gretchen und Stanley und Hanna alle, have said you were good boys und to you I must give a job!"

In this way, somewhat unbeknownst to Buddy, the boys got jobs. They rented Gretchen's old room which was the larger, and would pay Emma thirty dollars a month.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Buddy was impressed with their initiative and dispatch. He and Josef had a lengthy conversation one of the last evenings at River House. Josef insisted that they must pay all their expenses incurred in London and after, so he wanted an accounting and wanted to sign a promissory note to be business-like.

Buddy said, "Oh, the British are curiously relaxed about such things. We may not get a statement from Sir Rodney before New Year, but we can make a rough estimate. Let's add up the outlays as you remember them." They got a total of 350 pounds. Buddy said they must add a commission for the English firm. "Let us say 400 pounds at the most, altogether. The pound fluctuates but let us say \$4.05 per pound. That makes \$1620 altogether for both of you. I think that's a pretty good bargain for two bright young boys for America!"

"Now let me explain something that I've been thinking about concerning you and David. Some time ago, we set up a sort of foundation with the purpose of helping impecunious students get through college. We call it the Reisfeld Scholarship Fund--named for Gretchen's father. It functions at several schools including New York University where you want to go."

186

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"It works this way: The Fund advances \$1000 to a student for each of four years of college. He must remain in the top twenty percent of his class and he has to have a job or other income since \$1000 by itself is not sufficient. However, it makes possible what would otherwise not be possible. Further, when the student finishes college he undertakes to repay the \$4000 without interest when he is able to do so.

"Since some of these earlier students have started to repay their loans, there is enough money in the Fund to get you and David into New York University, and we can consider your London expenses as a preliminary--(getting you to school as it were), and not to be repaid until after you graduate and start making a good income."

When Josef started to protest that they had no right to this benevolence and should by rights earn their own way, Buddy raised his hand and shushed, "Sir Rodney was right when he told you 'Don't look a gift horse in the mouth.' Is there an equivalent for that in German? Anyway, it means 'accept the gift and be thankful.' Syntax is mysterious, but I once had a Belgian teacher of French who told the class one day, 'When you get a gift do not look into the mouth of the horse!' Does that

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

sound funny to you? Our class roared with laughter and the professor could not imagine what he had said to cause the outburst."

Josef looked puzzled, but in later years when he was more comfortable with English, he often enjoyed saying to Buddy, "Do not look into the mouth of the horse! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

To ease the path for the boys, Buddy telephoned the the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences who knew of the Reisfeld Scholarships and was eager to cooperate. The dean told Buddy there would be some entrance examinations which he was certain the boys could survive since the German Gymnasium had not yet been totally destroyed by the Nazis. "The boys are undoubtedly as well prepared as American prep-school boys."

In mid-September Josef and David proudly became students at New York University. Josef's work schedule was easily adjusted to allow for his classes. As for David, Mrs. Kepler made difficulties saying he asked for a job and should therefore be prepared for work any hours.

Emma thereupon phoned Mr. Feldstein himself, to explain the problem. Mr. Feldstein, (a wealthy descendant

of a Jewish great-grandfather who had come to America in 1849), had helped set up the Jewish Rescue Agency and was one of its principal benefactors. He knew Emma well, had often had lunch with her and was even thinking of her as a suitable replacement for his late wife who had expired the previous year.

Emma urged, "Please don't make any trouble for Mrs. Kepler so she will hold some sort of grudge, but can you make David Goldsmith's schedule so that he can attend his classes in Washington Square? He's your new runner. His classes are from three to seven each afternoon. I take a personal interest in him since he and his brother have rented a room in my apartment. We really must help these boys in every way because the Nazis have arrested all their family and they're quite alone here."

Mr. Feldstein answered, "I've seen him--yes--he's a good boy. I had no idea you knew him. Of course we can fix it. We want our boys to get through college. We'll start him at six A.M. and he'll be out at two. That gives him time to grab lunch on the way to school. If that doesn't work, we could try part-time."

David didn't know why Mrs. Kepler became so friendly, but his schedule was arranged as he had hoped.

In October Gretchen gave two hundred dollars to Hanna who was going downtown to meet the Goldsmith boys on Saturday. "Take them to Macy's and buy each a fleece-lined coat, a woolen stocking cap, and some warm gloves. Tell them it came from you. If they protest, tell them it gets plenty cold here in winter and they better not 'look into the mouth of the horse!'" Gretchen and Hanna had heard Buddy's joke. "Tell them when they graduate from college, that will be all the thanks you need."

In such little ways the Maynards, the Reisfelds and Hanna Bocklin kept watch over the young Goldsmith boys, becoming their surrogate family in the New World. When the boys received their bachelor's degrees in June of 1941, they had become thoroughly Americanized though they still awaited their citizenship papers. Then, with some of their classmates, they volunteered for the burgeoning U. S. Army as the country feverishly prepared itself for a great confrontation with the Axis Powers.

The Maynard Estate remained like a solid rock in the pre-war years. Early in August 1937, Porter Lumsden, Hunt's priceless, insightful associate, had warned that they must once again, as in 1929, liquidate their stock holdings. Buddy was peripherally aware of this activity. Hunt reacted quickly this time without soul-searching. By mid-August the Estate stock portfolio had been trimmed to the bone, not to be re-constituted until June 1938 when stock prices started rising once more. In these months of unyielding

depression and renewed New Deal pump priming, their money was gathering little interest, but the principal was safe in banks and other harbors.

BUNDLES FROM HEAVEN AND GOD KNOWS WHERE

With her fine sense of historic timing, Gretchen bore a second son on September first, 1939, when the headlines screamed of Hitler's invasion of Poland which launched World War II.

Buddy, seeing how red the new-born child was, said, "He looks like Eric the Red or some other red--maybe Earl Browder or Karl Marx!" So the child was named Eric Karl Maynard, but to avoid a scene they didn't tell Madge where the name came from. Eric the Red got a blue carriage like his older brother.

On an Indian summer morning in November 1939, Gretchen and Hanna took the two little boys in their carriages for an airing. As they walked along Sutton Place, they noticed a round bundle on the step of one of the beautiful, brick Georgian townhouses. Then they heard a muffled cry. Hanna looked closer. "Oh Gretchen, just see here! It's a baby! And pretty cold here on the step! It has a bottle, but all cold!"

Gretchen approached. "Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear! Such a sweet, tiny brown-eyed thing! It can't belong to this house. It must be abandoned! She picked up the creature in its ragged and soiled cotton blanket. "There, there," she hummed and hugged it. "It's going to be all right, little thing!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

She took the warm milk bottle from Eric (who was asleep), to give to the foundling.

"Let's just ring the door bell to see if these people know anything about it!" She rang twice. In a moment a uniformed housekeeper opened the door.

Gretchen began, "Excuse me but I'm Mrs. Stanley Maynard-- we live in River House. We were walking by when we discovered this baby on your doorstep. I'm sure it must be abandoned.

The gray-haired housekeeper listened with dismay and incredulity. "Just a moment, I'll call Miss Glamorgan. Miss Anita Glamorgan owns this house." The housekeeper disappeared then returned with her mistress whose piercing brown eyes, regal bearing and impeccable attire announced that she was one of New York's grande dames. She reminded Gretchen of the Queen Mother Mary. She had a double string of pearls reaching to the waist of her matronly figure where the flesh was held in check by the finest corsets money could buy.

When Miss Glamorgan heard the story of the infant, she invited them all in. They brought the perambulators and the foundling into one of the drawing rooms where Miss Glamorgan took the baby in her arms for a minute. "My, we haven't held such a little creature for a long, long time. Oh, it's so cold. Mrs. McAuliffe, get that little pink woolen baby blanket from the Saruk bedroom." To the visitors she remarked, "The bedrooms are named for their carpets. If

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

we were to move the carpets, we should have to change the names of the rooms!" She smiled warmly, quite changing her forbidding presence.

"Now what shall we do about this child? This is one of the hazards of living so near the poor in their tenements. We've been here for fifteen years and we've seen several abandoned babies in this block. The poor mothers must hope that wealthy people will take their children in. Of course, it doesn't usually work that way. We call the police and the welfare people and the babies are taken away--who knows where? We have endowed some orphan homes, but they are always full and it's not an ideal solution, is it?

"Would you like some coffee? Mrs. McAuliffe, please have cook send in some coffee and coffee cake for four people. These other two babies we presume are yours, Mrs. Maynard? How proud you must be. Beautiful children! Both boys, yes? Those ultra-marine baby carriages tell the story. But this other little mite?"

Hanna was wrapping the baby in the pink woolen blanket. She peeked at its bottom. "It's a little girl, Miss Glamorgan, and I think it can't be over two months old. But just see, I think she's smiling at us!"

"So you live in River House, Mrs. Maynard? We watched them build it about ten years ago. We were tempted to move there since we have an old friend, Lydia Burbury, who lives there. Do you know her? The apartments are so beautiful, but here

of course we have the terraces and the garden, so we try to make do don't we, Mrs. McAuliffe? Many of our friends have moved into apartments, but we're old-fashioned. We do often see Mr. Astor sail by in his white yacht. He ties up at River House.

"Now then, we suppose we have no choice but to call the police--though it does seem heartless." Everyone looked somber.

Gretchen had taken the foundling from Hanna. She looked at its helpless, minuscule form--so vulnerable, so dependent. A tempting morsel for a bird of prey--no more. Like a bolt of lightning she knew what she must do. "Miss Glamorgan, since no one seems to want this child, I would like to take her home. She would round out my family nicely, don't you think? We will have to talk with the police and the authorities, yes, and I'll have to persuade my husband, but truth is, I love this little thing already. We have everything the baby needs, so why not? One more baby can't put us in the poor house, do you agree, Hanna?"

Miss Glamorgan was smiling her most philanthropic smile. "You're quite sure about this? It's an important decision. Then too, they may track down the mother and you might have to return the infant."

In a few moments Miss Glamorgan and Gretchen had exchanged cards, agreeing that Gretchen would take the baby home and in an hour both would call the police.

Soon after, Gretchen and Hanna brought the three babies home to River House where Buddy lay on a sofa reading some bit of esoterica . . . about the 'patient Griselda.'

"See what we found out in the street, Buddy my love! It's a little girl abandoned on a doorstep in Sutton Place. It was Miss Glamorgan's house. She was kind to us and quite willing for us to have the baby though of course it wasn't hers. We agreed to call the police in an hour. Buddy, I want to keep this child. What do you think? She's about the same age as Eric. We could get one of those prams made for twins. It would be no extra trouble at all and the boys could have a little sister. What's more natural than that?"

Buddy, half-smiling, half-pensive, picked up the mite, hefting and cradling it. "She is a little thing. I doubt if she weighs half as much as Eric, but then he has had all the advantages you might say." Another baby in the family was serious business, but Gretchen almost never asked for anything for herself. Gretchen had good sense and this baby certainly was appealing! "She does need a place to live. Yes, let's keep her if we can!" As Gretchen gave Buddy a delighted hug and kiss, the phone rang. It was Miss Glamorgan who asked if she might come over right away.

"Please do," Gretchen responded. "Buddy, Miss Glamorgan is coming here in a few minutes."

"Oh my gosh," Buddy cried out, "You know who she is don't you? She's from one of the most famous rich families in America, and she's always paying for all sorts of things-- new city parks, new wings on the museums, there's the Glamorgan Foundling Hospital up in the east eighties! Gosh, I better comb my hair! The Glamorgan School for the Deaf!"

Buddy ran into their bedroom to tidy up for this state visit.

Gretchen and Hanna, who had already run the gauntlet and found it not so difficult, and amused by his excitement, busied themselves bathing, powdering, oiling and changing the new baby, whose proportions, though tiny, were all appropriate. She had all the requisite legs, toes, fingers, eyes etc. She seemed to be a complete, healthy baby with smooth, unchafed skin. Her swaddling clothes, though ragged, were clean. Someone had cared for her.

Buddy returned in jacket and tie. "The Glamorgan Craft School for Women! We have to take that baby to the pediatrician. We want her to be as healthy as possible. Some of the poor children develop frightful diseases because of conditions in the tenements--eczema, malnutrition, rickets, colic, cholera, measles, polio, skin rashes, T. B.--things like that! Oh, look at her! She seems just perfect." He turned her over on the blanket then raised her overhead. She appeared pleased, gurgling and slobbering.

Gretchen squealed, "All those diseases! Buddy you've been listening to your mother's wild ideas!"

Miss Glamorgan arrived in a half hour. With her was a second lady--short, plump, clad entirely in black with serviceable black walking shoes and an Empress Eugenie hat such as that worn by Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

296

"This is Miss Dora Endicott. Miss Endicott is director of our foundling hospital. The minute you left our house, we called her to ask her to take a taxi down here so we might give you a visit." Miss Glamorgan, accustomed to command, attacked the problem head-on. "Mr. Maynard, how pleasant to meet you! How do you feel about keeping this child? Mrs. Maynard, you haven't had second thoughts? No? Well then, Miss Endicott and I know perfectly well how these things go. We've gone through it all dozens of times haven't we Dora?

"We haven't called the police or the welfare people yet, but when they are notified, they will instigate a search for the baby's mother and there is a good bit of bureaucratic nonsense--some good, some bad. What we like to do is place babies in good, nurturing homes as quickly as possible. That's why we are here--acting as social workers, and we might point out, social workers with a good deal of experience! We met Miss Endicott years ago when we volunteered at the Henry Street Settlement. We were trained by Miss Wald, herself! Wasn't that 1902, Dora?

"We're keeping our eyes open here, as you may notice. This is a beautiful apartment--your view is better than ours since you are so high. You have space and clean air, and just see all those books beckoning! Don't think we haven't recognized those engaging Childe Hassam paintings though he's not in our area of expertise. We see no dust in the corners, no stains on the piano." She ran her white-gloved fingers

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

along the curve of the Steinway. "Who plays this instrument? You, Mr. Maynard? Give us, if you please, three minutes of Bach, or your choice!"

Buddy felt very much like a schoolboy being prodded by a mad, domineering teacher, but he played a bit of the Prélude and Fugue in C Minor. Miss Glamorgan swayed her head and left hand in contrapuntal entente, her sharp brown eagle's eyes momentarily glazed in abstract reverie.

"Charmante! Yes, indeed! Thank you Mr. Maynard. Don't waste that talent! We have heard artists at Carnegie Hall who played less well! Now, however, we must settle this business before us. We see the baby all clean and toasty in that laundry basket." She felt the bottle which was warm. "The milk is warm, the baby is happy and asleep." She started a self-guided tour of the apartment. Returning, "The bathroom and the kitchen sink are clean. The closets are neat. What do you think, Dora? Truth is, we have considerable influence with the authorities who, in any case, are there to do our bidding and would probably send this baby to our foundling hospital.

"Let us therefore call the police, explain all the circumstances and recommend that the baby remain with you for eventual adoption. If they follow our recommendation as they commonly do, it will save a lot of shuffling about for the baby and get her quickly into a good home. May we use your phone?"

THE TUSCAN VILLA / R. L. Merritt

When she made the call, the police arrived quickly since this was not the ordinary kind of summons. In a trice the police deferentially agreed to Miss Glamorgan's plan and departed.

When they were gone, Miss Glamorgan relaxed sufficiently to apologize for her peremptory manner. "You must forgive us if we appear overbearing or dictatorial. It's a method of operation we learned from our father. We usually get our way. We see things that must be done and we do them!

"Dora and I will walk back to our house now. Keep that little pink blanket. It's been pleasant meeting you. We'll keep an eye on this baby." She shook her right index finger at them--an unspoken admonition that hygiene must never be neglected.

Buddy and Gretchen conducted the great lady and her companion to the elevator then returned to collapse with hysterical glee on the sofas. Buddy caught his breath. "Did you hear all that royal we stuff? I guess it comes naturally to her. Her father and brother have been the greatest financiers in the history of this country! They hob-nob with royalty. There is the Glamorgan Bank down on Wall Street opposite Brown Brothers, and the Glamorgan Library--stuffed with treasures--your father would have loved it! We'll go down for a visit--you must see it. Wasn't she like a locomotive plowing through this apartment? One would have

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

to be brave or foolhardy to stand up to her! Lucky she was on our side! Lucky our sink was clean!"

This was the way they got their daughter. The child, adopted in due course, was named Griselda Glamorgan Maynard because that morning Buddy had read the story of the 'patient Griselda' in Geoffrey Chaucer's Clerk of Oxenford's Tale. He was comparing it with an earlier Italian version in Boccaccio's Decameron and a Latin version by Petrarch that Chaucer had used. Buddy had heard somewhere that the German dramatist, Gerhart Hauptmann, had also used this story, but he hadn't yet found that among Dr. Reisfeld's books, although some of the books with marginal annotations and inserted notes indicated Dr. Reisfeld's special interest in the Griselda story on which he may have been preparing a paper in Jena. Tied together with string were Quellen des Dekameron (Sources of the Decameron) Die Griseldis-sage in der Literatur-geschichte (The Griselda Legend in Literary History), and Der Griseldisstoff in der Weltliteratur (Griselda Subject Matter in World Literature). In this manner the dead teacher of Jena had a part in naming his grandchild.

Often, to Gretchen's amusement, Buddy would spend a day or two in some such recondite endeavor which seemed to her of no importance whatsoever, but which, nonetheless, endeared him the more to her since it reminded her of her scholarly, beloved father.

Griselda was perfectly healthy as the pediatrician soon told them. The police never found her mother, since there were no clues to follow and abandoned babies were distressingly plentiful in New York. Miss Glamorgan did keep an eye on them. When Gretchen suckled both babies, the tiny girl quickly bonded with her new mother.



Richard Lee Merritt
4428 23rd St.
San Francisco, CA 94114-3114

THE TUSCAN VILLA / R. L. Merritt

300

For the Maynards life was pleasant in those last pre-war years, though always tempered by the black, threatening headlines of Axis victories. Franco conquered Barcelona in January. In March Germany overran Czechoslovakia and in April, Albania fell to Mussolini. In August, the Hitler-Stalin Pact cleared the way for the German invasion of Poland and the outbreak of World War II.

1939
That summer, everybody went several times to see the wonders at the World's Fair at Flushing. Everybody read Grapes of Wrath and everybody saw Good Bye Mr. Chips and Dark Victory at the movies. Buddy discovered he could walk all the way to Wall Street since he had the time, needed the exercise, and enjoyed the urban scenery.

Several times they rented a car to drive to Lake Placid, also taking Emma or the Goldsmith boys. Once they persuaded Uncle Abraham to close his shop for a week so he and Joe Goldsmith could go to the cabin. This was Abraham's first-ever vacation, made especially enjoyable since Bobby Townsley, thinking his Reisfeld Scholarship came somehow from this frail, tattered old man, took Abraham and Joe rowing, horse-back riding, picnicking and fishing.

Bobby, a quintessential back-woods, All-American boy, found fascinating these German immigrant urbanites with their vestigial accents and European background.

Joe, on the other hand, patterned his speech and movements after Bobby. Joe, more than anything, wanted to be an American

through and through--even a cowboy like Gary Cooper, though he understood he was too intellectual for that. He wanted to shed his European persona. There were times in Manhattan when he found himself following and unconsciously mimicking the easy, careless stride of fellow students, boys he considered real Americans--the way they dressed, carried their books or talked to the girls. Many of the students were not American-born but there was no doubt about Bobby Townsley.

The two boys quickly became fast friends. Later that summer Bobby took off several days from his Forest-Preserve summer job to come down to the city to sleep at Emma's apartment and go with the Goldsmith boys out the Long Island Railway from Penn Station, fare: ten cents on the World's Fair train.

1940 slipped by. The war crept closer. Senator Burton K. Wheeler and Colonel Charles Lindbergh passionately led the America-First group and the Isolationists who sought to keep America out of the war with, of course, the embarrassing support of Fritz Kuhn and the American Nazis. The Roosevelt Administration was frantically re-building the tiny armed forces. The draft was re-imposed. In June 1941 after graduation, both the Goldsmith boys volunteered for the U. S. Army. They had some thoughts of settling scores with Hitler. They were sent to Officers' Candidate School in Texas, receiving their citizenship when they became second lieutenants.

The Pearl Harbor attack united the country. At Brown Brothers some of Buddy's associates entered the armed forces as field-grade officers. Buddy got a call one day from an old college friend of Hunt's. "This is Ethan Allen Somerset. Your father and I were in Dartmouth together. I met you one time in Cedar Rapids when you were about three years old but you won't remember that. I have some important business to discuss with you. Could you meet me at the University Club at Fifty-fourth Street tomorrow at 10 A.M.?" The meeting was set.

Next day, Buddy entered the beautiful palazzo on Fifth Ave., to be directed to a group of leather easy-chairs facing a warm hearth. Awaiting him was Ethan Allen Somerset in the uniform of a brigadier general.

"I have some coffee here--what would you like, coffee, chocolate, Scotch? Coffee? Fine. You wonder what this is all about, I can see that. I won't waste time. The country is in a great crisis as you know. We have some very powerful enemies and we are woefully ill-prepared. We'll probably win out in the end since we have resources, industry, know-how and an enterprising population, but it's not going to be easy and it's not going to be quick. We are just at the beginning of building up our armed forces and marshaling our strength." The bald, rotund, little general rolled his blue eyes around to make sure no one was listening.

" Maybe you are wondering how we can win this war with such an old, portly general? I'm sixty-four, old and fat for

the army, but Headquarters says that in this job experience is more valuable than youth!

"I'm working with an army intelligence unit in Washington which will be vastly expanded in the next few months. We're looking for officers who know foreign languages, who have traveled extensively and know first-hand the countries in the war zones. Your name has been suggested and I admit we have a file on you. We know you speak French and German fluently, that you lived in those two countries, and that your wife is German, but a refugee from Hitler. I know your father and your age, which is thirty-three.

"So, we know a lot about you, and I'm here to ask you to join us. It would have to be voluntary. Because of your age and your family, you probably won't be called in the draft. But we need you. There are not enough people with skills. Learning languages and geography takes time. We don't have much time. I'm asking you to volunteer for our unit and we'll see that you get through Officers' Candidate School--you'll be a ninety-day-wonder!" He beamed. "We can get you commissioned as a major and you will join us in Washington. After a planning stage anything might happen, but I expect we will be sent to Britain and on to the Continent when that is possible.

"Don't answer right now. Think about it. Talk with your wife about it. But your country really does need you! If we're going to whip Hitler and Tojo it's going to take everything we've got! Here's my card. Give me a call in a couple days!"

"By the way, you don't happen to know of any foreign-born

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

young men, especially German, French or Czech or Dutch--they would be useful to our operation."

Buddy talked about it that day with Gretchen. It wasn't really such a hard decision--it was something that had to be done, no alternative.

He phoned his father in Iowa. "Dad, can you get along without me for the duration? Your old college chum, Ethan Somerset, was here yesterday to recruit me! He's a general now and told me Uncle Sam can't get along without me. I never thought of myself as a warrior, but he says they have a group that badly needs people with language skills and assorted qualities he thinks I have. He's done research on me!"

"Gretchen says they can manage here--we're better off than most families with fathers going into the service--the rent's paid, there's food on the table and all that. I just wonder if the Maynard Estate is all under control? You're past retirement age now! How's the tower room?"

Hunt laughed. "Don't you worry any about us. The tower's fine. I'm only sixty-eight and as fit as your grandpa's fiddle. Porter's just sixty-two now. We can hold the fort all right. Everybody has to make adjustments to win this war. Our factories here are all switching over to war production--truck parts, radio equipment and all that."

"Say, how is old Somerset? He visited us here at the villa one time a long, long time ago. We used to call him "Eatin' Allen" at college. He was overweight but plenty smart."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

Buddy called General Somerset. In a few weeks he found himself suffering at an unpleasant OCS school in Georgia, dragging about through the winter rain and mud. Some little cheer came in letters from Gretchen who remained at River House with Hanna and the children.

In spring, as promised, he was commissioned as a major then assigned to the Washington unit that was soon transferred to the new Office of Strategic Services. The raison d'être of the group was to gather intelligence in Axis countries and foster resistance movements.

Buddy told General Somerset about the two Goldsmith boys who were native Germans but now officers in the U. S. Army. General Somerset had them tracked down to bases in California where, in the abstruse wisdom of the army, they were being trained for the invasion of Pacific islands. The Goldsmiths were promptly transferred to Washington, arriving dirty and tired from the trans-continental journey in hot, crowded trains. Joe arrived first, then David. Neither knew the other was there. They were mystified by their sudden transfer, having been told only when and where to report. Imagine then their delighted surprise to discover one another when they were directed one August morning to Room 305 of an old commandeered hotel on Avenue G.

"What's going on here?" David cried out as he hugged his brother. They were laughing with disbelief. An orderly had told them to wait here. "I got orders to come here but no idea what its all about!" They started to compare notes,

THE TUSCAN VILLA / R. L. Merritt

having been separated since O. C. S. They were both tanned, fit and handsome in their uniforms. "Hey, you're lookin' good, man," Joe said gleefully in careful proximation of G. I. talk.

At that moment, Buddy walked in smiling broadly. Their eyes fairly popped when they saw him, then with some confusion they jumped to attention and saluted.

"Forget that stuff," Buddy grinned, "I'm your Big Brother, remember?" He put them at ease and they began outlining their various experiences in the military. "We'll talk about all that later, but now this is why you are here. We have a new top-secret organization called the O. S. S.--the Office of Strategic Services. You will not discuss our work with unauthorized persons--that's of prime importance. Our goal is the total defeat of the Axis powers, especially the Nazis. That is why we need you and others with intimate knowledge of Germany and the German language. You will train here with us. We probably will be sent to England soon. The English are already supporting operations on the Continent to disrupt the Wehrmacht. We will join that effort and you may be asked to perform some very dangerous tasks."

The boys' belief that Buddy was a powerful person in American society was re-inforced by all this. Who could have rescued them from Europe as he had done; who could have army officers transferred across the country? The president, yes, perhaps a senator! Buddy was powerful and they were lucky to have him for a friend!

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

Early in September they had a few days leave in New York City before sailing on the Queen Elizabeth--the great liner converted to crowded troopship, painted with camouflage and too fast for convoys. In the River Clyde they disembarked to entrain for a base near Colchester in Essex near East Anglia.

This was their headquarters for the next two years until the invasion of Europe enabled them to move forward. Sometimes they didn't see each other for months. Buddy usually performed duties at Colchester or London, maintaining liaison with the British Special Operations Executive, interviewing informants or translating secret documents. A couple of times he successfully led missions to take radios and codes to the French Underground in Périgord. They parachuted from low-flying planes to a vineyard forty-five miles east of Bordeaux, in what was called Operation Eyquem. Buddy wanted to visit Montaigne's nearby château but reminded himself this was not a Grand Tour. Later, the Underground placed them on fishing boats to be picked up by the British navy.

The Goldsmith brothers had similar adventures, but more dangerous and complex, since they penetrated Nazi Germany itself. The resistance in Germany was fragile at best and brutally suppressed with murder and torture, but it was of exceptional value to the Allies who tried in every way to succor it.

These forays into enemy territory might be airborne from some of the nearby bases--Saffron Walden, Mildenhall or Honington, or sometimes they started in inconspicuous boats from the

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

little ports such as Clacton-on-Sea, Harwich or Felixstowe.

It was done differently each time for the Nazis also had their ever-alert informants.

One day in May of 1944 orders came for First Lieutenant David Goldsmith. He was to memorize certain complex instructions to be carried to Agent Wolfsjäger who had been an excellent source of information from inside the Reich, but whose dispatches had abruptly ceased two weeks before. The O.S.S. needed to know if Agent Wolfsjäger was still alive and why communication was broken off.

David had been chosen because this was his home territory. Before dawn, the British would severely bomb Stuttgart. When all the attention of the district was focused on Stuttgart, David would parachute into the Schurwald, a forest above Esslingen-am-Neckar several kilometers east. He must bury or conceal his parachute and all evidence, then dressed as a forest worker he was to make his way to a little country chapel called St. Wolfgang-ober-Neckar. He would talk with the old priest there, Vater Ludwig Lehrer, who could direct him to Agent Wolfsjäger. David would have Deutschmarks, food coupons, identity papers etc.

There were other instructions to follow if he could not find Father Ludwig, including how to find the difficult road he must follow to return to England. All had to be memorized. There must be nothing written for the Nazis to capture.

309

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

His instructions included several escape routes--one through the Dutch Underground, another to the French Underground at Strasbourg and perhaps the best--in Lindau on the Bodensee where an agent could take him by boat to the Swiss shore. Any course was fraught with extreme peril for the Nazis were determined and ruthless. Many good O.S.S. men had been lost in these ventures. To be captured meant almost certain death. David thought of his parents, of his siblings. No! He would not be captured! He would strike this blow against Hitler! He was twenty-three, full of youth, strength, and, he was no schlemiel! He smiled to himself as he thought of the Yiddish word he had learned in New York City.

He was excited about returning to the Stuttgart area he knew so well. As boys they had hiked the hills of the Schurwald. He had even talked with Father Ludwig in those days.

At midnight on the tenth he was on an R. A. F. bomber dressed somewhat shabbily as a German Waldarbeiter or woodsman, and carrying a Luftwaffe parachute and an old Rucksack with a German razor, some clothing and German candy bars and crackers. They had made certain everything was German from the boots up.

The bombers would form up, fly to Stuttgart to drop their bombs then return to Britain by dawn. This particular bomber would fly a couple minutes further east where he would jump, then the bomber would race to re-join its group. If all went well, David would descend in some recognizable part of the Schurwald.

340

THE TUSCAN VILLA / R. L. Merritt

At about 0230 hours they dumped the bombs. He could only vaguely see the blasts and flames in his hometown, for the planes were at a great altitude to escape the flak. A couple minutes more and a friendly gunner with a cockney accent opened a hatch. "Okay mate, this is it! Good luck!"

"Thanks, I'll need that," David hollered over the roar of the engines and the wind. He had locked the rip cord on his finger. Now he was tumbling through the blackness. He waited to be free of the plane then pulled the cord sharply. He felt the chute opening then the sudden arrest of his descent. This was almost pleasant after all the noise and turmoil--sort of like a womb, he thought--so quiet, so dark and the air so balmy! He could see some light in two directions--in the west Stuttgart was burning and in the east, the first hint of dawn. He floated down to land softly in some bushes. Righting himself, he reeled in the chute, unfastening the straps. Now he must hide it quickly. He had a small, portable Wehrmacht shovel for digging foxholes. He heard some restless birds twittering, some distant cowbells.

It was still too dark to see anything. He decided to walk twenty yards or so up a hillside to lie under a bush for a few minutes until he could see. Above all, he must hide the tell-tale chute. A cock crowed down the hill somewhere. Now he could make out the tower on a little country church. He crept toward a stone wall that enclosed the churchyard. If he could but see a new grave. Luck was with him. He found the gate,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

darting in. The gloom was dispelling. Here was a grave, quite new, the earth all piled loose and high. Quickly he dug a square hole, placing the spoil on the lower part of the grave. When the hole was a good thirty inches deep he jammed in the parachute, laying the shovel alongside, then with his hands he pushed the earth back over, packing and smoothing it all in place. There were half-full watering cans nearby. He reached in to wash his hands then watered the surface of the grave and two adjoining graves. Now no one could see that the ground had been disturbed.

Hearing a click at the iron gate, he crouched behind a tombstone. An old peasant woman walked slowly to a grave near the church door, watered some geraniums, seemed to sing a little song, crossed herself, then shuffled down the country road, dragging her worn pantoffles in the sand.

Now it was much lighter. He noticed the temporary wooden marker on his grave which said GÜNTHER WACHTER 1926-1944
Im Russland gefallen für Führer und Vaterland. David whispered, "I'm sorry Günther, you were too young to die. Keep watch over that chute for me, will you?"

He needed to determine where he was. Going to the front of the church he looked closely at the carved wooden sign then realized it was the little baroque Stephanskirche that he knew quite well, having passed it numbers of times in his boyhood. It was all familiar to him now as the light grew. He was about eight kilometers east of St. Wolfgang-ober-Neckar. He relieved himself against the stone wall, looking up and down the

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

narrow road. No movement anywhere. He drank some water from a hydrant. He could smell narcissus and other flowers decorating the graves ~~and also~~ the strong odor of German barnyards. Time to make tracks. Keep the Nazis guessing.

He was now a simple German woodsman going about his business. He strode rapidly toward St. Wolfgang, getting there just at sunrise. The chapel appeared deserted but smoke arose from the priest's stone quarters at the rear. Warily he approached. The old priest, clad in a frayed black cassock was spading a little garden plot by two blossoming apple trees.

"Grüss Gott, Vater," David said.

The old priest looked at him with some surprise. "Guten Morgen, mein Sohn, you are early. How may I help you?"

"Are you Father Ludwig Lehrer?"

"Ja, everybody knows me here! I've been here for fifty-five years. I'm too old to start a new career! But are you from our district?"

David, approaching him closely, whispered, "Father, I've come from a friend. I'm looking for Wolfsjäger."

The priest gave him a penetrating look, put down his shovel and said, "Come inside. Perhaps I can give you a bit of breakfast?" At the door an old, blind German shepherd padded over to welcome them, wagging his tail a bit and licking their hands before returning to his place by the stove.

"Some Hafergrütze, ja? We have also a little cream and ~~peppermint~~ Korn Kaffee. Now, how may I help you?" he asked a second time.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

David looked at him squarely and said, "Es ist nichts so fein gesponnen, es kommt doch an das Licht der Sonnen," which is an old proverb meaning roughly Truth will out or What snow conceals the sun reveals.

This was the password David must use to get Father Ludwig's cooperation. The old priest smiled. "We are in dangerous times. I think I have seen you before but we must not ask unnecessary questions."

David knew it was also best to not volunteer information in these dangerous times, but he couldn't forbear from telling the good old man, "Father, I was one of the boys who hiked these hills seven or eight years ago and you used to give us apples and let us drink at your well! You get big yellow apples out there, don't you?"

The priest smiled quietly again, "I remember now, but keep your own counsel my son. Reveal nothing. Der böse Feind-- the evil one lurks everywhere. You asked for der Wolfsjäger, ja? There is a farmhouse called Baumgartenhaus with its name carved into a balcony across the front. The house is painted white, has green shutters and stands at the right of this little side road out here exactly two kilometers north. Go there and ask for Gisela Hauptmann. She is a young woman. She can help you."

David thanked Father Ludwig--"May we meet again in happier times, Father." Their eyes met as they shook hands. The old dog beat his tail feebly on the floor when David gave him a

THE TUSCAN VILLA / R. L. Merritt

a farewell pat.

David slipped out the door and up the grassy lane. In half an hour he sighted the farmhouse where a young woman was hanging out laundry and several brown milk cows and calves were grazing. He went up to her and said, "Es ist nichts so fein gesponnen, es kommt doch an das Licht der Sonnen."

She dropped a wet towel on the grass and looked searchingly at him. Picking up the towel, she said, "Come inside." In the warm kitchen where pans of water heated on the stove and the clean smell of soap pervaded, she faced him. "What do you want? Why are you here?"

"I want to see Wolfsjäger."

She drew in her breath. "Ja, please sit here. I give you Kaffee, ja? On the table she put a cup, a coffee pot and a milk pitcher. She seemed uneasy, picking up and putting down some dishes then she left the room. In a couple minutes she returned. "Go to the second room on the right."

David arose, his heart pounding. The corridor and the room were dark with the shutters closed. There was a folding screen in the room. "Wolfsjäger, are you there?"

"What do you want? Where did you come from? Who are you?" The voice was low, nearly imperceptible. "There's a Luger here."

In this bizarre situation David whispered, "I am Schmidt. I come from England. We need to know what has happened to you. We have not heard from you for two weeks. You are very important to us. Are you Wolfsjäger? I have been sent to determine how we may help you." David kept thinking he knew

that mysterious voice.

What sounded like a sob came from behind the screen. "Ja, ich bin Wolfsjäger. Schmidt, I'm afraid our operation is shut down. We had seven people working for us. They've all been shot in the last fortnight. I think the S. S. will be here anytime now. Our radio is kaputt with no replacement parts. I'm going to try to get away--maybe tonight. Gisela will stay. She's been invaluable help but this is her farm and there's nothing to connect her with us except the radio and a couple personal things I have here which we can bury in the farmyard under the dung pile."

David said, "My name is Schmidt, Goldschmidt!" He was sure now he was talking with Aaron. The screen was pushed aside. An older Aaron, his hair graying, his face deeply lined, but certainly David's brother with his alert, black shining eyes, stood there holding a Luger. The two brothers, their mouths working with emotion, faced each other. Aaron placed the Luger on the bed before a tearful, back-pounding embrace. "Little Davy! Mein Gott, where did you come from?"

"Aaron, we were sure you were dead! So Aaron is Wolfsjäger!"

Aaron pulled him up short. "We have a thousand things to talk about but no time. No time at all. The S. S. won't wait. Here's what we must do. I've been planning it for some time. Each evening about five, a couple of Wehrmacht soldiers come racing down by here on a motorcycle with a sidecar. They go to the village for Schnaps. We better strike before the S. S. strikes! I've got a long piece of piano wire. We must stretch it across the road at neck level, anchor it well, and

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

they will do the rest. Rather like suicide, nicht wahr? Then we must very quickly bury the bodies and the radio under the dung heap. We will take their uniforms and their motorcycle and head for the Bodensee which is about one hundred fifty kilometers from here. There we have a contact who can get us across the lake to Switzerland."

David knew of that contact and hoped he was still there.

Aaron added, "We will take a little hose to siphon Benzin, and now let's go out and dig a very deep hole under the dung heap!"

They moved the dung aside and rapidly made a hole big enough for two Nazis, a radio, a safety razor and some bits of clothing. Aaron got the radio and all its appurtenances from the hayloft and buried it. Now they rigged up the piano wire, carefully measuring from the roadbed to neck height.

It worked like a charm. At five, the fat, happy Nazis raced down to get their Schnaps and were instantly and definitely decapitated. There was, of course, a good deal of disconcerting blood, but Aaron had prepared for that. The uniforms were stripped and soaked in cold water tubs while the Nazi bits and pieces were placed in their appropriate last resting place under the dung heap. The hole was rapidly filled and obliterated. It reminded David of burying his parachute only that morning, though already that seemed long ago.

The motorcycle, overturned, ditched, but miraculously undamaged and still roaring, had been mopped down with cold

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

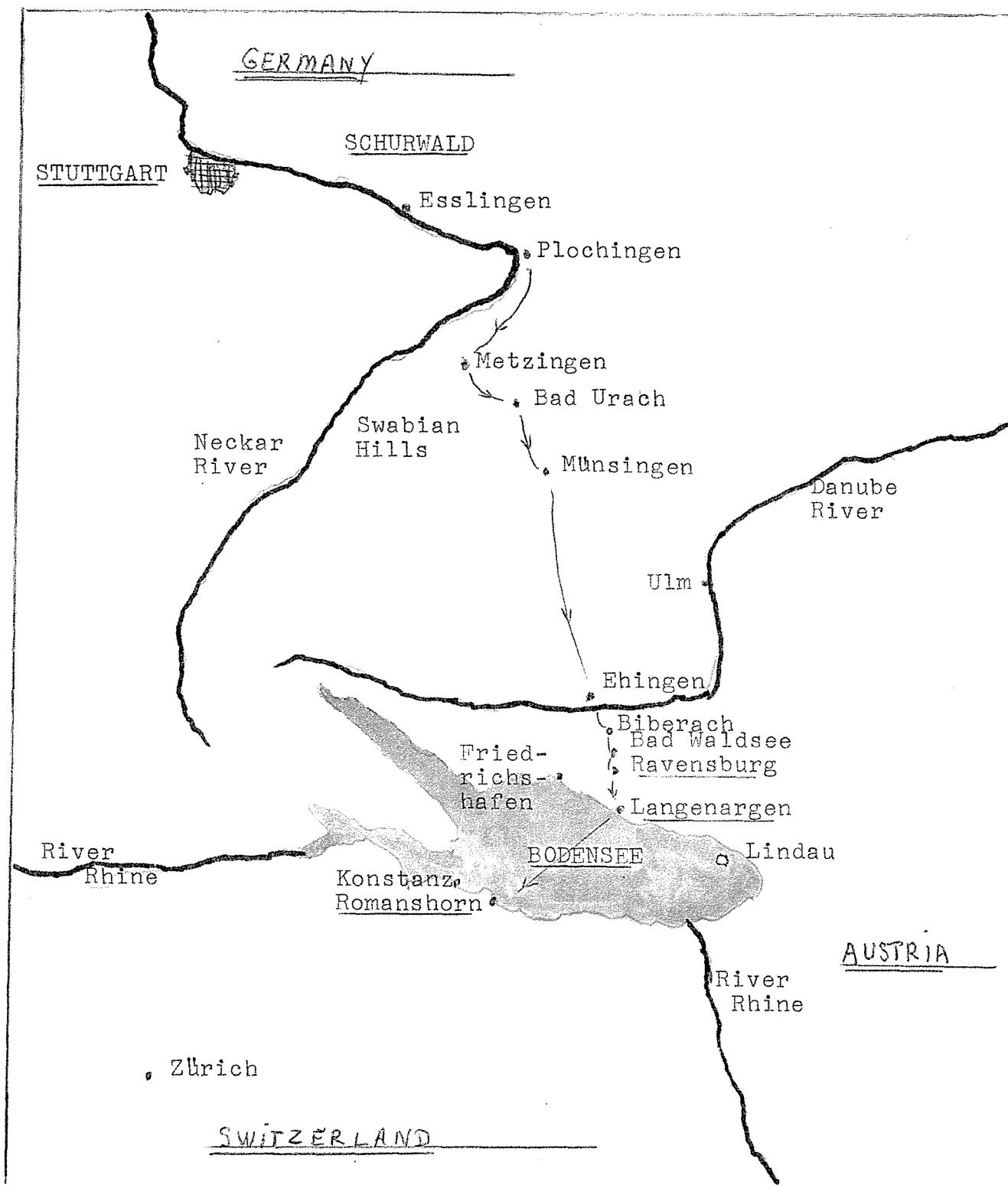
water then parked behind the barn. Aaron, ever resourceful, had sent Gisella to see her aunt so she wouldn't be upset by the day's activities. "She knows practically nothing about our work. Better to keep it that way--safer for her and safer for us too."

They finished rubbing the blood from the uniforms then rolled them in towels. They swept dirt over the blood on the road. They packed some bread, cheese and wine as well as the uniforms in the motorcycle which they then parked down the lane. When Gisela came home, everything was in order.

Aaron told her they had to go out on business and they walked down the lane waving good bye. At the motorcycle, they donned the Nazi uniforms, rolling up their own clothing in the bottom of the sidecar. Now they had four Lugers, some ammunition and a tank full of Benzin. They headed for the Bodensee at a hundred kilometers an hour. Better to be far away before questions were asked. They crossed the Schwäbische Alb to Biberach.

At about twenty-two hundred hours Aaron noticed that the tank was nearly empty. "Damn," he felt the bottom of the tank, "I think there's a little leak down here! We're going to have to get some Benzin." They were approaching Ravensburg, about thirty kilometers north of Lindau. There had been much bombing and a general blackout prevailed, but people learned to function. They happened to pass a Bierstube where twelve or fourteen cars were parked in a paved Parkplatz. An S.S. officer was standing smoking a cigarette near a Mercedes touring car. From the Bierstube came the raucous sound of beer-soaked revelry and toneless attempts at the Horst Wessel song.

after 317



Approximate escape route of Goldschmidt brothers
in May 1944, from Schurwald to Bodensee and thence
to Switzerland.

DEUTSCHLAND

1 p. 317

Schwarzwald - Hilly plateau Kuperbergland either

nor Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg, Teil des
Schwäbisch-Fränkisch-Schichtfelselandes,
in Kernen 513 m ü. M. Ober S. is now
5 resettlement districts; agricultural gardens

and Ditzbau; French Baroque villages
in den Stuttgarter Raum.
above the land
über dem Land

wooded, mountainous land east of
Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg, Part of
Schwäbisch-Franconia Forested Land

Kernen in Renatal 513 metres above

sea level.

Settlements are scattered
in the south; truck farms

and orchards; numerous

Stuttgart commutes.

Little wine valleys belong to Renatal.

In Esslingen many baroque
buildings give character

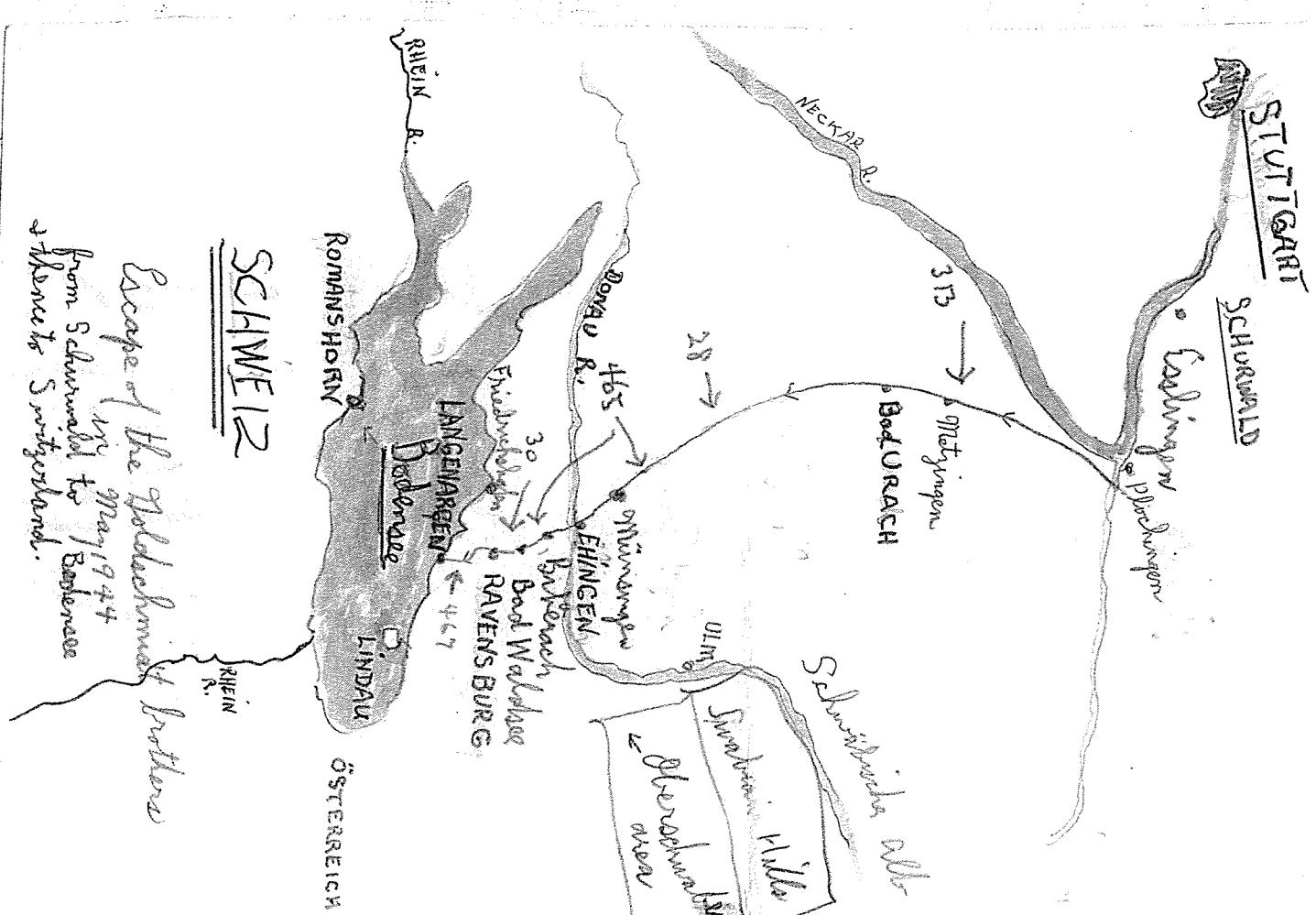
SCHWEIZ

Escape of the Goldschmid brothers

on May 1944

from Schwarzwald to Bodensee

then to Switzerland.



THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

Parking the motorcycle, Aaron reached for the siphon hose and told David to wait there. Aaron crept around the Mercedes behind the S. S. officer and with a practiced movement threw the hose over the head of the unsuspecting victim, throttling him in an instant.

Aaron whispered, "We can't wait for him to finish his cigarette or catch us stealing Benzin." They pulled the motorcycle near the Mercedes and quickly siphoned their tank full. The hose flipped free and Benzin ran down the paved slope under the officer's body and the adjacent cars. David started to retrieve the hose but Aaron said, "No, leave it. I've got an idea." They wheeled the cycle to the bottom of the parking place and waited.

"Let's get out of here," David hissed urgently.

"One second more," Aaron was looking at the pavement in the faint moonlight. When he saw a sparkling glint of Benzin trickling, he lighted and tossed a match, at the same moment starting and accelerating the cycle. One kilometer further from atop a hill, they looked back to see a very satisfactory bonfire of Nazi vehicles with explosions and frantic drunks.

"I hated to leave that hose," Aaron remarked, "It could still be useful, but we'll get to the lake pretty soon. We don't go all the way to Lindau--only to a fisherman's house near Langenargen. Lindau is an island town, remember? We used to go there in summer sometimes. It's easy for the Nazis to patrol. So our contact is more isolated. I've been there before."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

Near midnight, Aaron parked the motorcycle behind some bushes and told David to wait again. They had seen the moon glittering on the tranquil Bodensee and behind them a great torrent of bombs was being dropped on Friedrichshafen. Aaron walked down toward the shore.

David heard a door open and close. In a minute Aaron returned with another man. "Bring it this way," the man said, leading them to a boat house. They rolled the motorcycle onto a fishing boat.

"Es ist alles in Butter--all okay," Aaron muttered. "Now let's get out of these filthy uniforms." Quickly they changed into their own clothing, bundling and wiring the uniforms securely to the machine. "When we're out in the middle it's overboard with this little bit of evidence." The contact smiled grimly.

The contact now quietly said, "We start at three. You can both lie down for a couple hours. We'll take some sandwiches." He indicated a pile of straw and some horse blankets, then extinguishing his flashlight, he left them.

Before they dozed into a fretful sleep, Aaron told David, "He has a radio. He will talk with a fisherman near Romanshorn on the Swiss side. They meet out in the middle. We dump the cycle and transfer to the other boat. It's all simple and easy so long as the officials don't catch us. Even on the Swiss side it can be sticky because they are so concerned with their neutrality."

At three, they helped their taciturn host push the old

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

vessel out into the lake. The diesel coughed, then started. They moved offshore. The host said, "We're lucky today--all the S.S. and the Wehrmacht are over in Friedrichshafen doing rescue work." After thirty minutes when no other boats were in sight, they heaved the cycle overboard.

Near four, a brightly-painted boat approached. It was the Süsswasser from the Thurgau side. When the boat drew alongside, the brothers jumped over, calling their thanks to their German host. He raised his hand, surprised them with a Churchillian V for Victory sign, then headed back to Germany.

Before five, their new Swiss boatman, young as themselves, prosperous and sportily dressed in yellow canvas trousers and jacket, had conducted them to his base which appeared to be a tourist resort with a terrace of tables and gaily-colored umbrellas. Leading them into a separate stone cottage with two narrow beds covered with bright chintz, he asked, "What now?"

Aaron answered, "We have to talk this over. We've been in too big a hurry to even think about it. Could you leave us here for an hour or two so we can think of something?"

When the Swiss was gone, David slapped his hands together, "By golly we made it! You are some tourist guide! But now you better let me take over. I have specific instructions all in my head and not written down, about what to do when we get to Switzerland. We're about fifty kilometers from Zurich. The Americans have a consulate there and there is an attaché named Bromley Garrett who takes care of little matters for the O. S. S. We must phone him and he will

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

smooth our way, so to speak. I have his phone number. With our host's permission we will phone the consulate about 9 A.M. and lay low here until Garrett can take over." Aaron was satisfied with this plan.

The Swiss man returned with a generous tray of Frühstück and excellent, rich Kaffee. "Ja, natürlich, you can use the telephone--it's in the reception room."

In this way, the Goldschmidt boys escaped Hitler's madhouse. Bromley Garrett drove his Renault over from Zurich to arrange everything for them. He gave them money and all appropriate papers. When the O.S.S. in Colchester was notified of their escape to Switzerland, it responded that they should take a well-deserved leave, since departing from Switzerland just now would also be hazardous.

The boys decided to go to a little hotel in Spiez on the Thunersee where their family had often gone in their childhood. "Remember old Frau Schwingli? She had been there forever! She knew how to run a hotel, all right!"

The brothers stayed for almost two months at the Hôtel des Alpes where ancient Frau Schwingli, recalling their family visits, and hearing the shocking story of the Goldschmidts, did everything in her power to welcome them. They had two picturesque little crooked, low-ceilinged rooms with quaint dormers looking across geranium boxes down to the castle and lake. For the first time they had leisure to review their adventures of the past seven years.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

"Joe and I are both first lieutenants in the U. S. Army and we're both citizens of the U.S.A! Hanna will be this year too. She had to wait five years. We all might even get to vote for Roosevelt in the November election!

"When you left us in Rotterdam, we went on to Uncle Fritz in London. We were sure you were lost forever. Then Hanna and mama and the children got to Baden-Baden on their way to Paris but the S.S. arrested mama there. They didn't want Hanna so she went on to Paris and got to New York. Hanna kept looking for us and finally located us. We have a special friend, a wealthy American who is Hanna's employer, and they managed to get Joe and me to New York and they managed to get us through college too! A lot of things happen in seven years. We love America. You'll have to come over --that's where your family is now, or at least will be when the war is over."

They were sitting on the hotel terrace on a lazy, warm pleasant morning. Aaron looked thoughtfully at the orchards and meadows with their Bauernhäuser spread below, and at the majestic Bernese Oberland peaks gleaming in the south.

"Germany is finished but doesn't know it. And the Jews are finished in Germany, I guess. We were never all that Jewish but the S.S. thought we were. So we're finished in Germany--still, I may go back just as a gesture of defiance to Hitler. Gisela was more than just my landlady. We loved each other, but it was all very clandestine. I was there only sporadically and never openly. We learned to be nonchalant and keep our

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

emotions strictly under control, never knowing when the Polizei would come smashing through the door. Once in a while we talked about how it might be after the war.

"I haven't told you yet how I found things in Stuttgart in 1937. When I got there, I found a Herr Kriminaldirektor had moved his family into our house with all of our belongings still there--just took over everything! Imagine them sleeping in our beds; their filthy hands on our most precious things--on mama's silver hair brushes that came from Grandma Elsner; on Joe's books, and even going through our chests in the attic where we had our childhood keepsakes like little Monika's shell collection from Bad St. Peter!

"And remember how mama and Hanna set out that row of rose bushes along the driveway? You were pretty small then. They had General Jacqueminot--that was red, and they had Frau Karl Druschki--that was white. The bushes loved that spot, they got so large, and the neighbors used to come to admire them in season. Mama said they reminded her of Grandma Elsner's garden.

"So what did the Herr Kriminaldirektor do? He had them all chopped down along with the big lilac bush, so he could park cars there." Furtively, Aaron brushed tears of fury from his eyes.

"They had posted a guard so I dared not go close, but I walked by one morning and saw the feather quilt that mama made thrown over a balcony for airing. Someone was pounding on the piano. The door was open and I saw an officer chasing a girl in a negligee--shrieks of laughter. They were drunk--having

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

a Schwelgerei, a debauchery, at ten in the morning!

"Then I went underground and was ordered to stay out of Stuttgart where I could so easily be recognized. Hanna's brother, Gerhardt, was with us for a while, but he got shot, and that's a good way to go in this business. Most of the early ones are dead. There were communists too. They hated Nazis as much as anybody. We learned a lot from them, especially about organizing a secret, revolutionary underground. One mustn't think about anything but the goal. Our goal was to impede and defeat the Nazis and total secrecy was our only defense. Everybody assumed a different identity which could change to meet the circumstances. We were in little cells with almost no knowledge of who else was in the organization.

"You see why I dared not write to you in Rotterdam or London. We were so few, so isolated, so alone, and our mortality rate was high. Somehow we held out and when the British entered the war, they contacted us and helped in some small ways. Then, at least, we knew we were not alone anymore in the struggle against Hitler.

"I found that papa, then mama and the three children were all sent to Dachau. In 1941 a man escaped from there and joined our group. He told me he heard that Dr. Goldschmidt died at Dachau and that Dr. Goldschmidt's family had been herded with many others onto a train of boxcars headed for a 'work camp' in Poland. I'm sure they are all dead now."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

At Spiez, the boys heard of the Normandy landings. One day orders came for them to meet in Geneva a representative of the French Maquis who would conduct them across occupied France to the Allied bridgehead. They were delayed several times by the disruptions of war. The Allies were heavily bombing the bridges, railroads and marshaling yards, while the German army was moving forces up to contain and destroy the bridgehead. The brothers were passed along secret backroads by the French Underground to the tiny port of Cancale from which a Breton fishing boat audaciously delivered them across the Bay of St. Michel to Granville in General Bradley's area very late in July and on the eve of the Allied breakout at Avranches. After being closely interviewed by army intelligence on the spot, they were promptly returned by plane to Colchester.

There, Aaron was re-united with Joe and met Stanley Maynard for the first time. Stanley, now a lieutenant colonel, de-briefed the brothers, eliciting all possible important information from them that could help the military effort. They noticed that he carefully wrote down the pass-word proverb in a little pocket notebook. Es ist nichts so fein gesponnen es kommt doch an das Licht der Sonnen. "That's very good, I can use that!" He was saving it to be carved in the beams of the tower room in the Tuscan Villa. So ended one of many wartime adventures of the Goldschmidts.

The de-briefing was conducted in the vaulted basement of Eudo Hall, an Elizabethan manor house built on a foundation

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

of Norman stone and Roman brick walls. Stanley was fascinated by the history of the place with its bits and pieces from different centuries. Colchester had been the first Roman colony in Britain and had a Norman castle built largely with Roman materials.

Eudo Hall, once the seat of a great old family, now belonged to a wealthy chocolate manufacturer who, having leased it to the Americans, departed to wait out the war in the Bahamas. To Stanley's chagrin, the owner had closed and locked the old library for, as he pointed out to his steward, "I never even looked at these old books but a bookdealer told me they were valuable and I want to be sure they are still here after the war."

Six or eight Nissen huts had been erected on the lawn to accomodate the wartime functions and there was a small library furnished with donated books from the homefront and special paper-back editions printed for the Armed Forces. Both Stanley and Joe, inveterate book lovers, spent time in this library, but they also quickly discovered the superb bookstores of Britain such as Blackwell's in Oxford, Hefter's in Cambridge and Foyle's and many others along Charing Cross Road in London. Typically, Stanley was shipping home a package of books each week.

In September 1944, General Somerset's group was moved to Rouen where Stanley remained for the balance of the war, making frequent sorties to his old haunts in Paris--a Paris still

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

euphoric from liberation, dealing with shortages, swarming with soldiers; a gray Paris of peeling plaster, worn clothing, strong odors, incredible coiffures; a black-market Paris where chocolate and cigarettes could buy anything--but a city of hope, of great monuments and treasures, a city of life and light. Best of all for Stanley were the old book shops of the Latin Quarter.

The three Goldschmidt brothers had more adventures and narrow escapes behind the German lines, especially during the Battle of the Bulge when David and Aaron were nearly shot by some Americans who surrounded a German unit.

When victory came in 1945, Colonel Stanley Maynard, Captain Joe Goldsmith and Major Dave Goldsmith returned to America to be relieved of duty.

Aaron, urged by his brothers to come with them, after some atypical indecision, opted to return to the Schurwald to live quietly at Baumgartenhaus. "I will help to build a new Germany."

In the general post-war confusion when Europe was flooded with millions of refugees, civil authority was chaotic with records lost and destroyed. The eastern Soviet Zone of Germany was cut off from the west. Many people, including Nazi war criminals, took new identities suited to a new era. Aaron took the identity of a dead Dresden soldier named Alberich Wolke, and in that name was granted asylum by the western occupation authorities. In time he became a citizen of West Germany and married Gisela in the chapel of the good old priest.

Eventually, the Bundesrepublik, trying to make amends for

The TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

Nazi crimes, compensated Josef and David, the only known survivors, for their parents' property in Stuttgart. The brothers then divided this money with Alberich Wolke, their brother incognito, enabling him to buy a contiguous farm--seventy-four hectares of mixed orchard, woodland and vineyards on south-facing slopes of rich marl. Thus he enlarged Baumgarten Farm, became an expert on phylloxera and insured the prosperity of his little family of three sons whom they called die drei Wölkchen--the three cloudlets.

When Alberich, as the oldest and first-married, received from his American brothers a tiny but precious link with the annihilated past--their mother's ring--he gave it to Gisela, --his love, his wife, his life--the one who was there through the darkest times.

Joe Goldsmith returned to the Reisfeld Book Store in January 1946, just in time to save and re-vitalize it, since Abraham, at eighty-eight was near-blind and so weak he was dependent on some dishonest clerks who kept no records. "Joe, now you have whipped der pants off that Schicklgruber, you must come back to fix up the shop. I waited for you und every day I read by the paper how you und all the boys were doing. I can't trust these new clerks. I vant you should come back to be the boss here, ja? I can't run things any more. Come back und be my partner. It vill be Reisfeld und Goldsmith, Booksellers. Everything fifty-fifty! Und you see I am old like Methusalah

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

und in my vill to you goes the whole shop. Maybe not so long to vait--six months, a year or two. You are to me like a Sohn."

Joe borrowed ten thousand dollars from the Maynard Estate to expand into a little shop next door, to paint the ceiling and shelves, install a new linoleum floor, get a new lighting system, new space heaters and a new painted sign: Reisfeld and Goldsmith, Booksellers. There was also a new coffee pot but Abraham said, "Nein, I keep yet the old pot. It does a good job."

Joe found new, honest clerks and in March was able to

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

return to New York University part-time under the G. I. Bill to work on a master's degree in Comparative Literature. Abraham thereafter came in each day to sit in a wicker chair near the door to welcome and visit with customers, putting them in a book-buying mood.

The clerks opened the store at ten. Joe spent the morning at the university nearby, coming for six hours each afternoon to run the store. Abraham told people, "No more I am the boss. Fifty years, das genügt mir. Since 1896 we are here, but now, Joe Goldsmith, he's the boss. Just see how beautiful is now the shop! It was Joe that made the improvements. He said 'wy not a little paint?' It was a good idea! Und jetzt we haf more space to spread out the books! No more splinters by the floor!"

David Goldsmith decided to go to Massachusetts Institute of Technology to work for advanced degrees in physics. They all had four years of G. I. Bill time coming. That provided each student with tuition, a book allowance, and seventy-five dollars a month for living expenses. So the Goldsmith boys were now independent. They had saved money in the war and paid a large part of their old debt to Buddy's Scholarship Fund.

THE TUSCAN VILLA / R. L. Merritt

Colonel Stanley Maynard arrived in New York in November 1945 on a crowded transport where officers and enlisted men mingled on deck. There had been great excitement as the warriors, after a four-year exile, approached their homeland. Some stayed up all night to get a glimpse of Montauk or Ambrose Light, or some dim and distant blinking evidence that North America was still there.

On deck and below, the men told each other what they would do after discharge. They showed one another crumpled photos of wives, girl friends and children.

"He's six years old now--time he had a pa at home to show him how to go fishin'. Why he don't even know what his pa looks like. We gotta make up for lost time! Glad we got Christmas comin' up!"

"Me? I'm gonna get some of them white Arrow shirts and get me some ice cream, maybe a gallon, mixed strawberry and vanilla!"

"Me? I'm plannin' to stay in bed until noon ever' day for a week, an' I'm kickin' all these G. I. clothes and boots to the back of the closet."

"Me? I got a job waitin' fer me at the Endicott-Johnson Shoe Factory, Binghamton, New York. They promised me they would save my job. Annie, that's my wife, she and our two kids been livin' with my mom and dad during the war but now, first thing, we're gonna get us a little house all our own with a good garden space to grow tomatoes and Annie's gonna

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

have all the things she wants like nice clothes and a washing machine. I still got my old Studebaker and Annie says it runs good."

"Me? I'm just gonna get down on my hands and knees and kiss the dirt of the good old U. S. A!"

"Me? I'll catch me a big mess of them ugly catfish down in Bayou Lafourche an' I got me a little French sweetheart that's been pinin' away 'til I get home, an' she's gonna cook 'em up Cajun style, and us an' the whole town of Labadieville is gonna have a three-day party! Them's all my cousins, see? Hey, you ain't ate until you had some of that Cajun cookin'!"

"Me? I have a buddy that was in the Pacific and we've been writing. We're going to start a gas station on College Avenue, Terre Haute, Indiana. We have the corner picked out and maybe my grandfather will help us get started!"

"Me? My girl friend in Salina wrote me a "Dear John" letter and married some soldier from Arizona, so I don't know if I'll go back to Kansas. Maybe I'll go to San Diego or somewhere to pick oranges! But I'll probably go back to college. You've all heard of the G. I. Bill of Rights? We can't go wrong getting more schooling!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

The ship listed perceptably to port as everyone crowded to get a look at Miss Liberty.

At the pier Buddy said goodbye to Major Ray Wooding with whom he had shared a stateroom for the crossing. He thought of calling River House, but saw a line of men waiting for the telephones. Gretchen didn't know exactly when he would arrive. He managed to hail a cab then gave a lift to two harried young lieutenants who were going to the Roosevelt Hotel. "That's Forty-fifth and Madison--just on the way--hop in!"

Arriving in mid-afternoon with no key at River House, he buzzed his own doorbell. Hanna, not accustomed to un-announced visitors, opened the door with a quizzical expression turned to unbounded joy. "Ach, du meine Güte! Herr Gott! It's Colonel Buddy! Oh dear, we didn't know if you would ever get home." They were embracing.

"But where is Gretchen?"

"She walks over each afternoon to school to get the children. It's P. S. 135, just down the block. Nogg says he's big enough to go by himself but we still walk with them until they get bigger. There are some rough boys in the neighborhood."

Buddy and Gretchen had done considerable corresponding about where the children should go to school. Some of the wealthy River House people sent their children to private

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

schools such as the Walden, but it was on the West Side and not close. Gretchen opted for P. S. 135 which was practically on their doorstep. She met some dedicated young teachers there and felt that she and Hanna could make up any possible deficiencies. The children were all reading before they entered school and they could speak some German and French. Nogg, now in the third grade, had started in 1943. The younger children were in the first grade.

"When will they get home?"

"Probably in about fifteen minutes. She sometimes stops in a little French bakery on the West side of First Avenue near Fifty-second, or she might talk for a few minutes with the teachers. When they get home, they go down to swim in the pool for about forty minutes each day."

"Hanna, I'm going to go out there and surprise them!" He rinsed and towed his face at the kitchen sink, swallowed a gulp of coffee then combed his tousled hair before the gold-framed Georgian mirror in the living room. "How do I look?"

Hanna grinned conspiratorially. "Buddy, you've always been one of the most handsome men I've ever seen, and now in that uniform, you'll absolutely knock 'em dead!"

"Hanna," Buddy roared, "Where did you pick up that expression? We'll have to have a serious conference about your English! 'Knock 'em dead' did you say?" He straightened

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

his tie. He was laughing as he rushed out the door to the elevator.

He saw them across First Avenue. Gretchen, in a navy-blue woolen coat with matching hat and shoes, stood hand-in-hand with the two smallest children and Nogg, now sprouted unbelievably, was pointing animatedly at something in a shop window. They then sauntered into the French bakery--the Boulangerie Belle Époque. Buddy hurried across the avenue. He peered through the window. He couldn't wait. He went inside to stand just behind them. Eric was saying, "Mama, can we have some of those gooey things there if we promise not to eat them until after supper? We didn't have none this week yet."

Looking up at his mother, Eric noticed the uniformed man standing close. "Hey mister, you're a colonel! I can see them ducks up on your shoulders! My daddy's a colonel too, but he ain't been home for four years!"

Gretchen started to correct the boy's English, "He hasn't been home for four..." Then she saw Buddy. "Oh my, oh my! It's not possible! You've come home at last! It's Büdchen, children, it's your papa! We waited so long! But how did you find us here in the bakery?" Their faces beaming and streaked with tears, they embraced while the customers and shop assistants all watched joyfully and broke into applause.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

The children, owl-eyed, watched this display and Nogg authoritatively announced to his siblings and the audience, "That's our pa! I remember him all right. He can play the piano too, bettern anybody." Nogg had a recollection of his father at the Steinway four years before. He took his father's hand. "My pa kicked old Hitler in the ass--kicked him good too, he ain't comin' back for more!"

The bakery owner hurried over. "We want to give to you the bread and the patisserie! We are so grateful to America and your army which have libéré la France. I remember also les Américains in the first World War. Mme. Maynard, she is certainement a good customer. Now she have back her husband. Je vous en prie, take yes, une douzaine des patisseries. We are so happy la guerre est terminée and Monsieur Maynard you are once more with your family!"

Griselda was hiding behind Gretchen. Eric took her hand, "Come on Grizzle, come on out and see. This here is our papa. We always wished we had a papa, didn't we? Now we got one!" In a moment the children were shyly exchanging hugs with Stanley.

With waves and smiles all around, Buddy and Gretchen led their little brood home. They decided to all go swimming as the family regularly did at this time. In the dressing room Nogg bashfully watched his father. Stanley, though now thirty-seven, was in peak condition--muscular, hirsute and handsome. "Papa, do you think me and Eric will have

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

hairy chests like you when we grow up?"

"I don't know, Nogg--probably--but we'll have to wait and see."

"Well, I got a friend at school, Tony Ragazzo, and his big brother said you ain't a real man unless you got a hairy chest."

"He's wrong about that, Nogg. Men come in all shapes and sizes--some hairy as apes and some bare as new-born babes. I've seen some real heroes in hospitals in this war that didn't have a hair on their chests, but they were wounded and got medals too. A hairy chest has nothing to do with whether you are a good, brave man or not. Now, come on--show me how well you can dive."

All three children were fairly good swimmers but Griselda didn't relish diving as the boys did. There was a fair amount of boisterous activity at the pool with other tenants and their children splashing about. A Columbia student named Bill Kent was there each afternoon as lifeguard.

When Buddy and Gretchen saw each other in their brief swimming costumes, they were doubly aware of their need and yearning for each other after four years. Buddy saw that Gretchen's figure had filled out some. How beautiful! He thought of a Botticelli painting. He whispered to her, "Would the children be all right if we went upstairs for a while?"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

She smiled, taking his hand. "Bill Kent is very good watching them. We'll ask him to send them up in forty minutes. Let's swim a couple lengths, then we'll tell them they can stay here until five-thirty, but mama and papa have to go upstairs to read the mail!"

In a couple minutes, clad in their terrycloth swim robes, they reached their bedroom, locked the door to discourage visitors, then fell on the bed to assuage a bit the emptiness they had known since 1942.

So the pleasant life at River House was resumed. If their parents locked the bedroom door as sometimes happened, and Eric and Griselda complained, Nogg would explain, "Ma and pa have to read the mail!" Then he would give them a theatrical wink that he had learned from his classmates.

Though the O. S. S. asked him to stay on, Stanley resigned his commission a few days later. Now he must address civilian problems. He worried most about the children learning gutter English from their classmates. In a way it was amusing to hear Nogg and Eric talking like Dead End kids, but Stanley had enough of his grandmother Letitia's training in him to shudder at the same time. She had maintained, "We must always strive for excellence. What we do we must do well." She would brook no bad English from him. "There are standards, and for our language, which is a most remarkable creation, there is Standard

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

English. This is what we will use. Believe me, it allows us enormous latitude for expression. Our language is used all around the world, so people in remote corners must take care to learn it properly."

Stanley chuckled ruefully as he thought of the children attempting to matriculate at Dartmouth while perversely salting their speech with grammatical atrocities. Gretchen, who spoke careful school-book English, was not unaware that the children were acquiring the grammar and intonations of the working-class families of the district, whose fathers worked in coal yards and slaughter houses. Something needed to be done.

After some discussion, Buddy found and investigated the Fennimore School, a small private school on East Sixty-first. It was run by a young Quaker couple, Jared and Rachel Fennimore, from Mount Holly, New Jersey. The Fennimores had the four floors of a crumbling brownstone where old-fashioned Academe held sway. Here grammar was important. Whittier and Longfellow poems were memorized and essays were written on the iniquity of slavery, the hope for universal peace and brotherhood, the products of the Mato Grosso, the prospects for Indian independence, or the nationization of the Mexican petroleum industry. Students went on frequent conducted educational excursions.

Three boys from River House attended the Fennimore School. Jared told Stanley they had also two non-paying

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

poor children and would like to take two or three more if a way could be found to cover the expense. The school operated on a shoe-string budget.

Nogg was willing enough to transfer to the Fennimore School when he heard of their excursions, but he balked at leaving his friend Tony Ragazzo behind. Stanley solved this problem by visiting the Ragazzos in their tenement on East Fifty-fourth. He proposed to the parents that their boy go, all expenses paid, with his friend, Nogg Maynard, to the private school.

The father, Umberto Ragazzo, a dark somber man, stooped and scarred from a life of labor, his black-ringed fingernails playing with the edge of a worn, oil cloth table cover, mumbled, "Why should he go oveh deh wit' dem rich kids? He's doin' jes fine at one-toity-five an' anyways we can't keep 'im in school no longeh afteh dis yeh--he's gotta woik an' oin his keep." The man shuffled over to take a bottle of beer from an old crate nailed to the sill of a dirty window on the air-shaft. This was their refrigerator.

Now the mother said, "Sure, he'll go. What's he got to lose?" The father looked only mildly surprised for he had frequently been over-ruled in this family and in life itself. He sank down in his battered chair and said no more.

Buddy emerged from this moldy-smelling warren where cracked, over-burdened drains, unchanged babies and stewed brassica perfumed the dingy corridors. How good to escape the stink of

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

poverty even if only, as in Tony's case, for a few short months.

Nogg and Tony thereupon transferred to the Fennimore School and Buddy said Eric and Griselda would follow in a year or two, when they were big enough to walk north of the Queensboro Bridge. Normally Nogg and the others went in a group, or accompanied by an adult, because Buddy and the other River House parents were aware of the possibility of kidnapping.

All the family including Hanna went for two weeks at Christmas to Cedar Rapids. The children had met their grandparents briefly in New York but hadn't gone to Iowa during the war. Hunt was anxious to have a good visit with them all. Indeed, he told Buddy on the phone that it was time for them to move to Cedar Rapids--to give up the New York apartment. Buddy, however, was non-committal, at least insofar as undertaking to live in the villa while his parents were there. Over-exposure to his mother could be baneful to him and his family.

As for Madge, she wanted to see her son, just returned from the war, and Gretchen and the children, though she believed children in the abstract and at a distance were clearly more tolerable than proximate children. She was resigned to a visit. It was her duty to acquiesce and put a good face on it all. (She would give herself a good

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

vacation after their visit!)

The children were vastly intrigued by the great ancestral villa where they dashed up and down the stairs with concomitant clatter and crash described by Madge as the 'thundering herd.' How much of delight there was to explore! They played hide-and-seek in bedrooms long unopened. They were everywhere from the tower to the music room to the drawing room, the office, the kitchen, the library, and in the carriage house they found the Detroit Electric and the brougham. Eric, climbing into the Detroit Electric, pretended to drive it, all the time making the roaring, groaning noises he believed were right for a very old engine.

Nogg ridiculed him, "You got it all wrong. Grandpa said the Detroit Electric didn't make no noise at all. It didn't hardly even purr--it jes went! Now you an' me can get over on this here buggy--grandpa says it's a broom but it looks like a buggy to me--an' we can pretend we're drivin' two horses. Now one of us can sit outside an' drive an' the other one can get inside an' be the senator--that's grandpa's pa, an' we'll drive down to Cedar Rapids! The one that's inside is the boss, but the one that's outside has the most fun! Pa says he went to school in the buggy a couple times but nobody got to ride unless the senator went along!"

They found a Flexible Flyer sled that had belonged to Buddy. He showed them a slope west of the villa where he

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

used to slide. Six inches of new snow had fallen, so the boys spent hours there guiding the racing sled down the slope and taking their sister as a passenger.

Hunt and Madge decided to have the big Christmas tree again in the drawing room bay. Everybody helped decorate it with the old ornaments down from the attic. The pile of presents grew. There were ice-skating parties with Buddy's Czech friends and their children; a family party at the country club; a German dinner at Amana colony; a sleigh ride of neighborhood children. From the tower they hung colored lights that could be seen for miles.

Madge couldn't believe it but she was genuinely beginning to enjoy the fierce activity. She quickly arranged a grand Christmas party with about two hundred guests--she lost count--but enough to fill the villa with celebrants and numbers of children. Mrs. Powell, the housekeeper, and Melissa Tyler, the cook, got six extra girls to help with the party.

There was a great surprise for Buddy and Gretchen when Marcy Tyler appeared. In 1944 with Buddy away at the war, Hunt had consulted with Miss Havergill and arranged for Marcy, her most talented and promising student, to attend the Chicago Conservatory. Now Madge, Hunt and Melissa quickly conspired to have Marcy come home for a couple days to give a little concert especially for Buddy, who had first

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

subsidized her lessons in 1935. Naturally Miss Havergill was also present.

Madge and Melissa spirited Marcy up the back stairway to Madge's room where, as for her first recital in 1936, she was appropriately costumed in an evening dress from Madge's bulging wardrobe. While Hunt detained Buddy and Gretchen with toddies in the library, Marcy and her growing, giggling entourage proceeded to the Baldwin piano in the music room. The phonograph was shut off. Marcy started to play a piano arrangement of Saint-Saëns' tone poem, Danse macabre.

In the adjacent library Buddy exclaimed to his father, "Just listen! What's that? Who's playing that? It's not a record. Let's look in the music room!" They hurried toward the music.

In the music room, the crowd, in on the secret, was watching the door. Buddy burst in quite as expected, his face a symphony of interrogation. He sputtered a bit involuntarily, but Letitia had taught that one does not interrupt a musical performance. Hunt and Gretchen were just behind him. The delighted crowd could not forbear breaking into applause while Marcy, giving off playing, stood smiling at the piano, her arms spread in a self-deprecating gesture.

Who was this handsome young black woman? It couldn't

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

be Marcy? But yes it was! He could see it now. The years had wrought changes! He dashed forward to hug her which both embarrassed and pleased her.

He turned to the crowd. "We were wrong to interrupt an artist. Oh, what a happy time! I see here Miss Havergill and Melissa Tyler. Please, now let's give Marcy our attention. Find seats if you can."

Marcy recommenced after announcing: "This is Danse macabre by Saint-Saëns, written for the violin, but I'm playing it especially for Mr. Buddy Maynard and Miss Gretchen for special reasons they will remember."

So the joyous party proceeded in all the rooms of the old villa. It was a party to mark the end of the war, the advent of a time of peace and new beginnings. When they sang Christmas carols around the tree, Hanna, Buddy and Gretchen with their children sang several in German--O Tannenbaum and Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht--reminding all of the madness of the recent war.

A DISQUIETING DISCLOSURE

One morning Hunt had a long conversation with Buddy in the library, that elegant room where the enduring importance of the Maynard Estate was emphasized by the old paintings of early Maynard river boats and the two portraits of solemn, bearded grandfathers who had built the fortune.

A warm fire crackling in the red marble fireplace played fugitive light on the rich, gilt-leather bindings while the men sipped strong coffee from the large, utilitarian cups that Hunt preferred in this house full of porcelain treasures. "There is something you must know--we didn't tell you earlier since you were busy with the war.. Last April I seem to have had a stroke. I remember nothing about it except waking up in the hospital. Your mother found me lying on the bathroom floor. I had always been in perfect health before then.

"For a short while my speech was garbled, but the most alarming result is my memory loss--not total, thank God, but still I'm aware of significant diminution in that vital area. It could be worse than I realize. I really don't feel competent to run the estate properly anymore, and Porter Lumsden, my good old mainstay, is sixty-five--that's retirement age!

"We have perhaps been remiss in not training some younger people, but the war has interfered with everything. So now Porter and I think it's important for you to come home to Cedar Rapids and the sooner the better. We think it's time for you to take over...to build a new group of experts to work with you--young people with new ideas. Maybe you can get some of those young people you have helped through college--are there some wizards of finance and industry among them? I'm sure we could find some good men eager for jobs like this at the College of Commerce in Iowa City.

"Your mother knows nothing about the business. If

The Tuscan Villa/ by R. L. Merritt

something happened to me there would be a real problem of continuity, even with Porter still there. It's essential for someone to be at the vertex of an organization such as the Maynard Estate.

"I'm being medicated, but the doctor says these strokes often recur. In any case, I feel I must step aside soon. In the past you have indicated you might prefer to employ professionals such as your old associates at Brown Brothers Bank to run the estate. That is your option, and possibly the right one for you unless you have become more passionate about business affairs than you were before the war." He rolled his eyes with an impish, indulgent grin that Buddy would fondly remember later. Buddy thought of all his father's fine qualities. Hunt had always had enough understanding to make up for Madge's shortcomings.

Deeply troubled, the younger man blurted, "Dad, I didn't know--had no idea at all, but it's going to be all right. Of course I'll move out here--whatever is necessary. It will take a little while--the kids should probably stay in school until June, but we can get started and I can spend half my time out here.

"I have to talk to Gretchen about it all. Oh, and I think it would be better if we don't move into the villa--mama is set in her ways so let's insure domestic tranquility by maintaining separate establishments!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Hunt chortled, "Now that's true wisdom forestalling crises months before they occur! What do you think of the gatehouse? Would that be too close? Our present tenants are moving out in January. As you know, it has four bedrooms and is really quite a nice house--even has a miniature tower where you could shelve some books. We're planning to modernize the bathrooms and kitchen. It needs paint but I guess you and Gretchen could handle that after your project with Miss Havergill! "

That day Buddy and Gretchen discussed the plan, then walked down to the gatehouse where the tenants, already half-packed, showed them around. The brick house, a smaller replica of the villa, had been built at the same time and was originally occupied by an estate steward with considerable authority. In 1910 the interior had been modernized with Arts and Crafts overtones. It had a brick fireplace, high coffered ceilings, three generous bays with stained-glass windows plus the rare little tower room reached by a winding stair.

Gretchen saw there was more room than in River House. "Buddy, this would be just perfect! We could have a garden here and those look like apple trees out there in the snow. It does remind me of home in Jena. It would be good for the children certainly, with a little room to play outside."

Buddy roared. "A little room, yes, I guess so. The last time I asked dad it was fourteen hundred forty acres, but if we get cramped here I think they have some more land

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

not far away. But you're right, it will be good for the kids. They can go to the same schools in town where I went--maybe get their slaughterhouse English repaired before it's too late! (Not that Cedar Rapids doesn't have slaughterhouses!)

"We'll be a long way from your mother and Uncle Abraham but they can come for long visits. I think we'll just keep the River House apartment for a while--otherwise where would we put all those books? Anyway, we just signed a new five-year lease."

In this wise things were arranged. Buddy, profoundly concerned about his father's health, thought about how Hunt had been the solid rock of the Maynard family for forty years. What a good man, a good father, Hunt had always been! Quiet, low-key, almost self-effacing, but solid as Gibraltar, loving and supportive with his family and community. An honest businessman! People didn't wait until after his death to utter platitudes about Hunt. Hunt seldom asked for anything in return. Now came this desperate appeal.

Buddy, though cognizant of his own deficiencies, would do his best for his father. As he told Gretchen, "This is urgent for Hunt. Let's send Hanna with the children back to New York so they won't miss school and we can stay on here for two or three weeks. We can catch up on our second honeymoon after four years of war!" He smiled ruefully, "Really, it's not for that. I'll go down to the Maynard office every day and do what I can with dad and Porter

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

still there, and in June we will move out here permanently.

"The Albertson family said they'll be gone from the gatehouse by January first, so we can get started on another Havergill project all for ourselves! Would you like that? We can do over the old place and have it all ready by June. I wonder if our old master-craftsman, Jeff Toner, can be found?"

As it happened, Hunt told Buddy that Jeff Toner (just back from the navy), had come to the Maynard office seeking capital to start a construction company. Jeff didn't have much collateral. He owned a couple houses, one in Minneapolis and one in Cedar Rapids. "We haven't decided yet whether to finance him or not but I'm inclined to gamble on him because he can do such beautiful work as he did in your tower. Since you're going to join us in the Maynard Building maybe we should make this your first decision. He's coming back to the office on the fourth of January."

Buddy hadn't seen his old friend since the Havergill project--almost ten years. Now he thought of playing a little cat and mouse game with Jeff about the loan (which he had determined to extend regardless of Jeff's inadequate collateral.)

Buddy asked Hunt to stay home on the morning of the fourth. At the Maynard Building, the receptionist, Mrs. Granville, was instructed to send Jeff into Hunt's office when he appeared at ten o'clock. "Go in there Mr. Toner and sit down. Mr. Maynard will be in shortly."

At ten-five, Mrs. Granville came to the office door to

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

ask Jeff to pick up the telephone receiver. "It's Mr. Maynard--he's been detained outside the building but he wants to talk with you."

Buddy and Gretchen were in an adjoining office. Buddy, muffling his voice and attempting to sound like Hunt, spoke into the phone, "Is this Mr. Tooner?"

"Toner," said Jeff.

"Yes, of course, Toner. Excuse me for not being there at the appointed hour. We put great store on punctuality. Now if I were applying for the loan, I would be out of luck wouldn't I, not being there on time! Lucky for me you are the applicant! Ha, Ha!"

"We've looked over your application and I'm sorry to say it doesn't look good for you. You have maybe twenty thousand of collateral but are asking for a fifty thousand dollar loan. Any bank would turn you down. You might get ten or fifteen tops.

"You mentioned having done a job in the Tuscan Villa tower for Buddy Maynard. Good enough, but what have you been doing during the last thirteen years? Incidentally, I might say that my son Buddy has been a disappointment to me--he's just a piano-playing, bibliomaniacal dilettante who lives in New York because we didn't trust him around here to make sensible business decisions, so using him as a reference was not well-advised on your part. If anything, it inclined us against you, Mr. Tanner."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"TONER," said Jeff, getting very ruffled. "And by the way, I listed my jobs in Cedar Rapids, Minneapolis, Iowa City and my four years as an officer in the Naval Seabees. That experience should count for something, Mr. Maynard, and further I know you underestimate your son who is a rare, talented individual who could teach a few things to you businessmen!"

The phone was quiet for a moment while Buddy gleefully relayed Jeff's answers to Gretchen. Buddy and Gretchen, red-faced and crying, nearly exploded with laughter. Then the phone spoke gravely again: "Businessmen know business, Mr. Trainor, that's what's important. Remember what Mr. Coolidge one of our best presidents said, 'The business of America is business.' Buddy forgets important basic things like that. You sit there for a minute Mr. Trainor, and Mrs. Granville will send in our new loan manager to explain why we consider you such a bad risk."

"It's TONER," said Jeff, "TONER, do you get that? Don't bother to send anybody in here! I'll find a loan somewhere else!"

"Oh, you say it's Toner. Why yes, here it is on the application! Well, you sit there and the manager will come talk with you."

As Jeff slammed down the receiver and was slipping into a navy-blue pea jacket, he muttered a couple obscenities. Buddy and Gretchen, faces streaked with tears, appeared at

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

the door.

"Well I'll be damned! It was you all along, wasn't it? It sounded strange to me. The voice wasn't right and the words were not right for your father who has a reputation for civility." Jeff's face was shifting from anger to incredulity to high amusement.

"Say, it's great to see both of you again. But you are supposed to be in New York! Oh, you were having a good joke weren't you? But does it mean I don't get the loan? Are you the loan manager, Buddy?"

"What it means is you do get the loan and we were having fifty thousand dollars worth of fun to start with!"

The joyous bellows and clamor coming from Mr. Maynard's office, that seat of magisterial calm, caused many a cocked eyebrow and sidelong snicker in the office staff.

Buddy continued, "There are several ways we could do this. We could lend you the fifty thousand outright at five per-cent, but we could also become silent partners. This would lessen your risk and you have your family to think of. We've done this with many of the local businessmen. For example, we lend you thirty thousand and you are responsible for re-paying that. We invest and own the other twenty thousand and we are silent partners. Thus, you control the business, but in the unlikely event that you fail or encounter some disaster, your liability is only thirty thousand. The Maynard Estate with its resources will be a helpful partner in time of need. We will take two-fifths of profits and

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

losses, and we can write into the contract that you may buy out our interest when that becomes feasible or desirable for you."

Jeff grinned at Gretchen. "Now I ask you, does that sound like a piano-playing, bibliomaniacal dilettante talking?"

Soon they agreed on the particulars and Buddy, who had been making notes on a form, called in a clerk to type up the new partnership agreement. Then they went down the block to the Vltava, a new little restaurant near the Roosevelt Hotel, to recount over a lengthy lunch their plans and their considerable adventures of the past decade.

Jeff had been a captain in the Civil Engineer Corps supervising Pacific Theater Seabee construction projects during the war. His wife and two young sons were still living in the Minneapolis house but he planned to bring them to Cedar Rapids where he hoped to build his business.

"I just got back to Minneapolis from the Pacific a couple weeks ago. My wife Milly, was a little bit upset with me for coming down here right after Christmas, but I told her I have to get a business started so we can have food on the table. I want to rent a small warehouse and a lot to park trucks, store equipment and material, and then find a couple good carpenters, cement workers, masons-- all that to get going. We'll move into our house here in Cedar Rapids and I'll work out of the garage to start. I think I have some good will here because a lot of people

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

have been happy with my work before the war."

Buddy clasped Gretchen's hand on the table cloth.

"Well, we are happy with Jeff's work aren't we Gretchen? In fact we started looking for you a few days ago. Your new company has a job lined up even before it's organized! We're going to move here from New York in June and Hunt said we could move into the gatehouse at the villa. You remember it--it's a small version of the villa, same Tuscan style and it has a small tower! The tenants have moved out so we want to do some changes and re-furbishing--get it ship-shape as you old sailors would say. It will be a job like we did at Miss Havergill's. Maybe we'll build an addition. We have three children--boys eight and six and a six-year-old girl. We also have Hanna Bocklin who is our nanny and indispensable friend. She's just taken our children back to New York City. We will want to add a small apartment with separate entrance for her."

When they finished their coffee, Jeff proposed they visit the gatehouse. Buddy had his father's 1941 Buick so they drove out through a gentle curtain of snow. The house, located near the iron gate which stood always open, had great charm without the bulk of the villa itself. It was by no means a small house having eight large rooms with nooks and crannies and the little tower over a full basement. It had its own two-car garage and dependencies with a brick-walled garden and a Tuscan

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

pergola, all now blanketed with snow.

They could see the villa and tower up the hill.

"Just like old times," Jeff mused. "Remember those good old depression days when we did the tower room? I do want to go look at that again. Did you ever get those beams carved with ancient adages?"

"Still hanging fire," Buddy said. "I'm collecting a list of possibilities. You wouldn't want me to rush into it, would you? It's only been thirteen years!"

The outside of the gatehouse was always maintained-- painted beige with a rich, brown trim like the villa itself and the carriage house. The warm colors, blending well with the tile roof and brick garden walls, had never been changed in ninety years as the painters could determine when some of the wood was stripped.

Each time Gretchen went in the gatehouse she became more enthused. It had built-in china cabinets with leaded glass doors, and the three large bay windows had window seats with storage space beneath.

In a couple hours of discussion, the job plan was developed. Hanna would have a studio apartment with bath in an addition off the kitchen. The kitchen and existing two baths would be completely modernized except that the superb Craftsmen tile in one bath would remain. Jeff said there might be a problem getting good fixtures and some materials this early after the war when there was great

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ R. L. Merritt

demand and industry was not yet re-converted. "I'll look around. I have contacts. Sometimes we can get beautiful things from a building being razed."

That evening, Jeff called his wife to tell her to start packing. He would be up in a couple days to load their possessions on the train. Milly was thrilled and incredulous when he told her of the happy inauguration of his plans. He'd gotten the loan. The business was founded. They had a substantial partner--the Maynard Estate Company, and they already had their first job! Luckily their Cedar Rapids house where they used to live was empty, so they could move right in!

The Bösendorfer

Buddy thought he must have a good piano in the gatehouse but, believing it would be extravagant to buy a new piano when he had two others only several hundred yards away, he called Miss Havergill who told him of a friend, Mme. Elena Tylinkova, recently dead, who left a beautiful Bösendorfer grand with carved walnut finish. Miss Havergill said the piano had fine tone and Mme. Tylinkova's scatterbrain, alcoholic daughter, Angel Parker, had offered to sell it for eight hundred dollars.

Not ones to procrastinate in matters of pianofortes, they arranged to go that afternoon to Mme. Tylinkova's house to look at the piano. Angel hadn't sold it. She told Miss Havergill she was "having a little party but come on

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

over! The more the merrier, Tee Hee!"

At Mme. Tylinkova's handsome old house the liquor was flowing freely. Angel, who was a shop-worn thirty with a generously-painted face and bouncing, outsize breasts, had found three carefree, muscular young sailors at the rail station. She brought them home to celebrate the end of the war or the New Year, or whatever required celebrating. The sailors, Jerry, Larry and Muff, on their way to points west, were not about to turn down the proffered party so they simply postponed their journeys until another day. They had stacked their duffle bags in the corner of the living room and were seriously attacking Angel's considerable supply of rum, bourbon, beer and gin.

Muff answered the door. "Are you Miss Have 'er fill? Ha, ha! Hey lady, you came to the right place. We need some more girls here. Come on in an' have a drink. Angel says come on in! I'm Muff, what's yer name, man? We're havin' a party. Plenty for everybody!"

The phonograph was blaring out Chattanooga Choo Choo. Buddy and Emily exchanged wry glances, half amused, half apprehensive. Buddy had seen some boozy parties but he didn't believe Miss Havergill knew much of such things.

Angel came from the kitchen with a bottle of Old Granddad. "Jerry, see if you can get this thing open. Oh, Miss Havergill! You say you have somebody who wants to buy the Bösendorfer?

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Why it's Mr. Buddy Maynard, Wow! Have I ever always wanted to meet you! Well, here's the old white elephant." She took a couple beer bottles from a heavy, purple velvet cover then revealed the instrument. "Say, how about some drinks? We're having a party--I guess you can see that. That's Larry lying on the couch and that's Jerry fussing with the ice. These boys have been fighting for their country so they deserve some thanks. You already met Muff. They're good boys. They all come from Out West. Cowboys, you bet!

"Well, Mr. Buddy, why don't you try the piano and look it over. It's been covered for ages and it's clean inside. Play us a little boogie-woogie, huh? Hey Muff, cut off that damned phonograph!"

Buddy sat down to play some arpeggios, a couple Mozart sonatas and a bit of Bach. It was a wonderful piano though the music and the party didn't seem right for each other.

He was surprised to see Angel crying. She quavered, "Yes, you should have that piano. That's the way it sounded when mama and papa were here. Hey Muff, what do you know? I was born in Prague and we had the Bösendorfer and we brought it to America in 1920. Mama used to try to teach me to play but I got other irons in the fire, other fish to fry, you Kapeesh? Come on guys, have another drink. The day is young. Now Mr. Buddy I told Miss Havergill it's eight hundred dollars but for you it's seven hundred so it will have a good home and mama (sob) would like that."

359

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Why it's Mr. Buddy Maynard, Wow! Have I ever always wanted to meet you! Well, here's the old white elephant." She took a couple beer bottles from a heavy, purple velvet cover then revealed the instrument. "Say, how about some drinks? We're having a party--I guess you can see that. That's Larry lying on the couch and that's Jerry fussing with the ice.

These boys bee
some thanks.
all come from

"Well, Mi
over. It's be
us a little b
phonograph!"

Buddy sa
sonatas and a
the music and

He was s
you should ha
when mama and
I was born in
it to America
but I got ot

Kapeesh? Cor
Now Mr. Budd
but for you
and mama (so

Bösendorfer
THE WORLD'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS PIANO
IN A SELECTION THAT NORMALLY EXISTS ONLY IN AUSTRIA.

ONE MILLION DOLLAR factory selection
flown in from Vienna, celebrating
Austria's 1000 year anniversary.
The Franz Liszt, Johann Strauss
& Franz Schubert models
will be on display.

DON'T
MISS THIS
OPPORTUNITY!

Sale!

Friday Feb 11, 10-7
Saturday Feb 12, 11-6
Sunday Feb 13, 11-4

**3 DAYS
ONLY**

Bösendorfer
Pianos Never More
Affordable...Near
Steinway Prices!

Bösendorfer
The Piano Steinway
and Baldwin Owners
Trade Up To!

**ONE MILLION DOLLAR
FACTORY SELECTION**



Being Held at: Our New San Francisco Location

500 Van Ness Avenue

San Francisco, CA 94102

(415) 864-0500

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Buddy wrote her a check for eight hundred and then used her phone to get piano movers to take the Bösendorfer to the gatehouse that afternoon. When he gave her the check she embarrassed him a little by giving him a wet kiss and a lingering embrace with more than sisterly affection. "I've been waiting twelve years to do that," she gloated. "When we were in Washington High School we used to see Mr. Buddy Maynard buzzing around in his little SHIVER-LAY KOOPAY. We all wanted to go riding with him out to Stone City or someplace. Maybe get SHIVER-LAID! Whoops, what I said! But nobody could ever get near him or see him up close! All that money and cute as a bug's ear! Now I can die happy, honey! Well, how about a drink to close the deal?"

Larry, suddenly rolling over onto the floor, rubbed his head and slurred out, "Hey Jerry, where the hell are we? Did we get to Omaha yet? Jerry old pal, bring me one of them Cuber Libers to rinse this taste out of my mouth. Hey Jerry, where the hell's the head?" As he struggled to his feet he yielded an unseemly eructation, then gagged.

Jerry hurried him across the room to the bath room. Muff was laughing. "Larry can't take serious booze--'course we been drinking now for two or three days. But he's got to learn to take it like a man, ain't that right Angel?"

Emily Havergill, acutely alarmed but trying to keep a composed face in this lumpen bacchanal, had edged over to the far side of the Bösendorfer as though to place a

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

substantial barrier between herself and raging sin.

The door bell rang. The piano movers had come directly since business was slow. Buddy watched them expertly dismantle the piano, wrap it in padded quilts and load it on their truck. He wanted to stay long enough to be sure they didn't succumb to Angel's siren song. These healthy, strong young men were fair game for Angel who wanted to keep them for the party, but agreed to welcome them back after the piano was delivered.

Now Buddy and Miss Havergill managed to depart gracefully. As they left, Angel draped in the purple velvet piano cover was doing a seductive dance à la Rita Hayworth. She flicked the check back and forth under Muff's nose and sang, "We're in the money, honey, we gotta lotta wotta takes to get along!"

Buddy and Emily hurried over to the gatehouse to admit the movers. When the movers left, the youngest, a hulking gray-eyed boy, took off his cap to Miss Havergill and with a shy smile said, "Well, goodbye ma'am. Pleasure to meet you. My little sister Gladys hopes to be your pupil next year." Then to Buddy he whispered, "Those guys want to go back to that other house. Jim, he says we don't get a chance like that every day."

Buddy answered, "You be careful over there. That's a pretty rough crowd!"

"Yes sir, I guess you're right about that." The truck horn beeped and the boy ran.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Buddy took Miss Havergill to dinner at the villa.
"I think we really earned this piano, Miss Havergill, I
feel exhausted!"

Miss Havergill, composure recovered, laughed a bit.
"You will have a curious idea of my friends. I was Mme.
Tylinkova's friend for years--Letitia knew her too. But that
Angel--always rebellious and headstrong! She was an
unmitigated disappointment and burden to her mother. She was
drinking heavily at age sixteen, wouldn't go to college or
hold a job, and when the war came along she had a four-year
binge from coast to coast and obviously that hasn't stopped.
She's been married several times. I'm afraid she will drink
up her mother's estate and your eight hundred dollars in
short order. But I'm glad you got the piano. Her mother
loved it dearly."

At dinner they permitted themselves a bit of wine
as they told the family of their dangerous adventure.
Miss Havergill amended her characterization of Angel:
"I should add in poor Angel's defense--she does have a
heart of gold--always so likeable and generous to a fault.
But moderation has no part in her nature. With no thought
of tomorrow she will give away anything she possesses!
Buddy, I do believe she would have given you the piano
if you had appeared insolvent!"



Richard Lee Merritt
4428 23rd St.
San Francisco, CA 94114-3114

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt 363

That same evening after dinner, everybody bundled up to troop through the snow to see the Bösendorfer standing in a bay of the gatehouse living room.

"How wonderful!" Gretchen exclaimed. "It's almost exactly like papa's Bösendorfer in Jena, except that papa's had a dent just here." She indicated the edge of the keyboard. "That was the result of some foolishness of mine. When I was about Nogg's age I had a shepherd dog and we were racing at high speed around the house. The dog, old Nero, got tangled in a floor lamp cord, knocking the lamp against the piano. Nero got banished from the house for two weeks, poor dog, and it was really my fault."

Stanley grinned. "We might get a hammer to knock a dent in this one to make you feel at home! But no. No dents please. I made sure the movers would get it here in pristine condition. It does need a tuning and a good polishing, but plenty of time for that. We'll cover it while the painting and construction go on."

They showed Hunt, Madge and Miss Havergill around, telling of their plans, how there would be an additional room and bath for Hanna and how they would not violate the charming style of the house.

Madge said, "It's Craftsman style on the inside. Remember Hunt, they did a lot of changes in 1910, but only on the inside. Letitia wanted the Tuscan style to remain on the exterior since it belonged to the villa, but 'Arts and Crafts' was all the rage in 1910. Letitia was quite involved. The furniture came, I believe, from Stickley in Syracuse. At the villa

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

she had William Morris books spread around the library. She never did things by halves. She got wallpaper from England.

"Stannery was just starting to walk and talk. We were all down here one morning when Stannery overturned a bucket of wallpaper paste. The senator thought that was funny, but Letitia and the paper hangers were not so amused! This is William Morris paper in this room, but it's certainly worse for wear now. Goodness, what were the tenants doing? Still, it has been thirty-six years."

Hunt smiled quizzically.

The wallpaper was a pattern of swirled acanthus leaves in shades of green and pale yellow arranged over a dark green background although Morris had published admonitions that "yellow should be used sparingly" and "dingy yellow-green avoided."

Most of the rooms had beautifully-crafted paneled wainscots rising six feet to a narrow ledge topped by a three-foot band of wallpaper and a generous wooden cornice. The craftsmen had built round arches into the paneling, repeating in bas relief the style of the windows. A small, stylized tulip motif had been incised at intervals near the top of the wainscot, repeating the tulips in the stained glass windows.

Madge tapped these with her carefully-manicured finger nail. "These tulip flowers were painted gold and the leaves green. The woodwork has always been painted white but

clearly it's ready to be repainted now."

The round-top upper sash of the Tuscan windows had always been divided by arched mullions into three clear lights. In 1910, Letitia had each top light removed and replaced with leaded stained glass with three yellow tulips arranged around a central, clear trefoil. This scarcely reduced the light in the rooms but enhanced the interest and the color.

In the evening, Hunt told Madge, "Funny, I didn't remember a thing about that gatehouse remodeling. Are you sure I was there?"

"Hunt darling, of course you were there. You were right in the middle of it all. But it will come back to you. The doctor said, 'Give it time and your memory will come back.' Anyway, I'll remember things for you." She kissed him with more true tenderness than usual, for they were both frightened by this ominous amnestic affliction.

Madge helped the younger Maynards with the wallpaper and in some other ways. She found Letitia's ledger with its record of the 1910 remodeling. Letitia had arranged with Marshall Field Company of Chicago to do the job as they had done the villa itself in the 1890s. Letitia had recorded the provenance of the paper.

Through a friend who was an executive at Marshall Field, Madge discovered that the venerable British wallpaper firm was still in business. When contacted, they wrote that the acanthus pattern had been discontinued in 1914, but they

had a warehouse supply in North Bergen, New Jersey, good as new despite thirty years on the shelf! In due time, the new paper was installed. The colors were green and yellow, but not too green or yellow, and in no wise dingy, for they had been created by the master. Even Madge agreed they were just right.

Jeff Toner found bathroom fixtures from a small North Side luxury hotel being demolished in Chicago--three of everything for the bathrooms, and they had the Craftsman tile duplicated by a ceramic arts instructor at the university, so all the bathrooms and kitchen counter-surrounds were done in the burnt umber and ultra-marine blue tile with its embossed tulip design.

The hard wood floors were all sanded and re-finished. Back in New York, Gretchen who hadn't been particularly aware of the Craftsman style, spent much time at the Metropolitan Museum and the New York Public Library studying the movement and its European manifestations such as the Wiener Werkstätte and the Secessionists.

Emma was persuaded to move into the River House apartment in June, so the Maynards could leave most of their furnishings and books, and could stay there during visits to New York. Emma had resisted the blandishments of Allen Feldstein, the wealthy broker, who through the war years intermittently urged her to marry him and become the mistress of his handsome brownstone townhouse on East Seventy-Fourth Street. But she kept her independence, continuing to live in her

modest Village apartment where she shared the rent with Dörte Brüggemann, another refugee widow who had moved in when the Goldsmith boys moved out. Dörte was not Jewish, but her husband and family were Social Democrats, sufficiently active in the Third Reich to attract the attention of Himmler's Gestapo, from whom they managed to flee.

Buddy and Gretchen begged Emma to move to River House. "It's rent free. It will be here whether you live here or not. What a shame to leave it with no occupants. You must come and keep an eye on Dr. Reisfeld's books. We'll feel so much better having you here."

Logic prevailed. The two widows moved to River House. Dörte found her job at Bergdorf Goodman was conveniently close and she confided to Emma, "I'm an old Social Democrat, but I could get accustomed to all this decadent luxury--the view, the smiling doorman, the space, the Steinway, the swimming pool!"

Early in June the time for the Maynard removal came. For each, the departure from New York was tinged with considerable regret since, as wealthy people, they had been spared most of the inconveniences of the city while partaking of its special opportunities. They all loved the city and were at home there.

One little crisis was avoided when Nogg and his proletarian friend, Tony Ragazzo, had an argument. Stanley had worried about separating the school chums, but now it would be easy. One day Nogg told Tony, "You're not supposed

to say 'ain't' all the time. Didn't you hear the teacher today?"

Tony's face darkened with wrath. "Da trouble wit' youse fancy River House joicks is youse tink yer shit don't stink!" After some more heated words this led to a real break. Tony withdrew from the Fennimore School.

Nogg confessed all this one morning to Stanley when questioned about his week-long morose mood. "See dad, Tony's my best friend ever, or used to be, but he's been getting edgy and mean, and when he said that--that bit about my poop doesn't smell so sweet--well, I just thought 'to hell with you, Tony.' I'll be real glad to get to Iowa and I won't run into him anymore. To hell with old Tony. Guess he's no friend of mine."

The Maynards decided to leave most of the furnishings and books at the New York apartment. Gretchen told Buddy the gatehouse should be furnished in Craftsman style. They would put it back to it's 1910 appearance. This would include a lot of Mission oak furniture with leather-covered cushions, some wicker chairs and sofas with chintz pillows, some Indian rugs, some ethnic textiles, ceramic vases, hand-wrought copper fixtures and hardware, some period paintings of Eden-like natural paradises.

Buddy was greatly amused by her list. "You've been doing your home work! We'll find loads of all that stuff in Iowa. Every attic and junk market is full of it. People were throwing it out in the 1920s!"

"Our friends will think we're eccentric, but they've always known that, so let's go ahead and shock them! There isn't any Mission oak in the villa attic I . . . believe, because they have always used the mid-Victorian furnishings, but we can look."

They started for Cedar Rapids taking only the Limoges porcelain set and Hanna's furniture. They gave up Hanna's separate room at River House and planned to "camp out" in the gatehouse until they could find appropriate furniture.

On arrival in the beautiful, bright, sunny house, they threw open all the windows to allow pastoral fragrances to mingle with the lingering odor of fresh paint. Nogg begged his mother to let him and Eric have the tower room. "Ask your father, Nogg, he may have some plan for that room." But Buddy said, "Yes, that would be very good for the boys. They can keep a lookout up there for approaching enemies or crashing bores."

For a time only Hanna had a bed; the others had mattresses on the floor, but everybody, even Madge, was searching for Mission oak. Madge told them, "I'm just not sure where all that original Mission oak went--the oak that Letitia had made. Part of it was gone by 1930--then when the Tabbs retired, we gave them some for their little house.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

370

I've got an idea. Let's go over there and see if they still have it. Maybe they'll be willing to trade it for some up-to-date furniture."

Madge, Gretchen and Buddy drove over to the Tabbs. The old couple, just turned eighty, were thrilled with this visit. Madge, being her most diplomatic, made sure they were comfortable and happy, then after some small talk, told them Buddy and family were moving into the gatehouse and they needed the old oak furniture because they wanted to restore the gatehouse to its 1910 condition. From where she was sitting Madge could see the oak dining room set with its solid table, its eight chairs, and the distinctive copper pulls and every piece with copper and beech inlays of the tulip design.

"When you moved here we gave you the oak furniture and it belongs to you, so you do exactly as you like, but if we can persuade you, we would like to have it back." She gave them a gracious smile. "Hunt's mother had it made for the gatehouse. I would like to buy new pieces for you. You go down town and pick out anything you like. Would you be willing to do that so we could have the old oak back?"

Varina looked at Fred as her rotund figure started shaking with laughter. "Land o' Goshen, Miss Madge, yo' don't have to buy no furniture fo' us. Yo' wanna know da truf? We bin jes keepin' dis heah furniture fo' yo'. How many times we used dat dinin' set, Fred? Maybe onc^t in sixteen yars. We don't have no outstandin' social life to

speak of, but we's happy jes da same. We most times sets in da kitchen an' we sets in da garden watchin' da termaters grow an' we sets on da front po'ch watchin' folks go by. Now I bin a-polishin' dis heah furniture onct a week an' sayin' to mahsef, 'Sho' would like to be shed o' dis ol' oak, but I gotta keep it fo' mah frins da Maynards!"

"Now we got dat dinin' set an' dese heah two Morris chairs wit da leather all pushed out--'cause we does use dem. An' we got two or tree chests of drawahs an' a oak bed in da spare room. What else we got, Fred?"

Fred scratched his white head. "We got dat ol' coat rack an' a square table an' we got dem two ol' coppah lamps out in da back shed, dat don't give no light worth mentionin'. Maybe dey needs some fixin'. It all come from da gatehouse all right. Ah minds how Miss Letitia done had all dat stuff made back in 1910."

Varina continued, "We wuz proud to have dem pieces dat Miss Letitia had special made, but we ain't nevah had no true need fo' dem 'ceptin' maybe dese Morris chairs. But iffn we wuz to find two good old stuffed chairs fo' heah in da livin' room--it sho' don't have to be new no ways. Why I sees 'em all da time in da junk sto'--the Salivatin' Ahmy an' dat--maybe two dollahs. Den we be glad fo' yo' to take da kit an' caboodle. Oh yes, we got dem two oak-framed pitchahs on da wall--It's two lovahs chasin' each othah 'round in da woods. Dat lil filly, she ain't smaht, she gonna git caught--He!He!"

They had to visit Fred's neat garden and sit in the shade of the house, drinking iced tea and eating fruit and fresh-baked cookies.

Fred told Buddy, "We's beholdin' to yo' all from the senator and Miss Letitia on down. Anythin' we can do fo' da Maynards we does gladly. An' Mr. Stanley, we's proud of yo' winnin' da war an' all, an' we's glad yo' back in one piece and back at da villa. Dat's da way it should be. Got tree kids now! Yo bring dem ovah fo' a visit.

"Mr Stanley, yo' know dat furnace yo' sent us? It keep us warm as toast! Nevah no cold feet heah!

"Now you send ovah a big van an' we git dis old oak ready to go back wheah it belong!"

Madge arranged to pick up Varina the following day to go buy new living room chairs, a new spare bed, and some odds and ends Varina admitted she could use. Thus Madge, who could be impulsively generous, gave them a good start in furnishing the gatehouse. In subsequent weeks she drove Gretchen around to second-hand stores, dealers and junk markets, where they found a great deal of Mission oak at bargain prices. Truth was, it was so solid and sturdy that it couldn't be sent to the dump, but it was out of favor, so people put it in attics or tried to sell it. Gretchen soon discovered she could get very good specimens for a song. So she shopped around. Some needed new leather. Some appeared to need re-finishing, but she wanted to keep the original finish if possible. Cleaning and waxing often did wonders. Her purchases were set in the

garage next to Buddy's 1933 Chevrolet coupe. There the whole family participated in their rehabilitation before they were moved to their appointed position in the house.

Meanwhile Hunt, who had seen the beautiful swimming pool at Brucemore, another great Cedar Rapids estate, decided to have a pool and tennis court installed near a grove of sycamores just north of the villa. This was his welcome gesture to his grandchildren whom he adored and hoped to see every day. The Italian villa concept was enhanced with three stepped brick terraces, stone retaining walls embellished with Italian stone fountains, stone balustrades, climbing roses and a Tuscan pool house with colonnade and red tile roof.

Buddy immediately started long stints at the estate office where Hunt's memory loss was a matter of great concern. Porter Lumsden had a long conference with him. "What has your father told you of his condition? We're going to have to make a lot of quick changes. I hoped to retire this year, though I can stay for a while. I don't want to sound like an alarmist but it's clear that Hunt can't make decisions any more. The doctor says it could get much worse, or he might have another stroke at any time that would do him in. Hunt knows it's bad. So we have to build a new command structure here. Hunt has always said that maybe you would take over and maybe you wouldn't."

They talked of possible changes. Buddy told Porter he was going to ask Schuyler Ellington, the Brown Brothers partner in New York City, to come to Iowa for a few days of consultation. "We will review all the possibilities--the sooner the better. I've worked with Schuyler

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

and trust him implicitly. He's about forty-five or so-- just back from the service and a very savvy financier-- like yourself but younger."

Porter told Buddy the estate was worth near three hundred million dollars. Buddy's jaw dropped. "I knew it was big but gosh, is it that big? Oh gosh, that's embarrassing!"

Porter laughed, "Lots of folks wouldn't mind being embarrassed that way."

Schuyler Ellington arrived the next week. Hunt had declined to attend the conference. "I don't know what they're talking about anymore. It's very upsetting for me and for them. So you and Porter and the others do what must be done. It's all your baby now." Hunt and his grandchildren now spent most of their time watching the pool construction.

Buddy asked Gretchen to attend some of the meetings in the estate board room. Alberta Peckenpaugh and Frank Lowry, the attorney long with the estate office, were there as were several local bankers and Arnold Fenster of the Great Lakes Trust Company of Chicago. Everyone present had some close connection with the Maynard Estate, but only Porter Lumsden could have presented the comprehensive statement with which he opened the conference.

"Thank you all for being here. We will discuss some confidential matters so please be prudent. Statements will be issued to the press in due time.

"We're here to plot the future course of the Maynard

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Estate. Mr. Stanley Maynard III., whom you all know as Hunt Maynard, has recently become incapacitated. Mr. Stanley Maynard IV., sitting here, and whom most of you know as Buddy Maynard, is the sole heir to the estate. Buddy is young, vigorous and bright, as you all know, but his training and inclinations for the most part have not made him (in his own words) "the ideal candidate to run a financial empire." He has told me that he feels we must place the bulk of the estate in the hands of young, astute, and preferably honest professional managers." (Mirth ripples around the table.)

"The Maynard Estate fluctuates in value but is presently nearly three hundred million dollars." (Some gasps and surprised glances around the table.) This is mostly invested in various ways depending on many circumstances which in the past Hunt Maynard and I and some advisors would constantly review--the general economy, the prospects for certain industries and regions, etc.

"For nearly a hundred years much of the estate has been invested in Iowa land and industry. Indeed that's why Buddy's great-grandfather moved the family to the Villa Toscana--so he could be near his investments. The estate has been a source of capital for hundreds of enterprises new and expanding in our area.

"Today however, we maintain about two-thirds of our resources in Brown Brothers Harriman Bank in New York City, where wise men of finance conservatively decide how they

will be invested. Hitherto, Hunt Maynard and I have maintained a strategic overall direction which, with luck, has delivered us from a couple catastrophes in the stock market. Timing in buying and selling is of paramount importance.

"I expect a vast expansion of economic activity in Iowa and in the whole country in the next few years. It will be an amazingly prosperous time, but care, thought, research and prescience will all play important parts in successful management of the estate. I envy young people with their lives before them. I have told Buddy I hope to retire soon." (Oh no! No! Woeful glances around the table.) "But I will stay for a few months during this transition."

Now Buddy rose to speak. "Nobody knows better than my father and I the inestimable value of Porter Lumsden's counsel and friendship. Without him the estate might well have disappeared back in Depression days. Porter and father have pursued a hands-on, active kind of investment policy for the last forty years, going about meeting people, judging character, making loans often without collateral, buying equities, keeping myriads of details in their heads. This takes a special kind of aptitude which I have never had. My father warned me as long ago as 1932 that one day I would have to direct the estate, but I've always been better as an amateur of music and books, not you understand, company books. (Laughter, scattered applause.)

"So now I have asked Schuyler Ellington, whom you

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

have just met, to assume executive control of the estate. Schuyler lives in New York but will be able to spend half his time in Iowa under an arrangement we've made with Brown Brothers Harriman Bank, of which he will remain an officer. The assets of the estate will be gradually transferred to a new, non-profit Maynard Foundation, and will be invested with care to support such educational and philanthropic programs as we choose.

"We will appoint a board of directors, adequately compensated, who will be chosen for their expertise, and who will operate principally as advisors, since I and Gretchen Maynard, my wife, will retain a final veto on any significant action. Schuyler and the board will, for the present, oversee both entities, i. e. the estate and the foundation, and they will meet in this room.

"Porter Lumsden has warned me against any sudden, large-scale withdrawal of capital from the Cedar Rapids area, because it could harm the economy. The changes we make will be deliberate and incremental. We will deposit significant sums in local banks to increase their lending capacity.

"In summary, what we propose is a step by step down-sizing of the estate as we withdraw from what has been essentially a private, money-making, banking activity. In time, a decade or two, most of the assets will belong to the foundation which will continue to function unencumbered by the death or incapacity of individuals."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"There are a number of notable family foundations such as the Ford, the Carnegie, the Kresge, the Mellon-- thousands in fact, that we can use as patterns...Frank Lowry and our attorneys are already preparing the necessary documents.

"It's immodest to speak of these things but we are not strangers to small-scale philanthropy. Since 1936 Gretchen and I have had a little enterprise we call the Reisfeld Scholarships, named for Gretchen's father, Professor Reisfeld. Before that, I had the Maynard Alumni. These are both attempts to aid impecunious college students. The idea has seemed important to me since I returned to America in 1932 and found many of our people in desperate distress while a few of us had great fortunes. I have puzzled over what could be done about it.

"My father has aided and supported these efforts. He never condemned them as erratic or soft-headed, as many capitalists might do. He has reminded me, however, that only so long as the business is profitable is it possible to engage in philanthropy. So our hope is to maintain a decent profitability and thus render the foundation viable."

Because of Hunt's precarious health, estate taxes became a matter of concern almost immediately. Hunt was the sole owner of the vast estate. In the event of his death, taxes would be enormous. Frank Lowry and other attorneys suggested tax-avoidance measures to Hunt, who

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

thereupon set up six trusts of ten million dollars each for Madge, Stanley, Gretchen and their three children. Each family member over twenty-one would get the income from his trust until his death, at which time the fund principal would accrue to the foundation. Hunt wrote a new will generously endowing several local institutions (including the public library, three hospitals, Coe College, the College of Commerce in Iowa City) and providing security for a number of employees, past and present.

The transition proceeded smoothly. By mid-August the Maynards all felt they needed a vacation, so when Hunt wanted to take Nogg and Eric to Cousin Monty's Montana ranch for some training in trout-fishing, Buddy asked if the whole family might go along. "I've heard a lot about Fergus County, but I've yet to see it!"

Madge begged off. "Imagine me cleaning a fish or whatever they do after they catch it! No, never! You all go and suffer. They have mosquitoes, ticks, rattlesnakes and outhouses. Not my cup of tea, darlings. But, of course, Monty is my cousin and a Templeton so you be diplomatic and say 'Cousin Madge is sorry.' I'll get them a little present." She got them a couple beautiful white four-point Hudson's Bay blankets, boldly striped with blue, red, yellow and green.

Hunt and all Buddy's family, including Hanna, took a train to St. Paul to board the Midwest-Hiawatha, an orange, gray and maroon streamliner which roared out the Milwaukee Road to Harlowton, Montana, metropolis of Wheatland County.

Monty was there on the sweltering railroad platform, his commodious old station wagon parked nearby. As they alighted and the streamliner headed west, Monty tipped back his Stetson,

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

threw an arm over Buddy's shoulder and grinned widely, "Well lookee here, ol' Buddy finally came for a visit! After ten years! Took your own sweet time about it! And look at that sweet lady and all these little cousins! I got some kids about your size." He poked Eric in the tummy.

Eric squirmed with pleasure and a gap-toothed exclamation, "Grandpa says you'll teach us to be cowboys like Roy Rogers and John Wayne!"

After introductions all around, they loaded themselves into the big, worn vehicle, ("She's old and noisy, but she's reliable and got lots of room for five adults and three kids if we just tie these boxes and bags to the roof"). With windows wide open to catch any breeze, they drove past the false fronts and crumbling paint of the little cow town, then headed north fifty miles to the ranch. It was nestled up against the Big Snowy Mountains, from where a lively creek descended to irrigate Monty's hay fields, then tumble on to Big Spring Creek, the Judith River and the Missouri.

"Guess what they call this creek," Hunt shouted over the din of the engine as they crossed a log bridge and cattle guard at the entrance of the ranch. Here was a double row of lilac bushes. Monty grinned.

"It's called Templeton Creek! Now where do you suppose they got a name like that?"

Monty explained, "Well, the Indians had a name for this creek, but it was hard to pronounce and spell, then when my granddad got here, this was the only ranch hereabout so it became Templeton Creek. It's all melted snow

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

plenty cold right through the summer and has some good trout fishing holes in places up the canyon as Hunt knows, though it looks small here."

They had arrived. Having heard the approaching, elderly station wagon, Rosalie and the two Templeton children, Clintrod (Clinton Roderick) 8, and Lolly (Laura) 7, all dressed in faded blue overalls, were standing smiling expectantly in front of the rambling, old ranch house with its sagging log center section, its 1897 addition hauled in pieces by mules across the prairie from old Fort Maginnis, and its 1908 addition, the most plumb, built on a good foundation when Monty's father had had a rare taste of prosperity.

Hunt noticed that Monty had glassed in the south porch, making that into a dining room where they could seat up to fifteen or twenty people when the cabins were full. Hunt cried out, "There they are, my Montana family!" He jumped out to hug the buxom, laughing Rosalie. "Just wait 'til you get some of her flapjacks with home-made jam!" Again, introductions all around. Buddy was gladdened to see his father so animated.

The youngest cousins, smiling shyly, sized each other up. Eric went over to Clint. "My grandpa says you can teach us how to be cowboys just like in the movies!"

Clint screwed up his freckled, brown face. "How long you gonna be here?"

"Oh, maybe two weeks but we have to be home to go to

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

school in September."

Clint looked up at his father. "I don't know, Eric. See, being a cowboy is serious business and it takes a ton of time to learn. I don't think we can teach you the whole works in two weeks. But we can get you started and if you come back every year for twenty years, maybe you'll learn some of the basic stuff!"

Eric looked around and saw the others were laughing. Then he laughed too.

Buddy patted his head. "Your cousin Monty has been a cowboy since the day he was born but he'll tell you it's not easy and it takes a lot of hard work even when you're born to it."

Lolly had edged over to Griselda. "I got a cowboy doll and I got an Indian papoose all tied up in a blanket and a Shirley Temple doll and some others too! Do you want to see? We got the Indian papoose at Old Faithful Yellowstone Park last year. They had big dolls but we could just afford a little one." The two little girls ran off to Lolly's bedroom to see the dolls. They were immediate fast friends. Lolly hesitantly asked, "What should I call you? You're the only Gerselda I ever met!"

Griselda sighed, "I sometimes wish I had a regular name, but papa found my name in a book. He's always got his nose in a book. When my brothers are being mean they call me 'Grizzle' and I don't like that much because it sounds like a bear or a piece of meat that's hard to bite, but

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

mostly they all call me 'Elda' except when I'm bad,
then mama and Hanna get real stern and say 'GRISELDA'
eat your oat meal, 'GRISELDA' pick up your clothes,
'GRISELDA' comb your hair, 'GRISELDA' do your homework!"

Lolly giggled. "My mama says all those things to me.
Guess we're both kind of bad!"

Clint had taken the two boys for their preliminary meeting with the horses north of the ranch house. There six or eight horses were grazing in an irrigated recently-mown alfalfa pasture adjacent to a large, red, gambrel-roofed barn built against a hill, so that hay could be conveniently hauled to the level of the hayloft. The lower level of the barn was built of field stone. There was a second, older barn of brown, weathered logs, and two long, low sheds to shelter animals and machinery from the notable whimsicality of the weather.

Clint put two fingers to his mouth to produce an ear-splitting, enviable whistle. The New York-Iowa cousins were filled with admiration. The horses, ears at attention, raised their heads, then loped over to the old log fence to see what Clint wanted. Clint showed the cousins how to break off handfuls of the lush alfalfa outside the fence to feed the animals.

"This here little pony is mine. He's a pinto and his name is PINTO and he's been mine since he was born. He's got lots of spirit and you can always tell him at a great distance because, see, he's spotted brown, black and white

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

and he's small, but he's just right for me.

"Most of these horses are gentle and well-broke. We keep them here for the dudes. Gotta be careful with them dudes 'cause most of them never rode anything but a Greyhound bus or a subway or something, so we can't let them break their necks or nothing like that. Some of the horses are wild and they kick and bite and 'cause they're big, you better watch out!"

"My pa told us how he went to New York one year and rode around on them elevateds and subways. I'd like to do that some time. But I guess riding a horse is the most fun there is. My pa said he visited your folks that time. Do you remember that?"

Nogg got a far-off look in his gray eyes. "Hardly nobody can remember back that far. It was even before I was born and I'm nine and one-half! But my pa can remember. He says they went to the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State and even up to the Lake Placid cabin! Why that was even back before the war! But see, my pa can remember everything!"

Eric begged, "Clint, can we try riding now?"

Clint patted Eric's head. "How old are you, Eric?"

"Me and Grizzle are both almost seven."

"Are you and Grizzle twins?"

"No, but Grizzle came to us from a rich lady and they could see that she was the same age as me, so we have our birthday on September first. But my new teeth are comin' in, see, and Grizzle's ain't yet. We put our teeth under

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

the pillow and got a quarter!"

"Well, you're big, but still only six, so we're going to go kind of slow and keep you from breaking a leg. We better go back to the house to see what's happening. There will be time to saddle up later. We'll do some riding and some fishing. It's going to be a lot of fun. Dang it, wish we didn't have to go back to school!"

The boys found the adults sitting around in the living room which was the old log section of the house. Monty was talking. "That old pump organ works just fine--we had to get the bellows patched one time, but we don't have people who can play it. Rosalie does some. Buddy, you better try it. Oh, it's no Steinway but it's the best we got.

"Imagine, grandpa pulled that up from Billings in a wagon--a hundred forty miles and no roads to speak of. He brought up these window sash, shingles and furniture and even those two big lilac bushes out front--they were in tin cans straight from Orange County, New York. Grandma said, 'We're civilized people and we're not going to live like gophers!' Grandpa got the cabin built before she came out to Billings on the train.

"It was my dad that got that old Edison phonograph--the records weigh a ton. That's the music we had until I got a battery-run Graybar radio in about 1928, but the nearest stations were Havre and Great Falls; Salt Lake, Calgary and Denver evenings maybe. Plenty of static but we felt connected with the world. I heard Al Smith in 1928,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"Now, we're right up to date. The R. E. A. finally got here and we have electricity so we have that Montgomery Ward Magic Eye table radio over there. There are stations in Billings and Great Falls. We put our cooperative phone party-line on the R. E. A. poles and it works most of the time. He indicated the ancient, brown-oak wall phone with its crank for ringing numbers.

They had been admiring Monty's impressive collection of silver trophies won at rodeos from Calgary to San Antonio. It was getting on to late afternoon. Rosalie rose to suggest they get the visitors settled in their cabins.

They carried the baggage up to the two Spartan cabins--each with two small bedrooms, a common room with a wood stove and some home-made furniture, a porch and beds for four. There were coal oil lamps because Monty had not yet extended electricity to these outposts. Hunt had even told him the dudes would find the lamps quaint and charming.

In the first cabin, Buddy and Gretchen took one bedroom and Hanna and Griselda the other. Hunt and his two grandsons shared the second cabin. Hunt, who had visited here often, showed them where buckets of water, wash basins and soap were located on wide shelves at the ends of the porches. This was the basic bathroom. Monty had built two privies down the slope for guests. He had painted them inside with white enamel.

The Maynard cabins had been completed in 1938 and two more added in 1941 since Hunt's first visit. They were

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

grouped a hundred yards south of the main ranch house on a hillside of mature ponderosa pine. Nearby was a decrepit, low bunk house with tiny windows. The ground was spongy with old needles and the air perfumed with their scent, augmented, even on some August mornings, with the odor of tiny wood fires kindled to moderate the brisk, cold air down from the peaks of the Snowies.

Behind the cabins, a low ledge of layered rhyolite in a boscage of chalk-white aspen trunks gave birth to three small springs which drained into Templeton Creek. The trees and a certain water plant lent an elusive, enchanting fragrance to the spot. Monty had cleaned and dammed one spring with planks to channel the water into a length of two-inch pipe so that guests could easily fill their buckets with pure water. A large fallen log, clean of bark, made a pleasant resting place where visitors could hear and see the play of the water in the speckled sunlight. Already more than a few golden aspen leaves bobbed like wide, sharp-prowed vessels on the sparkling pools.

It was in this secluded, sylvan spot several days after their arrival that Hunt talked with Buddy. They wouldn't be interrupted since Monty and Hanna had taken the five children in the station wagon to fish the Big Spring Creek. They took lunch and wouldn't return before five. Gretchen and Rosalie were busy in the kitchen, and the guests in the other cabins, two middle-aged couples who had driven out from St. Paul, kept much to themselves, eating early break-

fasts at the ranch then driving off for the remainder of each day. They said they were exploring the old mining camps of central Montana such as Maiden, Gilt Edge and Yogo.

Since the Maynards arrived, Buddy had watched his father closely. Hunt seemed somehow relieved, happy and carefree like a man who had lain down a burden. Different from the controlled, focused and recently-troubled father he knew.

Hunt asked Buddy to walk up to the spring with him. They could each 'fetch a pail of water.' For a few moments they sat silent on the old log in the dappled shade, their senses overcome by the spell of the place.

Hunt began, "It's been an interesting life, but the estate was like an exacting taskmaster. Oh, I enjoyed it all, but sometimes I envied other men who were free to go to the edge of the world and sink or rise according to their own skills. I liked nature and simple things and admired self-reliant, resourceful men. But then I'm sure many of those same men envied me and would gladly have changed places with the rich man of Cedar Rapids.

"But the estate was very demanding. I did what was expected of me. I 'married well' and did a fair job of running things all these years--and I went to the country club." He smiled ruefully. "Your grandfather thought I should enter politics but I resisted that, thank God. He had those old Hamiltonian ideas about government being run by a wealthy élite.

"Anyway, I would take rare little vacations, mostly

fishing trips with Porter Lumsden, and that was truly enjoyable. I had myself convinced that business and finance were my raisons d'être, but now in retrospect, I think I should have been a fisherman! I have treasured these visits with Monty and I think of this very sylvan glade as a sort of Eden. Funny, it stays in my head when I go back to Iowa. It's a special place where one might encounter wood and water sprites! There are some other magical spots up the canyon that we'll show you. Of course, the climate here is severe and much of the year there is snow and ice everywhere, so it might seem less hospitable and charming at minus forty degrees.

"But I wanted to talk about Monty and the ranch. You have said you thought of him as a brother and I've come to think of him as another son. He's totally wedded to his land. You couldn't drag him away. Once he told me a story about the early nineteen thirties before he was married. He lived alone at the ranch, had lost half his land, beef prices were down and things looked bleak indeed.

"One day he came across a telephone construction crew working west of here, rebuilding a line to Harlowton. It seems he started talking with them, telling them how he was scared he might lose his ranch with things so bad. A superintendent was there, a Mr. Merrill or Merritt out from Helena. Mr. Merritt said, 'You're not looking for a job, are you?'

"Monty said he would do anything honest to make some

money. Then Mr. Merritt asked him if he smoked. 'Smoke if you have to, but don't smoke when you're driving the truck. A man just quit because he wouldn't follow that rule.' That's why we have an opening today. We have a safety program in this company that's very important! Keep two hands on the steering wheel,

"Monty got the job as a 'grunt' or the lowest flunkie on the crew, but was starting to climb poles and show promise. He got room and board and saved all his money. It would have been permanent employment but Mr. Merritt said they would have to transfer him around the state, according to where jobs were, so Monty had to quit because he couldn't bear to leave the ranch. But he did save enough money to hang on to what was left of the ranch. Monty said also that he learned on that job why the Bell System phones work and his own cooperative line is so defective. Mr. Merritt had memorized the Bell System Specifications and he made sure all the construction was done in precisely the proper way.

"I believe you know how Monty's ranch was once over two thousand acres but he had to sell half of it in depression days to pay his taxes or other debts. He has shown me that lost acreage which is across some fences down the county road. When we came out here from town, I saw some FOR SALE signs posted along there--two sections of prime grazing land, and it was advertised by the Fortune Realty Company in Lewistown. Here's what I'd like to do. I'd like to buy that land, ask Monty to ranch it for the Maynard Estate, and then leave

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

391

it to him in my will.

"He's fiercely independent and would certainly resist some gratuitous gift of that magnitude, but he couldn't argue after I've gone, as they say, to my reward! Also, I thought of one other thing. I want to call Frank Lowry and add a codicil to the new will. I will make a trust fund of two hundred thousand which will pay income to Monty and Rosalie during their lifetimes and, as with the other trusts, the principal will revert to the Maynard Foundation after their deaths.

"I don't dare use their phone, even if I could figure out how to use it, because this is all confidential business. It's a party line and all of Fergus County would be listening in! So let's ask Rosalie if we might borrow her car tomorrow morning and we can go into Lewistown."

Next morning they drove Rosalie's 1940 Plymouth into town to the Fortune Realty where it was established that the land in question had indeed once belonged to the Templetons. It was still for sale and the owner, the Big Spring National Bank was on the corner in the same block.

When Hunt heard the price, automatically from long experience he demurred, though he knew nothing of prices in Fergus County. As it happened, the bank had been hoping to sell this land for months. The bank manager came over when the realty company said they had a prospective buyer.

Hunt acted as though he had quite lost interest since the price was so elevated. He even put on his hat and started

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

392

out the door, whereupon the price miraculously dropped by many thousands! Thereupon, the Maynard Estate became the new owner. After the Lewistown bank called the Cedar Rapids bank to confirm Hunt's credit rating, the Lewistown people became excessively deferential. They allowed Hunt to use their private offices and phones to complete his business. He called Frank Lowry and with the aid of a local attorney, executed the necessary documents to amend his will.

The Maynards were jubilant as they drove out the gravelled county road. Hunt chuckled, "I acted shamefully with that haggling, but that's business. It boils down to 'buy cheap, sell dear.' No telling if we got a good price or not, but we did get a better price than we might have. Even so, this was not good business practice. It's so much better to act deliberately and with a thorough understanding of the market and the variables, but we didn't have time for all that today. Say, look at those signs on our fence, there!" They passed some rusty, bent tin signs, used for target practice and attached to their barbed wire fence. 'Smoke Roi Tan,' 'Baby Ruth Bars,' and 'Sam C. Ford for Governor.'

"I hope that Monty and his family will always be secure and those kids go to college--not get yanked out like Monty was. We can make sure of that with our little plan."

That evening after supper, Hunt said in an off-handed way, "Monty, Buddy and I just bought the other half of your ranch today. Would you be willing to work it for us?"

Monty's jaw dropped. "No!! Don't kid about that! It's been for sale since spring and I've wanted it so bad, but we had decided never again would we go in debt. There was no possible way for us to get it back, and I was afraid one of these big cattle companies or something worse would get it and it would never be for sale again. You're not joking? You really bought it? But these things take time! How...?"

Buddy broke in. "You haven't seen my dad in action. He just went into town and took the place by storm. Anyway those two sections belong to the Maynard Estate now, and we can take down the FOR SALE signs and some of the other signs, too, although they are rather picturesque! We would like you to stock that land and handle it as part of the Templeton Ranch. It's back in the family now!"

Monty, adjusting to the new reality, quickly agreed to their proposal. "How many times Jim Weaver and I have wished we had the use of that land. It's a natural part of this ranch."

Now Hunt produced the two large boxes from Madge. "Your cousin Madge, who can't be persuaded to go west of Des Moines, has sent you these little gifts." The thick, luxurious, white blankets, most elegant in the world, made a great hit, especially with Rosalie. She lifted them to her cheek.

"So grand! Remember Monty, we've seen them at Glacier Park and last year at Old Faithful but we could only look and admire. We'll write a thank-you to Madge tonight."

She wrapped herself in one of the blankets and danced about the room.

Monty laughed, "Just see, here is Sacajawea ready to lead the expedition!"

The next days in the clear, sparkling air redolent of pine, alfalfa and sage, were a golden time for everybody--fishing, hiking, horseback-riding, dozing in the sun, helping with ranch work--cleaning ditches, feeding dogies, pitching hay. Some nights the boys slept in the hayloft.

But soon they must go home. They had tickets for Saturday, August thirty-first, since school opened the following Tuesday. Hunt proposed to lead Buddy and Nogg on their last Thursday up the Templeton Creek Canyon further than they had gone before. "The creek starts up there out of some beaver ponds. It's quite high--maybe eight thousand feet."

The other children with Hanna were eagerly projecting a horseback foray to the Weaver Ranch one mile west.

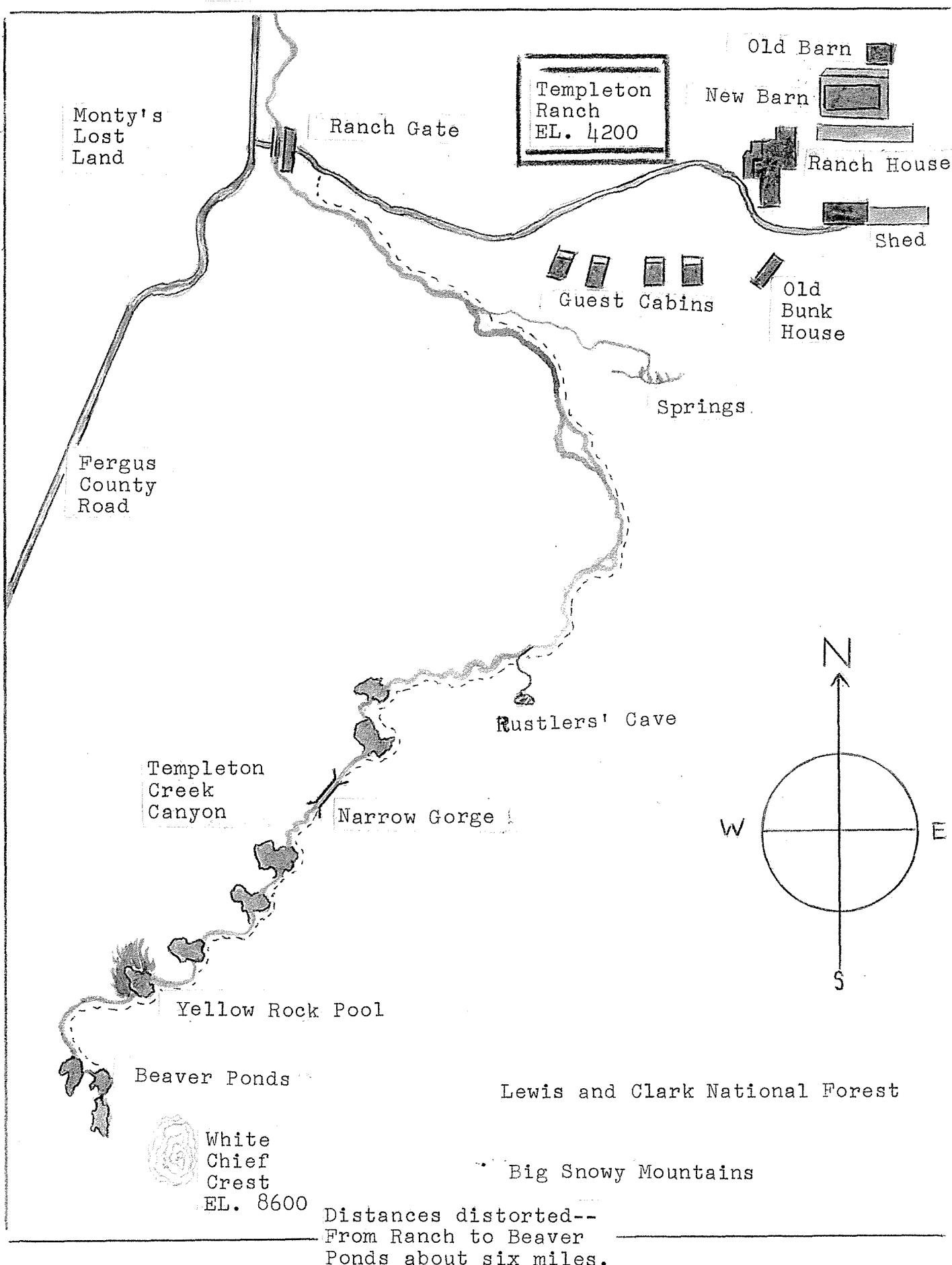
Gretchen planned to help Rosalie with ranch chores--feeding chickens, gathering eggs, milking a big Holstein cow named Polly--all jobs of pleasing novelty to Gretchen.

Before supper on Wednesday, Buddy, his arm around his son, sat with Nogg on the front porch swing reading the article on beaver in volume three of Rosalie's encyclopedia. Since the day after his return from the European war, Buddy had been reading regularly with his children. He wanted quickly to re-establish bonds sundered by separation but also believed there was no better way to assess their educational progress. The children adored this close attention from a papa

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt
MONTY TEMPLETON'S RANCH--1946 A.D.

after p. 394

To Lewistown



THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

who was big, handsome, knew everything, had been everywhere and could do anything.

At age nine, Nogg could read very well and knew more about beaver than Buddy did, although neither had encountered beaver first-hand. "You see dad, beaver are large rodents--that's gnawing animals like rats and squirrels, but they are aquatic--that is, they live in the water. They have fine coats of fur and have been hunted almost to extinction--that is, there aren't so many around anymore. The female is what's this? MONOGAMOUS. Oh okay, she has just one husband!

"They are engineers who can cut down trees as big as forty-two inches in diameter! Wow, that's over a yard thick! Wonder how they know that? Maybe up in Quebec somewhere a beaver cut down a tree that was forty-three inches! They cut down trees to build their dams and their lodges, and since they eat bark, they store limbs near the lodge to eat in the winter. They are what's this? GREGARIOUS. Oh okay, they love to pal around and live in groups. When the young grow up and get married, they build a new lodge near their parents'.

"They never eat what's this? CONIFEROUS bark. Oh, that means like pine trees that have cones! Wonder why--maybe it doesn't taste so good? They like to eat bark like lindens, maple, poplar and birch. They enter their lodges from underwater. They are considered valuable and are protected because their dams hold back the snow-melt floods and maintain water flow in the dry summer. See dad, they're just as good as the Army Corps of Engineers building those

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

dams on the Tennessee and Missouri Rivers!"

Thursday morning Monty told them, "I would go along but I have to haul some steers into town today. Take sweaters and jackets--it gets cold up there and remember, keep a sharp eye on the weather. If you see some clouds building up, better head back to the ranch because we can get freak snow storms this early, then it clears away and we can have Indian summer for a couple months. No telling about the weather."

Rosalie gave them sandwiches. They tied sweaters and jackets to their fishing baskets then started early carrying their fishing poles up the rocky path. After a mile of climbing the path was harder to follow,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

especially where it crossed masses of broken rock. But Hunt had been here before. He told them it was simple--they just followed the creek up and then they followed it down again. It was always there to guide them.

The canyon narrowed. Hunt led them across a slippery talus, wet with moss and spring water. Then he took them on a lateral path to visit a cave part way up the granite wall. "This is called Rustlers' Cave, Monty told me, because some outlaws holed up here back in the early days, and they had a shoot-out here with a posse of cattlemen, just like in the movies! Let me show you something." They were gingerly exploring the dim, bone-strewn floor of the cave. There were charred sticks from ancient fires. The cave seemed cold and they shivered.

"Look here on the wall," Hunt exclaimed, "These are petroglyphs! Nobody knows how old they are, but see the human hand prints and here some arrows and some buffalo and deer! And over here on this ledge Monty keeps some matches and a couple boxes of army C rations in old coffee cans so the animals can't get them but people can just in case they get stuck up here in a storm. And over here Monty piled a lot of dry fire wood. You're supposed to remember where this cave is, just in case. Look outside--see there's a deep fissure, just about black, that climbs up to that high point on the opposite canyon wall and at the top, see that big, round boulder! Who knows how it got up there? And above all, you can see the top of White Chief Mountain--

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

398

near nine thousand feet and always covered with snow."

Wide-eyed, Nogg asked, "Grandpa do you really think Indians and rustlers were here?"

"Of course, Nogg. We know that for sure. In those days there weren't any houses and people had to find shelter where they could. Lots of wild animals were in here too--maybe bears and wild cats."

Emerging from the cave, they were hit by the heat of the sun glancing off rock faces. They were warm from climbing. Nogg asked if they might not drop their sweaters and jackets and retrieve them on the way down.

Hunt said, "Better hang on to them. It gets a lot colder higher up." Nogg hoped to see some beaver. They decided not to fish until they got to the beaver ponds although they were passing several beautiful fishing holes in basins of striated rock or where slides and fallen timber had impeded the rushing water.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

At one point the canyon narrowed to a gorge five feet wide where, by spreading their arms, they could touch both of the sheer rock sides which rose hundreds of feet above them. Hunt, with some excitement, urged them on. "Oh yes, we can get through here by leaping from stone to stone. The creek is tranquil now but not in springtime or if there's a cloudburst. Monty says you could have a flood here almost without notice. He says you always have to conjure with mother nature when you're up here!"

A hundred feet further the canyon widened once more. Now the straight, sturdy ponderosa with its bark in

HDD

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

thick, yellow-brown, ridged plates, gave way to a forest of scattered juniper, fir and spruce, where thick groves of willow and aspen hid the creek.

As they climbed, puffing for breath through the spectacular scenery, the trees grew stunted and scarce, and then they were on a polished rock plateau marked with lichen and tenuously-rooted alpine flowers bobbing in the biting breeze down from the snowy peaks looming nearby.

Suddenly they saw the beaver ponds with lodges and dams constructed of willow and other sparse bushes that struggled for life in the brief springtime of this cold, high, windy aerie. Most of the year this was winter's snow-bound kingdom. Here there were vistas out to the west forty miles across the Judith Basin to the Little Belt Mountains. Behind them to the north, the Moccasins and Judith Mountains stood up from the plain. It was the top of the world. The defiant, icy escarpments of White Chief hung in the sky, while here, patches of unyielding snow lay helter-skelter among the boulders. Like schoolboys, they pelted each other gleefully with snowballs.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

They were glad they had kept their sweaters and jackets. It was so cold they chose to drop back down the canyon after Nogg and Buddy had seen their first beaver nonchalantly going about his engineering activities.

In a sheltered, sunny corner they ate lunch, watching an eagle wheel slowly overhead, then they tried their luck in a deep pool carved by the stream from a thick layer of yellow rock. With a professorial stance, Hunt announced, "This is limestone--specifically ferruginous limestone. Iron gives it the color. No telling how it got here amidst all the granite. A geologist would have some theories. They say this was all under water at one time--a lake or an ocean, and limestone is largely of organic origin. If we dug around here we might find evidence of tiny shell fish or plants that lived millions of years ago!" He patted Nogg on the shoulder. "You're old gramp sounds like an expert but I was just reading Rosalie's encyclopedia last night!"

Nogg couldn't wait to start fishing. "Grandpa, let's fish now and look later for the old shells." In the pool under the rippling, icy surface, amorphous, darting shadows were tantalizingly revealed by the brilliant yellow light. Two fish leaped from the pool, their bellies flashing as they snatched indiscreet insects from the air.

For bait they had grasshoppers, fat worms dug from the horse paddock, and tied flies. Everything worked and they each had several fish in an hour. Nogg was ecstatic, but he also wanted to try the pools further below, so he and Buddy headed down the path after Hunt told them he would stay here for a while and then follow. "We can't get lost here--only two ways to go--up or down!"

Those who have fished know that it can have a mesmerizing effect. One forgets time, concentrating on matching wits with the trout. Just one more cast will do the trick!

Buddy didn't know how long they had fished, first in one pool, then another below, but when he looked up from the water he was astounded to see rolling black clouds over the peaks. Then the sun was cut off and the temperature seemed to drop forty degrees in a minute.

He called to Nogg, "Have you seen your grandpa?" "Not yet. What's happening? Gee it's cold! Gosh, look at those clouds!"

Buddy called, "Nogg, come over here quick. I think we might be in for a storm." Now he started thinking of the cave. But where was Hunt? Buddy only half believed all he heard about

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

403

these storms but better not take chances. He would get Nogg back to the cave and then go find his father.

He and Nogg raced down the path. "Look for that high black fissure in the canyon wall. It's going to look different from this side so watch close. We'll be all right in the cave and I can go find your ... granddad." They traversed the gorge

It was starting to snow. Rapidly visibility decreased and the temperature fell. They stumbled on, then Nogg said, "Daddy, I think that's the big round boulder up there at the top, don't you? I can't see the black fissure."

They searched the stone canyon wall for the cave opening. The snow was falling like a thick curtain. Unbelievable! For a moment Buddy thought he saw the cave opening above them. Throwing down their fishing poles, they crawled up the scree for they couldn't find the path. At last luck was with them. They found the smoked entrance to the cave.

Buddy was unsure what to do about Hunt. His father would have the sense to take shelter if he could find any. Hunt had matches and might even cook a fish somehow, perhaps on a spit, or at least make a fire for warmth.

It was very cold outside. By contrast the cave seemed warm now. They got a fire started. Monty had been provident in preparing the cave for just such an emergency as they now faced. Buddy kept going to the mouth of the cave hoping for a weather change. Should he try finding his father? Already several inches of snow covered the trees and rocks quite altering the scenery and obscuring the path. Snow

kept falling--twelve, fourteen inches deep.

Buddy thought, DON'T PANIC. He told Nogg, "Grandpa has been up here before. He'll know what to do--just like he showed us this cave, didn't he? He showed us how to be safe."

But Buddy secretly was in a turmoil. His father might have another stroke, or fall and be hurt. He could freeze. Still, Buddy could do nothing until the weather cleared. Thank God, Monty was down below and would come to the rescue as soon as it was apparent they were in trouble. Monty knew the terrain. Buddy, who seldom prayed, prayed that the weather would clear--then at least, they could see their way. He looked at his wrist watch. It was six-thirty P. M. and dark as midnight outside and the snow was still falling.

When they didn't return to the ranch by supper time, everyone began worrying. At six, Monty said, "I'm going after them. Maybe something has happened." They could see the storm that enveloped the mountains though there was only a scattering of rain at the ranch level. "Rosalie, call the sheriff and tell him what's happened just in case. But we'll probably be back by ten o'clock." He picked up Jim Weaver. They dressed with boots and mackinaws then started up the canyon packing four blankets, extra jackets and stocking caps, food and Hershey bars and two powerful flashlights.

Soon they saw the snow up ahead. When it got darker

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

405

they turned on the flashlights. The snow got deeper. As they climbed, Monty told Jim they might find the visitors at Hustlers' Cave. "Hunt Maynard knows about the cave. I bet that's where they are." Because of the deepening snow they didn't reach the cave until eight-thirty. They had been calling out HALLOA intermittently so not to inadvertently miss their friends.

In the cave Buddy was trying to keep up Nogg's spirits. They had speared trout on long sticks and were inexpertly roasting them over the coals. Buddy said, "It doesn't matter if the outside gets burned. We'll peel that off and eat the meat."

Thinking he heard something beside the howl of the wind, he went to the cave opening. That's when he heard the first distant HALLOA! Buddy let out a great WHOOP and got a quick answer. "They're coming! Oh thank God, I think it has to be Monty!"

There was a good deal of relief when rescuers and rescued saw each other. "Dad's still up there. I didn't know what to do. I just hope he knows of some shelter. We all got up to the beaver ponds and it was ice cold, so we came back down the canyon. Then we fished in the first nice pool below the top and we all caught some. Then Nogg and I came down further but dad said he would stay there a while then follow us. We should never have left him alone. We didn't see him after that and the storm came up so suddenly we were blinded by snow and just managed to get back to this

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

406

cave that dad showed us on the way up. What should we do now?"

Monty and Jim conferred for a minute then decided to go up the canyon which they both knew so well from childhood. "You sure you last saw him at the first pool below the beaver ponds? That's what we call Yellow Rock Pool. Okay, we'll go up there and holler 'til we find him. Won't do to leave him out overnight. Here, you two put on these caps and jackets. We got more for Hunt. We'll take a couple blankets." In a moment they were off through the falling snow.

They were brave and prepared, but they didn't find Hunt. They came back at about eleven, crest-fallen and tired. "We hollered ourselves hoarse. We just can't do anymore until morning, and let's hope it stops snowing." Heavy of heart, they ate the food and the bits of roasted trout, then wrapped in blankets they lay down Indian fashion with their feet to the fire.

For a couple minutes they watched the fantastic shadows leaping up and down the cave walls. Perhaps these were the ghosts of forgotten creatures that through the millennia had found shelter here.

Then, exhausted, the three men and the boy slept.

407

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

At the ranch Rosalie had called the sheriff who said, "If they don't get back by ten tonight, call me again and we'll head out there first light in the morning. Rosalie, damn it, you know them mountains. Don't do no good to flounder around up there in a blizzard at night time. But me and some deputies will hightail it up there at sunup. Now Monty and Jim can take care of themselves but we gotta keep an eye on them dudes!"

About six in the morning the sheriff and two deputies showed up at Rustler's Cave. It had finally stopped snowing and bright sun was glancing on top of the canyon wall.

They left one deputy with Nogg but took Buddy along so he could show them exactly where Hunt had last been seen. Buddy was able to borrow the deputy's boots. The five men pushed through deep snow which changed the appearance of the scenery. The creek and ponds were partly frozen over. When they got to Yellow Rock Pool, Buddy called out, "This is it. We left dad just at that willow there, and he was fishing."

The sheriff said, "Okay, now let's just fan out systematically and cover the ground to see what we can find."

It was Monty who found him. Hunt was lying next to a log, mostly covered with snow, his hand still grasping his fishing pole. His eyes were open and there was a smile on his face. But he was frozen and they couldn't take the

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

pole from his hand. The sheriff broke off the pole on both sides then they wrapped Hunt in one blanket and like experienced rescue workers, found two smooth poles to improvise a stretcher with the second blanket.

Hunt's frozen right arm reached out at an angle. Buddy kept thinking irrationally how cruel it was to take his father's fishing pole from him. Buddy gathered up the line and broken pole.

He and Monty were beside themselves, unable to speak, tears streaking their faces. The other men looked aside, embarrassed. Buddy picked up Hunt's fishing basket. It had four frozen trout. Monty mumbled they were rainbow and cutthroat. The men didn't see two small flat stones in the bottom of the basket.

Now the forlorn group started down the canyon taking turns carrying the litter and having some trouble in the narrow gorge. In this way Hunt Maynard began his journey home to the Tuscan Villa.

Doctors in Lewistown said that he had had a massive stroke, probably dying instantly.

At the ranch, when Buddy gave the fish to Rosalie, she picked up the stones from the bottom of the basket. They had beautiful, clear imprints, above an inch long, of some ancient, oval three-lobed creatures.

"Buddy, I teach English, but they didn't let us escape Montana State College without studying some science, and I can tell you these are good specimens of trilobites."

She found the encyclopedia article on paleontology to show him an illustration of the trilobites. "See, these are from the Ordovician period--maybe five hundred million years old! We find these from time to time up in the rocks. A professor came out from Missoula several years ago, spent some weeks here and told us he was coming back because the 'hunting was good.' He was hunting fossils! Don't let anybody tell you Montana is a new country!"

Buddy wrapped the precious rocks in a handkerchief. Later, back at the villa, he placed these, a last gift from his father, among his childhood keepsakes in one of the fragrant old cigar boxes in the tower room.

Ever after Buddy toyed with the idea that his father had planned his own final days. Hunt had so carefully arranged affairs, providing generously for friends and family, willingly witnessing the diminution of the estate which had occupied most of his life, facing resolutely the challenge of a faltering memory through the last months of the war, then deciding to go fishing! And it had been a glorious, a perfect fishing trip! Hunt had died doing what he enjoyed most. One couldn't ask for more than that.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

At first back in Cedar Rapids they weren't sure what to do. They came to live in the gatehouse, but at the cemetery after Hunt's funeral as they walked back to the cars from the big granite Maynard mausoleum, Madge, elegant in black, told Buddy, "I've been thinking about it constantly since you called from Montana. Now that your dear father is gone, there's nothing to keep me here at the villa." She dabbed delicately under the black veil where there might have been tears.

"I've tolerated that house for forty-one years because it was my duty, but I haven't kept it a secret that I would have preferred living elsewhere. Still, I was taught that a woman's place was at her husband's side. Of course, your father wouldn't hear of living elsewhere--not even in one of those nice new estates here in the city, like the one he gave to Porter Lumsden. No, we had to stay at the villa. So I tried to make the best of it. It's not easy for a person of my temperament living in a museum in the middle of the Corn Belt.

"Now your mother may not have so many years left, but Clarissa Faymont and I have decided to just cut loose from all this and move to New York. We'll have suites in the Plaza and we're going to enjoy ourselves. We feel we've earned it. No more drudgery!

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"When Mr. Lowry read Hunt's will, I thought your father was just a tad niggardly, leaving his widow only the income from a ten million dollar trust, when his estate was over three hundred million. Widows deserve more, don't you think? But that's all right. It's unseemly to haggle. I certainly wouldn't contest it. Think of the publicity! I do have my own money and Mr. Lowry thinks I'll get half a million a year from the trust. Maybe I can scrape by on that. I'll have to tighten my belt, what with all these income taxes the Democrats have levied. Our Mr. Rumml won't let me escape."

She took Buddy's arm. "I'm sure my Stannery won't let his mother go to the bread lines."

When she flew to New York in September, she took only her furs & personal effects, leaving most of her clothing, since she planned to have a new wardrobe for her new life. Buddy and Gretchen then moved their family into the villa. This left the renovated gatehouse unoccupied, but Schuyler Ellington decided to move his family there during their Iowa months, while keeping their Westchester County home for their New York months. Their children were in Connecticut prep schools much of the year. Schuyler's wife, Rhoda, seized with the idea of Craftsman restoration, undertook the rehabilitation of Gretchen's collection of Mission oak.

To Buddy, the villa seemed strange without his parents, yet it felt like the place where he should be. He sensed strongly the aura of the old mansion. Certainly the spirits

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

of his grandparents and his father were here.

He was almost angry with his mother for her rejection of the house, her precipitous defection and her complaint about her limited legacy. 'Poor mama,' he thought, 'she'll have to skimp by with income of less than a million a year!' Still she had always lived within her ample income, even permitting her account at the estate office to grow year by year. Now she would have only the added expense of the Plaza suite and the added temptation of being on Fifth Avenue near the expensive shops. 'Well, the ten thousand or so a week from the trust should take care of that!'

Madge had given Gretchen her dog-eared recipe book, explaining how her system worked and adding details about running the house. Mrs. Powell, the housekeeper, now sixty-one, might retire. The Tylers and the Luckners would stay on.

After discussions all around, Mrs. Powell agreed to train Hanna for six months to be (with a significant increase in salary), the new housekeeper. The children, all in school, hardly needed a nanny anymore. Later Mrs. Powell retired to a Maynard Estate apartment in town.

Gretchen and Hanna together were a winning team, bringing to the old mansion the considerable skills of two determined, energetic hausfraus.

The big master bedroom immediately under the tower where Maynard grandfathers, each in his time, had slept with

413

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

his wife, was cleaned carefully before the great walnut door was pulled shut. Madge's room was ready should she decide to come home or visit. After a year, they covered the furniture with old sheets.

The children had their pick of six or eight large bedrooms along the corridors.

The Maynards filled the new swimming pool for the first time in mid-September, inviting friends and neighborhood children for the inaugural swim, then starting a policy of opening the pool on Saturday afternoons in warm weather to bus loads of children from town. During the next decades Buddy paid college athletes to act as supervisor and life guard during these weekly visits.

During the war, George and Virginia Luckner who continued to work at the villa, bought an old farmhouse on four acres down the road from the gatehouse. They had four children about the age of the young Maynards and Virginia's mother lived with them, cooking and keeping house while the Luckners worked. In 1942 George borrowed money from Hunt to build two long, low sheds where he started to grow rabbits for meat and fur. He told Hunt, "I think there's a market and I can do the work in my spare time."

Hunt, who admired enterprise, encouraged George. "I don't want you to be so successful that you quit your jobs at the villa, but I want to see you prosperous. You can grow a good part of the rabbit feed on your place and I know a Chicago jobber that will probably take the skins

if you grow the right kind."

George had built a concrete platform with drains where he dispatched hundreds of rabbits a month, skinning and getting them ready for local meat markets and restaurants. He could also sell them live.

Luckner had a beautiful black Labrador retriever named Black Betty who often followed her master when he came to garden at the villa. She was known and liked by all in the vicinity. In April 1947 when she had a litter of six pups of unknown paternity, all the children had to go often to the Luckners to visit. The pups naturally became increasingly attractive until at age six weeks they were well-nigh irresistible. George announced they were for sale at ten dollars apiece but must first be spayed since they could not be registered like their aristocratic gracious mother when the purity of the breed was at risk.

Buddy was forced to ante up thirty dollars plus veterinarian fees so each of his children could have a dog. Griselda picked an all-brown female. Eric chose a black male with white paws and Nogg got an all-black male. The dogs were named Katinka, Pause and Klaus.

Some ground rules had to be established. Gretchen said, "Dogs are not allowed in the house. Is that understood? Especially they are not allowed upstairs. If you want the dogs, you must promise to care for them--be kind to them always and make sure they have food and water every day.

"Since the back porch is heated, they can sleep in a packing box there while they're young. George or Abe can build a big dog house by the back entrance where the dogs can sleep when they are older, but they can come into the porch on really cold nights and we'll get some old rugs for them to sleep on." This porch was where people coming in from outside could leave their overcoats and galoshes.

The children were going to school in Cedar Rapids. The puppies soon learned when and where the school bus passed the gatehouse, so each afternoon they would sit on snow banks waiting until the children returned, then erupt in paroxysms of joy, whirling, leaping, yelping--all floppy and awkward with outsize paws, while the whole noisy gang trailed up to the villa. Stanley in his tower, Melissa in the kitchen, Gretchen or Hanna where ever they might be, even the Ellingtons in the gatehouse could look out smiling and set their watches when this straggling parade erupted. For its part the old mansion seemed to come alive when the children returned. Rarely had it known such a clatter and furious activity except that notable time when Buddy staged his simulated battle with Kaiser Wilhelm's hordes in 1918.

Years went by--years packed with pleasurable events as the children grew. They made trips to New York, to Montana and Europe. When Buddy bought a new Buick sedan in 1949, they drove with Hanna and the children to Monty's ranch. That same year Buddy put the 1933 Chevrolet coupe up on blocks in the gatehouse garage where there was plenty

416

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

of room. He remarked at the time that if the Windsors of Buckingham Palace could keep all their old vehicles, then the Maynards could do the same.

Also in 1949, Dr. David Goldsmith, now a physicist working at the Argonne Laboratory in Illinois, started visiting them. He was like a member of the family. A room in the villa was always reserved for him and the children called him Uncle Dave. Sometimes he brought a friend named Jenny Lawrence to stay a week or two. Hanna wouldn't allow them to sleep in the same bedroom, but gave Jenny the room next to Dave's. Hanna said, "We must preserve propriety. What would your mother say if you brought a girl (and worse, a shiksa), to sleep at Lothringenstrasse?"

Dave laughed, "Hanna, I've become a shegetz and I am almost thirty, so the old rules don't apply. But he accepted the sleeping arrangements and they both knew that privacy came with darkness. They would never have used the Yiddish terms in Stuttgart. These were part of New York City lingua franca.

The close friendship between Buddy and Dave going back to 1937, resulted in long, serious talks. Dave was dissatisfied with his scientific career which had a lot to do with the development of frightful new weapons. Buddy asked him if he might be interested in joining Schuyler Ellington in directing the estate and foundation. "Schuyler remembers when we rescued you from London. Why don't we have a conference with Schuyler tomorrow morning?"

417

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

At the gatehouse next day Schuyler joked, "The only problem is whether or not we can train a Phi Beta Kappa physicist to do our kind of work! Buddy, do you think he's got enough brains?"

They decided to give it a try. Dave would go through the same process Buddy had undergone in 1933, i. e., training at the School of Commerce in Iowa City and on-the-job training in Schuyler's office. His compensation would exceed that at Argonne so he and Jenny could afford to get married and move to a little Maynard Estate clapboard house which they partly furnished with the excess Mission oak from Gretchen's gatehouse project.

RETURN TO THE SCHURWALD

In April 1951 Dave took Jenny and Hanna for a three-month visit to Baumgartenhaus. In New York City they stayed with Emma at River House for ten days until their ship, the Queen Mary, sailed. Jenny, who was a Chicago girl, had to be shown the old haunts by both Dave and Hanna. In the Riverhouse area she saw the Queensboro Bridge, the tiny neighborhood parks, Welfare Island, the old pier where Hanna and Nogg met the dead-end kids, Public School One Three Five, Miss Glamorgan's elegant doorstep where Griselda Maynard had been found, and also the striking, new glass United Nations Secretariat building just south.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Much of their time they spent with Joe at his Village apartment in Bedford Street, or at the Reisfeld and Goldsmith Bookstore. Joe was now sole owner because Uncle Abraham had died in 1948 at age ninety-one, leaving everything to Joe. This included the bookstore and some small savings, but also a hundred thousand dollar life insurance policy that Joe hadn't known about. For a couple brisk spring days, Joe drove them all up to the Lake Placid cabin which Buddy had sold back to the Townsleys at cost when he moved his family to Iowa.

Now in 1951, Joe was negotiating to buy the old four-story Italianate bracketed building on Fourth Avenue where the store was located. Here the bookstore had always used the second floor and parts of the basement for book storage, but the top two floors, unused since the First World War, had boarded-up windows. Joe believed that with some extensive renovation he could have two commodious apartments up there and live over the shop in time-honored entrepreneurial fashion.

One day he took them all up to see. They carried big flashlights since the electricity was cut off and only narrow slivers of light penetrated the boarded windows.

"I guess the plumbing stopped working about 1918 so the owners just moved out. That's what Uncle Abraham told me. They had other buildings and didn't want to spend money on this one--but they kept it, who knows why? I think an eccentric widow owned it. Now it's been in probate for several years.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"There are two large apartments--one on each floor, or one could remodel them into four smaller units if one wanted to. The building dates from about 1869 and is solid with a flat tar roof. It's brick with an iron front bolted on. I'll show you the foundry name out there. The decorative detail is iron and when we scrape the rust away and paint it, it will be a glory to behold!"

"I've thought this top floor could be grand, perhaps with one or two skylights and maybe a garden terrace on the roof. There are lots like that around the city." In the musty gloom they could see stained, ancient, striped wall paper hanging in shreds, and fallen plaster mixed with filth and rat-droppings on the floor. It reminded David of an oft-published photograph of the devastated room in Ekaterinburg where the Bolsheviks had executed the Romanoff family. Even so, it was impossible not to share Joe's enthusiasm. With imagination, light, air, Lysol, plaster, paint and elbow grease, a great metamorphosis could come to this place!

Joe resumed, "I think we killed off all the rats some time ago when they started chewing our books downstairs. We had the exterminators do a proper job on the whole building. But look in here!" He led them into an old kitchen where four coffee cups were on a table. Oak chairs were pushed back from the table as though someone made a hasty exit. Dried coffee stained the cup bottoms. On the wall was a 1918 calendar with a picture of Mary Pickford selling war bonds. Dead gas and electric light

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

fixtures were in the rooms.

In a pantry off the kitchen were shelves of jam and fruit preserves in glass-lidded, dust-covered jars. "Touch some of those and you'll set off an explosion," warned Joe. There was a Yuban coffee can, a faded box of White King Granulated Soap and a rat-chewed, cardboard box of Quaker Oats. David looked closely. Sure enough, it came from Cedar Rapids! A missing kitchen range had left its outline on the broken linoleum.

On a kitchen shelf was a stack of New York Tribunes, the latest from December 1918, telling of the end of the Great War and the Allied occupation of the German Rhineland. Joe read some of the headlines. "Remember Davy, papa told us about that. The German newspapers told the people their army had voluntarily ended the war to stop the bloodshed and suffering. The German army retreated in good order and there were flags and cheers as they passed through the towns."

Joe led them through the other rooms where abandoned clothing hung in wardrobe closets. The rooms were spacious with high ceilings, fine heavy woodwork and brass fittings. The newel posts and balusters were ornate, carved walnut, much in need of cleaning. The soapstone kitchen sinks and primitive bathroom fixtures in the final stage of disintegration, begged to be removed although the cracked toilet bowls had once been beauties of porcelain embossed with garlands of flowers.

As they went down the steps Dave asked Joe how his finances were. "Buddy might be willing to help you with estate money. He does this kind of thing over and over. Even if you can buy this building, it will cost a lot to fix it up."

"Davy, Buddy's been our great good friend--more than we had any right to expect, but I want to handle this on my own. It's going to be wonderful to be out of debt someday. I'll buy the building if I can, then do the renovation when I can afford it!"

In the bookstore Joe kept Abraham's old coffee pot, brass cash register, wicker chair and Woodstock typewriter. These were all retired and replaced but kept for sentimental reasons. That day, not so long after the interminable Whittaker Chambers-Alger Hiss hearings which had filled newspapers for months with the bizarre story of the Pumpkin Papers and the nation-wide hunt for Hiss' old Woodstock typewriter, Joe struck a histrionic pose, looking right and left to discover secret agents, his forefinger to his lips, his blue eyes sparkling, then in a husky stage whisper he told them, "There is the old Woodstock typewriter!" This startling bit of theatre caused initial consternation then laughter from Dave and Jenny.

While they visited, the two brothers agreed that Aaron should have their mother's ring that she had slipped to Hanna on that fearful day in 1937 in Baden-Baden.

For old-time's sake, Dave called at the Feldstein, Orbach Brokerage in Nassau Street. Allen Feldstein and Mrs. Kepler received him with surprising warmth, seeming to know a lot about what he had been doing since he left them in 1941. Mr. Feldstein gave him coffee in the richly-paneled office, the sanctum that Dave had formerly only glimpsed from the corridor. "Mrs. Reisfeld has told us of your triumphs! We bragged about you in the street--our war hero, and then later at M. I. T.--just think, Doctor Goldsmith, the physicist, who used to work at Feldstein's! Oh yes, we're proud of you. We have other informants too--some friends down here at Brown Brothers. I was surprised when I heard that you had joined the Maynard Estate office. I don't know of any other physicists who are also financial wizards, but we expect great things from you.

"Do you know Mrs. Reisfeld called me back in 1937 so I could arrange for you to work and attend college at the same time? We feel we played our little part in getting you started. She is a charming lady. You are staying with her now? I don't see her as often as I would like. And you are married now? No children yet? Going back to the fatherland for a visit? To visit a brother? But you are Jewish are you not?"

Dave explained how Aaron had been in the resistance and at war's end chose to remain in Germany.

"Not an easy choice," mused Mr. Feldstein, "but we hear of a few who have done that."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Later, Dave walked two blocks down to Brown Brothers Harriman to meet some colleagues of Buddy and Schuyler Ellington.

It was David's second crossing on the Queen Mary--this time one step up in cabin class. They took the boat train to Paris, staying overnight at Herr Klingelschnur's little hotel. The aged Alsatian welcomed Hanna like an old friend. "Ja, I have so often thought of Fräulein Böcklin. We have many who pass through but some we remember. Fourteen years is it? I knew you didn't like Hitler so I helped as I could. You are now American? Ach nu! We had a long fight to get rid of the Nazis. Now you are back only for a visit? Now in Germany it is much better. They suffered much, but they work hard, they rebuild, and there is the Marshall Plan to help. But there are lots of good people there when they get cured of their bad ideas!"

Next day from the Gare de l'Est they took the train to Stuttgart where Aaron would meet them. They planned to tour Paris properly before sailing back to America.

Jenny recognized that this visit would be difficult for both Dave and Hanna who were bursting with conflicting emotions. As they approached and crossed the Rhine, Jenny doggedly watched the scenery, exciting and interesting as always at this ancient frontier. She reached over to hold Dave's hand.

When they stopped at Baden-Baden, Hanna suddenly arose to walk down the corridor to hide her tears. The station looked different, friendly with its bright paint and geraniums.

She saw an American officer loading his family into an olive-drab Packard at almost the same spot where she had last seen Trude Goldschmidt and the children.

Stuttgart certainly was different. Scarcely any building in the center had escaped the bombs. Now a feverish reconstruction had seized the city and all of Germany. Allied policy and aid were designed to re-create West Germany as a prosperous, democratic bulwark. Derricks, construction materials, scaffolding were everywhere. Streets were being widened. Stacks of reclaimed bricks and cobble stones stood in cleared sites where David remembered imposing buildings.

Aaron, driving a pre-war Citroën, met them at the station. Aaron himself was a surprise to them since his thick shock of hair had turned completely white. He was undeniably handsome--lithe, with an athletic, masculine grace, muscular with bronzed, furrowed features and those alert black eyes. A white-haired young man with an air of mystery that people turned to watch. Dave and Hanna exchanged smiles when they saw young women in the station unabashedly staring at Aaron. Aaron shrugged. "It happens. There are just not enough men to go around here. Millions killed in the war and they say a half million or more are prisoners still in the Soviet Union. So better watch out, Davy. Lots of predatory women hereabout!" It was an emotional reunion. As they embraced, their minds raced back over all the catastrophes of the preceding twenty years. "Remember," he told them, "I am now Alberich Wolke."

Alberich drove them past the old and new palaces of the Dukes of Württemberg, the Schlossgarten and the ruins of

THE TUSCAN VILLA by R. L. Merritt

the Stiftskirche, then out the Lothringenstrasse so they might see the site of the Goldschmidt house. The house was gone; the land was dotted with little vegetable gardens. Alberich said, "It happened that night just before Davy showed up at the farm, I think. The house was still there up until then, but there was a heavy bombing and one of the bombs landed square on our house. They say the Herr Kriminaldirektor and his gang all went up in smoke. I found that out later! It's just as well. I don't think any of us could have lived there again with all the memories."

David thought how the bomb that destroyed his parents' house might have come from the same R. A. F. bomber that carried him on the Wolfsjäger mission. He asked Alberich to stop the car for a minute. He had noticed some of the ubiquitous neat piles of reclaimed brick. These were a shade of light tan--bricks from their parents' house!

Dave walked over through the familiar old iron gate in the garden wall, approaching an elderly, emaciated man in tattered garments and worn Wehrmacht cap who was slowly hoeing a patch of young potato plants.

The old man, with an uneasy sidelong glance of his rheumy, faded-blue eyes muttered, "I have papers and my grandson has a job in the Daimler-Benz Works. For five years we are now here."

David reassured him. "I'm not here about that. Don't worry. I wonder if I might have four of those tan-colored

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

bricks? I will pay for them. We knew a family who lived here long ago, before the war, and I would like some bricks from the old house for souvenirs."

The old man looked at the bricks piled at the periphery of the garden. "Ach, Backsteine, ja! We have here too many. Always each day I am digging up more." Realizing David was no threat to him, he became more friendly. "Ja, let's go pick some good ones. You can have ten or twenty, warum nicht?"

David laughed. "I am American and we must travel back to America, so we mustn't take too many because they are so heavy." He gave the old man some Deutsche marks. "Buy yourself some good tobacco--I see you have your pipe."

Now the old man smiled. "A-mer-i-ka,"--he drew out the syllables--"I hoped to go there one time when I was young. It was a dream. Maybe it was your family that once lived here, ja? I too would like some certain bricks. I would like a brick from my grandfather's house. We lived near Karlsbad in the Sudetenland. For four hundred years our family was there but at the end of the war we were Flüchtlinge--refugees--. All the Germans had to leave since that is in Czechoslovakia. They said we supported Hitler and they herded us across the frontier. We had some months when there was almost no food. Here they put us in refugee camps, even the old concentration camp at Dachau. We were so cold and hungry my wife and daughter died there from pneumonia. Also my son was gone at Stalingrad

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

so I have now only my grandson.

"Things are better now but people here say I am too old to work so I try to grow potatoes for next winter. We have a room in a widow's house near here. We will never go back to the Sudetenland so I told my grandson, 'I wish I had just one old brick from home.' He laughed at me. He's a good boy but he doesn't understand. He thinks only of buying a car and fine clothes."

They walked to the brick pile. Some bricks had a brown, glazed design on one side which David recalled had formed a pattern around the doors and windows. They picked out four of these and carried them to the car.

Alberich had been showing the others where he and Joe had chiseled their initials into the garden wall in about 1925. He pulled some weeds aside. The initials in well-formed Fraktur were still there! "We were going to put the date but we got tired of the hard work!"

David showed them the four souvenir bricks. "Remember, these were the special bricks used around the entrance. I have four--one each for Hanna, Alberich, Joe and me."

Before they proceeded on their way, they wished good luck to the old gardener who stood by the gate waving at their parting car. In a half-hour they turned up past the little Catholic chapel in the Schurwald. "Father Lehrer died last year. He's buried there by his apple trees. He said Germany was in good hands when Adenauer became

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Bundeskanzler. But we had some difficult times after the war. Everything was in a shambles. You couldn't get this, you couldn't get that. It was hardest in the cities where there was little food and fuel. They chopped down beautiful old trees in the Schlossgarten for firewood. Lucky for us the Americans helped a lot. Now, since the currency reform, the economy looks better. We might even get prosperous! Gisela and I were fortunate. We had chickens, rabbits, potatoes, cow's milk, apples, grapes, and some grain and we were able to help some friends in town who had nothing. Then those CARE packages that Joe and Davy sent were a great help that we could share with Father Lehrer and Gisela's cousin's family."

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

The visit went well and they were glad they had come. It would never be so difficult again since time softens sorrow. They visited picturesque provincial towns nearby, and the collections in the Stuttgart museums which had survived the bombing.

One day Dave asked Alberich if their Nazi friends were still beneath the dung heap. Alberich smiled grimly, "Where else? They're not going anywhere!"

"But Gisela doesn't know?"

"No, she need not know. What good would it do? It could only upset her."

David and Gisela got to know and like each other, ruefully recalling their first brief encounter--those few minutes in 1944 filled with reserve, suspicion and fear. Aaron had sent her away that day and she still knew nothing of the violent events that enabled the Goldschmidt brothers to survive.

"Naturally, I was curious about your visit and then alarmed by Aaron's disappearance. But that had happened before. It was the clandestine character of his work--not a clue until after the war! It was a difficult cat and mouse game that we had been playing with the Nazis for years. I just believed that Aaron was going to return sometime. I was helped a little on the farm by my cousin, Reinhold Goetz, who has a farm just down the road here. Reinhold lost a leg at Kursk in 1943. He was given a wooden leg and sent home. My aunt was still living there then. Reinhold never

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

saw Aaron. We didn't talk politics but I discovered later that he didn't like the Nazis either. The Nazis wanted Aaron badly. Well, those days, Gott sei Dank, are over. Aaron, Alberich that is, says we must not talk or even think about those awful times."

Another day the brothers walked to the little Stephanskirche where Dave had parachuted during the war. "I must return to the scene of the crime--see if I left any evidence!"

The church was surrounded with scaffolding and Dave found Günther Wächter still apparently guarding the moldering parachute. But Günther had a mass of colorful Stiefmütterchen (pansies) and a polished granite stone which said simply Im Russland gefallen, omitting the part about Führer und Vaterland. Alberich said, "Oh yes, they're all doing that if they have enough money to replace the markers. It's not in style anymore to mention der Führer!"

Sitting on a bench in the quiet churchyard they talked of many things. Dave told of their recent visit in New York and of Joe's success and plans. "He's even attending Columbia University part-time--working on a doctorate in literature though he says it won't happen any time soon. He's got a girl friend too, but we didn't meet her. She's an anthropologist and was on a field trip in British Columbia when we were in New York. Somehow it seems funny to me to have an anthropologist for a girl friend! Maybe they talk about tribal religions in Togoland or Athapascan languages in Alaska!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

431

Alberich was amused. "Come now, I expect she's a charmer! Joe always had good sense and good taste! Anyway, what about you? A physicist and a Herr Doktor! What kind of a love-bird are you? By the way, why are you doing this other work? What is it?"

Dave explained, "You remember meeting Colonel Stanley Maynard in Colchester in 1944? He is like an American brother to Joe and me. He is very wealthy--so wealthy in fact that it's difficult to manage all the assets! He owns a great estate with a headquarters building and a staff of experts. When he asked me to join his staff I decided to try it though I had to take some special training in financial matters.

"Before that I was working in nuclear physics--military projects to develop more efficient systems of mass destruction--(part of the Cold War). I was unhappy there. I want to build not destroy, and we've had enough destruction in our lives.

"Now Stanley's estate is being converted into a philanthropic foundation. I can help decide how to do that. The foundation helps students, libraries, colleges, hospitals, social projects, and the list is growing. Stanley has been a close, wonderful friend. Hanna has worked for him since 1937, and now she's housekeeper in his villa in Iowa. The villa is really a Schloss but they're very democratic. They eat together and Hanna is part of their family--like an aunt!"

Alberich smiled. "Hanna looks so grand--similar to a duchess! America has been good for her."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

That was when David gave their mother's ring to Alberich.
"Joe and I want you to have it. You're the oldest."

Alberich kissed the ring, studied it carefully then slipped it into his pocket. "I'll give it to Gisela. You've seen how it is with us. She's my mainstay. I'll tell you our secret. Gisela is pregnant. We were careful not to have children before, but now, after twelve years, we think it's time to settle down!" A seriocomic expression flashed across his face then both brothers grinned.

The first of the drei Wölkchen--the three cloudlets--was on his way.

Back in the New World that same autumn, Josef Goldsmith and his anthropologist, Dr. Cordelia Lewis, were married at her parents' home in Connecticut. The old Fourth Avenue building was re-habilitated in stages so that they were able to set up house-keeping on the top floor where the vestiges of 1918 succumbed to 1951. Cordelia joined the Columbia faculty and Joe soon received his Doctor of Letters degree, making him the best educated bookseller in his block.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

In Cedar Rapids the years slipped by as families grew. When his duties permitted, Schuyler Ellington returned permanently to New York City. It seemed natural for Dave and Jenny Goldsmith to move into the gatehouse. Their first child, Stanley Maynard Goldsmith, was born in 1953 and his brother, Konrad Aaron, arrived the following year.

Up in the villa, Buddy and Gretchen were amazed that they were now middle-aged, their children nearly grown.

One significant project of this time was Gretchen's kitchen garden. One day she had remarked to Buddy, "It's wonderful having George Luckner here to do the gardening but I would like to do some gardening on my own. I've been a frustrated gardener since we came to New York City in 1935!"

Buddy was greatly amused at her rueful expression. He gently tried to push up the corners of her mouth. "Just see how sad we are! Are we not frightfully mistreated? Why didn't you complain six or eight years ago, poor deprived creature? You had those potted geraniums and hyacinths at River House. Not enough? Well, we have plenty of rich land and sunshine here. Gretchen shall have her garden!"

Gretchen almost never asked for anything for herself-- a quality that endeared her the more to Buddy. Buddy had read somewhere of Eleanor Roosevelt's special place at Hyde Park-- Val-Kill. There the former first-lady had created her own happy retreat down in a corner of the estate away from the

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

cares and pretensions of the great house where a domineering mother-in-law ruled. "Everybody needs a place like that. I have the tower room. Now Gretchen will have a private garden."

They chose a south-sloping half-acre plot behind the carriage house where some fine sugar maples and northern red oak trees stood. Buddy had the plot enclosed with an eight-foot brick wall and some brick paths laid out according to a plan Gretchen made. Inside was a low, brick Tuscan structure to house a tool shed, a bathroom and a studio for Gretchen. There were two gates with rounded tops and heavy wooden doors painted green with wrought-iron hinges--one for people and one for trucks of manure. Over the people-gate was a sign carved in Gothic letters:

GRETCHENS GEMÜSEGARTEN

(1955)

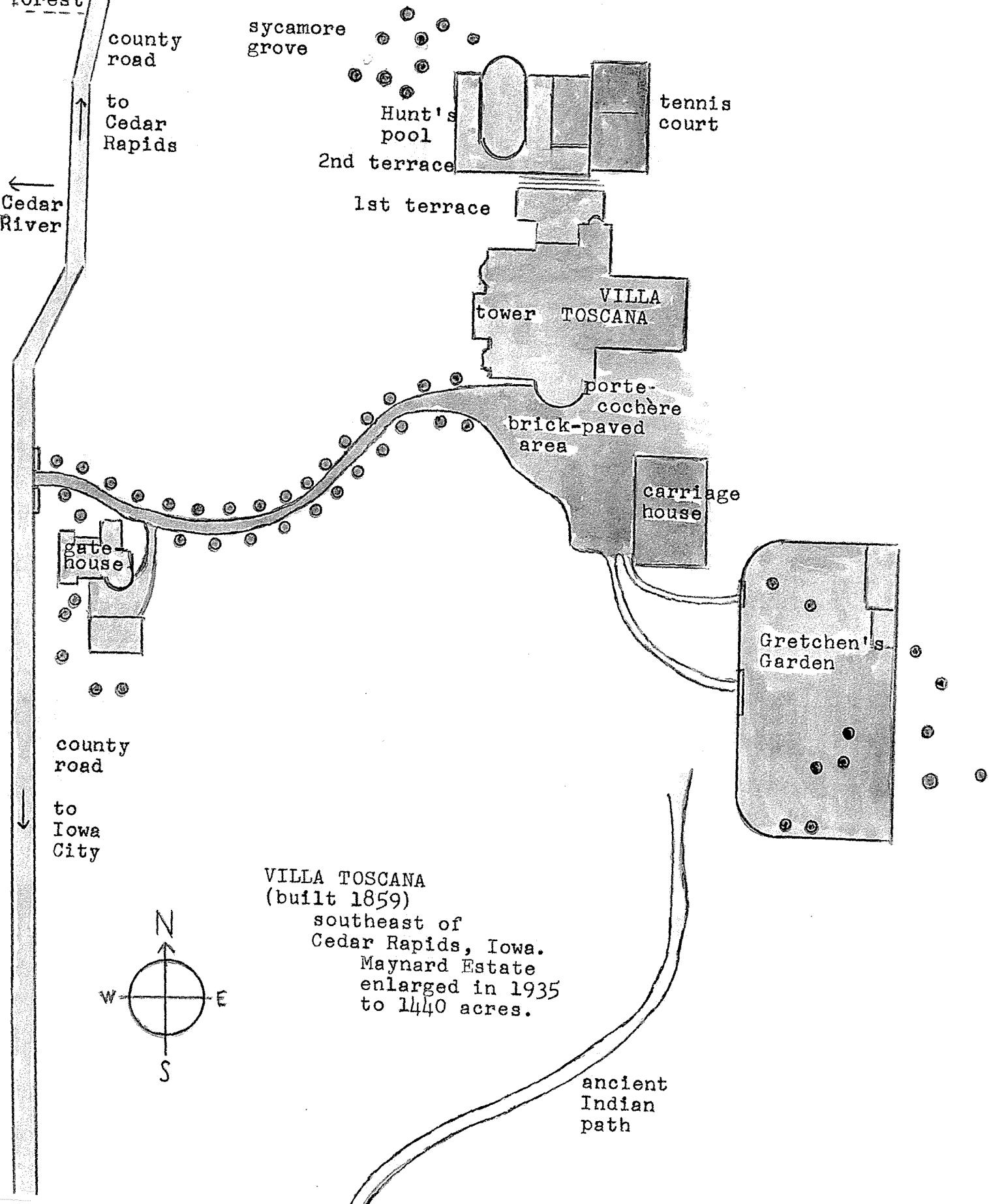
Gretchen got a small brick terrace with table, chairs and colorful beach umbrella such as they had near the swimming pool. The land was laid out in parterres which they could cultivate or not according to whim and energy. She got loads of aged cow manure from Alfred Bunker who still farmed most of the estate, and she got rabbit manure from George Luckner's rabbit enterprise. She remembered the piles of steaming manure at every Thuringian farm and was convinced she knew the secret of agricultural success.

She invited Alma Peckenpaugh, the master-gardener over from Miss Havergill's house. Alma's garden, as expected, had become one of the wonders of Cedar Rapids over the past two decades. After fondly reminiscing about the great

40 acres
bought
to
Screen
View
with
forest

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

after p. 434



THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Havergill project of 1936 when that garden had emerged from the brambles, Alma inspected the new site, pronounced it a perfect one, then suggested that Alfred Bunker give it a good ploughing with his tractor that autumn, then the beds and paths be laid out, the beds long and narrow, raised and never to be walked on again. Then rich mixtures of leaves and manure must be generously spread over the beds. She emphasized that the existing supply of leaves must be augmented with tons more from from the streets and lanes--all to be composted with the manure.

Alma persuaded Buddy and Gretchen to buy two of the new Ruster-Rustless Garden Tillers manufactured in Cedar Rapids by her oldest son Toby and his partner, Orville Ruster. The Ruster company, long in gestation, had finally been launched in 1950 with Maynard financing, so Buddy was inclined to give them business.

In September before Nogg departed for his first year at Dartmouth, the whole family, dressed in denim overalls, went to favorable spots on leaf-gathering expeditions. They would pile into one of the Buicks followed by George Luckner with his pick-up truck. They filled hundreds of gunny sacks with leaves to be carried to Gretchen's garden. Burghers who recognized them thought they were odd, but probably not dangerous.

Gretchen's garden was her twentieth wedding anniversary gift. She and her guests, principally Hanna, her own family or the Goldsmiths, spent countless happy hours there and grew embarrassing amounts of flowers, vegetables and fruit, much

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

of which they donated to the Salvation Army or churches to feed the poor.

MADGE'S LEGACY

The previous year, 1954, Madge had died in her sleep at the Plaza Hotel in New York City. Buddy flew back to accompany her body to the Maynard mausoleum, but in life she had never returned to the villa after Hunt's death. In those last years they talked by telephone on Sunday mornings and since the younger Maynards were frequently in Manhattan, they would lunch together, but on her terms, that is, she chose the locale and the subject matter for discussion and they humored her for the sake of tranquility.

She surprised everybody by leaving her estate to her second cousin, Monty Templeton. Monty was most surprised of all. The estate was two and one-half million dollars after taxes. She and Monty had never met, not even exchanged letters, for as she candidly remarked, "What could we possibly say to each other?"

Monty phoned Cedar Rapids. "Buddy, I don't understand this at all! It must be a big mistake. This money should go to you or your kids or anybody but us. We haven't done anything to deserve this. Why we never even saw your mother. I can't take this! What would I do with it? You know what kind of life we have--it's simple and uncomplicated and your dad already put us on easy street with guaranteed

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

income and the schooling for the kids. Oh gosh, no, I can't take anything like this! It would change our whole life. Besides, I don't know how to handle money like that!"

Buddy had to calm him down. "Monty, the truth is in this family we just happen to have too much money. I've been working for years to build our foundation so all the excess money will do some good."

He laughed. "I'm afraid this money is yours now, you can't squirm out of it. One reason she left it to you may be because she had a 'crush' on your father when she was ten years old. She told me that years ago. It must have been in 1889 before your family left Orange County!"

"A two and ~~one~~-half million dollar crush," Monty interjected, "That's a helluva crush!"

"But that wasn't all. My mother was also unreasonably proud of the Templeton family and their long history in the Hudson Valley. She thought they were distinctly superior to the Maynards. In her mind the Templetons were nobility up there with the Stuyvesants and the Van Rensselaers, while the Maynards were a new-rich family that scarcely measured up. Most of her ideas were odd and Hunt and I could never change them, but that's the way it was. Anyway, it was not Maynard money. It came from her first husband, Arthur Fulton. She always kept it in a special account at the Maynard Estate office. It was invested for her by experts and the sum grew and was protected. She could use what income she wished.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"This sum is going to keep growing--five percent in ordinary years--that's one hundred twenty-five thousand, and some years a lot more. Now here's what I suggest: We can simply leave that money in that account and change the name of the owner from Madge Maynard to DeWitt Clinton Templeton. Our experts will do as they have always done, and even take care of your income tax for you if you wish. You can go on living exactly as though the money were not there.

"I think I know how you feel. You have had the natural elements to contend with out there, but life has been simple, uncomplicated and happy. It's this honest simplicity that we have always enjoyed when we come to visit you.

"But I advise you to accept this money. If you don't, it might even go to the State of New York. In the future after you get accustomed to its being there, you might have an opportunity to buy one of those old ranch properties, or you might want to give some money to an orphanage or a school, or buy a silver trophy to be awarded each year to the best all-around cowpoke in Montana!"

Monty cautiously remarked, "Yes, we started sending money to some charities when your dad remembered us in 1946. We never had extra before. We could send more, couldn't we? Gosh, we could really do some good!"

Buddy chortled. "That's the idea. A million good causes need money. You pick some out and help them!"



Richard Lee Merritt
4428 23rd St.
San Francisco, CA 94114-3114

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

439

TWENTY YEARS LATER

In July 1974, fifteen months after Gretchen and Hanna died, Stanley had yet to recover from his depression. The villa was so silent, so deserted, so lonely, its material blessings availed him not. One Sunday he brought the Chicago, New York and Cedar Rapids papers up to the tower. He carefully read the news, then went on to the classified advertisements--something he would rarely do since they offered multitudes of goods and services for which he had no need.

That Sunday, coming across a little advertisement in the local paper, he scanned quickly by, then his eye returned. This interested him. Here was someone who had studied at the Paris Conservatoire! Not many such people in Iowa!

Experienced piano teacher trained at Prague and Paris Conservatories, now accepting students at all levels--call J. Holečková--JU8-9438

His mind went back to 1932--so long ago--now forty-two years! Josefa had been kidnapped by her father. The little tragi-comedy played again through his mind. Then he thought of her letters from Prague. She wrote she had married (who was it?)--Antonín Holeček. Slavic women have feminine

suffixes tacked on their names. Surely this couldn't be Josefa here in Cedar Rapids? J. Holečková?

The quickest way to find out was to call that number. Feeling faint and with trembling hand, Stanley dialed. A pleasant voice answered.

Stanley asked, "Is Josefa there, please?"

Mystified, since few in this country called her by her given name, she answered, "I am Josefa, yes, but who is calling?"

"Are you Josefa Němcová who studied in Paris in 1932?"

"Indeed yes, but who knows that? Who is calling?"

"I am Stanley de la tour toscane!"

Silence, then she drew in her breath emitting a little involuntary cry. "You are Stanley Maynard who had rooms in the rue de Vaugirard? Who ate le déjeuner at Pension Dampierre? But this is not a joke? It's a thousand years ago!"

"Josefa, this is the same old Stanley. May I see you? Is your husband there? Perhaps he won't mind a visit from an old student friend?"

"Oh, this is a shock! I don't believe it's you, Stanley! It can't be! How did you get my phone number? No, my husband is gone, my brave Antonín died eight years ago. I live here now with my daughter Libuše Czermaká. Yes, of course, we must meet, it will be such a pleasure, but Stanley, I don't look as I did in 1932. Youth flies. I've become an old woman, poor, old and not so pretty, not so thin. Maybe it would be better if you didn't see me? Your memories would not be spoiled."

"Tell me your address. I'll come for piano lessons if

nothing else." It was the Czech neighborhood south of the river. "I'll pick you up at two this afternoon!"

Both old lovers were concerned about the impression they would make. They scurried about, bathing, trying different costumes, applying cologne, attempting to pat refractory tummies and chins back into place, combing, re-combing hair, wishing the mirror told a different story.

Still, they weren't unattractive--sexagenarians, yes, odd as that sounded, but the decades had not been unkind. Both had thick, curly hair, now gray, with brown, intelligent eyes made interesting by masses of crow's feet wrinkles. Faces with character!

Buddy, habitually disciplined in his diet and personal conduct, jogged and swam regularly every morning. He was scarcely heavier than in 1932 but today, in the mirror, he discovered incipient wattles that disappeared if he lifted his face. "Too late to do anything about that now. Anyway, what's to be done?" He had heard of women, screen-stars and country club creatures, men too, who had face-lifts. He smiled into the mirror. "Buddy-boy, thank God you're not that vain. They'll have to take or leave you as you are!" Since it was very warm outside he finally dressed in tan denim slacks and a white polo shirt. He was brown from summer mornings in the pool. A last glance in the mirror: "Not bad for your age, old boy!"

In this situation his mind went back fleetingly to that analogous moment in 1945 when he had primped before the mirror

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

442

at River House. "You'll knock 'em dead," good old Hanna had said. He chuckled a bit, surprising himself as the gloom of the past fifteen months seemed to lift.

Josefa was plump. After bathing, she tried three different dresses before settling on a loose-fitting, calf-length, pale-blue cotton that she had found on sale in a dress shop. She could accent it with a navy-blue silk scarf. It was so hot! Frightful! Not an ideal time to meet an old lover. What would he think of her? He would see this sad little apartment; see her battered furniture, her forlorn piano. And today the overworked air cooler was groaning. The thermometer in her dining room said 90° F. What was that? Over 32° Celsius?

Buddy started at one-thirty, driving his 1974 Buick quickly to her neighborhood. It was ten minutes too soon when he found the old two-story wooden house with its sagging, paint-checked porch. He parked in a shady spot down the block, keeping the engine and air-cooler running. At two o'clock he knocked on her door. She was in the kitchen. She bolted down some red wine to give her courage, then went to answer the door.

After forty-two years they faced each other again. Her face was flushed with the heat and the wine, but she was plump and pretty still. And Stanley? More handsome than ever! They took each other's hands then broke into laughter. "You were supposed to meet me in the Restaurant-des-Deux-Mondes," Stanley joked, "I've been waiting for a long time!"

"Oh, my Stanley, how I wanted to keep that rendez-vous! A million times I've wondered how it might all have turned out

differently. But we can't turn back the clock." She was crying and in that same gesture he remembered from long ago, she swept a little plump fist across her cheek.

He pulled her into an embrace there on the doorstep. They kissed. An unprepossessing six-year-old neighbor girl named Ernestine Spitzel, dressed in a dirty bathing suit, looked up at them from the sidewalk. Rubbing her index fingers together, she sucked in her breath and caught her lower lip with her upper teeth. "Naughty, naughty, naughty," she sang out, then running home, "I'm gonna tell my mommy on you!"

"Compromised already," Buddy grinned. "You have nosy neighbors! Would you like to go to the Tuscan Villa--remember, the tower? No neighbors to supervise us there. We have a million things to discuss. It's only a few minutes drive."

"Only a few minutes? Oh, how incredible. I had no idea you were here. I've been here in Cedar Rapids almost six years! But we should not have kissed. You surely have a wife?"

"I had Gretchen, a wonderful, loving wife. We were married in 1935 in New York City and we had three children, but Gretchen was killed in an auto accident last year. We were married for thirty-eight years and it was a good marriage. I can't tell you how lonely and depressed I have been during these months. We also had a close friend, Hanna Bocklin, who was our housekeeper, but more a friend and family member, and she was killed with Gretchen, so it was a double blow. They were driving home from Amana on slippery roads in the springtime. A semi-truck driver went to sleep and there was a collision. Gretchen and Hanna died instantly." His face mirrored his misery, then brightened. "Get your overcoat and we'll drive

to the Tuscan tower! Your papa won't come after you this time, I hope!"

They walked to the Buick. Its cool, luxurious interior felt grateful, almost chilly, to Josefa after the moment in the merciless sunshine. In a quarter hour the big car entered the estate driveway. All the Goldsmith cars were parked at the gatehouse, even their oldest son's Volkswagen. "I have friends living there in the gatehouse. It's Dave Goldsmith and his family. Their oldest son is home for the summer from Harvard Business School. Guess what his name is? They named him Stanley Maynard Goldsmith! He's smart and he's handsome so I can't complain about having such a namesake! Well, there it is--the Villa Toscana, and see the tower with its balconies, and the vines--it's Parthenocissus tricuspidata--Boston ivy."

It was breath-taking, a beautiful sight. "But it's a château, it's a Schloss!"

Buddy roared with glee. He felt wonderful, he felt young again. "How many people have said those very words--it must be true! That's what Gretchen said when she first saw it! She was a refugee from Hitler--from Jena, only a few hundred kilometers from Prague. 'A veritable Schloss,' she said."

He parked the car in the carriage house then led Josefa to the screened, open entryway. The house seemed blissfully cool because the vagaries of the Iowa climate scarcely penetrated its thick-walled masonry bulk.

"Six years you've been in Cedar Rapids! Josefa, why didn't you try to find me? I could have been some help to you. The Maynards are well-known here. We've been here for one hundred thirty years!" He led her into the cool, dimly-lighted drawing room with its high, ornate ceiling, its marble fireplace and wide bay where Christmas trees stood in past years, its paintings by Frederick Church and Thomas Moran. They sat for a moment. Josefa was wide-eyed and speechless in this opulent setting. It had that effect on people.

"Hilda Grieder is my trusty housekeeper now. She's been with me for fifteen years, but she doesn't work on Sundays. But I know we have some Czech Pilsner beer out in the kitchen. What would you like? Can I get you some beer or a cocktail? I know how to make the easy ones."

She went with him to the cavernous kitchen and helped find the beer in the restaurant-size refrigerator. Everything in this house was large-scale. They brought the beer on a tray back to the drawing room.

"Stanley, when we came to America I thought of trying to find you, but I just knew you would be married with lots of grandchildren and you wouldn't want anything so awkward as an aging Parisian girlfriend showing up on your doorstep. Furthermore, I am a complete dolt about geography, especially American. I remembered your villa was in a place with an Indian name, but Iowa, Tulsa, Idaho, Ottawa and Ohio all seemed the same to me, and I don't believe I ever heard you mention Cedar Rapids.

"We came here because my old cousin, Karolina Groll, offered to help. That's her house where we live. We got out of Czechoslovakia with just the clothes on our backs."

Buddy asked, "Any boyfriends now?"

She laughed a little. "Boyfriends! Who would have me now? My daughter Libuše is forty this year. She lost her husband in 1968 and I think she has a boyfriend at the newspaper, but she won't talk about it, so I'm not sure. I've thought about going back to Prague because I would have a little pension and a secure place to live--that's socialism--but my family is all gone. My two sons died in a confrontation with the Soviet tanks in 1968. But come, you must show me through this amazing house!"

They walked into the library, now expanded into the second drawing room to accomodate the mass of Reisfeld books from River House. In the original library he had hung an oil portrait of his father to complement those of the earlier Maynards. Hunt had sat for the portrait in about 1940 when, as he believed, he had developed a sufficiently aspect. The portrait had hung in the board room at the Maynard Building until two years earlier when the building was sold for seven million dollars in the continuing down-sizing of the estate. The artist had caught a bit of Hunt's kindly, thoughtful nature.

Buddy explained how the estate had grown, starting with the old paddle-wheel river boats pictured there. "These three men were all superlative businessmen, but when it all came down

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

447

to me, that is when my father died in 1946, I decided I wasn't suited to run such a vast enterprise, and ever since we have been transferring the assets, bit by bit, into a philanthropic foundation."

Now they went to the music room. The Steinway from River House had been placed vis-à-vis the Baldwin so that pianists could play duets while facing one another. The Bechstein stood against the wainscot and Letitia reigned, as always, from her glowing portrait.

He smiled in a self-deprecating way. "Almost an excess of pianos here, don't you think? And down in the gatehouse I have a beautiful Bösendorfer! But each one is dear to me. This Bechstein square piano came to the villa from Pennsylvania on a river boat, and this Baldwin my grandmother bought for me in 1924.

"That's my grandmother up there in the portrait. She was a superb pianist and my first teacher--She used to take me to New York City every year to hear the concerts. Then this Steinway, we had when we lived in New York. My parents still lived in the villa and father sent me to New York as a sort of family business representative. I lived there after 1933 in an apartment. It was fairly empty for a long time except for books and the piano, but after I married Gretchen in 1935 we started furnishing it. The children were born there, then I went to war. After the war we moved to Cedar Rapids. So that's why we have so many pianos! There's even an old upright out in the carriage house!"

448

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

Josefa, mischievously eyeing him, sat down at the Baldwin and started playing Mozart's A-major Sonata. Stanley grinned. "Yes, I never hear that without thinking of Josefa and our heated discussions about the inept little Luigi Pardini. Let us hope that when he returned to Italy he became a butcher so not to train a generation of pianists in some provincial town to play as inadequately as himself!"

Buddy tried playing along on the Steinway. "I always like to hear the two pianos simultaneously. They're both very good. I have them tuned regularly. They've seen some fine pianists. Back before 1930 grandmother used to entertain many a virtuoso when they came to town to give concerts, and we have always had musical soirees over the years since the room is large enough.

"One of our dear old friends, Emily Havergill, who was a piano teacher and died ten years ago, had her students' first recitals here back in the 1890s. She was rather like a protégée of my grandmother. She had studied in Leipzig.

"Have you heard of the black concert pianist, Marcy Tyler? She's having an exceptional career. When I first brought Gretchen here in 1935, we were sitting playing on the Baldwin when a little black girl peeked in at the door. It was our cook's daughter, Marcy. We discovered right here that she had talent and interest, though she was only about seven years old. So we were able to give her a start. That's why the piano is out in the carriage house apartment. She lived there with her parents.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"But let's go see la tour toscane!" He took her hand. They mounted the broad stairway with its multi-colored flecks of light from the German window. "We keep all these bedrooms along here closed now. When Gretchen and Hanna were here things looked their best. But now I just have Hilda, and she has her hands full with cleaning and some cooking. We decided to cut down the work which was hard to justify with only one Maynard left here. It would make sense for me to move to a smaller place but I can't desert all the ghosts here--a lot of beautiful memories."

He showed her the great square master bedroom directly under the tower. Here was the gracefully ponderous Gothic bed where his . . . grandparents had slept.

They sat on Letitia's sheet-enshrouded petit point chairs.

"But where are your children?"

"We had three children--Nogg (he's really Stanley the fifth) in 1937, and Eric and Griselda in 1939. Nogg got through Dartmouth as every Maynard man should do, but Eric didn't. Eric was there for two years then begged to transfer to Montana State College out west. That was 1959. We have a cousin who owns a ranch out there. Eric was always set on being a cowboy! Well, why not? His grandfather left a generous income to all the kids after their twenty-first birthdays. Anyway Eric has his own ranch in Montana and I have six grandchildren too! Eric graduated in animal husbandry at Bozeman.

Griselda, after four years at Radcliffe, went down to the art school at Iowa City for an M. A. degree, then she promptly married an artist (who is odd as artists often are), but they seem right for each other. He teaches art at the college level and at present they are in Chico in northern California. They have a couple children that I would love to see more often. So, have you got your breath? We'll go up to the tower now."

After waiting forty-two years Josefa finally saw Stanley's beautiful retreat. The three rare Caucasian carpets--the Karabagh, the Kazakh-Lambalo and the Gendje from River House were now in the tower on the polished maple floor, while the Childe Hassam pastels and the four Grant Wood oils occupied what little wall space was left by the windows and book shelves.

Buddy opened some of the shutters as he had done in the rooms below. In the forty years since the re-modeling the room had mellowed, but retained all its striking charm. Now a pleasant air current moved across causing some petals to fall from an arrangement of full-blown red and pink roses that Hilda Grieder had placed on the handsome, late-medieval escritoire.

"This desk--Gretchen found it at the Paris Porte de Clignancourt Marché aux Puces, and we were able to trace its history. It came from the Cistercian monastery at Aubray-la-Sainte-Croix south of Dijon. A Bonapartist family owned it after the revolution. Oh, it's seen a lot of manuscripts and illuminating, I'm sure. I always feel a

little presumptuous when I sit there.

"There's a story attached to everything here just like in the rest of the house, so don't let me bore you. Tell me when you've heard enough. This tower used to have big wooden tanks of water for fire protection in the nineteenth century. They had windmills outside to pump up the water. Later grandfather made changes and this became my playroom. Finally in 1933 my father let me re-model it into this great study. Remember our visit to Montaigne's château in 1932? That's where the idea came from. I had to have a ~~tower~~ room like Montaigne's. I used to think it would make me as wise as Montaigne! Unfortunately it takes more than ambience to develop wisdom.

"Remember how closely I examined and photographed the aphorisms on the beams over Montaigne's tower room? It was always my plan to do something similar here. Over the years I collected some wonderfully-wise sayings in four or five languages and I have them around here somewhere in a notebook, but somehow they never got carved into the beams!"

Buddy got them some more beer from a small refrigerator. "See how civilized we are--we have the good Czech beer up here also!"

Josefa was gazing out the south windows at the rich panorama of farm land that stretched beyond the carriage house and Gretchen's brick-walled garden. Buddy stood at her side. "That's all Maynard Estate on this side of the road. And see this painting. Grant Wood, the regional artist who lived in Cedar Rapids came up here in 1933 and did these four landscapes.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

It's a little sad to compare the pictures with the present reality. In this direction there is almost no change since we owned all this land, but to the west and north the city is growing and eating up the open land, so we see tract developments and blinking lights in that direction. I did buy forty acres over there in 1970 to keep the neighbors at bay--that sounds elitist, I know. We planted a new forest--better than a motel!

"The most notable change this way is Gretchen's walled garden that we built in 1955. See down there on the left is the wall and little Tuscan house. Gretchen loved it and we all spent a lot of time gardening there. The neighbors thought we were goofy--the rich Maynards working like peasants! The children were still at home at the beginning. Gretchen was so successful we gave truckloads of vegetables to the Salvation Army every summer. Now it hasn't been gardened for a couple years. The Salvation Army feeds poor people and they want to send volunteers out here next spring to do the work. We may try that.

"When I look down there I always expect to see Gretchen and Hanna. It's hard to believe they are gone." His voice broke as he turned his twisted face away to hide his emotion. He sank into one of Gretchen's old oak Morris chairs. Josefa stepped behind him, bussed him lightly on the ear and placed her hands on his chest.

"Dear Stanley, now you have that woeful expression I remember so well from the rue de Vaugirard when I told you

we must never meet again. When I thought about it later I would have done anything to make you happy again--to see you smile. Oh, it was love, true love, at least it was for me, and we lost each other so quickly!"

Stanley looked up over his shoulder, squeezing her hands against his chest. "I've been going on non-stop about me and our life here. Tell me what happened with you. When I went to the pension that day in 1932, Mme. Dampierre gave me your note and told me about the big touring car and the three angry papas. You just disappeared completely except for those two letters!"

She smiled a little. "I think I've already told you some of it. Anyway, papa married me to Antonín Holeček and it worked out all right. Antonín was good to me, he was brave and he loved me. In 1934 we had our daughter Libuše, and in 1938 and 1939 our two sons were born--František and Nicolas.

"Antonín was an engineer so the Nazis made him work in Germany during the war. They sent him to a Ruhr munitions factory where he was injured in an industrial accident--he lost his left eye and part of his left hand and then was imprisoned for sabotage in April 1945, but was liberated just in time by the Nazi collapse.

"After the war we led a normal life in the Malá Strana quarter of Prague. I was a successful piano teacher and we had a happy home in an old baroque inherited house. Antonín

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

died in 1966 and both my sons and my son-in-law died after being injured in freedom demonstrations in Wenceslaus Square in 1968 during the 'Prague Spring' period. Of course a lot of our hope died with them. You've heard about the 'Prague Spring?' We hoped things would get better with Dubček, but communist austerity was re-imposed by the Soviets. Still, the borders were temporarily open, so Libuše and I made our way to Vienna, then decided to go to our cousin Karolina Groll who had settled here in Cedar Rapids before the First World War. We used to get funny letters from Karolina who always told us about how much food there was in Iowa. We would be having some ridiculous shortages--like no lentils one winter. NO LENTILS! All over town, no lentils. And our country looked so unkempt and poorly-run after thirty years of war and communism. We had shaggy grass in the parks which wasn't so bad since the régime wanted to keep the grass for sheep fodder, but we had deteriorating buildings everywhere with peeling paint and cracking walls. They would build scaffolds around some buildings then do nothing for decades.

"Everything was controlled by the régime--where we could live, what we could eat, what we could read or hear, and all the while they were telling us how well-off we were and how the west was threatening us. We did have a kind of freedom from apprehension about basic things such as housing, jobs and food, and that was good for the mass of

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

people who kept their mouths shut and didn't complain.

"Our decision to leave was sudden and not carefully considered since we didn't really know how things were in the west. When we got to Vienna we phoned Karolina and she sent us the airfare to America.

"We were both fluent in several languages. Libuše had been a translator working for a government publishing house. We had precious little money when we got here, but old Karolina and some Czech organizations have been wonderfully helpful. Libuše found a job reporting activities of the Czech and Amana communities in a local paper.

"I must say at first I was overcome with longing for Praha, my beautiful somber city, and I felt considerable regret forfeiting the security of a pension and the big stone house--even without lentils! I could have returned when the opportunity was extended by the government, but I decided to stay with my daughter, even though we were so poor. I rented the piano and started taking students--putting those little advertisements in the newspaper."

Buddy asked if they had seen much of America.

"I'm ashamed to say very little. Our plane landed in Chicago where we got another small plane for Cedar Rapids without leaving the airport. We've scarcely budged from here since. From the air we saw the Chicago skyscrapers and Lake Michigan. Libuše has seen more than I. One time we went to Dubuque and Davenport to see the Mississippi since we used to sing about Ol' Man River in Europe."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

When Buddy looked surprised she explained, "When we were students in Prague, we heard of Paul Robeson and the musical Showboat. We may have seen it on the stage or in films. One day we went to Kampa Island--it's a lovers' island in the Vltava--that's the Moldau, our Prague river, and the water flows on both sides. It's beautiful and near my old home. Someone started singing Ol' Man River in mangled English! We had only the sketchiest of ideas of the Mississippi but we were sure it was the biggest river in the world. I never expected to really see it. It is big, but I thought it would be bigger."

Buddy explained how it gathered its principal tributaries further south, getting more impressive as it neared the Gulf of Mexico and flowed past the cotton plantations.

She continued, "Well, we saw the Mississippi and when someone told us it was Illinois on the other side, we had to cross over. Last year some friends drove us to Des Moines for a day to see the state capitol. On the way we saw a little Dutch town called Pella, and we've also visited the university in Iowa City! I guess that's all. We look at maps and know how much there is to see but unless we marry some very rich men, I think we'll be stuck here!"

They both broke out laughing at this point since it was manifest that one 'very rich' man was in the elegant room where they were sitting. They were face-to-face in two of the refurbished Morris chairs--the Stickley oak chairs with copper and beech tulip inlays that Letitia had bought for the gatehouse and that Madge had retrieved from the Tabbs

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

in 1946.

Buddy's face grew serious once more. "Some people around here think I'm a 'very rich man!'. Would you like to marry me? I could take you on a tour of this country. I'm sure we could afford that. Then too, you and I have done some touring before. Remember our trip to the Dordogne?" He reached over to cup her left hand where it rested on her chair.

Flustered and unbelieving, she looked down at his brown strong hand and arm with its pattern of dark hair. A current seemed to be flowing between them. "Oh Stanley, don't say such things. You surely can't mean them. If you wanted a wife there are legions of beautiful women just waiting, I'm sure. You're making a little joke, perhaps?" She looked up with tears in her brown eyes.

Stanley thought she looked enchanting. He squeezed her hand. "I know about all those women waiting to pounce. There are some out there all right--I guess a few, but I don't encourage them. There is Paulette, and there are Fifi and Madeleine--all mad to get me and my money; and there are Bridget and Iphigenia--I'm a bit partial to Iphigenia Judkins but she is near-sighted and has big feet. Now how could I marry a woman with big feet?

"But seriously I feel immensely fortunate to have found you again and in these circumstances when we are both free to act. Let's not allow these remaining years to slip away. In a way this is abrupt--meeting and proposing marriage one hour later. But we aren't meeting for the first time. Do

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

you know I almost threw myself into the Seine when I thought I had lost you in Paris?"

She raised her eyes. She wanted to see if his endearing chin-dimple was still there. Yes, and no distressing additional chins below! Oh, he was still so handsome! The attraction of their youth was still there! But her mind was in turmoil. If Stanley were serious, it all seemed much too wonderful to be true. Life hadn't treated her this way. There must be a catch.

That very morning she had been hoping to find another pupil--maybe even that frightful little Ernestine Spitzel, since the extra three dollars a week would help with their budget. And Libuše had cracked the glass coffee-maker, but they kept using it to spare expense. Then they didn't want to bother Karolina about the defective air-cooler since Karolina had helped them in so many ways it was embarrassing. Poverty was nipping them at every turn--sagging furniture, worn, faded clothing, old shoes, bills to pay.

And now, three hours later, a wealthy, very attractive former lover was asking her to marry him! "I just can't believe you're serious, Stanley. What could I offer you?" With an air of wonderment she looked about at all the quiet refinement of this room. Her eye studied the deep indigo central panel of the carpet where two small star motifs floated. "What kind of carpet is this?"

"Bad Josefa! You're changing the subject! This one is called Kazakh-Lambalo. Gretchen found it and these other two

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

when we lived in the New York apartment. They are quite old and came from the Soviet Union in 1935. We kept the apartment until 1971 and Gretchen's mother lived there with all the furnishings and the books that came from her husband's library. That gave us a place to stay when we visited though we lived here in Iowa after 1946. When Gretchen's mother died, we gave up the apartment and brought the books, the Steinway, the carpets and some paintings out to the villa."

Josefa murmured ruminatively, "So beautiful, and so intriguing, these carpets. We had several Kazakhs and Tekke Turcomans in Prague. In 1942 the Nazis commandeered our house for a few months and needless to say, when we returned, the carpets were gone, but we felt lucky to get the house back, and we knew better than to complain. Heydrich was the 'Protector' of Bohemia then and it was a murderous and larcenous protection."

Buddy now persisted. "I discovered I loved you when it was too late and you had returned to Prague. I would have followed you if you hadn't married. I feel the same way again now. I think we should get married. Why not? We like music. You need some pianos. I need a pianist! This old house is not such a bad place to live. You would make it infinitely more cheerful by being here. I need somebody to take for a tour of America. You need a tour guide. What a shame not to have a look at this country, especially when it's offered by such an amiable fellow as myself. We could go where fancy leads--down the Mississippi, out to Montana or to Maine--maybe even to Paris for old time's sake. You

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

would find me a much more pleasant protector than Heydrich!"

Now she was laughing at him. "Yes, I'm sure you would be better than Heydrich, but I can't believe you are serious with all this. And if you are serious, perhaps you will wake up tomorrow or next week and regret it all. Let's meet a few times and get to know each other as we are now. In a month or two if you still haven't changed your mind, we'll talk about it again. It's not a trifling subject." In her heart she wanted to say yes.

Buddy saw that he must not press her. "If we can't get married now, let's have a picnic!" They went to the kitchen where they made turkey sandwiches and found tomatoes, pickles, potato salad and strawberry ice cream which they carried on trays to a table in a delightful spot of deep sycamore shade overlooking Hunt's swimming pool.

Delectated by tiny breezes, they sat there on lawn chairs watching a great, full moon take shape as the sky darkened. Someone started a car at the gatehouse and drove toward the city. The fireflies were making magic everywhere.

Josefa used a telephone at the colonnaded poolside house to call Libuše. "You will never guess, but I met an old, old friend. Such an unbelievable story! I'll tell you all about it later. Don't wait up for me!"

"What kind of a friend, a boy, a girl?"

"Well, it's a boy. That is, he was a boy, but he's older now." She wouldn't tell her inquisitive daughter any more.

Holding hands in the warm evening breeze, they conversed

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

quietly and watched the moonlight on the rippling water of the pool. "It would be so pleasant to just swim and float about in that water! I've been thinking about a pool like that for three weeks. Our air cooler is worn out but we won't ask Karolina for a new one since we are already so indebted to her. So I get boiled and fried in the apartment. Libuše can escape to her newspaper office."

Buddy said, "I'm the landlord here. Let's go for a swim."

"But I have no bathing suit."

"Nobody is here but two old students from the quartier latin. Come on, we don't need suits." He stood up, impulsively pulling off his shirt, stripping in a trice. He plunged into the water with a mighty splash then surfacing, he called out, "Better come in! You'll be sorry if you don't!"

Josefa started to undress. "Don't look," she pleaded before climbing into the pool. Then they were frolicking like children. The years fell away. "Remember when we went one day down to the Square du Vert Galant--that little tip at the west of the Ile de la Cité? We took off our shoes to put our feet in the Seine. We wanted to go swimming but it was too awkward since we had no towels and certainly dared not go nude, even in Paris which is so enlightened."

After a time they emerged from the water in the velvet darkness. Buddy led her to the pool house for towels. He started to kiss and caress her. When she responded with some intensity, he led her to a daybed where they made love. It was all so natural and delightful that Josefa lost the apprehension she felt about this act, so central to marriage.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Her predisposition to go slow with Stanley's proposal was crumbling.

Stanley now wanted her to stay the night, saying she could pick from among eight or ten bedrooms, but she demurred. "How could I explain it to Libuše?"

They strolled up the lawn in the night fragrance of mown grass where roses, peonies, honey suckle and sweet alyssum bloomed with abandon. Gretchen had chosen flowers to delight the olfactory.

Overhead the arched windows of the tower glowed almost imperceptably in the great dark mansion. Buddy had left lighted a beaten-copper Craftsman lamp. Now he asked Josefa to wait a moment. He returned with a flashlight, some gloves, garden clippers and a plastic bag. He harvested a dozen long-stem roses and buds, placing them in the bag for Josefa. "Be careful with the thorns--we don't want you to shed blood." They found their way to the car and Josefa got home safely at ten-thirty, her reputation intact except for the adverse report of Ernestine, the neighborhood 'enfant terrible'.

Early next morning Buddy called Karolina Groll, with whom he had a long conversation. She knew who the wealthy, influential Maynards were. He explained that he was an old friend of Josefa's and that he would like to have a new air-conditioning unit installed on Josefa's apartment. He would make the arrangements and pay the cost but he needed Karolina's permission since it was her house. Then too, she was to tell Josefa that she, Karolina, had decided to replace the unit.

463

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

In this way, Josefa wouldn't feel obligated in any way. Like most women, young and old, Karolina found Buddy's charm irresistible. Certainly there was no good reason not to do what he asked.

When he telephoned Josefa that afternoon, she fairly effervesced about their delightful day together, about the wonders of the Tuscan Villa and the unbelievable encounter after forty years. "And Stanley, guess what has happened here! Karolina has had the air-cooler replaced! The workmen did it in twenty minutes and it's so pleasantly cool here now-- I could be on top of the Matterhorn!"

Buddy, though rarely impetuous, grew more certain day by day that he must win Josefa. His campaign paid off when her doubts melted away in the August heat of Iowa.

They were quietly married one morning by a justice of the peace, with Libuse, Karolina and the Goldsmiths as witnesses. Then they drove north through Waterloo and Mason City to the Minnesota lake country. Buddy told her they would go find the headwaters of the Mississippi at Lake Itaska so that later, when he took her to New Orleans, she would know where some of that enormous river came from.

When they returned from a short honeymoon at some lake-side resorts, Buddy set about easing the lot of his new relations. Some of the old Maynard investments were still in place. For example, the estate owned a thirty percent interest in the Linn County Clarion newspaper which happened to be Libuse's employer. The Maynards had never interfered in the newspaper

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

business, so when Buddy asked Reynolds Thornton, the publisher, if he could raise Libuše's salary, Reynolds agreed with alacrity. "Let's be generous, Reynolds," Buddy urged. "She's talented, hard-working with special skills and she's my new step-daughter! I think an extra hundred a week would be fine, don't you? Run-of-the-mill reporters couldn't go talk with the Czechs and Germans the way she can. She gets you a lot of scoops! Now if you have trouble about paying that much, take part from my account."

Reynolds called back later to say the paper felt they had overlooked Libuše who was a gem, and they would not only raise her salary one hundred dollars a week but make it retroactive to January first 1974!

Next, Buddy called Karolina and arranged to visit her one morning when Josefa was busy with a couple piano pupils who had transferred from the old apartment to the villa music room. Karolina and Buddy had become instant friends. Karolina was about eighty, about four feet high, and about 200 pounds of Bohemian amiability. She lived in the upper part of her big house. On the wall she had large, ornately-framed pictures of sober-faced Czech ancestors. She had a good deal of lace antimacassars, curtains and doilies and a plethora of heavy Victorian furniture. She brought out albums of pictures so that Stanley might be acquainted with his wife's family. She showed him an early picture of Josefa and another of Josefa's formidable papa who in 1932 had ruined Stanley's life. Diplomatically, Stanley questioned her about her finances

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

and her outlays for Josefa.

"We were never well-off. Old Groll (her late husband) was twenty-five years older than me. He came to America in 1890 and worked first in the coal mines in Pennsylvania, then in a paper mill in Ft. Madison. We were married here in 1914 and we both worked. I was in the oat meal factory and he used to work for Havergill's Tile yard. We didn't have children so we saved enough to buy this old house, then old Groll died.

"I had some savings when I heard that Josefa and Libuše were in Vienna, so I sent them money to come here. They've tried so hard, but they've had a difficult time. Still, I'm glad to have our little family together. We can help each other this way."

It was obvious that the house was ready for a major overhaul. Everything was old and worn out. In a different neighborhood a builder would simply tear it down and replace it.

Buddy told her, "I am deeply in debt to you (more than you'll ever know) for bringing Josefa here. You've made my life complete again. I can't repay you for that, but I can make things easier for you."

Karolina protested, but agreed at last to his plan. She and Libuše were moved for several months into the Tuscan Villa, during which time Jeff Toner's big building company completely renovated Karolina's old house from the ground up-- new foundation, roof, wiring, plumbing, floors, walls, bathrooms, kitchens, porch, gingerbread and paint. Then everybody in the block, not to be outdone, painted their houses and it was a new neighborhood! The Maynard Estate paid the bill. Needless

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

to say, Karolina and Libuse could find no fault with Buddy.

At the villa, he hired a new cook, Erika Friedemann from Amana, and a new maid, Erika's daughter Susan, to help Hilda Grieder with the housework. They moved into the carriage house apartment.

Josefa was at first intimidated by the idea of running the big house, but Buddy told her to simply leave things to Hilda. "She's been here for a long time, just let her know what's necessary."

Because of a reluctance on both their parts to use Buddy's old room where he had slept with Gretchen, Buddy and Josefa moved into the big corner bedroom that Madge had occupied. This was on the northeast corner where morning sun poured in and the offending distant view of the city encroaching in the north was screened out by the grove of sycamores. A slanted oriel bay with a window seat reached out from the north wall to admit errant rays of evening sun.

Early in September, Buddy, Josefa, Hilda and Pete Luckner (George's twenty-year-old grandson), opened the wide walnut door of Madge's room. Everything was as it had been in 1946--the furniture covered with sheets now dusty and discolored; the closets bulging with fashionable pre-Dior-New-Look clothing in protective paper sheaths. Racks of shoes, shelves of hat boxes, drawers of perfume bottles, jars of cosmetics, nail polish, emery boards, combs, brushes--all the astonishing mass of personal items left behind by Buddy's self-indulgent mother when she decamped. They boxed up all the clothing for

THE TUSCAN VILLA/by R. L. Merritt

the Salvation Army, creating what must have been a bonanza for the hippie girls of Cedar Rapids.

The large, tiled, vintage bathroom had room at one end for a shower stall. After a crew from Jeff Toner's company had installed the shower, cleaned the woodwork and wooden shutters, sanded and refinished the oak floor, hung new pale-yellow wall-paper and mounted retractable yellow-striped canvas awnings on the east windows (old-fashioned but colorful), they moved in furniture that Josefa chose from the other bedrooms, including a mid-Victorian carved bed, only less grand than Grandmother Letitia's, and furnished with a new mattress. Josefa had carte blanche to furnish the room which she did, bit by bit. They moved in some Caucasian carpets, some wicker chairs and bookcases.

Libuše and Karolina, housed far down the corridor, stayed until after Christmas, all the family taking dinner together at seven. Everyone from Buddy and Josefa down to the servants was joyful. Even the villa itself seemed to smile with all this new population and activity.

Josefa, who in America had never had more than twelve pupils simultaneously, and rarely could count on thirty dollars a week of income because of destitute or inattentive parents, now kept only six of the most promising. These young proletarians, delivered by mothers in old Fords, and wide-eyed in the opulent mansion, scurried through entry-hall and corridor to the relative safety of the music room where they rendered their hebdomadal cacophony.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Hilda Grieder confided in Josefa, "I can't tell you how happy I am to see the change in Mr. Maynard and in the villa. I feared for him, I truly did. I was afraid he might take his own life last year. He just lost interest in everything and it was quiet as a tomb here most of the time. Now everything is all alive--never a dull moment, you might say. You were the medicine he needed!"

With the rejuvenescence at the villa, the Goldsmiths and other old friends were frequent visitors. The old formality of Letitia's and Madge's time was forgotten. Everybody was welcomed with pervasive hospitality. Dave Goldsmith soon discovered Erika Friedemann, the new German cook, whose great-grandfather, born in Württemberg, had helped Christian Metz found the Amana Commune in 1855. Erika, who spoke English like any Iowa farmwife, also was proud to keep the somewhat archaic Biblical German that some of the colonists preserved in English-speaking America.

Dave found Erika interesting because, in addition to her excellent coffee, she could tell him stories about the Amana colonies in the earlier days. She remembered communal kitchens from her own childhood when property was held in common and meals were prepared in one place for numbers of families. They talked of Amana and also of Württemberg when Erika learned that Dave came from Stuttgart. They practiced conversing in German.

One morning in October when Buddy had gone to the city, Josefa found Dave in the kitchen. She asked him to take a

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

walk with her to get a bit of fresh air. It was a bright, brisk, autumnal day. They walked up and down the curving driveway under the expiring elms, waving at Jenny who waved back from her kitchen window in the gatehouse.

Josefa began, "I feel almost subversive asking you, but Stanley is curiously reticent about his oldest son, Nogg. I've asked him where Nogg is or what he's doing, and Stanley looks worried or turns away and doesn't answer. I feel I must know what this is about so that I will know how to act. We have talked of inviting Eric and Griselda and their families for an old-fashioned Christmas such as Stanley says they used to have. But when I say 'let's also invite Nogg,' Stanley appears distraught and says nothing! You're a very old friend of his. Can you tell me anything about this?"

They had reached the gate of the estate. There Josefa noticed for the first time the brass plaques bolted to the gateposts with the name VILLA TOSCANA in roman majuscules partly obscured by vines and wild roses. David pulled the bushes aside. His large brown dog, Baedeker, who took his name seriously, had been joyfully guiding them up and down the drive.

David silently and thoughtfully scratched the dog's ears then responded, "Buddy is my dearest friend bar none. He is pure gold. I would never do anything to harm him but I'll tell you what I can because it might help him."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"Maybe you've heard how he hired Hanna Bocklin when she was fresh off the boat--a penniless refugee. She used to be our nanny in Stuttgart--raised us all from babies, then Hitler murdered our parents and three of our siblings. My brother Joe and I managed to escape to London. Hanna and Buddy found us, brought us to the United States, met us at the pier, got us through college--gave us a future when we were just flotsam and jetsam. That was way back in 1937, thirty-seven years ago, and the reason he hired Hanna was because Nogg was born on March fourth that year, so they needed a nanny. Maybe you know Nogg is really the fifth of the Stanley Huntington Maynards, but Buddy coined the name Nogg as short for Inauguration Day since before then, new presidents were always inaugurated on the fourth of March and that was when Nogg was born. Although all those Stanleys had the same name, Buddy was Buddy, his father was Hunt and Nogg was Nogg!"

Josefa looked a bit puzzled by this historic footnote but waited for more revelations.

"All the Maynards had gone to Dartmouth, a famous old college in New Hampshire. Buddy graduated in 1930 before he went to Europe and met you in Paris. So he was very pleased when Nogg graduated at Dartmouth in 1959. He and Nogg were close--as close as father and son could be, everyone could see that. Nogg was a big, curly-haired, gray-eyed boy, athletic, handsome like his parents, intelligent

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

and with a certain care-free poise that comes maybe from being very rich for a hundred fifty years!" They both chuckled. "But he was willing to try anything and that got him in trouble.

"I think Buddy wanted Nogg out here in Cedar Rapids, but we decided to station him in New York (as Buddy himself was for years) to learn the Maynard Estate business from that end. Gretchen's mother Emma, a wonderful woman, was still living then in the big River House apartment where Nogg had been a child. But Nogg didn't stay there. He was a young man with a lot of money and he lived in Greenwich Village--that's sort of like the Left Bank in Paris--lots of students, artists, writers, intellectuals and camp-followers--Bohemian life, if you'll forgive me saying that.

"Things went well for a while then our communication with Nogg seemed to break down. We would call Brown Brothers Bank where Nogg was supposed to show up, at least occasionally, and they wouldn't know where he was. That was about 1964. I could see Buddy was worried. He would fly to New York and seem more worried when he got back. What happened was Nogg was getting into the drug scene. Buddy didn't want to talk about it and I think he still doesn't, but it's the truth.

"In 1965 Nogg volunteered for Vietnam. I even think he was hoping he would be killed in some glorious way and solve the addiction problem that way. But he wasn't killed and he

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

came back to America after a tour. Of course the addiction was only exacerbated down there where drugs were everywhere and the war so cruel and meaningless with death and violence at every turn.

"Then Nogg disappeared. Buddy and Gretchen might get an enigmatic post card once in a while with no return address. They wanted to put him into a rehabilitation program but to be successful, that usually requires the subject's cooperation and Nogg wasn't interested.

"One day in 1971--I remember it so well--Buddy and Gretchen were down here with us at the gatehouse--we were all in the garden barbecuing steaks, and one of those old school buses covered with wild art and graffiti turned into the drive, coughing, belching smoke, and went up to the villa. Buddy thought they had lost their way and went up to direct them. It turned out to be Nogg with five or six other very strange, unkempt people and three or four small children. They all needed bathing. Nogg had a bushy beard--really quite an admirable beard, but in bad need of currying. I could only recognize him by his gray eyes which were like Gretchen's.

"Buddy later told me that he was so happy to see his son once more, no matter what the circumstances, that he urged them to stay at the villa, starting with a steak barbecue at the gatehouse. So they all came down here while Buddy and Nogg raced to the market for another dozen steaks, about twelve six-packs of beer and all the trimmings.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"When they got back, I could see that they had been arguing. This whole gang, even the kids, acted strangely. I think they were all on drugs. Some had dark glasses on and some had eyes that wobbled around like slot machines at Las Vegas." Josefa appeared mystified again.

David explained, "In Las Vegas they have gambling machines with things whirling around and lights blinking--that's the way the drug addicts' eyes look when they are 'stoned' or intoxicated.

"All Buddy's children, including Nogg of course, have very sizeable personal incomes since their grandfather left each of them a ten-million dollar trust fund which is conservatively invested and they receive the income less tax each year. I just tell you this to show that more money could not help in Nogg's case since he already has near half a million a year (less tax). He probably wastes it buying drugs for a commune somewhere. Who knows?

"Anyway, Buddy told me afterward that on the trip to the market he had tried to persuade Nogg to go into a clinic for a cure. Nogg became hostile and abusive, first to Buddy and then to all of us, and worst of all, to his mother Gretchen. I was in the army for four years but I had never heard the foul language he used. He seemed very near murder. The others stood around laughing as though this were a common occurrence-- a bit of commedia dell'arte staged for their amusement. Jenny was so frightened she ran to the kitchen to call the sheriff.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"Then Buddy, in very even, stern tones like he must have used when Nogg was a kid said, 'Nogg, get the bus. Take your friends and go. We don't want you here any more. You're not welcome at the Tuscan Villa!' Gretchen was on a bench crying uncontrollably, hiding her face, her shoulders shaking. Nogg seemed suddenly to come to his senses. He started toward his mother, holding out a hand. He said, 'Mama, Dad, I...'

"Buddy firmly said, 'Nogg, go.'

"Then something so strange. Nogg smiled and said, 'Dad, remember the Rustler's Cave?' I'm sure that's what he said though it doesn't make any sense.

"Buddy looked like he was dying, his face all white, and he just rasped out, 'GO NOGG, DON'T COME BACK!' Suddenly Nogg seemed deflated and confused. Then he and his gang slowly straggled up to the bus. Moments later they stopped the bus at the gatehouse while one of the hippie women in a ragged, dirty velvet skirt down to her ankles ran out to grab four of the six-packs of beer. She tried to take five but couldn't manage. We didn't see them again. When the sheriff's deputies came, Buddy told them we were sorry and that it was all a mistake. So he gave them each a steak and we tried to have a pleasant picnic, but we were all so upset I think only the deputies had a good time. I don't think Buddy has heard from Nogg since. Nogg probably doesn't know his mother died. The estate office transfers his trust money semi-annually to a numbered account in a

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

San Francisco bank. We have no other contact."

They had walked up and down several times during this lengthy exposé. Josefa spotted some beautiful pink roses still blooming on bushes in a warm, sheltered spot at the base of the tower. Pete Luckner had been covering them each night to save them from the frost. "Thank you Dave for telling me all this. It's truly sad but helps me to understand. Wait, let me clip some of these roses for you to take to Jenny."

When Buddy came home about two in the afternoon, Josefa met him as he parked in the carriage house. "Have you had your lunch?"

"Yes, down at the Briar Hotel with some business people."

Josefa took Buddy's arm and steered him away from the villa. "Can we talk? This is serious--let's go down this way for a walk. Nobody will bother us down here. I've walked a little and found a good path going south."

Buddy grinned. "Oh, you discovered our path? Good for you! We'll walk all the way down there one of these days. It goes at least as far as the Turnwood Farm--that's part of the villa estate, and it goes by Billy Bunker's farmhouse. Dad bought the Bunker farm back in depression days from Billy's grandfather, but the Bunkers have stayed on to do the farming for us. We keep alfalfa and natural grasses for grazing up on this end so we don't get clouds of dust in plowing season, and the path is never plowed. The cows

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

use it too. My grandfather told us it was an old Indian path. But what does Miss Soberface want to talk about?"

"Buddy, don't get angry or distant. We must talk about this family matter. It's about Nogg. Since you have been so restrained talking about him, I've felt at a real disadvantage. As husband and wife we must share these concerns. So I asked Dave Goldsmith to tell me what it was all about. He didn't really want to tell me either, but he did because he thinks we might help you."

Buddy's face clouded over. "Dave told you? What did he tell you?"

"He told me about Nogg coming here in 1971 in the old school bus and about that awful scene when you told Nogg not to come back."

Buddy was trying to hold back tears but they streaked down his cheeks. He turned aside to swipe a handkerchief across his face. In a strange voice he muttered, "Come on, let's go into Gretchen's garden." They walked toward the smaller arched opening in the brick wall. Josefahad not gone there before, only having seen the interior from the villa tower. Buddy produced a key to open the heavy green door under the Gothic sign GRETCHENS GEMÜSEGARTEN.

"This was Gretchen's most precious retreat--Hanna's too. I used to be surprised (sometimes even in winter) to look down from the tower and see Gretchen sitting down here on her little terrace. It's warmer because of the brick

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

walls facing south. She would sweep the snow away and sit here bundled up reading a book. I had a phone installed here too though she wasn't sure that was a good idea. It's an unlisted number so nobody else would bother her, but I could call her from the tower and we would wave at each other!"

"Those must have been wonderful times."

"It was a wonderful time planning and building this garden. See, some good old trees that we left when we built the wall. This all used to be grazing ground, pretty much unchanged since the days of the Indians and buffalo. Actually the Indians were here until the 1840s, just before my great-grandfather bought this land. There were Iowa Indians and then the Sac and Fox came here from further east. They sold the land for white settlement before moving, first to Kansas and then Oklahoma. But what's wonderful and also sad is that some of them returned to Iowa and bought land in Tama County--that's fifty miles west--and they live there today."

"Why sad?"

"Because they sold millions of acres of Iowa land for a small amount of money then used their money to buy back about three thousand acres. They needed an honest business agent to protect them from the predatory whites.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"Somewhere back around the First World War my grandfather and I used to take walks down the Indian path. I was about ten years old and he was near eighty though he seemed quite sturdy to me--ramrod straight with white hair and square-cut beard. He carried a cane but more for pointing at things than to lean on. We were pals. He always dressed formally like a nineteenth century senator (which he was) and he liked to light-up a very expensive cigar. He would show me some of the prairie grasses and flowers that grow down here and tell about the early days of the family.

"His father was the first Stanley who started building riverboats in the 1830s along the Monongahela River in western Pennsylvania. He settled first at a little town called Bridgeport and he married a Quaker girl there. He prospered and they moved north to Pittsburgh where they built a big Greek-Revival house. My grandfather was born there in 1840. The first Stanley very early recognized the great future of railroads. People thought he was a dreamer when he told them the railroads would go right across the continent to California one day soon! He invested in roads building west from Chicago, then moved his family to Iowa when it was open for settlement. They went first to Davenport, then he bought this land and they moved to Cedar Rapids. He said he wanted to be out where the railroads were growing!

479

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"So my grandfather first saw this land maybe about 1850 and they didn't build the villa until 1859. They were living in town the first years. When the house was built, the first Stanley kept the Indian path and much of this land unplowed.

"But I've been telling you all this to avoid the subject of Nogg. Of course, Dave was right to tell you about my son. Nogg, as you might know, was the apple of my eye. I always

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

tried to treat the kids equally and loved them all, but Nogg was 'first among equals'.

"Let's go over here to the terrace. There are some lawn chairs in the little building. See how warm and sunny it is here, sheltered from the breezes. Just look at the red and gold leaves on those old trees! And see what a bumper crop of weeds, grass and volunteer plants we got this year! It's rich soil all right. I'll have it gardened again next year, one way or another. Last month Billy Bunker hauled in that big pile of cow manure over there. It has to be spread with the old leaves over the beds through the winter. That's what Gretchen used to do. We all brought in tons of leaves. Nogg too!

"It's so hard for me to tell about Nogg. Hard to know where to begin. He was just a superlative son. I would look at those kids and congratulate myself. We expected too much, perhaps. We found out early he was no pianist, but he was a good student all through school. It was easy for him, he scarcely had to study. His memory was phenomenal. He was always healthy--big and handsome for his age--athletic--he got prizes for swimming and diving. Of course the girls were after him in high school. I suppose he committed a peccadillo or two in those days, but overall he was a good boy.

"Just after we built this garden he went to Dartmouth College--that's in New Hampshire, a thousand miles east,

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

so we saw him only in vacation time. He graduated in 1959 near the top of his class, so I thought he could have nothing but a brilliant future. Eric was a sophomore at Dartmouth then, and Griselda down in Radcliffe, so the whole family was there-- even Gretchen's mother Emma, and the Goldsmith brothers-- it was just a big family gathering and we were all so proud!

"In 1958, at age twenty-one he had started to receive his trust fund money--a lot of money for one so young--near half a million a year and that's more than most successful executives get after long careers. My father set up those trusts with the best of intentions, but he was haunted with the thought of his own impending death. I believe that in general, such largesse should not be showered on young people until they demonstrate some maturity of judgement--say at age thirty or thirty-five.

"In any case, Nogg had that money and we asked him to live in New York City (as I used to do) to help manage the Maynard Foundation by working with people in Brown Brothers Bank in Wall Street. This was a scarcely-veiled sinecure as I know from experience. We had all the experts in place to run things with or without a Maynard scion.

"It proved a recipe for disaster--giving that young man all that money, no significant work to do, no supervision, and having him live in the center of every imaginable temptation. He could have lived with his grandmother in our

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

big River House apartment, but what young man would want to do that?

"I'll try to shorten the story. He got his own apartment in Greenwich Village and then we started to get little warning signals that something was wrong. He wouldn't write or call us for months. He wouldn't answer his phone. The bank would mention that he missed his appointments. So I would fly to New York City but have a devil of a time even finding him. Some very odd people were living in his apartment, coming and going all the time. Often I couldn't get beyond the security system at the main door.

"What happened was that Nogg was caught in the drug scene. I'm no expert on that but it looked like he and his friends would try anything. If I managed to see and talk with him during those five years, it was a miracle. He looked terrible--really wasted, and he wouldn't hear of any kind of rehabilitation. He would tell me to go home and mind my own business, as though his addiction were no business of mine. My oldest son! I would try and try again, only alienating him further.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"In 1965 we heard that he had volunteered for the Vietnam War. That was all mysterious to us. He was too old--twenty-seven at the beginning of the year, and he was a drug addict. He didn't have to go. I'm sure the army didn't want addicts. None of us thought the war was just. The kids were demonstrating against it and even Nogg had told me we were fighting on the wrong side! He said we should be on Ho Chi Minh's side against the imperialists--that all the old colonies were free except Vietnam, and the United States was just supporting a corrupt clique of puppets.

"Anyway, somehow he cleaned himself up, concealing his addiction, and got into the war as a lieutenant. He pretty much disappeared after that. We received a few post cards from Southeast Asia with ridiculous stock phrases like 'Having a wonderful time,' but omitting the usual 'Wish you were here.' Apparently he got back to the States after a year or two. He changed banks from New York City to San Francisco, so we think he may live on the West Coast now, but I stopped trying to contact him. I could have hired a private investigator to hunt for him, but what's the point?

"Dave told you about that visit in 1971. First time I had seen Nogg in maybe eight years! I was so pleased to see him it clouded my judgement. He looked sturdy and healthy but badly in need of a bath and a barber. And you should have seen his companions! All dirty and ragged with junk-store

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

clothes, greasy hair, sunglasses and limp sunflowers hanging over their ears. What a sight! Some emaciated and sickly-looking, and one of the girls, very pregnant, was a chain-smoker nursing a pint of brandy. Their language was full of obscenities and grammatical improprieties. Their dissolute behavior should have warned me instantly.

"But I was euphoric to see Nogg here at the villa once more, so I made a fool of myself and insisted they stay as guests. Lots of bedrooms, said I, clean sheets, hot water, swimming pool, broiled steaks. Oh, it would be a great visit. I even hoped Nogg was home to stay! I was willing to make adjustments. I try to be democratic!" Buddy grinned ruefully.

"It took about twenty minutes for my illusions to be shattered. Nogg and I went to buy some more steaks for a barbecue we were having and we got into a violent argument almost immediately when I tried to persuade him to get treatment and give up drugs.

"Dave probably told you what happened then. Back at the gatehouse, Nogg was totally out of control, spewing vituperation in every direction. It was total madness. None of us remotely deserved such vile castigation. When he appeared to be ready to strike his mother, I ordered them all to leave and leave instantly.

"I was surprised by how docile he became. It was a startling metamorphosis. All at once he was abject, wretched, someone looking for help, someone to be pitied. I was torn

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

inside, wanting to retract the order, wanting to say 'Stay, we'll find a way to help.' But at the same time I knew that the chance of helping him was scant, with the probability of ruining our lives in the process.

"So I told them again to go and to my amazement, they left without further words. It's been three years now. I still hope a little and think about him when he was a boy-- so bright, such a lot of fun, such promise. We used to read together--I did with all the kids.

"I think about the difference with Eric. Eric had a goal so the money didn't harm him. He always wanted to be a cowboy and a rancher. Both he and Griselda found what they wanted, so I'm thankful for that."

Josefa arose and kissed his forehead lightly. "What did Nogg mean when he asked about the Rustlers' Cave?"

"Oh, Dave told you that, too? Well, I have always needed Dave here because he has good ears, good memory and good sense. The year my dad died, 1946, we were all visiting at cousin Monty Templeton's ranch in Montana. Nogg was nine years old. Near the end of our vacation, my dad took Nogg and me up a rugged canyon for a day of fishing. It was sunny and warm, but Monty had warned us of sudden weather changes and blizzards in the mountains. On the way up, my dad, who had often visited there, showed us a cave called the Rustlers' Cave (which Monty had supplied with firewood,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

matches, emergency food, etc.) where people could take shelter if necessary.

"As it happened, we got to the top to some beaver ponds and then were separated from my dad. In a flash the weather changed to winter. Suddenly it was freezing and we were blindly staggering through a heavy snow storm. By some luck and because Hunt had shown us the landmarks, Nogg and I found the cave. We were safe, Nogg was safe but Hunt was still up there on the mountain somewhere. I wanted to go find him but it wasn't possible. It was like midnight in that heavy snow storm.

"Cousin Monty came up with help in the morning and we found Hunt's body. He had died from a stroke. All that made an unforgettable impression on all of us, particularly Nogg. Earlier, Hunt had shown us petroglyphs--those are pictures and symbols made by ancient Indians on the cave wall. Nogg was excited and wide-eyed. He heard stories of cattle rustlers hiding in the cave and fighting the sheriff's posse and he saw the cave floor strewn with bones of by-gone creatures. I could see he would never forget the cave.

"So when he was here in 1971, raging and cursing in that irrational way, I was sure he was beyond redemption. Then, a second later, he was smiling and asking in a modulated, conversational tone, 'Dad, do you remember the Rustlers' Cave?' I was in a turmoil because it seemed like an olive branch

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

that he was offering. I thought what the cave had meant to us--a place of refuge from a violent, stormy world.

"Was he ~~really~~ asking in this oblique way for help, for refuge? He could be helped only when he, himself, was ready for it. Even so, rehabilitation could not take place here at the villa. The disruptive, destructive influence of alcoholics and addicts is common knowledge. They need the love of concerned individuals, certainly, but also they require the understanding of trained, profession staff. I had to think of the welfare of the rest of the family so again I told him to take his entourage and go."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. MerrittEND OF NOGG

Stanley envisioned an old-fashioned, family Christmas party in 1974 such as they had had in 1945. Eric and Griselda and their families hadn't been at the villa for several years except briefly for the funeral of Gretchen and Hanna. Now Stanley wanted to introduce them to his new wife. Both children agreed to come to Cedar Rapids for a couple weeks in December.

If Buddy and Josefa had further qualms about what to do concerning Nogg, they were settled one day when a letter came from a Ukiah, California legal firm with the felicitous name of Clout, Frumkin and Twaddle, attorneys-at-law.

Mr. Ephraim Clout regretted to inform them of the untimely death on October fourteenth of their son, Stanley Huntington Maynard V., known as Nogg Maynard. Mr. Clout recounted the story in the quasi-jurnalese he had learned as a reporter for his student newspaper at San Jose State College:

"After investigations by the sheriff and Mendocino County authorities, it was determined that Maynard had overdosed with a lethal combination of alcohol and drugs. Some of the people living at Maynard's ranch near Laytonville had expressed surprise at his passing saying, 'We didn't do nothin' unusual. We wuz just speed-ballin' like always, ya know--some heroin and cocaine and methamphetamine injected in our arms or some-wheres. We did it thousands of times. Then, wow, old Nogg just keels over. Hey man, this don't mean we gonna get kicked outa this place does it? Man, we always gettin' kicked around!!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Mr. Clout explained that his relationship with Nogg was tenuous at best, since he had seen Nogg only once or twice, but had been retained to handle Nogg's legal matters which generally were drug-related scrapes with the law, or more recently, altercations with his neighbors, old-time ranchers who resented his harboring numbers of drifting addicts--refugees from city streets who planted crops of marijuana and built unsightly shacks of rusty metal, rotten wood and blowing plastic. The neighbors noted correctly that these nomads were a shifty, shifting lot who avoided gainful employment and paid no taxes. Some, who succeeded with their pot plots and got the crop to market in San Francisco, could be flush for a while. But there were many hazards what with drug gangs and officials always watching to steal or destroy the valuable product. The ranchers alleged that Nogg brought low-scale drug war to their pastoral county.

With his substantial resources, Nogg apparently helped and protected these itinerants at his ranch. One story was told of Nogg in the late 1960s. He first bought a 500-acre ranch, installing his coterie of flower children, whereupon an old neighbor (latest of four generations at that spot and whose ranch was for sale for three hundred thousand dollars) wanted to run Nogg and his friends out of the county. The old rancher told a gathering of irate citizens in the Liveoak School, "Them damned hippies is ruinin' property values in the county

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

an' mark my words, we're all gonna suffer!"

Secretly, Nogg bought the neighbor's ranch, paying cash, and thereby scuttled the opposition. All the hippies celebrated for weeks as they spread out over the new land.

At death, Nogg owned 1200 acres of grass and forest on rolling hills, which Mr. Clout confided could become significantly more valuable as the vineyard industry spread north from Napa.

Nogg chose to be cremated and his ashes were in the custody of the Bright Side Mortuary, Ukiah. Nogg left no acknowledged wife or minor children. He wrote a terse will, a copy of which was enclosed, leaving any assets to the Maynard Foundation for, as he wrote, "They will use this money for something good." At the end he wrote, "Mom and dad, forgive me. I tried but couldn't kick the habit. I've always loved you, Eric, Griz and Hanna--the best family anybody could ever have. This is crazy, but could you mix my ashes with those leaves in mama's garden--down in the south corner somewhere--then I'll be back at the Tuscan Villa. That seems right for someone with my name. Maybe plant a tree there. Maybe a young northern red oak. Some are there now. They like the spot. That's Quercus rubra--see pop, I didn't forget!"

He signed the document Stanley Huntington Maynard V.

"A name that gets results," Buddy groaned to himself, then flooded with emotion after reading through this last communication, he handed it to Josefa blurting, "I have to go to the tower."

He didn't come out for the rest of the day. Josefa, creeping to the top of the stair at dinner time, heard strange sounds--Stanley was sobbing intermittently. When he needed her

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

he would come out. She didn't disturb him, thinking men must be alone at such times. She went to bed at eleven.

About midnight he lay down next to her. They embraced. She whispered, "I know what it's like, Buddy."

He said, "Josefa, how terrible. You lost two sons at the same time."

"Yes, but remember the good times. It gets easier to bear after a while."

Tenderly they made love, then slept.



Richard Lee Merritt
4428 23rd St.
San Francisco, CA 94114-3114

492

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

The 1974 Christmas reunion would be more subdued now, with the news of Nogg's death. Still, Buddy felt as though they had lost Nogg years before. He told Josefa some of the family history she hadn't heard.

"In June 1961 we had to do some intricate planning since Griselda was graduating from Radcliffe--that's really Harvard in Massachusetts, and Eric was graduating from Montana State College in Bozeman. Naturally, they both wanted the family there and we certainly wanted to be there. These schools are about two thousand miles apart. So Gretchen, Hanna and I flew to River House in New York City for a week's visit with Gretchen's mother, Emma (and with Nogg if we could find him). I hoped the whole family would go on up to Cambridge, then after the ceremony there, we would all fly to Cedar Rapids to drive the Buick out to Montana. There was just time for all of this. It was even more important to get to Montana on time since Eric and his fiancée, Alice Petrie, both graduating, planned to be married the following day in Columbus, which is a little town a hundred miles east of Bozeman. It's the county seat of Stillwater County where the Petries are an old ranching family. I really hate trying to organize expeditions like this which require consultation and consent with so many diverse people.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"But it worked out beautifully except that Nogg wasn't there. I realized then that the kids were grown and would all go their own ways.

"Alice is a beautiful girl, as you will see, with striking black eyes and hair. We discovered that she is part Crow Indian, maybe a sixteenth or so. Her great-grandmother, Suzy Meldrum, who lived until 1950, was half-Crow, and the Petrie Ranch on the Stillwater River north of Yellowstone Park is on land that was part of the Crow Reservation until 1892.

"Alice's father, Jack Petrie, told me his grandfather came out from Menard County, Illinois in 1892, married Suzy and started the ranch--all in six weeks! Jack had been drinking a lot of bourbon whiskey at Eric's wedding reception so he was telling all the family secrets. He said the Petries are very successful politicians which is true, since he and his father have been in the state legislature for most of the past fifty years. He told me they even keep an old brick house in Helena near the state capitol since they spend so much time there.

"Jack's a 'good ol' cowboy' who first looked at us Maynards like we were a species from another planet, but when my cousin Monty Templeton and his family showed up there--they live on their ranch one hundred fifty miles north--and ol' Jack discovered we were cousins of Monty Templeton--he truly welcomed us into the cowpoke fraternity!

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"He and Monty had known each other for years, working together in the Montana Stockgrowers' Association and that sort of thing. 'Any cousin of Monty's must be true-blue! I'm proud to have my little girl marrying a Templeton cousin! Hey, mom, did you hear? Eric is a cousin of Monty Templeton! Come on, have another drink, Mr. Maynard--mind if I call you Buddy? We're all family now, I guess. Eric says you have land in Iowa. Do you run cattle back there?' etc., etc.

"It was a great disappointment to us that week before, in New York City, when we didn't even see Nogg. We left messages for him and had written him, but got no response. The day we were leaving for Cambridge, a heavy package arrived at River House. There was a gold locket for Griselda inscribed:

Dear Grizzle, Yer big brother is proud of you, kiddo. Nogg --June 1961
--

"It was that dead-end English the kids used in 1945 when I got home from the war.

"He also sent a handsome Frederic Remington bronze of a cowboy on a bucking bronco and there was a note:

For Eric, the best cowboy in the Maynard family (Templeton cousins excepted). From Nogg--June 1961
--

"We delivered the gifts but Nogg was not there

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

and we all missed him.

"After Eric's wedding party, he and Alice drove to Banff for their honeymoon (that's in the Canadian Rockies) and we visited at the Petrie Ranch south of Columbus, then for several weeks up at Monty's ranch near Lewistown. We've gone there lots of times and it's a favorite with us all. Monty has a working cattle ranch with some cabins for visitors. Grandma Emma loved it. She hadn't been west of Iowa before--always lived in Germany and New York City, so it was very different for her. You should have seen her getting on a horse!

"Have I tired you with this monologue? So much to tell! Eric and Alice wanted to buy a ranch. Jack Petrie and Monty helped them find a good one. They found what they wanted in the autumn. It's about thirty-five hundred acres near the Petrie place--beautiful mountain country. It belonged to an old man named Raymond Beckwourth, said to be one of many descendants of Jim Beckwourth who was a famous mountain man in the early days and who lived with the Crow Nation.

"So Eric and Alice are very happy in that mountain hideaway. They have enlarged and improved the old buildings. They have some cattle and other animals but principally Eric likes horse-breeding. He's won lots of ribbons and because of his grandfather's trust fund, he doesn't have to worry much about making a living. Alice is a better rancher than he is, with all her practical experience. But Eric is serious about

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

managing money. He's been a good boy that way--never foolish or wasteful--and he's training his children to know the value of money. There are four children and maybe another on the way. The kids get little allowances and each has chores to do. They live like the other farm kids and are bussed into school each day.

"Eric has his own account in the Maynard Estate office and it's surprisingly large. He has saved almost all his trust money since the ranch was paid for. He told me it's not hard to save when you have half a million coming in each year! He says that now, with the Maynard Estate mostly gone into the foundation, he must insure that his children won't sink into abject poverty--unlikely in any case, but I like his prudence. He's mindful of the fact that the trust fund terminates at his death, which could be next year, or sixty years from now. Of my three children, he would have been the ideal one to carry on here with the estate and foundation, but he is adamant in his decision to be a Montana rancher.

"When he was a little kid he used to beg us to let him go live at cousin Monty's ranch. He did stay there for two years going to high school with Monty's children. And guess what? He even named two of my grandchildren for Monty and Monty's wife, Rosalie. Those cousins are something special! I think Eric absorbed a lot of Monty's good characteristics--self reliance, probity, and simplicity.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"Funny, such wonderful cousins, and we didn't even know we had them until Monty showed up one time in New York in 1936--but that's another story."

VISITING NOGG'S RANCH

Eric, Alice and their four children, who planned to stay for a month, flew in from Billings on the fourteenth of December. Two days later, Griselda and her husband, Doctor (of Fine Arts) Nicholas Lowell Greenfield, arrived from California with nine-year-old John Everett Millais Greenfield and eight-year-old Beatrice Dante Greenfield, whose names reflected their father's predilection for the Pre-Raphaelite painters, the works of whom he and Griselda had assiduously sought out in private collections and a hundred galleries such as the Tate, the Birmingham, the Walker or the Manchester, from Aberdeen to Land's End during their year-long honeymoon in Britain.

Buddy had seen the Greenfields in October when he and Dave Goldsmith flew to California to get Nogg's ashes and to investigate Nogg's ranch property. Griselda and Nicholas drove over from Chico, distraught, but curious about the life of the erring brother who, unbeknownst to them, had lived so near.

Buddy rented a car at San Francisco Airport then drove north to Ukiah where they consulted with lawyer Clout who conducted them the following day to the ranch.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

It was a sunny, glorious autumn day. They met the Greenfields in Laytonville then proceeded seven miles to the property located up against the coastal range, with some old-growth redwoods and fir but more second-growth, already mature and valuable timber. Mostly there was rolling grassland, unplowed, with stately live oak trees.

They passed a couple of hippie encampments where old cars and busses, some with flat tires, stood about amid random piles of garbage and haphazard shelters. Some naked children, dirty and apparently healthy, lay in the shade of a faded tent on a ragged blanket watching while a pot-bellied Indian man with braids slapped a cadaverous blond woman for some dereliction of spousal duty. He finished a can of beer which he threw into a smoldering fire where they were roasting some strips of meat cut from a deer carcass hanging nearby.

Mr. Clout explained that there were several farm houses in varying stages of disrepair as well as the hippie encampments. "Hard to take a census here! They come and go like the birds. But I'll introduce you to Reefer O'Shea. He's always over in the main house and has been here with Nogg since the beginning. He's plenty odd, but sometimes he shows 'leadership ability' as they say. The others defer to him now that Nogg is gone. I think he knows where the drugs are hidden! Nogg used to be the leader, no doubt about it, but Reefer was his lieutenant."

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

They passed a decrepit arbor loaded with fragrant, purple, over-ripe Concord grapes, all abuzz with yellowjackets. Then there were three rusty, stripped-down cars before they climbed the rotting porch steps of what had once been a fine, big farmhouse with beveled-glass windows, round pillars and gingerbread. Some of the windows were broken. Some cheap, overstuffed, faded chairs and a worn seat from a car flanked the big, open front door and screen door, where a gaping hole allowed free passage to cats, kids, dogs, flies and yellow-jackets.

Mr. Clout pounded on the door. No answer. Pounded again. No answer. Mr. Clout said, "He's here, I'm sure. Let's just go in." Gingerly they advanced into that dark, malodorous den, largely devoid of furniture except for two or three filthy mattresses on the floor of each room to facilitate "crashing" for hoards of itinerants.

In the hallway, they encountered a skeletal girl who stared blankly at them when they asked if Reefer were here. She collapsed on the stairway then looked up saying, "Yah, you gotta reefer? I could use one o' them reefers." Then she slumped over.

Mr. Clout found Reefer O'Shea in a back bedroom. "Remember me, Reefer? I'm Ephraim Clout. I'm Nogg's lawyer. This is Mr. Stanley Maynard, Nogg's father, and Mr. David Goldsmith-- they are from the Maynard Foundation that owns the ranch now--

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

They come from back east. And this is Dr. Greenfield and and Mrs. Griselda Greenfield. Mrs. Greenfield is Nogg's sister."

Reefer, with long, dank hair, greasy T-shirt and a permanent sardonic twist on his unprepossessing face, was sprawled on a rusty iron bed smoking something, maybe a cigarette. Someone had recently vomited at the side of the room and someone, perhaps a dog or child, had defecated a few times near the bed. In the corner on a pile of old styrofoam, a mangy yellow cat daintily sniffed some moldy fried chicken.

Griselda, looking about with some alarm said, "Come on Nick, let's get out of here, this is too much!"

As they retreated, Reefer started to laugh, calling out loudly, "So sorry, Miss Prunella, it's friggin' hard, don't ya know, to keep maids these days. The lower classes been spoiled with them high wages they git in factories. We been tryin' for ages to git a girl to clean up all this shit, but no luck so far! You don't wanna job, do ya?"

Habituated to order and cleanliness, trained by Gretchen and Hanna to always keep her own room ~~clean~~ immaculate, Griselda was revolted by everything she had seen in this outpost of perdition. Suddenly she turned back and marched over to the bedside, taking care where she stepped, then, pulling herself up to her full four feet ten, brown eyes flashing and Harvard accent in full sail, she hissed, "Listen to me, loathsome scum bag, they'll be cleaning the shit out of here

THE TUSCAN VILLA by R. L. Merritt

soon, all right, and they'll begin with you. You seem to be number one turd in this menagerie of excrement, but your meal ticket is gone now. No more free slop for you, pig! No more free smack, ~~or~~ or speed or snow or angel dust, or whatever you have in your soupe du jour. No more Nogg to foot the bills." She burst into tears and ran from the room followed by Nick.

Reefer blew smoke toward the fly-specked ceiling. "Man, what's she all bent outa shape about? I didn't do nothin' to her. Man, that broad needs somebody to turn her on. Here I am, just mindin' my own business in my own bedroom, man, an' all you friggin' lords an' ladies with your friggin' fancy talk come chargin' in. Why don't ya git the hell out? Go talk to Nogg."

"Nogg is dead," Mr. Clout said. "You know that--you were here when it happened."

Reefer said, "Yer name's Clout, huh? Ya think ya got clout, huh? Well I got a poem fer ya. Clout git out!
Out with Clout! Out with Clout's ugly snout!"

So began that singular interview, confused and full of obscene, sarcastic ribaldry such as the visitors had never experienced. They attempted to learn how many people were on the ranch; who was in charge; how things were with the sheriff and the neighbors; what was expected of the new owners, etc.

After a couple hours of fruitless exchange, they withdrew,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

telling Reefer the residents might stay until spring but must vacate by April 1975. Mr. Clout told Buddy that Reefer was the most rational of all the sorry crew! The rest were completely spaced out.

Buddy had some idea that the ranch might be used for a new drug-rehabilitation program, if they could find some responsible agency in San Francisco to administer it. It could be a memorial to Nogg. Nogg's trust money could finance it, but it would need building renovation, removal of the shacks, and obviously some adjustment of the population.

His hope that they would find some personal mementoes of Nogg was completely frustrated.

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. MerrittCHRISTMAS, 1974

The holidays, like those of 1945, were a notable success. Buddy had been apprehensive about his family meeting their new step-mother along with the pall of having so recently lost Gretchen, Hanna and Nogg, who were so central to all of their lives, but he was grateful to Griselda with whom he had had a lengthy private conversation after the October visit to Nogg's ranch. They all had driven south to Ukiah in the early afternoon. Once Mr. Clout had returned to his office, they ate lunch at a pleasant, quiet restaurant by Lake Mendocino. Dave and Nick later walked down the shoreline leaving Buddy and Griselda drinking coffee on the shady terrace.

"Daddy, I want to apologize for my outburst in that awful place. I was so shocked and angered by it all, I wasn't using good judgement."

Buddy grinned. "Oh no, I agreed with you completely! You were right on target although I was surprised by your choice of words. You sounded like an old top sergeant with a Harvard accent! At that moment I still felt diplomacy might be useful, but our talks with Mr. Reefer were a waste of time except that they showed us what we were up against."

"Well, I hated what had happened to Nogg, my beautiful brother, and I blamed it all on that Reefer creep. Of course,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

he had little to do with it. Nogg set his course a long time ago--long before Reefer. When I first went to Radcliffe, I would see Nogg from time to time and he was already experimenting with drugs--that was maybe 1958. Oh yes, he was in the vanguard of all that crappy revolution! He didn't try to recruit me, but he seemed to believe he was totally in charge. He said, 'Don't worry, Grizzle, I can handle it, I know how much to use.'

"We just can't blame anybody but Nogg himself. It wasn't as though he were weak-minded or imposed upon. Anyway, that's all over now, isn't it? We'll have to try to keep our kids away from it. We'll have to remember the good days when we were all at home at the villa. It was all so safe, so perfect, so happy! Remember how our puppies used to sit in the snow banks and how we all collected leaves for mama's garden? A real family endeavor--simply wonderful memories!

"And daddy, I wanted to tell you. Eric and I have talked about it and we are delighted that you found Josefa. That was a miracle! I know we will all love her. Mama's gone, so none of this nonsense about resenting having her replaced! That my own papa had a love affair going back to Paris in 1932! You could sell that story to True Romance Magazine! It must have been

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

frightful and lonely for you after mama's accident.

We're glad about Josefa and hope to meet her soon."

Any unease Josefa herself felt was quickly dispelled by the genuine warm greeting when Buddy's children arrived. Josefa became Mama Jo or Grandma Jo, Karolina became Grandma Karolina, and Libuse became Auntie Libby to the young cousins.

With fourteen in the family, meals were in shifts or became baronial on special occasions with Buddy and Josefa side by side at the head of the extended table, Eric and Alice at the foot, and family and guests sprinkled liberally in between.

Buddy was conscious that he wanted to recreate all the joyous holidays of the past--particularly that of 1945, when the villa burst with life, his parents and Gretchen were there, peace had returned to the world, and his own small children had discovered the innumerable attractions of the old mansion.

Early, they set up a great Minnesota fir tree in the drawing room bay so that everybody could participate in the decoration. This year, to the family ornament collection down from the attic, Karolina added some treasured, exquisite Bohemian glass angels she had brought from the old country in 1914. Buddy showed the newer generation the special ancient decorations that his father had remembered from the 1870s. "See these--very old and fragile! Your great-grandpa said they were old in 1879! He said they were first brought here on one of the old Maynard river boats--like the old

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

square piano--before there were railroads!"

The young cousins were nearly of the same age--Roderick Monty Maynard at eleven, was the oldest, and his sister Helena Rosalie was ten. Johnny Greenfield was nine and Gretchen Hanna Maynard and Beatrice Greenfield, born in 1966, were eight. Eric Junior, at six, was the youngest, but everyone could see that his mother was expecting another child.

The boys were more venturesome, spending a good deal of time outside. Rod-Monty, by virtue of age the leader, with Johnny Greenfield at his side, and always trailed by Eric Junior, raced first to the old vehicles in the carriage house as well as to Buddy's 1933 Chevrolet, up on blocks at the gatehouse. Unwittingly, they engaged in the same simulated driving that their father and uncle had done in 1945.

After a snowfall, they moved a stepladder to get down Buddy's old Flexible Flyer sled from the carriage house wall. When Buddy saw what they were doing, he wiped the dusty sled clean and put some oil on the steering movement.

"Tell you what we better do. There are three of you and only one sled, so let's jump in the car and we'll get a couple more!" They drove to town to buy two new best-quality sleds--one larger, one smaller, then Buddy showed them the hill north of the gatehouse where the best sliding was. Before the day was over, most of the family had tried sliding, working up a great appetite in the icy weather. Dave Goldsmith's sons, Stan and Kon, both home from college, joined the group with

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

their own old sleds and in the ensuing days took the boys ice-skating and to a couple basketball games in Iowa City where Kon was a senior premedical student at the university.

The little girls meanwhile, were mostly occupied inside the villa where they willingly helped Mrs. Grieder and Louise with the extra housework, since just being in the grand old house with so many relations was a novelty. There were many eager, accomplished cooks and the ambrosial odors from the kitchen filled the corridors. Karolina, Josefa, even Libuše, prepared old Bohemian specialties to supplement the ample mouth-watering creations of Erika Friedemann and Alice Maynard. Only Griselda admitted she was no cook. "Mama and Hanna tried to teach me, and when I lived in River House with Grandma Emma that year, she said it was a disgrace that I couldn't cook. She said no good man would have me if I didn't learn to cook! But all I ever learned was how to make toast and scrambled eggs! I was lucky to find Nick since food doesn't seem to be important to him. We can give him Quaker Oats three times a day and he won't complain! He's far more interested in art books and supplies than in food!"

It was true that Nick was perfectly happy now because he had discovered the art books in Dr. Reisfeld's library and there were some German works on the Pre-Raphaelites. One was Der Lebensabend Rossettis, an account by Wilhelm Franzmann of the long decline of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. It was a fine, calf-bound, two-volume set, one of a tiny edition of fifty

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

numbered copies published on hand-made, linen paper at Jena in 1884. Nick was almost certain it had never been translated. Perhaps he, Nick, might do this! It was in his field and his administration was forever pestering him to publish. The difficulty was he always had a devil of a time with German. He needed it for his work but he had just scraped by in his German classes. He was much better with the Romance languages. Now he was having trouble reading this exciting Franzmann book when almost every other adult at the villa could have helped him. Dave Goldsmith, always friendly, was a native German, and Buddy, Josefa, Griselda, Eric, Karolina, Libuše, even the new cook, Mrs. Friedemann, knew German much better than Nick!

But Nick had pride. To ask for help would be an admission of academic weakness. He was a doctor, a Ph.D. with dignity to be maintained. So he buried himself in the Maynard family library, plodding through the Rossetti story, secretly consulting a German-English dictionary, and getting a well-garbled version of what he was reading. In this case, a little learning was a most dangerous thing.

Nick, whose mother was a poor, unacknowledged cousin of the great Lowell family, had grown up in Northampton, Massachusetts, son of an obscure accountant. Failing to get a scholarship to an Ivy-League school, he ended up with his Iowa City Ph.D.--not bad for one who had no help from his family. In 1962,

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

after they got their advanced degrees, he and Griselda had been married here in the villa, across the hall in the drawing room where the Christmas tree stood now.

Griselda's trust money was rolling in and it made a big change in his life of near-penury, but the money was not important to him, and Griselda divined immediately that this lavish wealth could damage or destroy their marriage, given Nick's sensitive male ego.

So they talked candidly about it and decided to bank most of it (as Eric also did)--that is, allow most of it to remain in Griselda's account in the estate office. They augmented Nick's skimpy salaries with about fifty thousand a year to enable them to live well in pleasant, college-town houses with a housekeeper and good cars. Their living standard was good, but not extravagant enough to arouse faculty envy. Indeed, some of the other professors who published textbooks, lived better than the Greenfields.

Nick knew a good part of the literature about the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the genius, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. He knew that Rossetti was not thought to have painted or written poetry after about 1878 when, each day, the artist was taking 180 grains of the hypnotic, chloral, along with immoderate amounts of whisky.

This Christmas holiday, Nick sat glued to one of Gretchen's oak Morris chairs among the Reisfeld books that Buddy had

510

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

brought from New York only in 1971.

In a professional frenzy, Nick made copious notes on the Franzmann work. Essentially what he thought he read was that Herr Anton Schreiber, a wealthy businessman of Hannover, in 1880 had visited Rossetti at 16, Cheyne Walk in Chelsea, London. With the aid of Theodore Watts-Dunton, Schreiber persuaded the failing artist to attempt one more picture. Rossetti agreed, and with the help of another artist, Treffry Dunn, he created his last work, titled Soul's Beauty Enthroned which, with a predella, measured 183 X 107 centimeters. The model may have been Alexa Walding or Jane Morris who continued to visit the dying artist.

Schreiber, with almost unseemly haste, bought this picture (evidently one of highest quality and a major work), and spirited it away to his estate in Hannover before it had been seen by anyone in London, not even Watts-Dunton.

Nick Greenfield kept thinking What a discovery! We'll all go to Hannover next summer and track down this painting. But would it be there? What of the World War II bombing? He looked in Buddy's encyclopedia. Yes, Hannover had been severely bombed. Still, the Germans had been pretty canny about hiding away their art in salt mines, etc. Maybe he could find the painting and somehow re-introduce it to the art world. Then his authority would be recognized in academia. This was a large painting--the same size as the

Astarte Syriaca of 1877 that he and Griselda had seen in Manchester on their honeymoon! He, Nicholas Lowell Greenfield, D. F. A., might astound art scholars and curators the world over with a revelation of this magnitude!

Buddy, amused at Nick's infatuation with the Franzmann work presented it to him, thus winning his undivided fealty.

Meanwhile, Buddy was discovering that he and Josefa's family knew many of the same people in the Czech community. Groups of friends were invited for different evenings. There were some Czech and German songfests with impromptu piano and instrumental recitals. Buddy and Josefa often played, and since they both habitually practiced each morning, there was a good deal of fine music. To Alice, it seemed odd but elegant and pleasant, since she rarely heard anything like it in their isolated, mountain home. Maybe on the radio a truncated half-hour at midnight from Salt Lake City, or the Bell Telephone Hour, or a concert at Montana State. That was all. It would be good if the kids heard this kind of music more often--not just a steady diet of Beatles, Elvis or Western.

The girls, especially Helena Rosalie, liked their grandpa very much--liked to sit near him at the table or turn pages for him at the piano when he would wink or poke them with his elbow. They formed a tattered malion entourage following him around, for he knew stories concerning everything in the fascinating old villa and good-naturedly

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

took the time to tell them all the secrets.

One morning as some of the cousins played hide-and-seek in the corridors, Helena helped her grandfather arrange books in the tower study. With black eyes wide and earnest she asked, "How old are you, grandpa? How old is the villa? Daddy says it's older than the hills!"

"Well, let's see--certainly not as old as the hills, but pretty old! How much is forty-one plus seventy-four?"

"Oh, that's kind of easy, but I'll write it down." She went to the escritoire. "See here, it's one hundred fifteen! Is that how old you are, grandpa?"

Buddy laughed, "No, that's how old the villa is, because your great, great, great grandfather built it in 1859 and the Maynards have always lived here ever since. Guess how old grandpa is. I was born in 1908. Do you know how to figure that out? Write down this year and subtract 1908 from it."

Helena did this and announced, "Grandpa, it says you're sixty-six!"

"That's right. How old was I when you were born?"

"Oh gee, I'm ten years old. I guess I subtract ten from sixty-six. That's fifty-six. You were fifty-six!"

"You're a smart kid! Grandpa's proud of you!"

"I'm proud of you too, grandpa, 'cause you know just about everything," she grinned. How long have you lived here?"

"I was born in 1908 and grew up here, but went away to school and to war, and I lived in New York for eight years

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

and have lived here ever since. So figure it out for me. Eight years in New York, four years in the war and six years in college. How much is all that? Eighteen? All right, now subtract eighteen from sixty-six."

"That leaves forty-eight! Grandpa, you have been here for forty-eight years!"

"Oh yes, but I remember back much longer than that. I remember how the villa was over sixty years ago."

"How was it?"

"Well, it was pretty much like it is now. We've made a few changes. When my father was born here they didn't have plumbing--no toilets, bathtubs, electricity or telephones--they had privies outside and coal oil lamps and horses and buggies instead of cars."

"We have some neighbors in Montana like that. Daddy says our ranch didn't have a bathroom before we moved there."

"That's right, and my study here was unfinished--like a big gloomy barn with great black tanks full of water in case the villa caught on fire."

"What if the villa caught on fire today?"

"Now we have a fire department and a good water supply coming in pipes, and in summertime, that swimming pool down there is full of water! Maybe next time you visit it will be summer and you can go swimming."

"I'd like that grandpa, because at home sometimes we try to swim in the Stillwater River, but it's sure cold and there are slippery round rocks to walk on, and there are some

mean deer flies that bite you. Now Rod-Monty, he doesn't mind--he just jumps in and he hollers to get under the water 'cause the flies can't bother you there--but boys are different and they like to show off."

Helena walked about examining the objects in the study.
"Grandpa, did you ever hear how I came into this world?"

"No, tell me about it." Buddy, the fond grandfather savoring these precious moments with the children, knew the story but wanted to hear her version.

"Well, the ranch is isolated and daddy says that it is all right for a horse to have a baby there but proper ladies must go to a hospital, and so mama would always go to Columbus when the kids were born to avoid complications, and then too, Grandma Petrie usually helped out.

"But when my time was near, Grandma and Grandpa Petrie were in Helena because grandpa is always in the legislature and he has a lot of stockgrower's business there, so he's always had a big red brick house on Breckenridge near the state capitol. It's not as big as the villa but it's plenty old and I like it a lot. Grandpa says his daddy bought it with all the furnishings from the pioneers maybe about 1920 or something. Grandpa says it used to have a tower too, but they had to tear that off after the earthquakes in 1935. They spend half their time in Helena. So my daddy drove mama and Clint-Rod over to Helena until after I was born, 'cause they have a good hospital and hundreds of doctors and all.

515

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

Then daddy had to go home to tend the ranches.

"Well, mama says I was in a big hurry because I just real sudden-like appeared right there in the old red brick house with only Grandma Petrie to heat the water or whatever they do.

"Of course, the hospital and all those doctors were only blocks away and they came running when Grandma Petrie called them. But the doctors saw that it was all over when they got there. I was healthy and mama was fine so they said, 'Better if you stay where you are and forget the hospital!' That's when mama and daddy gave me the name Helena!"

All too soon, as it seemed to Buddy, the time arrived for the children to return to their homes. Then in January, when Karolina and Libuse moved back to the grandly-renovated house in Cedar Rapids, the villa was once again quiet--almost too quiet, while outside, wind, sleet, snow and dark, fierce clouds held sway.

A time for migration as it seemed to Buddy, thinking of the January in 1916 when his grandparents took him on the train to Florida. He had been only seven years old but he kept some vague recollection that his grandfather had been a sometime business associate of Mr. Henry Flagler, the financier who had done so much to develop Florida. This was

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

their first visit to Florida although Mr. Flagler, who died in 1913, had invited them several times. They were away for six weeks, staying at the Seminole Glades Hotel in Palm Beach. Old Senator Maynard hired Shadrach Needham Lee Bailey, a nineteen-year-old poor college boy, to be Buddy's tutor-companion during the visit. Shad, also a part-time receptionist at the hotel, hoped to return in the autumn to the university at Gainesville. Their acquaintance had started when the Maynards were charmed by the handsome young man's unreconstructed southern accent, his conspicuous alacrity in that languorous ambience, and his apparent prior contact with grammar.

In time they heard Shad's story. He was the grandson and namesake of Shadrach Needham Lee (1850-1915), attorney of Montevallo, Shelby County, Alabama. Shad's mother, Matilda Ann Needham Lee had married a neighbor boy, Fortunato Bailey, who despite his name had the misfortune of dying at age twenty-five from eating tainted pork, whereupon Matilda Ann returned with little Shad to the shelter of her father's roof.

She became a clerk in her father's office and the old attorney planned to see his grandson through college, but died unexpectedly and intestate (double negligence for an attorney as he himself would have said), at which time Matilda Ann's younger brother, Nathan Forrest Needham Lee claimed all their father's estate, maintaining in court

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

that Matilda and her son had long since received their portion.

Nathan did not attempt to evict Matilda from the parental home but did tie up the assets in such a way that Shad could not remain at Gainesville.

Old Senator Maynard sympathetically heard all this tale of woe for he was a firm believer in the inviolability of education.

Buddy recalled conversations then and later from which he learned how his grandfather had decided to finance the remainder of Shad's college years. One day the senator asked Shad why his uncle was named Nathan Forrest, (though the senator knew perfectly well that this was a favored appellation in Dixie).

"It's because my granddaddy was in the Battle of Selma in 1865. He was fourteen years old and General Nathan Bedford Forrest organized the defenses and tried to stop the Yankees there, but there was no stopping them. Seemed there was no end of Yankees and General Forrest did the best he could but he didn't have enough men or ammunition. Like most southern folk, granddaddy thought the world of General Forrest and it happened my uncle was born in 1877 just after General Forrest died in Memphis, so granddaddy gave him that name. As for the Needham Lee part--that was our great, great granddaddy that came from east Tennessee in 1816 to Shelby County. Grandpa brought the stock overland and the family

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

came on a raft down the Tennessee River to Gunter's Landing and then walked a hundred miles to Shelby County and the Cahaba Valley. I can tell you half the county is kinfolk to him and he had three sons and forty-six grandsons (not countin' the in-laws) that took up the fight in the War Between the States! Senator, I reckon we're a southern family all right, plenty proud of it and no gettin' around that!" Buddy remembered the wide smile of pleasure on Shad's handsome face.

Senator Maynard didn't reveal that he also had been in the Battle of Selma (but in the Yankee army), and he could remember the fear and slaughter of that April day, the burning of the little city and the smooth-faced, little southern boys captured or lying blasted on the broken fortifications.

The senator also had had a more recent experience that affected him deeply. In 1913 he attended an encampment in Pennsylvania to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. It was a joint national reunion of the Grand Army of the Republic and of the United Confederate Veterans. President Wilson was there briefly, but the senator mostly remembered sitting at plank tables with aged veterans, north and south, eating simple fare with plenty of pie, ice cream and good coffee in big tin cups. They slept in tents and sat on benches in the shade, blue and gray together, smoking cigars, showing each other photographs and pock-marked tintypes, re-telling stories of the great national schism, marveling at their strong feelings of common heritage, reborn brotherhood,

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

love and nationhood.

So when Senator Maynard heard Shad's story, it seemed perfectly right to him to share some of his ample prosperity to help the boy through college. He said to Letitia, "We whipped Nathan Bedford Forrest in 1865 and it wasn't easy, and we messed up Alabama, but now we're all one country, so I'm going to help that southern boy!"

To Buddy in 1916, the white and yellow-painted Seminole Glades Hotel seemed very old, but grand, with its wide, wooden gingerbread verandas looking to the nearby sea, and its acres of gardens where uniformed blacks drove open carriages down quiet, sandy lanes shaded with palms, mossy liveoaks, magnolias, Australian pine and citrus, and where every turn revealed some startling display of bougainvillea or hibiscus or pastel-shaded houses with turrets.

Shad, more companion than tutor, spent a good part of each day on the beach with Buddy. He told of a fortuitous day in about 1878 when a Spanish barque, loaded with coconuts, had washed ashore. Some of the coconuts took root, then early settlers planted the others widely in the wind-blown, sandy soil, thus earning this spot the new name of Palm Beach.

All the rooms in the hotel, especially the dining room with its slowly-revolving electric fans, seemed cool, cavernous and dark when one came in from the outside, from bare-foot expeditions along the sun-drenched beach where cumulus clouds

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

climbed high like in some paintings of N. C. Wyeth or Winslow Homer.

Memories of that Florida idyll flooded Buddy's mind in January 1975 as he sat in the villa disconsolately regarding the wicked weather outside. Deciding that enough was enough, he and Josefa took the plane to Florida, going directly to the old Seminole Glades Hotel, which they discovered was slated for demolition that summer and consequently had only a skeleton staff and few guests.

At first Buddy hesitated about staying there when he saw the decay, but Josefa enthused, "Oh, I just love it! It reminds me of some old hotels where we used to stay at Karlovy Vary or Mariánské Lázně--great suites of rooms built for aristocracy, but with crumbling plaster, moth-eaten velvet drapes, bathrooms big enough for a regiment, water maybe hot, maybe not, a staff that mostly leaves us alone! We'll have a fine time here!"

And they did! They took the 'Atlantic Suite' for a pittance since there were so few guests, and they had the second floor to themselves with a wide, covered balcony and weathered wicker chairs for watching the whitecaps on the ocean.

They had been warned at the desk that the phones no longer worked, and there was no room service except for a cheerful, rotund black woman named Dinkie, who spoke incomprehensible Gullah, changed sheets and towels and did

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

a minimum of mopping etc.

They could still get meals in the dining room but service was erratic, so on days when they required efficiency they could walk over to neighboring hotels. Palm Beach was an enclave for the wealthy and since they were wealthy, things worked out well enough, but they were glad they had found their hotel before its demise--it was too old and worn for pretense, and it was comfortable and familiar like aging house slippers.

They learned that the Schlaufuchs Investment Corporation of New York City had bought the old hotel with the intention of replacing it with an outsize, ultra-modern facility ~~and~~ with parking garage and maximized profits--everything that could be squeezed past the strict local zoning regulations. Mr. Schlaufuchs Junior who was less avaricious than his father, had permitted some of the staff to continue operating the old hotel in its twilight, while architects and bankers made decisions. There were few guests, no advertising, and the services ~~waned~~ from day to day. Roofs and pipes leaked, windows went unwashed, bathroom tiles crashed to the floor, termites gnawed. The gardens were perhaps more beautiful than ever in their feral abandon. Roses and flowering vines had climbed past the Maynard balcony to a shingled tower above.

They stayed several weeks, walking the beaches and gardens along Lake Worth. Later, Buddy rented a car to visit Lake Okeechobee, the Everglades, and all the sights down to Key West then over to New Orleans so that Josefa could see that the

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Mississippi was indeed an impressive river.

They flew home to the villa in late March.

A MEMORIAL FOR NOGG AND GRETCHEN

In early April, when the earth was warm but before the trees leafed out, Buddy took Nogg's ashes down to the south corner of Gretchen's garden. He had called Alma Peckenpaugh (the master gardener) the previous October and she came over to help him pick two good young northern red oaks from among the volunteers that came up in the garden each year. Buddy decided to transplant two--one for Nogg and one for Gretchen.

Alma had said, "Don't do it now--wait until early spring when the snow melts and the earth dries a bit. Then I'll come over and we'll do it right!"

Now the time had come. They picked a spot where a pile of leaves and horse manure had mellowed for three years. Moving the pile aside, they excavated two large holes. Alma said, "Whatever size you think it needs, make the holes twice that size." They loosened up the earth all around, then mixed the loose earth with decayed leaves and manure.

"Alma, how is everything over at the Peckenpaugh house?"

She was on her knees, pushing dirt with her bare hands. She smiled up at him, "Oh, we still call it the Havergill House and the Havergill Garden--everybody does, the neighbors and all, though it's true it's just full of Peckenpaughs!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Goodness, It's been eleven years since dear Miss Havergill died and left that beautiful place to Toby. Seems to be room for everybody and it's been a god-send. I think you know that Jared's sister, Bertie (your father's secretary) moved in several years ago. She's eighty-six and Jared will be ninety soon. I'm the baby, only eighty-four until June. But Toby had a lot of children. Just think, Toby will be sixty this year and there are always children and grandchildren moving in and out, and Jared and I are still are still out in the carriage house and we still grow lots of food in that garden.

"How many times we've talked about that renovation back in 1936 when you and Gretchen worked such a miracle for all of us!"

Buddy leaned on his shovel. "That's what's hard to believe--almost forty years since then! Gretchen and I and Miss Havergill and Jeff Toner--everybody had such a great time. My mother thought we were all crazy! She thought I should be at the country club doing God-knows-what.

"I hear Toby's Ruster tiller company is doing well. We always keep a paternal eye on them in the Maynard Estate office. We have two of those Ruster Rustless tillers here--good as new after twenty years!"

"Toby says they'll introduce a new heavier model this spring for large gardens--it will be the Ruster Sod-Buster."

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

She looked about. "Now things are ready here. Let's go get those little trees."

The two likely young trees, about five feet high and marked with bows of twine, were now excavated, taking care not to sever the roots. Buddy wanted to do this job himself, but Alma showed him how to do it successfully.

Before the trees were replanted, Buddy opened the urn, added Nogg's ashes to the rich soil, then ran water (not unmixed with tears) into the holes. The trees, with chunks of earth adhering to their healthy root systems, were set in, securely staked, tamped down in place then thoroughly watered.

Both Buddy and Alma gently touched the bark and swelling buds of the little oaks, savoring the scene from the new berms of brown loam, the little pools of water reflecting scudding clouds, up past the garden wall, the dove cot and iron weather vane of the carriage house to the Tuscan tower of the villa.

"Planting a tree is a magical moment," Alma averred. "A little anthropomorphic message and prayer gets the tree off to a good start. Don't forget to stop and say a word to them now and then."

Buddy burst out in a wide smile. "That's a job well-done don't you think, Alma? Now we can wash our hands and put these tools away. Josefa wants us to come to the villa for some coffee."

Needless to say, (with Buddy frequently visiting and greeting them), the trees thrived wondrously and though it was not their habit to grow rapidly, they soon peeked over the high brick wall at the lush Maynard grazing land where the Indian path wound south to Iowa City.



Richard Lee Merritt
4428 23rd St.
San Francisco, CA 94114-3114

525

underlined
parts in italics
through p. 531

THE TUSCAN VILLA / by R. L. Merritt

NOVEMBER 1985

Hilda Grieder mumbled a bit to herself. He was certainly in the tower. She must go up to tell him she had returned. Slowly she climbed the tower stairway.

One knock, two, on the door brought no response. He must be here--his car was in the carriage house. She pushed open the door. At first she thought he was asleep. It wasn't the first time she had found him this way. But this morning there was a curious immobility--no apparent breathing... She called to him, then approached him with some apprehension. He was dressed in navy blue cotton jogging togs. His head was slumped over his walnut escriatoire (as he preferred to call it).

Now she saw his eyes, open and lifeless, seeming to examine the adjacent 17th century Spanish credenza. Hilda gasped, forcing herself to feel his neck and wrists. Oh, he was certainly dead--maybe for a day or two! Feeling faint, she sat down on the medieval, iron-bound English chest, looking about at the orderly clutter, the endless rows and piles of books. She rose for an instant to extinguish the beaten-copper desk lamp.

Her mind went back over the years here. No employer could have been kinder or more thoughtful. Over twenty-four years since she had come here as a young widow. All of Mr.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Maynard's family had been here then, and the other servants--
George Luckner the gardener and his wife, dear old Hanna the
housekeeper, and Melissa the cook, whom she replaced. Then
the family was gone and there was that awful accident with
Hanna and Mrs. Gretchen Maynard, and then one by one the
servants were gone. He treated the servants well, giving
them little pensions and houses to live in.

Then that delightful interlude of rejuvenation when he
found Josefa, his second wife. The villa had simply come
alive with Josefa! The music, the succession of tousled
piano pupils, the visitors, the new servants, the laughter--
and the change in Mr. Maynard himself was nothing short of
miraculous! He was so merry, so full of ideas--looking and
acting twenty years younger!

Hilda remembered that Josefa herself had changed in
that first year. Oh, she had been a handsome woman but a bit
too plump at first, then, what with careful eating, swimming,
tennis, gardening and long walks with Mr. Maynard, she had
lost about twenty pounds. She was just right! Then one week
Mr. Maynard took her on the train to Chicago and she returned
with a stunning wardrobe bought in some of the exclusive
shops he recalled from his mother's time.

Josefa had confided in Hilda. She would do what she could
to make herself more attractive to Stanley, so she had acquiesced
in that shopping spree while she deprecated the elevated prices.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

"I've done a lot of penny-pinching in my life, Hilda,
so being wealthy seems very odd, but Mr. Maynard says I might
even get to like it!" Josefa, her brown eyes twinkling in
an intriguing way, emitted a trill of laughter, her candor
quite winning Hilda's heart.

Hilda never faced it squarely or permitted herself to think about it, but secretly she herself loved Mr. Maynard--had done so almost from the beginning, whether he had a wife or not! Now he was dead. She chuckled ruefully to herself even as the tears welled forth. She reached for his left hand, now so cold and stiff, and held it for a moment. This was as intimate as they had ever been! There was always a total good-natured propriety about their relationship. She had heard endless stories about gentlemen and their housekeepers but none of that hanky-panky here! She had been happy being near him, seeing him each day, making him comfortable. She never expected more. Now she had him all to herself! Wasn't that a joke!

He had something in his hand. What was it? She moved the reluctant fingers. A glass marble fell to the floor, rolling toward the desk. His fingers also held a small stone. How strange! It was a fossil of some sort--a little insect creature engraved on the stone. She retrieved the marble, placing it with the stone on the desk near an old cedarwood cigar box that stood open there. She noticed the faint cedar

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

scent from the box. A pen lay on an old worn notebook which had curious sentences in foreign languages.

She slumped back on the chest, reviewing the happenings of the past decades. He cut the house staff back after his wives died. Now there were just herself and young Pete Luckner who tried hard but didn't have his grandfather's knack in the gardens, so things were a bit wild out there. But Stanley had fought to save the giant elms from the elm disease--even getting tree pathologists over from Ames.

Periodically he would summon crews from Cedar Rapids to prune trees and the rampant Boston ivy; to repair the roof or heating system--things that cried out to be done. A crew of domestic workers came out spring and fall to help her do with thorough house cleanings, and once painters re-did the exterior as well as some of the rooms, though Mr. Maynard hated having the house invaded.

Hilda suspected that he still had a large chunk of the Maynard family fortune, even with the unending philanthropies of the Maynard Foundation. She knew they had all been very good at managing money. Certainly he was no spendthrift though he always had been notably generous. She recalled the day five years before when he had given her the 1978 Buick. For decades he and his father before him had bought a new Buick every two years, except in wartime.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

One morning in 1980 he was having breakfast as usual at the oak kitchen table. He asked, "Hilda, guess how many miles on that 1978 Buick?"

"Well, I don't think very many, Mr. Maynard. It mostly sits out there gathering dust except for those trips you made to Des Moines and down to South Carolina. Maybe you have 10,000 miles?"

"Hilda, you guessed pretty close! I have 9500 miles and now it's time to turn it in on a new one! Doesn't make much sense does it? It's not even well broken-in. I've decided no more of this every two year stuff which is just from habit. So this year I'll get a 1980 model and it may be my last because I hardly need a car, and I want to give the 1978 model to you. Your old Ford is worse for wear and most of the driving you do is household business anyway."

Feeling faint and strange with these memories and emotions flooding rapidly by, Hilda stepped over to collapse into one of the mission oak chairs. She must call someone. She looked at Mr. Maynard, now so singularly shrunken and contorted. What if she had been here when...maybe he had tried to call her. Maybe she could have saved him. But then she didn't even know what he died from.

She must call someone. Libby Putnam--that was her name now. Josef's daughter had used her impossible Czech name until she got married to Tip Putnam, the editor of the Clarion, then she

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

became Libby Putnam, reporter! But, of course, there was
Dave Goldsmith--he was just yards away.

Hilda thought how close the Goldsmiths had always been with Buddy Maynard. It wasn't just Dave Goldsmith. When Buddy and Josefa took that big trip to Europe in 1976, they had stayed for a month with Dr. Josef Goldsmith in New York and also gone up to Cambridge when Stanley Maynard Goldsmith got his M. B. A. at Harvard. Also they visited that other Goldsmith brother called Alberich in West Germany. She knew they had been like family since Hitler days in Europe--Buddy and all of them over there fighting the Nazis. Also, dear old Hanna had worked for the Goldsmiths in Germany ages and ages ago!

Dave's son, Stanley Maynard Goldsmith, named after Buddy here--Hilda had watched him and his brother grow up at the gatehouse. Such good-looking boys! And smart! Stan came to work at the Foundation in 1976 after he had his degree.

Then in 1979 that awful day when they discovered Josefa had inoperable cancer! Josefa just wasted away in a couple months and no warning at all! The money didn't help there!

After Josefa died, the grandchildren started coming to live at the villa during summers to keep their grandfather company--especially Helena every summer since 1980. She had special rapport with her grandfather and cheered him up

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

amazingly when she was here. She graduated from Radcliffe only this past June (Mr. Maynard and the family were all there) then came here and pleased everybody immensely by marrying Stanley Goldsmith. We all knew they liked each other but he was ten years older and it was a surprise!

At Mr. Maynard's suggestion they moved into the big northeast bedroom (which he had occupied with Josefa), he having returned to his old childhood bedroom.

These last years Mr. Maynard had been pretty quiet--not playing the piano so much anymore and busying himself writing monographs on history, literature and music which he proudly showed her from time to time when they were published by Dartmouth or Iowa City.

She must call Helena. Helena and Stan had flown to Chico, California to visit the cousins. The phone number was downstairs. But wait a few minutes. Mr. Maynard loved this villa and this tower study and all these books. Why the big hurry to notify the world and take him away forever? Hilda broke down into sobbing, wiping her face repeatedly with her apron. With shaking body, she huddled pitifully as tears dropped to the sturdy oaken arm of the old chair.

An hour later she went down to the telephone in the kitchen.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. MerrittAN END AND A BEGINNING

An autopsy revealed that Buddy died from a massive stroke, probably with no warning or preliminary pain, very much as his father had died in 1946 after finding the little trilobite stone.

They arranged the funeral for four days later so that people might come from far away. All the Maynards and ~~a Rosalie and~~ Monty Templeton's ~~family~~ came in a small chartered jet from Billings, Montana. From California came the Greenfields and from New York City, Joe Goldsmith and his family. Alberich Wolke and Gisela came from Germany, Bobby Townsley from Lake Placid. Bankers and businessmen, philanthropists, humanitarians, doctors, educators, writers, artists, historians, musicians, builders and former students whom he had aided came in droves from New England, New York, Chicago, Minneapolis and all over Iowa and America to honor Stanley Huntington Maynard IV.

A delegation of reformed addicts came from the Nogg Ranch and New Hope Society of Northern California. There were local delegations of Czechs and Germans, also representatives from little black colleges in Alabama and Florida, and American Indians--Mesquakie Sac and Fox from Tama County, Oglala Lakota from South Dakota and Crow and Northern Cheyenne from Montana.

Scores of libraries, schools and hospitals sent mourners to honor his extraordinary lifetime largesse, his rare generosity

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

that would live on in the Maynard Foundation.

Buddy would have been acutely embarrassed by all this pomp which ended at last when he was placed for all eternity between his two wives in the big granite Maynard mausoleum.

Next morning, Frank Lowry Jr., Buddy's attorney, called the family and certain other people together in the music room of the villa for the reading of the will. Mr. Lowry and Dave Goldsmith had had a hasty consultation concerning the size of Stanley Maynard's fortune which was greatly reduced since the time of his father, but still sizable. Since Stanley's account was kept in the estate office, and with computers there and at the gatehouse, Dave was able to quickly produce some figures. He knew Stanley's habits as well as his own. Stanley had no debts and spent little.

In the music room they arranged the chairs in several semi-circles facing Mr. Lowry who stood at a lectern under Letitia's portrait. Soft morning light came from the great bay window. Most of the audience were family members but Mr. Lowry had also asked certain others to attend including Hilda Grieder who felt she should be in the kitchen. Mr. Lowry said, "No, plenty of time later for that. You sit right here!"

As soon as everybody was seated, Mr. Lowry, not one to waste time said, "Good morning. Mr. Maynard's will is couched in much legal terminology and practically impossible to

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

understand as I should know since I wrote it (under his direction, of course). This is why lawyers are necessary. They can simplify what they have already rendered arcane! This morning we will review and summarize in plain English the main provisions of the will. My secretary will be here momentarily with copies of the will which we will distribute. This is certainly Mr. Maynard's last will since he made it only ten days ago. The amounts of money we mention are approximate and will change somewhat before the estate is closed.

"First there are a number of smaller bequests of fifty thousand dollars each to old friends, servants or acquaintances. I won't read through all that. The major bequests which concern us here I will now review. Mr. Maynard desired that the mentioned sums should be after taxes, that is, where possible the taxes will be paid by the estate and the sums mentioned will be net received.

- A. To Libby Putnam, daughter of my late dear wife Josefa, the sum of one million dollars.
- B. To my close friend, Dr. David Goldsmith (here at Villa Toscana,) the sum of two million dollars.
- C. To Dr. Josef Goldsmith of New York City, the sum of one million dollars.
- D. To Alberich Wolke of Baumgartenhaus, Schurwald, Stuttgart, West Germany, the sum of one million dollars

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

for his heroism and sacrifice in defeating the Nazis.

E. A trust of one million dollars each for my seven grandchildren; they to receive the income only after age thirty, and the principal to return to the Maynard Foundation at their death.

(It should be noted here that the will provides that the income from these trusts will be held in the estate office from today until the recipient's thirtieth birthday, resulting in large sums, since the grandchildren range in age from ten to twenty-two. Thus in the case of ten-year-old Stanley Maynard VI here--assuming an income of about fifty thousand dollars a year compounded for twenty years, he will get a lump sum of well over a million plus the continuing income for life of the principal. The late Mr. Maynard was concerned about giving too much money to young people of immature judgement. He felt that Nogg, his oldest son, was destroyed at least in part by having at an early age the great resources from just such a trust.)

F. To Stanley Maynard Goldsmith and Mrs. Helena Maynard Goldsmith, my grandchildren most involved in villa and estate affairs, an additional one million dollars.

G. To Hilda Grieder, my faithful good housekeeper, the income for life of a five hundred thousand dollar trust, this also to return at her death

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

to the Maynard Foundation.

"Lastly, the personal assets of Mr. Maynard, after taxes and the aforementioned bequests, appear to be at the very least twenty-seven million dollars, not including the Villa Toscana, its contents and the adjacent fourteen hundred forty acres. All of this is left in equal parts to his two surviving children, Eric Maynard and Griselda Maynard Greenfield.

"Mr. Maynard, as you all know, was extremely fond of the Villa Toscana which has been the family home for generations. He hoped that a way could be found to preserve it, with or without the family living here. Every Maynard who has lived here has left his mark in some way. Mr. Maynard wrote special notes to several of you concerning the villa.

"That sums it all up. Here is Miss Reynolds with copies of the will. Settling the estate will take some time, perhaps years, for the wheels of the courts grind slowly. Thank you."

Most of the gathered audience had time to look about them at the beautiful room with its three polished pianos, its brown Italian marble fireplace, the tall cabinets of music and books and the superb Eastman Johnson portrait of Letitia Maynard, the grande châtelaine whom only

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Buddy could have remembered. Now, alas, Buddy was also gone.

The family were mostly of a mind. No, this must not be swept away. But the fate of Villa Toscana now lay with Eric and Griselda.

Next morning as the Eric Maynard and Monty Templeton families prepared to take their plane to Billings, Monty, now a hale and lithe seventy-nine, told Eric, "Buddy had himself a fine spread here. Wish I'd come earlier for a visit. He asked me plenty of times. Maybe I could have shown him how to make things pay with a few cattle. 'Course maybe he didn't need the cash!"

About ten o'clock, Rosalie Templeton and Alice Maynard were with Hilda in the kitchen. All the young cousins were noisily playing softball near the carriage house. Hilda was producing fresh-brewed coffee and fresh-baked Apfelnockerl.

Up in the tower study Eric was talking with Griselda, Helena and Dave Goldsmith. He stood at the south window looking toward the escritoire. "Hilda says he died right here at the desk."

Dave answered, "Yes, I got here almost the minute she called. He was slumped at the desk and Hilda said he had that marble and that little stone in his hand." (Continued)

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Everything is as he left it. See that little open notebook there? You probably all remember that over the years he planned to have these beams above us carved with aphorisms in various languages. He said the tower study was not complete until that was done. He told me that he and Josefa visited Montaigne's château near Bordeaux in 1932 and he got the idea there for finishing this study. So he kept that little notebook of aphorisms. Even back in 1944 he was entering possibilities. I remember in England-- Yes, see here, this is it! It's faded and stained, but see this:

'Es ist nichts so fein gesponnen,
es kommt doch an das Licht der Sonnen.'

Oh, I must show this to Alberich! Basically it means Truth will Out, and we used it as a password in the Second World War. There's a big story there!

"Anyway Buddy never did get the carving done, not wanting the mess or not finding the right artist, but that notebook is his collection of appropriate sayings.

"Poor Hilda was very distraught and felt guilty for not being here, as you may be sure we all did. Buddy was like the Rock of Gibraltar for all of us--always strong, dependable, munificent! It was just

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

completely unexpected since he appeared so healthy."

Eric gazed out the south window at the ball players, the old carriage house, his mother's walled garden with its sturdy young memorial oaks, and the Indian path winding down across the rolling Maynard grassland. As they had done a thousand times, he compared the Grant Wood painting of 1933 with the current scene. "Still not much change there," he remarked, "The trees moved around some and there are all those parked cars and mama's garden, but it's still recognizable after fifty years. We'll have that iron cresting repaired."

He walked to the desk. "Is this the little stone?"

He was turning it over. "Griselda, look at this! Helena, where are Monty and Rosalie?"

"I think they're down in the kitchen with Hilda, papa. Just a minute." She buzzed the kitchen on an intercom that Buddy had installed several years before. "Oh Hilda, are Monty and Rosalie there? Mama too? Good! Will you ask them all to come up here to the tower, please?"

In a moment Monty, Rosalie and Alice appeared with a big tray of coffee and hot Apfelnockerl.

Eric said, "Rosalie, look at this little rock. Do you recognize it?"

Rosalie put on her glasses. "I can tell you what it is. It's a trilobite fossil. We have quite a few in our

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

canyon in Fergus County. Where did this come from? It's not...? Oh, I bet this is one of those that Hunt found out at our ranch near forty years ago! And see here in this box is the other one! Buddy saved them, didn't he? You can see here in this beautiful room, he saved almost everything! Remember Monty, Hunt found these and put them in his fish basket. He had some nice trout in there too."

Eric said, "Dad had this in his hand when he died. He must have been thinking about grandpa. Isn't that strange? They both died from the same thing."

Alice urged, "Come, let's all sit over here and have some coffee and dumplings to cheer us up."

Monty tried to hide some tears. "I can tell you Buddy and Hunt were salt of the earth. They sure made things better for us, didn't they Rosie? And Cousin Madge! Wasn't that something! I still can't get over it. Leaving us a fortune when she didn't even know us! Well, we've tried to do good with that money. Buddy used to think he could make a philanthropist out of me when all I knew how to do was chase a dogie or tighten some barbed wire." He smiled, wiping at his eyes. "By the way, we talked on the phone to Clint-Rod this morning. He said to tell Eric to come up to the Templeton Ranch more often because Eric needs a lot of basic lessons in how to be a cowpoke!"

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Eric grinned as he flopped into one of the oak chairs. "He's been teasing me for forty years!" Then his face sobered. "I wanted to tell you all that I have already been contacted by a couple realty companies from Cedar Rapids. They sure don't waste any time. One of them, the Heartland Future Company, said they would like to buy the entire villa estate and they tentatively offered fifteen million dollars for the fourteen hundred forty acres."

Helena, her black eyes stricken, uttered, "Oh daddy, how awful, You can't be thinking of selling the villa?"

Eric smiled teasingly, "Well, fifteen million is a tidy sum and we might haggle for more! Besides, wait 'til you hear what their plans are. They said they are in the shopping-mall business and it's very lucrative. So they are going to have a humdinger of a mall--maybe two--and plenty of luxury housing on one-acre lots, and best of all, some of the most beautiful parking lots and gas stations this side of the Mississippi. They said the county road out here would be widened to four lanes and that would take the gatehouse.

"I asked them what would happen with the villa. They said, 'oh nobody wants an old barn like that anymore. What's it good for?' No, it would be torn down because it happens to be a perfect location for a Wal-Mart or a MacDonald's

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

because from there you could see the arches for miles around!" Eric gave them a big theatrical wink as he had learned to do from Nogg back in the long-ago days in New York City when they were practicing to be dead-end kids. "And what's best, when I looked a little hesitant, they said, 'We might even sweeten the deal. How does two percent of the gross profits sound to you?'"

Griselda tried to sooth Helena. "I'm pretty sure your dad is joking, especially when we get a wink like that. I would call that company the Heartless Future Company! I can tell you for myself that I would never sell the villa. It's too important to all of us and none of us needs the money. There is going to be a problem with most of the Maynards living elsewhere. We will have to carefully consider our options about how to use and maintain the old house. It's too early to decide. We know what the Douglas sisters did with Brucemore, right here in Cedar Rapids--gave their mansion to the National Trust. That was a wonderful idea for these modern times since it preserved their estate when their family no longer lived there."

Dave Goldsmith interposed, "Buddy and I had talked about closing the Maynard Foundation and Estate offices downtown and moving them to the villa or the gatehouse. It would be thoroughly feasible now with computer hookups.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

Most of the business is done that way now. We talked about using the top floor of the carriage house or part of the servants' wing, or building a small unobtrusive space at the rear. It needs only three or four offices.

"You've all read those notes that Buddy included in his will. He wanted the villa and the library to be maintained and available in some restricted way to the family and the public--perhaps as a conference center for Coe College or the University of Iowa."

Eric winked again as he hugged Helena. "I'll put my little Absaroka Indian's heart at ease. The very last thing we will do is sell the villa. But now, we have to leave in a hurry to get the kids back in school. We'll be thinking about the future of this house. We can have a leisurely conference next year, maybe sitting around the swimming pool. Meanwhile, with Dave Goldsmith, Hilda Grieder, young Pete Luckner, Stanley Maynard Goldsmith and Mrs. Helena Maynard Goldsmith, I think the villa is in good hands!"

As they started down the stairs, Monty patted Eric on the back. "Don't ever part with your land--dumbest thing you could possibly do--I know, 'cause I did it once!"

Eric shouted, "Grizzle, where is that husband of yours? Don't you have to catch a plane today?"

Griselda smiled over her shoulder. "He's easy to find.

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

He'll be downstairs back in the corner of daddy's library reading over Grandfather Reisfeld's books, looking for some new 'discovery of the century' and it's going to be hard to pry him away!"

The Goldsmith brothers lingered at the gatehouse, but the rest of the family and friends in little groups got in their cars and went their ways, each with heavy heart and deep realization of having lost someone of transcendent quality, someone to emulate, someone to whom much had been given, but who used it wisely with rare altruism.

Now a new generation must preserve and protect the Tuscan Villa.

AFTERWARD

In May 1988, nine-year-old Jimmy Luckner was walking with Lois Bunker home from school down the county road. At the villa they saw several trucks from the Iowa Wrought Iron Company. Workmen were crawling along the roof of the carriage house replacing the rusty fineals and cresting.

"See, I told ya Lois, they ain't never gonna tear down the old villa 'cause it's the most beautiful thing in Iowa,

545

THE TUSCAN VILLA/ by R. L. Merritt

and even though it takes a pot of money, the Maynards
got it! Uncle Pete told me and he oughta know!"

--THE END--

Richard Lee Merritt
4428--23rd St.,
San Francisco, CA 94114
completed 14 July 1996

